

2 Corinthians 2:2 - For if I make you sad, who is going to make me happy? You are the ones to do it, and how can you if I cause you pain?

How are you taking care of the people that God has entrusted to you?

Paul, (the writer of this verse), asks an interesting question that has important implications for you as a leader. Another potential translation might ask, “If I distress you or if I inflict pain into your life, then who is going to help me when I’m distressed or in pain?” It’s not your job as a leader to make everyone happy. That is virtually impossible because what makes people “happy” is as elusive as finding Yeti, the Easter Bunny, or the secrets that God has kept hidden. But it IS your job to be aware of what impacts the people that God has entrusted to you that might be causing them to be grieved, distressed, or in pain and that includes words, policies, attitudes, other people, and the culture you set or allow to happen.

All that we call human history—money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery—[is] the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy. ~ C.S. Lewis

The current culture’s concept of “happiness” seems to be an obsession designed to make people unhappy, or more accurately, unfulfilled. Think about it. How many people say they will be happy when...(and you can fill in the blank with just about anything). The historic example for people thinking they will be happy is declaring, “if I only had more money.” But money will not buy what people are really looking for and money, when it becomes an obsession, becomes the root of all types of evil. (1 Timothy 6:10) In reality, true happiness can only be found where God says it’s found – and that’s in the wisdom that can come from the Lord. (James 1:5)

- *Proverbs 3:13-18 (NKJV) - **Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding; For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. Length of days is in her right-hand, In her left-hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, And all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who retain her.***

What causes grief, pain, distress, or sorrow in the lives of the people you lead or work with? What vexes them or what puts them off their game? What causes them to have a negative mindset or sadness? If you’re the problem or you’re doing things that are causing their issues, then your best course of action is to start working with a Christian leadership coach and make an effort to improve your leadership skills. Jesus was consistently aware of what was causing problems in the people God entrusted to him. He knew how to comfort people but there were also times he was strong, confrontational, direct, and accusatory. Yet his words and actions always aligned with God’s word making his leadership the best guide for how to get things done. He also set the standard for working with others with his declaration of what is now commonly known as “the golden rule” and his instructions on how to lead others.

- *Matthew 7:12 (NIV) - **So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.***
- *Mark 9:35 (NLT) - **He sat down, called the twelve disciples over to him, and said, “Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else.”***

Whether it’s you who is causing the problem or not, as God’s leader you have a responsibility to pay attention to what’s happening in, around, and to the people who work with, around, and for you. As God’s leader you have spiritual responsibilities for those God has entrusted to you. There was never a day or time when Jesus ‘stopped’ being spiritually responsible for the people who walked with him. He paid attention to their words, attitudes, problems, and needs. He warned them and gave them insights. He taught, instructed, and revealed truth to them. And...He listened to them. You are to do the same.

- *John 9:35 (NLT) - **When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”***
- *Mark 5:33 (CEV) - The woman knew what had happened to her. So she came trembling with fear and knelt down in front of Jesus. **Then she told him the whole story.***
- *Luke 7:9 (NIV) - **When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.”***

The spiritual responsibilities of the leader will always exceed the responsibilities of their followers in the context of that leadership. As one of God's leaders, you have a spiritual responsibility to be interested in what's happening in the lives of those under your umbrella. That does not mean being nosy, over-interested, or micro-managing, but having a physical and spiritual awareness of the people God has entrusted to you. You're to love them with the love of God. You're to consistently do what is right, according to God's Word, and to do your best to help them similar to how Jesus helped the people entrusted to him. But if you ignore the issues and problems that cause grief, pain, sorrow, and distress in the lives of those God has entrusted to your leadership, it's going to continue to hurt them and eventually it's going to hurt you too.

- *1 Peter 5:2 (NLT) - **Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God.***

Perhaps it's time to recognize that your leadership responsibilities are more spiritual than they are physical. After all, life is more about spiritual realities than the temporary and limited perspective of your physical years. Leading God's way doesn't mean it's going to be easy. You are to pay attention to the people under your umbrella and speak life into them with the right words at the right time. (Proverbs 25:11) Listen to their concerns, then ask the Lord for guidance on what to say or do for them. (Psalm 16:7) Care for them in the same way Jesus cared for those around him. (Mark 8:2) And even when people treat you badly, (and they will treat you badly), you're to use the same model of love that Jesus exemplified, in everything he said and did.

