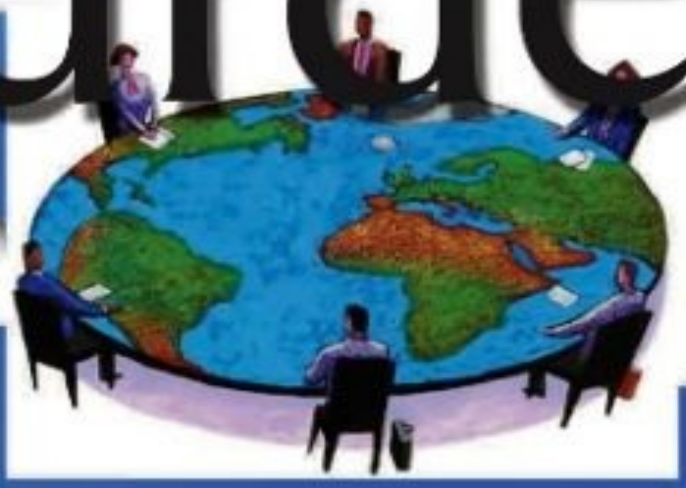
Dag Heward-Mills

Sharing the Burden



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by Dag Heward-Mills

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Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible

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Chapter 1 -The Burden of Leading People

And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people,

and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall BEAR THE BURDEN of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.

Numbers 11:16,17

One of the most difficult tasks in life is to lead people. The Bible teaches us that Moses delivered the Israelites from bondage.

However, he had a difficult time handling them. The job that Moses did is the job that all pastors have to do. God graciously gave Moses spectacular and sensational miracles. These signs and wonders helped to establish his authority over God's flock. In spite of this, the burden of leading the people was very heavy on Moses. The Bible calls it a burden - and that is what it is!

People Have Problems

If you have a pastor's heart and love people, you cannot disassociate yourself from their problems. Their problems will become your problems and their burdens will affect you!

When God wants to use you to minister to a large number of people, He will expect you to share the burden of His divine call upon your life. Failure to share this burden will simply mean that you may collapse or come to a standstill in ministry. There are many "standstill" churches. They grow to a point but can grow no further, because they fail to share the burden of ministry. A balanced church is one that has people of all sorts within it; the young, the old, educated and uneducated, rich and poor, male and female. Every pastor will fall into one of these categories.

It must be your goal to incorporate all sections of the church to help in the development and growth of the ministry. In other words, all sorts must be drafted in, to share the burden. You will find that the category of people you have written off, as far as ministry is concerned, would be able to contribute greatly to the ministry. I notice that most churches exclude the educated and rich from involvement in ministry.

Usually, the rich are only expected to contribute money to the church. Similarly, the educated are just expected to improve the cosmetic image

of the church. However, I have found both of these groups of people to be very productive and useful spiritually. I have many medical doctors, specialists, lecturers, architects, and engineers, who are all serving as lay pastors. These lay pastors are sharing the burden of ministry alongside me. **The burden of the ministry cannot be borne by one person. It is simply impossible.** From today, if you want to have a greater ministry than what you currently have, learn to share the burden.

Sometimes, people do not share the burden because they want to take all of the glory for themselves. They want people to feel that they are the only ones with a supernatural gift. They want people to show appreciation to them alone. Others are afraid of rebellion in the camp. How common is the story of associate pastors rebelling. Many senior pastors fear their assistants will outshine them one day. Fear not, only believe! You cannot expand without trusting people. The work is so great that you will never ever be able to do it all alone. There is too much space in the sky for two birds to collide.

Chapter 2 - Seven Reasons Why Pastoring People Is Such a Burden

1. People are by nature ungrateful and forgetful. …in the last days… men shall be…unthankful…

2 Timothy 3:1,2

You can notice ungratefulness in people by the way they complain. Moses led the Israelites out of bondage and slavery and yet they murmured and complained bitterly against him. Aaron even had to make a golden calf to calm them down.

When something minute goes wrong, you may be surprised at the actions of people you have ministered to. Many easily forget what you have done for them. This is because the things a pastor does are often not physically tangible, but spiritual. Most tend to think that the pastor has done nothing for them. Others go a step further and commit evil towards you after you have been a blessing to them. Don’t be shocked! The prophet Jeremiah experienced the same thing from his people. He said,

Shall evil be recompensed for good?

