
**TLAWM-NGAIH-NA:
HOLINESS IN THE MIZO
CONTEXT OF MYANMAR**

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Communicating the gospel and holiness presents different challenges in different cultures. This is true for the Mizo people of north-western Myanmar. The Mizo language group is a subset of the wider Chin ethnic group. It occupies north-western Myanmar and also the Mizo state of India. Mizo people are nominally Christian, in contrast to the dominant Buddhism of Myanmar.

Efforts to communicate the love of God in Mizo evangelism have used the translation *bma-ngaib-na* (“love”). This understanding of love in the Mizo context is important, but is limited to human relationships. It was not traditionally used for divine relationships. Thus to say, “God so loved (*bma-ngaib*) the world,” does not really make sense to Mizo hearers.

More significant than “love” (*bma-ngaib-na*) in the Mizo context is the concept of *tlawm-ngaib-na* (“chivalry”). There is no direct equivalent in English for this term, but it connotes chivalry, mercifulness, self sacrifice, humility, selflessness, faithfulness, loyalty, hospitality, kindness, politeness, and being helpful to the poor and needy. It is often thought of in terms of a knight who displays courage, generosity, loyalty and courtesy. This cultural value applies in various settings. For example, if someone dies, many young people will volunteer to do whatever is necessary to help the grieving family. They may walk for ten miles to deliver the coffin. *Tlawm-ngaib-na* is the highest standard of human conduct in the Mizo community. It is used to evaluate all other cultural values.

Tlawm-ngaib-na approximates the biblical emphasis of love and holiness. A similar kind of “chivalry” is also important in the community of faith. Paul wrote, “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Eph 4:2); and “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:1-2).

The Mizo concept of *tlawm-ngaib-na*, then, provides an important point of contact with God’s holiness and love. It is much more meaningful to Mizo people to say, “God is *tlawm-ngai* (chivalrous)” than “God is *hmangaib-na* (love).” This strikes at the core value of Mizo culture and communicates God’s character better.

Mizo people already try to live a life characterized by *tlawm-ngaib-na*. There is already this value of practical and relational holiness. In reality, God is the epitome of *tlawm-ngaib-na*, and His holiness demands that He alone be worshiped, to the exclusion of other gods. Communication of the gospel and holiness in the Mizo context can utilize this existing category, while deepening its significance to include ethical aspects of holiness. This could open the way for a deeper understanding of the character of God in Mizo societies, and for a move beyond the complacency of nominal Christianity to a deeper ethical relationship with God. The Mizo concept of *tlawm-ngaib-na* gains ultimate significance when it is practiced all the more earnestly in relationship with God, whose *tlawm-ngaib-na* is ultimate.

TEN CONVICTIONS ABOUT LEADERSHIP

Greg Fernandez

My philosophy of leadership is to lead and serve people by demonstrating biblical principles of leadership through servanthood, and by influencing and helping people reach their full potential in order to turn their vision into reality, thus creating change for the glory of God and resulting in the expansion of His kingdom. My leadership principles can be summed up in ten convictions.

I believe in spiritual leadership.

Prayer life is the essence of spiritual leadership.

I believe in spiritual leadership. What I mean by this is that I as a leader should be a spiritual person. In order to be a spiritual leader, one should have an intimate relationship with God. One should walk with God in order to lead people for God. Therefore, my prayer life should be the fundamental aspect of my spiritual leadership. I consider leadership without prayer as non-spiritual leadership. Leadership could be practiced without prayer, but leadership cannot be considered spiritual without it. Therefore, prayer is the essence of spiritual leadership. Moreover, spirituality also should be demonstrated in the character of a leader. The leader's integrity and holiness of life along with prayerfulness are the very essence of spiritual leadership, without which leadership could not be considered spiritual in the strictest sense. In this manner, every leader should maintain an intimate relationship with God. We must walk with God.

I believe in visionary leadership.

Vision determines the future of the leader and an organization.

While vision does not consist of what leadership is all about, genuine leadership includes vision. I believe a leader without a vision, goal, plan, or dream is not a leader bound to create change. He may be a leader by title and position but he is not a leader in terms of what he really is. True leaders have always something in mind that they really want to accomplish, whether a personal vision by the leader or the vision of an organization or an institution. Vision is an integral part of leadership. If change would take place, vision must be the foundation of it. Therefore, if vision is to be turned into reality, there must be action. Although I know I would be staying in a church for a year, I would lead out with my plan as if I were staying there forever. It saves me from worrying what to do next.

I believe in developing leaders.

Developing leaders brings lasting legacy.

I believe in developing leaders rather than just attracting followers. An emphasis of my leadership would be to develop leaders. Since I will not live forever on earth, I need to train and develop leaders who can carry out my dreams and visions. In order to leave a lasting legacy, I must train leaders who will train others also. This is one of my models of leadership that needs to be implemented. If we could develop more leaders, we would make a greater difference in our generations for God.

I believe in delegating leadership.

The art of delegation is the cure for ministry attrition.

