

## 10 lessons from 10 years of being a pastor

By Terry Masango, Captain –

### 1. Most people are hurting, and are in great need of authentic love.

Not everyone knows it, and not everyone admits it, but they are in great need of being loved. Sometimes hurting people hurt you, but show them sincere love, anyway. Be kind. Everyone you meet is fighting a battle you do not know about.

Sometimes we are so focused on ourselves that we forget that others are dealing with similar or worse challenges than ours. Someone once said, “Everyone is normal until you get to know them.” Similarly, everyone seems like their lives are perfect until you get to know them. Kindness and grace are required at all times.

### 2. We can never do church or live life the way we have always done.

The new reality is chaos. The new reality is busyness, confusion, little commitment. There is a huge competition for people’s attention and time. Many people are too busy to commit to church. We can never do church the same way it was done in the past, so how can we do church in the 21st century, without watering down the gospel?

### 3. You can take the horse to the river, but you cannot make the horse drink.

I used to blame myself when people would continue to live in sin, despite “good sermons and teaching.” God is teaching me I cannot change people. If people are unwilling to learn, there is nothing I can do to teach them. They have to make the conscious decision to seek God.

### 4. God equips the unqualified.

Often we disqualify ourselves without trying. Often, we think we cannot do the work until we have achieved this or that. I have learned that I am not a particularly gifted person. I am just an ordinary person used by an extraordinary God. Do you think God cannot use you because you have no skills? You are the person God is looking for. Come as you are. He will equip those he calls. It’s not your ability that matters. It is your availability.

### 5. Whosoever will can be saved. God can save any life.

God can save anyone, anytime, anywhere. There is no sin too great to be overcome by his grace. Drug, alcohol, sexual addictions, lying, cheating, stealing—any sins you have committed, you can be forgiven. Do not dismiss people because the worst of all sinners can be saved by God. God can



change you and me, too.

**6. Not everyone will like you.**

We are born with an inherent need to be loved. However, as a leader, not everyone will be particularly fond of you. There will be people who will just not like you, for whatever reason. There are people who will not like the way you talk, dress, preach, and make decisions. If you live to be liked, you will die heartbroken.

What does God say about you? He loves you. He cares for you. Our value and ultimate affirmation has to flow from God.

**7. Set your priorities straight.**

Your relationship with God should always come first. Then, your spouse and family should follow. Family is more important than our ministry or work. Misplaced priorities can cost you your relationships.

**8. Prayer is important.**

Prayer will solve everything. Prayer will change you, before it changes your circumstances. I have learned that in my own life what should matter most are prayer, the word, and growth in character. As I strive to follow Jesus and as I strive to lead others to follow Jesus, prayer is crucial.

**9. Listen and learn from the advice of older, wiser soldiers.**

Our society does not respect the elderly. Our society seems to treat the elderly as people who do not have anything to contribute anymore. The elderly have wisdom, and have acquired a wealth of experience in life. I used to think I was tolerant of the elderly; I am learning, they are tolerant of me. I realize just how patient they are with me as a growing corps officer.

**10. Choose your battles wisely.**

Pick your battles; don't let them pick you. What benefit is it to you if you win the battle and lose the war? Some battles are not worth fighting. Some battles are best responded to through prayer. When you respond, you do not have to respond in the same spirit. Pray about it. Think before you respond. Sleep over it.

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