

The Inner Work of the Chief Executive:

Humility and Wisdom in the Service of Leadership

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Introduction

The deepest inner work for us as Christian leaders is to know ourselves through knowing God for the purpose of becoming more like Jesus. This is the process of sanctification. As we say yes to God's work within us, His Spirit transforms us by renewing our minds. God equips us to understand the nature and ways of Jesus and to increasingly live by them. As a result, we know ourselves more fully, and more effectively serve those to whom we are called. Additionally, we more readily envision responses to organizational challenges we face as leaders.¹

Consider Solomon. He met God through his father David, a man after God's own heart. Solomon's character was initially formed through the influence of David, a worshipper and warrior, and the instruction of the best of the significant priests, prophets, and military leaders in the kingdom. He was prepared to be king or was he? Stepping into any new leadership role confronts us with challenges intellectually and emotionally as

well as ministerially. When Solomon was crowned king, what were his first emotions and thoughts? Fear - of how he could rule these people well? Awe - that the God of the universe had chosen him to rule His people? Or, maybe, Pride - that God had chosen him over Adonijah to be king? Surely all of these were there. Scripture also reveals his humility - knowing God and His character, knowing himself and his own capacities.² When God appeared to him in the beginning of his reign and said "What shall I give you,"³ Solomon demonstrated this knowledge of himself and his great need: "Now give me wisdom and knowledge that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of yours . . . Then God said . . . wisdom and knowledge are granted to you; *and* I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings have had who were before you, nor shall any after you have the like."⁴

He began leading the nation of Israel spiritually, economically, and militarily through his own

submission to God. As a result, God fulfilled His word to Solomon and prospered Israel. Solomon knew his own inadequacy without God just as we Christian leaders daily recognize our own inadequacy. Similarly, he knew his dependence on God and his true identity in God, just as we must. However, when Solomon strayed from his relationship with God in the middle of his reign, he lost his identity in God and sacrificed Israel's future prosperity as well as his own legacy. As such, he exemplifies our need for sanctification, revealing the consequence of faithfulness as well as unfaithfulness to God's continuing work in us, His children.⁵

In coming to know God, we realize our inadequacy without Him, our dependence on him, and our true identity in Him. We begin to see ourselves as He sees us, and experience ourselves as He created us to be, not simply as we have come to think of ourselves.⁶

Fulfilling God's Call: The Inner Work of the Christian Leader

The challenge of Christian leadership is to know ourselves for who we are and what is required of us by God. However, we are tempted to ask ourselves in words and by our actions, "Is inner work, or the everyday aspects of sanctification, really important? If so, why is it important?" If it is important, "What does it take to do this inner work?" And, as we discover how to do this inner work, "What does it produce - personally, relationally, and organizationally?" The first part of this article will address these questions. The second part will provide a case study to illustrate these principles. The concluding third part will offer direction for applying lessons learned from this case study.

The Importance of Inner Work

This article assumes that inner work is important first because of God's command to be holy even as He is holy. While we were made holy in Christ as a result of his life, death, and resurrection, we still have work to do to manifest that holiness in everyday affairs. The great commandment is to love God, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. In the book of 1 John, we read that we love God if we obey his commandments - in other words, we allow ourselves to be shaped in his image by conforming to his ways. For us to manifest the

holiness we have as a result of Jesus' sacrifice for us, there is much inner work for each one of us to do.⁷

Second, inner work equips us with wisdom. Inner work transforms us. It gives us perspective on ourselves, others, and the situation. It teaches us that there are many ways to view a situation, not just one right way. It humbles us. It reveals our true dependency and need for God. It makes us accessible to those we lead. It sets us free from attachments to the attractions of this world. And it daily reminds us that we have not arrived, nor will we until we finish our race. Such wisdom is a gift of the Spirit from God. It is also the hard earned fruit of diligence in pursuing God in and through our lived experiences. It is more powerful for us as leaders than all the theories and tools of leadership available to us.⁸

Third, inner work produces practical benefits as is always the case when we know and follow God's ways. Inner work increases our godliness. Godly leaders attract and disciple godly others. We are not alone in the work God has called us to do. Godly leaders create trust. We motivate others to give their best for the work of the organization. Finally, Godly leaders are effective and efficient with eternal results. We seek God for his guidance both in vision and in implementation which removes non-essentials from the equation.⁹

