Casting the Mantle of Leadership upon the Next Generation of Leaders: Elijah's Paradigm

Christel Arnaud Ngadima, M-Div student
Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines

1. Introduction

The biggest challenge that any system or organization; be it political, economical, societal or religious, faces is sustainability. One fact that has being squarely observed is a constant and universal conflictual transfer of leadership. Power struggle, *coup d'état*, and an epidemic violence always follow the departure, death of a leader or change of leadership. It is not an exaggeration to assert that, when it comes to the issue of transition in leadership, the familiar phrase attributed to King Louis XV "after me the deluge" seems to be the norm. In the face of such daunting political, social and religious realities, there is a need of leaders who will set the pace of excellence; through learning and application of spiritual leadership principles.

Henry and Richard Blackaby aptly observe, "Society's problem's is more than just a lack of leaders. Society's great deficit is that, it does not have enough leaders who understand and practice, the principles of Christian leadership."[1] One of these principles is the principle of succession. Leadership is also about reproduction of future leaders. I therefore strongly agree with Ajitena that, "a success without a successor is a successful failure."[2]

---

[1]Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual leadership* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman), 13.

[2]E. Ajitena, *A motivational books for today's 'Ark-builder'* (London, LDN: AuthorHouse, 2008), 64.

2. Statement of the Problem

Wisdom teaches us the valuable lesson that "there is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: (Ecclesiastes 3:1 NIV). There is time to come into position and there is time to leave. But the biggest cross of leadership is not the temporary occupation of a leadership position, but it transfer, when the time has come to do so. The undiscussed question here therefore is what to do when the time has come to leave a leadership position? Or if the leader is not so greed enough for power, how to prepare future generation to take over? The biblical account of Elijah is a case in point.

3. Purpose

Elijah's paradigm can be singled out as classic example of what is expected from a leader concerned about the sustainability of his organization. This paper draws the dichotomist approach used by Elijah the prophet in the passing of the baton of leadership to the next generations of leaders. The first step: the selection of the future political and religious leaders and their enthronization, lately performed by his successor by virtue of delegation of authority. The second step: the training of his successor Elisha into the pastoral ministry. To sum up it all, Elijah definitely understood with Wager that "there is no success without a successor."[1]

4. Methodology and Limitations

Elijah's paradigm unfolds but a unique clever mix of God' revelation with godly mentorship that represents a great source of inspiration for today's level 5 leaders who basically say "I want to make sure that I leave somebody behind who can continue to be successful in the mission and the vision that I have.[2]

---

[1]P. Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators, prophets and theologians: Lessons from a lifetime in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 269.

[2]P. Jenkins, *The next Christendom* (New York, NY: Oxford university press, 2002), 96.

This paper carefully investigates Elijah's transitional leadership in its double function of selecting and preparing the cream of the future generation of political as well as religious leaders who took over the mantle of leadership after his ascension (1 King 19). And also confirm its tremendous success that inevitably brought about not only sustainability but also excellence in the mission of the upcoming leaders and in the entire life of the Israelites (2 King).

5. Background

The events of Elijah's end time leadership took place c. 841 – 801 B.C. Like many leaders today, "Elijah had complained because the past generation had failed and the present generation hadn't done any better."1

We see Elijah complaining in 1King 19:10 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." NIV)

God "assured Elijah that his own ministry had not been a failure, for there were still 7,000 people in the land who were faithful to Jehovah. Indeed, the prophet was not alone, yet God sent him to touch the lives of three individuals. The Lord did not command Elijah to gather all 7,000 faithful people together in a mass meeting and preach a sermon.

Wiersbe maintains that "the remnant according to the election of grace" that Paul wrote about in Romans 11:1–6. No matter how wicked the world scene may appear, God always has a remnant that is faithful to Him. Sometimes that remnant is small, but God is always great and accomplishes His purposes."[2] God's purposes are the key to spiritual leadership. The divine purpose came into completion in the case of Elijah via two decisive means: revelation and personal mentorship.

---

[1]W. W. Wierbse, *Be responsible* (Colorado Spring, CO: Victor, 2002), 150.

[2]Ibid., 51.

6. Leadership Responsibility

Solemn responsibilities rest on those who are called to act leaders. Blackaby and Blackaby underscore the crucial task of the leaders when they convincingly argue that "without clearly understanding their role, leaders are destined for failure."[1] The first two tasks which God gives to Elijah — the anointing of Hazael (2 Kings 8:15) and of Jehu (2 Kings 9).

