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Reflection on the leadership practice of Saul as a failure of leadership for church pastors

ABSTRACT

King Saul was a privileged man. He was especially privileged to be the first king of Israel. Samuel was opposed to the idea of having a king as he saw this as a rejection of himself and of God's rule over Israel. However, God instructed Samuel to comply with the people's request to have a king, but to inform them of how the king would conduct himself. Nevertheless, the people had made up their minds, and they would not let anything stop them from getting what they wanted (1 Samuel 8:11–20). God was not surprised by this. Saul was crowned king of Israel by Samuel. Saul was taller and handsomer than all of the Israelites. He seemed to be doing well until he started making mistakes. These mistakes led to his rejection by God, and to his suicide at Mount Gilboa during the fight against the Philistines (1 Samuel 31:4). Saul's leadership may be an example of a failure of leadership for church pastors of today. This article aims to describe the failure of Saul in leading the nation of Israel and to provide an example for church leaders of today. Through the analysis of Saul's leadership, a reflective analysis may be formed so that a transformation leadership model can be developed for pastors and church leaders. The study follows a descriptive qualitative approach, with a literature study. After observing the results of the leadership practice of Saul as a failure of leadership, researchers can develop a constructive reflection for the transformation leadership model: 1) to manage a vision for the church pastors of today, 2) to transform an interaction with God, and 3) to be persistent in mission for church pastors of today.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Book of Samuel, Saul's conquest of the Ammonites was inextricably linked to his ascent to the throne. This victory was Saul's third, and the last step toward becoming the king, and therefore the leader, of Israel. Leadership is a necessity that cannot be separated from the lives of believers in church fellowship. Organisations or churches without leaders will not be able to epitomise good values and results (Samarena 2020) In regard to leadership matters, there was a time in the history of the nation of Israel that the people rejected God's leadership and chose a king as their leader. Saul became the first king who was chosen by God. God chose Saul probably because he was seen as having the capabilities needed to be a king. Physically, Saul had advantages over the men of his country, being tall of stature, and having a beautiful face (1 Samuel 9:2). At the same time, in terms of morality, Saul was a polite, caring, responsible and reliable person (1 Samuel 9:5-16). God saw that Saul was good and that he had the qualities of a good leader; he therefore chose Saul and set him as king for the nation of Israel (1 Samuel 9:17). The Spirit of God directly accompanied and controlled Saul (1 Samuel 10:6-7). According to the Book of Samuel, Saul's conquest of the Ammonites was inextricably linked to his ascent to the throne. This victory was Saul's third and last step toward becoming the king of Israel (cf. Müller 2018; Kim 2011).

Saul's ability and spiritual moral strength contributed to the success of his reign. The strength of his army was such that he was able to defeat many great enemies. In fact, as mentioned, Saul was a leader chosen by God himself to be king of Israel. Through Samuel, Saul was anointed and this was a sign that God believed in Saul with all his potential (Peruge, 2018). Success caused Saul to develop much self-confidence, but at the same time he had a fear of losing all that he had gained. This situation led Saul to ignore God's decrees and eventually to act against them. Saul thus started his leadership well but along the way he experienced deviations, diversions and changes in motivation (Wati & Yuono 2021) On several occasions, Saul heard God's voice but deliberately ignored it (1 Samuel 15:10-30; 1 Samuel 2:22-25). Above and beyond the many positive things, however, it happened that in the end, God became disappointed in Saul and rejected him. This led to the tragic death of Saul.

In both the Old and the New Testaments there are many examples and models of great leadership, with biblical figures showing exemplary attitudes that never become obsolete. These examples are especially important in this day and age where there is a leadership crisis among God's people. According to Budiman and Siswanto (2021), a decline in the quality of today's church leaders is evident. Leadership today is experiencing setbacks along many

fronts, both in the leadership of the nation and in the leadership of the church (F 2018:94-95). Degeneration occurs in every line, both in national leadership and church leadership. More and more conflicts occur in the process of changing church leadership due to political games (Wijaya 2018: 129-144). The leadership crisis occurs because of a lack of trust in leaders who are involved in many conflicts (Tubagus 2020:56). The study of the leadership models of Bible characters can be an example and a warning for today's spiritual leaders, showing them how to be successful in carrying out their duties and especially how to be accountable to God for the trust He has given.

