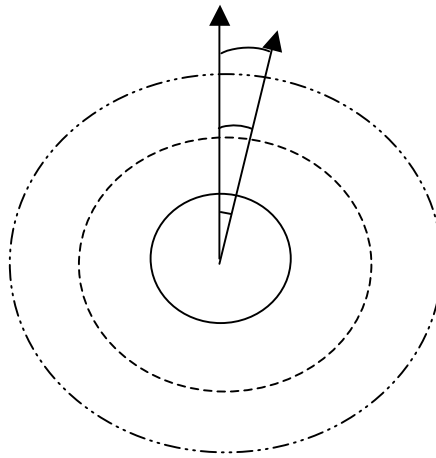


Chapter 14: Leadership Lessons from the Cockpit

“The mishap has already occurred;
the aircraft is now simply proceeding to the crash site.”

=====> Where are you proceeding?



To paraphrase the Air Force,

“The _____ had already occurred. _____ was simply proceeding to the crash site.”

Takeaways

1. Rehoboam: Bad leaders are _____.
2. Both kings: Bad leadership promotes _____.

*There was continual warfare between Rehoboam and Jeroboam.
There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam throughout Abijah's lifetime.*

3. Jeroboam: Bad leadership originates in _____.

Today's Equipping Point

Never stop trusting your _____

4. Jeroboam: Bad leadership always involves _____.

- Have you asked anyone to shade the truth for you recently?
- Do you habitually tell only *part* of the truth?

He will abandon Israel because Jeroboam sinned and made all of Israel sin along with him."

1 Kings 14:16

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever been able to see a crash coming?
2. In what ways do we deceive ourselves and shade the truth?
3. When you experience "spatial disorientation" or "spiritual disorientation", how will you anchor yourself going forward?

Teaching Script

Many of you remember singer-songwriter John Denver. In the 70's and 80's he was very popular with his combination folk-country tunes that included "Take Me Home, Country Roads," "Sunshine on my Shoulders," and "Rocky Mountain High." My little sister had this huge crush on him—I remember taking her to one of his concerts—she played his songs all the time and cried all the way through the concert.

The world was saddened 11 years ago when the single-engine plane he was piloting crashed just off the Pacific Coast and he was killed on impact. But what's even sadder is that his death was both hastened and avoidable. In fact, some have called John Denver's mishap "an accident waiting to happen." One person went even further and said that in a way, John Denver's death was a suicide.

Let me first explain something about the airplane he was flying...*[explain fuel selector handle position, right rudder, etc.]*

Now let me read you the final paragraph of the official inquiry into the crash by the NTSB:

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause of this accident was the pilot's diversion of attention from the operation of the airplane and his inadvertent application of right rudder that resulted in the loss of airplane control while attempting to manipulate the fuel selector handle. Also, the Board determines that the pilot's inadequate preflight planning and preparations, specifically his failure to refuel the airplane, was causal. The Board determines that the builder's decision to locate the unmarked fuel selector handle in a hard-to-access position, unmarked fuel quantity sight gauges, inadequate transition training by the pilot, and his lack of total experience in this type of airplane were factors in this accident.

Listen again to the causal list in the report:

- Pilot's diversion of attention from the operation of the airplane
- Inadequate pre-flight planning
- Failure to refuel the airplane
- Inadequate training by the pilot
- His lack of experience in this type of airplane

Mark Tidwell, one of our executive ministers here at our church, spent a good deal of his 20 years in the Air Force in aircraft safety. He told me about a saying they frequently used while they were debriefing flight incidents (on your outline):

The mishap has already occurred; the aircraft is now simply proceeding to the crash site.

In other words, there are certain actions a pilot or aircrew perform, or do not perform, which make an aircraft mishap simply a matter of time.

And so, it seems an appropriate question for us to ask as we begin a new year: **Where are you proceeding?**

John Denver's habitual pattern of cutting corners, failure to plan, and diverting his attention from what he was doing was an eventual recipe for disaster. As long as he kept flying with those habits, and without the necessary training, it was fairly certain that sooner or later his plane would arrive not on a runway, but at an accident site.

Even small, seemingly insignificant deviations from true north, over time, set us on a path that can eventually become unrecoverable. Here's what I mean...

If you'll remember our study of Solomon in Chapter 13, God's instructions to keep the nation of Israel flying level and full of fuel were clear. Look at page 188-89 of *The Story*....

