

## **Deep Processing**

### **By Dr. Paul G. Leavenworth, the Convergence group**

J. Robert Clinton, in his *Clinton's Biblical Leadership Commentary*, defines deep processing as “process items which intensively work on deepening the maturity of a leader” (p. 684). Process items involve life circumstances and relationships that result in character development, skill development, and expanded potential. They are providential in nature, designed by God to help develop a leader’s capacity.

Deep processing is a special category of Clinton’s list of process items, but they may overlap with each other in the complexities of life and leadership experiences and relationships. For our purposes here, I have adapted Clinton’s findings and come up with the following list of deep processing items:

- 1. Life transitions**
- 2. Life and leadership crises**
- 3. Life and leadership conflict**
- 4. Leadership backlash**
- 5. Isolation**
- 6. Spiritual warfare**
- 7. Brokenness**

Let’s briefly define and describe each of these. Several of the following definitions are taken from the Glossary in Clinton’s *The Making of a Leader*.

1. *Life transitions* – Change happens to all of us sooner or later. Life transitions occur during times of major changes such as death of a loved one, becoming “empty nesters”, loss of a job, retirement, etc. Along with these situational life transitions there are developmental life transitions that we must navigate as we age and become more mature. Example: Paul

2. *Life and leadership crises* – “Process items that refer to special intense situations in life, which are used by God to test and teach dependence on Him” (p. 238). “A specialized form of a Crisis process item, referring to a time of crisis characterized by intense pressure in which the meaning and purpose of life are searched out, and the leader has experienced God in a new way as the Source of life, the Sustainer of life, and the Focus of life” (p. 246). Example: Peter

3. *Life and leadership conflict* – “Instances in a leader’s life in which God uses conflict, whether personal or ministry related, to develop the leader in dependence upon God, faith, and insights relating to personal life and ministry” (p. 237). “A process item referring to those instances in ministry in which a leader learns either positive or negative lessons about the nature of conflict, possible ways to resolve conflict, possible ways to avoid conflict, ways to creatively use conflict, and how to see conflict in terms of God’s processing of the leader’s inner life” (p. 249). Example: Paul and Barnabas

4. *Leadership backlash* – “A process item describing the condition when followers react against a course of action taken by a leader; usually due to unforeseen complications arising after the followers have previously approved of the action” (p. 245). Example: Moses (Exodus 14)

5. *Isolation* – “A maturity factor item in which a leader is separated from normal ministry, while in the natural context in which the ministry has been occurring, usually for an extended time, and thus experiences God in a new and deeper way” (p. 244-245). Example: Elijah (I Kings 19)

6. *Spiritual warfare* – There is a real devil and he is an adversary of God and his purposes. Leaders may face times when they encounter spiritual realities that may hinder their life and leadership progress. We are told several times in the Bible that we do not live in a natural world, but a natural/supernatural world where we need to learn how to do spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6: 10-20). Example: Daniel

7. *Brokenness* – A process by which God brings us to the end of ourselves in order for us to learn to live and lead under the control of his spirit. There may be several breakings before brokenness is accomplished. The primary fruit of brokenness is love (I Timothy 1: 5) which is manifest in humility (I Peter 5: 6). Example: Joseph

### **Potential Benefits of Deep Processing**

Deep processing can take us to levels of understanding, maturity, and spiritual authority that can not happen any other way. God initiates deep processing because he wants to take us deeper into himself and his resources for our fulfillment and effectiveness. If we endure during deep processing, we will experience some of the following:

1. A deeper sense of God’s love
2. A greater appropriation of the fruit of the spirit
3. A greater appreciation of God’s faithfulness
4. A new way of looking at life and leadership (paradigm change)
5. A greater understanding of God’s majesty and holiness
6. A greater level of intimacy and integrity
7. A greater capacity to function in spiritual authority
8. A greater freedom from sin and fleshly patterns
9. A greater realization of the fear of God
10. A greater sensitive to the “voice of God”
11. A greater appreciation of others
12. A greater passion for God and his purposes
13. A greater sense of giftedness and calling
14. A more focused life
15. A greater capacity to finish well in life and leadership

These and many other outcomes are possible if we can learn to submit to God in the midst of deep processing. Remember Job and how God transformed him and blessed him with a double portion of what he had lost during his “severe mercy”.