

Keep on Leading

by Peter Maiden

Leadership is essential to prevent chaos, maintain motivation, and get the best out of every member.

Duration: 44:39

Scripture: Exodus 24:7-32

Topics: "Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of leadership in motivating and inspiring demotivated Christians. He uses the story of Paul's shipwreck in Acts 27 to illustrate the demotivation and loss of hope that can occur in churches and Christian unions. The preacher emphasizes the need for leaders who can inspire hope and rekindle lost motivation. He also highlights the role of young people in the history of the Christian church, particularly in missions, and encourages them to take a stand in times of crisis. Additionally, the preacher emphasizes the responsibility of leaders to care for and shepherd God's flock.

Transcript

Exodus 32, sounds much better than that. When you think of the Exodus, it must have been a wonderful experience for the children of Israel. Do you know how many years they'd been in bondage, anybody? 430 years, if my memory serves me correctly, they'd been in bondage in Egypt.

430 years of sheer frustration for the nation of Israel. And then of course there was that tremendously frustrating period when God sent the various plagues on the land of Egypt and Pharaoh kept changing his mind. Have you ever used your imagination and read through that passage in Exodus? Can you imagine the frustration which the people must have felt after the various plagues? Pharaoh decided to let the children of Israel go and Moses went back in triumph to Goshen and he told the people to pack their bags, get their suitcases ready, get the cattle together because they were about to go on their way.

Time and time again, Pharaoh changed his mind and they had to unpack everything and settle back into their captivity in Goshen. And then the day finally came when Pharaoh was to release them from his captivity. Full of excitement and expectation, they commence their journey.

Oh, they knew that there were many hardships ahead and there were many setbacks which they faced. But here in chapter 32, when God gave the Ten Commandments and various other laws to the people, you can see their enthusiastic response in verse 3. Get the sense of enthusiasm and expectation here.

Everything the Lord has said, we will do.

Moses was a very careful leader so he wrote down everything which God had said and then he read the book of the covenant to the people and again they responded, verse 7. We will do everything the Lord has said. We will obey. And then Moses went up on the mountain of God and he said to the people, verse 14, Wait here for us until we come back to you.

Aaron and Hur are with you and anyone involved in a dispute can go to them. Moses is a very good leader. He's making ample delegation before he goes.

But by the time you get to chapter 32, everything is falling to pieces. I'm sorry, I completely misread you. All the previous verses were in chapter 24.

That was just to see how many of you actually are asleep on a Sunday afternoon. They're all in chapter 24. Now they're in chapter 32.

Welcome, you've arrived. Chapter 32. By the time you get to this chapter, you've been there a long time, but by the time you get there, you'll find that everything is falling apart.

It really is, isn't it? Everything is falling apart. Verse 1. When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and they said, Come, make us gods who will go before us. Chapter 24.

Everything the Lord has said, we will do. Chapter 32. Let's make other gods who will go before us.

As for this fellow Moses, the Moses they've been so excited and so enthused about. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what's happened to him. And it's not long before they're worshipping a golden calf.

Verse 4. And they're saying, can you imagine it? The people of God are saying, These are your gods, O Israel. These are the gods who brought you up out of Egypt. Exactly what had happened between chapter 24 and chapter 32? What had happened to bring about this tremendous change? Well, a very simple thing had happened.

The leader had gone. He'd gone up on the mountain to meet with God. And when the leader was gone, confusion and chaos very soon followed.

Now, the man who followed Moses as the leader of Israel was, of course, Joshua. And I want you to turn now to the book of Judges to see the leadership influence of this man Joshua. Turn to Judges, and it's definitely chapter 2. Judges chapter 2 and verse 7. Here you read about the leadership influence of Joshua.

Judges 2 verse 7. Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel. There's the influence of a leader. When Joshua was there, the people followed God.

When the other elders who'd ministered with Joshua were there, they continued to follow God. And when all the other people who'd been touched by the man Joshua were there, the children of Israel were faithful to God. But verse 8 reports the death of Joshua.

