

Gary L. McIntosh & Samuel D. Rima, Sr.

# Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership

THE PARADOX OF PERSONAL DYSFUNCTION

7

## THE COMPULSIVE LEADER

As an infant, tragic circumstances dictated that the young boy be abandoned by his parents. This severe measure, reluctantly taken by his parents, was the only hope the child had for survival. It was done in an effort to save his life.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately children cannot understand the circumstances or discern the motivations that precipitate such traumatic events. They are simply left to spend a lifetime sorting through and dealing with the emotional debris that inevitably results.

Growing up, it probably was not too difficult for the boy to figure out that he was an adopted child. He looked different from his adopted family and was from an entirely different culture. He probably asked the same questions every adopted child eventually asks: Why? What was wrong with me? Why didn't my parents want to keep me? These questions are often a lifetime in the answering.

As the boy grew and matured he learned of his cultural heritage and likely began to understand more about the circumstances that led to his abandonment as an infant. However, simply understanding does not remove the scars, or the pain.

When he was a young man, it had become clear to him that members of his own race and culture were living in an oppressive state. As a result of having been adopted into a wealthy, well-connected family, the young man now had the power and position needed to bring liberation to those from his race who were still suffering as political prisoners and slaves. However, his initial attempt to liberate his people resulted in failure. In fact it resulted in murder. When his adoptive grandfather learned of this subversive act, he took steps to have his adopted grandson killed to pay for the crime. The young man fled to a foreign country to save his life (Exod. 2:1-15).

Such were the childhood experiences of Moses. Abandonment by his parents as an infant, adoption by the enemies of his own people, an upbringing in the rigid environment of a royal family with the accompanying high expectations, a significant failure, and the ultimate rejection by his adoptive grandfather comprised Moses' formative years. It no doubt was the combination of the unmet needs stemming from this childhood that created Moses' dark side and resulted in his becoming a compulsive leader.

#### MOSES: A MAN IN CONTROL

At the time Moses led the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage, conservative estimates place the number of people under his leadership at around three million. During any age and for any leader, no matter how gifted, this is an impossible number of people over which to exercise direct control. And yet it appears from the biblical record that Moses felt a need to have control and believed that he alone was capable of doing the job correctly. In Exodus 18 we are told that Moses alone would mediate disputes among the people and render authoritative judgments. In order to accomplish this task the people with disputes would stand

around Moses from "morning until evening," a period of at least twelve hours, so that Moses could settle their problems. Apparently some of these disputes were quite petty in nature (Exod. 18:22).

One would think that a man with Moses' level of education and his exposure in Egypt to the most sophisticated form of government known to the world at that time would see the need for delegating authority. But it took his shepherd father-in-law, Jethro, to witness this inefficient practice and suggest organizational changes before Moses could see that his compulsive need to control was not healthy for him or the people (Exod. 18:17-18).

In addition to the control issue it would seem that Moses was subject to occasional public eruptions of anger. In fact one of his public outbursts resulted in his being forbidden to enter the Promised Land, the ultimate purpose of his leading the people out of Egypt (Num. 20:1-13). Although any analysis of Moses' personality can only be conjecture, it would seem reasonable to assume that his public outbursts of anger in the face of difficult people may indicate some repressed anger and resentment from his early years.

In spite of Moses' struggles God used him in amazing ways to advance his kingdom plan, and he enjoyed close fellowship with God (Deut. 34:10). Whatever the exact cause, in the life and leadership of Moses we can see some of the signs of the compulsive leader.

#### MAINTAINING CONTROL AT ALL COSTS

*Compulsive* in a leadership context describes the need to maintain absolute order. Because compulsive leadership results from the leader's own compulsive personality, the leader sees the organization as another area of his life that must be controlled. The leader sees the organization's performance as a direct reflection of his or her own person and

performance. The compulsive leader pursues perfection to an extreme, both in personal and organizational life. Compulsive leaders generally develop very rigid, highly systematized daily routines that they must follow meticulously.<sup>2</sup> These can involve exercise, devotions, schedule, and family routines and extend into the leadership of organizations. Compulsive leaders also tend to be very status conscious and as a result are deferential and ingratiating with their superiors, often going out of their way to impress them with their diligence and efficiency.<sup>3</sup> They continually look for the reassurance and approval of authority figures and are anxious when unsure of their performance and standing.<sup>4</sup> Because all of these efforts require an enormous amount of energy, compulsive leaders are excessively devoted to work, often becoming workaholics. They work inordinate hours to the detriment of their family and establish an unhealthy example and environment for staff members. Staff then feel like slackers if they don't keep up with the boss or if they want to leave the office after a normal day's work. There is little room for spontaneity, and even compulsive leaders' recreation and pleasure are often planned in advance so as to get the most out of their relaxation time. These leaders are often overly moralistic, conscientious, and judgmental both of themselves and others.<sup>5</sup>

Although compulsive leaders are pictures of absolute order (e.g., their grooming, clothing, speech, family, and work environment), on the inside they are an emotional powder keg.<sup>6</sup> At heart they can be angry, rebellious individuals who believe it wrong to express their true feelings. These feelings can be the result of a rigid childhood where unrealistic expectations were placed on them. Or they can be the product of some failure or childhood trauma to which they were not allowed to give appropriate expression. Whatever the source, compulsive leaders respond to their inner turmoil by so tightly binding their feelings that

the opposite of turmoil results—highly controlled and ordered individuals.<sup>7</sup> This is why it is common for such persons' repressed anger to be expressed in sudden and violent outbursts, only to be just as quickly controlled, with appropriate apologies extended.

Ultimately all attempts to exercise and maintain control of their lives and environments are efforts to keep repressed anger, resentment, and rebellion from surfacing. It is not unusual for compulsive leaders to have so deeply buried this anger, living in denial for such an extended period, that they are unaware of its presence. The first step toward regaining balance is to identify whether compulsive leadership is a problem and then begin reflecting on the possible sources.

#### COMPULSIVE LEADERS IN THE CHURCH

There are many pastors and spiritual leaders today who feel the need to be in complete control of their organization in every minute detail. They must oversee the preparation of the bulletin to ensure it meets their high standards. They pick every song for Sunday worship. There is a worship director, but that person cannot match the song perfectly to the theme of the sermon. These leaders are obsessive over every decision. One pastor of a large church insisted that his staff wear black or blue suits, white shirts, and red ties. This was staff policy!

Compulsivity in the church often shows up in the pursuit of excellence in ministry. This striving for excellence can become perfectionism. Compulsive leaders see the organization they lead as an extension and reflection of themselves. Therefore, any flaws in the organization are seen as a direct reflection on them personally. We firmly support excellence in ministry, but there must be balance. We need to recognize when our pursuit of excellence is crossing the line to obses-

sive perfectionism. Excessive criticism and criticizing can be another symptom of compulsive leadership in the church. Very often such leaders are most critical of themselves, but their attitude affects others within the organization.

Though all of the above behaviors are done under the guise of serving God and doing our best for the Lord, which is very admirable, in reality it is all done in an attempt to meet and satisfy the leader's unhealthy needs.

