

Book Review of “Thriving from the 2nd Chair”

Mike Bonem’s book, *Thriving in the Second Chair*, is a sequel to his other book co-authored with Roger Patterson, *Leading from the Second Chair: Serving Your Church, Fulfilling Your Role, and Realizing Your Dreams* (2005). The phrase “Second Chair” refers to the role junior to the Chief of an organization, in this context, it has been used to refer to a post junior to the head of a Christian organization, a church or related ministry. Second Chair leaders play a very important role in churches and ministries across the world. They include local licensed pastors, ordained clergy, among others who are significant to the running of churches but are not the lead or senior pastor.

Mike Bonem argues that the difference between just surviving and flourishing in the Second Chair is the difference between resentment and fulfillment, or tolerance and joy. The author of this book intends to see that both the Second Chair Individuals and the ministries they serve to benefit, flourish to the glory of God. Which to his point, is a win-win solution.

In this book, Bonem has provided ten enactments that are trusted sources of refreshment and encouragement for professional growth in the Christian ministry. The ten practices are; *Grow toward Partnership, Think and Act Strategically, Develop for the Future, Organize Selectively, Seek Lasting Rewards, Overcome Loneliness, Live with the Lid, and Extend Your Shelf Life*. The book has a chapter for each of the ten practices. The author ends each chapter with questions meant for personal reflection and discussion ideas for conversations with people occupying the “First Chair.”

Throughout his book, the author offers a practical and spiritual guide to understanding and overcoming potential hurdles, urging patience, self-reflection, and partnership building. The first three of the ten enactments in the book are about the relationship between the second chair

and the first chair, which is the most important professional relationship to the second chair. The Bible has highlighted the importance of a good leader-subordinate relationship, like in this case, between the first chair and the second chair. Like the story when Jesus heals a centurion's servant. It is evident that he must have been diligent and faithful to his master since he received his master's esteem and concern"¹. It is logical to say that a second chair must have a good relationship with the first chair to ensure that they thrive and find fulfillment in their ministries.

The final three enactments or springs in this book are the most important. They give guidance to staying spiritually stable, taming loneliness, and becoming re-energized. These three are the most important because they enable second chairs to be productive and achieve the highest satisfaction, even in the most deplorable conditions. Jesus speaks of the importance of being patient and the importance of seeking lasting rewards. Scripture says, "wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the lord"². Second, chairs need to focus on lasting rewards to be effective and productive in their work now. Patience will help them understand the situation and take time to build the capacity for the most effective action.

Second chair leaders are crucial in the day to day running of churches on every circumstances. They carry heavy responsibilities. They work in paid and unpaid positions, and therefore, it should be easier to understand how they feel frustrated and overwhelmed sometimes. The author of this book, therefore, is trying to find a solution to the often discouraging proverb that says, "when you are not in the lead, the view needs changes."

After reading this book there are two things that really inspired me to put into goals/action. One is on a more personal development highlighting the last few chapters of the

1 Luke 7:1-10

2 Psalm 27:14 (NIV)

book; and the other one is on developing my partnership with my first chair (my lead pastor). My first SMART goal is that for the next two months I will carve out and prioritize two hours of my actual work schedule to spend prayer walking and dreaming of new ways for people to come in contact with the Kingdom of God. Part of what I realized through this book is the importance of space to thrive instead of just simply following along with the agenda and accomplishing all of the tasks. Yes, there are responsibilities and admin work, but if I am not seeking and allowing myself to dream with God, then I am losing great opportunities for him to speak to me about the realities of his ways over mine.

My second and also important goal is to grow in my relationship with my First Chair. Because we do work pretty closely together, and now understanding the importance of a good relationship (even outside the work sphere) I will propose to meet twice a month for the next three months and spend time together. I believe that spending time with him and his family will help our friendship grow deeper and will also help me understand him better in his family context, helping me grow in compassion and grace towards him.