

AAF leaders urged to steward leadership well

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CEDAR HILL—Texas Baptist African American Fellowship leaders convened March 8, for their annual leaders' conference at Community Missionary Baptist Church in Cedar Hill. Taking Acts 4:13-21 as her focal text, Danielle Brown, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Plainfield, N.J., delivered the keynote message, challenging leaders to be good stewards of the gift of leadership.

"To lead in the face of resistance," Brown began, "requires us to develop resilience."

Brown cited Tod Bolsinger's *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territories*. When times become difficult, the strength of leaders becomes critical, she credited Bolsinger as stating.

Bolsinger cites Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, pinpointing a part near the end: "With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together."

It takes a special kind of person to look despair in the eye, Brown said. To look at the jangling discords of our nation and say, "Out of you, I'm going to create something beautiful," is not easy.

It takes a special kind of person to keep failing and not quitting, "so much so that whatever comes your way will be used by the Spirit." It takes a leader, Brown said.



Danielle Brown preaches at the 2024 AAF leaders' conference. (Photo/ Texas Baptists)

When you are committed to a cause, opposition is not an excuse to walk out on your purpose. Opposition requires stewardship of this gift called leadership, Brown continued.

And if you are a Christian, Brown said, leadership has been trusted to you. You are the light of the world, the salt of the earth. "Like it or not, you are a leader," she stated.

"Then why aren't we leading?" She asked.

Because leadership is hard, she answered. But since leadership is a gift from God, it can't be given back.

"And since we can't give it back, I want to suggest we just make a decision to steward it well," Brown challenged, referring back to Acts 4.

Peter and John are arrested "while speaking to the multitudes of people who are being added to the church. There's a commotion because a lame man is walking around and the higher-ups are upset." The Sanhedrin wanted to know by what power or name Peter and John did this, Brown continued.

Someone is always going to ask who gave you the authority when you are in leadership, Brown said. But, like Peter and John, "you cannot allow a line of questioning to turn you away from your purpose."

Leadership stewarded well

Brown suggested three marks of leadership stewarded well.

What you spark

Mature leaders spark deliverance. They spark the desire of other people to meet Jesus. Peter and John sparked the healing of the lame man. Good stewarding of leadership is about helping people “get where God wants them to be and to be how God needs them to be when they get there.”

How you speak

The mature leader speaks with wisdom and truth. Peter and John spoke the truth it was by Jesus’ power the lame man was healed. So, a leader must tell the truth even when there is opposition all around.

What you support

Nothing in the passage records specifically what John says, even though it names Peter and John. John’s leadership is in the form of support. The same gift that enables leaders sometimes requires them to follow and provide support to other leaders.

When you stand

Peter and John take a stand in this “pressure cooker of resistance.” They say they do what they do because God says so. Leaders must lead, even when the cause can cause them trouble, Brown contended.

Good leadership stewards should “let resistance be their classrooms,” she

continued.

The world is changing, but God still reigns. And it is still the same church whose foundation is Jesus Christ. So, be a leader, Brown urged. And do it in Jesus' name.

Leadership training

In addition to three other sermons focused on leadership, breakout sessions on how to lead well in particular areas of ministry included Pave, systems, Wave-Nextgen youth and student ministries, and assimilation.

African American Fellowship President Henry Batson III and Texas Baptists' African American Ministries Director Oza Jones clarified ways Texas Baptists' African American Ministries can provide assistance and support to member churches.

Batson also explained the importance of giving to the Mary Hill Davis Offering and how to designate funds to specific Baptist General Convention of Texas ministries.

"I found it to be informative, equipping, challenging, convicting and inspiring, and I use those to conclude ... based on my observations and interactions, that the African American churches in the BGCT are alive and well in this season," Joseph Parker, senior pastor of David Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Austin, said about the event.