

ALIGN 2015 – Migori, Kenya
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Text: Luke 10:38-42

Theme: Developing Mature Leaders in the End Times

Introduction: The story in the text is about three siblings who lived in Bethany village. They genuinely loved and cared for one another. They also loved the Lord Jesus Christ. Martha was the eldest of the three.

One day, our Lord Jesus and His team visited the village. Martha was very concerned about their refreshment: Her prime concern was to give them something to eat and drink. Hospitality was paramount in the culture of the Jews at that time. Naturally, she expected her younger sister, Mary, to have had a sense of responsibility and joined her in the kitchen. However, it did not occur the way Martha, the elder sister, had expected.

The alternative was petitioned the chief guest, the Lord Jesus Christ for intervention, instead she got a mild rebuke: The Lord had commended her younger sister for taking a better priority.

The Lord has been speaking to me personally on this Scripture about what is my ministry priority. This Scripture came at a time when my morale was the lowest ebb: I was involved in a nasty road accident; a roll over that could have claimed my life. Plus, I had a host of challenges, coming one after the other; financial challenges, persecution, etc., have been a common phenomenon in my life during the past 5 years. At one point I thought my experience was like that of Elijah when he asked for death after a successful contest with prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel. Just like Elijah, I believed I had done many good things for the Lord.

That Saturday morning, the day of the accident, I had preached on FM Radio Station, rushed to Soroti (4 hours from Jinja where we live) and had a packed Sunday program.

After the accident and hospital-stay, I cancelled all ministry appointments for 50 days, preferring rather to wait upon God. The Story of Martha and Mary came clearly to me. Yes, I work hard, and no one can complain about my slackness in work. But something was more important. I needed to hear and do just precisely what the Lord wants me - not everything else. Martha was doing a good job, but she needed the fellowship with the Lord more. Mary was correct in her priority. Leaders, more or less, are victims of Martha's scenario.

Developing mature leadership can only come by help of the Holy Spirit, not the works of man's decision and will. The Holy Spirit must be given opportunity to create changes in our lives. Education is excellent, but cannot accomplish the work of the Holy Spirit. We need more time with the Holy Spirit for Him to bear the fruits.

Below is structure of my contribution based on the 2015 ALIGN Conference

Theme:

- (i) The Characteristics of the End Times
- (ii) Definition of a Mature Leader
- (iii) Get to that Maturity

PART 1

A. Characteristics of the End Times (2 Timothy 3:1-9): The End Time is characterized by disorder, rebellion and faithlessness. Corruption and sensuality are part and parcel of the end times. This is the time that we live in now. There are three features that have accelerated the arrival of perilous times described by apostle Paul above:

(a) Haste/ Hurry: We live in time of instant results. People are driven by deadlines and are measured and valued according to the quantity of their outputs. This has not only compromised the quality of products and services, but has resulted in shallowness and superficiality in relationships and partnerships. The product may appear big and fantastic, yet in reality is lacking the eternal value. Service to God has not been spared this problem, whether in the ministry of the Word, or social concern. What we do will be tested, and if it is found wanting it will all go up into smoke; destroyed by fire.

(1Corinthians 3:12-15).

Building work with eternal quality does not need haste, and has to be done in Divine partnership. Many people are wasting time building lofty empires, which will remain in the fire as straw does. Analogy of Organic Agro Products versus Natural Agro products apply. Exotic chicken may be bulky, but tasteless compared the local chicken.

(b) Crowds: People are naturally taken up by crowds. Measuring success based on the masses is a faulty judgment. God's standard is quite high, and the Bible clearly tells us that few can attain it. (Mathew 7:14,21 Mathew 22:14). Accommodating crowds may be bending down the standard of God. In the time of Jesus Christ many people followed Him for the wrong reasons. They wanted to eat and to get healed. These were not sinful, but were of temporary value.

(c) Noise: Jesus told the Samaritan woman that a time is coming when people will worship the true God in the Spirit. Jesus meant that the Spirit of God connects with the Spirit of man in deep fellowship. That can happen in an atmosphere of solitude. People who have connected with God and done

exploits are associated with solitude. The noise that people crave for is an attempt to fill the emptiness in their souls, and crushes the spirit of contemplation and spiritual reflections. The emptiness and glaring gaps in people's lives, if not filled by God, lead to loneliness. However, people have tried to fill their emptiness by pleasure, power, and wealth. These not only drive man to bottomless depth of emptiness, but complicates man's attitudes, responses and relationships described by apostle Paul (2 Timothy 3:1ff)

PART 2

(B) Who is the Mature Church Leader? Determining a mature church leader is very complex, because this is an issue of the heart visible only to God **(1Samuel 16:7)**. However, the Bible clearly tells to "know them by their fruits." It should be clearly noted that it is not gifts, talents, or by natural endowments that determine maturity. It is by the ability to preserve unity and the manifestation of fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:21-23). We have 9 fruits enumerated in Scripture which I would resolve into three dimensions of maturity.