The Requisites of Inner Work

Inner work requires at least three things. First, it requires courage - the strength to look at what is unknown and potentially threatening about ourselves, and to persevere through to our goal.¹⁰ Facing the reality of who we are *is* demanding - with all of our strengths and all of our weaknesses, with the expressions of grace worked in us as well as sin working through us. Knowing ourselves as God knows us, for good and for bad, requires death to the demands of self-pride, self-justification, psychological defense - and life to Him.¹¹ Second, it requires fellowship - the willingness to submit not only to God but also to our fellow believers.¹² When approached with humility, there is great comfort in knowing we are not alone, that we have others to support us on our way, and that we can discover God and ourselves through these relationships.¹³ As all leaders know, leadership can be a very lonely place, but it doesn't have to be and God doesn't intend it to be.¹⁴ Third, it requires skill - the competence that

comes through instruction, practice and application of processes that produce desired results.¹⁵ Too often, the spiritual and emotional demands of inner work are such that we as leaders want to avoid that work, preferring to focus on other areas of competence.¹⁶ However, just as in all the spiritual disciplines, training in inner work of sanctification is a requirement for us to become complete and whole in our leadership.

The Fruit of Inner Work

Finally, what does such inner work produce in our lives as leaders, in those whom we touch, and in the organizations or groups that we lead? This article emphasizes three results in particular: Personally, the healing that manifests itself; Relationally, the identification that occurs, and; Organizationally, the authority that comes forth. When a leader pursues God in doing inner work, God reveals Himself. In the process of such revelation, He becomes our healer.¹⁷ Such healing is part of working out our salvation with fear and trembling towards being the person He created us to be.¹⁸ With release from each new bondage, we open ourselves to worship and glorify God.

Through identification – first with Christ, then with others – we know not only the trial, but also the victory, and we can lead others toward similar victories in their own lives just as Jesus has sacrificially led us.¹⁹ So often when we as leaders face situations where we have not done the inner work, we cannot and will not lead from God's heart, but from our woundedness. The result is always destructive. However, having done the inner work, we are free to comfort with the comfort for which we have been comforted as we see more clearly His vision for us and our followers.²⁰

One last fruit of inner work is spiritual authority, which imparts God's truth through us as leader to shape his body. This authority allows us as leaders to persuade and/or influence those we are leading while leaving their will free to choose to follow or not.²¹ God gives each of us a measure of this authority when He places us in positions of organizational leadership. However, He also expects us to continue to grow in that authority in part as a function of doing the significant inner work to which He has also called us.²²

The Situation

The premise of this work is that the character of

an organization's executive leadership – primarily in the chief executive and secondarily in his or her executive team²³ – shapes the character of the organization. Therefore, to the degree that the chief executive and his or her executive team allow the transforming power of God to do His inner work in them, the organization will itself be transformed to more readily reveal the kingdom of God at work.

To illustrate the principles of inner work, an example will be taken from research into the interface between executive leadership and organizational development.²⁴ This research focused on the personal, interpersonal and organizational dynamics associated with leadership in the University of the Nations, a faith-based, multicultural, missions training ministry of Youth with a Mission (YWAM). It is a twenty-first century version of faith missions formed in the nineteenth century.²⁵ As it has grown, the University of the Nations has developed its global reach with more than 300 locations in over 100 nations around the world.

In this research, the focal point of the study was the Chancellor of the original university resource campus in Kona, Hawaii (U of N-Kona). He combined ministry and executive functions in this role. The focus of this article will be looking at him as an example of the senior, executive leader of a medium-sized, Christian organization who embraces God's call to holiness as part of that function. Therefore, he will be referred to as chief executive as well as Chancellor. Finally, as with each of us, this is not the whole of his story, nor the university's. However, his example is instructive to us as Christian leaders.

I select examples from this chief executive's commitment to inner work to point to the importance, requisites, and fruit of doing inner work. This description, reflection, and analysis is developed with an eye toward the lessons that we as Christian leaders can apply in our own lives.