And then listen to the solemn words of verse 10. After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, the generation who'd been influenced by Joshua, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. And then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

They served the Baals, they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers who had brought them out of Egypt. And then just look at chapter 3, verse 9. Chapter 3, verse 9. They've turned away from Joshua's influence, they've turned away from God, and they're in a real mess. But verse 9, they cried out to the Lord.

And he raised up for them a deliverer, Othniel, the son of Kenaz. Verse 10, the spirit of the Lord came upon him so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. Verse 11, the land had peace for 40 years until Othniel died.

And then once again, the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Now we could trace the story right through the fortunes of the children of Israel in the Old Testament. There's a very simple pattern when you read through.

When the leader is there, when he is walking with God, then the people are walking with God. They're moving on for God. But when the leader departs, or when the leader goes astray, almost immediately chaos and confusion enters the camp.

The spiritual forces of the children of Israel was directly linked to the spiritual leadership in the nation at that time. So I think we can say with absolute conviction this afternoon that the subject we've been looking at together this weekend is an absolutely crucial subject. When the leadership of the church and of the Christian unions and of the youth fellowships and of the missionary societies in our nation is really walking with God, then the people will rise up and they will walk with God.

I said in answer to a question yesterday, I think, or in my seminar, I can't remember where, what people are looking for today are models to follow. They are looking for people to imitate. It's one thing for me to get up here and speak to you, or for others to get up here and speak to you.

That's not easy, but it's one thing. It is quite another thing for me to be living a life Sunday by Sunday, Monday to Friday, which people want to follow. That's leadership.

Not just lecturing from the front, but living the life that will infuse and motivate others and give them a desire to follow. So I want to begin this afternoon by giving you five reasons why leadership is absolutely essential to the health of the Church or the Christian Union. Five very simple reasons.

Firstly, as we've seen, I just underline it, without leadership, chaos will very quickly result. Leaders are essential to prevent, for example, friction, to prevent duplication. Leaders are essential to ensure that things actually get done.

Churches, Christian unions, missionary societies can become great talk shops, can't they? Endless committee meetings, endless fellowship meetings to discuss what we should be doing. But the question is, what are we doing? Leaders are people who turn discussion and ideas into action. And if we don't have leaders, there will be duplication, there will be friction, there will be demotivation, and there will be chaos.

Secondly, leadership is required if people are to maintain their motivation. Leadership is required if people are to maintain their motivation. Let me give you a biblical example of that.

Turn to a remarkable example in the 27th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. I want you to turn to this chapter because it's really very exceptional. Acts chapter 27.

This is the account of the violent storm which Paul encountered as he sailed towards Rome. Now remember, Paul is a prisoner on the ship. Get that in your mind as you read this story.

Chapter 27, and we take up the story in the 14th verse. A wind of hurricane force called the Northeaster sweeps down on the vessel as they head for the island of Crete. And the ship is caught in the storm.

Initially the crew respond very actively to the storm. Look, for example, at verse 18. We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard.

That's normal. There's a crisis. A life and death crisis.

And initially the people caught in the crisis are highly motivated. They're very active. They take action.

Throwing everything overboard to lighten the ship. Verse 19, on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. That must have taken some doing.

But then as you can see in verse 20, hope is beginning to fade fast. And when hope fades, motivation disappears. Verse 21 tells us that they aren't even eating.

The initial active response has become totally demotivated. And here are the people so demotivated, so afraid, that they've actually stopped taking food. Now what is needed in a situation like that? And you can illustrate that situation in many churches, in many Christian unions up and down our country.

Christians who are demotivated. They've lost their hope. They've lost their sense of victory.

They feel they've been evangelizing and witnessing and testifying for 5, 10, 15, 50 years. Nothing seems to have taken place. And they're basically demotivated, going through the motions.

What do we need in a situation like that? Quite simply, a leader. A leader who can inspire with hope. A leader who can rekindle lost motivation.

And the Apostle Paul was just such a man. Strong in faith in the promises of God, he tells them of God's promise to him that he would stand trial before Caesar. And then he encourages them in verse 25, Keep up your courage, men.