Many studies have been done with the theme of the leadership of King Saul, one of them by Peruge (2018), who discusses the meaning of God's rejection of Saul based on 1 Samuel 15:1-35 and its implications for today's servants of God. The main points of this research are: God's rejection of Saul because of Saul's disobedience; sincere repentance by admitting mistakes instead of blaming others; and God's choice in choosing His messenger is always right (Peruge 2018). Research conducted by Wati and Yuono (2021) on comparative leadership studies considers David versus Saul and the implications of this for church leadership today. In this current article the aim is to describe the leadership of Saul as an example of a failure of leadership in the Bible, and the relevance of this to the church today. This article concludes that transformation leadership is related to calling, character, spirituality and practice in accordance with the value of truth. Transformation leadership also manifests in managing a vision, an interaction with God and persistence in mission (VIP). The stronger the character, the spirituality and the calling of a leader, the stronger the VIP transformation of the leader in the church and its leadership will be (Wati & Yuono 2021). Another study was conducted by Shella, Sitanggang and Harseno (2021) that discusses the characters of David and Saul as benchmarks for successful ministry. It is conveyed in the study that the characters of David and Saul can be used as benchmarks for the characteristics that should be changed and the characteristics that should be retained. The results of this study show that character as a determinant of success includes faith, wisdom, discipline, humility, and dependence on the Holy Spirit (Shella, Sitanggang & Harseno 2021:16).

In several existing studies, there has been some discussion of Saul's leadership as a leadership model that can be evaluated. Instead of being anointed and given divine approval as king, Saul is portrayed as a heroic figure in 1 Samuel 11. He is motivated by both the heavenly spirit and by his rage, and after scattering bits of butchered cattle around Israel's borders, he causes the people to experience fear of God, which causes them to "go out as one" (cf. Müller 2018; Kim 2011). Saul's entry into the public eye is described in 1 Samuel 11:6-7, which also shows his authority over Israel. The passages

do not, however, explicitly state his part in the particular events mentioned in verses 1–11. In order to better understand Saul's idealised kingly leadership, this article considers several literary-critical concerns of 1 Samuel 11:1–11 in a larger perspective. Then, Saul's leadership is evaluated in light of the wider ancient Near Eastern environment (Kim 2011). In this article, Saul's leadership as a failure of leadership could be a constructive reflection on leadership for the church pastors. Referring to the failure of Saul's leadership, which was caused by the lack of consistency in obedience to God's decrees, this article focuses on this issue as a constructive reflection of the transformation VIP leadership model. The focus of this VIP leadership is firstly to manage a vision of God's kingdom as an attitude that puts God above all else; secondly, to transform an interaction with God. In this case the church leader or pastor is required to have the ability to find God or hear God's voice in every life event that is lived (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Ephesians 6:18; Matthew 26:41); and thirdly, to be persistent in the mission. Persistence in the mission relates to efforts in continuous self-denial. This is very important considering the fact that modern human life has been shackled by the pleasures and facilities of the world. Worldly ideas and values have dominated. Hedonism, consumerism and materialism have dominated the majority of people today, and pastors and church leaders are required to be able to break free from these shackles, and not to follow the lifestyle of today's world.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a literature study as research methodology. An assessment is made of existing problems, using various pieces of supporting literature, from journal articles, books and study results to general articles covering the same theme. A discussion of the main ideas is presented, using the qualitative descriptive method. The first step is to interpret the events surrounding the election of Saul as king of Israel according to the meaning of the narrative. The next step is to analyse Saul's leadership and his characteristics as displayed, as a failure of leadership to be evaluated as transformation into a VIP leadership model. This interpretation aims to find the message contained in the text. From the results of the analysis, a constructive reflection is drawn up to form a new pattern or VIP model of leadership for church pastors.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 King Saul: Background

The disappointment of the Israelites over the leadership of Samuel's sons, Joel and Abijah, led to their demand for a king. In addition to this, there was

also the factor of the strong desire of the people to have a king to reign, as was the case with other nations. By having a king, the people felt protected, and also able to fight against enemies (1 Samuel 8:5-7). Saul was elected as the first king born of the tribe of Benjamin, son of a rich and respected Kish family. Saul was tall and handsome (1 Samuel 9:1), and had the basic capital to be an ideal king. From the point of view of morality, Saul was an individual with good morals and a sense of responsibility (1 Samuel 9:3-5). His humility is manifested in his being willing to listen to other people's suggestions (1 Samuel 9:6) and being polite (1 Samuel 9:7-8). His morality is clearly indicated in the story contained in 1 Samuel 9:5-16, when, shortly after his anointing as king, his moral qualities and gentleness were tested when some people abused and distrusted him (1 Samuel 10:27). Saul's response to this was good and he was even able to forgive them (1 Samuel 11:12-13).

