

Tools for Wise Leadership

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

Series 13: Leadership Stewardship

Talk 12: Stewardship Faithfulness

Welcome to the programme Tools for Wise Leadership.

Over the past weeks we have had a great time talking about stewardship from a leadership perspective. We started off by defining stewardship as management of someone else's affairs or property. When you were put in charge of someone's affairs, especially during the biblical times, the expectation was that you would fulfil the purposes intended by the owner. One of the purposes was for the steward to add value to the property. As we now conclude this series let us focus on Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 4:2. Paul says, "Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy." In the New International version it says, "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."

How will God measure our faithfulness? One of the renowned Christian leaders by the name of Rick Warren has written about 7 criteria God will use to evaluate your faithfulness. I will now summarize these seven criteria and relate them to what we have been saying all along about stewardship.

Criterion no. 1. Do you possess the right values?

A faithful person knows what's important in life and what isn't important in life. That means as a leader you must know how to invest your life. How will you make your life count? When we dealt with the stewardship of time we pointed out that we can either invest our lives in what is important and will ultimately count or we can squander our time on trivia.

Some of our pursuits may, of course, not be trivia, but they may be very selfish. A good leader should value the welfare of those he or she leads rather than being in leadership for selfish gain. It is a paradox of life that if we over-value ourselves at the expense of others we lose ourselves eventually. On the other hand if we value others at our expense we gain ourselves.

Or take the perspective of Proverbs 28:20 which says, "A faithful man will be richly blessed but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished." This verse contrasts faithfulness with a desire to get rich quick. Solomon is saying here there is more to life than just the accumulation of things. But that is exactly what the world values. Faithfulness is proven by our refusal to buy into the system that says the almighty buck is the number one thing in life. Faithfulness is often proven by choosing of a simplified lifestyle to allow more time for our ministry of leadership

So remember, firstly, that your faithfulness will be judged according to whether you possess the right values.

Criterion no. 2: Do you care for the interests of others? Warren says that God will judge our faithfulness on the yardstick of our relationship to other people. Again, faithfulness swims against the stream of contemporary culture which says, "What's in it for me? What are my needs, my ambitions, my desires, my goals, my hurts, my values, my profit, my benefit?" Faithfulness is proven by our others-directedness and by giving our life away, by looking at others rather than concentrating on ourselves. Maxwell says that people don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care. In other words people buy into the leader before they buy into the leader's vision. So do you care for the interests of others? That is the second way your faithfulness will be judged, says Rick Warren.

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Criterion no. 3: Do you live with integrity before an unbelieving world? As Warren says: one mark of faithfulness is the kind of testimony you have with unbelievers. The Bible teaches that a pastor is to be above reproach in the community and to have a good reputation, not with believers, but with unbelievers. This same thought can of course be extended to any Christian leader. When unbelievers see how we lead they will naturally want to see what our Christian faith means to our leadership style. How near are we to the leadership style exhibited by Jesus Christ? When God evaluates your faithfulness, He won't be looking at your communication skills but He will be examining the way in which you walked before those who are outside the faith.

Criterion no. 4, Warren says, is Do you keep your promises?

When God evaluates your faithfulness, He's going to look at all the promises you made. One strong characteristic of God throughout the Bible is the fulfilment of His promises. Psalms 105 recounts the events of the Exodus and all the mighty works God did for his people until and beyond their settlement in Canaan. Why did God do this? Verse 42-44 give the explanation:

For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant. So he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing. And he gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the fruit of the people's toil.

Faithfulness demands that we fulfil promises as God does. Yet we know that it's easier to get into debt by making promises to pay than to get out of debt by fulfilling those promises. It's easier to fill up your schedule than it is to fulfil your schedule. Yet the Bible says that faithfulness is a matter of "if you say it, do it." You keep your promises. The number one cause of resentment is unfulfilled promises. Do not be caught up in this trap if you want to be a faithful leader.

Criterion No. 5 according to Warren, is: Do you develop your God-given gifts? There's a tremendous emphasis in the Bible on using the gifts and the talents God has given you. God has made an investment in your life and He expects a return on it. We have repeatedly emphasized that the purpose of a steward is to add value to the property or affairs entrusted to him. That is what the parable of talents is all about.

Criterion 6 for judging our faithfulness is: Do you obey God's commands? You may remember us discussing the fact that a steward must keep within the boundaries provided by the owner. That is what Saul failed to do when he offered a sacrifice which only a priest could do. That is why Saul was rejected as king. You would not want God to reject you as his steward would you? Then you must obey God's commands. We can be skilled leaders and communicators, but disobedience disqualifies us from being seen as faithful as God defines it. This is basic, but it is essential.

Finally, criterion no. 7 is: Do you pass on what you learn?

The Bible talks a lot about the transferring process of multiplication. According to 2 Timothy 2:2 You are to give what you learn to faithful men and women, and those faithful men and women are to give it to others, and so on. Warren makes the valid point that none of us would be here today if there hadn't been faithful men and women in the last 2000 years of the church. We are leading today because some faithful men and women took time to write down the Scriptures, and others preserved the Scriptures, and others translated the Scriptures. We are here because of the testimony of these faithful people.

In past weeks God has taught you many spiritual truths about leadership stewardship, and about a lot of other subjects as well.

We'll let Jesus have the last word: He said, "now that you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

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