Jeremiah 18:20a

Once a pastor told a very disturbing story. He said he was surprised when one of his church members came to his house one night to assault him. He couldn't believe that this young man whom he had led to Christ, trained up in the Lord; whose marriage he had blessed and whom he had helped him through various crises, would attack him in that manner.

Dear friend, do not be surprised! Do not expect gratitude from man; expect your rewards from God. Hezekiah was blessed. But he did not "render again". That means he did not show gratitude for all the blessings he had received.

But Hezekiah RENDERED NOT AGAIN according to the benefit done unto him…

2 Chronicles 32:25

This is the nature of man. This is the nature of the people God wants you to lead.

2. People will betray you.

Though Judas walked and ministered with Jesus for three years, he eventually betrayed him for a small amount of money. Betrayal is a part of ministry. It is also a part of life. If you have yet to experience betrayal, I can assure you that you will. The disturbing thing about betrayal is that it is done by people who are supposedly close to you.

You are not greater than your master Jesus! The fact that someone may one day betray you, may make it very difficult for you to happily interact and flow with the people. Look closely at the ministry of any great man of God. You will discover that they have all had their fair share of traitors. All of this contributes to the burden and difficulty of ministry.

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

Psalm 41:9

3. People are wicked.

Alexander, the coppersmith did Paul a lot of harm in his ministry.

Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:

2 Timothy 4:14

I have experienced wickedness from people who have lifted themselves up to fight and oppose me. There are times when my ministry and very existence have become a source of work for such wicked individuals; their work being fighting, slandering and opposing. Without my existence, I think some people may not even have a job to do!

If you are not resolute in ministry, you could easily decide to leave these harassments behind and move on to a more peaceful existence in some secular job.

4. People can abandon you suddenly.

Paul experienced sudden desertions by some of his colleagues, like Demas. I remember one young man whom I trained. He was about to take up an important position in the ministry that we had been preparing for, well over a year. On the day he was to fill the position, he suddenly informed me that he was leaving the country. I couldn't believe my ears! All of our months of preparation meant nothing to him. He just abandoned ship without notice. These experiences are all part of the ministry. Abandonment also occurred under the ministry of Apostle Paul.

For Demas hath forsaken me…

2 Timothy 4:10

Because people can abandon you at any time, it is burdensome to lead them. But God wants us to help share the burden of His people. God wants us to be involved in His work. God wants us to be shepherds!

5. People are equalizers, disrespectful and impudent.

And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses…Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? HATH HE NOT SPOKEN ALSO BY US?

Numbers 12:1,2

Miriam and Aaron (the closest assistants and closest relatives) were now speaking against Moses. They most probably said things like, "God also speaks by us," and "Are you the only one?" With time, familiarity creeps in and people now consider you as an equal. They tend to think, "We can all do it. What's the big deal? You are no different from us!"

This is unfortunate, but real. People easily take you for granted. They

murmur and complain against you, forgetting all that you have done for them. When they lose their temper, you will find church members speaking to you as they would to a little child.

“**You Remind Me of My Father”**

One church member approached her pastor after Sunday service. The pastor thought she was about to compliment him for the powerful sermon he had just preached.

She started, “Pastor, you know something? I felt I should tell you that you remind me of my father.”

“Oh really?” the pastor responded. She continued, “He was so full of himself and so are you!”

The pastor was taken aback but he had to smile and continue as though he had received a compliment. The church member was telling the pastor exactly what she thought of him.

Now Korah...and Dathan…and Abiram…and On…rose up before Moses...and said...WHEREFORE THEN LIFT YE UP YOURSELVES [Moses and Aaron] above the congregation of the Lord?

Numbers 16:1-3

These rebels apparently thought that Moses felt he was too “big for his own shoes”.

6. People are disobedient and rebellious.

Samuel confronted Saul and asked him why he had not obeyed the Lord fully. One of the difficult things every pastor will have to come to terms with is that in spite of all the good things you preach, many people are still disobedient and continue to live in sin. I used to be amazed at the extent of spiritual rebellion found in the Body of Christ. But that is human nature.

Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord?