As described in previous work,²⁶ this executive leader entered into his role as a second generation leader following the footsteps of the founder. Previously, he had been a very capable voice of the ministry, serving the founder much as Joshua had served Moses. However, at the beginning of this research,²⁷ he became the spiritual and executive head of the original, resource campus of this ministry's university.

He discovered his deep need to have Rom. 12:2 (worth a quote) fulfilled in his life as he took on

these responsibilities: 'Now do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.' His commitment to inner work came out of an awareness of his need for and dependence on God's transforming work within him, that he might rise up to the challenge.

Inner Work from a Personal Perspective

In the second year of his tenure as Chancellor, the chief executive took a working trip to Europe. He visited YWAM bases and University of the Nations locations to minister to these communities and to share what God was doing both at and through the U of N-Kona. While there he had numerous occasions to pray with leaders and discuss ministry issues, to mentor young leaders, and to reflect on his own walk with God. As is often the case, when we allow ourselves to be open to God, He will reveal Himself through the very ministry we offer to others. God did reveal Himself to the chief executive in just this way. As a result of this time with God, he identified issues affecting his leadership.

One personal issue that surfaced was a core belief that "I am alone," an existential cry about his leadership and his life. In this time with God, he came to know that "God is discipling me inside. The first message he gave me was 'You're not alone.' I knew this related to the belief that I had to have all the answers myself which led to me isolating myself."

Another belief was, "I have been abandoned." He recognized the root of this issue early in his life as well as later on during the formative years of his leadership. He reported, "I've experienced being abandoned, not that it was consciously done. For example, I looked at myself, where it deals with confrontation - saying something that [I] could be rejected over - and not saying it. [Out of my own abandonment] I abandon others by not speaking."

A final issue related to accountability, avoidance of which at its core comes from a performance orientation fearful of being a failure. After this trip, he began to see it in a new light, "I've started seeing areas of my life, from how much I travel to parts of my thought life that nobody talks to. That's not healthy. The message of accountability is that somebody cares."

For a leader not used to sharing this depth of personal issues so broadly, this trip marked a dramatic shift in his willingness to do inner work and to share the results. Clearly, he was ready and available for God to intervene in his life. He embraced the pain of these awarenesses and deepened his pursuit of change in his life as an individual, in his relationships, and in his leadership of the university.

Reflection on Inner Work from a Personal Perspective

There are at least four components of this inner work. First is the chief executive's awareness. He recognized there was inner work to be done. Such core beliefs as he recognized on his trip had shaped the previous twenty-five years of his leadership without clear conscious awareness. Yet, he could remember effects of these beliefs while in his previous leadership roles. He realized that with his new promotion to Chancellor of the university, he no longer could allow them to be so influential in his life and leadership.

Second is humility. He humbled himself to seek God and pursue healing that God had available for him. Some of the activities contributing to his successful inner work included: 1) orienting his executive team, called the Chancellor's Team, to address issues affecting both personal and organizational actions, 2) seeking out one on one consultations with individuals skilled in identifying and resolving personal issues, 3) attending retreat type ministries specifically focused on resolving such issues, 4) working closely with his wife on these issues as they related to their relationship and to his functioning in the university, 5) sharing his journey with the university staff quite openly, 6) using the fruit of his life experience to minister to others in need, and 7) mentoring young leaders through personal and organizational issues he had worked through himself.

Third is willingness, a "willingness to embrace the pain." It means coming through the denial phase where fear numbs any pain, and then allowing this emotional pain to guide his attention to the core beliefs. The challenge is staying with the pain long enough to get God's perspective on these beliefs and the issues associated with them.

Fourth is the way through. Once he got God's perspective, he could make his way through. The pain would begin to lessen and he could release his creativity, motivation, and emotional strength

for the many other tasks at hand that had suffered under his denial. Two of the most significant types of those tasks included 1) his tendency to isolate himself and thereby exclude quality input from strong leaders, and 2) making tough organizational decisions that were bound to create criticism and with it the threat of rejection. Both of these tasks he chose to engage. He demonstrated personal change that cascaded into the rest of the organization because of his influence and by virtue of the new authority founded on this inner work.

