

# Leadership and the Crisis of Confidence

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[ 0 : 00 ] And if you'll open your Bibles to the book of Exodus, we're going to be in chapter 5 today, Exodus chapter 5.

Earlier this week, I made mention to a number of guys that I thought we would be talking today about how to keep focusing on God, even in busy times. And when I got through and started looking into the text more deeply, I realized, you know, that's just not there to the extent that I thought it was.

And so rather than strain that theme and be all over the Bible today, I thought I would share with you what I think is the more dominant theme of the text. And that simply has to do with leadership, which seems to be God's good and perfect plan to have us land on leadership today.

You know, father is really just a synonym in many respects for the word leader, for the function of leader. I want to show you today a pattern that appears first here, as far as I can see, but continues throughout the book of Exodus, throughout the Bible.

And actually, just this pattern continues throughout all times in which leadership takes a group of people through some sort of God-driven change.

[ 1 : 14 ] And I'm going to first kind of just lay out the outline to you and then show it to you in this particular text. So as far as I could see, this pattern can be described as the six C's of leading through change.

The six C's, six words that start with C related to leading through change. And this is going to help you men lead your families. This is going to help you lead in church contexts.

This is going to make you all better church members. And even in work context, so much of this still applies. Because remember, even if you're leading in some secular, so-called secular business, you're still God's man there.

You're still God's leader there. So the six C's that I think we see throughout Scripture are first, a call. The leader receives a plan from God. The second one would be change.

He begins to lead his followers into the new state. Remember what we said about the Exodus pattern, that the Exodus pattern is just God moving people out of an old state that's not so great into a new state that's better.

[ 2 : 16 ] And there's usually some middle state, which we typically think of as the wilderness. That's the Exodus pattern. We see that all over the Bible. Well, this is part of that. This is the six C's I'm bringing to you is sort of how this takes place.

First, the leader receives a plan from God. Secondly, he begins to lead his followers into the new state that God has revealed. But a conflict emerges because there is always some force at work in the situation that prefers the status quo.

And that force is provoked. At this point, the followers who you're trying to lead begin to feel the friction. A cost begins to be revealed for the change itself.

And from there, you have some various version of insubordination or triangulation. The people you're leading begin to complain either to you or behind your back. And then finally, there is a crisis of confidence for the leader.

The leader begins to doubt everything about the mission, about himself, about whether he's the man or the woman, so on and so forth. So this is a pattern we see not only in Scripture, but also in life.

[ 3 : 21 ] And we're going to focus mostly on this crisis of confidence that we see in our text. Last week, I posted a chronological timeline of all of the church history biographies that John Piper delivered over the span of more than 20 years.

And I want to read you something he wrote back in 1989 as he covered the biography of a pastor named Charles Simeon. He wrote this, Piper wrote this, I am, in great measure, a child of my times. And one of the pervasive marks of our times is emotional fragility. I feel it as though it hangs in the air we breathe. We are easily hurt.

We pout and mope easily. We break easily. Our marriages break easily. Our faith breaks easily. Our happiness breaks easily. And our commitment to the church breaks easily.

We are easily disheartened. And it seems we have little capacity for surviving and thriving in the face of criticism and opposition. And then he says, we need help here.

[ 4 : 27 ] Indeed, we do need help here. We're seeing at every level of leadership in our world a failure of nerve. And to be quite blunt, this is why we can't have nice things.

It's not because the followers respond the way they do. It's not because the world responds the way it does. Those things are just part of the process.

It's not even that the leader experiences a crisis of confidence when all of this goes down. It's simply that the leaders that we have asked to take care of us in our institutions, in our families, are not passing successfully this crisis of confidence.

So rather than emerge successful from this crisis of confidence, they compromise. They turn back. They give up. They slam the dopamine button and have an affair with the secretary or whatever.

However, this is why we can't have nice things. Now, Exodus 5 and 6, well, really Exodus 3 through 6 shows this exact same pattern. In Exodus chapter 3 and 4, Moses receives the call.

[ 5 : 35 ] In Exodus 4, 29 through 5, 1, he initiates the change. And then that change brings him into conflict with Pharaoh's need for the status quo.

That's Exodus 5, 2 through 5. For instance, in verse 2, after Moses says, let my people go, Pharaoh, who has an interest in the status quo, says, Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice and let Israel go?