There's the flight manual. Now, look how Solomon piloted his kingdom: page 191-192...

An ongoing accumulation of bad habits doomed both John Denver and Solomon. By the time we get to Chapter 14, we can rephrase the Air Force and say,

The sin had already occurred. Israel was simply proceeding to the crash site.

Once again, our lesson this morning is on leadership—what I believe is the biggest issue facing the church today. In the four months since *The Story* began, we have studied leadership in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Joshua, and Saul. These were the pilots of their families and their nation no less than you are the pilot of your family.

And what happens in Chapter 14 of *The Story* is, more than anything else, caused by pilot error. The primary aviators at the wheel are Solomon, Rehoboam, and Jeroboam, plus a host of kings that made bad choices after them.

And what we will see is that because of Solomon's disobedience, Israel began a tailspin that was unrecoverable, even after Jeroboam and Rehoboam followed him.

This chapter is all about leadership—so this chapter is all about you and me, because every one of us is a leader, like it or not. All of us are influencers in our families, our companies, our schools, our neighborhoods, and our church.

Let's look at examples of leadership in Chapter 14 of *The Story*—we call our study this morning, "Leadership Lessons from the Cockpit."

Takeaways

1. Rehoboam: Bad leaders are insecure.

When faced with a decision to show grace as a leader, to serve his kingdom rather than have his kingdom serve his own ego, Rehoboam chose the latter. Leaders who rule by intimidation and domination aren't leaders at all: their hunger for approval can never be satisfied, so they demand capitulation. I've worked for people like that and I'm sure you have too.

Insecure leaders are men who:

- Always have something to prove
- Never got attention/approval from father figures
- Afraid they don't measure up

- Won't deal with their baggage
- Always throws up a smoke screen, an excuse
- Driven by shortcomings, not strengths

And so our lesson from Rehoboam is to leave your insecurities behind so that you do not castigate your wife, your employees, or anyone under your charge. Doing so, only hastens your arrival at the crash site.

2. Bad leadership promotes division.

Solomon had flown the plane into treacherous airspace by giving in to the pagan worship of many of his wives, instead of keeping God on the throne. His loyalties were divided, so the split between the Northern and Southern kingdoms was a natural consequence of flying in the enemy territory where Solomon had piloted the nation in the first place. I mean, if they couldn't agree on the same God, how could they possibly hope to be unified in any other way?

There is a reason the first two of the Ten Commandments deal specifically with no other gods and no graven images. There is a reason Jesus spent the entirety of John 17 in prayer for unity. There is a reason Paul and Peter spent so much of their ink on recognizing false prophets. It is because as leaders of Christ's church and of our families, the worst we can do is be lukewarm or straddle the fence.

Listen: if your loyalties are split in any way, if God only shares the throne in your heart and in your home, then divisiveness becomes a way of life under your roof. Bad leadership promotes division because if Jesus isn't just Savior but also Lord, then at home your children are faced with an irreconcilable dilemma: trying to make sense of what they hear at church and a materialistic lifestyle or bad language or anger management issues at home.

Bad leadership promotes division because we refuse to forgive past grievances of family members, just like Jeroboam and Rehoboam. On page 199 of *The Story*, it says:

There was continual warfare between Rehoboam and Jeroboam.

And two paragraphs later:

There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam throughout Abijah's lifetime.

Solomon's problem became Rehoboam's problem, which became Abijah's problem. But the whole time, because these guys were the pilots, it was also Israel's problem. The whole country suffered because of these bad leaders, just like many of your families suffered growing up because bad leadership. If you and I are not peacemakers, how will our kids learn any other way?

Bad leadership promotes division because when fathers and husbands and CEOs and captains and managers and pilots can't resolve issues, who will model godly leadership for the followers?

Third...if I've said it once I've said it a thousand times....

3. Jeroboam: Bad leadership originates in fear.

Most common leadership disease we've seen so far in Aaron, Jacob, Gideon, Saul, and all the rest is fear. And now, once again in Chapter 14, we see the skeletal remains of fear-based leadership. Look at the middle of page 196 in *The Story*....

Out of fear, fear of a loss of control, Jeroboam built shrines for people to worship, because he cared more for his ego than for his people. Look again at the last phrase in that section:

Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt. Does this sound familiar at all? Do you remember who said those exact words at the base of Mt. Sinai while Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments? Aaron! Out of fear, Jeroboam managed to quote Aaron verbatim. He quoted a man who was also driven by fear because the people were getting restless about Moses' absence.

