

MOBILIZE **2020 PHASE 2**

THE COST OF LEADERSHIP

Introduction

It's wonderful to be with you now! Last week, we were looking at the subject of leadership and discernment and one of the things that came up in one of the breakout rooms, was a discussion and Andrew Cunningham got back to me and asked whether I would just quickly refer back to something they were talking about and no doubt next Tuesday, you can start to talk about all kinds of things that have come up during this series of teaching and I really encourage you to do that and if there are issues that are raised via Scott or myself I'd still be happy to be part of some kind of chat around that as well which will be excellent. The thing that Andrew raised with me, had to do with my final point, last week which was about pressure and if you remember, I was already under pressure and so, I finished the topic very quickly.

The referral back to pressure had particularly to do with people - and people causing us pressure, and it's obviously a big subject but I think that discerning how to handle people that cause you pressure is actually quite a gift, it's quite an important issue because if you hadn't noticed people can be very, very draining.

A guy called Gordon McDonald actually wrote in one of his books a whole chapter on what he called very draining people, VDP, and to not discern whether people are going to really drain you or spend an awful lot of time and energy can actually mean you as a leader can end up really spending hours with people, whereby you don't get anywhere, which is why I emphasized that verse last week from **1 Thessalonians 5v14** about where Paul says admonish the idle, encourage the faint hearted and help the weak. He's trying to show us that the people around our lives, the people that we're caring for as leaders are often people who we do need to discern where they're coming from.

So my answer to Andrew and his group, and therefore to everybody is just to become discerning in terms of what people want from us. We can't be everything to everybody and sometimes leaders can do that and I think I have said already in this series that the best pastor in the world isn't someone who runs around spending hours with everybody pastoring them, but rather who discerns where he is really needed and then raises up a whole army of people who can pastor the flock and share out the load as it were. So I would just say this, in my experience I've found that if people are pressurizing you, they're demanding something of you, you need to discern the very root of where they're coming from. So for example, there are people that you care for, who are desperately wanting to follow Jesus, and are very teachable and faithful and want to learn, these are the people that I will prioritize and I would want to hang out with them the most, because I believe that by hanging out with them, you are being most productive and you're seeing most of the fruits being borne out in their lives.

There's another group of people who have problems and genuine difficulties that can appear quite overwhelming and when you start speaking to them, you kind of think, "oh dear this is going to take up an awful lot of my time and



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energy.” But if they are people who desperately want to be freed from their problems they desperately want to grow, they want to change then although they might be quite draining, they're people worth hanging out with because they will change and you will see that change.

There's another group of people who have lots of problems and they have no intention of wanting to get out of their problems at all. In fact, they would like to spend hours and hours and hours of your time and actually have no intention of changing they just want to spend hours of your time. So I hope this helps Andrew and the breakout group to realise that we do need to be discerning of what these kind of people are that are demanding time from us and learning to say no is as important as saying yes, because if you don't say no to people then you're going to have them at your door morning, afternoon and night and it will exhaust you. And contrary to what a lot of people think, I think Jesus said no, to a lot of people. Everybody thinks, well, Jesus will just say yes to everybody but when you read the Gospels, often the disciples were all for hanging out for the next day and the next day, the next day with the same people and Jesus just said, “No, we're going to the next village, we're going to the next city.” You know, these people have had their chance and a prophet is not received in his own homeland. All these things are when Jesus had courage to say no, because he realised that otherwise life will become quite overwhelming.

So I want to encourage you to be discerning, not only to find out where pressure is coming from, but also with the dealing of people, that's a little resume of last week.

THE COST OF LEADERSHIP

Today's topic is the cost of leadership. There is a cost isn't there to following Jesus, for example, we **no longer live for ourselves** and if we no longer live for ourselves, but for him, that can be quite costly because things can be demanded of us just because we are his disciples and his followers.

