



## *Passing the Baton*

*Thoughts on  
Leadership Succession*

### ■ AN INTERVIEW WITH ELDER JOHN

*Interviewer:* John, please share with us your working experience.

*John:* I started as an academic for 4 years before joining the corporate world working for Johnson & Johnson and EssilorLuxottica for 25 years.

*Interviewer:* How important was leadership in the companies you worked for?

*John:* In Johnson & Johnson, leadership was as important as your technical or professional skill set. I remember that whenever I interview someone for a job, I always looked at their leadership roles from as far back as their university days.

*Interviewer:* Why is leadership so important?

*Leadership Lessons is a publication by BBPC Leadership Academy ministry.*

*Each issue focuses on a key leadership trait or topic, and features articles penned by our very own BBPC ministry leaders.*

*It is our hope and prayer that the leadership lessons will inspire us to live out biblical leadership principles in our homes, schools, workplaces, ministries, community, church and beyond.*

*Be strong and courageous,  
Ps Koh Chao Rui  
Convener, Leadership Academy*

John: Every employee is important. Leaders are important because all of us can work very hard but if the direction is wrong, then all the hard work counts for little. Hence, leaders are important to provide the vision, the directions and the strategies.

Interviewer: Do you feel the same about leadership in BBPC?

John: Proverbs 29:18 says that where there is no vision, the people perish. We see how God uses leaders like Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Peter, Paul amongst others to provide vision and lead His people. So yes, to have the right leaders appointed by God is important.

Interviewer: What do you think of leadership succession in the church?

John: God's work in His church is 'dependent' on His children serving. I am very appreciative of all who have served for a long time. This includes Sunday school teachers, AV technicians, ushers, etc. There are also leaders who have served a long time like CG leaders, Deacons & Elders. It is important that there are people who will step up to take over these responsibilities. At a time like this, we need more 'Joshuas' and 'Isaiahs' who will say "Here I am, send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

Interviewer: Why is it important to have new leaders taking over?

John: I love this church and I believe many of us do. We serve the Lord to the best of our ability but being human, we need time off to refresh ourselves both spiritually and physically. So, it is important that there are others who can step in with new energy, ideas and enthusiasm to contribute to the building of God's Kingdom.

Interviewer: Due to space constraint, this is a short interview. Any last words?

John: We served in church for the love and glory of God. When we are involved in serving or leading the church, we are involved in building a church that allows for lost souls to be saved. That is such a wonderful privilege. Imagine the people who will greet us in heaven because of our service to the Lord. That is worth whatever sacrifice we make to serve the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says that in the Lord our labour is not in vain. Amen to that. ■

***Elder Dr John Ang is married to Helen and has a family of one daughter and two sons. Until January 2023, he served as session clerk for three terms at BBPC. John is passionate about contributing to the development of pastors and leaders in the Presbyterian churches. His life motto is "To know Him, to be like Him and to serve Him so as to glorify Him all the days of my life".***



## ▣ SERVING AS *LITTLE* PEOPLE

One Old Testament event that demonstrates the topsy-turviness of God's kingdom appears in the first half of 2 Kings 5. It is a familiar story: Naaman, a Syrian commander, successful and powerful, has leprosy. He goes to Israelite prophet Elisha for divine healing, who tells him to take a bath in the Jordan River. Naaman feels condescended to, but gets over his pique, dips himself into the Jordan, and is not just healed physically but converted to faith. It is a wonderful example of repentance, grace, and how to live as believers when those around you are not.

Remember, though, the Israelite king's fear upon receiving the Syrian king's letter of recommendation. There may have been a truce between Syria and Israel at that time, but the threat of war and captivity casts a long shadow over the events of 2 Kings 5. The story is not only about one man's illness; at stake was a nation. With this grand background, what strikes me when reading the passage is a word that appears twice (in the ESV): *little*.

In the beginning of the story, it is a *little* captive Israelite servant girl – the wrong age, the wrong immigration status, the wrong race, the wrong job – who bravely suggests that Naaman consult an Israelite prophet. And at the end, the *great* Naaman is restored—in health, to God—when his flesh becomes like that of a *little* child.

God uses the nameless, the young, the lowly, to move the hands of kings and the feet of armies (1 Corinthians 1:27). He also tells us that true healing and restoration come when we are like children (Matthew 18:3), needy and trusting.

*Littleness*, we see, is not a deterrent but a pre-requisite for serving Him. This is why I have loved serving with the youths in BBPC for the past twelve years\*. Young people have empty LinkedIn profiles, non-existent credit scores, the awkwardness of navigating society and relationships, crackly voices but few places to be heard – they know their *littleness* very well. And in their youth and littleness, God works wonders: Successful events and outings, sensitivity and love to their non-believing friends, theological awareness and depth, and (personal favourite) my 'ex-students' becoming my 'now-colleagues'.

*\*There are some cons, like feeling less fashionable and having to learn new abbreviations and a new social media platform every year!*

If your status or your stature or your age or your abilities are causing you to hesitate to serve, whether in a new or different capacity, 2 Kings 5 remind us that what is really needed is being *little*. In the New Testament, the marks of good servants are not primarily about age and life experience, but about the fruit of the Spirit, and God's gifts to those who are willing to follow Him – like *little* children.

How weak, foolish, and lowly (1 Corinthians 1:26-28) are you? How *little* are you? God is calling precisely such people to serve Him. This is what pleases God, what God so often chooses to use, and how God is most glorified. ■

**Deaconess Alena Wan** started attending BBPC 17 years ago and is currently serving in the Youth / Young People's ministry. Outside of church, she is a tax consultant in an accounting firm and spends too much time and money on books.



A leader's lasting value is measured by succession.

— John C. Maxwell —



AZ QUOTES

## ■ ENDNOTE

If John Maxwell is right, then the litmus test and lasting legacy of a leader can be evident in his or her intentionality and impetus to pass the baton. Passing the baton in ministry parallels a relay race: it requires the starter runner as well as subsequent runners. To go the long haul, no leader, however capable or willing, should anchor the race indefinitely. A leader leads as much as he or she grooms the next leader. If you have been the sole runner all these years, would you begin scouting for your successor? Conversely, if you have been watching your ministry or cell group leader run the race these while, would you prayerfully step up to receive the baton? The relay race of ministry can be best run and sustained, when each of us plays his or her part in leadership succession – both passing the baton and receiving it.

**Pastor Koh Chao Rui**