Fruit of Inner Work from a Personal Perspective

The chief executive identified one of the skills that helped him make his way through. He called it a personal tracking process to get to root, emotional issues. He describes it saying,

I first recognize the pain . . . filtering through my belief system with the messages, the feelings attached, and the inappropriate behaviour. [Even recently] I went through the process. I came much quicker to a feeling and gut level and could go to the source and say, "What's the root?"²⁸

Personal tracking is an individual skill that can be used anytime, anywhere. It is powerful because it is under the control of the individual in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. Therefore it does not depend on a special person to direct it or a special context to experience it. Rather it allows the individual to identify and act on the issues which keep their mind unrenewed.

Effectively, personal tracking requires that we identify the trigger for an unresolved emotional issue in our lives. It could be a feeling. It could be a recognition that our communication with another was off the mark. It could be the "aha" that "Here's a pattern that doesn't work for me, or for others." Next, it means identifying the filter that we've been using on our experience. This could take the form of a belief statement that makes sense out of our perception and behavior. It could be tapes we play in our minds. It could be fantasies that we imagine. Then the task is to go to the root. Here we ask Jesus to join us as we identify what is the lie we are believing about ourselves, others and the world around us, *and* what is his truth that can replace that lie. When we identify the truth, it is then our work with the Holy Spirit to embrace and embody this truth, learning to live it out in our daily behaviour.

As a result of taking on God's challenge of

doing the inner work that He required, the chief executive could say, "God has set a sense of internal approval, and I don't feel I have to be somebody I wasn't meant to be. I can be wholly who I am." What a difference in a leader's life when he or she can move from the fear associated with need of approval from others, to receiving and embracing God's approval. However we as leaders arrive at this place, it is a place worth being. It is a place worth leading from. It is a place worth encouraging others to find.

Inner Work from an Interpersonal Perspective

A previous article has documented in detail a conflict within the university between co-directors of a major department and other departmental leaders.²⁹ To get to resolution for that conflict, the chief executive needed to confront the conflict head on. However, to do so, he had to do major inner work with the support of his close colleagues in the Chancellor's Team. This was not work he could do alone. He needed trusted advisors who would love him *and* not flinch from truth telling with him. Having to face himself and the pain of his own abdication over a period of months in this circumstance was difficult. But he persevered, and when he finally confronted the co-directors, he was able to say,

I have honestly sought God to look at issues in my own life . . . in that process I have humbled myself to you over two major issues in my own life, not only in this relationship but also as they appear in others.

The chief executive's willingness to look at himself first before dealing with significant relational issues in the organization came from a practice developed in the Chancellor's Team. Whenever it appeared that there was a significant issue in the organization requiring correction, the question asked of one another in the Team was first, "How is this true about me," and second, "How is this true about us?" These are the questions associated with identification, a process and a skill.

His skill of identification was honed during intense sessions with Chancellor Team members, the purpose of which was to find God's heart and in humility build a bridge to the one or ones in opposition. This process was also used whenever criticisms, judgment, or accusations needing to be addressed were levelled against Chancel-

lor Team members individually, or the university corporately. The Chancellor's Team found God's bridge to those they led by: Asking the identification questions; Searching for answers to how the very behaviour patterns that needed correction in others were present in themselves; and Finding that part in criticism, judgment or accusation that was true.

As each and all of the team members embraced this identification, God revealed limiting beliefs, misperceptions, and untruths that were acting as barriers both for themselves and others. Taking responsibility for these personal and organizational truths about themselves, they then found resolution within themselves for the issues. With such resolution comes authority to confront others in love and to be able to offer a way forward. This process of identification is a key to the inner work of the chief executive and his or her executive team. The chief executive in this study recounted the significance of this process for him:

That time frame was critical at its core. I was functioning in a context of leadership [i.e. the Chancellor's Team] where I was safe relationally. I could address personal strongholds, as well as corporate strongholds. I was discovering issues in my own life, walking with them and having the freedom to walk out of them. [I was] developing an internal paradigm that said, 'This is me' [according to God's definition]. It puts pieces together of how I identify my own value, value of others, of how we grow, the effect of valuing identity on performance and valuing others, and formation of frameworks.

Thus, the process used in the Chancellor's Team for analysing, evaluating, and deciding on important organizational issues dealt with core personal revelation as well as organizational implementation. The chief executive was committed to grasping the significance of how his personal issues affected himself, his relationships, and the organization as a whole.

