I lift my eyes to the hills

Throughout the pandemic I have found myself turning to the Psalms with a renewed ability to relate to the emotions expressed by the psalmists; pain, fear, joy and hope. Whilst faith helped the Psalmist the question is how does our faith help us in these uncertain times?

The McKinsey report, Leadership in a Crisis, outlines 5 leadership practices that can help us in such unprecedented times. Whilst some seem fairly universal, three in particular stand out as particularly important to those of us with Christian faith:

• The value of ‘deliberate calm’ and ‘bounded optimism’. As Christians our hope is in God: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11). Our future is uncertain but we know that God loves us and will not harm us.

• When making decisions amid uncertainty, the report talks about the need to “pause to assess and anticipate, then act”. For those of us who pray, this is part of our day to day lives. On any major decisions, taking that time to pause, reflect and pray before moving forward is critical now more than ever.

• Finally the report talks about the need to demonstrate empathy - to “deal with the human tragedy as a first priority”. As Christians we are called to love: “Let all that you do be done with love” (1 Corinthians 16:14).

So from a leading strategy consultancy we see some intrinsically Christian calls – a call to remain hopeful, to be prayerful and to share the unbounded love we receive from God. The last four months have undoubtedly changed business forever, but I pray through these uncertain times we all continue to support one another, to be creative and innovative, but most importantly to be hopeful, prayerful and loving in all we do.
This little light of mine
On the 11th of July 2018 the nation was poised on the edge of our seats as we dared to believe for just a moment that football was coming home. It didn’t. But what was interesting, was to hear the commentators following the match where England were knocked out of the world cup.

They said, ‘yes we lost but today was a win for English football. The tide has turned and people believe in the game again.’

They said that it brought people together, and was sure to enthuse a whole generation of future footballers; who would in their time bring it back home.

Edmund Burke, the famous politician, philosopher and father of modern conservatism quite rightly said that:

“Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little”

Edmund Burke insightfully recognised that the problem with the human condition is that we all too often live not by the motto for which he is afore attributed but rather that conversely, we all too often say, I only do what I have certainty of succeeding at. Or in other words we find our self-living by the notion that we only try when we know we will succeed.

Burke wrote against such a notion, for he knew that whilst human history has been shaped by many acts of greatness, they are less frequently acts of winners, but rather of imperfect people in an uncertain world daring to believe there might be a better way.

Our role at Christian Aid is to support you; Christian business leaders across the UK and beyond. Supporting, encouraging and equipping you to be agents of positive change within your organisations and throughout your spheres of influence.

Why? Because Christian Aid has seen both the impact poor and unjust business practises have upon some of the worlds poorest people and communities, as well as experienced the transformative and prophetic power business can have, both domestically and internationally, when its leaders and operations are resourced to thrive based upon holistic and faith values and not simply the generation of financial value alone.

Poor corporate practice has the ability to catastrophically affect communities and whole countries, whether it is failing to pay tax in the counties in which wealth is created, or unequal employment policies; or it might be turning a blind eye to the painful reality of modern day slavery. Proactively positive practices however have the ability to set the foundations of health and prosperity for those same communities.

Many members of the Salt Network are not large multinational corporations, although some are. Rather most are small operations but are unified by the belief that there might be a better way to run organisations, make money and secure a livelihood that honours life, equality and justice of all.

Jesus said “You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” - Matthew 5: 14-16

The world is full of injustice, brokenness and pain. 72 million children go without primary education, half the world lack access to essential health services, 780 million lack improved water sources and 63 million people are displaced. But the world is also full of joy, healing, dignity; and imperfect people willing stand as a flame of hope amidst the dark believing that there might be a better way.

Jesus said that you are the light of the world. Whatever your reason for being part of the Salt Network, you have given time to read this and more than likely engage with some of the other content of the Network. Whatever you believe, the very fact that you have spent your valuable time reading this suggests to me that you may believe in the notion of a more fair and just world. To my mind that might just make you light to the world.

When the world can appear dark, hard and unfair. When our businesses and our leadership feels under pressure and inadequate. When the bank balance and our
energy to ‘go beyond’ is low hold fast to that fact that “Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little” because even the smallest of lights overcomes the dark.

**Building a diverse business beyond the slogans**

The last few weeks and months have seen extraordinary tensions and uprisings in the name of racial equality and justice. The slogan Black Lives Matter has become a household name and we've seen organisations taking a stand to drive up ethnic representation across their teams. This is of course good news, however we have also seen the critique of the BLM movement grow and suggestions of alternative, less virtuous influences at play.

As Christians in business does the bible offer any insight into how we might respond appropriately so as to secure a more fair and equal company and societal structure?

Romans 12 is a scripture full of lessons for the everyday disciple, including those of us called to and gifted in leadership. There are two key messages within Romans 12:3-8 that speak powerfully into Christ centred leadership at a time such as this.

We are one amongst many. The passage starts by calling us to “not think too highly of ourselves”. This seems like an odd thing to say within the context of addressing gifting. However the passage calls us to recognize ourselves within the content of others and the their gifts. Paul, the author of this passage makes the point that each of us operate as a single part of a communal whole. Our gifting; including our gift and call to leadership, is no more important than any other gift or role and depends upon the gifts of others so that collectively we thrive.

