

THE AFRICAN LEADERSHIP LETTER

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TEACHING STEWARDSHIP IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

Defining Stewardship:

The subject of 'Stewardship' in the African context draws ideologies from the field of farming. A farmer, after harvest, ensures that the crop is carefully stored away in the barns and thereafter used sparingly in order to last until the following season and selecting the best crop as seed for the following planting season. The crop for food and for seed are kept in separate barns. The art of being able to manage the crop from the field to the barns and the careful use thereafter and reserving some as seed for the next planting season – is effective stewardship. The Chitonga word 'Bubanzi', translated in the English word for effective stewardship and the word 'Mubanzi' is translated in English as 'Steward'.

Therefore, when teaching principles of effective stewardship in the African context, one needs to appreciate the knowledge that the people already have on the subject and the challenges of daily livelihood where there is intentional management of stored grain for maximum benefit at the end of the day. Teaching stewardship in Africa with an assumption that Africans have no clue about stewardship is starting on a wrong foundation.

This paper will discuss six general principles of effective stewardship drawn from the African farming context: Ownership by the Served, Long-Term Planning, Individual vs Community

Responsibility, The Holistic Approach, Giving, and Accountability and Transparency.

1. **Principle One:** Effective stewardship is about strengthening **local driven-ness and ownership** by those being served.

At the point of nationalization, the African Church inherited a lot from missionaries in terms of land, church buildings, houses, vehicles, farms, etc. This scenario sometimes created the feeling that this 'inherited property' belonged to the person who donated it and in the process divorced it from the beneficiary. In Zambia, for example, vast pieces of land remain idle, buildings and other valuable assets left at Mission stations by the missionaries were often vandalised and put to waste due to the absence of a sense of ownership and championship by the local people. Ownership without championship or drivers to advance the cause is inadequate. The two go hand in hand. The nationals need to step up and own what was graciously given to them by missionaries in order to carry on the mission of the Church to reach out to the lost and support the work and the workers.

The Bible is very clear that God created man to own, rule and manage His creation (Genesis 1:26-28). Without a good sense of ownership, man cannot manage God's resources (Luke 19:12-26). Every farmer is

able to carefully manage stored produce because of ownership. Adam was meant to become the champion to oversee God's creation. He also provided an assistant to ensure results.

2. **Principle Two:** Effective stewardship is about **short, medium to long-term planning** which includes strengthening capacities and mentoring potential champions:

There is an increasing demand for long-term planning in the African church given the experience during the missionary era. In many African societies, people tend to be short-term preoccupied in search for daily basic needs. This scenario has tended to limit planning only to a short-term basis, only focused to deal with the issue at hand possibly threatening livelihoods.

Furthermore, in the rural African setting planning is on an annual basis cycle as farmers. The furthest most rural farmers think is the next planting season. Also, the perception in Africa that this world is a temporary place is an obstacle to long-term planning. A Kiluba proverb says, "*Kishiya bashiya; Kitana batana.*" The meaning in English is, "This is how we received it; as we received it is how we have to leave it." This includes every aspect of life such as housing, food, power, land or boundaries and traditions. In Africa, it is a taboo to try to change things.

However, good stewardship is about **short term, medium and long-term planning** around personal improvement and, in this context church life. The church needs to be challenged to plan for growth, expansion and management both in the present and in future. Likewise, a good farmer plans around both short and long-term goals.

They prepare for the future in the planting and later harvest and careful storage and use of the stored crop that will go beyond the next planting season. It is such farmers who help others who run out of food before the next harvest. Effective stewardship is a learned skill. We do not automatically know how to be effective stewards of God's resources. We can learn from Scriptures and from those that are effective in this area.

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Jesus prepared for his departure but also prepared the people to carry on the work. In John 16:7 Jesus told his disciples, "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." The point Jesus was making is that when he was with the disciples, he did things for them, but when he goes away he would send that Holy Spirit to enable the disciples do what Jesus did so that His work continues.