I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go. And then he says in verse 4, But the king of Egypt said to them, Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens. Burdens is the Hebrew word for free labor. Slavery. So Pharaoh's status quo is, you're threatening my free labor force.

Right? Because of this conflict, we now move into the cost. Pharaoh fights back, pushes back by inflicting a great cost on the followers. And that's found in verses 6 through 19.

[ 6 : 41 ] A central nugget of what he's doing there is found in verse 7. He says to the leaders of the slave force, you shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks as in the past.

Let them go and gather straw for themselves. This had the effect of really just doubling the amount of work that these slaves were already going through, and it was already difficult. So the burden just doubles with Moses' introduction of this new plan, the conflict that arises with Pharaoh, and now the people are paying the cost.

Next step is that the people grumble and complain to Moses. This is found in verses 20 and 21. They met Moses and Aaron who were waiting for them.

As they came out from Pharaoh, they said to them, One of the hard things about enduring this particular moment is that the aggrieved followers always invoke the Lord as if he's on their side. And this is one of the things that causes the crisis in confidence. So from the complaint comes the crisis of confidence, and Moses has this crisis in verses 22 through 23. Then Moses turned to the Lord and said, O Lord, why have you done evil to this people?

[ 7 : 56 ] Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all. This is the process we see throughout all of life.

When a leader wants to lead, given a vision from God, they perhaps even enter into this whole thing reluctantly, which we'll talk about in a moment. They introduce the change.

The change provokes the status quo. There's a conflict with someone who has invested themselves in the status quo. That conflict produces a cost. The people begin to suffer.

They then complain or criticize the leader either to his face or behind his back, and this all winds up back on the leader's lap, and he has a crisis of confidence. Now, in this case, this situation goes well, and we're going to talk about why it goes well.

It goes well because God is gracious. Like, that's the summary. But it goes well, and God responds to all of this by saying in chapter 6 to Moses, Say therefore to the people of Israel, I am the Lord,

and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great acts of judgment.

[ 9 : 09 ] I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And he says, go tell the people this. We'll return back to that section of the text in a moment.

So Moses does. He goes to the people in verse 9, chapter 6, and says, Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery. So the people have been effectively demoralized, and now Moses and Aaron stand alone with nobody but the Lord. This is the loneliness of leadership. They are sandwiched between Pharaoh's hard heart and the people's broken spirit, but in this case they press on.

Now there are other times we see this pattern in Scripture where it doesn't turn out well. One of those would be with Aaron and the golden calf. From Exodus 20 through 32, Moses is sent up to the mountain, and the people are told to assemble at the foot of the mountain and to consecrate themselves and to abstain from sexual relations during the 40 days and 40 nights in which Moses is gathered before the Lord.

So there's a call to wait. Aaron is the one that's supposed to lead this call to police its fulfillment, if you will. The conflict is with the people's own lack of peace, their own struggle to be still.

[ 10 : 33 ] The cost is they have to remain in a consecrated state. Their behaviors have to change. They have to abstain from sexual relations during this time. This brings up complaints, and a crisis of leadership emerges for Aaron, and Aaron folds.

You can see this pattern also in 1 Samuel 13 with Saul. This is actually what gets Saul kicked out of the throne or off the throne. The people want a sacrifice offered before they go to battle.

Saul is told to wait for seven days until Samuel joins him. Samuel is delayed. He doesn't get there in seven days. Saul takes this as just carte blanche permission to offer the sacrifice on his own, and he does that because the people are grumbling and anxious.

He goes with their anxiety, and we don't have a good situation there. This is also what happens with Abraham and Sarah and Hagar. Men, pay attention.

I don't need to say that in a way that singles out women as exceptionally sinful, but we probably do need, because of the day that we live in, to say that women do sin. They are not pure victimless, or they're not just victims.

[ 11 : 49 ] In this particular case, you have to understand that God's whole plan for Moses and Sarah was to have a baby, and it was Sarah who was technically infertile.

So God's plan was adding extra attention on Sarah, exposing her, pointing out her weakness. She appeared as a liability in this great plan to an extent that Abraham did not, and so it's her that suggests that we just take the spotlight off of me.

I've got this maidservant named Hagar. Abraham has a crisis of confidence, but rather than go to the Lord, which we'll talk about in a moment, he listens to the voice of his wife. He goes along with the anxious flow and, you know, screws everything up.

