

7 Warning Signs You'll Notice Before a Leader Falls

Unfortunately, in every level and realm of life we have all witnessed serious leadership failure. It is no longer a surprise when we read about a high-level pastor, celebrity, sports figure or politician who is disgraced because of ethical or moral failure.

As one who has worked with many struggling church and marketplace leaders on a very personal level for the past 30+ years, I have made the following observations regarding warning signs before a fall, which I teach younger leaders so they will avoid the mistakes of the present generation of leaders.

All of us have fallen into the following in one way, shape or form. Hopefully, we will have learned the hard leadership lessons of life so we can pass on wisdom to the next generation.

Here are seven warning signs before leadership failure:

First, often before falling a leader will cram so much into his or her schedule for a prolonged amount of time that they don't get enough time for personal renewal and rest. Much activity is not always kingdom productivity; when a person is constantly running around from meeting to meeting, from state to state, from event to event without seeking God and personal times for reflection, they do violence to their soul and will eventually be operating on will power and fumes instead of the Spirit of God. This can lead to them being tempted to escaping from the pressure of life with adulterous relationships, pornography, excess entertainment and foolish endeavors.

Activity without clarity will also lead to making poor decisions. When we are always in a rush we will not have the

proper time to process things, which leads to a lack of discernment and disastrous leadership decisions. This will compound the pressure even more and create more work to get out of the mess they are in! Sometimes less is more!

I am not saying leaders shouldn't be very busy or have a lot of responsibility. But what I am saying is there always has to be enough time in between events and days of meetings for daily reflection, prayer and seeking God, so that our level of discernment is high and we are walking in the grace and power of God to do His work instead of our own will power and strength!

Second, I have noticed that before falling a leader avoids intimate contact with their peers or overseers who can speak into their life. They live a life of isolation, which is very dangerous.

As busy as I am, there are a number of mentors and spiritual sons that I open up to who give input and prayer; I am always open to hearing God's voice through their prayers or exhortations to me. The more responsibility I have, the more community I need to keep myself on track.

We also need intimate relationships to keep the human side of us active. It is very easy to go from one productive business meeting or anointed service to another and always be in front of strangers or crowds of people or with leaders who don't know us well. There is no real community in those settings; even in the midst of a crowd, we can still isolate ourselves, because in a crowd, a leader doesn't have to be intimate or accountable since they are the ones calling the shots, doing the leading and speaking instead of the other way around.

Third, a leader is heading for a fall when he or she is not spending adequate time with their spouse and/or family. God told us that it is not good for man to be alone. I have seen many leaders, especially those who travel a lot, who are not

in regular touch with their spouses and who rarely ever spend time at home. Being with family helps keep a leader grounded. Without that, they will be surrounded by superficial relationships related only to their productivity as a minister or businessperson, where they are always receiving accolades (from sycophants), as opposed to being a father, mother, husband or wife who has to constantly strive to work hard at intimacy in their family relationships—which God intended for us to keep us humble and grounded. A leader may get praise from everyone around them, but the spouse really knows them and will tell them like it is and keep them in touch with reality.

Fourth, leaders are heading for trouble when they don't exercise self-discipline in eating and indulging their pleasures. If a leader cannot control their eating patterns, that is most likely a reflection of a larger issue: They are medicating themselves with food and are most likely vulnerable to other lusts of the flesh that will enable them to escape the pressures of reality. Obesity is a social sin that has become acceptable in the body of Christ, even though Jesus warns against it (Luke 21:34).

Furthermore, when we as leaders have bad diets it begins to affect our minds, emotions and spirits in negative ways because it creates sluggishness, fatigue and clouds our spirits with our carnality. Many leaders have died or have serious health issues once they hit their 40s and 50s because of a poor diet. God will judge us if we prematurely meet Him and miss half our lives because of our lack of discipline and obedience.

Fifth, leaders are heading for trouble when they don't seek God for Himself and only pray and read the Bible when they have to preach a sermon or minister. Worse than our lack of intimacy with the Lord is the fact that we are only using Him to make a living or using His Word to achieve certain outcomes. However good they may be, our highest call in life

is to know and love God. Matthew 7:22-23 teaches us that we can minister for God effectively and still fail if He doesn't know us. Leaders who only seek God for a sermon have a professional relationship with the Lord and will eventually not have the grace and spiritual power to deal with all the pressures of marriage, life and ministry, which can lead to moral failure.

Sixth, leaders who love titles, positions, recognition, constantly join boards and get involved in large events for public prominence are heading for a fall unless they repent. When we exalt ourselves, God says He will humble us (see Luke 14:11), and he who seeks his own glory is not glory (see Prov. 25:27).

We are not far from a fall when we try to lift ourselves up, promote ourselves or get involved in events without hearing from the Lord. We are like the Pharisees who loved titles, prominent positions, greetings in the marketplace and to be called leader or reverend or bishop or doctor (Matt. 23:6-7). Leaders who are broken have learned not to try to create names for themselves by marketing their accomplishments and hype; they have learned that only when God exalts a person does it really last (Ps. 75:6).

Last, when leaders use people as objects for their businesses or ministries instead of having a motivation of empowering people to walk in their purpose—when leaders put programs over people and tasks ahead of relationships—eventually they will have no one around them who is loyal or who they can trust. They will have burned many bridges behind them because, eventually, their followers will become weary of them and leave them. Leadership is a lonely road to walk; leaders, more than anyone else, need to minister to people with a servant's heart. When leaders come into the ministry with the attitude of being served instead of serving others, they develop an entitlement mentality that can lead them to pride, arrogance and eventually to destruction.

May God help all of us who serve the kingdom as leaders to glory only in knowing Him (Phil. 3:7-11; Jer. 9:23-24). {eoa}