Also it can be costly to follow Jesus and just being in his pathway because that means we'll be **out of step with other people** and there will be a real cost of being out of step with others because we're in step with Him. There can be a cost of following Jesus because we can be **persecuted** and persecution is right now rife across the world with certain followers of Jesus simply because they call themselves Jesus followers.

There's also a cost because of what we looked at the other week - **our calling**. Sometimes the calling of God upon us brings us into situations where we have to suffer loss and we can suffer literally and there's a cost involved in the calling of God upon our lives. There's a cost that comes to us as Christians because we're in a spiritual warfare. So there are times when we just get hit by fire. Paul talks about the **fiery darts of the enemy**, that the devil is the accuser of the brethren and sometimes it can be very costly because we get wounded from time to time, we have scars because we're involved in a **spiritual warfare**. Not only is there all those kinds of avenues of cost and suffering and sacrifice but also there's the cost of being a leader. So, let's describe some of the costs that are involved sometimes in being called into leadership.



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Well, obviously, there's **RESPONSIBILITY**. And I think often that can be very costly. There have been times in my life where I thought, I don't know if I want to be a leader anymore because I have to carry responsibility, that comes with the job. Like many jobs, if you're a leader in God's kingdom, there will be the cost of taking responsibility.

Obviously, as a leader, there's the cost of **BEING MISUNDERSTOOD**. And this can be very, very painful. So not only is there responsibility, but there's always the problem of being misunderstood. If any of you have been in leadership for any amount of time, you will most likely have been misunderstood. I won't ask, but if I said, let's have a show of hands for anybody here tonight, who's being misunderstood just simply because you're involved in leadership, I think most hands would probably go up.

Sometimes the cost of leadership has to do with **NOT BEING POPULAR**. Sometimes you have to make decisions that are not popular with people but if you know you're making the right ones, they need to be made and that also brings with it the responsibility of decision making.

So there's a lot of cost involved in being in leadership, and this is going to sound very strange, but sometimes the cost of leadership is just literally what the word means **LEAD**. We live in a world where some churches have a lack of leadership. And sometimes it's not because there are people who are called leaders, but it's because leaders just don't lead. They're actually following the people rather than leading them. If you take a battle scene like the First World War when soldiers were in the trenches, and there was a whistle blown, who would be the first one up and over the top? Well, it should have been the ones who were the leaders.

I think also there's a cost in leadership in just not giving up when things get tough, when people leave, when there are disappointments. Sometimes when God even seems far away and maybe we feel low, the cost of leadership is you **DON'T GIVE UP, YOU DON'T JUST GIVE IN**. We have hinted at this before and we're hinting again, I think Paul was speaking to Timothy as a man who has the tendency maybe to be reluctant as a leader and maybe wants to give up. There is a sacrifice involved in leading. Sometimes people don't see what you do. Sometimes there's a time commitment that people are not even aware of that you do because you're a leader and you don't make a song and dance about it, you just carry on.

I spoke to a pastor last week, who was complaining about the lack of affirmation that his team give him in any given week, and we chatted around it and I said to him, "You know what, at the end of the day, that's the cost of being a leader. And the fact that people don't bring you affirmation is something you just have to live with. I guess if you were affirmed by God, that makes up for everything about the lack of affirmation from others." So leadership, this is the topic this week, there is a cost to leadership.

And I will just throw this one in because we're going to look at some verses in a moment from Paul to Timothy and that is the subject of suffering. All Christians suffer. I guess as leaders we have the responsibility of being an example. When Christians suffer we need to be an example of how to handle suffering. It does not mean that we suffer because we are leaders, okay? But when we do, we need to be aware that people are looking to us, and we



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need to set them an example and that can be costly. So I hope you're realising why it's been important for you and me to listen to the last six or seven weeks, because one of the ways you handle the cost of leadership is guess what:

- **Is to know that you are called,**
- **It's to know that you're a leader that lives in the Word.**
- **You're a leader who lives by the Spirit**
- **You're a leader who sets an example**
- **You're a leader who makes disciples and**
- **You're a leader who has discernment.**

Some of you are wishing that you had been listening a little bit more than you have been as we approach this subject tonight, so there's a bit of a bank built up. That's why I'm doing this at the end and not at the beginning of our series.