That which took place in these first episodes speak pointedly about how God wants spiritual leaders to live. Blackaby and Blackaby opine, "God's people live by revelation."[2] They explore the concept of revelation versus vision in relation to Proverbs 29:18, by explaining that "although widely used, is also widely misapplied. The popular translation is, where there is no vision, the people perish" (KJV). A more accurate translation of the Hebrew is: "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint (NIV)." They go one step further, and demonstrate that "there is a significant difference between revelation and vision. Vision is something people produce; revelation is something people receive."[3]

Using the appropriate term, A. Knowles zeroes in on the blatant fact that "Elijah never anoints Hazael or Jehu. Perhaps it is enough that God has revealed them to Elijah as key people for the future."[4] Their anointing, were performed by Elisha. In other words, God revealed the right people to Elijah, but it was his successor Elisha who continued the work of enthronization of these two political leaders. This first episode of Elijah's spiritual leadership teaches us the valuable lesson that effective spiritual leaders through God's revelation live ahead of time.

They see what others people cannot perceive. They do not die with God's revelations but make them available for the next generation to continue the work. Wagner made it abundantly clear that "the winners in the race of life are those who successfully pass the baton of godly faithfulness to the next generations."[5]

---

[1]Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 16.

[2]Ibid., 69.

[3]Ibid.

[4]A. Knowles, *The Bible guide* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 156.

[5]Wagner, *Wrestling with Alligators*, 269.

7. Elijah's Transitional Mentorship

So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who *was* plowing *with* twelve yoke *of oxen* before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. (1Kings 19:19 KJV)

Elijah's third task was to anoint Elisha to be his own successor (1 King 19:16). The passing of the mantle from Elijah to Elisha was symbolic of the divine transfer of prophetic authority. The sacrifice made by the ongoing leader give the most striking evidence of the fact that the ceremony that he was going to take place was capital for the future of Israelite "Elijah traveled 150 miles from Sinai to Abel Meholah where he would find Elisha plowing a field. Friedrich Hegel was right in observing, "Nothing great has been accomplished without passion in the world."[1] Lesson here is evident: effective spiritual leaders will do and go extra mile for the present and the future interest of their institutions.

If "leadership is influence "as John C. Maxwell wisely observes, then it is understandable that Elijah's deeply influenced Elisha's life and ministry. Biblical commentators all agree on the fact that, if Elisha had 12 teams of oxen that may indicate that Elisha came from a wealthy family. But Elisha brook completely with his former legitimate lifestyle in order to follow God's agenda for his life.

Spiritual leadership as far as mentoring is concerned is therefore three things: a brain, an ear and a push. Elijah successfully used these three for the continuation of the work of the Lord in the life of his successor. Elisha learned the workings of pastoral ministry under the leadership of Elijah.

Effective Spiritual leaders are individual extraordinary blessed by character, personality, sound mind, profound, words, and advices. It is because Elisha saw in his mentor's life, valuable qualities of spiritual excellence, that he arose, followed him and became his personal servant.

The influence of Elijah in Elisha's life and ministry is in line with Paul's statement in 2 Timothy 2:2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

---

[1]Wierbse, *Be responsible*, 151.

8. Summary and Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper it was our contention that the greatest problem for leaders is probably the transmission of the leadership's torch to future generation. Coming at this stage, it is crystal clear from Elijah's paradigm that, when true spiritual leaders are in position, there will be soft, peaceful, and enjoyable transition or transfer of authority.

The men Elijah was sent to anoint were not especially significant in the social structure of that day. Hazael was a servant to King Bedhadad, Jehu was a captain of the army, and Elisha was a farmer. But these three individuals played critical roles in Israel's immediate future. Hazael of Syria also known as Aram became a chief foe of Israel (2 Kings 8:7–15). Jehu wiped out the family of Ahab and the Baal cult in Israel, though for political rather than religious reasons (cf. 9:1–13). And Elisha, Elijah's successor, nourished the return to Yahweh that Elijah's public triumph over the priests of Baal stimulated.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid the conclusion that, when leaders no longer illuminate the future, the spirit walks in darkness, and their leadership is over. The task of a Spiritual leader is the reproduction of the future. Effective spiritual leadership is, leading and preparing others for leadership.

If a leader has not inspired young generation to leadership, he or she has never been a leader. For "success without succession is a failure" If therefore it is true with Ken Blanchard that "leadership is not something you do to people; but something you do with people" then it is understandable that leadership is what Elijah did with Elisha. He took him from where he was to where God wanted him to be. As Elisha witnessed the secret of his mentor's power when moment of their separation came, he exactly knew what to ask for in order to take his ministry to another level spiritual excellence: A double-portion of his mentor's Spirit.