The Part of Leadership No One Wants to Talk About

It was a late Sunday afternoon and I was enjoying some reading (with the Players golf tourney in the background…who's responsible for the pin placement on hole 17?!) The author of the blog I was skimming through recommended a book with the foreboding title *Leadership Pain*. DELETE. (I'm not a big fan of pain. You?). Well, almost DELETE. My eyes grabbed the subtitle: *The Classroom for Growth*. I paused (I like to grow). Then I noticed its author: Sam Chand (I'm a fan). From there, I read the book description and I was hooked. "Buy now with 1-click." Done.

What a read.

Candidly, for my part, Chand's take on leadership at times seems extreme. But ultimately, I buy his premise, mainly because I have lived his premise. Leadership IS painful. True. Very true. But equally true, as Chand convincingly argues, is this hard-core reality: the crucible of leadership will do a work. A deep work. A good work. A transforming work. It will grow you. It will humble you. And it will break you—in every good sense of the word.

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To provoke your perspective on the pain of leadership, allow me to showcase several nuggets of gold from Chand's book. Warning: Buckle up.

- Pain isn't an intrusion into the lives of spiritual leaders; it's an essential element in shaping the leader's life.
- You'll grow only to the threshold of your pain.
- Making friends with your pain is part of leadership. Our pains tell us we're moving in the right direction. New pains will always be a part of your life as you continue climbing the ladder to your destiny.
- There is no growth without change, no change without loss, and no loss without pain.
- Difficulties are God's curriculum for those who want to excel.
- Throughout the Bible and church history, we see a clear pattern in how God works with people. No matter how gifted they were, God humbled them before he used them.
- God's methods may vary, but he always manages to get a person's undistracted attention to

teach the most fundamental lessons of trust.

• Pain isn't an accident in God's world. Even when it's self-inflicted through doubt and sin, God graciously weaves the strands of these experiences into something beautiful—if we'll let him.

• Sooner or later, the God who has transported us out of the kingdom of darkness into his marvelous light takes us out of the light and into a dark night of the soul. It's part of the way of the cross—to some degree for every believer, but especially for those of us who have been called to lead God's people. We find true spiritual strength when we trust God when we're weak. Similarly, our leadership is far more attractive and authentic when we've been broken and then lead out of humility instead of pride.

• Pain is a surprising substitute teacher in our lives. We've gotten used to the way things are in our leadership strategy, thoughts, perceptions, and practice. Pain is the new teacher we want to avoid or get rid of as soon as possible, but in reality it's the best instructor we could ever have.

• Don't run from your pain. Don't deny it exists. It's the most effective leadership development tool the world has ever known. You'll grow only to the threshold of your pain, so raise it!

• Do you want to be strong in God's grace and power? Make peace with the pain God sends your way. Recognize it as a springboard for growth and a platform for greater effectiveness. You'll need it. God has much more in store for you.

Potent stuff, huh?

The unsought, unexpected, and unwelcomed tests, trials, and heartaches of leadership will shape your soul like nothing else. You will be different. You will have a new normal.

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A new normal authored by the One who does all things well.