Tools for Wise Leadership

A programme of TWR-Africa, produced by TWR-Zimbabwe, presented by Rev Dr Roy Musasiwa

Series 13: Leadership Stewardship

Talk 07: Stewardship of Family Life

Welcome to the programme Tools for Wise Leadership.
We are focusing on the issue of stewardship in Christian leaders. We defined stewardship as management of someone else's affairs or property and we are exploring the implications of this definition.

One of the things we emphasized in the previous programmes is the fact that the main purpose of a steward is to add value to what has been entrusted to him. We applied this and other principles to the stewardship of our bodies and the stewardship of our minds and emotions. In the last programme we began to apply the principles to the stewardship of the relationships God has given to us with particular emphasis on the marriage .

From marriage we are today emphasising that as stewards we need to add value to our family relationships. Now here is our starting point. God created the family to be the primary means of meeting human needs. What part are you playing in meeting the needs of your family members? It is within the family that you can practice meeting the needs of others. From that practice you can be a better leader in other contexts as well.

Let's go back to our starting point: God designed the family as the primary place for the meeting of human needs. But what are the needs? Abraham Maslow popularized the concept that human needs are a hierarchy which, from the bottom up consist of:

- Physiological Needs
- Safety needs
- Belonging Needs
- Esteem need
- Self-actualization

We should, however, add to this list the fundamental human need that goes over and beyond other needs i.e. the need for God. Now God created family to be the primary means of meeting all these 6 needs. The story of Jesus' upbringing as well as the parable of the Prodigal son give a good illustration of this fact. They illustrate firstly that God designed the family to meet the physiological needs of its members. Jesus' family was a provider of his physical needs while he was a child. So it says in Luke 2:40, "And the child grew and became strong." It goes on to say in verse 52, "And Jesus grew in ...stature." Joseph did not spend money on beer halls or on womanizing at expense of Jesus. On the other hand the prodigal son found his very survival threatened after his many mistakes. When all else failed, he turned to his Father to have his needs met.

Then secondly, God designed the family to meet the safety needs of its members. God used Jesus' earthly family to care for his safety when they took him to Egypt after Herod threatened his life. Later they searched for him 3 days when Jesus had remained at the temple in Jerusalem. On the other hand the Prodigal son learnt a hard lesson: The world out there was not as safe and as friendly as he had imagined. It was only by coming back to his family that he found true protection. Now safety is not just physical. It can include the need to protect our children from sexual abuse, emotional and psychological abuse etc.

Thirdly, God designed the family to meet the belonging needs of its members. We all have the need to know that there are people who accept us completely, and unconditionally. God designed the family to play this role. Apart from family all other connections are for present convenience. Family

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is connected to you because you are you. Family says, "I love you for no other reason than that you are my son, daughter, wife etc. You may upset me, or you may fail in different ways, but the value of belonging will outweigh my disappointment with you. You are accepted as you, and for no other reason than that you belong to the family." Jesus recognized his human parents and was obedient to them. They in turn loved him and cared for him physically and emotionally. Hence he grew "in favour with.. men." The father in Luke 15 knew that it was not enough to provide food and shelter to his repentant son. He provided shoes standing for freedom, and a fattened calf to celebration relationship.

Fourthly, God created the family to meet the need for esteem in its members. Jesus was able to listen and ask questions to religious authorities in the temple probably because at home he was regarded as a significant somebody who was allowed to ask questions and was listened to. Also the Father in the parable knew the importance of giving a sense of significance to his son. He provided him with a robe standing for position, and a ring standing for authority. So here is a question you. How are esteem needs met in your family and what is your contribution to the meeting of such needs? Esteem is sometimes destroyed in the home through name calling and the use of degrading words. When parents scold their children using derogatory terms like "dog" they might be imagining that they are merely disciplining those children. In actual fact, however, they are destroying the self-esteem of those children. You are a steward of family relationships. Let that not be true of you as a leader within your family.

Fifthly, God designed the family to meet the self-actualizing needs of its members**.** Hence the family needs to create opportunities for members to develop their potential in areas education and the flourishing of their gifts and talents. We all need encouragement, recognition, delegation and appreciation for this to happen. This must have happened a lot to Jesus as he was growing up. No wonder he grew in wisdom – hence actualizing his potential into actuality.

Finally God designed the family to satisfy the need for God in its members. Jesus' parents took knowledge of God as a fundamental thing as shown by visits to temple, and perhaps having family devotions. Again it's no wonder that "Jesus grew in favour with God."

Now that we have explored human needs the question that arises is how we as stewards can add value to our family member by meeting their needs. At least one of the answers is that we need to overcome pressures that militate against prioritizing the family. Families are neglected due mainly to four tyrannies: Tyranny of the urgent, the tyranny of expectations, the tyranny of competition and the tyranny of the image. The tyranny of the urgent has to do with the many demands on our time that present themselves as urgent so much so that families are neglected. The tyranny of expectations are the many expectations from members of the extended family, the church and other groups who demand our attention and our resources to the neglect of our immediate families. The Tyranny of competition expresses itself in our wanting to be like the Jones or to be better than them. We then overextend ourselves in our work etc. and then neglect the emotional needs of our families. Then of course the tyranny of the image has to do with our wanting to impress other people so that those other people start to matter more to us than our own families. Mark McDonald says, "When I was young I had a friend whose father seemed a great man. He appeared to me to be everything that a son would want of a dad. However, what I didn't realise was that my friend's father wasn't the same man in his home that he portrayed to everyone outside of the home. The lack of respect that my friend felt for his dad was the result of this inconsistency."

As stewards we should remember that our primary calling is to our families before we can effectively minister to others. When the leader's focus is primarily on ministry outside the home, his or her children usually experience and identity conflict, attention deficit and an integrity deficit.

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The children of Eli and of Samuel manifested these effects and the results were tragic for the families and for the whole nation of Israel.

So Christian leader you are a steward of relationships within your family. As Gordon MacDonald rightly says: There's no place like home for building young people to be a pleasure, both to God and to their generation. Well our time is up for today, but let's meet in the next programme where we will be talking about stewardship of money and other resources. God bless you.

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