Saul's concern for others was expressed through the rescue of Jabesh from the arbitrary actions of the Ammonites. Saul acted as a protector for the house of Israel (1 Samuel 11). After the victory of the Israelites over the Ammonites, Saul invited his people to worship God by means of burnt offerings and giving thanks. This also proved his close relationship with God (1 Samuel 11). God called Saul (1 Samuel 10:1) to be king, with the task of saving God's people from the enemies around them.

However, the next story in the Book of Samuel reveals his personal weaknesses one by one. It begins with the story of the resistance against the Philistines (1 Samuel 13:1-22). Saul should have waited for Samuel's arrival to make a sacrifice, according to the promise of seven days. Saul however felt that he deserved to do it himself. This action was also motivated by his fear of being abandoned by the people (1 Samuel 13). This act led to God's disappointment, so that God appointed another person to replace Saul as king (1 Samuel 13:13-14). Saul's next instance of disobedience was his refusal of God's command to destroy the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15). Saul allowed the Israelites who were with him to plunder the good cattle, even though God had commanded them not to leave anything behind. These two wrong actions had damaged Saul's relationship with God so that the Spirit of God was no longer with him. Resulting from this situation, David became Saul's confidant, but in the end David's fame made Saul jealous (1 Samuel 18). This was a sign that Saul's moral and spiritual qualities were deteriorating, until finally he suffered a tragic death, killed by his own hand during the war against the Philistines (1 Samuel 31).

3.2 Saul's leadership as a failure of leadership

At first, Saul's leadership was exercised on the basis of humility and the right motivation. Therefore, the administration of his leadership was based on and

guided by the Spirit of God. In this situation, Samuel became a counsellor and intermediary who conveyed all the commandments of God to Saul. Sincerity and clean motivation put Saul at the Lord's side. Leadership that is in the presence of God leads to the fulfilment of the interests of the people and not personal interests, so that Saul managed to have extraordinary achievements in his government.

However, as his reign continued, Saul began to shift his focus to himself. He began to feel insecure as David became more successful. Saul had become very ambitious and intended to kill David because he saw David as a threat to his power (1 Samuel 18:7-9; 20:31). Everything Saul did and measured was for his own sake, and this also resulted in his ignoring God's commands and not respecting the ark of God, as David once alluded to, "And let us move the ark of our God to our place, because in Saul's day we did not heed it" (1 Chronicles 13:3).

The shifting of heart and focus to himself made Saul sin by building a monument to himself (1 Samuel 15:12) and this leadership orientation of self-fulfilment led to Saul's need for praise and acknowledgment of the magnitude of his accomplishments. His own reputation became the focus of Saul's leadership. Therefore, Saul experienced a change in the purpose of life: he forgot about his origin and the purpose for which God had appointed him as king (1 Samuel 12:13-15). Saul even dared to oppose God by making David – who was approved of by God – his enemy (Samuel 18:28-29).

Saul's leadership as a failure of leadership was coloured by stories that highlighted Saul 's selfishness: Saul waging war without God's command and seeking to prove he was great (1 Samuel 13:1-4), out of ambition, willing to sacrifice others (1 Samuel 14:45), his deep hatred (1 Samuel 20:32-33), seeking praise (1 Samuel 15:1-3), and violating God's provisions (1 Samuel 15:7-8). In addition to being selfish, Saul also justified himself for every mistake he made. The self-justification of Saul is shown, for example, in the offering of burnt offerings without Samuel (1 Samuel 13:8-13) as well as in other self-justifications (1 Samuel 15:9, 15; 15:20, 21, 24, 30). Saul's leadership was ultimately built on an attitude of selfishness that formed negative attributes such as pride (1 Samuel 15:12), disobedience (1 Samuel 13:1-13), greed (1 Samuel 15:17-19) and building self-image-popularity (1 Samuel 15: 24), which influenced all of Saul's decisions. The result of leadership that is controlled by selfishness is the retreat of the guidance of the Spirit of God and ultimately, this leads to eternal destruction. This is because the purpose of this model of leadership is self-glory, and not the glory of God who is the giver of the mandate.

