

WFWP USA HerTribe: Leading with Love - A Woman Leader's Journey of Healing and Empowerment

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So many times when we look at successful people, especially in the world of health at least, we've heard the phrase, "what begins as your pain, transforms into your passion." There are countless stories of people who have faced adversity squarely in the eye and made the decision that their limitations do not define them. Mother Moon has said herself that often our greatest struggles can one day transform into our greatest treasures, and to therefore, appreciate the challenges that inevitably come. I would say I resonate with all of it. And it often seems to me that our ability to respond in a positive way is spurred on best when we take time to listen to that still, small voice inside of us, imploring us not to settle when we feel pained by this world's shortcomings.

As a woman leader in a male-dominated world, it was easy to feel the need to "mirror" or try to replicate masculine leadership qualities in order to feel seen or socially accepted. I definitely played the "power card" - wielding my title like a sword - when I needed to get my way on certain decisions or changes that I felt were right. It was easier for me to follow suit with aggressive tactics at times, than it was to work through an approach of seeking first to understand, listening or collaborating with others. I served in the capacity of a woman pastor for nearly seven years before I made the painful decision to step down, as I had invariably put my family and my own needs on the "backburner" for far too long, and both desperately needed care and understanding.

To leave a role with so much love to give for your community and the families in it, and to realize that your investment was not fully understood or acknowledged, was truly a heartache for me.

It took time for me to realize that while I felt a bit "steam-rolled" and in need of some tenderness and healing, I also needed to acknowledge my own mistakes, most especially in the ways I led - not from my heart - but from my head. I was able to discover these aspects of myself and release my pain in large part when I attended last year's Awaken Retreat, led by Women's Federation USA. By the end of it, I realized I didn't need the retribution or validation I was seeking from the men around me. Rather, it was through the support and understanding from my sisters that made all the difference and softened my heart towards surrender.

We live in a society that disregards our mothers' love and our sisters' contributions because we've been conditioned to believe that a man's efforts are worth more and worthy of recognition. A woman's work tends to be quiet, in the background and unassuming, but her love is fierce, and her capacity to uplift and heal the broken-hearted is mighty. This is the love I encountered as I took time to surrender to my pain and the healing I needed to move forward. It was in this quiet and loving space that I recognized I still had the capacity to love my community, and that I could turn my pain around toward something beautiful, this time collaboratively with others in a meaningful, intentional way. Before I knew it, the ability to give came more freely and without expectation of recognition from those in leadership.

I would say it's important to remind ourselves that there is no reward greater than feeling that you are utilizing your gifts to match an even greater outward need from the world around you. This is what can be called your ministry and the way you can enrich the lives of others in a substantial way. Each person is unique, endowed with strengths and gifts that are meant to be honed and developed for the purpose of uplifting and empowering the other. For women, we have an incredible gift of holding others, creating space, and nurturing growth. It is quiet, seemingly passive, and unintrusive, yet it is transformative. I personally have a ways to go in order to really let this wisdom shine brightly within me. Nevertheless, Women's Federation for World Peace has given me a space to come back to my true self, to continue to grow and develop into someone who can ultimately transform this world. One can imagine therefore, that to my surprise and pleasure, I was thrilled to take on the opportunity of working for Women's Fed USA, in large part to support other women in the ways I feel I have been supported. I am grateful to take this time to work within this organization, both for me, and for the many incredible women around me, who have so much to give and who may benefit from the encouragement I can give as a fellow sister.