#### TARGETING INSIGHTS

- One manifestation of the dark side is the development of the compulsive leader. Moses is one example found in the Bible.
- Some signs of a compulsive leader include the following. Compulsive leaders are status conscious, looking for reassurance and approval from those in authority. They try to control activities and keep order and usually are workaholics. At times they are excessively moralistic, conscientious and judgmental.
- At heart compulsive leaders have an angry and rebellious attitude. Since they may not feel it is proper to express their true feelings, they may repress their anger and resentment.

#### APPLYING INSIGHTS

How do you know if you are a compulsive leader? If you have read to this point and cannot identify with anything that's been said, you probably are not a compulsive leader. If, however, you caught brief glimpses of yourself in some but not all of the signs described, you might have some tendencies toward being a compulsive leader. Then there are those of you who felt as if someone had climbed inside your skin and described you perfectly. You are most likely a compulsive leader.

To help you understand if this is the shape your dark side has taken, we offer the following inventory. Read each statement and circle the number that corresponds closest to your impressions about yourself.

- 5 = strongly agree  
4 = agree  
3 = uncertain  
2 = disagree  
1 = strongly disagree

1. I often worry that my superiors do not approve of the quality of my work. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I am highly regimented in my daily personal routines such as exercise schedule or devotions. 1 2 3 4 5
3. When circumstances dictate that I must interrupt my daily personal routines, I find myself out of sorts and feeling guilty for having "skipped" a day. 1 2 3 4 5

(continued on next page)

4. I frequently find myself conscious of my status in relationship to others. 1 2 3 4 5
5. It is difficult for me to take an unplanned day off from work responsibilities just to goof around or spend time with friends or family. 1 2 3 4 5
6. While away from work, I still find myself thinking about work-related topics, often sitting down to write out my ideas in length even if it disrupts family activities. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I like to plan the details of my vacations so that I don't waste time. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I often explode in anger after being cut off or irritated while driving or over petty issues. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I am meticulous with my personal appearance, keeping shoes shined, clothes perfectly pressed, hair carefully cut and groomed, and fingernails always clipped. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I frequently comment about the long hours I keep and my heavy workload. 1 2 3 4 5
11. When others make sloppy errors or pay little attention to detail, I become annoyed and judge that person. 1 2 3 4 5

12. I am obsessive about the smallest errors, worrying that they will reflect poorly on me. 1 2 3 4 5

Add up the circled numbers and place the total here \_\_\_\_\_

If your total comes to less than 20, you probably are not compulsive. If your total is between 21 and 40, there is a likelihood that you have *some* compulsive tendencies. If your total is 41 or more, you probably are a compulsive leader.

Do you see the traits of a compulsive leader in yourself? In what ways does this type of leader mirror your dark side?

the pool and pined for himself until he finally was absorbed by the earth and became a flower—the Narcissus, which can still be found on the banks of most ponds; its reflection glimmering in the water.<sup>1</sup>

#### SOLOMON: A MAN OBSESSED WITH HIS IMAGE

It is never easy to follow a legend. Whenever a new leader is faced with the task of filling a beloved and successful leader's shoes, it is almost always an uncomfortable fit. That is especially true when the new leader happens to be the son of the living legend being replaced. Such was the predicament of Solomon.

For forty years King David ruled as a benevolent king and was greatly loved by his people. His accomplishments and reputation were bigger than life: war hero, expander of the nation, a handsome and gifted king. But as with all beloved and legendary leaders, the torch must eventually be passed to the next generation. Enter Solomon.

Solomon's transition to this challenging position was not without its problems. Solomon ascended to the throne in the midst of much family tension. When King David was on his deathbed, his eldest son, Adonijah, assumed that he would naturally ascend to the throne and declared himself king over Israel. However, because he knew that Solomon was his father's favored son, he did not invite Solomon, Solomon's mother Bathsheba, or David's trusted advisor, Nathan the prophet, to his inaugural festivities. On learning of Adonijah's bold move, Bathsheba and Nathan hatched a plan to usurp the throne from him and install Solomon in his place. As a result Solomon became king at the urging of his mother under less than ideal circumstances—a fact that surely was not lost on the young prince.



#### THE NARCISSISTIC LEADER

Ancient Greek mythology tells the story of a young boy by the name of Narcissus. Narcissus was a beautiful boy. So beautiful, the fable has it, that his face appeared to be chiseled from the most perfect marble and his neck looked as smooth as unblemished ivory. Because of his extraordinary beauty, many of his peers were attracted to him but none could get through to him. They reached out to Narcissus and extended their love to him, but he was not interested in any of them; he had found his love interest closer to home. At the age of sixteen Narcissus was walking along the mythical river Styx when he approached a calm pool of water to get a drink. As he moved his face closer, he saw his own image reflected in the pool and was transfixed. From that moment on Narcissus was in love with the image he saw reflected in that riverside pool—his own image. Because he was so obsessed with his own image, he could not love anyone or return anyone's love. As the story goes, Narcissus eventually could not bear to leave his reflection in the pool. He lay down by

Solomon was quite young and inexperienced in political matters (1 Chron. 29:1). It is probably safe to assume that Solomon's contrived route to the throne, his youthfulness and inexperience, the legendary success of his father, as well as his probable awareness of the circumstances of his own birth that followed the death of David and Bathsheba's child born of adultery all combined to provide a sense of inferiority and a powerful drive within the young king to make a name for himself.

Because of the legacy of his father, David, Solomon would always be looking over his shoulder; simply succeeding would never be enough for an insecure young king. Making a name for himself would require doing something grand. Even with the prospect of building the great temple (plans and preparations for which had already been made by his father), there was always the possibility of failure. Or worse yet, what if people attributed the temple's completion to David's planning and preparation? Whatever the reasons, Solomon hatched plans for his kingdom on a scale previously unheard of in Israel.

I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself; I made gardens and parks for myself, and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees. I bought male and female slaves, and I had home-born slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. Also, I collected for myself silver and gold, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men—many concubines.

Ecclesiastes 2:4-8

Even with a cursory reading of Solomon's project list it is easy to recognize the focus of all his efforts—himself! With the constant refrain of me, mine, and myself, King

Solomon reveals that he is obsessed with himself and with creating an image that would outshine the star of his revered father, David. Apparently he succeeded, at least for a while. As a result of his massive, self-indulgent projects he began to feel temporarily satisfied with the image he had created for himself.

Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me. And all that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor.

Ecclesiastes 2:9-10

It would seem that Solomon, the tentative young king who got off to a troubled start, had more than just a healthy self-image. He had become bigger than life in his own mind. But this world-class greatness was not without significant cost. To fund his desires, Solomon taxed the people to the point of economic exhaustion. When image is everything, no price is too high—especially when it is being paid by others.

In addition to the misappropriation of national financial resources, Solomon was willing to tarnish the integrity of his office by violating divine mandates in an effort to advance himself. In Deuteronomy there were three specific prohibitions for whoever would serve as king over God's people: The king should not multiply horses for himself (especially not horses from Egypt), he should not multiply wives for himself (lest they turn his heart away from devotion to the Lord), and he should not increase silver and gold for himself (Deut. 17:16-17). Evidently Solomon's obsession with his own image was so overpowering that he blatantly violated each of these prohibitions. Yet in spite of it all, Solomon could not find the satisfaction and meaning

he had hoped his grand achievements would produce. Instead they led him to this life-shaking midlife encounter with the dark side.

