

Leadership Pain

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Leadership Pain by Samuel R. Chand is about pain in leadership and the encounters of pain throughout one's tenure as a leader. However, in order to discuss leadership pain, we must first understand what leadership is. There are many definitions of leadership. According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, leadership is the office or position of a leader: capacity to lead. According to a statement on Forbes.com, leadership is a process of social influence which maximizes the efforts of others, toward the achievement of a goal. Leadership is the ability to obtain followers, influence (Maxwell, 1993). In my opinion, leadership is fundamentally necessary. There needs to be direction and order if a goal is to be accomplished and I believe that comes about with strong leadership, someone with the vision that has gone a little further in that area and can show the way.

Once you are involved in leadership, pushing the vision and helping to create change, pain is inevitable. What Chand describes as leadership pain is brought on by many causes. As leaders, we are conditioned to carry the load. Leaders are seen as the people who have it all together because we constantly mask the pain that is brought on by such a heavy task. Leaders also tend to be perfectionist with unrealistic expectations, (Chand, 2015). Being not only a leader but a perfectionist too causes unnecessary burdens. Perfectionism wrecks us and poisons our hearts, (Chand, 2015). The standards can be set so high that there is no freedom and it causes internal pain. Leaders' afflictions come when things do not go their way. Leaders often feel like a failure when people let them down, reject them or if others oppose their ideas. Leaders also empathize with others when others are in pain. Leaders are not immune to pain and difficulty. Leaders are human too.

The source of pain may be different for each leader but one thing is certain, "Pain is meant to wake us up", Jim Morrison, *Nobody Gets Out of Here Alive*. We need to make friends

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with our pain, (Chand, 2015). The example that Chand uses regarding the athletes and how they play through their pain, to me, speaks to their perspective of the pain. I imagine they count the cost to see which will yield more of a profit: pushing through the pain or giving up. Athletes play while they are hurting because they understand that is the price they must pay to stay on the team, (Chand, 2015). Making friends with our pain means no longer letting our pain stop us, define us, or keep us off the team, but instead, we must allow our pain to push us to grow to develop to our full potential and purpose. We must embrace pain and burn it as fuel for our journey, Kenji Miyazawa. Like a patient in surgery, you have to be willing to feel worse before you can feel better, (Chand, 2015). To be able to silence the pain and focus on the goal, a leader must make a mental shift to push through the pain.

How a leader responds to pain is very important. They try to cope with intense pain in different ways, (Chand, 2015). The response can propel him or derail him. In order to propel him to the next level, the leader must become self-aware that he is in pain. Self-awareness is when pain brings you back to reality and you realize that you are not exempt from pain because you are a leader. Self-awareness causes you to no longer focus on yourself but now you are able to identify with others when they are going through tough times. Your senses are heightened and more in tune with reality and the reality is, everyone goes through pain at one point or another. When a leader acknowledges pain, be it past or present, it opens the door for healing and restoration. He must allow the pain to teach him and develop him. He must acknowledge that, even as a leader, he is not immune or exempt from pain. Being self-aware will challenge the leader to act.

The opposite of self-awareness is being blinded by pain, paralyzed as Chand put it. Pain imposes limits. Being blinded by pain is not being able to see past it. Being blinded by pain is

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derailing and exhausting. It is being stuck where you are. Being blinded by the pain makes you feel like you cannot make it. Being blinded makes you feel like a failure. It affects your self-esteem. It is losing focus of the vision. Living in the past and holding on to the pain, stunts your growth and your progress. It is draining, both mentally and physically, (Chand, 2015). It also hinders and blocks those around you. People look to you to see how you respond to pain and if, as a leader, you can't progress, the people you lead will not be able to progress.

When a leader is in pain, his focus is no longer on himself but his attention turns to seek how to stop the pain. Some people may be angry or in denial, (Chand, 2015). Some may develop resentment or self-pity. Some may even turn to drugs or other inappropriate activities and behaviors. They want to null the pain so they don't feel it. They tend to withdraw. As Chand puts it, "When numbed leaders flatline their feelings, they try to go through all the motions, but their hearts are far, far away". If they are successful in suppressing the pain, it causes anxiety, resentment, depression, and tension, (Chand, 2015), which only creates more pain. The more you avoid the pain, the more it grows.