The day Saul was publicly chosen as king he was nowhere to be found. He had gone into hiding. This was despite the earlier private encounter with Samuel without the people's knowledge, when Samuel had anointed him king (1 Samuel 10:1). At the public selection of the king by the tribes of Israel, Saul the son of Kish was chosen from the family of Matri in the tribe of Benjamin, but he had disappeared. Eventually they found him among the equipment and baggage (1 Samuel 10:20-23)! Saul was not sure of himself, and this reflected in his leadership. He saw everyone as a threat, including those who should be a blessing to him.

In 1 Samuel 17:25, David was told,
Have you heard about the huge reward the king has offered to anyone who kills him? The king will give him one of his daughters for a wife, and his whole family will be exempted from paying taxes! (NLT).

It is unlikely that those who said this made it up, because David confirmed it in verses 26-27. David killed Goliath, and there is no record that Saul fulfilled the promise or exempted David's whole family from tax – it was in fact unlikely that he did. Neither did he give him his daughter as wife for killing Goliath. Instead, hoping to get David killed, Saul promised to give him his older daughter, Merab, as wife if he would prove himself to be a real warrior by fighting the Lord's battles. 1 Samuel 18:19 says that when the time came for the wedding, Saul gave Merab in marriage to Adriel, a man from Meholah, thus breaking his promise once again. Saul's leadership as a failure of leadership is again shown in his breaking of his promises.

3.3 Transformation leadership model that must be maintained by church leaders

The example of Saul's leadership contains a negative side which makes it necessary to point towards constructive reflection for church leaders. Saul was judged as a failed leader (Sibuea 2020). Leaders become key figures who determine the progress or decline of a nation and, likewise, of a church (Wati & Yuono 2021). The church is in a leadership crisis and the era of virtualisation encourages aspiration towards a condition of being well informed, because this era is increasingly open to the view of all, particularly in regard to cyberspace (Anjaya 2021b). Therefore, constructive reflection is very much needed for the development of the church in respect of the quality of church leaders.

The main failure of Saul's leadership was a change in motivation and focus, away from God and towards himself. Change is the key to failure. Leadership that pleases God is that leadership that is focused on, and motivated by, God alone, for the sake of the glory of God and the kingdom of heaven. If everything that is naturally given by God is consistent with all His rules and promises,

then leadership that is under God's control is required to be consistent as well. One of the failures of Saul's leadership was a lack of consistency: he started with success but ended in failure; he began with motivation towards God, and ended with motivation towards his personal self.

The change in direction of Saul's leadership goals and motivation did not take place suddenly but started with small things. Saul was not aware that the desires of his heart, which were increasingly uncontrollable from day to day, stemmed from small mistakes that were made. For example, when Saul became impatient with waiting for Samuel to arrive, he finally took over Samuel's duty to perform sacrificial services. Another mistake was when Saul disobeyed God's commandment by not killing Agag, the king of Amalek, even though in the end Saul did kill him. God's punishment for these "small" mistakes was so severe because Saul's fault was not in the size of the mistakes, but rather for violating God's law. God does not tolerate this because it can set a bad precedent for Saul's people, who are also God's people, and moreover it has been a provision from the beginning that if there is a violation of His law, God's punishment is ready to be poured out (1 Samuel 12:13-15).

Saul had no fellowship with God. The Bible records in 1 Samuel 14:35 that Saul built his first altar to the Lord after many years of being on the throne. "And Saul built an altar to the Lord, the first one he had ever built. Then Saul said, 'Let's chase the Philistines all night and destroy every last one of them.' His men replied, 'We'll do whatever you think is best.' But the priest said, 'Let's ask God first'" (1 Samuel 14:35–36 NLT). Prior to this time, he never built an altar to the Lord. One can see in this scripture, that though he built an altar to the Lord, he didn't think of consulting God before going to chase the Philistines. It was the priest who said that they should consult God. It was fortunate that the priest did, because when Saul consulted God, He didn't answer. It was then that Saul suspected that something was wrong. He furthermore found out that Jonathan had sinned – he had ignorantly violated the oath that the soldiers should not eat until he had avenged all his enemies (1 Samuel 14:24-30). Saul didn't have a personal relationship with God. He never said, "The Lord my God." In 1 Samuel 15:30b, he says to Samuel, "The Lord your God" (NKJV). If one compares him to David, a man after God's heart, the difference is clear. David enquired of the Lord as a matter of course. Saul consulted God only as a last resort.