1 Samuel 15:19

7. People do not understand and do not respond.

When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and UNDERSTANDETH IT NOT…

Matthew 13:19

Sometimes, people do not understand the Word. Often they do not understand why you have to do fund-raising. Consequently, many do not respond by giving. Many times, I have to explain that they are giving to build a nice church where *they* can have *their* weddings, baby dedications and other ceremonies. Leading people who have all the above characteristics: ungratefulness, disloyalty, etc., is a major task.

One person cannot do it alone. The burden must be shared with others. Sharing the burden is hard work. The people will be angry with you for trying to help them. People need help but when you try to give it to them, they attack you.

Chapter 3 - Distributing the Burden

The principal strategy for distributing the burden is to involve lay men and women in ministry. No church is capable of employing an endless number of people. Every church has a limit to its resources.

It is not possible to pay salaries and rent an unlimited number of houses for the staff of the ministry. Full-time staff are limited in the amount of work that they can do. In my ministry, though I oversee over seven hundred churches and several thousand people at the Lighthouse Cathedral, we don't have a huge workforce of full-time pastors in our office.

We have several hundred pastors and trainee pastors within the ministry. Over ninety-five per cent of them are unpaid lay people. **The use of lay people is the secret to unlimited expansion of the church.**

There are those who think that lay people cannot do much of the ministry work. Do not be deceived - the opposite is true! Lay workers often do more ministry work than full-time staff. The reason is simple. The sheep who you have to minister to are at work from nine to five in the day and are only free in the evenings and at weekends.

Stop Pretending…

Both full-time and part-time pastors have to wait until this period to have access to the sheep. What do full-time pastors do during the day? Many of them pretend to be working in the office behind a desk, but in reality,

they are doing nothing at all!

Pastors instruct their members to have their “quiet times” at home. However, they come to the office to read their Bibles and pray behind their desks! (The pastor should have his devotion time at home just like his members). Sitting behind a desk does not mean that you are working. A pastor is neither a banker nor an accountant. He is a shepherd. Shepherds must be in the fields moving amongst the sheep and ministering to them.

Let the pastors do pastoral work, and let the secular people do their work. Lay people can join the pastors to share the burden of the people. Let your lay people know that they are called to share the burden of ministry with you. They will share the burden on earth and they will share the burden of accounting for the sheep in Heaven. What is the burden on earth? It is the burden of praying, visiting, counselling and interacting with the sheep. What is the burden in Heaven? It is the burden of answering for each and every soul that God gave to you.

The burden of leading sheep cannot be borne by one person or just a few people who supposedly have a “call”. The burden of accounting for hundreds of different people cannot be borne by one person. When I stand before the judgement seat and God asks me about some souls in Canada, I intend to mention the name of the pastor there and ask the Lord to inquire from him. When the Lord asks me about some souls in Navrongo, in the north of Ghana, I will immediately tell the Lord, “Please ask my dear pastor who is in charge of that branch.” It is impossible for one person to answer for such a large burden of souls.

…**for they watch for your souls, AS THEY THAT MUST GIVE ACCOUNT, that they may do it with joy…**

Hebrews 13:17

Every pastor will have a lot to answer for when he stands before the Lord in Heaven. Your burden is to lead all your sheep to Heaven. Make sure you lose none of them. Every true pastor’s motto should be, “Of all that you have given me, I have lost none!” (John 6:39, John 17:12; and John 18:9)

Moses was breaking down under the burden of leading the entire flock. God saw this and decided to take of the “spirit” that was on Moses and

put it on the seventy leaders “to bear the burden” with him.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me SEVENTY MEN of the elders of Israel…THAT THEY MAY STAND [work] THERE WITH THEE.

Numbers 11:16

Involving students, workers, and professionals helps to distribute the burden to all saints in the church.

The Lord wants us to be fruitful no matter what we do in this life. In the universities, I have established Lighthouse churches and have entrusted the preaching and pastoring responsibilities to a few students. I am very proud of these student ministers because of the great job that they have done on their respective campuses. I don’t have to rush to any of the university every Sunday morning to minister the Word. Ordinary saints should please join in and work together.

The saints must be perfected (prepared, trained) to do the work of the ministry. Ordinary saints can do the work.

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Ephesians 4:12

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