Reflection on Inner Work from an Interpersonal Perspective

Hodgson *et. al.* identified a very significant factor in successful organizations, *the executive role constellation*. They write, "We take the view . . . that the top executives of any organization - except one that is being pulled apart - form a close-knit group that is of key importance to all aspects of

that organization's operations. Such executive groups, we think, usually consist of two or three (rarely more) central individuals . . . We have used the term 'constellation' rather than 'group' to emphasize the significance of the *personal relations* among members, the emotional climate of the group, and the psychological properties of the interactions that define the group."³⁰

The Chancellor's Team fulfilled the three components that Hodgson *et. al.* identified - 1) significant personal relations, 2) strong and supportive emotional climate, and 3) growth producing psychological properties of the group interactions. It created a group leadership context to validate the reality of emotional pain, discuss it, and deal with it. Underlying these strengths, this team mutually shared a commitment to seeking God in all they were doing, humble transparency before God and one another, and speaking the truth in love to one another. Through the spiritual, psychological, and behavioral support of the Chancellor's Team, the chief executive moved from functioning in isolation to functioning within more typical organizational systems.

Swann's (1987) research noted that having such a social context of support provides one of the two most important features required for change. Personal openness is the other. Further research supports the principle that validation by one's social circle increases commitment to role identity (Burke and Reitzes, 1991; Riley and Burke, 1995; Swann, 1987). In turn, increased commitment leads to increased performance.³¹

Fruit of Inner Work from an Interpersonal Perspective

As a result of doing tough inner work with his colleagues in the Chancellor's Team, the chief executive came to be known as a leader who could be approached. One example out of many illustrates the point. A senior leader in the ministry committed a marriage and ministry threatening sin. He left the campus and the city, not knowing how to re-build the trust he had broken with his wife, his colleagues, and his students. The chief executive travelled to meet him in another city in an effort to establish a basis for re-conciliation and restoration of this man and his ministry. Reporting his experience, this other senior leader said:

Part of the struggle I've had was that I never did trust. I tend to be a very emotional person,

and I didn't see anything coming back from [other leaders]. It was painful to not have anyone identify on that level. I never thought that they couldn't, it was like they wouldn't. Out of all the leaders I had seen, I'd never seen a leader broken.

I didn't trust them. If I had trusted them, I might have shared my condition. On this occasion, I aired my frustrations with [the chief executive]. In the course of the conversation, he said, "Stop." He waited on the Lord, and then he just broke [into tears]. He asked my forgiveness for [the fact I'd never seen a leader broken]. It was very, very real. That put me over the top as far as relating to guys in leadership. Something inside of me changed.

In part as a result of the chief executive's depth of identification with the pain of this colleague and friend, the colleague was reconciled to his wife and restored to effective ministry. In this example of reconciliation, it is clear that the chief executive was putting into practice his experience of walking with Jesus for many years. And yet, he attributes a significant portion of this and other successes like it to the processes developed out of the Chancellor's Team experiences together. As he says, "A lot of these things started growing out of our own relationship in the Chancellor's Team - how I was walking, how overall leadership was walking, my relationship with [the founder], and the International Leadership Team."

The chief executive's identification with those he was leading created a trusted environment. As one of the university's international deans described his experience of the environment being created,

The leadership infra-structure [the chief executive] is setting up here gives me a sense of security. This is a place where we can process things, put things on the table, know they'll be heard, thought about, processed, and we'll be a part of what is birthed. There'll be ownership.

The importance of creating such trust and security is clear to all leaders. However, it is especially vital for Christian leaders to live out the values that scripture details are ours to model. One of the critical ways in which this is done is through the inner work God reveals to us. Such inner work leads to increased transparency and openness with the resulting increase in trust and security for followers.

Inner Work from an Organizational Perspective

Organizationally, the chief executive moved into his role at a point when the organization was in transition. The university and its related ministries had grown dramatically over the previous fourteen years. The dynamism of faith and works joined together had produced great spiritual fruit throughout the world as well as in individual students, staff, and volunteers' lives. Like all living organisms, however the university needed to go to a new stage of development. In order to continue producing good fruit, the organization had to address its limitations to going to that next stage.