(I) Inward Freedom (Joy, Peace and Love): A mature leader is not affected by the external environment, nor suffers from mood or attitude swings due to occurrences in life. He, or she, is anchored in the Lord, fully dependent upon Him for both trivial and big issues. A concrete relationship between that leader and the Lord has developed as a result of long time intimacy through consistent fellowship. It is a transformation (a fundamental change) developed by the Grace of God, through the Holy Spirit, over a long period of time. Concerns about material possessions, reputation, popularity, power no longer count for him or her. Squealing for power and leadership in the church, amassing wealth, and any form of show offs is the marks of immaturity. He or she has been trained and tested through both hardships and good times and found not wanting.

(ii) Divinely Motivated Service (Faithfulness, Kindness and Goodness):

Any service rendered unto God is directed by the Holy Spirit. It is never an external service aimed at pleasing man for a temporal reward. Divine compassion is the underlining factor in any service. Strife, competitions, jealousies and other fleshly responses are signs of immaturity. Any beneficiary of the service rendered by a mature leader comes into contact with God through the witnessing action of the service provider.

(iii) Relationship Guided (Gentle, Self-control and Patience): A mature leader is relationship oriented: He, or she, is more concerned about relationship than tasks. He, or she, builds people while the immature builds on work. God is more interested in fellowshiping with us than what we do for Him. In effect we do not work for God, but work with God. Man is the greatest interest to God. Therefore, building man is important because only one soul saved brings celebration in Heaven. Preservation of unity at any cost is a major factor in maturity. Human relationships are crucial in determining their relationship with God **(John 4:20)**.

PART 3

(C) How do we arrive at God's Desired Maturity? Maturity is not a result of man's decision of will or power; it is the progressive work of God's Grace through the Holy Spirit and the cooperation of man. Man's response in four "A" is much needed to arrive at maturity.

First A

ALTAR: An altar was a meeting place with God. Each time a man of God had an encounter with God, an altar was constructed there. In a busy and competitive world, we need to cultivate discipline and establish a regular meeting place with God. The Lord Jesus regularly retreated to the mountain side to pray. He had established an altar. Daniel had an altar which he visited three times a day.

Second A

APPOINTMENT: After establishing an altar, then we schedule a time where we make an appointment with the Lord. It has to be a time without any distractions. It has to be a time in which one is fresh and alert. It varies from person to person and the location of your altar. This implies some discipline and the ability to say no to things otherwise considered important. Adam and Eve had their appointments in the evening.

Third A

APPROACH: God is Holy, Sovereign, a source of power, the Creator, etc. He must be approached within that context; with respect, honor and worship. What we do in the third “A” determines the quality of fellowship and response of the Holy Father. He has invited us to ask (pray) for whatever we want despite the fact that He knows all our needs. Prayer is complex, with a high likelihood of praying amiss. The disciples, aware of this possibility of fruitless prayers decided to ask the Lord to teach them to pray. Today, this not necessary because the Holy Spirit is already in you, to help you pray appropriately. (**Romans 8:26-27**). No one prays effectively without the Holy Spirit. Many of fruitless prayers are a result of bypassing or ignoring the Holy Spirit. Also one needs to engage the entire Godhead in prayer for effective fellowship. Below is a simple prayer structure that has worked for me and other people I know

Step one: Welcome the Holy Spirit and let Him lead the entire session of prayer. He is God, and therefore He deserves our worship and adoration too.

Step two: Call upon the Lord Jesus Christ and always acknowledge, with thanks, what has accomplished for you in the cross. Ask Him to forgive your sins both known and unknown, because He is now on the right hand side as an intercessor. Surrender areas in your life that you see as have weakness and welcome the grace of God in them

Step Three: Go to the Father in humility and in the spirit of adoration and reverence. Thank Him for the gift of salvation and being a member of His family. Feel free to make requests - as many as you want. Plead with him as with a father, with reverence, over situations in your life.

Step Four: Read your Bible attentively.

Fourth A

ANSWER: No communication is complete without a dialogue. Listen to what He has to say either directly into your spirit, through a spontaneous flow of thoughts, an inward small still voice, or rhema (Scripture made alive). If possible keep a journal of what the Lord says. Do not get discouraged when you do not hear anything. I am not suggesting that each time we pray He has to speak back audibly. We know God does not operate in realm of man, so we approach Him by faith knowing that He loves us in Christ Jesus who has made us His sons and daughters, Amen!

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