Tools for Wise Leadership

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

Series 12: Self-Leadership
Talk 09: The Leader's Status and Functioning

Welcome to the programme **Tools for Wise Leadership**. For several programmes now we have emphasized that in order to lead others well you have to lead yourself well first. We have seen how this applies to the heart, by which we mean our character and to the head, by which we mean our mastery of knowledge necessary for us to function as leaders. We have begun to see how this also applies to the hands, meaning the skills we need for effective leadership. As we continue to explore the hands our focus today is on the dynamics of status versus functioning when it comes to leadership.

By social status we mean the honour or prestige attached to one's position in society. On the other hand leadership function describes what you actually do to fulfil your mission as a leader. Now leadership deficiency is often expressed by the lack of marriage between position or status and function. How often do people gain positions in companies and organizations but actually fail to effectively function in those roles? By the same token one might not have a position but can still function as an effective leader.

To illustrate the difference between status and function let us revisit the story of David's early leadership. In 1 Samuel 17 we read the story of David and Goliath. At that point David was only a herd boy who looked after his father's sheep and Saul was the king and commander-in-chief of the army. Yet the story shows how David functioned as the real leader in this situation even when he did not have the position or status of a leader. On the other hand Saul who had the status of a leader by position failed to exercise the function of leadership in this situation.

Saul and his soldiers were paralyzed by their fear of Goliath the Philistinian giant who was very well armed. For 40 days Goliath stood out in the valley boasting and challenging the Israelites to choose a man to come out and meet him in battle. David arrived at the camp as Goliath was coming up from the battle lines and doing his usual boasting and challenging. David's response was, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he defies the armies of the living God?" Then David said to Saul, "Don't let anyone be discouraged. Your servant will go and fight this Philistine!" And that is exactly what David did. He prevailed over Goliath with just the sling and the stone. As soon as that happened the men of Israel and Judah charged forward, shouting a battle cry. They chased the Philistines to the valley and to the very gates of Ekron. So much for the summary of the story.

But what do we learn from it? In short we learn that the leader by position failed to lead. The leader by calling provided the necessary leadership. The one had status. The other had functionality. In the end what got the job done was not the status; it was the functionality.

Do you wish to be as effective as David was? Here are some important lessons from the story we have just summarized:

Number 1: David utilised his God-given gift. David had an ability that fitted the need of the moment. It was a natural talent and an acquired skill. "As David said to Saul, 'Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by

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its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God.'"

What we see is David's readiness to put his gifting to use for God's glory. People followed him because he was productive in the use of his gift. David succeeded where Saul failed because he made use of his God-given talent.

God has put a spiritual gift or a natural talent that you can use to exercise transformative influence on the people around you. You have something that others need. Please ask yourself: What is my primary gift or talent? What contribution do you make to others that would be most missed if you were gone? David gives us a good example of finding and exercising his gift.

Number 2: David perceived a need. His leadership didn't start by filling an empty position. There was no position to fill, but this did not stop David taking leadership. Instead his leadership began with perceiving a need. Here is Goliath who for the past 40 days has been a threat to God's people and a disgrace to God's name. There was obviously a need to neutralize this threat, and this disgrace. What about you? Just look around yourself. What needs do you perceive? Wherever you look there are many needs that are waiting to be met. It may be in the area of education, health, helping people find their purpose in life, marriage preparation and marriage enrichment, bringing about reconciliation and the list goes on.

Number 3: the need sparked a passion in him. Not all needs spark a passion in every potential leader. For David the outward need of eliminating the Goliath threat and disgrace coincided with his passion. Hence in verse 45 he addressed Goliath, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied." Can you feel the passion in David's voice? This sort of passion makes up for lack of resources. David triumphed over the Philistine giant with only a stone and a sling.

What about you? When you hear the many needs around you, which one strikes a chord within your heart? For me it's about developing leaders of integrity, who know the Lord and can be transforming agents in society. For you it might be a different thing. What makes you cry or makes you angry? What do you feel strongly about that you often feel driven to act? That would define your passion.

Number 4: David acted in response to the need. David did not just end with having a gifting, perceiving a need and developing a passion. He actually acted. He acted according to his true self. He refused to go in Saul's armour. Often we think we will be effective only if we mimic the American Televangelists, or some other prophet. If we are to be transformational leaders we need to respond to the needs. But we need to respond as ourselves, not as copies of other people. We were born originals. Let us not die as copies of other people. There is only one you, and nobody can be a better you than you. In the same way you can never be as good at being Billy Graham than Billy Graham himself.

Number 5: David's action inspired others to cooperate. We read, "When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran. Then the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and the gates of Ekron. These soldiers did what they had been too paralyzed to do for the last 40 days until David provided some leadership.

You see, true leaders eventually come to the point where they attract and empower others to their passion. Genuine leaders connect with others. This is what separates an entrepreneur and a leader. Leaders don't act alone. They have followers. They have to, because they have a cause that is bigger than they are – they need others to pull it off.

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So friend, be an effective leader like David was. He exercised leadership, not as a position but as a calling. It was not about status but about function. Why not right now decide to be more concerned about service than about recognition, power and status. Humbly ask God to remove the temptations of recognition, power, and greed. Until we meet again in the next programme practice these tools of wise leadership. And now that you know these things, blessed are you when you do them.

Discussion Questions for: Series 12 - Talk 09 - The Leader's Status and Functioning

For this series of *Self-Leadership* you can use the following study questions to guide you in deepening the impact of this series:

Study Question 1: for Personal reflection
What does this episode mean to you personally as a leader?

Study Question 2: for Group Discussion
What does this topic mean you as a group of leaders?

Study Question 3: for applying the topic
What can you apply from this topic in your role as a leader?

Summary:

A good leader is someone that has an ability to share with others how to overcome an obstacle or reach a goal, by guiding out of humility and from position or status.

Discussion Questions:

Study Question 1: Personal reflection

Do I allow the feeling of pride to influence my ability to lead? Do I let my sense of status determine my personal goals? Am I able to recognise a need for good leadership before taking any action?

Study Question 2: Group Discussion

Do you depend on your social background to influence your decisions and leadership style? Do you spend time with God so that you can get direction and strength to lead competently?

Study Question 3: Applying the topic

How do you recognise and utilise the gifts God has given you? Do you let opposition deter you from reaching your goal or exercising your individual gifts?

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