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MESSAGE

Holding Pattern

Putting off an easy thing makes it hard, and putting off a hard one makes it impossible. —George H. Lorimer

Have you ever been in an airplane whilst it's been in a holding pattern? When Lyndal and I traveled by airplane to the UK, the 747 we were in was instructed to move into a holding pattern over London. Thinking back to it now brings to mind a few feelings: Frustration; exhaustion; powerlessness, hopelessness, and of course nausea.

Now with airplanes, holding patterns are a necessary evil, its use is to hold the plane in a set and re-occurring pattern so that the regulation of planes landing and taking off is safe. I'd like to put to you, that in our ministry, teams, organisations, managerial attempts and personal growth, it is easy to get caught in a holding pattern. Which, like my airplane experience, can conjure up the same feelings, but unlike that metaphor does not have the same value or goal.

Holding patterns aren't necessarily the same as a pattern of detraction. In a Pattern of Detraction, there is a goal, there is some drive to reach it, there is desired destination. A Holding Pattern however says, "I will settle for the status quo; What we have is good enough; What we could develop is too difficult; Where we go and what we could achieve is too risky; Addressing that underlying conflict is too uncomfortable; The benefit of doing, is not worth the cost." Yes, a holding pattern has the potential to drain all that is good out of your ministry, organisation, Church, leadership team or business.

How? Because finding traction calls people's commitment out, it challenges people forward, it enables the recruiting of new people, it impassions and energises those (not all) already involved. These things however are not the norm. Most people, especially in Churches enjoy their 'spectator privileges', many

CHALLENGE:

To discover if you are in a holding pattern:

Evaluate your leadership in relation to the content of this episode. Evaluate those on your team. Evaluate the direction you are moving in. Evaluate the decisions that are not only being made but being followed through on. Evaluate the goals you have, and compare them with the goals of your team.

Now ask yourself the question: If we have goals, is what we are doing helping us to reach them?

are of the belief and understanding that turning up is enough. That holding ground, or maintaining our current position will suffice. This is exemplary of a holding pattern. The danger is that leaders can also get stuck in these holding patterns. Which brings us to a far bigger issue: Is a leader in a holding pattern, even a leader? I suggest not, because the entire concept of a leader is to create movement in a particular and desired direction.

I need to address at this point a misunderstanding that may be in the back of your mind. Sometimes not taking action, resting, healing, waiting or preparing, can be mistaken for a holding pattern. These things are only a holding pattern when they are not part of the process needed to achieve the goal or reach the desired destination. As leaders however we need to be continually on our guard not to allow these things to cause us to slip into a pattern of detraction.

It is always difficult to know how long to wait before acting, how much information to acquire, how many people to approach, how much material to write, and so on. These things are vital to effective results, but always be careful not to wait too long, prepare too much, gather too much information. Often great initiatives are lost at the hands of too much lengthy preparation, that turns out to be avoidance.

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