I have faith in God. You might not. But I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.

And it's clear if you look at verse 33 that the prisoner on board the ship has taken total charge of the situation. Paul urges them all to eat. For the last 14 days, he says, you've been in constant suspense.

You've gone without food. You haven't eaten anything. Now I urge you, take some food.

You need it to survive. This is the prisoner speaking. Not one of you will lose a single hair.

I must get on board fast. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head. Now look at the result.

Look at the result of this intervention. Verse 36, They were all encouraged and they ate some food themselves. And what happens? Action begins to return.

Verse 38, When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea. A hopeless situation where all hope and motivation had gone is totally rescued by one man who has faith in God. Now I'm challenging you as you go away from this conference.

How many in your Christian union, how many in your church, how many in your youth group are spiritually demotivated? They're going through emotions because they're fearful of the consequences if they don't. But they're demotivated Christians. How many do you need to get alongside? And by your model, by your example, you are going to rekindle lost motivation.

And you're going to get people and groups and CU's and please God, even whole churches moving again for the glory of God. Now you say to me, look, I'm so young. And I will tell you that in the history of the Christian church, it has been young people time and time again who in a day of crisis have taken their stand.

I wish I had time to tell you in Carlisle in less than three and a half hours. But I wish I had time to tell you of the history of Christian missions. If I could trace through the history particularly of the last 200 years of Christian missions, I would show you people of your age and just above, five, six years above the age of many of you who have been absolutely at the forefront of the missionary advances in churches all around the world.

I wonder how many Christian unions, I wonder how many youth fellowships and I wonder how many churches are just waiting for you to go back and live the life and inspire and rekindle lost motivation. It's the great task of leadership. And then thirdly, leadership is required if people are to be used to their full potential.

Leadership is required if people are to be used to their full potential. One Christian preacher illustrated a common problem in the church from a childhood memory. I'll read this to you.

He says, I've got a vivid memory of a day when I was a child and I was playing at the side of a London canal with my sisters. Our rubber ball went in to the canal and bobbed about tantalizingly near the bank. I, the youngest at the scene, was urged to reach for it.

Obediently, I crouched perilously on my haunches and stretched for all I was worth and just touched it. Go on, hissed my sister fervently. You're there! And I was.

But as she spoke, she gave me an encouraging push and the next moment I had my first experience of total immersion. Now the point of this story which the preacher is making through the illustration is that in the church there are so many of what he calls elder sisters who are quite happy to allow the few, to encourage the few to carry all the responsibility. You know, I visit maybe two or three churches a week in Britain.

And this, to me, brothers and sisters, is a tragedy. It makes me weep sometimes. As I look at British churches over and over again, I come to the conclusion if you took ten or fifteen people out of most churches in this country the whole thing would collapse.

Because the whole church is built often on even fewer than that. People who are taking all the responsibility. And some foolish Christians put these people who take all the responsibility on a pedestal.

And they say, what marvelous people. Oh, the commitment. They're there at every service.

They sit on every committee. They're involved in everything. Committed people they might be.

Foolish leaders they undoubtedly are. If you want to be a bad leader just do everything and you'll wreck the place in a few years. It's a very simple formula.

If you want to go home and wreck your church that's your desire at the end of this weekend. You just go home and sign up on every committee. You get involved in everything.

You get on the spiritual star list. He does everything. Great man.

And you'll ruin the church. You know what Ephesians chapter 4 says? If you want the body to grow it only grows when every muscle and when every sinew is playing its part. Some of the local churches today they're ugly, ugly things.

There are some churches with one great big right leg. That's all you can see. A great big right leg.

There are other churches with a great big right ear. Totally imbalanced bodies of Christ. Where one muscle is doing everything and therefore growing enormously.

But it's an ugly, ugly picture. The true picture is every sinew and every muscle playing its part. Part of the challenge of leadership as Andy shared with us this morning is the challenge of handing over.

Handing over to the young brother or the older brother. The young sister or the older sister. Who, horror of horrors, will do it different than you've been doing.

