

Leadership Development Program

Module 5 – Character



Romans 12:8 “he who leads, with diligence”

There are two main categories of development to consider in the Christian life - our gifted-ness and our character. These two things are represented by the gifts of the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit. The same is true for our leadership development. The leader ought to be seeking development of the gifts that contribute to their leadership as well as development of the fruits of the Spirit that undergird their character. It is important to have both. Leaders need both the ability to lead as well as the character to sustain their leadership. When the Apostle Paul chose one word to describe what was needed for leadership in the book of Romans, he chose the word “diligence” which is the Greek word “spoudē” which means “speed” or “earnestness” or “diligence forwardness”. It carries both character and gift meanings.

What is leadership?

Leadership is the ability to help a group of people to go in a similar direction at significant speed for a sustained period of time. It therefore necessitates elements such as vision (direction setting), alignment (strategic formulation and implementation), motivation and buy-in from the stakeholders. It is our character, especially the way we treat people, that sustains buy-in from people over the long term. In this module, we will cover character development and in the following module, we will cover building influence which is at the core of our leadership effectiveness.

The increasing requirement of a leader’s character

The apostle Paul was very clear that a leadership role had character requirements associated with it. He was also very clear that the greater the leadership role, the more was required of the leader’s character. When he outlined to Timothy the requirements of deacons and bishops in first Timothy chapter three, the character requirement on bishops was greater than that of deacons. Also, the character requirements on deacons were certainly higher than those on others in the church.

For example, Paul wrote that a deacon was “not to be given to ***much*** wine”, whereas a bishop was “not to be given to wine”. Although the statements about wine are a small part of the character requirements listed, it is indicative of the increasing character requirements of leadership.

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The scope of a leader's character

As we reflect on our character development, we should consider the scope of a leader's character that Paul outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13

- *Reverent – Leaders should have a respect for God, His church and His leaders*
- *Not double-tongued – Leaders should be truth tellers. Honest mistakes are made by everyone, but intentional lying including exaggerating should be avoided.*
- *Not given to much wine – Leaders need to have their appetites in check. Not only in alcohol, but also in sexual, financial and relational matters.*
- *Not greedy for money – Leaders need to have their priorities set from God, not from money. Money and/or power often follows successful leaders, so a leader needs to ensure their eyes are on God.*
- *Holding the mystery of the faith with a good conscience – Leaders need to be settled spiritually, emotionally and intellectually about their salvation.*
- *Having been tested first – Leaders need to have been observed for some time or recommended by a trusted person who has observed them.*
- *Blameless - Leaders are not required to be perfect or had a spotless past, but their present behaviour needs to be of a standard that sets a positive example.*
- *Having spouses with good character – As a leader becomes busier with people and tasks, their spouse and families need to be able to support the leader's commitment*
- *Good family life – Good leadership requires the same qualities that make a family work. Leaders are not expected to have a trouble free home life, but if their home lives are consistently troublesome, they are better off attending to that.*

Action Points

With a coach or mentor, go through the list of character qualities in 1 Timothy chapter 3 and discuss where the Lord might be wanting to help you.

- ***Reverent***
- ***Not double-tongued***
- ***Not given to much wine***
- ***Not greedy for money***
- ***Holding the mystery of the faith with a good conscience***

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- *Having been tested first*
- *Blameless*
- *Having spouses with good character*
- *Good family life*
- *Thoughtful decision making*

Character development processes

Fortunately, the Lord is motivated to help our character independent of whether we are leaders or not. The stronger our character, the better our lives become! There are four main vehicles that He uses to do this:

1. His transforming presence

2 Corinthians 3:18 *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”*

The Holy Spirit can and does transform our character and motivations as we spend time in His presence. His Spirit brings *“washing of regeneration and renewing”* (Titus 3:5). So we ought to bring ourselves into His presence and ask for this type of character development – asking Him to “wash” our motives and drivers. It is the easiest and most pleasant way for it to happen.

2. His conviction

John 16:8-11 *“And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”*

The Holy Spirit witnesses to our Spirit about all of His actions and desires for us. This “witness” or “second level of awareness” is information that the Holy Spirit brings to our spirit about sin, righteousness and judgment as well as other things such as sonship (Romans 8:6). We tend to read the word “convict” in John 16 as the word “condemn” but is more akin to the word “convince”. Therefore, if we wish to develop in an aspect of our character, we should ask the Spirit to convince us of the need for it. He wants to help our motivations and if we are not motivated for character change, then He can help us to become motivated. If we are only partially convinced, we should ask the convincer to fully convince us. Abraham *became* “fully convinced” (Romans 4:20) that the Lord would fulfil His promise but he certainly hadn’t reached that point when he had a son to Hagar.