Referring to the story of Saul, there are several transformation leadership models that should be maintained by church leaders: *firstly*, to manage a vision means to have a direction and a focus on the kingdom of God. The focus of church leadership begins with a vision to realise God's kingdom on earth, which means that the focus of service is consistently carried out based on God's needs and desires. The church can grow if it is led by people who have

a vision to grow the church as a reason and foundation for equipping church members for the building of the body of Christ according to Ephesians 4:11-16 (Borrong 2019). Leaders are chosen and sent by God to be leaders who have clear goals and objectives (vision). That means the leader must set a clear vision of the kingdom of God. It is not enough for a vision to be announced only; it really needs to be achieved through concrete actions. The direction of the goal, the total focus of life, is only on God. Every potential leader needs to be able to see the big picture and to inspire those he or she leads. It is impossible to achieve the objective without having a vision. A leader will be able to keep believing if he or she has a clear vision. Vision is about coming up with something new that is better than the current reality and yet does not ignore the past. Instead, it builds on the foundations of the past. When it is fully realised, that vision will help us get closer to our objectives (Ming 2021). Action is needed for vision. Great leaders begin each day with a strategy in mind, and then they execute that strategy. Before they move, they don't always ask permission. The act of leading results in the ability of a leader to see and comprehend the sacred desires that God has written in his heart for the organisation and its leadership; this is the vision of leadership. According to Ming (2021), in that vision, God has a special will for the leadership of a leader.

Second, transformation is an interaction with God. This transformation as an interaction with God requires church leaders to always be connected with God in prayer (Andrian, Ming, Harianto & Daliman 2021). Thus God's wisdom will cover all, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit will direct all correct actions and decisions according to the teachings of the Bible (Anjaya, Arifianto & Fernando 2021). Always connecting with God can be accomplished by diligently praying properly, always trying to understand God's will in every life event and self-correcting continuously. Spiritual leadership must leave self-interest and motivation to be directed to the interests of others – for the glory of God. Therefore the motivation should be by and for God alone (Rumahlatu 2017). In the transformation in this divine interaction, leaders are required to continue to maintain humility, to listen to and respect others, as well as to maintain good interactions between humans in general. When it comes to the responsibility for change, a leader has many responsibilities in respect of transformation. *First* and foremost, a transformative leader cares about the well-being and position of others rather than about his own comfort or position. The beliefs of others are always directed toward God by transformative leaders. The transformative leader seeks assistance in every circumstance. *Secondly*, the leader is in charge of discipline, which is a responsibility that is frequently derided. Paul describes the spirit of discipline that must be present in leaders: therefore, "let us do good to all, but especially to our fellow believers, while we still have the opportunity" (Galatians 6:10). *Thirdly*, direction from leaders is

essential. Before leading others, a spiritual leader needs to know where he is going. Leaders are required to make a public entrance. A leader is someone who is willing to take on responsibilities. Joshua was one of these people. He didn't hesitate to take the difficult path. Nehemiah's transformative leadership continued to encourage people to work together. He put an end to usurers and brought the wealthy rulers and the oppressed together. Additionally, he fed his people with his own money while uniting them. The walls of Jerusalem cannot be rebuilt without cooperation and a wise heart (Ming 2021). The leader, after having an interaction with God, may transform his own comfort or position; the leader is in charge of discipline and the leader has a direction.

Fourthly, persistence in mission is firmness in carrying out the vision that has been set through concrete actions that are in accordance with the truth of God's word. Reflecting on Saul's story, the persistence in the mission that needs to be carried out is a continuous effort at self-denial. This is very important, considering that in carrying out church leadership, leaders or pastors will face many worldly temptations (Anjaya 2021a). The inability to deny oneself is fatal to God's favour. In fact, self-denial can start by removing all worldly desires. Ideally pastors or church leaders live only to carry out missions in order to achieve the vision of presenting God's kingdom. Church leaders are required to live only for the glory of God, not for self and family glory. Saul's fatal mistake was to carry out a personal mission for his own benefit (Selan 2018).