And may well do it better than you've been doing. But the challenge is to know when to hand on. When to encourage someone alongside.

Stand with me for six months. Stand with me for a year and then it's yours to run with. Part of the challenge of leadership is the challenge of getting the best out of every member of those you are responsible to lead.

Fourthly, without leadership people will not receive the care which they need. Without leadership they will not receive the care which they need. We saw at the end of my talk last night in 1 Peter 5 that this is the responsibility of overseers in a church.

Be shepherds of God's flock under your care. Serving as overseers not because you must but because you're willing as God wants you to be. Not greedy for money but eager to serve.

Not lording it over those entrusted to you but being an example to the flock. Now we could say many things from those verses because they're full of instruction on the subject of leadership. The only thing I want to say is this.

That in every church and in every Christian union there must be people who sense the responsibility to care. There must be people who sitting in that meeting or at the end of the meeting are looking around. Who's missing today? And was that person missing last week? Not because you're thinking in some critical fashion but because you're thinking in some caring concerned fashion.

I went to a church down in the Midlands not so long ago. And I went for four Sundays. And I'd been to the church many times before and I knew one young man.

Brilliant preacher. Graduate of a Bible college. Marvellous Christian fellow.

Real gift in ministry. And I noticed he hadn't been around during the four Sundays I was there. So I went at the end of my four Sundays and a couple of days left in the area to one of the elders and I said, James, what's happened to James? Where's he been? And this elder said, you know, we've missed him.

We've no idea where he is. So I went to his home and he opened the door. And I said, James, I've noticed you haven't been around the last four Sundays I've been here.

Anything wrong? He said, seeing you've asked I'll tell you. Come on in. Nobody else has asked.

As you've asked, I'll tell you. And he sat there in his room and he told me the most horrendous story. He was actually struggling with homosexuality, with homosexual desires in his life.

He'd been doing so for over ten years. He hadn't fallen. He wasn't a practicing homosexual.

But he was struggling with this tension. And he was bleeding. He was hurting.

And I had to come to the conclusion. It was a sad conclusion. I hope I'm wrong.

But there just didn't seem to be anybody in that fellowship who was overseeing the flock and looking out for the wounded lamb who needed the shepherd's care. You know, if you're in responsibility in your Christian union, it falls on your plate, brother, sister, to overlook the flock and to minister to those who are in need. Without leadership, people will not receive the care which they require.

And then, fifthly, without leadership, the job, quite simply, will never be done. Without leadership, the job will never be done. Do you think the walls of Jerusalem would ever have been rebuilt if Nehemiah had not taken the lead? There would have been great meetings about it, I'm sure.

There would have been consultations and conventions and executive committees and all kinds of things amongst the Israelites. We have to get round to working out some plans for those broken-down walls in Jerusalem. Let's meet again next Tuesday and discuss the matter further.

Unless Nehemiah had said, God has called me, are you ready to join me? Those walls would still not be rebuilt today. Would the Gentiles have been evangelized? If God hadn't put his hand on Paul and said, Paul, you're my man. I want you to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

Where would the Reformation have been? If God had not said to Martin Luther, Martin, it's your task. I'm with you. You have a few helpers around you, but you're my man.

Now go out and do the job. Who can estimate the impact which William Carey has had on the world missionary movement in the last 200 years? If you haven't got the book yet, you may still be able to get it. No, I don't think you can.

Hard luck. Come back next year. William Carey, the cobbler.

What an impact that man has made on missions in the last 200 years. One man available to God, and the job is done because a man was willing to take the lead. You can see the vital importance of leadership just by looking at the life of Jesus.

Three years of public ministry. What does he do? He invests days, weeks, months in his disciples. He could have spent the whole time ministering to the millions, couldn't he? He could have just performed a few miracles, the crowds would have gathered, and he could have ministered to the millions, but he didn't.

He invested his life in the disciples. Why? Because he knew, humanly speaking, that if what God had sent him to do was to be carried on after his ascension, he had to have men ready to run with the task. I'll never forget Tom Houston, who was the General Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society for many years, about ten, eleven years, I suppose.