3. **Principle Three:** Effective stewardship is about **individual persons**, in context of the **community at large**; taking responsibility.

Most African communities or societies operate in systems where perception, values, and even decisions, are to a larger extent shared or even owned by communities. In rural settings children have no sense of personal ownership of property. For example, one blanket is bought for two or three girls or boys who share the bed. They consider the blanket to be theirs and not for one individual. Without the community, Africa would be much more

chaotic than it is now. Communities play very important roles in individual people's lives. However, this community mind-set can get complex and leads to unaccomplished tasks because property is not assigned to a specific accountable individual. An effective steward farmer takes personal responsibility of ensuring who is going to hold the plough, plant and cook for those in the field, but has the community in mind.

As individuals, we are one another's keeper and part of the community of faith. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother? And he said, 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?'" Genesis 4:9. The Apostle Paul says, "For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body..." (I Corinthians 12:12)

4. **Principle Four:** Effective stewardship must take a **holistic approach**; it should involve the whole man and his environment.

In Africa, life has always been very integrated. Africans have depended on natural resources such as land, trees, water, animals etc. for survival. In recent times, however, pressure on natural resources has increased, leading to over-harvest of resources such as trees for energy. Effective stewardship, therefore, will entail finding alternative avenues away from dependence on natural resources to preserve natural heritages.

The redemptive plan of God involved that of the air, water, land, trees, animal and human life. Stewardship means the careful care for all God's creation. (Genesis 1:1-27)

5. **Principle Five:** Effective stewardship is **giving** and not just **receiving**.

The rationale for stewardship is adequate warehouse storage for the benefit of the family and the needy beyond the profit motive. In most African societies, generous giving is a life-style. People share and give in time of plenty and in time of need at weddings, tribal annual ceremonies, etc. However, this concept seem not to have the same understanding when it comes to giving in the Church, particularly churches that were started by missionaries. There are two possible reasons.

First, when the church started, the Africans were not encouraged to give because they may have been considered too poor to support the church. The issue here is that they were not taught. This reason seems to be justified by the fact that members of churches that were not started by missionaries give generously to their churches. Interestingly enough when members of churches not started by missionaries leave and join churches that were started by missionaries, they become top givers in those churches.

Second, members of churches started by missionaries have not taken true ownership of the church. Therefore the church is only perceived as the institution which helps the sick, dying, poor and the needy. Perhaps, the question to pose is – where does the church build reserves to meet all these demands?

God expects us to give generously (John 3:16.). In Exodus 35:4-10 Moses challenges God's people to give what they have. Because most of the churches in Africa are in rural areas, church members there should be challenged to give what they have—maize, beans, chicken, goats, etc. During the District Conference at Jembo in

Zambia, Rev. Phillip Moono, the District Superintendent told me that one of the churches in his district gave an ox as payment for their financial goal to the district.

6. **Principle six:** Accountability and Transparency:

In Africa people generally take offence when they are asked to account for what has been entrusted to them. You often hear a sharp reaction, “Don’t you trust me? Why are you asking me to account?” The other dynamic is that in Africa, it is only children or servants who are required to account what has been entrusted to them. For example, a boy looking after goats will be asked by his parents or seniors are all the goats and kids in? If one of the animals is missing, the lad knows that he is in trouble and may delay coming home.

Effective stewardship requires that everyone – leaders and those led – commit themselves to ensuring that whatever is given is used for its intended purpose and that those who give have access to transparent information about how what they have given how been used. Diverting gifts is a very quick way to discouraging and

losing donors. Those who have given must be appreciated. The parable of talents in Matt. 25:14-30 shows that accountability and transparency increases resources.

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In conclusion, I wish to say that the African church needs to be forever thankful for the work of missionaries. They made great sacrifices to establish the church in Africa and acquired property which the church today cannot afford to get. The property owned by churches started by missionaries is just a wish for those churches that were not started by missionaries. The church leadership in Africa must take action in teaching the church on effective stewardship for the growth of the church and seek partners who will help the church in Africa realize her potential to be effective steward of God’s abundant resources.