In the strongest terms I can say, let me encourage you to never, ever lead from fear. From this lectern you and I have discussed example after example of men who are driven by fear.

We've talked about the nuclear physicist who beats his wife black and blue because he is afraid of facing the possibility that he might someday be wrong about something. We've talked about the youth pastor who keeps pornography in his nightstand, so that he can look at it before he makes love to his wife because he's afraid he can't perform otherwise. We've talked about the boss who fires employees because he equates discussion with disloyalty—a boss who fears dialogue because, just like the physicist, he may discover he's not right about everything.

Fear will shred a man's senses and put him on a downward spiral that can become unrecoverable. And since we're already using aviation analogies today, let's also consider the crash of John F. Kennedy Jr.'s airplane in 1999. In that accident, the NTSB determined that the probable cause was Kennedy's failure to maintain control of the plane during a descent over water at night, which was a result of "spatial disorientation" [*define*]. Translation: he didn't trust his instruments. He was overcome by fear. That irreversible downward spiral that took his life will take yours as well, if you are driven by fear and STOP TRUSTING YOUR INSTRUMENTS [*hold up The Story*].

And there's your Equipping Point for today:

Never stop trusting your instruments.

There will always be times when you don't see the horizon—when you can't tell up from down—when the enemy has confused you in the darkness. But never forget there are anchors you can always depend on: the love of God, the promises of His word, the presence of His Spirit, and the support of your brothers here. All of us go through "spiritual disorientation"—and the way to stay solid in your leadership is to remember to trust your instruments.

4. Jeroboam: Bad leadership always involves deception.

Look at the middle of page 197...

Is there any deception in your life? By that I don't just mean getting caught in a bald-faced lie, or with your hand deep in the cookie jar. I also mean this:

- **Have you asked anyone to shade the truth for you recently?**
- **Do you habitually tell only part of the truth?**

So let me ask again: **Where are you proceeding to?** I've had several conversations with people over the last few weeks. Some are playing with fire—they understand they are playing both ends against the middle, that they're trying to live their lives so that this part is unaware of a different part, a sinful part, a part that would collapse their world and crash their plane if anyone found out. I don't know, maybe the thrill of the danger of being caught is somehow intoxicating in a stupid kind of way, but, as the saying goes, their aircraft is simply proceeding to the crash site.

This is a new year. You may have made some good resolutions already. It's one week into 2009, and you may still be going to Lifetime Fitness, or wearing a Nicotine patch. But what we've discussed this morning is so much more important. This whole year it's all about taking the responsibility of leading your family, your employees, and anyone you influence well.

And if everything we've said today hasn't been enough, consider the last Scripture on your outline. It's on page 198 of *The Story*, and found in 1 Kings 14:

He will abandon Israel because Jeroboam sinned and made all of Israel sin along with him.

1 Kings 14:16

Such is the tremendous responsibility on the shoulders of a leader. If that doesn't sober you up, nothing will. Your influence is unstoppable. Whether we like it or not, as leaders in our families, our companies, our communities, and our churches, wherever we go, they go.

You may remember in Chapter 10 that Eli the High Priest was judged because his sons, both priests themselves, were abusing their position and seducing women at the entrance to the Temple. That's not even an old story—we've heard a lot about priests and seduction in the last several years haven't we? The Bible says God will judge not just the perpetrators, but the leaders over them. One of the greatest burdens of leadership is that we will be judged by God because of sin we know about but fail to restrain. *[Quote Isaiah 9:16-17]*

But it doesn't have to be this way! In the leadership roles God has given every person in this room, in 2009, we can take those who follow us to new heights of trust and faith in an unstable world. Where you go, they will go.

If you've been flying recklessly, use this time of new resolutions to stop and think: where are you proceeding? Are you fueled by the Holy Spirit, or has it been a while since you checked the tanks? Are you playing with fire and singeing your family in the process?

My prayer is that you will trust your instruments. My prayer is that you will trust your brothers around you, right here, with both your victories and your weaknesses, so that like Joshua and Aaron held up Moses' arms when he was tired, we can hold each other up. That's what has always set this particular Bible study apart, and I promise to do that for you if you'll be there for me. My prayer is that in 2009, our rendezvous is not at a crash site, but at a party: a celebration of freedom from fear, rescue from insecurity, and a simultaneous arrival for all of us, and those we lead, on a runway that lands at the feet of Jesus.