The chief executive inherited the problematic, organizational consequences of the university's success, as well as the good will and organizational resources. Success had fuelled growth resulting in fragmentation of efforts. Tasks got organized around people, not positions. People were assigned by availability not competence. Few formal accountability systems and policies operated. Short interest spans led to insufficient follow-through. And, management by expedience and/or crisis characterized the management style.

The culture encouraged people to get a personal "Word of the Lord" and act on it. As a result, it produced too many directions at once. It focused on opportunities not problems. It spread the organization's resources too thinly. And, it created the sense of prioritizing everything, thus nothing. The organization faced an identity crisis and required new structures, new definitions, and new ministry expressions.³²

For the chief executive to affect the organization, he had to recognize the need for continuity alongside the need for change. Reinterpreting vision and values in light of a new functional identity and still remaining true to the essence of the vision and values presented him one of his greatest challenges. The key that he discovered in the process was integration.

The organizational manifestation of this integration involved relocating two branch campuses of this resource campus into the main campus. On a practical level, it was driven by a financial imperative - the university had to face up to its debt. On a spiritual level, it was a manifestation of work God was wanting to do across the board - in the university, but also in the leaders and staff of the university.

The inner work required of the chief execu-

tive here was to live out in his own life what he was leading the university to live out in its life. Under his guidance, campus leadership seriously accepted the responsibility to retire debt. He also took God's leading and applied it to himself and his family, declaring, "How can I lead in this if I myself am not committed to the same principles. What is in the head will be in the body. If I accept myself to remain in debt, I have no authority to lead us as a campus out of debt. And I am committed to not leave a legacy of debt."

More generally he spoke to the same issue, "To what degree is the mandate [to retire debt] in this place integrated in my life? Am I willing to say YES to what is inside of me? The critical thing that God is trying to focus us on is integration in multiple levels. How do we integrate family? How do we go to the nations and be free to have integrity? ... Can we go to the nations in integrity when our finances are out of shape?"

What inner work was required in order to move himself, and his organization, forward? In his words, the issues had to do with fear, need for approval, and shame, "I know there has been a fear historically and need for approval. So looking to certain significant people created a symbiotic need for approval. I think that pattern has been in my life and the last five years has been a process of intentionally addressing it . . ." He committed himself to this work at every level, and actively pursued the healing and transformation God had prepared for him.

Reflection on Inner Work from an Organizational Perspective

Jeavons (1994, p.70) writes about the meaning of work in Christian service organizations. He suggests that the Christian concept of ministry, i.e. doing the work of the organization, is "intensely and essentially personal . . . To ask people to be involved in the ministry of a Christian service organization, then, is to ask them to bring their gifts, their personal attributes as individuals and as believers, to that work."³³

Jeavons describes one source of the chief executive's understanding and commitment to integration and transformation. His desire to transform the organization paralleled and grew out of his desire to transform himself. Such transformation is essential to the Christian life, for it is a commitment to grow in the likeness of Jesus. And, this would hold true for the chief executive

across personal, interpersonal, and organizational contexts.

As important as personal skill and collegial support is for doing inner work, the ultimate test of the work is in its organizational application. Organizational leaders face this test daily. The fast paced demands of their roles require actionable decisions, often without sufficient time in the moment for considered reflection. How does a leader deal with this pace and these demands?

One answer is to do the work ahead of time. As this chief executive had been doing his inner work, both individually and in collective settings, he had been addressing core beliefs within himself, overcoming his fears, and growing his faith. The financial imperative facing the campus, and the decision to integrate the two outlying campuses into the life of the main campus, represented the biggest challenge to the chief executive's leadership he'd ever faced.

His decision to integrate them was fraught with multiple issues - practical issues of organizational finance, relational issues with leaders of these two branch campuses, organizational issues of effective structure and function alongside the "leading of the Spirit," individuation issues related to the founder and his vision, *and* the personal, emotional issues of identity, integrity, and character. What then were the results?