It's, I suppose, one of the kind of plumb evangelical jobs in England, if you think of things in those terms. And there was quite a shock when Tom Houston resigned at the age of 48. And he came to a conference where I was present not so long ago, about a year ago, I suppose, and he explained his thinking.

He became the Chief Executive when he was 37, I think, or 38. And he said, I did my executive task for about eight years, 38 to 46. He said, those are the best years of your executive life.

And then he said, I began to look around after eight years for my successor. I identified him, and for the last two years, I've prayed for him, I've prayed with him, I've trained him, and now I'm getting out. Because I've trained my man and I want him to have the freedom to take over.

And he explained that if he had stayed in the job any longer, his own motivation would have dissipated, and the young men coming up underneath him would not be able to mature and come to full flower, because he was holding them back. He was looking to the future. He, like the Lord Jesus, was willing to give his time and his energy in training his successors.

Because without leaders, the job will never be done. So there's five reasons why we desperately need leadership in the church today. Now I imagine that all of you would agree with those reasons.

Maybe I'm just too optimistic, but I imagine that most of you would agree with those reasons. So let's ask a final question at this conference, and it's a very brief one. If we'd all agreed that leaders are so necessary, why are there so few? Why are there so few? Oswald Sanders in the 1960s wrote these words.

Has there ever been a greater dearth of God-anointed and God-mastered men to meet the crucial need for leadership? He goes on to write, This type of dedicated leadership has always been in short supply for the simple reason that its demands are too stringent. You know, I think if Oswald Sanders was writing today, he'd say the same thing. There's a great dearth of real leaders in the church today.

William Sangster, the great Methodist preacher, put it like this, The church is painfully in need of leaders. I wait to hear a voice, but no voice comes. And I love the back seat in the conference and in the synod.

I would always rather listen than speak. But there is no clarion voice to listen to. Why is that? Why do we love the back seat? Why are we slow to take the initiative and go to it for God? Let me give you three reasons.

You've been very patient and we'll finish with these three reasons. Number one, there is an unwillingness to lead because of a total misunderstanding of the job of leadership. Many Christians, as I suggested last night, have been very surprised on reading Paul's advice to Timothy.

1 Timothy 3, verse 1. Let me read it to you in the New English Bible. To aspire to leadership is an honorable ambition. That still comes as quite a shock to many evangelicals.

To aspire, to desire, to actually seek after leadership is an honorable ambition. To many people, that seems to conflict with Jeremiah's counsel to Barak in Jeremiah 45, verse 5. Seekest thou great things for thyself, said Jeremiah, seek them not. We feel much more comfortable with that, don't we? Surely in Christian service it should be the office that seeks the man rather than the man seeking the office.

Is it not a very dangerous thing indeed to put ambitious men into Christian leadership? I think our concept of leadership, as I said last night, is all wrong. The concept of honor, power and prestige. That's why we think in a totally wrong way of leadership.

The responsibility of overseer, which Paul is referring to in 1 Timothy 3, was far from being a coveted position. You weren't getting long lines of people at the application desk to be an overseer in Paul's day. To aspire to such a position was to aspire to danger, contempt, rejection and heavy responsibility.

The only reason anyone would aspire to such a task was that they were desperately concerned for the glory of God. Yes, to seek great things for yourself is wrong, terribly wrong. But to seek great things for God and therefore to use your gifts to do great things and to see great things done for God is an honorable and a beautiful ambition.

I hope you're going to dismiss entirely from your mind the worldly concept of leadership after this weekend. I don't think there's any better explanation of the difference between the world's view of leadership and the Bible's view of leadership than that given by Oswald Sanders. Let me just read this magnificent paragraph of literature to you.

True greatness, true leadership is achieved not by reducing men to one's service, but in giving oneself in selfless service to them. This is never done without cost. It involves drinking a bitter cup, experiencing a painful baptism of suffering.

