

Course Title: CHALLENGING THE PROCESS

Goal of This Lesson: This is a very relevant topic to the success of leadership, especially when you are young passionate leader who finds him or herself somewhere down on the totem pole of church leadership.

Note: One of the hardest things is to be a successful young leader.

READING ASSIGNMENT: Please Read the Following Passage(s)

(1 Timothy 4:12 ESV) Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

People don't respect you yet. They question your judgment, responsibility, and experience. And they have a right! Most of you are still in the proving stage of ministry. The bottom line is that you are leaders, commissioned by God to make a difference in the lives of others. In order to make that difference, you've got to be able to wisely lead and minister in new ways to reach this generation.

READING ASSIGNMENT: Please Read the Following Passage(s)

(Proverbs 11:14 ESV) Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.

Challenging the Process

*“Do not follow where the path may lead.
Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Regarding Leaders**READING ASSIGNMENT:** Please Read the Following Passage(s)

(Romans 8:28 ESV) And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Leaders hate the status quo because it's boring, generally ineffective, and also unrewarding. Nothing strikes fear or dread in a leader's heart more than the idea of being stuck in a rut.

- Some enjoy the rut, because it's comfortable and predictable, and less accountable, but a leader loses sleep over being stuck in a rut
- Leaders love progress. Their nature is progress

How can I take what *is* and make it better? If what *is* cannot be made better, what can I create to take its place?

Regarding Progress

Progress is always preceded by change. If progress is to be made, change is going to happen. Something must be altered.

- Change is always preceded by a challenge
- The minute you introduce change, you will be met with challenge

Change may be as simple as a renewed emphasis on prayer, fasting, or holiness that has become slack in your walk with the Lord. However, if it is a change, you will find it to be a challenge.

Challenging the status quo and improving the process is where leadership begins.

- If progress weren't a challenge, leadership wouldn't be needed

READING ASSIGNMENT: Please Read the Following Passage(s)

(Ecclesiastes 3:1 KJV) To every [thing there is] a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

(Galatians 6:9 ESV) And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

In a notable quote from the book, *The Leadership Challenge*, by James Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner states "Leaders must challenge the process because any system will unconsciously conspire to maintain the status quo and prevent change".

This is true in your marriage, job, Christian walk, home life, ministry team, etc. Your challenge as a minister is to take people to where they have never been before. Leadership always progresses. The nature of a leader is to evaluate and critique everything you bump into organizationally, is not meant to criticize, but to critique: to look closely at and rate its effectiveness.

Illustrations

READING ASSIGNMENT: Please Read the Following Passage(s)

(Philippians 2:3-4 ESV) Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

As *administrators*, you don't just attend church; you critique the way the church is run, how the service is flowing, ministry processes, etc.

As *music ministers* you don't just listen to what is being sung, but you evaluate how it's being sung, the musicians, how old the song is. How many times it has been sung, how anointed, etc.

As *communicators* you aren't simply listening to the person speaking, teaching, or preaching. You are listening for their gestures, words, illustrations, cadence, context, tone, phonetics, etc.

You can't help it because you are leaders. It's in you to challenge the process. You want things to be better.

- Deep in your heart you feel that if you were in charge, things would not only be different, but they would be better.

This propensity explains some of the very virtues of a leader, such as:

- You ask *why* about everything (leader at heart)
- You have an opinion about everything
- You are regularly offering unsolicited suggestions
- You are constantly pointing to other models
 - Another group doing things this way, let's look at what they are doing

Your challenge is channeling these feelings in the right direction. But don't feel bad for feeling this way. Only feel bad if you're not being Christ-like in acting on them.

- When a leader stops challenging the process, he or she has stopped leading and begun managing.

Challenging the Process Pitfalls

READING ASSIGNMENT: Please Read the Following Passage(s)

(2 Timothy 2:15 ESV) Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

Unfortunately, challenging the process is often interpreted as a challenge to someone's leadership and/or authority.

Previous youth leader! You decide to cancel the every Friday night game of Pictionary because only two kids are showing up. This is perhaps because *Bro. & Sis No Name* has been doing this for years!

When you challenge someone's idea or vision, they are prone to feel challenged personally. People are going to take it personal when you decide to stop having popcorn testimony services or using song books (true story).

If you challenge the status quo, people, which are a part of that system, may feel threatened because it's totally out of comfort zone.

The fact is that challenging the process does not necessarily mean the people in the process are at fault. They are not bad people. They didn't wake up one day with a mindset to be irrelevant or less effective. They may be unsuspecting casualties of the system.

Keep in Perspective

Everything that is set in place was originally considered a good idea. Open testimony service, and "Winkem" was once a cutting edge youth night game, and more. Everything that is in place was originally somebody's good or best idea.

Everything that is in place was once viewed as revolutionary. One day your revolutionary good idea will give way to accommodate future progress.

The Morse Code was an incredible, barrier breaking form of communication that was able to transmit messages long distances. The basic telephone was next, then the switchboard phone came along the scene.

That technology was soon overshadowed by the cordless phone. From there, new ideas developed and then cellular (cell) phones came into existence.

Now technology is constantly being changed, and improved upon many times throughout a generation.

- Computers
- Cars
- Medicine
- Communication
- Phones
- tablets

These are all results of challenging someone's previous revolutionary idea.

The Big Challenge

READING ASSIGNMENT: Please Read the Following Passage(s)

(Hebrews 13:7 ESV) Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

In every organization, there is someone standing guard over the status quo. Whether it's a church secretary, deacon, board member, ex-youth pastor, and maybe even the pastor.

- Your job is to effectively and respectfully challenge the process.