The three transformation models for VIP leadership (vision, interaction with God, persistence in mission) cannot be run separately, they are interrelated and support each other. For mission consistency, one of the main things is the act of self-denial – it needs to be concretely manifested for the achievement of God's vision (goal). Transformation in vision can continue to be directed to the right path only if an interaction with God is being carried out consistently. The achievement of God's vision can only be achieved if there is a mission consistency – in this case self-denial that is carried out consistently, which even needs to be done throughout life. Therefore, a church leader or pastor, in setting his vision, his interaction with God and persistence in his mission (VIP leadership), should reflect as a transformation leadership model for the church pastors of today. In the context of the story of Saul's leadership as a failure of leadership, the vision and mission to liberate and save the Israelites from the pressures of the surrounding nations according to God's will was lost. Thus, in referring to Saul's leadership as a failure, the vision of today's shepherds must be to liberate and to save, to free the congregation and oneself from the shackles of a tempting vision of the world and through this, to save souls for eternity.

3.4 New Testament leadership

The Lord Jesus taught the most perfect model of leadership. God asserts that a person who is prominent or a leader must be a servant to all (Matthew 20:26-27; Mark 9:35). That is the condition for His followers: leadership for the Lord Jesus in the sense of providing service to others. This will not be achieved without humility and an attitude of prioritising the interests of others. Christian leaders and church pastors must have a basic understanding and awareness that being a leader is as a servant-servant (Mark 10:42-45), and not to be served (Arifianto 2020). A Christian leader is called by God to the duties and responsibilities as a servant, and he or she has the status of a servant of God and others, in order to be a transformative leader, namely being an agent of change (Ronda 2016). Transformative means that the leader must be ready to bring change to the organisation he leads if he wants the organisation to continue to be relevant in his time. Without the competence to think and acting transformatively, a leader will lead the organisation to stagnation and even to death. Furthermore, the function of effective leadership is "proactive"; that is, through vision and mission, he assumes responsibility and takes the initiative for the betterment of his organisation (D'Souza 2013). Leaders don't wait for and watch changes taking place but actively observe changes and try new breakthroughs in service.

In Luke 22:26 the word leader is connected with the word *deakonon* from *diakonos*, meaning servant. This means that a leader is a servant, not a ruler; a servant to those who accompany him, and must follow the attitude of Jesus as someone who has a humble and gentle attitude, is willing to sacrifice and is ready to carry out his duties. The implication of this statement is that a servant has only one vision, namely the vision of his master. To be able to know and keep the vision focused on its goals, a servant must constantly interact with the master. Through this, the concrete action of implementing the vision can only be carried out perfectly if the servant is willing to give up all of his own interests, deny all of his desires and only focus on the interests of the master.

3.5 Transformation leadership model application from a Bible perspective

Saul took credit for another person's success. Saul was not humble enough to give credit to the person who deserved it. Jonathan attacked and defeated the garrison of the Philistines at Geba, but Saul took credit for it.

And Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, 'Let the Hebrews hear!' Now all Israel heard it said that Saul had attacked a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel had

also become an abomination to the Philistines. And the people were called together to Saul at Gilgal (1 Samuel 13:3-4 NKJV).

By extension, a victory by his son or his subject was a victory by him, and, therefore, could be excused. Nevertheless, it could also be a manifestation of a character flaw. Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear!" There was probably no mention of the fact that Jonathan had performed the feat. The impression given to the Israelites must have been that Saul defeated the Philistines; hence, all Israel said that Saul had attacked a garrison of the Philistines. If they knew it was Jonathan, all Israel could have said so, just as the women sang the praises of David when he killed Goliath (1 Samuel 18:6-7). Nevertheless, Saul's soldiers later credited Jonathan with the victory for Israel.

But the people said to Saul, 'Shall Jonathan die, who has accomplished this great deliverance in Israel? Certainly not! As the Lord lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day.' So the people rescued Jonathan, and he did not die (1 Samuel 14:45 NKJV).

