

How Life's Pressures Reveal Your Weakness

The pressures of leadership can reveal hidden character weaknesses.

I believe the greatest challenge facing anyone in Christian ministry today is the temptation to compromise. Too often, gifted leaders who begin humbly fall when the pressures of their leadership roles reveal character weaknesses that have never been addressed.

Though their failures always grieve us, we should not be surprised when those we've come to trust are overtaken by a besetting sin or weakness. The Scriptures provide a number of examples of people who were given every advantage to succeed in leadership but in the end failed the test of integrity.

King Saul is one of them. Through divinely orchestrated circumstances, as recorded in 1 Samuel, he was chosen to become Israel's first king (see 9-10:1). His appointment was sudden; he had no preparation and no role models. However, he did have the power of God and the Word of God spoken through Samuel the prophet.

Samuel anointed Saul and told him, "'The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you ... and you will be turned into another man'" (10:6, NKJV). Instantly, the anointing set in motion the transforming work of the Spirit of God that gave Saul a new heart (see v. 9). The internal change was noticeable even on the outside (see v. 11)—but it wasn't a finished work.

The anointing alone cannot guarantee lasting success in ministry. Anyone who has ever experienced the anointing of God's Spirit for a specific purpose knows how thrilling it is. But spiritual empowerment also comes with an element of dread, and fear of the enormity of what God is requiring can overtake

a flawed character.

When Samuel first named Saul God's chosen one, Saul responded with a litany of reasons why the prophet must be mistaken (see 9:21). His statements revealed his insecurity, which manifested itself later as pride. Subsequent references in Scripture attest to Saul's weaknesses, his compromising character and his tendency to play to man's opinions (see 13:11-14; 15:24).

These traits flowed into every aspect of Saul's life, including his leadership style. Ultimately, they made him a disobedient and unfaithful servant and caused him to forfeit what God had given him.

The Bible declares that Saul was a valiant warrior (see 14:47-48). Yet, his unfaithfulness and disobedience set the stage for one of the saddest passages in the Old Testament: "'I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments'" (15:10-11).

We all deal with some degree of brokenness. Any one of us can be tempted in the heat of battle to make choices we think will protect us from conflict and disapproval. But it is not necessary for any Christian leader today to follow Saul's poor example and become a disappointment to God.

The New Testament provides us with the story of another Saul, whose Roman name was Paul. Based on his past, Paul knew he was unworthy of a leadership role in the church. But he understood that the enormous transforming power of God had dramatically altered his nature.

Paul wrote: "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. 15:10). This grace is the remedy for our struggles.

Ultimately, it is our love for God that will sustain our desire to work through our issues so we can live and lead others with integrity. We must labor to build God's kingdom, promote God's agenda, and walk out our commitment to Him and His people in this age, in humble obedience and with gratitude for all He has done.

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