I know some people who experienced attrition and burnout in the ministry because they did all the work. They should not have attempted to do everything themselves. I strongly believe in the art of delegation. I propose that the cure for attrition is delegation. A leader who does not delegate responsibilities will experience burnout and soon be discouraged. Leaders should remember that they cannot do all the work. No matter how intelligent, efficient, and competent a leader is, he or she

cannot do the entire job. Let me make some suggestions that I think are also needed when we delegate responsibility.

Authority should accompany delegation of responsibility. When we give others responsibility, we should also give authority or power so that they can perform the responsibility that is given to them. When I say authority, I am referring to the power to make decisions. I know there should be a limit here, but great things can happen if authority is given to those who are directly involved. When we give real authority we are actually giving the power to make decisions. When we do this, it shows that we fully trust them, thus confidence in them is built, which results in their giving full potential in fulfilling their responsibilities. While I am aware of the abuse of power by immature leaders, a cautious attitude towards some should not prevent us from entrusting responsibility and power to others.

I believe in empowering leadership.

Empowerment begets power.

I think if we want people to stay empowered and focused on fulfilling their commitment, empowering others is crucial in the maintenance of strength among followers. I feel there are some leaders who fail to practice the art of empowerment. Instead of empowering people, some actually cause disempowerment. Some leaders are too insecure to empower others by entrusting them with the authority and power to exercise their full ability. Some are worried about losing their own status and credit. When I lead out with my plan for a one-year stay at my church, I not only set goals in such a way that it seems that I will stay there forever, but I plan and never care or think about who receives the credit if I accomplish something. It works. Others are strengthened when I empower them and do not try to get the credit.

I believe in sacrificial leadership.

In order to move forward sacrifice is essential.

When a leader makes sacrifices, the people will also sacrifice. Sacrifice begets sacrifice. Let me illustrate this from my own experience.

When I moved to a new church, the ceiling of the church building was not completed due to a lack of finances. Even though I was preparing for my upcoming wedding, I gave all that I had in order to buy plywood to complete the project. After I showed the first move, the members followed. They began to give money for the church building fund. I am not only speaking of sacrifice in terms of currency or economic necessity. Sacrifice can be demonstrated in many ways, such as time, pleasure, or personal ambition in order to accomplish something for the glory of God.

I believe in servant-leadership.

Servant-leadership is the most biblical pattern for leadership.

I have a difficult time thinking about leader and servant in relation to leadership. If a leader must serve, how could he lead? That question bothers me. I have this idea that since I am the leader, I should lead and others should follow me because I am the boss. Leadership and followership are difficult to unite with the servant-leadership concept. I have this idea that leaders always have followers, and followers are to serve the leader. How can we effectively lead people if we are their servants? This is difficult. Most leaders I have seen are highly respected. We have this mental idea that we who have no title and function should bow down and serve those in higher leadership and position.

I feel like it is necessary to define servanthood in order to fully grasp what Jesus meant when He said, "If you desire to be a leader, you should be the servant of all." I think the word "servant" is understandable. I am aware of the possibility that it may have some cultural and exegetical implications or hermeneutical importance, but I think the word "servant" simply carries the message of service. I do not wish to do a word study on this word or read commentaries on the word "servant" because it is not difficult to understand. I think its application is the most difficult. Perhaps one of the reasons servant-leadership is difficult is the fact that there is a misconception between leading and serving. To some, leadership gives the idea of title, position, power, and authority, and servanthood implies the idea of servant, slave, etc. This

seems too difficult to unite. I believe I am called to serve. Being a servant does not mean I have no authority and power. Being a servant means a leader must know how to work. The leader must be willing to make sacrifices when ministry demands it. A leader should be ready to serve people for the sake of ministry and not for selfish reasons. The idea of humility and selflessness is part of this process.

I believe in both goal and relationship oriented leadership.

Goal and relationship oriented leadership should be in balance.

I believe a leader should be neither goal-oriented nor relationship-oriented. It is not either/or, but it is both/and. Goal and task orientation is needed. We need different types of leadership because there are different types of situations and people. Wise leaders should know how to balance between task and relational leadership.

I believe in motivational leadership.

Motivation brings inspiration among followers.

Motivational leadership has several characteristics. Motivational leadership depends so much on the character of the leader. The leader should be efficient and competent. Motivational leadership includes inspiration and example. Motivation is the result of transformed character. How shall we then motivate people? Motivation should be intentional. We must plan to motivate others. Leaders must motivate by personal character, words, and actions. Leaders will motivate through their influence.

I Believe in transformational leadership.

Transformation is the result of genuine leadership.

One cannot be a leader without transformation. Change and transformation must be stressed because unless change takes place, true leadership will not result. I want to see genuine transformation in my generation that will result in leadership. We need people today who are change-makers. It's the only hope for any organization. Change-makers

are the crying need of genuine leadership. Really transformed leaders cannot watch the world and let it pass by without doing something positive to bring transforming change into the lives of others.

Conclusion

What I have noted above represents what I believe at this point in time. It does not mean these ideas are necessarily unchanging. Some might change as I grow in leadership ability. Personally, I look at leadership as a complex matter. There is no single key to leading. What may seem very effective to some may not work for others. We must remember that we may have different methodologies and approaches to leadership from many different contexts. Strategies and methodologies may change but the basic principles remain. Those principles I have attempted to define here.