#### WHEN IMAGE IS EVERYTHING

For the narcissistic leader, such as Solomon, the world revolves on the axis of self, and all other people and issues closely orbit them as they get caught in the strong gravitational pull of the narcissist's self-absorption. As seen in the life of Solomon, narcissistic leaders "present various combinations of intense ambition, grandiose fantasies, feelings of inferiority and overdependence on external admiration and acclaim."<sup>2</sup> At the same time the self-absorbed leader is chronically uncertain of himself and experiences dissatisfaction with his accomplishments, which he tries to overcome by exploiting others in ways that will help elevate his self-image.<sup>3</sup> In addition, narcissistic leaders have an overinflated sense of their importance to the organization and an exhibitionistic need for constant attention and admiration from others, especially those they lead and any person or group to whom they report. In spite of their drive to achieve greatness, their restless ambition is rarely satisfied in a way that enables them to enjoy their accomplishments. Another characteristic is their "interpersonal exploitiveness, in which others are taken advantage of in order to indulge [their] own desires or for self-aggrandizement."<sup>4</sup> Solomon displayed this type of behavior through overmaximizing the people in an effort to finance his own self-promoting projects.

Narcissistic leaders also tend to overestimate their own achievements and abilities while stubbornly refusing to recognize the quality and value of the same in others. Any recognition of someone else's accomplishments or abilities is a threat to their own self-importance and risks the loss

of the exclusive admiration they crave from their followers. Because narcissistic leaders tend to use others to advance their own goals, they are notorious for being unable to empathize with those they lead. This enables them to pursue their own ends without restraint. Though narcissism seems to be diametrically opposed to the concept of spiritual, servant leadership, it is all too common in the church and among spiritual leadership.

#### NARCISSISTIC SPIRITUAL LEADERS

So how do narcissistic leaders show up in the church and Christian organizations? Though it may not be on the same scale as Solomon, Christian leaders often use those they lead to enhance their own image and improve the way they feel about themselves. Far too many sermons are preached in an effort to gain the approval and admiration of followers, with little or no concern for God's approval. The pastor or speaker who steps down from the platform and is immediately obsessed with whether his sermon was good is dealing with a prime symptom of narcissism.

Jim Bakker seems to have been a classic victim of narcissistic personality disorder.<sup>5</sup> His visions of grandeur were born out of deep feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. He was driven to achieve in an effort to prove to himself and others that he was worthy and approved. So deeply rooted was his psychological need to achieve greatness that he would stop at virtually nothing in an effort to gain the approval and recognition he craved.

Numerous churches have been destroyed by leaders who led the church into projects too energetic and costly for the congregation because the leader needed to feel good about himself. How easy it is for Christian leaders to use their organizations as nothing more than platforms from which they launch themselves on their chosen career path with

little or no regard for the long-term health of the organization they were entrusted to lead.

When a pastor or Christian executive says to himself, *This church (or organization) would suffer if I ever left*, it is a sign of narcissism. When the leader is constantly beginning new ministries, even when existing, essential ministries are not adequately staffed or effective, it is a sign of narcissism. Rather than ensuring that existing ministries are efficiently functioning, the narcissistic leader needs the kudos that come from new and unique ministries. However, once the "high" of a new ministry launch is gone, the narcissistic leader provides little long-term oversight or maintenance.

Because ministry provides the ready justification that grandiose visions and risky ventures are necessary to accomplish God's kingdom work, the church and Christian organizations provide fertile soil for budding narcissists. Tragically, because many followers of the narcissistic leader think all this activity is being done for God, they feel uncomfortable challenging their leader.

#### TARGETING INSIGHTS

- One manifestation of the dark side is the development of the narcissistic leader. Solomon is one example found in the Bible.
- Some signs of a narcissistic leader include the following. Narcissistic leaders are driven to succeed by a need for admiration and acclaim. They may have an over-

inflated sense of importance as well as great ambitions and grandiose fantasies. At the heart of narcissistic leaders are self-absorption and uncertainty due to deep feelings of inferiority. In addition, they may not enjoy their success and may be dissatisfied with their lives.

#### APPLYING INSIGHTS

So how do you know if you are narcissistic when it comes to the exercise of leadership? Chances are that you who battle these issues were uncomfortably aware of it as you read this chapter. However, one of the traits of narcissistic leaders is that they live in a state of constant denial and self-justification. Therefore, the following inventory may be helpful.

- 5 = strongly agree
- 4 = agree
- 3 = uncertain
- 2 = disagree
- 1 = strongly disagree

1. Fellow leaders in my church or organization frequently question whether my proposed goals and projects are feasible and realistic. 1 2 3 4 5

(continued on next page)

2. I am obsessed with knowing how others feel about my sermons, lessons, and performance. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I find it difficult to receive criticism of any kind, reacting with anger, anxiety, or even depression when it does come. 1 2 3 4 5
4. At times I find myself thinking, *I'll show them, they could never make it without me*, when I experience conflict situations or opposition to my proposed plans. 1 2 3 4 5
5. In spite of achieving what others would consider significant success, I still find myself dissatisfied and driven to achieve greater things in an effort to feel good about myself. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I am willing to bend rules and press the envelope of acceptable behavior to accomplish my goals. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I find myself feeling jealous of the success and achievements of associates, other churches, or organizations in my area. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I am often unaware of or unconcerned about the financial pressures my goals and projects place on

- those I lead or the church or organization I serve. 1 2 3 4 5
9. Success or failure in a project has a direct bearing on my self-image and sense of worth. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I am highly conscious of how colleagues and those to whom I am accountable regard my accomplishments. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I need to be recognized or "on top" when meeting with a group of fellow pastors, denominational officials, or associates. 1 2 3 4 5
12. I see myself as a nationally known figure at some time in the future or I have plans to attain such a position. 1 2 3 4 5

Add up the circled numbers and place the total here:

If your total comes to less than 20, you probably are not narcissistic. If your total is between 21 and 40, there is a likelihood that you have *some* narcissistic tendencies. If your total is 41 or more, you probably are a narcissistic leader.

Do you see the traits of a narcissistic leader in yourself? In what ways does this type of leader mirror your dark side?

## SAUL: A MAN SHACKLED BY SUSPICION

When Saul made his entrance on the stage of national leadership he was equipped for success. He was attractive and exceptionally gifted. He was appointed by God, who supernaturally changed him so that he could be an effective leader.

Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man. . . . Then it happened when he [Saul] turned his back to leave Samuel, God changed his heart.

1 Samuel 10:6, 9

Where it says that God changed Saul's heart in verse 9, the Hebrew literally says that God replaced his heart with another heart, a heart that would enable him to lead the nation. All of this was quite surprising to Saul, as he possessed a very low view of himself and the family from which he came. This sense of personal insecurity and low self-worth is evident in 1 Samuel 15:17 when Samuel rebukes Saul by saying, "Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes, you were made the head of the tribes of Israel?" The idea of serving as the king of Israel was definitely foreign to the future Saul had planned for himself. Yet Saul was to be an instrument of service in God's hands.

When Saul was publicly inaugurated as king, there was a pocket of people who doubted that this "nobody" could liberate the nation (1 Sam. 10:27). Though Saul was aware of their pessimism, he did not defend himself or respond to his detractors. Unfortunately that would be the last time Saul took such a mature approach to his opponents, whether real or imagined.