Now, the thing to understand about this is that at the end of the day, do the people get some blame? Yeah, they do, but really the blame falls on the leader. Again, not for having the crisis of confidence, but for going along with the anxiety of the crowd.

In fact, when Moses gets down and sees what's happened with the golden calf, he says this to Aaron, what did this people do to you that you've brought such a great sin upon them?

[ 12 : 59 ] Well, Aaron would not have seen it that way, would he? He wouldn't have seen it that way. He was being a consensus leader. For instance, he was being a servant leader. He was just giving the people what they wanted. No, see, Moses saw rightly that in this particular case, Aaron was hateful toward those people in his actions.

His heart might have been full of empathy, but he did great harm to those people by going along with the anxious flow. You know, there's going to be a time in leadership when you have to decide who you want mad at you.

That's the choice. God or the people that you love. Now, there are three complications at this crisis of confidence stage that I want you to be aware of.

And the first one is, is the leader's own insecurity. And again, this is not a problem. I would rather have a leader who doesn't think he's up for it than a leader who does.

If God only selected leaders who were sure, we'd have way worse leaders than we even do now. So we see that Moses was insecure. This goes all the way back to chapter 3 and 4 when he argues with God about whether or not he's the one.

[14:10] The second complication is a leader's love for the people. See, good leaders actually love the people they're called to lead. You think, well, why is that bad?

Well, it's not bad, but it's a complication. Why is it a complication? Because when the changes that you're trying to introduce produce trouble for them, that hurts you.

So when you see a person that you're called to lead go through trouble, a person you love, and that trouble is downstream of your leadership, that really gets to the good leaders. The ones who really do love the people.

We can go all the way back to chapter 2 to see that Moses identified with the people. He doesn't like seeing them get hurt. That's one of the reasons he killed the Egyptian, because the Egyptian was beating his brother.

This is a huge hurdle to get over in evangelism. Imagine what it was like in the first century to invite someone to put their faith in Jesus Christ, knowing that if they listened to you, they would immediately encounter hardship.

[15:22] A lot of times our love actually is a complicating factor. A necessary one, but a complicating factor nonetheless. So you've got the leader's own self-doubt, his own insecurity.

You've got his actual love for the people. And then you've also just got his own limited faith. God rarely gives the leader much more faith than the people. I would say typically God gives the leader about two steps more faith than the people he's trying to lead.

About, let's say, 15 feet more light into the darkness than the people he's trying to lead. So the leader's insecure. He loves his people. And he has his own struggles with trusting God and with believing that God's going to do what he says.

So because of all of this, we have to understand that a crisis of confidence is simply an inevitable part of leadership. There's really nothing that you can do to change any of these six things.

This is just how life is. What you need to do is learn how to handle the crisis of confidence in the right way. That's really where God will be most glorified.

[16:32] This is where you will grow. This is really where all the life happens. Let's talk about what you do in a crisis of confidence to see your particular situation resolve positively.

Look back at Exodus 5, verse 22. People have complained to Moses. He's now full of their anxiousness.

He's empathetic to the burdens caused by this particular change. He's introduced from the Lord. And here's the key to why I think this one turned out better than others.

Verse 22. Then Moses turned to the Lord. Let's just stop there for now. Then Moses turned to the Lord. This is far from a perfect prayer.

He's accusing God of sin. We'll see in a moment. But at least it's a prayer. At least it's a prayer. This is the first point. Set your mind how to overcome the crisis of confidence.

[17:34] Set your mind in the right direction. Pray. Moses turned to the Lord. You know, in these other stories that I cited with Abraham and Aaron and Saul, these situations didn't go well.

And we don't see this part. And I don't think that's a coincidence. When we see this situation going poorly, the anxious people have the last word. Do you know what prayer really is?

Prayer is promising to give God the last word. Prayer is promising to give God the last word. You say, our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That's how we start. We, our prayers, our promises to give God the last word. People ask, well, what good does prayer really do?

Well, it has a lot of benefits. But in these kinds of situations, where you're one bad decision away from really screwing things up, from losing your nerve, from compromising, what prayer does is it serves as a kind of decompression chamber.

[18:35] It is always better to pray a dumb prayer than to make a dumb decision. Moses isn't praying the best of prayers, but, you know, at least he's praying. You see, prayer has the effect of deflating anxiety.