Notes: Munza, Kasongo. *A Letter to Africa about Africa*. 2005.



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# FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE AFRICAN CHURCH: OVERCOMING BARRIERS

## Introduction

Africa is the continent that God chose to give refuge to His Son, with Joseph and Mary when Herod tried to kill Christ. (Matt 2:13-15) Refugees have a Royal line on the pain of homelessness, but their obedience is listed.

- Africa birthed Simon of Cyrene, who was forced to carry Christ's cross from the Praetorium to Golgotha. Forced labour flows back to Calvary. (Matt 27:27-32)
- Africa is event orientated – just as Scripture describes the events of Creation, Fall, Flood, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Egypt, Pharaoh, Moses, Joshua, Achan who stole dedicated articles and brought death upon 36 faithful warriors.
- Africa uses oral repetition to establish a memory that will not be forgotten. History, including good and bad events, are part of the title deed of every family. Robert C. Tannehill writes "Repetition is a means of emphasis. Selective emphasis enables narrators to convey the views they regard as most important for correct interpretation of the narrated events. Thus emphasis serves the 'education of the reader' in what is central to understanding the story." (Tannehill Robert C. *The Narrative Unity of Luke – Acts. A Literary Interpretation Vol. 2. The Acts of the Apostles.*)

## Background of the Problem:

The earliest form of accountability introduced to the African Church was written books that used new words such as receipt, expenditure, Bank statement, assets, debit, credit, trial balance. An analysis book that had columns with red and

black colours, date entry, cash, savings, general fund, salaries, buildings. A debit in the left side cash column moved into the right hand of the double column under the specified fund area, but when you paid money out it crossed sides. Maths is an abstract – not a concrete visual entity. After the whole month of receiving and paying, five lines at the end of all transactions had to be completed and made to balance.

1. Balance brought forward. Debit or Credit
2. Receipts and Payments
3. Total Receipts and Payments
4. Debit Balance
5. Credit Balance

Lines 4 and 5 had to balance or your report was not acceptable. I have known Westerners with earned Masters fail to do a quarterly financial report. This agony of reporting currency instead of cattle, sheep, goats, maize, beans, and fowls which could be identified by hide, hoof, horn, feathers, or granary began a slide of redeploying the pain and dust under the carpet. Currency doesn't bellow, cackle or squeal when it leaves the collection bag; it stays quietly in your pocket, the seller takes it without fanfare, no stock removal permit or witnesses. The currency absence is not noted until 90 days or a full year later. Tracking and return possibilities are remote.

African values are livestock, their markings are known and they travel as flock/herd. Strays are noted, reported and impounded until the owner with the dipping inspector or chief's runner comes by daylight to collect their missing stock. Bride price is cattle – and the currency value of

each beast is quoted (at 2013 – a three year old is R5000). Developing accountability requires relating the tithe and offering currency back to the local stock exchange market.

The church in Venda/ Limpopo was started when the late Rev J Maadie brought 2 sheep into the Regional Conference of 1974 to begin church planting. One of his spiritual descendants Pastor T.T Rhadzilani, committed 2 sheep for Regional Conference 16-20 Dec 2013.

My own experience in Swaziland pastorates was bags of maize, chickens, beans, lentils, chickpeas, and fruit coming in every month and all the church widows and orphans were cared for by tangible gifts that came in with great celebration. Currency was a minus of the community value of the man hours represented in the above offerings.