Fruit of the Inner Work from an Organizational Perspective

Unlike secular universities, this faith-based university was first and foremost a ministry training ground. One of the primary functions of the chief executive's role as Chancellor was to walk alongside the many ministry leaders within the university. Because of his inner work, this chief executive was able to effectively counsel a younger ministry leader who had inherited a significant debt from the previous leader's time. He reported:

I've been meeting regularly with [a key, young ministry leader]. I am walking through dealing with [his ministry's] debt quickly. He basically brought up, "How do you deal with this kind of pain . . . looking to the past, not just shelving it and saying it is someone else's." Will he embrace the pain associated with carrying that kind of debt right now, not try to hide it and look for a quick fix answer?

The chief executive's answer was predictable

to this young man's question: 1) do the inner work that allows you to know yourself in relation to God and your former leader, 2) humble yourself and acknowledge your dependence on God for the answers, 3) forgive and release those responsible for the present situation, and 4) get mobilized into Holy Spirit-led action.

At another level, the chief executive was accountable to the international Board of Regents of the university. He had to present the financial situation of the campus following the integration of the two branch campuses. Whereas previously, he would have simply handed out a written report, his report following the significant integration decisions he had made was oral and face to face. The Chairman of the Board of Regents reported on the chief executive's presentation.

I knew he had sweaty palms about being vulnerable in front of the Board of Regents. He had to present the financial situation of the [university] to the Regents . . . he not only handed out the written report before hand, but he was then willing to answer questions. He was so open, he was disarming. He stepped into the front and said, "Ask me the hard questions. This is what we've done. What do you want to say?" It was very positive and it spoke volumes.

His loyalty to the previous administration had a great big stamp of integrity all over it. He never described what he inherited in any negative or condescending or derogatory way, but always charitable in any reference to that. Yet, he presented the facts in terms of indebtedness, numbers of students, and so on so that we could really talk about real numbers. I remember the feedback from the Board of Regents to him was very, very positive also. His stature increased in their estimation as a result of the way he conducted himself.

Both of these examples demonstrated the chief executive's commitment to do his own, personal inner work. One was through personal interaction with a ministry leader needing the wisdom of someone who had walked ahead of him on the path. The other was through organizational accountability in which the chief executive had come to the place where there was no threat to him, even though he had taken a bold step to address his campus' need for integration and financial integrity.

Conclusion

What conclusion can we as leaders draw from this

case example? Clearly God has to be at the center of the process. We as leaders, chosen and gifted by Him, also must be as fully present as possible in the process. But what is the process? How do we hear God - generally and situationally - speak to our inner most being? How do we come to know that which He wants to transform within us so that we can lead with His authority? How do we embrace the call to holiness in the midst of organizational, relational, and personal demands on us?

A couple of answers come to mind. One is that we need to increase our "humility quotient." Humility is the willingness to be known for who we are. It starts with ourselves knowing ourselves - through using scripture to set the standards and an eager pursuit of evaluating ourselves in light of these standards. It includes surrounding ourselves with other, truth-telling colleagues and friends who function as trusted advisors to encourage, exhort, and comfort us. Finally, it means creating the space in our organizations for individual voices to be truly heard, and effectively responded to, as we all move toward fulfilling our common purpose.

A second is that we need to develop our own "tracking process," a personally developed means for following the lead of the Holy Spirit in the process of submission, obedience, and transformation of our hearts and minds. This requires developing the language, concepts, and practices necessary to do our inner work. It also involves including others, both professionally and relationally, in knowing God and knowing ourselves in relationship to Him.

As we take these and other steps to do the inner work of sanctification, we are renewed by the transforming of our minds. With each new aspect of transformation, we are better equipped to be the leaders God has called us to be and we are fulfilling the scripture from 2 Cor.3:16-18 which says:

. . . whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being *transformed into his likeness* with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

May we experience God's pleasure in us as we turn to Him for direction as leaders. May we know His freedom and reflect His glory as we lead. May the truth of His presence with us rise into joy and

overflow into worship through our leadership.

Notes and References

1 2 Pet.1:2-3; Rom.12:2; 2 Cor.3:16-18; 1 Chron.17:16 & 1 Chron.29:14-15; Mt.20:24-28; Acts 15:1-35.

2 Prov.11:2

3 2 Chron.1:7

4 2 Chr.1:10

5 1 Ki.11:1-13.