The true spiritual leader is concerned infinitely more with the service he can render God and his fellow men than with the benefits and pleasures he can extract from life. The Christian leader aims to put much more into life than he ever gets out of it for himself. That's why the Lord Jesus said, to aspire to leadership is to aspire to become everybody's slave.

To aspire to Christian leadership, then, is not pride. To want to become everybody's slave is not pride. It is a humble place to aspire to true Christian leadership.

So can we go away from Motherwell with that clearly in our minds? Have we caught it? The Church is desperately in need of leadership. So if God has given you the gift, take down the evangelical humility mask. Oh, I could never do it.

Not me. I can see Fred down the road doing it twice as well as I can. If you have the gift, get to it for God.

It's not a proud thing to aspire to Christian leadership, to desire to become everybody's slave. And then the second reason that many people do not become leaders, and I think it's probably the most prominent reason, is just fear. Fear.

Fear of failure. Fear of criticism. An inferiority complex which is often seen in a person making wrong comparisons with other leaders.

Now you can see this throughout the Scriptures when God called Joshua to be a leader, four times in the first chapter of Joshua, He has to urge him, Joshua, be strong. Be courageous. You can just see Joshua, can't you? Trying to get away.

And God says, Joshua, be strong. Be courageous. And he's just trying to get away again.

Be strong. Be courageous. It's exactly the same when He calls Jeremiah.

Jeremiah responds with doubts and fears. And God says to him, Jeremiah 1.7, don't say I'm only a child. Don't be afraid.

I'm with you. I'll rescue you. And Paul was instructing Timothy to take over his leadership.

He had to constantly urge him to be strong, to be courageous. And remember 2 Timothy 1.7, God hasn't given us a spirit of timidity, but of power, of love, and of self-control. Paul has to say to Timothy, and again and again, endure hardship.

Don't run away from it. Stand firm. Be strong.

Take your share of suffering. Very interesting to do a little character study of Timothy. Three things come out.

Number one, he was very young. Probably in his mid-thirties when Paul wrote to him. You might not think that's young, you might think that's ancient, but certainly in eastern terms, that's very young.

He's a very young man and he felt his youthfulness very much. And Paul has got to constantly encourage him to be strong even though he's young. Secondly, physically he was very weak.

Paul talks about his frequent ailments. And he gives him that very liberating piece of advice, not to stick to water, but to take a little wine for his stomach's sake. His frequent ailments.

Physically he was very weak. And emotionally, he was quite weak. That's obvious.

Paul has to constantly encourage him, be strong. Don't be timid. John Stott in his commentary says that if people had been talking today in sophisticated terms about Timothy, they would have described him as an utter introvert.

Do you feel like that? You've found this weekend desperately difficult because you're an introvert by nature. Such a man was Timothy! And Paul says, I want you to take my responsibilities when I'm gone, many of them. That was obviously God's will as well.

Many people quake and tremble as they contemplate the responsibilities of leadership. Thomas Akempis put it like this, it is much safer to obey than it is to rule. Much safer, much easier to obey than it is to lead, than it is to rule.

Let me just mention two particular fears. Firstly, there is the fear of failure. There's a sense in which every leader puts his neck on the guillotine, isn't there? He says, brothers, sisters, come on, this is our goal, let's go for it.

Time and time again, I think in my work, you know, are we going to reach that goal? Are we going to reach that goal? Or are we going to fail? You know, that kind of fear is not wrong. But if it becomes totally debilitating and you can't do anything because of it, what's happened? Well, you're making a statement about God, really, aren't you? You believe God has called you to leadership. You believe God has given you these goals.

And if you can't move because you're worried you'll never make it, what are you saying about God? If you're walking with Him and if you're doing your will, there should be victory on our lips and in our hearts. And then, secondly, there is an inferiority complex which keeps many back from leadership. A very common example of this is wrong comparisons.

You look at other people and you see their leadership qualities and you see their characters and personalities and you say, well, I could never be like that. And therefore, I could never be a leader. But, you know, I'm just amazed at the kind of people God uses to lead His church through the Bible and through church history and as I have the privilege of rubbing shoulders with some Christian leaders in the world today.

