



▣ STARTING WELL, FINISHING WELL

More important than starting well, is to finish well.

Be it in one's walk with God or service to God, many leaders often start well, but few finish well and strong.

In this final issue of *Leadership Lessons*, we hear from two of our ministry deacons, who will share with us their personal experience and reflection on this important topic.

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.

Leadership Academy

▣ REFLECTION BY DN BENJAMIN

Jesus is the great simplifier. When grilled on what the Greatest Commandment was, He reduced hundreds of years of Mosaic jurisprudence (even the Ten Commandments!) into two commands to love (Matthew 22:35-40).

Jesus is the great re-prioritiser. When confronted with two sisters (Mary and Martha) faced with competing preoccupations, He was able to zero in on the one that mattered.

I remember times in my ministry and work in church when I prayed for the ability to see through and past things to focus on the needful.

Many of us, like Martha, slip into the performance stream of ministry and get caught up in the business of 'hands and feet'. The bigger the event, the more there is to be planned, delegated and done.

In the context of our service to the church, focusing on doing more does not always translate into a deeper and more intimate knowledge and relationship with God for ourselves or others.

Sometimes doing more may lead us on a road of needless anxiety and troubledness – especially when we lose sight (and presence) of our Lord's leading. Jesus made less, more. He made less, meaningful.

May our time spent with Christ and the Word help us re-focus and simplify our lives around Him. This way, we may reduce chances of burn-out, and stay on track towards finishing well.

Deacon Benjamin Sim is part-time BBPC deacon and full-time legal professional, and has regularly witnessed life and ministry pulling in many different directions. Current status: open to fishing trips with the Lord.



▣ REFLECTION BY DNS RUYI

You have probably never seen me run.

It's for good reason. But there was once in my life, when I was in Primary 6, that I got the 'Sportswoman of the Year' award on Sports Day. A young person today might jokingly remark that that was when I 'peaked', and I would have to agree.

I don't remember why I was even in the try-outs. My name was called, and I went. I caused a stir at the try-outs, because I apparently out-ran the usual best runners (we ran at the same time). I say 'apparently' because it was my friend who told me. I did not witness it myself because my focus was just on the running; I didn't look left or right. Due to my try-out results, I was put in almost all the track events, and I podiumed for all I ran, thus earning 'Sportswoman of the Year', a feat never to be repeated in my life, and highly unbelievable for those who have seen me run after Primary 6.

It would be easy for me to say that I earned the award on my own, but that would be untrue; I benefitted from whoever got me into try-outs, the teammates who helped with podiuming for the team event, my family, friends and teachers who supported me, the good weather, the good track, and the shoes even. All these are external factors I didn't and couldn't control. In Primary 6, everything came together nicely, and I thank God for that, but while faith can be budded by thanksgiving, it is actually refined through suffering (1 Peter 1:6-7).

We will find that although God called us to certain areas in His kingdom (whether at home, church or office, or a combination), and though we excel at the try-outs, others may not give us the opportunity to be in certain events. The weather turns bad, the resources we have are lean and wearing thin, supporters leave, and yet others play politics or disqualify us unjustly. And the biggest blow of all? The two-faced ones are actually Christians who are your spiritual parents; they treat you like a (non-paid) hired hand, because 'servant leadership' right? 'Turn your cheek', 'forgive seventy times seven', 'be humble like Christ', 'You're not working for men but for God', 'unity', etc. They've forgotten that the blood of the martyrs will cry out, that justice requires restitution, that repentance precedes reconciliation, that peacemakers will inherit the earth, that shepherds lay down their lives for their sheep, and that teachers of the law are judged more strictly.

How then do we finish well, if at all? Why should we even start; is it worth it? I'm sure we all know the short answer; it is 'yes'. However, we dislike the long answer, because it winds through the wilderness, where we cannot control most things, and where we are forced to depend on daily manna to carry our cross. Don't even mention the Sabbaths – there's no manna because it was already provided the day before.

But that long answer also contains the promise of a Promised Land, where every tear is wiped away, where the River of Life and Tree of Life are, where there is peace, and where there is Love. And better than the Exodus Israelites, we have a Saviour who already went through the wilderness and more, and is now preparing for us in the Promised Land. We are but tracing His footsteps on this fiery race. His Spirit is with us. Our Father is working.

The question is not how do we finish well, but how do we *not* finish well? That said, while you probably have never seen me run, you will see me stop. I'm not done yet, or rather, God is not done with me yet, since I'm still on this side of heaven. And part of His work in me in the next season is that I need to catch up on my Sabbaths, lamentations, griefs, and forgiveness. Who knows what comes next? But I am sure that while I will never again be 'Sportswoman of the Year', I will still be a good and faithful servant, and enter my Master's joy when the time comes (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). Yet not I, but God's grace working in me. God be with you till we meet again.

Recommended reading list:

- *Serving Without Sinking: How to Serve Christ and Keep Your Joy (available in church library)*
- *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality (available in church library)*
- *A Rose in the Wilderness (<https://faithworks.com.sg/products/aroseinthewilderness>)*

Deaconess Dr Foong Ruyi lectures on data analytics at the School of Mathematics and Science at Singapore Polytechnic. Truth be told, she actually dislikes running for most of her life. Her current loves are, in no particular order: flowers, crafts, books and families.