Leadership requires humility and an ability to ‘see’ the others who equally contribute to the thriving of the whole.

Embrace diversity. We clearly see an emphasis on embracing unity within the diversity of gifting’s and roles. Leadership often places us in the position of developing teams and shaping organization structure, this passage calls us to think deeply and value the rich diversity of others. You may have come across of even used the Homogenous Unit Principle (HUP) in stimulating the growth of networks and groups. The HUP is based upon the notion that people gravitate towards likeminded people. In marketing and product growth terms we might say that to deliver growth we ought to identify our core proposition and product values and then work towards simulating activity primarily amongst our target audience and those of shared value. This might sound like sense, however when it comes to building teams, thriving organizations and healthy society, this passage in Romans challenges us to deliberately look beyond homogeneity and embrace diversity.

We know that diversity boosts innovation, return on investment, efficiency and growth of organizations. Moving beyond homogeneity is not only a spiritual trait of leadership it makes business sense too.

For you to reflect:

Christ centred, biblical leadership doesn't just happen but takes a proactive effort to reflect upon ourselves and others and then embrace the diversity we see. Self-awareness, humility and embracing difference is not easy and requires and willingness to engage with and accept the risk of acknowledging views different from our own.

•When have you made the deliberate effort to seeks views different from your own? What are the risks to pursuing diversity?

•What does humility look like in leadership?

**The UK’s role in unjust debt**

By Tim Jones, Head of Policy, Jubilee Debt Campaign

At the start of 2019 three former Credit Suisse bankers were arrested in London as part of a US investigation into $2 billion of loans by London banks to Mozambique.

The loans were given in secret in 2013. They were not agreed by the Mozambique parliament, making

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**Christian Aid and Gaia Energy**

Christian Aid and Gaia Energy have come together to develop the ARK Tariff (Additional Renewable Kilowatt tariff) helping the world's poorest communities to access clean, reliable energy.

Customers using this ethical energy tariff are helping to fund our award-winning Breaking the Barriers’ Programme. It supports women to create and own Women’s Led Sustainable Energy Enterprises in some of the poorest and most remote off-grid communities.

Groups receive training in sustainable energy products and technologies and business skills; they can also access finance through savings and loans groups. The project:

> Increases rural women’s jobs and income in the sustainable energy sector
> Improves their working and living conditions promotes gender equality
> Strengthens women’s social status.

How does it work?

By choosing Gaia Energy’s ARK Tariff, your church can support Christian Aid’s renewable energy projects.

For an additional charge of £20 (including VAT) per year, per contract (either gas or electricity or both), you can help give the world’s poorest communities access to reliable, clean energy.
them illegal under Mozambique law, and they only became public knowledge in 2016. Some of the money was spent on a tuna fishing fleet and speedboats which sit unused in Mozambique. Investigations have revealed that at least $700 million is unaccounted for. The US investigation alleges that at least $200 million in bribes and kickbacks were given and taken as part of the deal.

This scandalous deal was agreed between two banks in London, a company in the United Arab Emirates and a few senior people within the Mozambique government. Yet, despite the central involvement of London banks, the UK government has done nothing to hold them to account.

Revelations about the loans have caused an economic crisis in Mozambique, with public spending per person falling by 30% between 2014 and 2019. Campaigners in Mozambique are clear that the people of Mozambique should not have to repay one cent on a debt they had no say over and no benefit from. Instead, all those responsible, from the banks to the politicians in Mozambique, should be held to account.

The crisis in Mozambique is the worst example yet of a tide of growing debt problems across impoverished countries. This year Jubilee Debt Campaign calculated that debt payments by developing countries have increased by 85% since 2010 and are now at the highest level since 2004.

The global Jubilee campaign led to $130 billion of debt being cancelled for 36 impoverished countries. Debt cancellation in the 2000s led to significant improvements in healthcare and education. But not enough was done to prevent debt crises from recurring. One key problem is that loans to governments can be given in secret, preventing parliaments, media and civil society from holding governments to account on how money is spent. The UK is central to the global debt system, with 90% of African government international debts owed under UK law.

The UK government needs to take a lead in tackling the new round of debt crises. It must ensure that the UK-based banks are properly investigated for their role in the Mozambique debt scandal. And, as called for by over fifty MPs from every party in parliament, the government should pass a law that requires all loans given under UK law to be publicly disclosed when they are given.

Purpose based business, not easy but worth it

• Deutsche Bank found that aligning business operations to Environmental, Social and good Governance (ESG) principles improves long term financial performance

• Edelman found that 81% of people have more confidence in companies that demonstrate positive social impact

Building a values based organisation is not just a nice thing to do but it makes clear business sense also. Identifying and cascading your corporate values drive employee commitment, boosts customer engagement, secures stronger financial return and enables a more efficient, transformative and impactful organisation.

One of the false narratives that undermine values based business leadership is the notion that profit and purpose are in conflict. This is not true! What is true is that it is not always easy to align profitable activities with purposeful mission but it can and ought to be done so as to maximise the influence and impact you can have.

• What are the challenges you foresee in aligning values and profit making?