Women of Africa Care Pty Ltd

WOAC On Air
Episode 70

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Topic: Women in Leadership

How Maria Led – Lessons from a matriarch of label A General of God in the late 1800's early 1900's

"…You can't do a ministry like this, if you're afraid to take risk and if you're afraid of what people might think about you."

"You cannot build unity and revival by compromising the truth you know." She did not compromise the call of God under persecution.

What is a true leader?
Myles Munroe in his book the "spirit of leadership" attributes leadership to the following statements:

1. True leadership is an attitude rather than a title, it inspires rather than manipulates or controls?
2. Leadership is not a pursuit but a result?
3. Leadership is not a label you give yourself. Leadership is a privilege given by the followers
4. Leaders inspire by expressing their inner passion, which resonates with others and causes them to join in pursuing the leaders vision
5. The source of inspiration in a leader is "passion"
6. True leadership passion is discovery of belief, reason, idea, conviction, a cause not to just live for, but to die for, which focuses on benefiting mankind as a whole
7. Passion comes from purpose
8. Leaders are often ordinary people who accept or are placed under extraordinary circumstances that bring forth their latent potential, producing a character that inspires confidence and trust within others.
9. The greatest leadership seems to surface during times of personal, social, economic, political and spiritual conflict.

Even though Maria was under constant persecution in the ministry, she understood vengeance is the Lords and refrained from defending herself. Her reaction was "I'm not called to defend myself, but to lead others to Christ."[AJ. Revivalist Review: Maria Woodworth-Etter[Internet].

Dreams and visions should not be ignored. She highlights that there is real and false visions and dreams. "We must align ourselves with the right and resist the wrong." [Liardon,R God's generals Maria Woodworth-Etter, You tube]. In her own life, every time she had a vision from the Lord, she seen another which was counterfeit. We need to align ourselves to the visions and dreams that aligns to the word of God;

Ephesians 2.10 "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before time ordained that we would walk in them."

Character traits that made Maria a trail blazer without allowing the oppression and challenges that she faced to weigh her down and give up on the call. She kept on the ministry till age 80 when she went to be with the Lord. She was an itinerant evangelist, and at age 74 called her to open her own church, at 74 years of age.

Pre-ministry character

a) Maria was very timid and she was filled with fear as she stated "I was very timid, and bound as with chains in a man –fearing spirit. When I arose to testify I trembled like a leaf, and began to make excuses – O God, send someone else." [Maria Woodworth-Etter. Life and experience of Maria Woodworth, 1885].

b) Maria was lifeless being emotionally threatened by the spirit of death that hovered over her household, she herself wanted to die and go home to be with the Lord and her children, which was aggravated further by her husbands' instable mind and his inability to function as the breadwinner.

Transformed character

a) Maria's character was transformed when she was baptized at the age of 13, however fears and trepidations, sickness, death, impoverished conditions, suppressed her true nature in Christ to be revealed;

b) When she embraced the vow to serve the Lord fully, she was revived by God and that was when her true nature in Christ was revealed; and

c) She became flamboyant, zealous, courageous, candid, well –spoken, bold and relentless in her ministerial call. The devil brought history into her ministry, but her transformed nature in Christ put to death her previous nature, where this time she opposed satanic influence in the battlefield.

Strong, Persistent, Diligent, Self-motivated, Driven and Energetic

Maria was strong willed, persistent, unshakeable and immovable from the race she vowed to run for the Lord.

a) Even though sickness revisited her at the age of 70, the affliction did not threaten her from completing the race that she began, that at 74 she built a church, where she ministered at until she died at the age of 80;
b) Family losses did not threaten her ministry activities, if anything throughout her ministry majority of the miracles was "healing." Tragedies through disease and sickness that haunted her family transformed into miracles in the lives of the afflicted throughout her ministry;
c) Ministerial oppression - she was exposed to imprisonment, threats, defamation of character, and not even her first husband's adulterous relationship stopped her from evangelising, she rather asked him to go back to their hometown and addressed the matter later;
d) Her ex-husband publically defamed her character, she lost financial support as a result, and she was removed from her Eldership Evangelist title, yet she persisted in ministry.