Reflecting on the story of Saul's leadership as a failure of leadership where credit is taken for the success of another and allowing oneself to be carried away by worldly desires for self-image and power, then the basis of a true transformation VIP leadership model is 1) to manage a vision for the church pastors today; 2) to transform an interaction with God; and 3) to be persistent in the mission for the church pastors today.

The transformation VIP leadership model contains three important points in its application: **First**, to manage a vision of God's kingdom is an attitude that puts God above all else. A church leader or pastor is obliged to live completely and only for God. This fulfils the teaching of the Lord Jesus, to love the Lord God with all his heart and soul (Matthew 22:37) and the teaching of the Apostle Paul, that everything is done only for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). An example of a concrete attitude that leaders can take is to live the word of God in daily life, through both words and actions (Frederik 2020:69–86). Keeping words means only saying words that lead to things that are pleasing to the ear, encouraging, noble, holy, and edifying (Philippians 4:8). Even daily actions are behaviours that are in line with God's words. **Second**, to transform an interaction with God; this is consistent with acting as a leader who is always ready to connect with God through correct and quality prayer (Huang 2020) so that all actions, lifestyles and patterns of thinking are according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this case the church leader or pastor is required to have the ability to find God or to hear God's voice in every life event that is lived (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Ephesians 6:18; Matthew 26:41). Divine

interaction is not indicated by miracles that can be displayed or demonstrated by leaders, but rather by the wisdom that appears in everyday life: in decision making, how to respond to a problem, and the pattern of dealing with life.

Third, persistence in mission. Persistence in mission relates to continuous self-denial efforts. This is very important considering the fact that modern human life has been shackled by the pleasures and facilities of the world. Worldly ideas and values have dominated. Pastors and church leaders are required to be able to break free from these shackles, and not to follow the lifestyle of today's world. Hedonism, consumerism and materialism dominate the majority of people today. Therefore, the attitude that needs to be adopted in living this life is the example of the Lord Jesus. Pastors and church leaders should live in simplicity, not in luxury (Susanto & Triastanti 2020). Self-denial also speaks of the ambitions of the world. Various ambitions and desires related to status, pride, and honour should be abandoned. Building a church is not about accommodating the world's standards, which always relate to the number of congregations, the size of the church building and its assets, but is rather about the quality of the congregation's faith. Following the Lord Jesus is obligatory self-denial (Luke 9:23; Matthew 16:24-25).

With these three points, the VIP leadership model can be applied so that the name of God is glorified. Through this VIP leadership model, the life of the pastor or the church leader will be able to radiate God's light to this increasingly wicked world. Thus the congregation will also have a living example so that the purpose of God's call to church leaders to liberate and save is achieved. The VIP leadership model may be manifested in the charismatic leader who can create a positive and clear vision that enlists the support of his or her followers. Such leaders are also determined, performance-oriented communicators (Serrano 2014).

4. CONCLUSION

Reflecting on Saul's leadership as a failure of leadership may be a constructive reflection on leadership for the church pastors. Referring to the failure of Saul's leadership which was caused by the lack of consistency in obedience to God's decrees, this article focuses on this as a constructive reflection in the transformation VIP leadership model. The picture of this VIP leadership model is that it is firm and steadfast in faith, and that it refers to a life that is not tied to worldly things. **First**, to manage a vision of God's kingdom is an attitude that puts God above all else. A church leader or pastor is obliged to live completely and only for God. This fulfils the teaching of the Lord Jesus to love the Lord God with all one's heart and soul (Matthew 22:37). **Second**, to transform an interaction with God implies that the church leader or pastor is required to

have the ability to find God or hear God's voice in every life event that is lived (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Ephesians 6:18; Matthew 26:41). Divine interaction is not indicated by the miracles that can be displayed or demonstrated by the leaders, but rather the wisdom that appears in everyday life: in decision making, how to respond to a problem, and the pattern of dealing with life. **Third**, persistence in mission relates to continuous self-denial efforts. This is very important, considering the fact that modern human life has been shackled by the pleasures and facilities of the world. Worldly ideas and values have dominated. Pastors and church leaders are required to be able to break free from these shackles, and not to follow the lifestyle of hedonism, consumerism and materialism that have dominated the majority of people of today's world.

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