The primary service that God had planned for Saul was the liberation of Israel from the oppression of the Philistines. Initially Saul gained the upper hand over the

## THE PARANOID LEADER

It is likely that history will not be kind to Richard M. Nixon. Though he was a man of incredible intelligence, resilience, and determination, his leadership was sabotaged by his own insidious dark side. No amount of political acumen or international relations savvy could overcome the powerful influence of this tragic leader's dark side.

Richard Nixon was a man controlled by acute paranoia. He was highly suspicious of others—even his own staff members—and was obsessed with gathering information on perceived enemies that could be used to mount counterattacks against any and all adversaries. Even in the face of obvious wrongdoing Nixon refused to admit any failures or accept any blame. He was a master of denial. Had he learned about his dark side and become aware of the shape it had taken, he could have doubtlessly avoided the humiliation of Watergate and possibly salvaged his presidency. Instead he became one of this century's most prominent victims of the dark side. Richard Nixon was simply one link in an age-old chain of paranoid leaders who have destroyed themselves.

Philistines. But it was not long before Saul's dark side began to subvert his leadership and the plans that God had for it.

There are always parameters and restrictions on leadership. No leader, including Saul, has carte blanche. One of the restrictions on Israelite royalty was never to usurp the role of the priest. Before one important battle, as Saul waited for Samuel the priest to arrive and make the appropriate sacrifices, the people became restless and began to scatter. Saul was so concerned about this potential mutiny that he decided to make the priestly sacrifice himself. Moments after Saul made the sacrifice, which he knew was strictly prohibited, Samuel arrived on the scene and confronted Saul with his obvious disobedience to God's law. Saul justified his actions as necessary and refused to admit any wrongdoing (1 Sam. 13:11-13). It would prove to be the first baby step down the path of self-destruction for King Saul.

Shortly after this failure, Samuel announced that God had chosen to remove the mantle of leadership from Saul and had already chosen a new king, who would emerge at some time in the future. From that time, Saul's leadership was marred by suspicion, distrust of those around him including close family members, attempts to coerce loyalty, and even spying. One particularly bizarre episode involved a time when King Saul prohibited his people from eating until he successfully avenged himself on his enemies (1 Sam. 14:24-30). In fact Saul said that anyone who ate before he gave the okay would be cursed. It was an extreme measure born of severe paranoia and deep distrust. In response to his father's command Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land." Confusing Saul's plan was the fact that Jonathan, not knowing of the prohibition, was the first to violate the king's command. Interpreting his son's actions as treasonous, Saul intended to

execute Jonathan for his crime. In God's providence the people rescued Jonathan from his father (1 Sam. 14:31-45). After this Saul began a rapid descent into the depths of obsessive paranoia.

After yet another failure, when Saul failed to utterly destroy Amalek and refused to acknowledge any disobedience, a young shepherd by the name of David began to complicate Saul's life even further.

Well into his reign as king, Saul had still not accomplished his primary, divinely assigned task to deliver Israel from the Philistines. Israel was still being taunted by the Philistine giant, Goliath. David, the teenage shepherd, instantly won the hearts of the Israelites when he stepped forward and with one smooth stone destroyed the enemy giant.

As Saul traveled the land after Goliath's death, he heard women singing in the streets. "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam. 18:7). From then on Saul suspected David of trying to steal his throne. Saul said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" (1 Sam. 18:8).

Saul became afraid of David's popularity with the people. Here was a king, appointed by God himself and supernaturally gifted for the job yet jealous and suspicious of an inexperienced, teenage shepherd. Saul attempted to kill David on numerous occasions. When murder didn't work, Saul attempted to buy David's loyalty by giving him his eldest daughter in marriage. Regardless of what he tried, Saul could not quell his irrational fears and suspicions. Consequently he engaged in further acts of deception and spying in an effort to remove David from the kingdom. Ultimately Saul's neurotic activities led to his own breakdown and tragic failure. Such is the fate of the paranoid leader.

## AFRAID OF THEIR OWN SHADOW

Like suspicious King Saul, paranoid leaders are desperately afraid of anything or anyone, whether real or imagined, they perceive to have even the remotest potential of undermining their leadership and stealing away the limelight. They are characteristically suspicious, hostile, and guarded in their relationships with others—even close associates and family members.<sup>1</sup> Like Saul, paranoid leaders are hypersensitive to the actions and reactions of those they lead, always fearful of potential rebellions. Because they are deeply insecure in their own abilities, paranoid leaders are pathologically jealous of other gifted people.

Like Richard Nixon, paranoid leaders use clandestine scheming and spying to maintain a firm grip on leadership. Often this takes the form of building secret alliances and networks with those who can be easily manipulated and impressed by the leader's position and power. Anyone who is thought to be a threat often finds himself or herself unwittingly caught in a web of misinformation and rumor spun by the paranoid leader and his or her network of spies and supporters.

Paranoid leaders may overreact to even the mildest forms of criticism. This is because the criticism of followers and colleagues is often thought to be an effort to overthrow them or diminish their power. In addition, paranoid leaders are constantly attaching subversive meanings and motives to even the most innocent actions of others in the organization.<sup>2</sup>

Because of their suspicions, paranoid leaders will often create rigid structures and systems of control within their organization that enable them to keep their finger in every piece of the organizational pie and limit the autonomy of underlings and associates. Excessive staff meetings and reporting are often the result of this need to keep close tabs on those around them. Unfortunately, contempo-

rary Sauls are sprinkled throughout the ranks of spiritual leadership.

## PARANOID SPIRITUAL LEADERS

Today it is not uncommon to hear a pastor jokingly say, "I'd never let my board meet without me there." More often than many spiritual leaders would care to admit, it is no joke. For some pastors, their chief adversary is the governing board that ironically is supposed to be their chief partner in caring for the flock of God. But somehow, often as a result of a pastor's own insecurity, an adversarial relationship develops. To be fair, this fear is not always entirely without merit. What pastor has not heard the stories about the board that calls a special meeting while the pastor is on vacation—when the pastor returns from his summer break, a pink slip is on his desk. We both have friends who had this very thing done to them. In one instance it occurred after little more than one rocky year at a rural church where the relationships were too close and there were no personal boundaries. But it is the exception that an innocent, unsuspecting pastor is removed in this way.

Much more common in church ministry is the senior pastor who refuses to allow an associate to preach for fear the congregation might like the associate's preaching better than his own. Other times, when an associate is allowed to preach and he or she receives the approval of parishioners, a subtle jealousy grips the senior pastor and he begins to take steps to limit the praise the associate receives, usually by limiting his or her public exposure. And when a paranoid pastor enters the boardroom and finds even one board member who appears to be angry or frustrated, he immediately worries that the anger or frustration is directed toward him.

Another struggle for paranoid spiritual leaders is difficulty in developing and maintaining close relationships

with members of their church or organization. Close relationships are difficult because they require a measure of self-disclosure and transparency that they worry could be used against them at some point to undermine their leadership. Such leaders believe it is better to maintain a safe distance from people even if it means being seen as aloof and uncaring. For the paranoid pastor the possibility of being unseated is not worth the risk inherent in intimate, accountable relationships.

#### TARGETING INSIGHTS

- One manifestation of the dark side is the development of the paranoid leader. Still is one example found in the Bible.
- Some signs of a paranoid leader include the following: Paranoid leaders are suspicious, hostile, fearful, and jealous. Afraid that someone will undermine their leadership, they are hypersensitive to the actions of others, attach subjective meanings to motives, and create rigid structures for control.
- At the heart of the paranoid leader are strong feelings of insecurity and a lack of confidence.

