

Tools for Wise Leadership

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

Series 14: Personal Development Planning

Talk 7: Personal Development Planning - Developing Personal Values

Welcome to the programme Tools for Wise Leadership where we are focusing on personal development planning for leaders. We have been emphasizing that you as a leader must model for your followers personal development planning. You have to be intentional about it because human development does not just happen on its own. You are a person created in the image of God, with a mind and a will. Therefore your development should be a matter of intelligent planning.

As we said earlier, your personal development plan should consist of the following four elements:

- Your vision of the future
- Your life mission
- Your goals and strategies
- The values you live by

We have looked at the first three aspects. Today we conclude our discussion of personal development planning by looking at the need to develop values to live by.

Now what are values? These are the principles that determine right choices and decisions. These personal values are necessary for several reasons.

1. They define your personal culture. What kind of a person do you want to be? That is defined by your personal values.
2. Your personal values are the reasons for your actions and methods. Why do you do certain things, or do them in certain ways? That question is also answered by your value system.
3. Your values provide the criteria for choosing people to relate to. The Bible says that bad company ruins good morals. So how do you decide who to associate with and who not to associate with, who should influence you and who you should influence? It is your personal value system that helps in answering those questions.
4. In the final analysis biblically based operational values also provide us with an anchor of stability in a rapidly changing world. The world is truly changing very rapidly. All kinds of new fashions are surfacing as they are brought into our homes and offices through digital Television and the internet. We are now being told that it is fine for women to marry women, and for men to marry men. Prostitution is now being glorified as sex work. There is now massive confusion over what is right or wrong. So how do we live in this rapidly changing world? Your people as a leader are looking to you for answers. And the best way to show them the way is to have a well-defined value system which can offer stability in the middle of this confusing changing world.

So here is a question for you. What central values do you want to define your life? You can, for example, determine that honesty is an operating value for your life. Once you make that determination you will then decide to always be honest and truthful no matter how tempting lying can be and you will tell the truth even when the truth is likely to lead you into trouble. Because honesty is an operating value for your life it means you do not start deciding whether or not to tell the truth when you are already in a difficult situation. No. You have already made up your mind that to live by honesty. It is already a principle that determines your choices and decisions.

Abraham was a good man. Unfortunately, though, Abraham had not made truth an operating value for his life. As a result he told potentially costly lies. In Genesis 12 we are told that Abraham and his wife Sarai went to live in Egypt for a while. But just before they got there he instructed his wife,

Tools for Wise Leadership, Series 14: Personal Development Planning

“Please save my life by saying that you are my sister.” This lie resulted in the Egyptian king taking Sarai to be his wife. God had to intervene to save the situation. Now if God had not intervened what might have happened? Maybe Sarai might have become pregnant with Pharaoh’s child, yet the Lord’s plan was to give Abraham some children through Sarai. His lies were a threat to God’s plans for his life!

Now unfortunately once you start making wrong decisions this becomes a habit, and an accumulation of habits becomes part of one’s character. In Genesis 20 we again read of how Abraham settled for a while at a place called Gerar. As had become a habit Abraham told the people there that his wife, Sarah, was in fact his sister. And as had happened in Egypt King Abimelech sent for her and had her brought to him at his palace. Again God had to intervene to save the situation.

By his actions Abraham is really saying is that lying is okay if it will save you from an awkward or threatening situation. This not only became a habit, it actually became a terrible legacy. In Genesis 26 Isaac, Abraham’s son, also went to dwell in Gerar on account of another famine. And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, “She *is* my sister”; for he was afraid to say, “*She is* my wife,” *because he thought*, “lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she *is* beautiful to behold.” A character had become a legacy, and history was repeating itself.

Another important area of integrity that I hope you will consider including on your core-values is that of sexual morality. This is a source of many leaders falling. Just consider the difference between two brothers Judah and Joseph as recorded in Gen 38 and Genesis 39.

Judah succumbed to sexual temptation by sleeping with his daughter in law who was pretending to be a prostitute. He even parted with a pledge of his signet ring, his cord and his staff in return for the few minutes of pleasure. He did not calculate the consequences. And indeed some unpleasant consequences came to pass when the valuable pledged items disappeared and Tamar became pregnant. This is why we need to predefine our operational values even before we get into tempting situations. This is what Joseph did. No amount of seduction by Potiphar’s wife could make Joseph give in. Whereas Judah took the initiative of wanting to sleep with Tamar, in this case it was Potiphar’s wife who took the initiative. So Joseph’s temptation was even more than Judah’s. Yet Joseph did what Paul says we should do in 1 Corinthians 6:18:

Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

Now that means Joseph was operating from a well-defined value system. That is the reason that God used him in the way that he did.

The same could be said for other positive personal values that we should define for ourselves, such as financial integrity as a personal value. With all these values Proverbs 22:1 says, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches. And Ecclesiastes 7:1 also says, “A good name is better than precious ointment.” Joseph could well have said, “A good name is better than a moment of sexual pleasure.” The consequences of following the Judah way can be severe. That would explain why God did not choose Judah for the saving of the destiny of the Israelites. His choices would have affected too many people.

So there you are. By the time you have completed the stage of defining your personal values you have a complete personal development plan. It means by now you have

- A defined vision of the future
- A life mission that defines your reason for existence
- Goals and strategies for achieving those goals
- The values you live by.

Now that you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

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