I am amazed at the variety of people God uses to lead His work. You take Moses, the meekest man on the face of the earth. You took Peter, who never went around putting one foot in it.

He would jump in every time with both feet. He wasn't a man for half-measures. You can't get two more different personalities.

And yet, who is to say whom God used of those two personalities the most? There is no leadership personality, an identical personality picture of a leader. No such thing. God will take you where you are if He wants you to lead in His work and He will use you as you are.

He will refine your personality. He will sanctify you, but He will use you as you are. Don't be ashamed to be what you are.

You know, there's only one you in the body of Christ. Only one. There aren't two of you.

There isn't two of me. Praise the Lord. There's only one you and God wants you to be you.

He doesn't want you to try and be anybody else. He wants to take you as you are and He wants you, if He's calling you to leadership, to lead the work forward in a way which will be in accordance with your personality. Wrong comparisons is another reason why many people never move into leadership.

And the final reason, and I hope you won't think I'm too blunt at the end of the conference, but I think it's true, the final reason is just laziness. Laziness. I believe Western society is a very lazy society.

And I believe a lot of Christians just aren't ready for the hard work of Christian leadership. I don't know how you view the Christian life, but if you view it in any way or any other way than taking everything of you, then I think you've missed the mark. The commitment to Jesus Christ is absolute.

It's 24 hours a day. It's true for leaders, it's true for followers. When Paul is charging Timothy right at the end of his second epistle to him, he says, Preach the word, be instant, in season and out of season.

What does that mean? It means be ready to preach, be ready to fulfill your ministry, whether it's convenient or inconvenient. And you have got to be ready for massive inconvenience if you move into

Christian leadership. You know what I found about people? They don't get problems at the right time.

They don't. They don't look at my diary and decide when they're going to have problems. They don't look at the one night in the week that I've got to have with my family and say, well, I won't have a nervous breakdown that night, I'll wait until Thursday, because Peter's at home with the kids on Wednesday.

It doesn't quite happen like that. Problems come at the most inconvenient times. Now there's a time for rest in Christian leadership, and there's been far too many Christian leaders over the years who haven't realized that.

But you must be ready for massive disruption, massive inconvenience in your life, if God is calling you into Christian leadership. Well, there must be end. We all see the need.

There's many more than five reasons, but I've given you five. And I hope you're going to go away from this conference with the challenge. The challenge that to aspire to leadership is no wrong thing.

It is not a position of pride to aspire to become everybody's slave. I hope you're going to ask the Lord to deal with your fears. Fears about Him.

Will He really come through with the goods, if you trust Him? Fears about yourself. God can use you. And I hope you're willing to put laziness behind you, and you're ready in season and out of season to be used in the hands of God to take His work forward in your generation.

May He give you the grace to be His man and His woman in our day. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus Christ, you are the great leader, the captain of our salvation, the leader of your people.

And we thank you that you are leading us to glory through the cross, through the shame. You led on to glory. Lord, we want to follow in your footsteps.

As we follow in your footsteps, we're living the resurrection life. What you're calling us to is not drudgery. You're calling us to joy.

You're calling us to freedom. And even the hardships, Lord, are no burden when you are with us. Lord, we pray that you'll help us to be willing to follow you.

And at the end of this conference, just to pause, to think of one step, Lord, that we can take in response to what we've heard. Maybe it's in our Sunday school class or the Christian Union or the Youth Fellowship or the church. Just one step forward, which we can take in leadership of your work.

We don't, Lord, want this to have just been an enjoyable conference. But we want it to have been something which bears fruit in the work in which we are involved and in the kingdom of God. We ask this, O God, for your glory and in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Well, once again, I'd like to thank you all most sincerely for being with us this weekend.

Hope you've enjoyed it as much as I've enjoyed it. Look forward to seeing you at Easter, June, July, August. The year program starts in September and we'll let you back for the conference next February.

But, of course, this hasn't been a recruiting weekend at all, in any way. But it's been a great delight to have you with us and we hope you've enjoyed it. Travel safely and thank you very much indeed for your

fellowship.

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