One pain a leader tries to avoid is the past. To a large extent, leaders have been shaped by past experiences, (Chand, 2015). Whether they come from a stable, loving, supportive family or grew up alone, leaders are products of their past. Past experiences shape you. Although we are constantly growing and developing, most of what we experience that makes us who we are, happens during our formative years. According to an article titled "What are the formative years", "When something goes wrong during the formative years, that has an effect on how the person grows and develops later during adolescence and adult life. Most time lines consider the first five years the formative years, and during this time social skills and basic motor functions are learned and practiced. Learning to walk, talk and use the bathroom are some key examples of

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these formative skills. In addition, personality is greatly impacted by these years. Many basic likes and dislikes, such as arts and sports, have their beginnings in this period. Emotional development also starts in the formative years. It is important to focus on encouraging a child's intellectual and thinking abilities during these years, as it can have a significant impact on them later in life. It is difficult to make up for a lack of this encouragement at an older age because by the end of the formative years so many basic building blocks are set in stone. For example, a child who does not learn to speak early enough will have difficulty learning later on.”

Some past hurts were never dealt with so that hurt is carried over into future relationships. Leaders often judge situations based on their past experiences. As my pastor would say, “you are seeing through the lens of your experiences and sometimes your lens can be dirty”. It affects how leaders respond to situations. Hurt and past experiences left unchanged and not dealt with can be consuming and overwhelming, thus, creating more pain. It can take them beyond discouragement into depression according to Chand.

Another pain a leader tries to avoid is the price it costs to be a leader. The cost of being a leader is recognizing there is a problem and making the hard decisions. It is being willing to go with the unpopular choice for the good of the organization. Chand refers to it as the “figurative blood of leadership: having your sanity or integrity questioned, the uncertainty of taking a bold risk, the pain of hard conversations and replacing people who no longer fit the larger scope of responsibilities and the strain of being publicly positive while dealing the myriad of private pains of change. Leading a growing, changing, dynamic organization requires tremendous courage, wisdom, and tenacity.” People sometimes shy away from that much pressure. It is more than one is willing to pay.

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Chand warns that as a leader, your most valuable resource is your own heart. He says the greatest risk is becoming so tired, so discouraged or so angry that your soul begins to shrivel. A leader's heart needs to be nourished and strengthened. If a leader is not getting the encouragement needed, it affects them and those around them. As I previously stated, people look to leaders to see how they respond to situations. Their response or reaction can make or break someone else because of the amount of influence they have. If the pain is deep-rooted and has affected the leader, it can be put on someone if the leader is not taking the necessary steps to process the pain. Pain inevitably changes all that comes in contact with it, which is why most leaders try to hide it.

According to an article for *Church Leaders*, Mark Love identifies eleven significant secrets in the lives of pastors, which I also believe is true of most leaders. Here are a few I thought were befitting to leaders today: 1. "Our greatest fear is irrelevance". Leaders are afraid that what they do every day doesn't matter or make sense to those around them. 2. "We think about quitting a lot". Leaders are results driven. Therefore, leaders get discouraged when they don't see visible, tangible results within an allotted time frame. They somehow doubt their ability to accomplish the goal. I think sometimes it's easier to walk away than to continue to live up to the pressure. 3. "We envy people who can be themselves". Leaders sometimes have to put on a mask to be whom the people think they are. There is no private pain. They have to mask the pain because people have placed them on a high pedestal that they can't live up to. And 4. "We are lonely because it's hard to trust". Being a leader exposes you and opens you to a lot of criticism. There is no being a regular person with faults and issues. All eyes are on you and sometimes, it's hard to know who's on your side or who's waiting for you to fail.

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When we are in pain, we seldom see the reason for the pain at the time. We sometimes want to place the blame and shift focus off of the pain. However, there is a purpose in the pain. “For the believer all pain has meaning; all adversity is profitable. There is no question that adversity is difficult. It usually takes us by surprise and seems to strike where we are most vulnerable. To us, it often appears completely senseless and irrational, but to God, none of it is either senseless or irrational. He has a purpose in every pain He brings or allows in our lives. We can be sure that in some way He intends it for our profit and His glory, Jerry Bridges, *Trusting God*.

The pain develops us. The pain teaches us. It teaches us how to be or how not to be. It teaches us what is right or it teaches us what is wrong. I think by allowing pain to teach us, we become more in tune with reality and those around us. As we submit and allow the pain to teach us, it helps us to grow. You have to grow to change and you have to change to grow. Chand said in order to have growth there must be pain so if we want to grow we must allow pain to be our best teacher. According to Pastor Craig Groeschel, pain is a part of progress. He says anything that grows experiences pain and if you avoid all pain, you avoid growth. He also says “the amount of pain we’re willing to endure sets the limit of our effectiveness. If we avoid it or numb it, we’ll risk nothing, sacrifice nothing, feel nothing and accomplish nothing”. After reading this book, I now understand how important and necessary pain is for growth. If you want to grow, pain will be involved. As Chand puts it, “Growth equals change; change equals loss; loss equals pain; so inevitably, growth equals pain. That’s why leadership is both brutal and beautiful. It’s bleedership! It’s brutiful!” If you’re leading, you’re bleeding.

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