Philippians 4, 6 through 7 says, Don't be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

When you're in a crisis of confidence, you need your heart and mind guarded. You are really close to just doing a dumb thing. To following the anxiety of the people you love who are hurting. To losing faith in God. To losing faith in your own call. You need the decompression. And prayer is that. So one of the things I think we see that contributes to this going well is Moses turned to the Lord.

He wasn't going to let his own anxiety have the last word. He wasn't going to let the anxiety of the people have the last word. He didn't immediately go to scheme up some sort of compromise that would somehow potentially accomplish God's plans in a less painful way.

[ 19 : 51 ] He turns to the Lord. Now let's just start laying out some real world application. Just as an example of what I'm talking about. We heard a funny story yesterday. We were having lunch with a family in Wellsville.

They don't go to this church. And the husband had gotten all riled up because Shake Shack went super pride flaggy one year. And whether he made the right decision or not, he made a decision. He's like, honey, we're not eating at Shake Shack anymore. That's it. No more. And she's thinking to herself, but that is literally my favorite hamper. So the cost emerges.

The decision has been made. The cost emerges. And we all joked like, you know, that she was secretly going to Shake Shack. I don't think she was, but we joked about how like, you know, honey, why is there a Shake Shack cup in my trash can and so on and so forth.

This is the kind of thing we're talking about. Let's just talk about some particular ways that this could show up in your life, men. God gives you a vision for the people you're leading.

[ 20 : 54 ] God gives you a vision for the people you're leading. We're going to give generously. We're going to open our homes to hospitality. We're going to church. We're going to start praying together. Let's just camp out on that one for a minute.

If you don't do that now, you're going to go through all six C's. If you don't lead your family in prayer now, but you want to, all the C's, you will find them all.

Like, I feel led to do this. Call. Let's introduce the change. The status quo is we don't do this right now and life is working okay. This is going to cause some kind of bump in our schedule.

It's going to feel awkward, so on and so forth. The cost is you're going to look stupid. It's just going to be awkward, so on and so forth. You may not hear a complaint from your wife, but there may be body language of like, hey, we're going to go pray.

And there's like a, you know, or eye roll or something. And you, you're like, you press on, but you already are in the crisis of confidence stage.

[ 21 : 58 ] And then you find that you start having fights before you pray or after you pray and so on and so forth. You're going to go through all six C's just even with something as simple as, honey, we're going to start praying together.

And there's a lot more you could and should do, by the way, but you're always going to encounter this. So what do you do when you hit that crisis of confidence stage?

Number one, you pray. You turn to the Lord. You don't let the people you're leading, their anxiety speak, have the last word. You don't let your anxiety have the last word. You let the Lord have the last word, which is what we see in this particular text.

Let's say you start like, hey, we just need to be more diligent with our giving. We go to a great church that is worthy of our support and worthy of its mission spreading into the county.

We're going to do that. That's the change. Your car is going to break down the next week. I promise you. The crisis of confidence emerges.

[ 22 : 58 ] You doubt yourself. You doubt God's plan. You doubt God. So one thing you do is you turn to the Lord. Prayer has a decompression effect.

As we saw last week, we looked at Isaiah 26.3 for a second last week. And that verse, just want to bring to your attention again. You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you.

Because he trusts in you. So the first thing I would have you do in your crisis of confidence is to pray. The second thing is, is that you need to get your heart settled on the right devotion.

You need to get your mind set in the right direction with prayer. Get your eyes off of yourself. Get your eyes off the problem. Get your eyes off the people. And pray. Now you also need to get your heart settled on the right devotion.

Well, what do we mean by the right devotion? Well, it is hard enough to lead people when your motives are pure. We said a moment ago that the crisis of leadership is magnified in some sense by

the leader's love for the people.

[ 24 : 00 ] He hates to see them suffer for something he's initiated. True enough. But the heart of the leader is never pure. It's never pure. Only Christ's heart in leadership is pure.

So no doubt, all of us have to deal with a second motivation. And it looks like the other one. And that is, in addition to being motivated by a love for the people, another sinful motivation could be creeping in.

And that is, I am motivated by the people's love for me. And these two things don't appear to be very different. When you're a young man and you just got married, you would not believe how much of a temptation this is to be your wife's hero and let all kinds of things slide.

Because it's not because you're motivated by love for her. That's what it feels like. But what you're really motivated for by is you love to feel loved by her. So in addition to turning our hearts to God and getting our minds right with prayer, we've got to sort this out.