#### APPLYING INSIGHTS

Having read this chapter, do you wonder if you are a paranoid leader? If so, the following inventory may provide you with some insight.

Read each statement and circle the number that corresponds closest to your impressions about yourself.

- 5 = strongly agree  
 4 = agree  
 3 = uncertain  
 2 = disagree  
 1 = strongly disagree

1. When I see two key church leaders discreetly talking in the lobby of the church, I worry that they may be talking about me. 1 2 3 4 5
2. It really bothers me to think about my church's board meeting without me being present. 1 2 3 4 5
3. When an associate receives rave reviews for a sermon or some special ministry, I experience intense feelings of jealousy rather than joy in the success and recognition he or she is receiving. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I require subordinates and associates to provide me with detailed reports of their activities. 1 2 3 4 5

(continued on next page)

5. I struggle when an associate, rather than me, is asked by church members to perform services such as weddings or funerals. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I have few intimate or meaningful relationships within my church or organization and find myself avoiding such relationships. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I insist on absolute loyalty from those who work for me and prohibit staff from criticizing me in any way. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I often worry that there is a significant faction within my organization that would like to see me leave. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I have probed people for what they know or for special information they may have relating to certain leaders in my organization. 1 2 3 4 5
10. Those I work with often complain about my lack of a healthy sense of humor. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I routinely refer to those I lead as "my people," "my board," or "my church," while bristling

when the same designation is spoken by an associate. 1 2 3 4 5

12. I tend to take seriously even lighthearted comments and jokes directed at me. 1 2 3 4 5

Add up the circled numbers and place the total here:

If your total comes to less than 20, you probably are not paranoid. If your total is between 21 and 40, there is a likelihood that you have *some* paranoid tendencies. If your total is 41 or more, you probably are a paranoid leader.

Do you see the traits of a paranoid leader in yourself? In what ways does this type of leader mirror your dark side?

was a very traumatic experience for a young boy of one or two years old.

When Billy's mother, Virginia, returned home from her years in New Orleans she quickly and somewhat hastily married a man previously reported to be a wife-abuser by the name of Roger Clinton, who was also known for his heavy drinking, gambling, and philandering. In fact once, before they were married, Virginia caught Roger cheating on her but decided to marry him anyway, much to the displeasure of her family.<sup>2</sup> It was a dysfunctional marriage that was shaping a future president of the United States.

By the time he reached the first grade, Bill Clinton had already been exposed to significant family violence.

One night Virginia dressed Billy up to take him to the hospital in Hope to visit her maternal grandmother, who was dying. Roger did not want them to leave. When she said she was going anyway, he hauled out a gun and fired a shot over her head into the wall. Virginia went across the street to the Taylors' and called the police. Billy slept at a neighbor's house.<sup>3</sup>

That episode was only the beginning. Young Bill spent many nights lying awake in bed listening to his parents' fights. The alcoholism of his stepfather and the violence it spawned continued to spiral out of control until Bill, then sixteen years of age, and his mother finally left Roger Clinton in 1962. The subsequent divorce proceedings were exceedingly difficult, and Bill Clinton was required to testify against his stepfather. As the family's oldest son, the years of chaos and violence had a profound emotional effect on the future president.

The oldest son seemed emotionally distraught, not by the physical threats of his stepfather—he loomed over the man—but by the onus the family turmoil placed on him.

## 10

THE  
CODEPENDENT  
LEADER

As all too many children have, William Jefferson Blythe grew up in the home of an alcoholic parent. His childhood environment was characterized by instability and chaos. When he entered the world, Billy Blythe was already fatherless. Three months before he was born, his father was killed in an auto accident as he was traveling to pick up his pregnant wife and bring her to their new home in suburban Forest Park, Illinois. Not long after Billy's birth, without a husband to provide for her and her newborn son, his mother left him with his grandparents while she lived in New Orleans to pursue a degree in nursing in hopes of improving her chances of successfully raising her son. During her years of nurse's training, Billy was essentially separated from his mother until he was three years old. One of his earliest memories, Billy would say decades later, was "visiting his mother in New Orleans, then getting back on the train with Mammaw (his maternal grandmother) and looking out the window and seeing his mother on her knees, crying, as she waved good-bye."<sup>4</sup> It

He had come to understand that if the violence and abuse were to end, he had to be the one to stop them. He was an adolescent put in the position of reversing roles so that, as he later said, "I was the father."<sup>54</sup>

Because of the turmoil and chaos within the family, a teenage Bill Clinton took responsibility to rescue his floundering family. He became the family hero. In the role of family hero Bill was excused from the family problems and "disparched into the world to excel and return with praise and rewards that [would] make the entire unit feel worthy."<sup>55</sup> During his high school years Bill Clinton did not disappoint the family. He was an exceptional son and student.

In spite of Bill's success the Clinton household was constantly out of balance, frequently teetering on the very precipice of complete disaster. Bill, however, was determined to keep the family from experiencing an irreparable crash. His overachievement was a way of counterbalancing the irresponsibility and underachievement of his alcoholic father and of bringing stability to the home.

As with most dysfunctional families, the Clintons had become masters of denial. They learned to block out those episodes that might be the source of pain. The family also maintained a rigid set of rules, albeit silent and unwritten, that kept a lid on the family secrets. Speaking openly about the pain and chaos taking place inside the home would mar the illusion of civility they desperately hoped to project to friends and neighbors. As a result Bill was never given an outlet for the painful and confusing emotions he doubtless felt. In effect the family was forced to live a lie and deny any accusations of family abnormality. This denial is obvious when the president describes his childhood:

Overall I was a pretty happy kid. I had a normal childhood. I had a good normal life. But at times it was really tough. I had to learn to live with the darker side of life at a fairly

early period. But I wouldn't say it was a tormented childhood. I had a good life.<sup>6</sup>

One therapist assessed the president's childhood recollections:

This perception of self indicates Clinton's deeply ingrained denial of his youthful experience. . . . But one must grasp his deep-seated level of denial when he describes a childhood of repeated episodes of abandonment, parental alcoholism; marriage of his mother; divorce; remarriage; his stepfather's death; violence directed at his mother; his second stepfather's death; violence directed at his mother, brother, and himself; and gunshots discharged in his home as a normal life. A true description of Clinton's childhood would be: chaotic and highly abnormal.<sup>7</sup>

In his burgeoning role as family hero Bill Clinton developed a serious need to please others and make them happy. This need enabled him to acquire the ability to justify many otherwise questionable behaviors. He felt it was necessary to do this to keep the fractured family in balance.