A quarterly report form should reflect as follows:

| <b>Tithes</b>  | <b>Currency value</b> | <b>month</b> | <b>month</b> | <b>month</b> | <b>Total.</b> |
|----------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Cattle         |                       |              |              |              |               |
| Goats          |                       |              |              |              |               |
| Sheep          |                       |              |              |              |               |
| Pigs           |                       |              |              |              |               |
| Fowls          |                       |              |              |              |               |
| Maize          |                       |              |              |              |               |
| Beans/lentils  |                       |              |              |              |               |
| Vegetables     |                       |              |              |              |               |
| Cash           |                       |              |              |              |               |
| Crafts         |                       |              |              |              |               |
| Maintenance    |                       |              |              |              |               |
| Building Tasks |                       |              |              |              |               |

**Worldview Issues of Ownership in Africa:**

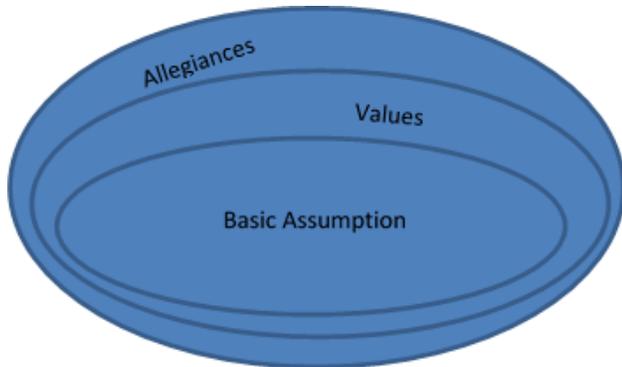
Every language group has their own way to interpret the different areas of their world. It is like a central, mental bank where a group decides what is important and valuable to them. A person withdraws from their deep/buried bank when they choose what is right or wrong. All decisions about people, finances, valuables, leadership, belief, land, use of space and time

comes out of three levels: Assumptions; Values and Allegiances.

Assumptions are the deepest level, it helps people choose what is the most valuable/important and then plan ways to show loyalty in a crisis; identifies their power base; the most important priorities and the payment they will make on behalf of that value.

Ownership in Africa is group; all actions are tested and approved by the family. Stock is kept in trust; money earned by a person can be used by the family for a crisis or an event that affirms loyalty/relationship.

For financial accountability to flow – the whole group must empower it, test and approve the giving and publicly affirm it by prayer, dance, feast and ceremony.



There is multiple ownership of an area, water and wealth cattle and small stock. Specific animals set aside strengthening the group's stability and blessing for the future. Mbiti, J. Introduction to African Religion, pg. 183..."The ancestors were consulted, honoured or appeased by the special feast"

The financial accountability of African church leaders has to flow out of group consensus, the planning of giving that shows their priority of Christ and the price they are prepared to pay to show where their values live before their physical families and their community.

There has to be a quarterly/annual celebration of giving e.g. District conference where the financial accountability is thoroughly anchored publicly.

**Biblical Concepts of Financial Accountability:**

Abraham and the covenant animals of sacrifice.

Gen 5:7-18 the title deed of the promises God had made to Abraham, at Abrahams request were stamped visibly by the following.

- Abraham had to bring a heifer, a goat. A ram each 3 years old, plus a dove and a pigeon.
- Abraham had to cut them in two and arrange the halves opposite each other. A multicultural Eastern symbol of deliberate commitment to faithful obedience to a leader.
- Abraham had to drive away the birds of prey when they wanted to feed.
- The sun had set, it was dark – there were other animals to be contended with but Abraham stayed “in the thick and dreadful darkness until the Lord spoke”; until the smoking fire pot and the blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces
- Financial accountability must be visible, must be fought for: by day when all the birds of prey are circling to grab the choicest pieces – when all the reasons to retire into the shade are calling. Financial accountability must be fought for at night when the four legged meat eaters are roaring and yelping. The smell of accountability has the smell of the choicest cuts attached to it. You could do this...instead of this same old raise the assets to give them away for the benefit of non-family. E.g. Evangelism, Missions, Site Development are all for the presently non- family, non- believer.

