



A RESOURCE FROM
THE [EPISCOPAL
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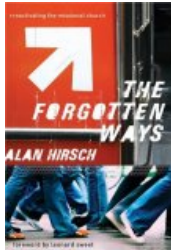
*For Missional Leaders in the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas and
Beyond*

<http://www.missionalchurchnet.org>

May 1, 2008

This Month's
Recommended Book

Dealing with Disappointments
Canon Neal Michell



[The Forgotten Ways](#)
By Alan Hirsch

Ancient Wisdom

It's not all about success . . .

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

—1 Corinthians 12:9

God's perspective . . .

If I could look at myself from God's perspective, what would I see as my true needs?

—Oswald Chambers

A Remedy for success . . .

When Man comes to be content with this world, God will take this world from him; when Man frames imaginary pleasures, God will inflict real punishments.

—John Donne

Are you anxious? . . .

Let the trouble of my soule be as great as it will, so it direct me upon God, and I have calmed enough.

Well, I was not elected to be the Suffragan Bishop of Dallas. Canon Paul Lambert was, and he will be a fine Suffragan Bishop. At the risk of being awfully transparent at a rather emotionally tender time, I'd like to share with you how I have dealt with the disappointment of not being elected. So, here goes.

Be careful in the people you talk to: (1) Do they share nice thoughts or do they tell you the truth

I was careful in the people that I talked to initially. Your own emotions will lie and tell you things that may or may not be true. The people from whom you seek counsel need to be people that, one, truly know you and believe in you; and two, will tell you the truth rather than be motivated to "pastor" you with nice thoughts. For example, I had a number of people who said, "You have so many gifts, God must have something even better for you." Oh, really? Actually, God may *not* have something "better" for you." Be appreciative of these friends. They mean well, but they may not be the people you really need to listen to.

The American psyche is often bolstered by the self-talk that something better is just around the corner. Something better may be just around the corner, but the biblical view is that we are often formed through the disappointments of our life in ways that our successes could never do. God's call to us is not necessarily to be successful, but to be faithful. St. John of the Cross counsels us not to run from the "Dark Night of the Soul" but to live into it.

Be careful in the people you talk to: (2) Do they pour energy into your soul

There are two kinds of people in this world: those who pour energy into others and those who drain energy from others. One way to distinguish between the people you should talk to is whether they insist on getting together or whether they simply encourage you to call if you want to talk. If a person says, "Call me if you need to talk about it," my counsel is: don't call. A real friend knows that he or

— John Donne

Heavenly Prudence . . .

[Heavenly Prudence] requires a total transformation of our attitude towards existence, because the choice and point of our heart is set towards the Eternal, our love and our meaning is God, and we are running our House for Him.

— Evelyn Underhill

The dark night . . .

O guiding night!
O night more lovely than the dawn
O night that has united
The Lover with his beloved,
Transforming the beloved in
her Lover.

— St. John of the Cross

Our Ancient Enemy wants to work all things for evil . . .

The devil, desiring the growth of pride and presumption in these beginners, often increases their fervor and readiness to perform such works, and other ones, too. For he is quite aware that all these works and virtues are not only worthless for them, but even become vices.

— St. John of the Cross

Lighten Up

(A true true story)

Sometimes we don't hear too good.

Once, Bishop Garrett, the first bishop of Dallas, inquired of a landlady of a local hotel whether she knew if any members of the Episcopal Church lived in the town. The good woman replied in the negative, saying the boys had killed the last one in a pasture a short time ago. The good woman mistook the word "Episcopal" for "possum."

she may need to overcome your reticence to discuss what has happened.

When a person wants to meet with you, ask yourself the question: Does this person pour energy into me, or does this person sap energy from me?" This is a time when you need emotional energy (remember, truthful, not just happy thoughts) into your soul. Some friends took my wife and me out to dinner on Sunday evening following the election. My bishop called me to have lunch on the Monday following the election (Monday is his day off). They recognized that I was at an emotionally tender time and poured life into me.

Don't say anything major or make any major decisions in the shadow of disappointment

As I said before, our emotions will lie to us. Following a disappointment, we don't always have an accurate handle on reality. Immediately following a major disappointment is a great time to reflect and take stock of your life, but it is a terrible time to make a major life decision. Most hasty decisions are wrong, particularly those made in the shadow of disappointment.

Spend time reflecting. Silence is a great gift during this time. And don't try to escape or numb your emotions with alcohol or extra activities, or anything else addictive.

Go back to the last clear word from the Lord that you had

If the future looks uncertain, as it usually does following a major disappointment, then any decision you make will be made out of uncertainty and likely to be a reaction to the disappointment you feel. When you are uncertain as to God's direction in your life, go back to the last clear direction that you had from him. Live into that previously clear call. Then, keep your spiritual ear open to the next call.

Bloom where you're planted

This is a corollary of going back to the last clear word from the Lord. Bloom where you're planted. Chances are, it was your effectiveness in your current position that led you to be considered for what you might have deemed a promotion. (Note to self: some would question whether being made a bishop can be considered a promotion. I doubt Jesus would consider it a promotion. So, for the sake of discussion, let's call it "increased responsibilities.") Do the best job you can in your current position. That is what God is currently calling you to. Don't run from that responsibility.

Finally, trust the sovereignty of God

We never know fully how our lives and the lives of all those around us intersect in God's design for our lives. Romans 8:28 tells us that "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

'Till next time,

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