So let's look at Paul's letters to Timothy, shall we, just for a few moments. What you discover in 1 and 2 Timothy is the language of warfare, descriptions of cost and suffering, you hear words about fighting, and words about injury.

Let's look at a few of these verses.

1 Timothy 1v18

¹⁸ This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,

1 Timothy 4v10

¹⁰ For to this end we toil and strive,^u because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

So there's a warfare that needs to be waged and there's an invitation to toil and to strive. It has that kind of terminology, if you like, that there's a cost, toiling and striving is costly.

1 Timothy 6v11

¹¹ But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith.

It's an interesting phrase that Paul uses in Timothy, about fighting the good fight of faith. In other words, there's faith to be fought for there's a fight that's a very good fight.



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Over into the next epistle, we find in 2 Timothy 1v8:

⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,

It's almost assumed that if you are involved in the Gospel, you will suffer. He says "sharing in the suffering of the gospel" without a comma, it's just all one phrase, as if all followers of Jesus will have to suffer something in order to proclaim the gospel in that particular way. This is also implied in verse 12 of 2 Timothy 1 where Paul writes, "which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me."

But Paul says because of the gospel, because of what we have, because of what has been entrusted to us, we will suffer. It's just mentioned as a phrase, in this context, it's going to happen. It's not if but rather when.

2 Timothy 2v3-9

And this is the language that Paul is using to do with cost, suffering and endurance.

³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. ⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. ⁷ Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. ⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!

You see, the amount of times that Paul refers to the calling of God upon our lives, is going to involve fighting, suffering, endurance training, and then even at the end, he says about the gospel for which I am suffering.

So we're getting the picture here, the kind of language that's being used throughout and a final verse in this context is:

2 Timothy 2v10

Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Whatever comes, I don't give up. I persist, and I endure!

Final texts from this section.



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2 Timothy 4v5-7

⁵ *As for you (Timothy), always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry.* ⁶ *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.* ⁷ *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

Paul uses a strange phrase in verse six, “*For I am already being poured out as a drink offering. And the time of my departure has come.*” In other words, I’ve given everything I’ve got, I’m still suffering for the sake of the gospel. In verse seven, a well known verse, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*” What an amazing statement! It’s almost like the final part of Paul’s passion is saying, “this is coming to an end, I’ve done it, I’ve fought, I’ve got through to the very end.”

So there is a theology of suffering, which I know that you’re all aware of but it’s good to underline it again. It’s there, it’s clearly biblical. Paul would go on to say any gospel of doctrine devoid of suffering cannot be supported by the word of God.



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WHY DO CHRISTIANS SUFFER?

There are a few answers.

1. Firstly, because **WE LIVE IN A FALLEN WORLD.**

We live in a fallen world, people are suffering all around us, and we're in this world. We're in it, We're not all of it, but we're in it and the consequences of living in this world is that all people suffer and that includes children of God. Of course, the big difference between us and the world is not that we no longer suffer because we're Christians, but we have resources in God in the midst of our suffering. That's the big difference. That's what marks us out from those around us who are suffering. And it's a completely different ballgame when you are a Christian, but we do suffer because we live in this fallen world.

2. The next reason that we suffer is because as we are in this world and **WE BECOME AN EXAMPLE TO THE WORLD OF HOW TO SUFFER.**

So we suffer because we're in a fallen world. But secondly, we suffer simply because God has kept us here to be an example to this world.

2 Corinthians 1 V 3-7

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. ⁶ If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷ Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

So one of the reasons that Christians suffer is because the world needs to see examples how to cope with suffering in this world, and also **SO THAT WE CAN BRING COMFORT TO THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING.** There are many verses to cut to confirm this but we have not got time to go into them tonight.