Robert C Tannehill writes...."It is a mission which Jesus anointing is for the sake of the poor, the prisoners and the blind. But the devil tempts Jesus to use His Spirit power as the Son of God to serve His own needs and self-centred desires

by satisfying His own hunger, seeking complete protection from harm, and gaining ruling authority, even if bought at the price of false worship”...(Tannehill. 1986. Pg. 59)

**Building Validation and Celebration of Stewardship:**

To accelerate accountability, the total must be announced. Visible A3 records, special giving efforts over each quarter developed, celebrated – Top ten sung out – and SMS sent to Zone and Pastors.

Targets for quarterly celebrations must be given and the result published by SMS. Values for stock must be validated and auction dates set –

so the church and the community know what is being sold and the currency allocated to specific areas: e.g. purchase of new site, building material, benches, and pictures by phone sent to members and sub region.

Clear teaching on the positive and negative effects of accountability. Great blessing flowing through generations or death and disaster from disobedience: Cain; Achan, Gehazi.

Rev Mbozaki and Rev Madaza stressed setting targets; not “per cent per member” e.g. R2.00 per member to pay off regional vehicle was laughed to scorn but a target per district of R5000 – R10,000 was acceptable.

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THE LEADERSHIP TRINITY

Leaders filling top leadership positions within the church, its departments, and auxiliaries will find that although they hold one position that position entails three distinct roles they must fulfil: leader/visionary, manager/administrator, and coach. Recognition and acceptance of these three complementary roles is fundamental to effective fulfilment of the leader's responsibility in the position he/she fills.

Leader/visionary: The leader's role is to assist those he leads to gain a clear understanding of the vision and direction the organization is headed toward and to motivate them to commit to achieving that vision. Primary tasks include vision clarification, vision communication, and motivation.

Manager/administrator: The administrator's role is to manage the processes and resources

(time, material, and human) of the organization in order to reach the desired vision. Primary tasks include planning, organizing, overseeing, and reporting of progress.

Coach: The coach's role is to help empower the members of the organization with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in helping the organization see its vision realized. Primary tasks include teaching, mentoring, and encouraging.

Questor and Keating (Questor, Jason, and Lynda Keating. "Your Critical People Roles: Leader, Manager and Coach." *Achieve*. Achieveblue Corporation, 28 Jan. 2012. Web. 07 Aug. 2013. <<http://achieveblue.wordpress.com/2012/01/28/your-critical-people-roles-leader-manager-and-coach/>>.) visualize the differences between these roles as follows:

| Leader | Manager | Coach |
|------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Change | Stability | Professional development |
| Leading people | Managing work | Optimizing performance |
| Followers | Subordinates | Team members |
| Long term | Short term | Immediate and ongoing |
| Vision | Objectives | People |
| Sets direction | Plans detail | Works in the moment |
| Transformational | Transactional | Incremental |
| Achievement | Results | Engagement and performance |
| What is right | Doing it right | Continuous improvement |

Viewing our leadership position in terms of a trinity of roles, here are a few thoughts to consider:

- None of us are equally strong in all three roles. Actually, most of us will find that we probably only strong in one of the three. We overcome that by making a deliberate effort to strengthen the

weaker areas and by recruiting helpers alongside us who make up for our weaknesses.

- Success in reaching the vision for our ministry demands that all three roles are filled. Failure in any one of the roles will severely limit our leadership

effectiveness, if not render us totally ineffective.

- Although all three roles are needed, in the lifecycle of an organization different roles are more critically needed at some times than at others. For example, if the organization is floundering without a sense of purpose or vision, what is most needed at that point is the role of a leader who can raise up a clear and compelling vision for the members. The wise leader will regularly assess the life

of the organization to determine which role should be emphasized at a given time.

- When an organization has stalled in making progress or has become stagnant, it is quite possible that leadership has failed in fulfilling one of the three roles. A fresh emphasis on the role that is lacking often will provide the push that is needed to get the organization moving again.



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