

## God and Leadership

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Jesus said to his disciples, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you” (Mt 17:20). The obvious question that flows from this powerful statement is, “Faith in what/whom?” So often leaders rely solely on their own abilities or those of their teams, and therefore, the moment that leaders do not achieve their targets or goals, they are disappointed in their own or their teams’ abilities. The result is that some leaders then retreat to statements such as, “Perhaps I am not good enough” or, “I should have made a better judgement call.” The worst part is that often when leaders face their own flaws or disappointments, they either “blame-shift” or spend their energy on envisaging scenarios of “could have” and “should have.” Eventually, these types of leaders start feeling anxious and exhausted, especially if they have to take extremely difficult decisions on a day-to-day basis which could have massive implications for the company and its employees.

What would happen if leaders would learn how to trust in someone who possesses much greater capabilities and abilities than they have? What if leaders can condition their minds and their hearts to put their faith in an almighty, all-powerful God? And then to trust that God will work out all things for the good (Rm 8:28)? The moment that leaders accept that they themselves can’t, but that God can do all things through them, that is the moment that their lives change completely.

When leaders put their faith in God and no longer in themselves and their abilities, they relieve themselves from the burdens of anxiety as well as the need to try and control the potential outcomes of the challenges that they are facing. When leaders submit their plans to the Lord and they put their faith in him, they enable him to do exceedingly abundantly more than what they have asked or thought, according to his power that works in them as human beings (Eph 3:20). However, in order for them to be able to tap into this infinite source of wisdom, power, and knowledge, leaders need to teach their hearts and minds to have faith in God. It is only when leaders put their trust and faith in God that

nothing will be impossible for them to achieve because an unlimited source of power, wisdom, and knowledge becomes accessible to them.

It is written in the Bible that God has set the end from the beginning (Is 46:10). This means that humans have no control over the course of their lives, but that an all-powerful living God has. It is also written in Proverbs 16:9 that “a man’s heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.” How much easier would life not be if leaders can rest in the knowledge that God has it all planned out and that they should only walk in His plans? Our job is simply to try and stay in his planned path. It is written in Jeremiah 29:11 that “I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” What this verse points to is that God has a good plan for people and that he desires for us to be prosperous. He has no favourites (Rm 2:12). He also wants us to be successful. He wants us to live a life in abundance (Jn 10:10). However, most people don’t think so. They think that they have to earn his love and favour. God has blessings in store for other people, but not for them.

The Bible teaches us that God is love (1 Jn 4:8). What is love? Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 that “love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. *Love never fails.*” Love never fails. . . . What does that mean? It means that, despite the fact that humans fail, God, who is love, never fails. His love for us never fails. Nowhere in the Bible is it suggested that Jesus, who is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15; Jn 1:18; 14:9.), turned anyone away who asked Him for help. However, for some reason we think that the moment that we ask God something, He won’t listen to us because we don’t deserve his love and we are not worthy of His love.

In Galatians 5:4 we read, “You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt* to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace,” and in Ephesians 2:8 it is written that “for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” It is clear that the love and favour of God is not something that people can earn, but it is given as a gift from God.

In his book, *12 Rules for life*, Jordan Peterson writes that “the successful among us delay gratification.” What he is effectively saying is that successful people have taught themselves not to lose faith and hope when they don’t see their desired breakthroughs immediately, but to be patient and continue working

towards the goal. The sooner people accept that breakthroughs sometimes take time and immense effort, the easier it becomes to keep hope in the midst of the inevitable challenges which one faces in achieving one's goals. Also, the sooner people accept that life is extremely difficult, and one needs to be tough and resilient to be successful, the less likely they would be to become disheartened and discouraged when their plans go south. Nowhere is it reflected in the Bible that life will be effortless and straightforward. In fact, Jesus said that in this world His followers "will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). It is also noted that when we pass through "the waters", God will be with us and when we pass through the fire, we will not be burned (Is 43:2). This is a clear indication that challenges and difficulties are part of life and when you do not have faith in yourself and in your own abilities, it becomes increasingly difficult not to start becoming overwhelmed, scared, and sometimes also very lonely. Feelings of restlessness and pressure could also result in unsound and damaging decision making, which in turn could have a destructive or undesirable impact on the business or the team.

Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, is a perfect example of this. In the well-known scene where Jesus walked to his disciples on the sea, His disciples were terrified because they initially thought that He was a ghost. Peter knew that if it really was Jesus who was walking towards them, He would be able to walk to Him on the water. Jesus said to him, "Come," and he then "got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!'" (cf. Mt 14:22-33). Jesus then reached out his hand and caught him and said, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Mt 14:31). There are a couple of lessons to be learnt here.

First, leaders should look at the storm, but should not focus on it. In other words, one should not blithely ignore the troubles which one faces, but not become consumed by them. The only way of not focusing on the storm itself, is to replace it with something else and to focus on the replacement. Leaders should replace focusing on the storm with focusing on Jesus because he is the only one that enables us to walk on water. He is the one that provides us with the capability to do the impossible: to walk on the water. Would Peter walk on water by himself? Never. He would not even have examined whether he can walk on water – but something in him knew that if it truly was Jesus walking towards them, he would have been able to walk on the water. Sometimes leaders aim to achieve a goal which they set for themselves, but when they face a storm in the middle of the process, they become scared. They then either throw in the

towel or whinge about the issue as opposed to simply focusing on Jesus, who is the ultimate answer to the problem which they are facing and also the source of their salvation.

Second, fear keeps leaders from arriving at the place where they are called to be. The moment that they fear that something will happen, it usually does. It is uncanny and almost as if one draws the feared outcome on ourselves. We read in Job 3:25 that Job said, “The thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me.” In this regard, the Bible gives a clear instruction that we should be careful what we think because our life is shaped by our thoughts (Pr 4:23). There is also that famous quote, “You become what you think you are.” The moment that Peter became scared of the storm, he began to sink. Something bad happened. It is also written in the Bible that “there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment” (1 Jn 4:18).

As mentioned earlier, God is love and the moment that the love of God fills a person’s heart and mind, fear is quenched and there is no room for anxiety and nervousness. A practical example of this Bible verse is when a person is too afraid to invest an amount of money or to expand their business. What is the price that they will pay? In other words, what is the punishment that they will have to suffer – perhaps missing the opportunity of becoming the largest producer of coal in South Africa? Or perhaps missing the opportunity of becoming the Chief Executive Officer of a listed company because the moment that they had to stand up for righteousness in the company, they were too afraid what other people might think of them. They become a slave of fear. Fear holds leaders back from achieving their goals. Peter’s goal was to walk to Jesus, but as soon as he became scared, he sank and failed. When leaders put their trust in God and not in their own abilities, they don’t limit themselves and the impossible becomes possible. Walking on water becomes an option for them.

Finally, what did Jesus do when Peter became terrified and fearful? Despite the fact that Peter lost his faith in Him, Jesus still reached out and saved him. He gave him His hand and pulled him up out of the water. However, the opposite is also relevant. What would it mean for Peter if he had not lost faith? He would have felt invincible. He would have aimed higher the next time around because he knew that miracles happen when he puts his faith in God. His relationship with God would also have grown because he would have gained the experience of knowing that God never fails. Again, despite the fact that Peter lost his faith in God, God still loved him, because the love of God never fails. It does not rest upon reciprocity but is a gift from Him who never changes

(Jas 1:17). It is also only when leaders endure the adverse and unfavourable times that they develop strength of character, and character in turn strengthens their confidence in the hope of salvation (Rm 5:4). When leaders don't live a life by sight, but by faith, they tend to press through these difficult times. They become the successful people that Jordan Peterson writes about. They are those who put their trust in God and when they run, they don't grow weary because they know that God will strengthen them in their weakness (2 Cor 12:9). His grace is sufficient for them.

Leaders are people who have to be mentally strong and emotionally stable. They have to take challenging and sensitive decisions that involve millions of rands on an everyday basis, which in turn could also have direct individual effects, such as potentially depriving a family of its sole source of income. If leaders really understand that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives inside of them (Eph 1:19-20) and that they also have the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16), they will not be anxious or lose hope, because they rely on a source that is not limited to human power and ability. They will also be able to take the right decisions because they are able to tap into God's infinite wisdom and knowledge which are freely available to them. Leaders will also rest in the fact that even if they make misjudgements or miscalculations, God will turn those decisions for the good (Rm 8:28). Leaders will also be likely to achieve their goals, despite the fact that they take time and effort because they live by faith and not by sight. They know that even when they go through deep waters, God is always with them (Ps 23:4).



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