

Developing Leaders

Detailed Outline

Part 4 of 5

Introduction

In the introduction I pointed out Oswald Sanders and his three points of leadership - Sovereignty, Suffering and Servanthood. In this part we will look at Suffering.

Oswald Sanders spoke about the first sermon he had ever preached which was 60 years before that day. He said after he had spoken in a little church he went to the Pastor's study, a little room to the side of the sanctuary. There he couldn't help but overhear the conversation of two older women. One said to the other, "What did you think of the sermon?" The other woman thought for a second and said, "Not bad, but he will be better after he has suffered."

Sanders went on to say that it wasn't long after that that his wife got sick and he had to nurse her to her death. Sanders then remarried and eventually the second wife got sick and he again nursed her to her death. His niece who came to help him take care of his wife became terminally ill and he had to nurse her to her death. He then said, "My preaching, my ministry and my leadership is vastly different now than it was before I suffered."

Suffering is a very critical point to remember as we discuss leadership.

IV. Suffering and Leadership

A. Suffering is Counting the Cost.

1. In the conversations that the disciples of Jesus have, we hear them thinking of success and status but not in terms of suffering. However, over and over again we hear Jesus says to them and to all who would follow him, "Count the cost. If you are going to follow me, you must take up the cross and follow me."
2. No symbol could emphasize suffering more strongly than the symbol of the Roman cross.
3. Suffering was the price one had to pay, if they were to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. We see that in the lives of the disciples. They suffered greatly for their faith.
5. Apostle Paul says:
"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted..."
(2 Tim. 3:12 NASB)
6. Christians in America live a life of status and comfort but this is changing. It won't be too long before Christians in America will suffer for their faith, similar to those around the world who have suffered through the ages.

7. Suffering is part of being a believer. If this true for Christians in general, it is especially true for those who are leaders in the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Suffering is a Leadership Issue.

Interestingly, Paul makes suffering a leadership issue in 2 Corinthians 11.

1. Difference between true leaders and false leaders
 - a) Here Paul points out that there are those who wanted a following and wanted to rise to the top by exalting themselves and putting other people down.
 - b) In this context, Paul distinguishes himself from those false teachers by saying that he is a man who has the badge of suffering.
 - c) In Galatians, Paul says those who seek to impose circumcision on others in a legalistic way do so because they do not want to endure persecution.
 - d) 2 Peter and Jude talk about false teachers as those who are self-indulgent and pleasure seekers. That's their game and suffering is when they bail out and escape.
 - e) Suffering is part of leadership and in fact it sets leaders apart. Those who are willing to stand for their faith and suffer for the cause of Christ are the ones who will be overcomers.
2. Suffering is part of the process.
 - a) Hebrews 12 reminds us that suffering is the process that God uses for all believers. The writer tells the Hebrew sufferers that they have not suffered to blood.
 - b) He further tells them that suffering is actually an evidence and proof of Sonship.
For those whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives. (Heb. 12:6)
 - c) Suffering is therefore a part of the maturing process that God uses as He raises up men and women to maturity. And those He raises up to the position of leadership.
 - d) Therefore, when we think about the subject of leadership, we must think of the category of suffering.
3. Evidence of leadership
 - a) One of the ways a leader becomes evident is through the suffering that the person has experienced and endured in a victorious way.
 - b) Suffering may set those apart who are genuine believers and leaders in the church.
4. Suffering is a gift.
"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." (Phil. 1:29)

5. Suffering produces a deeper relationship.

a) Suffering is a means to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.

“... That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (Phil. 3:10)

b) As we enter into His sufferings, then we find an intimacy with Christ that we have not known. And Paul calls it the “fellowship of his suffering.”

C. Suffering is a Platform for Ministry.

1. The third element we must consider is that suffering is a platform for ministry.

2. Those who have not experienced the difficulties of life and found victory in them do not have the same message as someone who has persevered and endured.

D. Suffering is a Stewardship.

1. In 2 Corinthians 1, Paul says, suffering is a stewardship.

a) When we suffer and we experience the grace of God with the ensuing perseverance, we are stewards of that experience. This then becomes a platform for ministry, whereby we can share with others the greatness and grace of God that we have experienced in the face of sufferings.

b) It is thus the sufferers who have endured suffering who can minister to others who are suffering within the body of Christ.

2. Suffering marks a leader.

a) As we think of leadership, let us consider the aspect of suffering.

b) Let us not minimize the cost of leadership. There is a cross to bear and it those who bear it well who have the marks of a leader.