6 John Calvin puts it succinctly when he writes, "Our wisdom . . . consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves . . . the endowments which we possess cannot possibly be from ourselves . . . we always seem to ourselves just, and upright, and wise, and holy, until we are convinced, by clear evidence [through knowledge of God], of our injustice, vileness, folly, and impurity." Calvin, John. (1559). *Institutes of Christian Religion*, Book 1, Chap.1, Section 1. Translated by Henry Beveridge. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library.

7 1 Pet.1:13-16; 1 Jn.5:2-3

8 Jam.3:13, 17.

9 Rom.8:28

10 Josh.1:6

11 Lk.9:23-24.

12 Heb.10:24-25; Jam.5:16; Mt.18:19-20.

13 Prov.27:17.

14 Josh.1:5; 1 Ki.19:14-18.

15 Jn.16:13-14.

16 For example, Saul failed God's test of patience and obedience. Relying on his natural judgment, he failed to access God's wisdom, even after God instructed him through Samuel. 1 Sam.15:22-27.

17 Ex.15:26.

18 Phil.2:12-13.

19 Phil.2:5-8.

20 2 Cor.1:3-4

21 Tom Marshall writes, "True authority is spiritual in origin. That is, it proceeds from the spirit of the one exercising it and it impacts on the person over whom it is exercised, also in his spirit. It carries an 'oughtness' about it that registers on the person's conscience, but it leaves his will free to choose to obey or disobey." Marshall, T. (1991). *Understanding Leadership*. Lynnwood, WA: Emerald Books, p.104.

22 Ps.75:5-7.

23 From a leadership and organizational theory point of view, all leader have inner, role task work to do. That is the work that "engages the deepest aspects of the self and . . . is the sustained and directed effort of mind [and we might add, emotion and spirit] in which a person seeks to *synthesize the organizational requirements of his position with his own individual needs, interests, and aspirations* . . . The essence of this inner,

role task work is the set of "necessary decisions of personal management [that] get made nowhere else but *inside the individual*, and by no other agent in the system than the individual himself. Working on these decisions, making them, acting on them, living with the consequences, and making further decisions; that is the substance of role-task work" Hodgson, R.C., Levinson, D.J. and Zaleznik, A. (1965). *The Executive Role Constellation: An Analysis of Personality and Role Relations in Management*. Boston: Harvard Business School. p.231.

24 Early, G. (2004). *Leadership Expectations: How Executive Expectations are Created and Used in a Non-Profit Setting*. Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press.

25 Fiedler, K. (1994). *The Story of Faith Missions*. Oxford: Regnum Lynx, p.144-45.

26 Early, G. (2000). "A Second Generation Leader Succeeds the Founder: What is the Process?" *Transformation: An International Journal on Mission and Ethics*. p.1-8.

27 This extensive, seven year research project analyzed how one executive leader created expectations for the growth, development, and transformation of his organization. The study employed a naturalistic, "inquiry from the inside" approach characterized by a longitudinal, field based, case study format relying on qualitative methods. It utilized research from the fields of managerial work-jobs-and-behavior, symbolic interactionism, role theory, role identity theory, and enactment theory to increase our understanding of the creation and use of expectations that empower executives and the organizations they serve.

28 The chief executive further commented, "That model I learned sitting with the Chancellor's Team. In some ways, I do not wish those times on anybody. But, the results of those times distilled in me, and the campus now functions differently because of them."

29 Early, G. (2000). "The Chief Executive Role as God's Classroom for Character Formation." *Transformation: An International Journal on Mission and Ethics*. p.9-15.

30 Hodgson et al., p.284.

31 Swann, W.B., Jr. (1987). "Identity Negotiation: Where Two Roads Meet." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 53, 6. pp.1038-1051; Burke, P.J. and Reitzes, D.C. (1991). "An Identity Theory Approach to Commitment." *Social Psychology Quarterly*. 54, 3. pp.239-51; Riley, A. and Burke, P.J. (1995). "Identities and Self-Verification in the Small Group." *Social Psychology*. 58, 2. pp.61-73.

32 Adizes, I. (1988). *Corporate Lifecycles: How and Why Corporations Grow and Die and What To Do About It*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

33 Jeavons, T.H. (1994). *When the Bottom Line is Faithfulness: Management of Christian Service Organizations*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. p.70.