

DANGERS LEADERS FACE

Being in leadership is dangerous. The Bible is full of warnings and examples of this truth. The devil (1 Peter 5:8) is always lurking in the shadows to sidetrack, plateau, neutralize or flat out destroy Christian leaders. I read of a Christian leader who, after settling into his seat on a plane flight, discovered, to his amazement and horror, that he was sitting next to a Satanist who shared that he was systematically praying for the destruction of Christian leaders around the country. One might surmise that his prayers were being answered.

We have all observed many well-known godly Christian leaders who have fallen due to financial greed, sexual misconduct and / or a variety of poor decisions. It seems to me that there are some obvious and common dangers related to such things as money and sex, then there are other dangers that fall into the category of deeper issues related to insecurity, ego, power.

I personally assumed that once I was experiencing victory in the more obvious areas, I was relatively safe, only to discover that there was an entirely new cluster of dangers that were much deeper and woven into the fabric of my mindset and habits. They proved themselves much harder to identify and more difficult to deal with and very likely were the root causes for falling rather than the sex and money issues.

Let's explore two of these less obvious dangers that leaders face. They are absolutely real, but not often discussed. They are not often taken seriously, but they are absolutely fatal.

Choosing Acceptance Rather Than Honesty

There is a strong desire in each of us to be liked, accepted, appreciated, respected and popular with those we lead, but there is a real danger here as well. Jesus spoke to this in Luke 6:26, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you."

I really like it in The Message, "There's trouble ahead when you live only for the approval of others, saying what flatters them, doing what indulges them. Popularity contests are not truth contests." Is it wrong to be liked, popular with those you lead? Yes, if it comes at the price of truthfulness. John Maxwell has said, "If you need people, you can't lead people."

My sense of significance and acceptance needs to come from God not the people I lead. If I have a deep unhealthy need for acceptance and popularity with those I lead, I will find it difficult to be objective and hold them to a high standard. I can ask myself if I am bothered to the point of ineffectiveness when the people I lead are unhappy with me. Do I tend to water down what needs to be said in order to not risk being unpopular? With His help, I want to focus more on being a man of

consistency and integrity rather than being well-liked and popular.

Sometimes I can be a first class chicken in dealing with the real issues. John 5:41 in the New Living Translation says (Jesus speaking to the Jews) "Your approval or disapproval means nothing to Me." That is where I want to be, by His grace. Getting off the emotional yo-yo of other's approval or disapproval. As a leader I need to be able to deal with being unpopular, temporarily disliked or misunderstood. It goes with the territory!

Choosing Harmony Rather Than Conflict

This is a close cousin to the first one. Many in leadership view conflict as something to avoid at all cost. There is a belief that conflict is harmful, divisive, counterproductive. Or is it? One leader made the observation that "If no one gets a little pushed out of shape during a meeting, I feel like we probably didn't put all our issues on the table. Tumultuous meetings are often signs of progress. Tame ones are often signs of leaving important issues off the table."

I recall a very painful experience I had when a conflict arose between me and a key leader. I wanted to go to him and discuss it but was strongly warned that I should not do that, but simply walk away and "sweep it under the carpet." I discovered others who had been involved with this leader who believed that harmony was to be maintained (albeit a veneer of harmony), conflict avoided even if it meant that lies were told, discussions were shut down and people were let go.

So many were hurt because of his desire to skirt around conflict and not deal with it. I think it comes back to insecurity on the part of a leader who, deep inside, is afraid to be wrong or have his opinions challenged. Insecure leaders are dangerous people.

Dr. Larry Crabb expressed it well when he said, "My personal need for significance and security can only be genuinely and fully met in my relationship with Jesus Christ." Getting it met some place else leads down a road of a gradual, but sure, leadership destruction.

Choosing harmony over conflict will shut down creative interaction, rob us of great ideas, keep us in the same old rut, and set a precedent for dishonesty and game playing, which will cause more conflict than the conflict itself might have caused. I must admit it is hard for me to welcome opposing viewpoints to my thinking. It always stings when people disagree with me and tell me in no uncertain terms. But the alternative is not an option for me any longer. Conflict and tension are well worth the price for the prize that is gained.

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