We've got to learn the difference between I'm doing this because I love you or I'm doing this or not doing this because I want you to love me. Because you can't have that sometimes as a leader.

[ 25 : 23 ] Sometimes that's taken off the table. You don't get to feel loved by the people you're leading. Now, if your love for the person is pure, you'll go talk to God and you'll get fortified in confidence in the plan and God and your calling and you'll stay faithful.

But if you don't get this darker motive expunged, it's not going to work. Where did all the pastors go over the last 15 years on the controversial issues of our day?

Why have so many abandoned God's clear biblical teaching about human sexuality and gender? Why are so few pulpits focused on the sins of the people in the room? Why has the rainbow mafia been so effective in moving previously faithful pastors, churches, and entire denominations off of the clear teaching of God's word?

John 12, 43 has the answer. For they love the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

Now, friends, if that's true, if you can see that clearly in the pulpits in America, boy, friends, you don't think that's true at your dinner table?

[ 26 : 48 ] You don't think you secretly want to be the hero and get manipulated out of doing the right thing?

You don't think that many of your discipline issues with your own children come down to what you have broadly communicated to them in a language they don't speak, and you don't speak, but that language is, I really want you to like me.

My discipline is informed by that. By my desire for you to like me. Back in Exodus 4, 29, remember this scene.

Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders. This is before all the bad stuff happens. Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people, and the people believed.

And when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped. Would anyone be surprised if in that moment, Moses thought, well, now I could get used to this.

[ 28 : 03 ] He appears on the scene, having been absent for quite some time, walks into the elders of Israel, shares the good news of God's promised deliverance, and the people look at him as the champion they had been waiting for.

And they bow their heads and worship in gratitude to God for sending this man to accomplish the impossible. You don't think there was a little bit of temptation to love that feeling?

Well, I've been leading things for a long time, and it's always a temptation. It's always a temptation. But in the next chapter, in verse 20 of chapter 5, all of their goodwill toward Moses has completely reversed.

They met Moses and Aaron who were waiting for them as they came out from Pharaoh, and they said, the Lord look on you and judge because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.

And to be honest, that is going to be what Moses experiences pretty much every day until he dies. That is not what you in the new covenant will experience as you lead your brothers and sisters.

[ 29 : 29 ] You will not experience this level consistently. But you'll experience it sometimes. The pastor comes in and says, I have a novel idea. Let's preach against the sins in the congregation.

Well, there are people in that congregation who have a lot invested in the status quo. And they will create a stink. And that stink will affect other people's opinions so that now all the people are questioning, is this guy really the guy?

So now there's grumbling. And that grumbling in various ways reaches the pastor. And the pastor begins to have a crisis of confidence. And he's like, well, maybe I'm not the guy. Maybe I'm not doing this right.

This happens all the time, friends. So what do we do? We turn our eyes to God. We say, Lord, you're going to get the last word. Not my complaints, not their complaints.

You're going to get the last word. We double down and make sure that in our leadership there's not a motivation that is really, and by the way, there will be. This crisis of confidence is where this darker motive goes to die.

[ 30 : 36 ] Or, it's where it goes to be in charge. But, in good cases, it's where it goes to die. We double down and we're like, Lord, I absolutely love these people, or this person that I'm leading, but I have to absolutely insist that I not be motivated by seeking their approval.

I have to seek your approval, Lord. I can't love the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. And number three, fill your soul with the right doctrine.

Fill your soul with the right doctrine. Set your mind in the right direction in prayer. Set your heart up right. Get rid of that darker motive. And now, let's say, let's fill our soul with right doctrine.

Look back at verse 22. Then Moses turned to the Lord and said, O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all.

Let's focus in on this phrase. O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Well, this is just plain wrong. This is bad doctrine. James 1.13 says, Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God.

[ 31 : 57 ] For God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. Moses' theology isn't as sharp or refined as ours can be with the new covenant.

He is asking why. By the time we see the spiritual leaders in the New Testament dealing with this issue, they're not asking why.

Jesus has made it real clear to them that why is a dumb question. The right question, by the way, isn't why, it's how long. That's the biblical question. But we'll get to that in a moment, maybe.

Okay, so by the time we get to the New Testament, all of our spiritual leaders are not asking why anymore. They're not provoked in this state, at least not publicly like Moses is. They're saying other things.

For instance, in 1 Peter, Peter is able to say, Beloved, this is in 1 Peter 4, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you.