e) At the age of 70 when her second husband Mr Etter died, she returned home from evangelising for the funeral and then went back on the mission field. She said that her husband would have wanted her to continue to press on.

f) She understood this principle Job 1:21 "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away." Therefore as long as she was obedient to God, she knew she will get and will have to let go. This scripture resounded in her throughout her life. And so no battle could stop her from fulfilling the vow she had taken to serve God.

g) In November 1914, following her 2nd husband's death, her own health failed her and, supernaturally, she completely recovered. She had a vision of Jesus in a great white horse holding a sword in His hand stating to her that He had conquered death and disease and he was sending her forth again in great power. According to Doctor's "she passed through what is ordinarily fatal in 60 % of persons 72 years of age." [E. V. Green, quoted in "Mrs. Etter Wonderfully Recovered," *The Christian Evangel*, *Jan. 16, 1915.]*

Maria resisted sickness and death and in January 1915 she was back on the road evangelizing.

Humility, Meekness, Submission

a) "Humble yourselves, therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you in due time."[1 Peter 5.6]. There was regular opposition against the workings of God in her life, and supporters detested her husband, but she respected both these authorities that the world hated. She did not rebel against God or against her husband even when the public expressed otherwise;

b) She humbled herself to the leading of the Holy Spirit, even though the manifestations and activities caused public offences, criticism, accusing her of Hypnosis, cultic practices etc.;

c) She guarded her heart with all diligence, for she knew the heart can become corrupt and would affect her from hearing God, as much as she was strong, bold and outspoken in character, when criticised, ridiculed or accused, she became ignorant of the accusations and threats to safeguard her heart and the work of the ministry and she let God vindicate her.

Integrity to God, His Word and the Holy Spirit

The following 2 scriptures come to mind when I study the life of Maria, namely:

a) "Teach me to do your will; For you are my God; Let your good spirit lead me on level ground." [Psalm 143.10]. When she began in the ministry the first thing she asked God for was to teach her to do His will, and she literally let Holy Spirit lead her since then. Her ministry practice went against religious customs and cultural trends but God trusted Maria to execute the tasks He set forth for her to accomplish. She relied continually on God for messages to preach, she leaned not on natural understanding to do the work of God.

b) "The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever."[1 John 2:17]. Even though she only started the work of the ministry 22 years after God first called her, when she started the ministry at age 35, she did all her work with urgency, as she did not desire any souls to go to hell.

c) One night after making the vow to step out in ministry she has an encounter with God and God asked her what she was doing on earth? "Lord I am going, to work in thy vineyard!" The Lord said "When?" and I answered "When I get prepared for the work." Then the Lord said to me. "Don't you know that while you are getting ready souls are perishing? Go now and, and I will be with you." [Maria Woodworth-Etter. Life and experience of Maria Woodworth, 1885,Page 36-37]

d) This conversation with God was the catalyst that brought the next 50 years of her life into a fast-paced, energetic, power packed life and flowed with much controversy and empowerment. Maria was unstoppable, unshakable, and unremitting to save souls. She was reliable in the sight of God.

e) 5.6 Selfless

f) a) "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." [Philippians 1.21 NLT]. This scripture describes Maria's selfless lifestyle;

g) b) She stepped out in faith and never looked back over those 50 years. Her entire life revolved on saving souls the burden of God became her burden; and

h) c) She was on pilgrimage, sleeping in tents, moving from one town to another, no stable home life or income. The discomforts, inconveniences, criticism, sickness, ridicule, imprisonment did not stop her from saving souls. She knew the vow meant her life no longer was hers, but God's to work through and she honoured that vow unto the end

Maria's life brought relevance to thousands of people in America and redirected many people on route to hell, towards heaven bound. How about you Gospel 4 Grampian Listeners. God has got great plans for every human being.
Jeremiah 29.11 "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you, to give you a hope ad a future."