How to Challenge the Process Properly

READING ASSIGNMENT: Please Read the Following Passage(s)

(Hebrews 13:17 ESV) Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

As a Follower, you must develop the art of challenging the process without challenging the authority of your leader. This is not impossible, but achievable.

God has instituted authority structures within the Body of Christ that we are to honor, regardless how out of date we may think our pastor or leader is, or how unknowing he or she may seem. They are still God's authority figure for your church.

When instructions are given by the leader, follow through now, and debrief later.

- Never verbalize your frustration with the process in front of other team members.
 - This creates division and undermines the integrity of leadership and the process, which is not the Will of God.

Principle of the Process

READING ASSIGNMENT: Please Read the Following Passage(s)

(Romans 12:3-8 ESV) For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

A profound quote by Andy Stanley states "Loyalty publicly results in leverage privately".

In other words, when you defend or support your leadership in public, you'll have leverage (greater advantage) when you question the process in private.

On the flip side, if you undermine your leadership in public, the private meeting is not going to be pleasant.

Don't confuse your insights or ideas with moral imperatives. There is no sinful quality, character, or conduct in the fact that your ideas are not being used.

- Your priority is not necessarily everyone else's priority.

If your idea is shot down by your leader, come up with another idea that is acceptable. Find another way, and do it respectfully. If you are ultimately told, no, then respect your leader and do your best under the current process.

If there is a sinful quality, character, or conduct behind your idea and it is not changed, you better change ministries regardless of how much it costs you!

- If you don't learn to lead under, you probably won't have as many opportunities to lead over.

In Luke Chapter 7, the Centurion was humbled by Jesus' power as he recognized that Jesus was a man under authority like him (Jesus is to the Father, as the Centurion is to Caesar). As a result, both men had authority of their own.

When you submit yourself, and are faithful to the authority over you, you gain authority with those you lead. It is not your right nor responsibility to challenge processes other than those in your area of responsibility (music dept., Sunday school, youth, etc.).

- When your mission can't follow your authority figure's vision, then you must immediately get off of the team.

Your job is to help fulfill the vision of your pastor. Your attempts at change and challenging the process in *your area of ministry* should be for the sole purpose of advancing the vision of your pastor. He is your leader to whom you have a scriptural imperative to submit.

- Ask him for the vision and provide processes that potentially advance that vision for his input and approval.
- If you cannot support your pastor's vision, don't sabotage it by staying on the leadership team.

As a Leader, you can create opportunities for those who report to you, to also challenge the process.

You don't gain anything by not knowing what they are already thinking. If you are leading leaders, they are probably thinking they can do better than you. Get their input and you might learn some things.

- Don't confuse an expression of leadership initiative with rebellion.

When a leader under you shows initiative and drive, don't take it as an affront to your leadership. Listen to their ideas for potential changes that can help advance your ministry. If their plan is lacking, help steer them in the right direction. Don't automatically shut them down simply because you're in charge or their idea challenges your process.

- An insecure leader is one destined for failure and mediocrity.

Win-Win Situation

READING ASSIGNMENT: Please Read the Following Passage(s)

(Philippians 4:13 ESV) I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

If our leaders have permission to challenge the process, then everybody wins. The ministry wins because of progress. Leaders grow because of experiences gleaned from change. The church remains relevant.

The last thing the church can afford is to get so stuck in a rut that we become relevant only to those who are already saved! We are trying to reach our world. We must create an environment that attracts leaders. If change and progress is always met with opposition, true leaders will seek someplace else to apply their leadership skills. Nothing should go underground. Everything should be out in the open. Communication lines will remain open.

As leaders, you will only have a great ministry if you have a group that strives after progress, not just change, but progress. Change without a purpose is simply recklessness. Don't start changing things without a purpose, and above all else, realize that doctrine never changes!

- The greatest works of God's people came as a result of challenging a process.

David challenged Israel's process. Israel was at battle but getting nothing done. It was the status quo. They got up in the morning, arrayed for battle, then went to hide in the holes while the giant intimidated them.

The church can be that way. We may show up, look prepared for battle, but be unwilling to face intimidating giants. These giants may be people, methods, ideas, etc.

Biblical Scenarios

When David got ready to challenge the process, the existing process tried to get him to do it their way. But David used an entirely different method.

In the Book of Exodus, we find another scenario where Moses went before Pharaoh and said, “Hey bud, I’ve got a message for you. The process is getting ready to change, and you’re going to have to find a new work force!”.

In the New Testament, Jesus burst onto Israel’s scene and said, “Hey, I’ve got a New Covenant”. Those who were a part of the Old Covenant establishment weren’t too happy.

Paul gave the Jews a reality check when he said, “Jesus was not only their God, but also the God of the Gentiles”. Talk about a change in process!

Conclusion

Progress does not come without change. Even though your part in the process may cause ridicule, resistance, and opposition, do it anyway. Do it the right way, with the right attitude, and motive.

There are thousands of churches, business, marriages, etc. that are destined to remain in the insignificance of the status quo because of their unwillingness to responsibly face the pressure of challenging and changing the ineffective processes. Refuse to accept business as usual in your ministry, your marriage, your spiritual walk, and in your leadership! Most changes that will lead to your ministry’s success will start within you.

Time to Work

1. What three methods, in your ministry, do you think should be continued?
2. What three things would you change immediately if you could?
3. What would you change about your leadership style and area of ministry/leadership?
4. What do you fear or dread the most about making the personal or ministerial leadership changes needed?

Congratulations on completing this lesson. While some lessons may seem harder than others, you must always study to show yourself approved unto God, and reveal to others, what God has given you.
