

Hindering Younger Workers

by Zac Poonen

Self-centred Christian leaders hinder the work of God by making themselves a necessity to others and refusing to train successors, while leaders like Barnabas demonstrate a willingness to step back and let others take the lead.

Scripture: Acts 13:2, 2 Timothy 2:2

Topics: "Humility", "Leadership"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the detrimental effects of self-centered Christian leadership, which hinders the development of younger leaders and undermines God's work. He highlights that no one is indispensable in the Church, and true leadership involves training successors rather than clinging to power. Poonen draws parallels from biblical examples, such as Cain's jealousy of Abel and Saul's envy of David, contrasting them with Barnabas, who selflessly supported Paul's ministry. The sermon calls for humility and the willingness to step back for the sake of God's mission, urging leaders to recognize their role in empowering others.

Transcript

A self-centred Christian leader hinders others below him from becoming leaders, let his own position be threatened. And so he ministers in such a way as to make himself a necessity to those to whom he ministers. This is utterly contrary to God's will. Oswald Chambers once said that anyone who made himself a necessity to some other soul had got out of God's order. God alone is the only absolute necessity to any human soul. May none of us ever try to take that place.

No one is indispensable in Christ's Church. God's work can easily carry on without us. In fact, it can carry on much better without the help of those conceited folk who consider themselves indispensable! We must recognise this fact constantly. And so, we must be willing to withdraw into the background anytime God calls us to. But the self-centred Christian worker will never accept that. He will want to hold on to his position for as long as possible. Many such "Christian leaders" are rotting away on their "thrones" today, hindering the work of God. They do not know what it is to face graciously into the background and let someone else take their place.

You've probably heard the saying that success without a successor is a failure. Jesus recognised this and trained people to carry on His work. In 3 1/2 years He had trained people to take over the leadership. Paul recognised the necessity of training other people to carry on the work. In 2 Timothy 2:2, he says, "Now Timothy, what I have committed to you. I want you to pass on to other people who will in turn be able to

train others (right on upto the fourth generation)" (Paraphrase). What Paul was saying in effect was, "You must ensure that you commit this treasure to others. Don't ever hinder people younger than you, from coming up." The people in the business world recognise this principle too. But many Christian leaders do not. Truly, "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

It is indeed nothing but self-centredness that makes a man jealous of someone younger doing things better than he. Cain was jealous of the fact that Abel had been accepted by God and that he himself had been rejected. If Abel had been older than he, that might have been tolerable. But it was the awful fact that his younger brother was better than he that made him furious enough to slay Abel.

We see the same in the case of Joseph and his brothers. Joseph received Divine revelations, and that made all his ten elder brothers green with jealousy and they tried to do away with him.

King Saul was jealous of young David, because the women sang, "Saul has slain thousands while David has slain ten thousands." From that day he determined to kill him. Man's history - and alas, the history of the Christian Church too - is filled with the same story over and over again.

On the other hand, what a refreshing contrast it is to look at a man like Barnabas in the New Testament. He was a senior worker who took the newly-converted Paul of Tarsus under his wing, when no one else would accept Paul. Barnabas brought him to the church in Antioch and encouraged him. In Acts chapter 13, we read that Barnabas and Paul went out together on a missionary journey. And when Barnabas saw that God was calling this junior worker, Paul, to a larger ministry than his own, he willingly stepped back and graciously faded into the background. And the phrase, "Barnabas and Paul" changes almost unnoticed to "Paul and Barnabas" in the book of Acts. The Christian Church suffers today, because there are few like Barnabas who know what it is to step back and let another be honoured. We are willing to step back in matters of no importance. When passing through a door, for example, we don't mind stepping back and permitting another to go through first. But in the realms that matter - such as position and leadership in the Christian Church - we are not so ready to step back. Our self-life is so deceitful. We can have a false humility in things that don't count. But it is in important matters that we see ourselves as we really are.

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