

LEADING IN THE SHADOW – PART 3

It is imperative that leaders embrace a stance of “realistic hope.”

By way of realism, this means embracing the inherent difficulty of life and leadership, knowing that we live in a fallen world full of Shadows.

Leaders should expect the forces of today to ferociously contest the realization of a better tomorrow. They should not be surprised or dismayed to find that the status quo is programmed to put up stiff resistance to progress. And they should know that the forces arrayed against them are not the least bit impressed by sincerity and good intentions; that good things not only are not inevitable, but that they are enormously difficult even under the best of circumstances.

EAST OF EDEN LIFE IS DIFFICULT AND ALL-TOO-SHORT. THE SOIL IS FULL OF WEEDS, THISTLES AND THORNS. ENTROPY REIGNS. THINGS DON'T GO AS PLANNED. RIGHT DOESN'T ALWAYS WIN. GOOD THINGS COME HARD, IF AT ALL. TOTAL VICTORY AND PERMANENT SUCCESS ARE PIPE DREAMS.

The Shadow looms large and undermines our highest aspirations and deepest longings. Great ideas and noble intentions are no match for the manifold and resolute forces that block our way. Nowhere is it written that a better tomorrow is the birthright of those who aspire for such. The sobering reality is that the Promised Land is never closer than just out of our grasp and we are relegated to a permanent state of “not yet having arrived.”

BUT HOPE KNOWS THIS IS NOT THE FULL STORY.

The Shadow, while formidable, will not carry the day. While an honest assessment of the inherent difficulty of accomplishing good things keeps us humble, it doesn't preclude the transforming power of hope-filled effort. God's grace has broken into our world in Jesus Christ. Hard work and perseverance in Jesus Name and by the power of the Holy Spirit does indeed effect substantive and by God's grace, lasting change.

But it takes time, sometimes generations. And a fallen world can't be expected to cooperate. Remember, it took Abraham and Sarah twenty-five years to bear Isaac. It took over 400 years for God to answer the cries of Israel for release from Egypt. David waited until he was 30 to become King (2 Samuel 5:4). Paul waited 14 years to begin his public ministry and fulfill the vision God had given him for the conversion of the Gentiles (Galatians 1:17; Acts 9:26; 11:20). It took William Wilberforce over forty years to end the slave trade in Great Britain.

THE LESSON: STAY HUMBLE AND REALISTIC.

Expect difficulty. Never abandon hope.

God is not done working. And God is not done with you or your organization just yet. In spite of the Shadow, your best days are yet ahead.

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