3. The third reason that Christians suffer is because **WE ARE IN A SPIRITUAL BATTLE** and we're called as we saw the other week, not to be ignorant of the schemes of the enemy, but to understand that there are fiery darts that cause pain and suffering. We read in Ephesians 6, concerning this warfare, "we fight not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the forces of evil in the heavenly realms." This indicates to us that there is sometimes suffering that's experienced because of this warfare that we're in, and as people have said again, and again and again,



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spiritual warfare is not like a battle, it **IS** a battle. And because it's a battle, the terminology that's used is about wrestling, and striving, and that's about combat and sometimes you get pushed back and then you come forward and you get pushed back, and you come forward again.

In Revelation 12 V 10, Satan is called “the accuser of the brethren, who accuses them day and night before God.”

These are all elements to do with the cost and suffering of being a child of God involved in spiritual warfare.

In **1 Peter 5v 8-10**

⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

It says he's ‘like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour’ and use words like ‘resist’, and ‘rebuke and stand firm’. And these are all things that Christians should do. And if you don't, then you can be affected by the enemy. So Paul does not hold back on a theology of suffering, nor does he hold back on explaining how he suffers in his own life as well.

If you read two Corinthians 11, and don't read this before you go to bed, read it sometime in the morning. Two Corinthians 11 is a catalogue of Paul's testimony of deep suffering. It's painful to read it. But it's sending a message. He says, “I don't just have a theology of suffering. I've actually experienced it in my life.”

If you're someone today, and you really want to get to grips with this subject, which we're passing over quite quickly, I would recommend a book by Tim Keller, entitled, Walking with God through Pain and Suffering. It's an absolutely outstanding book, and it's a good book to read during Coronavirus. It's quite a read, it's quite a difficult read. The first part is all the theology of suffering and why God allows it. The second part, which is absolutely outstanding, is how we as Christians and leaders, are meant to live through the suffering that may come our way.

I'd like to finish tonight with three helps to the cost of leadership. You've understood that all these things we've been looking at tonight, the pain, the suffering, enduring the fighting of the fight, as I said, right from the beginning is something all Christians go through. But as leaders we're called to also go through them and then set an example to others, which is why I'm talking about the cost of leadership particularly and these are three helps for handling the cost of leadership.



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HELPS FOR HANDLING THE COST OF LEADERSHIP

1. Embrace the cost

It is part of leadership, we have died to self we've been crucified with Christ, we are not our own anymore, we belong to Him. And we need to embrace it rather than run away from it because it's part of our calling. We need to be in the Gospel and the kingdom and into the purposes of God 100% - so therefore suffering and pain is going to come. If I was preaching this word to you at the age of 25 it would have been very theoretical but I'm preaching it to you at the age of 65, and when you've lived life, you realise that this is not strange. This is all part of living life in this world.

2. Keep everything in right perspective

This second point I want to make about handling the cost of leadership is very important. It is to keep everything in perspective, it's to keep the cost of leadership in right perspective.

Hebrews 12 v 4

⁴ In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

You know, Hebrews chapter 12, is very well known- that passage of scripture, "since we are surrounded by such a crowd of witnesses," etc. We often don't get to verse four, most preachers preach on verses 1 to 3. Here's why. Hebrews 12v4 says "and in your struggle against sin, you have not resisted to the point of shedding blood." No wonder people miss that out! With all the costs and all the overcoming of sin, it's not been that bad. You haven't shed blood for it! Jesus shed blood in terms of dealing with sin for our sake. And I just find verses like that get all my troubles and my struggles into a good perspective.

Also, Hebrews 12v11, says this.

¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

I think he's trying to say "get this in perspective" and later it will "yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

Therefore, lift your drooping hands, strengthen your weak knees, make straight paths for your feet so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. It can seem painful while you're



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going through a time of suffering or discipline but Paul says, “Look, in the end it yields good fruit. This is not of our own doing, but it's in the will and purpose of God. It's not to be shied away from - it's to be embraced as children of God. And the way you handle it is to get it into the right perspective.”