All of these coping mechanisms so vital to his childhood became a deeply ingrained part of Bill Clinton's personality and behavior as an adult and later as our president. Bill Clinton is what has been labeled by the psychological community a codependent, and his codependency has had a powerful impact on his life and presidency. This behavior pattern has led to blatant lying regarding his extramarital affairs, draft record, and drug usage and has prompted the constant use of denial in an effort to defend himself against questions regarding these issues.<sup>8</sup> His need to please others led to what vice president Dan Quayle referred to during the 1990 presidential election as "shading the truth" and "doing a Clinton." Psychologist Paul Fick states that "Clinton's upbringing taught him to lie automatically, with no

guilt, and to present excuses spontaneously. However, Clinton is no longer dealing with schoolhouse chums.<sup>9</sup>

As president, Bill Clinton flip-flops on virtually every issue, saying what he thinks certain interest groups want to hear at one moment only to change his views later when faced with a group that holds an opposing view. It is very likely that the president does not even recognize this as problematic behavior. It keeps opposing factions placated. Yet these behaviors, produced by his troubled childhood, as well as others not dealt with here, have crippled his leadership. Bill Clinton fears displeasing anyone and this fear has placed him in some untenable situations. In just the first two years of his presidency he was accused of sexual misconduct and he had to face the White House Travel Office scandal, the Whitewater affair (still under investigation), the tragic death of a close associate under questionable circumstances, as well as the dismissal of numerous high-level cabinet officers and staffers. All of these episodes are related in one way or another to the president's crippling codependency.<sup>10</sup>

#### SAMSON: A MAN WITH A NEED TO PLEASE

Samson grew up in an extremely restrictive environment with a secret he could not share with anyone—he could never get his hair cut. Because he was a Nazirite, Samson was subject to unusually strict rules of behavior; besides never cutting his hair, he was prohibited from drinking any fermented beverages, could not eat grapes in any form, had other specific dietary requirements, and was restricted from marrying outside of his people.<sup>11</sup> The Nazirite vow entailed a rigid, separatist lifestyle. Though the vow was ordinarily voluntary, done out of joy and a desire to be set apart for God alone, this was not exactly the case for Samson. It was prophesied to his parents that their son would

be a Nazirite from birth (Judg. 13:5). Thus from the time he was born, he was expected to fulfill the vow of a Nazirite and violate it at his own risk. The reason for this separation to God was so that God could use Samson as his instrument of deliverance for Israel from the oppression of the Philistines. It was all a heavy load under which he had to live and an environment well-suited for the development of codependency.

Samson had a difficult time living up to these expectations from the very beginning. One of his earliest acts of rebellion was eating honey he found in the carcass of a dead animal, an act that made him unclean. He brought some of the honey to give his parents, who were also Nazirites, but neglected to tell them its source, possibly for fear of their response—a classic codependent behavior.

Samson's trouble in leadership was of his own making. He continually engaged in behavior that was self-destructive, another trait of the codependent. Though he knew he should not, he became involved with three different Philistine women, who plagued him and led him to his ultimate fall—the Timnite woman he took as a wife, the harlot at Gaza, and Delilah (Judg. 14:1-4; 16:1-20). One Bible commentator says:

In spite of his [Samson's] great strength, he was not strong enough to control his own impulses. He was unable to withstand Delilah's seduction; and even when it became obvious that she was laying a trap for him, he still succumbed to her temptations and walked into it with open eyes.<sup>12</sup>

As stated earlier, any attempt to evaluate a Bible character's personality using contemporary definitions and diagnostics involves some conjecture. However, based on the behavior we are aware of in Scripture, it would seem safe to say that Samson was a leader who struggled with what we know today as codependency. Samson had a deep need to please others.

It was very hard for him to disappoint anyone. In fact it was nearly impossible for him to say no even when sayings were not in his best interest and ultimately was self-destructive. We also see in Samson a tendency to be a reactor, frequently reacting to the actions of the Philistines, such as his attempt at vengeance by burning the Philistine fields (Judg. 15:1-8). It is important for us to realize that even people divinely appointed and gifted by God, such as Samson, are not immune from the subtle inner workings of the dark side.

#### KEEPING PEACE AND EASING PAIN

The forces of codependency are powerful. Unlike the previous leadership types we have identified (compulsive, narcissistic, and paranoid), codependency does not fall into any one category of recognized personality disorder. Instead it is more of a generic trait or behavior that can be found in many different personality types and can be a component of many different personality disorders. There is not one widely accepted definition of codependency. Like the proverbial blind men and the elephant, the definition of codependency often takes shape from the person who is describing it. However, there is one definition that seems to be broad enough to encompass many different aspects of codependency:

An emotional, psychological, and behavioral condition that develops as a result of an individual's prolonged exposure to, and practice of, a set of oppressive rules—rules that prevent the open expression of feeling as well as the direct discussion of personal and interpersonal problems.<sup>13</sup>

Though codependency is most often associated with people living with others who are compulsively dependent on something (e.g., alcohol, drugs, food, pornography, etc.), another important aspect of codependency is the social sys-

tem that develops around these types of relationships. The codependent family adapts in different ways to counterbalance the socially unacceptable and embarrassing behavior of the dependent person. This often involves the development of strict rules—usually unspoken but clearly understood—that dictate how the family must behave and that govern how the codependent person is allowed to communicate in public. These coping behaviors call for covering up the behavior of the dependent person and restricting the codependent from giving full, honest expression to his or her true emotions or from discussing the problem with anyone else. This results in emotional repression that creates great stress for the codependent person.

It's interesting that the above definition has unique implications for those reared in very rigid, oppressive religious environments. Though there may be no unhealthy, compulsively dependent person in this environment, still those brought up in such homes experience many of the same dynamics. There are unspoken and unwritten rules governing what is acceptable to discuss and what is not. For example, admissions of unspiritual or "carnal" struggles (such as with lust, doubt, or fear) are not acceptable. Very strict religious groups hold their followers to very high, unrealistic standards that are impossible to consistently meet, resulting in a constant sense of failure and self-blame. Thus the members are unable to openly express their feelings or share personal problems with others and frequently develop codependent behaviors as a result.

Another aspect of codependency is the tendency to react rather than to initiate action. Codependents react to the behavior of the dependent person.<sup>14</sup> They react to the pain, problems, and behaviors of others in an effort to balance the family system, cover up the family problems, and maintain peace in their relationships.

Codependents take personal responsibility for the actions and emotions of others, often blaming themselves for oth-

ers' inappropriate behavior, and they generally have a high tolerance for bizarre behavior in others. They will go to just about any length to avoid hurting a person's feelings even if it means they hurt themselves in the process. Avoiding confrontation at all costs, they often serve as peacemakers between hostile parties. Codependents appear to be extremely benevolent, always willing to take on another task, even to the point of being overextended, because saying no might hurt someone's feelings. As a result codependents become repositories of repressed anger and frustration. A typical scenario would involve someone's making a request of the codependent to take on a new project. Though the codependent does not want to take on the additional responsibility, he or she does, so as to avoid hurting the feelings of the person who made the request. Then, after accepting the new responsibility, the codependent may become angry and say, "I can't believe they would ask me; they know I am overloaded! What's wrong with them?" In reality, the simple solution to the codependent's problem would have been a polite but firm "no, thank you."

Codependents obsessively worry about the feelings of others, often to the point of becoming emotionally and physically ill. When they encounter an angry or upset person, their first response is to wonder what they may have done to make the person angry.

In essence the problem of codependency involves the ways that an individual copes with the behavior and expectations of those around him or her.

#### CODEPENDENT SPIRITUAL LEADERS

On one hand it is not difficult to see why codependents end up in positions of spiritual leadership. It is the ultimate venue for taking care of others. Unfortunately the person with severe codependency will experience great frustration

in ministry. There are few professions where it is more difficult to maintain peace and please everyone than in ministry. Inevitably, the behavior of the spiritual leader that pleases some will alienate others.