[ 32 : 58 ] Don't be surprised by this. Moses was surprised. We don't have to be surprised. In chapter 5, be sober-minded, be watchful.

Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you've suffered a little while, the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Don't be surprised. This isn't strange. That's the basic doctrine I'm talking about. You need a doctrine of trials. And the first piece of the doctrine is they're not strange.

They're not novel. These kinds of things are experienced by all the brothers all over the world. No need to ask why. If you want to ask how long, the answer will always be in a little while. which is honestly totally true.

In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul says that these trials, these sufferings are light and momentary compared to the eternal weight of glory prepared for us. The answer is always in a little while, which is always true at some level and usually true practically.

[ 34 : 12 ] These don't last as long as we think they will. The Hebrews did not have to endure this deplorable state much longer at all. God sort of starts shutting down the Egyptian economy pretty

quickly after this.

There's no more work. Can't work when there's no light. Can't work when there's flies everywhere. He shuts it all down pretty quick. You can't make bricks when you don't have water and all you've got is blood.

So they didn't actually have to wait that long. Moses' nerve didn't have to hold too long actually. So let's just review the call.

God gives you some clarity that in some way or another the people that the thing you're leading needs to adjust to be more in conformity with God's will. The change, you introduce the change to the thing you're leading.

A conflict emerges because there are forces settled in the status quo and those forces could be Satan, it could be the world, or they could just be the flesh of the people you're leading.

[ 35 : 14 ] A cost emerges, the followers begin to feel friction, there are complaints, and then we have a crisis of confidence at which time we turn to the Lord, we get our hearts settled on like real love and not using people to feel good about ourselves.

Not using our kids to feel good about ourselves. Guys, come on. And then we fill our souls with right doctrine and we process what God has said explicitly about trials.

Trials are a part of the Christian life. When we follow God, we find opposition. All who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted, 1 Timothy 3.12.

Through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God, Acts 14.22. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own, but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Remember the world, the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they keep my word, they will also keep yours. John 15.19.

[ 36 : 24 ] Sometimes we'll upset the world, sometimes we'll upset the flesh of our followers, sometimes we'll step on Satan's tail and remind him that his time is short. In all these ways, a conflict and a cost emerge and to ask people not to complain under that is asking a lot.

It can happen, but we shouldn't expect it to happen. We should expect people to complain who are going through hardship. Hopefully they grow, but that's really not up to us in the immediate term. And when we lead people through godly change, there's always going to be a cost. Now back to this thing that Piper was talking about in this biography of Charles Simeon. He goes on, when historians list the character traits of the last third of the 20th century, commitment, constancy, tenacity, endurance, patience, resolve, and perseverance will not be on that list.

The list will begin with an all-consuming interest in self-esteem. It will be followed by the subheadings of self-assertiveness and self-enhancement and self-realization. And if you think that you are not at all a child of your times, just test yourself to see how you respond in the ministry or leadership when people reject your ideas.

We need help here, Piper says. When you are surrounded by a society of emotionally fragile quitters, and when you see a good bit of this ethos in yourself, you need to spend time with people, whether dead or alive, whose lives prove there is another way to live.

[ 37 : 57 ] And so he introduces a pastor named Charles Simeon from 1830s. Pastor Simeon served 49 years in the ministry and almost all of it was marked by fierce opposition.

He remained faithful and joyful in large part because he had learned how to live in this crisis of confidence, peace, and always wind up settling down in the Lord.

He was asked by a friend, how did you endure for so long so well? And he said, my dear brother, we must not mind a little suffering for Christ's sake.

My dear brother, we must not mind a little suffering for Christ's sake. When I am getting through a hedge, if my head and shoulders are safely through, I can bear pricking my legs.

Let us rejoice in remembrance that our holy head has surmounted all his suffering and triumphed over death. Let us follow him patiently, we shall soon be partakers of his victory. So the word picture is a little localized to England where Simeon served.

[ 39 : 05 ] These hedges are thorny and very thick brush and they use them to separate one piece of land from another. And to walk through a hedge, you're going to scrape your face, you're going to scrape your arms, you're going to scrape your legs.

They're not meant to walk through. They're meant to keep animals from passing through. So if you were to walk through a hedge, it's a very uncomfortable situation. The image that Simeon's presenting is of moving from one land to another, of moving from the status quo into the thing that you're called to lead.