- *Matthew 5:43-45a (NLT) - You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, **love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.***

God calls certain people to lead, and it's a calling unlike any other. It means that your entire life will be one of challenge, learning, spiritual contest, and a demand for doing, becoming, and sacrificing more. God's leaders are never fully accomplished – but always accomplishing. God's leaders are stretched by God's almighty hand to think differently, overcome evil, stand strong for Christ, teach, instruct, manifest God's power, and take care of God's people. God's leaders are to live in service to others, deny themselves, and take up their cross daily in order to follow Jesus.

- *Psalm 75:7 (NLT) - **It is God alone who judges; he decides who will rise and who will fall.***
- *Daniel 2:21 (ESV) - He changes times and seasons; **he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.***
- *Luke 9:23 (ESV) - And he said to all, **“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”***

You have followers ONLY because God entrusted them to you. The sooner you understand that your leadership is NOT all about you or what you can have – but about the people God entrusted to you and how you should serve them – the sooner the Lord will give you the insights you need about what He wants you to do and accomplish. Throughout your leadership journey he will instruct, guide, and provide revelations about how to take care of his people. And as a leader called by God, your spiritual responsibilities to take care of his people is not finished until the day you pass the mantle of leadership to another according to God's timing and will.

- *1 Kings 19:19 (NLT) - So Elijah went and found Elisha son of Shaphat plowing a field. There were twelve teams of oxen in the field, and Elisha was plowing with the twelfth team. **Elijah went over to him and threw his cloak across his shoulders and then walked away.***
- *Deuteronomy 34:9 (NLT) - Now Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him, doing just as the Lord had commanded Moses.*

There are multiple ways to set the conditions for supporting and keeping from harm, those God has entrusted to you. One of those ways is to set a Christian culture wherever you go. Jesus set the culture everywhere he went. The strength of his leadership was capable of revising the culture the moment he walked into a room or location, and he consistently overshadowed the stifling, religious, onerous, threatening, hypocritical, or evil culture of the Pharisees, Sadducees, lawyers, Romans, and unbelievers. He took care of the people entrusted to him by establishing a better culture with his words, attitude, and his very presence while declaring God's truth with signs, miracles, and a peace that passes understanding.

- *John 19:10-11 (TLB) - You won't talk to me?" Pilate demanded. "Don't you realize that I have the power to release you or to crucify you?" Then Jesus said, "You would have no power at all over me unless it were given to you from above. So those who brought me to you have the greater sin."*
- *John 13:3 (NLT) - Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God.*
- *Philippians 4:7 (NLT) - Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

There are many false leaders today, just as there were in Jesus' day. Like the Romans, Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers of his time, today they are called politicians, anti-biblical leaders, influencers, the elite, progressives, and dictators. The devil has always promoted a culture of chaos and his false leaders bring the devil's evil values and ways of doing things that cause pain, suffering, distress, and terrible unhappiness. Like Jesus, you're going to have to take a stand! You'll never help anyone overcome the grief, vexation, pain, and sadness by adhering to the pervasive evil culture. Instead, like Jesus, you're to build a Christian culture everywhere you go. You are a light in a dark world so let your light shine before others. Lead as a child of light.

- *Matthew 5:16 (ESV) - In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*
- *Ephesians 5:8 (NIV) - For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light*

Ignoring the problems, pains, and vexation of others allows for the festering and expansion of those problems making it harder to help them later. As God's leader you have a real and great responsibility to care for the hearts of those he has entrusted to you. You may get burned doing it. You may get hurt, emotionally bruised, or they may reject you, but your leadership calling to help and not grieve them persists, nonetheless. And when the time comes and you're in need for someone to help you, God will bring someone in your life to help.

At the end of your life on earth you will be evaluated and rewarded according to how well you handled what God entrusted to you. ~ Rick Warren

Godly leadership is NOT the same as worldly leadership. In Jesus' day, the Pharisees and Romans thought they were leading well, but they weren't. Nearly all of the people in leadership positions throughout the world today think they are leading well, but they aren't. Nobody can lead well unless they lead God's way, and for you, leading God's way also means taking care of the people God has entrusted to you.