And if I haven't convinced you, let me just share this wonderful passage:

2 Corinthians, 4 v16-17

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self^d is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,

You know when you're going through something it doesn't seem like a momentary light affliction. It feels like it's going on forever, but we need to get it in perspective compared to the eternal weight of glory that we're going to experience. Christians who suffer in this world have found this a tremendous comfort to get the suffering in a right perspective, whatever cost I bear in life and as a leader, it's all worth it for the glory of Jesus and because it's passing it is not going to go on forever.

3. Always check out your motives

And my third and final help for handling the cost of leadership - and I close with this tonight - is to always check out your motives.

So it's to **embrace the coming of the cost**, it's to **see the cost in the right perspective** and finally, it's to **check out our motives**.

We're not wearing a badge of sacrifice. We're not going around saying to people look how much I've endured. It's not about us. It's about being overwhelmed by the mercy of God. It's interesting, final verse for us is

Romans 12 v 1.

And some translations don't quite get this right. But the translation I love is this:

Brothers, I urge you, in view of God's mercy, present your bodies as a living sacrifice.

Now, if you get that verse round the wrong way, it's all about cost. My body is a living sacrifice. But Paul doesn't say that he says, “In view of God's mercy, present your body as a living sacrifice.”

Why do any of us sacrifice anything?



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Why do any of us count the cost of endurance or persecution or going through things we wouldn't normally want to go through?

Here's the answer. **Because of our motive!**

It's because we're so overwhelmed by the mercy and the grace of God. That everything that comes our way, however sacrificial it is, doesn't feel like a sacrifice, because it's just so wonderful. I can go through these things because day by day, I'm reminded of the amazing sacrifice of Jesus, and the wonderful grace and mercy that's been poured out upon my life, which is why Christians, who I look and marvel at, who seem to suffer so much, their testimonies are, "it was no sacrifice too great. Because I was a follower of Jesus and overwhelmed by his love!"

And what a wonderful note to finish on as a final part of session 7, the last in this series - to remind ourselves that our intimacy with Jesus, our daily enjoyment of Him, being overwhelmed by the love and grace of God and never becoming over familiar with God's love, this is what sustains you and me through times of cost, and sacrifice, to drink deeply of the love of Jesus.

And the greatest thing I can leave you with at the end of the session and all these sessions is to remind ourselves of the priority of our devotional life because if there is a cost, and there is a sacrifice, it's that moment of devotion on a daily basis, that will carry us through whatever happens, because we continually are overwhelmed by the revelation of "Who am I, that I should be even given this privilege to count the cost of leadership for all that you've done?" Amen!

Well, that's the last word for me after several weeks, you'll be pleased to see the back of me, I think you'll be pleased to stop listening to my voice for a while. And it's been an absolute joy and privilege to have these Tuesday nights with all of you. It's been one of the highlights of these last few months for me personally. So I'm grateful for Scott for bullying me into doing this. And I'm really glad that I did. And whatever we're going to do next week I'm with you!



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TUESDAY 27th OCTOBER 2020

Breakout groups discussion questions

Week 7: THE COST OF LEADERSHIP

Feedback

Please share 3 things that have really encouraged, or challenged you over these last 6 Tuesdays?

Discussion questions – week 7

1. Do you agree that leadership carries a sense of cost with it?
What do think this could look like for you either now or in the future?
2. What are your thoughts about Paul's use of military language (Waging war, fighting the fight, wrestling etc)?
Do we consciously apply this language to our daily lives?
3. Discuss James 1 : 2-4
***"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,
³because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.
⁴Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."***
Do you run from trials or embrace them as God's way of preparing you for the cost of leadership?
4. Do you agree that the best way of facing cost or sacrifice is to be overwhelmed by God's grace in your life?

PRAY for one another, for those in your group who are currently bearing the cost of leadership, those who are wounded and those who are fearful of the costs involved with leadership. Pray for us all to have an overwhelming awareness of God's grace in our daily lives.



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