And he says, you know, as long as you can get your face through, that's the hard part, get your head through. You can see the other side. And he's like, there's still a lot of scrapes to endure, but you've gotten your head through and you can see where you're going and you're kind of almost as good as through, even though you're not.

And then he reminds us that it is actually Christ who has stuck his head out. It is actually Christ who has, in his own obedience to the Father, crossed from this land into the next.

And he's the first fruits of the resurrection. Christ, our head, has already entered into the place we will join him in. He said, yeah, there's still some of the body to push through the thorns, but our head is through.

[ 40 : 23 ] So how does God respond to Moses' very imperfect prayer? He provides a very perfect promise. And this is the deal with prayer. It's such a great deal.

You guys love getting good deals. Prayer's the best one ever. You give a really terrible prayer and in return, God gives a really great promise.

It's a great exchange rate. Moses comes with his rather terrible prayer and God responds with literally in the Hebrew, this would be a literal idea of perfection.

He responds with a perfect promise. Threefold repetitions are perfect. A lot of you know that. So in chapter 6, verse 6, he responds to Moses, say therefore to the people of Israel, I am the Lord.

I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will deliver you from slavery to them and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment and I will take you to be my people. I will be your God and you shall know that I am the Lord who has brought you out from the burdens of the Egyptians.

[ 41 : 28 ] I will deliver you. I will redeem you. I will make you my people. Now, as I mentioned already, these words of assurance were not enough for the people.

Verse 9, Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery. Moses didn't pray a prayer and find everybody suddenly on his side again.

He prayed a prayer and suddenly found himself on God's side again. Promises weren't enough for the people, but they were enough for the leader. And so the crisis of confidence is navigated successfully.

Humanly speaking, the whole Exodus project depended on whether Moses would or not trust the Lord in his leadership task. Leaders in the room today, husbands, fathers, it's not easy.

It's not easy. It's not. You're going to need each other. You're going to need to spend much time in prayer. But I want to be clear.

[ 42 : 55 ] Humanly speaking, much depends on you being able to navigate these things. of giving the Lord the last word in times of anxiousness, of getting your own heart sorted out and doing the difference of I love you and I love to be loved by you, of seeing that trials are just a part of the story when we choose to follow God.

Brothers, leaders, we must not mind a little suffering when we lead into the light. When we lead into the light, the dark will always react.

We must not be surprised by the fiery trials that follow our turn toward the Lord. We must just simply say that after we have suffered a little while, the God of all grace who has called us to his eternal glory in Christ will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Let me pray. Oh, Father God, we pray that you would use what we see in your word to see just how clearly you care about leadership, how important it is to you, how you choose to work through leaders, and then, Lord, in whatever capacity we have leaders in this room today, we're focusing on fathers because it's Father's Day.

We have women who are leading many things here as well. Just pray, God, that you would help every person who is called to lead something, no matter how big or small, understand that when they lead their thing toward you, there's trouble on the horizon.

[ 44 : 41 ] That they are too, when they encounter that trouble, turn to you and ask you to do the work on their hearts necessary for them to remain faithful and ask them, Lord, to just, and help them to see that this is just a part of the process of loving people with leadership.

So, Lord, I pray your blessings. If anyone here is in a current crisis of confidence, Lord, help them emerge even from the sanctuary today with renewed confidence in you.

if anyone here needs to confess sins of getting mixed up in the love dynamic and beginning to confuse one kind of love with the other and essentially seeing that sometimes their actions are dictated by their desire to please rather than their desire to be a blessing.

Lord, would you just give them grace to sort through those issues or do you even just heal those wounds and put health in those spots in their heart?

God, would you just build us together as a group of people who are not surprised by fire trials but just double down in our trust of you? We love you, Lord.

[ 45 : 58 ] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. For communion, I just invite you to come and remember the one person who ever loved you perfectly who never did it because he was needing you to love him back.

Jesus entered this world full of the Father's love. He was not looking for some insecurity to be resolved. He did not trust himself to man for he knew what was in the heart of man.

And so this great God is really the only person you'll ever meet who did something for you with literally just absolutely no need on the other end. What a beautiful thing it is to be loved by this great God and we celebrate his love when we partake at the table.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he'd given thanks he broke it and said this is my body which is for you do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way also he took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

[ 47 : 10 ] Would you now come and partake of this table that is meant to instruct you week after week the great love of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.