A common manifestation among codependent spiritual leaders is their failure to confront and deal with inappropriate behaviors within the church. Even when a behavior is clearly unacceptable, the codependent leader can be terrified to address the situation for fear of hurting someone's feelings and risking the loss of approval that might come with such a confrontation. The natural result of such avoidance is the enabling of unhealthy and even unbiblical behaviors within the church.

Another negative aspect of codependency in spiritual leadership is that the codependent leader is often willing to take responsibility for the inappropriate attitudes and actions of others. When someone unceremoniously leaves the church with dissatisfaction, the codependent leader often feels responsible for the departing congregant's unhappiness and may attempt to placate the defector by smoothing over the "problem." This only allows the same thing to happen again in the future.

The codependent spiritual leader, particularly in the local church settings, can find his or her schedule out of control and the workload unbearable because the leader finds it nearly impossible to say no to the requests of church members. In an effort to keep everyone happy and gain approval, the codependent pastor can find himself being overtaken by the urgent needs of others while giving little attention to the overall direction of the church as a whole.

Ministry and Christian service organizations provide the perfect environment for a leader to focus on others to the exclusion of self. This often results in the codependent pastor or leader's failure to care for himself, producing burnout and other debilitating maladies.

## TARGETING INSIGHTS

- One manifestation of the darkside is the development of the codependent leader. Samson is one example found in the Bible.
- Some signs of a codependent leader include the following. Codependent leaders are peacemakers who cover up problems, rather than face them, in an effort to balance the group system. They may be very benevolent with a high tolerance for deviant behavior. Willing to take on more work so they do not have to tell anyone no, they react rather than act.
- At the heart of the codependent leader is a repressed and frustrated person who has trouble giving full, honest expression to emotions or problems.

## APPLYING INSIGHTS

So how do you determine if you are codependent in the exercise of your leadership? Chances are that just reading the profiles in this chapter has brought you close to an answer. However, in an effort to provide more specific help, the following inventory is offered for your own personal assessment.

Read the following statements, circling the number that corresponds closest to your impressions about yourself.

- 5 = strongly agree  
4 = agree  
3 = uncertain  
2 = disagree  
1 = strongly disagree

1. I grew up in a family with one or more chemically dependent people (i.e., alcoholics, drug addicts, etc.). 1 2 3 4 5
2. I grew up in a strict, legalistic religious environment that held its members to an unrealistic standard of behavior and discouraged open communication about personal struggles and problems. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I am usually willing to put up with the bizarre or embarrassing behavior of others. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I often refrain from sharing my opinion in a group setting until I have heard the opinions of the others in the group. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I frequently worry about hurting people's feelings by sharing my true feelings. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I often feel responsible for problems I did not create. 1 2 3 4 5

(continued on next page)

7. I find it difficult to sleep because I worry about someone else's problems or behavior. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I find myself frequently over-committed and feel my life is out of control. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I find it extremely difficult to say no to people even when I know that saying yes will result in difficulty for me or my family. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I constantly feel a sense of guilt but have difficulty identifying its source. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I feel like I never measure up to those around me and have self-deprecating thoughts. 1 2 3 4 5
12. When I receive compliments from others, I find it difficult to simply accept them without making qualifying statements. 1 2 3 4 5

Add up the circled numbers and place the total here: \_\_\_\_\_

If your total comes to less than 20, you probably are not codependent. If your total is between 21 and 40, there is a likelihood that you have *some* codependent

tendencies. If your total is 41 or more, you probably are a codependent leader.

Do you see the traits of a codependent leader in yourself? In what ways does this type of leader mirror your dark side?

Jonah's sorrow and repentance would not last long. Once the storm spawned by his disobedience had passed, Jonah again developed a less than enthusiastic attitude toward the mission God reissued to him. To his credit, in spite of his reluctance and stubbornness, Jonah fulfilled the mission. One can only imagine Jonah lethargically preaching to the condemned Ninevites, inentionally trying to be ineffective in his proclamation, hoping the whole time that his efforts would be met with failure.

In spite of his less than stellar performance, God brought redemption and revival to the pagan city of Nineveh as a direct result of Jonah's preaching, but Jonah was not happy (Jonah 4:1). His anger produced a period of sulking and even caused him impulsively to cry out to God, "Now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life" (Jonah 4:3). In the middle of Jonah's pouting and frustration, in a gracious gesture to shade him from the sun, God provided a plant for him to sit under, and "Jonah was extremely happy about the plant" (Jonah 4:6). The following day, when the plant withered, Jonah again became depressed and said, "Death is better to me than life" (Jonah 4:8). Jonah had a generally negative outlook on his life and the future.

In the life and ministry of Jonah we see a resistance to God's demand to perform an assigned task, bursts of sadness and anger, short-lived periods of contrition and sorrow for his actions, impulsive behavior, and a general negativity. Today Jonah would be classified as a passive-aggressive leader.

#### A RELUCTANCE TO PERFORM

Like Jonah the reluctant prophet, passive-aggressive leaders have a tendency to resist demands to adequately perform tasks.<sup>1</sup> Their resistance is most often expressed through be-

## 11 THE PASSIVE- AGGRESSIVE LEADER

He didn't want to go. In fact his aversion to the task impelled him actually to leave the country in hopes that the assignment would eventually be given to another spokesman. His assignment: Go to the enemy city of Nineveh and warn them of impending doom unless they change their ways and turn to God.

#### JONAH: AN ANGRY MAN

Because he walked away from the task God had assigned him, Jonah walked into a storm, the storm of God's discipline. As he attempted to escape God's call to Nineveh, his vessel of deliverance was swamped. Faced with the prospect of endangering the lives of others, Jonah confessed he was the cause of the storm, and, in response, the seamen threw Jonah overboard, hoping to save themselves. It wasn't until he was in the belly of the whale that Jonah finally expressed genuine sorrow for his reluctance to perform the task that God had called him to undertake (Jonah 2:8-9).

aviors such as procrastination, dawdling, stubbornness, forgetfulness, and intentional inefficiency.<sup>2</sup>

This reluctance to perform stems from the fear of failure that comes when undertaking a significant project and from the fear that success may breed higher expectations, which could lead to some degree of failure in the future. What better way to avoid failure or the increased expectations that success may breed than by simply refusing to perform or intentionally performing inefficiently?

Passive-aggressive leaders are also prone to short outbursts expressing intense emotions, such as sadness, anger, and frustration. Most often their aggression lies just within the bounds of what is legal and socially acceptable and yet is still provocative. These outbursts are often followed by short-lived periods of sorrow and repentance.<sup>3</sup> All of this behavior demonstrates a certain impulsiveness.

Modern-day Jonahs are perennial complainers whose very presence demoralizes those whom they lead or with whom they interact.<sup>4</sup> Though they perform the tasks that are expected of them, it is with little or no enthusiasm, and they harbor anger and bitterness for being forced (so they think) to do so.

Because passive-aggressive people often are impulsive, their acquaintances and colleagues often feel edgy as they wait for the next outburst.<sup>5</sup> These leaders make people uncomfortable and often leave them feeling confused. Those who work with a passive-aggressive person often ask, "What did he mean by that outburst?" or "Where did that come from?" when the passive-aggressive launches into a tirade. Another tendency of these people is to exhibit impatience, irritability, and fidgeting when things are not going their way or when they become bored with the proceedings. Amazingly, God is able to use even passive-aggressive leaders to accomplish his purposes.

## PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE SPIRITUAL LEADERS

Many passive-aggressive leaders in ministry find it difficult to set goals and implement plans for the future since these only provide the possibility for failure. Adding to this fear of potential failure is the passive-aggressive leader's pessimistic outlook, which causes him or her to say, "What's the use of planning or setting goals? Nothing is going to change around here anyway." They carry out their board's plans reluctantly. Standards and systems for measuring performance are resented and resisted by the passive-aggressive leader.

Leaders who are passive-aggressive may constantly complain about not having any support from their board and those they lead, citing that lack of support is one of the reasons why their effectiveness is impaired. Ironically, when others become involved with them and take a serious interest in helping them, these leaders quickly complain that they are not allowed to lead the way they want.

In board meetings and other settings, such as congregational meetings, the passive-aggressive leader may become impatient and irritable when things do not go his or her way. This frustration results often in an emotional outburst then or at some time in the future during a completely unrelated meeting.

It is not that these leaders are constantly angry or complaining. A majority of the time they appear to be happy, compliant, and satisfied with their job and organization. However, a pattern of erratic emotional behavior can be seen over a period of time. Because of this pattern passive-aggressive leaders are often the brunt of inner-circle jokes and comments such as "I wonder which pastor will show up for the meeting tonight?" or "I sure hope Pastor doesn't give us a performance tonight."

We remember a board member in a local church who demonstrated classic passive-aggressive behavior. As long

as there was no agenda for change and no structured plans for the future, this board member was fine. The moment the pastoral staff and church board began moving aggressively and developing plans for the church's future he went into his passive-aggressive mode. At those meetings this board member would suddenly explode with an irrational, emotional outburst that would catch everyone by surprise. He didn't offer lucid arguments or better ideas; he simply began to rant and rave about broad generalities that remotely, if at all, touched on the issue at hand.

Well, as you might guess, these tactics were successful at halting progress time and time again. For years the ploys of this board member kept that church from implementing any plans that could have set a standard for success and moved the church to a new level of ministry and effectiveness. This is very often the way in which passive-aggressive leaders manifest themselves in spiritual leadership settings. Their rantings halt progress.

#### TARGETING INSIGHTS

- One manifestation of the dark side is the development of the passive-aggressive leader. Jonah is one example found in the Bible.
- Some signs of a passive-aggressive leader include the following. Passive-aggressive leaders are stubborn, forgetful, and intentionally inefficient. They tend to complain, resist demands, procrastinate, and

huddle as a means of convolling their environment and those around them. On occasion they will exert control through the use of short outbursts of sadness or anger.

At the heart of the passive-aggressive leader are anger and bitterness as well as fear of success, since it will lead to higher expectations.

#### APPLYING INSIGHTS

Did the board member described in this chapter sound familiar? Have you ever responded as he did? How do you know if you are passive-aggressive? The following inventory is intended to help you begin answering that question.

Read the following statements, circling the number that corresponds closest to your impressions about yourself.

- 5 = strongly agree
- 4 = agree
- 3 = uncertain
- 2 = disagree
- 1 = strongly disagree

(continued on next page)

1. I find myself resisting standards and procedures for formal review of my performance. 1 2 3 4 5
2. It is common for me to procrastinate on major projects. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I regularly resist others' ideas that could translate into increased performance or responsibilities for myself. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I find myself consistently underperforming. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I experience periodic but regular outbursts of anger and frustration that are just within the bounds of what is considered acceptable behavior. 1 2 3 4 5
6. Occasionally I unintentionally forget suggested projects. 1 2 3 4 5
7. Sometimes I give others the silent treatment as an expression of my anger. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I find myself telling others that nothing is bothering me when in reality I am seething. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I tend to be generally pessimistic and feel negative about my future. 1 2 3 4 5

10. Others have expressed to me that I make them feel uncomfortable. 1 2 3 4 5
11. Strategic planning and goal-setting are difficult for me. 1 2 3 4 5
12. Sometimes I catch myself trying to manipulate others in group settings by venting my anger and emotions when facing an initiative or idea I do not support. 1 2 3 4 5

Add up the circled numbers and place the total here: \_\_\_\_\_

If your total comes to less than 20, you probably are not passive-aggressive. If your total is between 21 and 40, there is a likelihood that you have *some* passive-aggressive tendencies. If your total is 41 or more, you probably are a passive-aggressive leader.

Do you see the traits of a passive-aggressive leader in yourself? In what ways does this type of leader mirror your dark side?

As you likely have guessed, many leaders are a combination of the types just reviewed. In most leaders one or two types will have the strongest impact on the leadership style, while other types play minor roles. One way to see how they fit together in your own life is to plot the answers to the five inventories found in chapters 7 through 11. For each inventory take the number you entered as your total and divide by 5 (round off to the nearest whole number). Plot that number on the graph in figure 2 by starting at the center of the circle and moving toward the outside edge, counting the

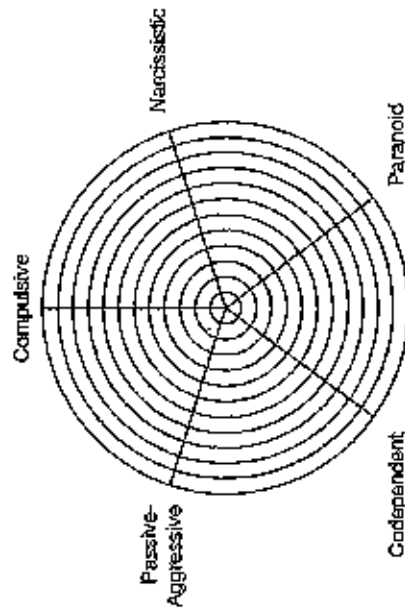


Figure 2

circles until you reach the total for that inventory. Place a dot on the circle representing your total. For example, if your total for an inventory is 40, you would place a dot on the eighth circle from the center (since 40 divided by 5 is 8). Once all totals for the inventories have been plotted, you can connect the dots with straight lines to see more clearly where the largest influence on your dark side is focused. This

is the one(s) where the point is plotted farthest from the center. Figure 3 is done as an example.

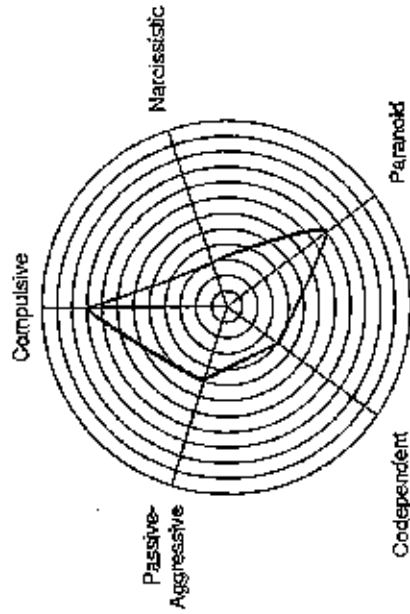


Figure 3

So what will you do now with what you have learned about yourself? How can you use your newfound understanding to avoid a crippling leadership failure that humiliates you and those you love? With increased awareness and understanding comes a greater responsibility to remove and overcome the dark side of your personality. It is now time to turn our attention to part 3 and the task of how we can begin to redeem our dark side regardless of the unique shape it has taken.