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3. Renewing our mind

Romans 12:2 *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

Our mind can be renewed through His transforming presence and conviction of the Holy Spirit as outlined in the previous two points, but it can also be transformed through an act of our will. We can actively campaign to challenge untruths that we believe with truths that displace the untruths. The best place to find truth, of course, is in the Bible.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”*

According to the preceding passage of Scripture, we can identify thoughts and arguments that are not in line with the truth about us and “cast them down” – so they do not dictate to our lives and “bring them into captivity” – so that do not run riot with our imagination. We can and should recognise these “high things” and bring them down, so changing our mindset. As we change this mindset, according to Romans 12, we are transformed. An example from Scripture is that we should *“reckon (or account) yourselves to be dead indeed to sin”* (Romans 6:11). We are, in fact, dead to sin, but we need to break the mindset that we are still slaves to sin.

4. Trials

Romans 5:3-5 *“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”*

Trials often provide the context for character growth. This is because we are often unaware of our own motivations, drivers and support mechanisms. The purpose of the trial is to reveal these drivers to us that we have been unaware of through the normal course of our life. Trials themselves don’t develop character, but they cause us to see our character more clearly. The three points above are the actual change agents – His presence, conviction and renewing of the mind. The trial helps us to want and receive these things more easily. The trial helps us to develop **perseverance**. We cannot persevere without one, we are simply enjoying life. Perseverance develops **character** because we remain committed to the pursuit of the kingdom whilst our motivations are refined. There are points within a trial when all we have is **hope**. We do not even seem to have faith. We do not know for sure what will happen to us. We lose trust in our plans, vision, support, gifts, experience and every other thing we have felt support from. It is at these points that we need to rely on the two “immutable” things that provide **hope** “anchors” for our soul (read Hebrews 6:17-19). These two things are the character and the promises of God. And at this point, we realise the purpose of the

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trial, and the breakthrough from the trial is imminent. That is because when we have a renewed understanding and reliance on Him, the *Holy Spirit pours love into our hearts*. We are freshly empowered, have increasing dependence on the Lord and with a stronger character. No wonder Paul could say that he found “glory” in tribulations.

The tests and trials God uses to develop leaders

Unfortunately, leadership development doesn't normally happen in the classroom. It happens in our everyday lives as we face duties, excitement, pressure, frustration and so on. The Lord controls the circumstances of these things when He desires to highlight something that we are missing and in which He desires for us to grow.

- **Patience**

The Lord will often call us to a role in the kingdom of God well before He releases us into that role. Many of the great biblical characters had to build and maintain their faith for God's calling despite the passage of long periods of time. Abraham (Genesis 12-18) was 75 years of age when God called him. At 86 through impatience, he had a child through Hagar. He failed the first test. It wasn't until he was 100 that he had the child of promise, Isaac.

Having received in our heart a call to leadership, we should understand that the full realisation of what we have been called will only materialise over time. The purpose of the patience test is for the leader to grow in faith. Since leaders are called on to help people in many situations, they need to develop the measure of faith that they have been given to help in many different situations. A trial of patience helps them to do that.

The delay in being released in their calling that happens to a leader also helps to purify the leader's attitudes and motives. A leader may believe that their activity and striving will make their calling come to pass. It will not. During patience tests, men's plans will fail and God will, at the end, bring glory to himself by miraculously bringing the result that He always desired, if the leader persists with patience.

- **Fruitlessness**

A leader who is in God's training will experience times where it seems like God is not blessing them and His word is not coming to pass. A leader faces discouragement, misunderstanding and temptation. God's purpose is for the leader to rely totally on His strength to bring His word to pass.

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Psalm 11:4 *The LORD is in His holy temple, The LORD's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.*

God's eyelids test us. There are times when it appears like God's eyes can't see our plight. Joseph (Genesis 37-45) had a promise from God at 17 to have his brothers and parents bow down to him. Joseph had to wait 14 years to see the promise of God come to pass. During that time, he was sold as a slave, falsely accused and imprisoned. However, Joseph grew in character, wisdom and humility during that time. God allows times where His word does not come to pass so that we would get our strength from Him and not from our life's circumstances.

