

KINGDOM EQUIP NETWORK | 'EQUIPPING THE CHURCH' GLOBAL ONLINE CONFERENCE | THURSDAY
27TH AUGUST, 2020 | 14:00 – 16:30 (GMT) | ZOOM WEBINAR | THEME: PASTORAL LEADERSHIP FOR
A HEALTHY CHURCH

SUB-THEME (II): NOTES BY REV. DR. RICHARD C. WHITCOMB

Agape House New Testament Church – Accra, Ghana

“PASTOR, LEAD YOURSELF”

In 1921, Dr. Evan Kane was one of the world’s leading surgeons. He was the Head of Surgery at the Kane Summit Hospital in New York City. He was an expert at removing the appendix from people with appendicitis. He had practiced his specialty for 37 years and had performed over 4,000 operations. And now he had discovered a new drug that could allow him to operate and remove the appendix without putting the patient to sleep. It was a miraculous discovery that would lead to very quick recoveries. With the old system of putting the patient to sleep, recovery would take a week or more. But Dr. Kane was convinced that with his new procedure, the patient could be out of bed and at home in a day. However, no matter how convinced Dr. Kane was about his theory, he had one problem. He couldn’t find anyone willing for him to operate on using his new system. No one wanted to go under his knife while they were awake. Everyone was afraid. So, Dr. Kane made a bold leadership decision. He decided that in order to change the way the world practiced surgery; he would have to be the first one to lead the change. **He couldn’t change the world unless he changed himself.**

So, Dr. Kane decided to operate on himself, using his new procedure. The nurses prepared him and brought into the operating room. The local anesthesia was carefully administered. As he had always done, he cut into the right side of the abdomen and entered the body cavity. He tied off the blood vessels, found the appendix, removed it, and finished by sewing the incision back up. To his own credit, he proved himself right. After operating on himself, Dr. Kane was up and around the next afternoon, which was remarkable in that day. It was a milestone in the world of medicine. Dr. Evan Kane not only discovered a new and better way to perform surgery, he also discovered a powerful truth: **Your greatest influence on others comes when you lead yourself.**

Because Dr. Kane showed by his own example that his theory worked, he was able to influence others. Medicine and surgery were forever changed that day. Because one man led himself, he was able to lead others. There’s a powerful truth for us in the true story of Dr. Evan Kane and his discovery of local anesthesia for surgery. God has called us to lead the Church – but in order to lead others, we have to be able to lead ourselves. We have to experience what God has for US before we can offer to others what God has for them.

Greetings of grace and peace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ and all of us here in Ghana. Thank you to Rev. Emmanuel Ansah and the entire Kingdom Equip Network leadership team for this opportunity. I'm privileged and blessed to share a few simple thoughts today on the topic: **Pastor, Lead Yourself.**

The truth is, you can't lead others well till you've learned to lead yourself well. So, let me share with you...

THREE VITAL TRUTHS TO HELP YOU LEAD YOURSELF

1. The IMPORTANCE of Your Leadership.

Everything rises and falls on leadership. *Proverbs 11:14* teaches us this truth when it says, *"Without wise leadership, a nation falls; there is safety in having many advisers."*

We also see this from the example of the nation of Israel. When Israel had no leader, the nation was in disarray and could not make progress. *Judges 17:6* *"In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes."* But Israel's greatest times as a nation were when they had the greatest leaders, such as Moses, Joshua, and David. That's why *Proverbs 28:2* says *"Wise and knowledgeable leaders bring stability."* And this same principle applies in the church today. A leader is vital to the success of the church. Jesus acknowledged this in *Matthew 26:31* when He said, *"This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered."* We need strong leadership in the church. Without strong and effective leadership, the church cannot function and succeed in what God has given it to do.

- **But the problem we have today is a misunderstanding of true leadership.**

Many Pastors think that leadership is a **POSITION**. That's why many today strive for a title or a post. They believe that the bigger the title, the greater will be the leadership role. But you can have a title and not be a leader in the true sense of the word. **Leadership is not a position. Leadership is influence.**

- **This is what we learn from Jesus' leadership –**

When we study how Jesus led, we see two very clear ways in which Jesus shows us that leadership is influence. First, Jesus shows us that Leaders have influence when they **set an example**. In *John 13:14-15* Jesus said, *"And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an **example** to follow. Do as I have done to you."* And the Apostle Paul tells us that we must also set an example. In *1 Timothy 4:12* he said, *"**Be an example** to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity."* And when a Leader sets an example, then the Leader can **lead the way**. *Matthew 4:19-20* *"Jesus called out to them, 'Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!' And they left their nets at once and followed him."* And the Apostle

Paul said in *1 Corinthians 11:1* “Follow me as I follow Christ.” Leadership is influence. Influence sets an example and influence leads the way. This brings us to our second truth:

2. The IMPACT of Your Leadership.

God has designed leadership to make an IMPACT. And if He has called you to be a leader in His church, then God’s plan for you is to make an IMPACT in the church. And **the impact of your leadership will be in direct proportion to your ability to lead yourself.** And when you think about it, that’s really good news **because the fact is that you can grow as a leader.**

- **You are not limited.**

No matter where you’re starting from, you can get better as a leader. See, if leadership is INFLUENCE, then we all have the ability to lead. If leadership is INFLUENCE, then you can **grow and increase your leadership by increasing your influence.** INFLUENCE doesn’t come from birth. It doesn’t come from position or title. It doesn’t come from your talents or your personality type. **INFLUENCE comes by developing yourself so you can maximize your impact.**

- **To make an impact, every leader must lead himself to grow and improve.**

That’s the lesson we can learn from former President Jimmy Carter of the USA. While in office, Carter was considered mediocre. He started out well but got buried under problems. It wasn’t the problems themselves that caused his decline – but his reaction to the problems.

When inflation hit and the economy went down, Carter went on TV and seemed to blame the American people. He lost influence. When protesters in Iran stormed the US Embassy and took American government workers hostage, Carter seemed uncertain what to do. The stalemate dragged on for a year – and Carter lost influence. He had a title and position as the most powerful man in the world. But he was unable to lead the nation. He lost his re-election by a large margin to a man named Ronald Reagan. But Carter didn’t give up. Though he never ran for office again, he didn’t stop growing as a person. And he has actually achieved a greater level of influence since he left the position of President. He set an example for others to follow. And rather than decreasing in influence and leadership, Jimmy Carter has actually INCREASED in influence and leadership after he left the position of President. He traveled to many nations working to solve problems. He did charity Work through Habitat for Humanity and set an example for millions. Today, he is one of the most respected leaders in the US and has a good reputation in most parts of the world. His influence - and thus his leadership - have actually increased since he left office.

And that’s important for all of us to know – for the fact is, your leadership will only be as effective as your ability to grow.

- **For the truth is: A leader is a learner. If you stop learning, you stop leading.**

We see this truth in the life of the Apostle Paul. During his years of successful ministry, Paul did great exploits. He preached the Gospel in many nations. He planted many churches, led thousands to Christ, and performed amazing miracles. He wrote most of the New Testament. Yet listen to the words he wrote in *Philippians 3:12-14* near the end of his life: *“I don’t mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.”* This is the greatest Apostle who ever lived speaking. He was at the end of his ministry, and he has accomplished great things. Yet he says, I have not done it all. I have not learned everything. I am still pressing forward. And if Paul could say this, what about you?

So, here’s my advice to you: Stop seeking a better position and position yourself to be a better leader. Leaders develop by learning. The more you learn, the greater your capacity to lead. No matter who you are, or where you come from, you can grow as a leader to earn the respect of others and make an impact. But failure to grow as a leader puts a lid on your ministry. You can’t lead someone further than you’ve gone yourself. You must keep growing in order for those under you to grow, and for the church to grow. If you can’t lead yourself, you have no right to lead anyone else. The smallest crowd you’ll ever lead is also the most important – leading yourself.

That brings us to our third truth:

3. The INVESTMENT in Your Leadership.

To be a growing leader, you must invest in yourself. Investing in yourself begins by learning. Learning a new skill set is important – I encourage everyone to find a skill and learn or develop it this year. But growing as a leader is much more than gaining knowledge. You can read a book and listen to a leadership message but that doesn’t guarantee growth. Growth only comes through change. You must be disciplined in your personal life to grow as a leader. Listen to Paul’s words in *1 Corinthians 9:24-27* *“Don’t you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. So, I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.”*

So, here’s the key for you to grow as a leader: You have to learn to discipline yourself. This is my challenge to you today: Examine your life, and find the areas you need to grow in. Look at the area you are weak in or an area that is uncomfortable and address that issue. It may be an area of unresolved conflict. You are avoiding it because it’s uncomfortable. Maybe there’s

a person you're avoiding. It may be a challenge you're putting off accepting. It may be a difficulty you're avoiding.

But it's up to you to invest in yourself and lead yourself to greater growth.

Others can teach you. But the fact is, you have to lead yourself to greater growth because you know the things that are holding you back. You know the areas that are the places you would rather overlook and bypass to remain comfortable. And you have to challenge yourself to confront those areas and lead yourself to change.

SUMMARY

- Leadership is Important: It's not a position, it's INFLUENCE.
- Leadership makes an impact: The more you learn, the greater your capacity to lead.
- Leadership requires your investment: invest in yourself for growth and change so that you can grow others.