Psalm 105:17-19 *He sent a man before them— Joseph—who was sold as a slave. They hurt his feet with fetters, He was laid in irons. Until the time that his word came to pass, The word of the LORD tested him.*

Because the word of the Lord takes time to come to pass, it tests us. The object is not for us to get discouraged, but that we are strengthened by the Lord. A leader might even be led by God into a dry place, like Moses was. During these times, a leader needs to become thankful for all the things that they do have and not focus on what they do not have.

- Faithfulness comes before fruitfulness

Whether we seem fruitless or not, we should remember to be faithful in what we have been given. Luke reminds us to be faithful in what is least, in our money and possessions as well as what belongs to other people. (Luke 16:10-13). We should attend to what are seemingly small or unnoticed tasks. We should be faithful to God in the way we handle our finances. We should also be faithful to serve another person for their benefit, and not for ours. Faithfulness is a key to receiving more from the Lord, whether or not we are leaders.

- Other opportunities

The Lord also tests us by allowing other opportunities to arise around us. Opportunities to do good things that are not "God" things arise for the leader to strengthen their understanding of God's call on their life. Many times when a potential leader is considering a leadership role, other opportunities come their way. Many new leaders report that it is just when they are being released into their calling that a prime opportunity comes their way that can't be done at the same time as their calling. During this time, leaders are being tested about their priorities.

God asks us to sacrifice good things at times. Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22), even though Isaac was a good thing, the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham. The purpose of this test is for the leader to see if they are willing to subject their plans, desires, thoughts and feelings to the will of God.

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- Leaders should be servants

As with any other gift or role in the kingdom of God, those who have been given a gift of leadership have been given it to serve others. Jesus said that whoever wanted to be great must become the servant of others. Isaiah 42:1-4 helps us to understand the spirit of a servant.

- *“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold” – God’s servant depends on Him for strength and favour.*
- *“My Elect One in whom My soul delights!” - God servant is approved by Him*
- *“I have put My Spirit upon Him” - God’s servant is anointed to do the role*
- *“He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles” - God’s servant is fair to people*
- *“He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street”-God’s servant is humble*
- *“A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench” - God’s servant is gentle*
- *“He will not fail nor be discouraged” - God’s servant is determined*

Motivation

God also tests us by allowing us to see the true motives of our heart. God arranges situations to reveal why a leader acts in a certain way. God uses motivation tests to purify a leader’s motive so that they are really motivated by the Lord getting the credit and building His kingdom, not ours. Often a leader doesn’t really know what their motivation is. They may be motivated for what they can get, rather than how they can serve Him. They may be trying to glorify themselves and not Him. Motivation tests are for the leader to see any unrighteous drives and replace them with righteous ones.

Balaam (Numbers 22-24) had a motivation test to see whether he would do as God wanted him to or as people with power and money wanted him to do. Balaam held out for some time, but eventually failed the test.

God will often ask the leader to continue doing tasks that are menial, instead of those associated with his calling. During this, God is revealing to the leader whether their motivation is to serve or to be in the public eye. Elisha (1 Kings 19) was ploughing with 12 yoke of oxen before him, with all the hard work, dust and smells associated with that. He then followed Elijah and served him, washing his hands (2 Kings 3:11). Elisha passed the test by continuing to serve without any prophetic release during this time.

Many leaders get discouraged when their calling isn’t proceeding at the rate they wish. At some point every leader faces discouragement. The leader should learn how to receive encouragement from the Lord. The Psalms are particularly helpful to a discouraged leader. The leader needs to learn to rejoice in tough times as well as in times.

Action Points

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- *What are the areas of patience that you are being tested right now? How are you growing in faith as a result of this test?*
- *What are the main areas of fruitlessness that you are facing right now? What are you doing to be strengthened by God?*
- *Do you have significant opportunities that can potentially distract you from the call of God on your life? Are you willing to subject your plans to God?*
- *What do you know about your motivations in serving God? Are you frustrated by what you are doing right now? What does that tell you about yourself?*
- *What is the major test that you are in right now? Reflect on the different tests with your coach. If you are in one of the tests, what is the key response you need to be making right now?*