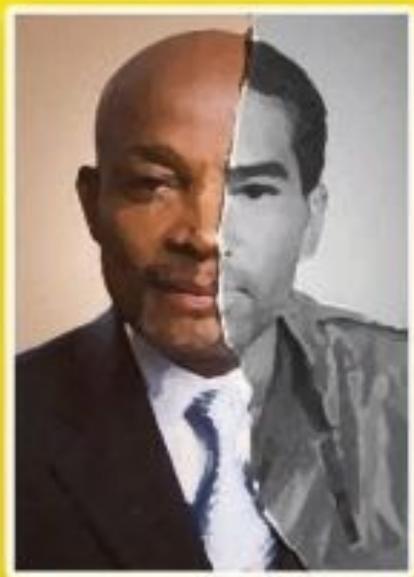


GOOD ASSISTANTS AND



**BAD
ASSISTANTS**

Dag Howard-Mills

Good Assistants And Bad Assistants

by Dag Heward-Mills

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Chapter 1

A Loyal Assistant

The assisting minister is anyone operating in any of the following positions: associate pastor, assistant or deputy pastor, worship leader, departmental pastor, youth pastor, branch pastor, minister of music, etc.

The duties of an assisting minister may look obvious. It may even seem superfluous to write about what is expected of the assisting minister.

Nevertheless, I have found the assisting minister to be one of the most important people in the ministry team. He can make or break the ministry by his actions, words and even attitude.

From experience, I have learnt that it is better to have no assistant, than to have a bad assistant. It is better to have no branch church than to have a branch church with a bad branch pastor.

A Good Ambassador

A good assistant minister can be compared to a good ambassador. He does not reflect his own ideas and visions, but only those of his home country (senior minister).

A good assistant minister can also be compared to a good wife. *He must not only obey instructions, but also must genuinely support and flow with the head or senior pastor.* He must not be an independent and difficult to control person. If you are not faithful with another man's ministry, do not ever expect to have anything of your own.

And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

Luke 16:12

There is a proliferation of associate Absaloms, Adonijahs, Ahithophels, Semeis, Joabs, Judases and Lucifers in the church. These are the major rebels of the Bible. Any experienced minister would have had his fair share of these personalities. I am against these people, and I am teaching against these personalities. Decide that you will never become a rebel.

It Is Not Easy to Be a Head

It is not easy to be the head of anything. All of the responsibility falls on you. You are always to blame for everything that goes wrong because you are the ultimate head. In a certain sense, it is easier to be an assistant than it is to be a head. But in another sense it is difficult to always submit, follow and support.

You Must Be Called to Assist

I believe that it is a gift and a calling to be a good associate. If God has not called you to stand in the office of an assisting leader, do not take on yourself a frustrating and difficult task. Decide to be on your own from the beginning. If you are the head you must ensure that you have loyal associates. Anyone who is supposed to be a head but acts as an assistant, will be a bad assistant.

I am going to share with you some lessons that will help you function in the role of an assistant. **If you are going to do it, then you should do it well!** I believe that these are perspicacious and important instructions.

Chapter 2

Twenty-nine Ways of Becoming a Good Assistant

1. Make mention of your senior pastor often, and in a favourable light.

Do this whenever you are speaking, preaching or counselling.

2. Quote your head as often as possible.

As I said earlier, you are actually an ambassador representing him. Jesus is supposed to be the most important person in the church and not the pastor.

He must be magnified and not anyone else.

He said,

...if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

John 12:32

However, there is a certain respect and admiration you must have for the head. Do not use your pastor as an illustration of a bad example. You must speak of your head as someone to be admired and followed. In every institution, a particular person must be more prominent - that is the head.

Anything with Two Heads Is a Beast

If more than one person is prominent, you will have a situation where there are two heads - a freak. Make mention of the fact that what you are doing is being done on behalf of the head. This makes it clear that there are not two heads, but only one.

3. Genuinely admire your pastor and praise him often.

If you do not admire him, you should not be working with him in the first place! If you are a good assistant, you will see the wisdom in the decisions that your head takes. You will admire the way he preaches and the revelation he brings forth. A bad assistant is full of contempt for all that his head does.

I learnt some time ago that you receive best from people you admire. That is a secret to catching the anointing. If you admire other people and

have no admiration for your own head, I humbly submit that you are in the wrong place.

4. Introduce your pastor in an exciting way and make positive or complimentary remarks about everything that he has preached.

Make statements like, “I was really blessed today by this message”, or “That message was timely.” A loyal associate is full of genuine public compliments for his pastor’s sermon. When the associate makes these open remarks the whole church appreciates their pastor’s message even better!

5. Announce the visit or arrival of your pastor with excitement.

We are all excited to see someone we love. A good associate will announce with joy, the arrival of his head and introduce him with pride. Surely the fact that you are not happy to see your head must mean that there is something wrong.

Don’t Allow Him in!

I remember a church that had a rebellious pastor. When the general overseer came on a visit, the pastor instructed the ushers not to allow the general overseer to enter the building. Can you believe that? The overall head was physically prevented from entering a church he had founded. A rebellious person is not happy to see his pastor. But a loyal person welcomes his father with joy.

6. Do not become a receiver of complaints.

Let people know that if they want to grumble and criticize, they have come to the wrong person. If your office is a centre for the discussion of the shortcomings of your pastor, then surely, another Absalom is in the making! It takes a certain evil spirit for people to have enough confidence to bring you all their accusations. Unity begins with the most senior associate. If he is loyal, the others will follow.

7. You must find genuine excuses for any lapses by the head.

Everybody makes mistakes, and nobody is always right. So your senior will have his fair share of mistakes.

It is your duty as a good assistant to defend and protect the developing ministry of your pastor.

For example, if the head is late for an important function, a good assistant should give a suitable explanation for this lapse. You must

emphasize that something must have happened to hold him up.

He Is Always Late

If you make sarcastic remarks like, “He’s always late anyway” or “He’s probably sleeping as usual”, you are putting your pastor in a bad light. And that is a sign of disloyalty!

8. Whenever your senior pastor is unable to attend a function, you must inform the parties concerned that he had intended to be there himself but could not make it because of very important reasons.

You must give the impression that your head is a good person who was constrained by real and pressing issues. Do not say, “Oh, I do not know why he didn’t come to the hospital to visit you. He was sleeping at home when I last called.”

9. Always remind the congregation that you are not the main pastor.

When people praise you and are very impressed with your ministry, you must be able to tell them happily that there is someone above you.

Notice what John the Baptist did when people were so pleased with his ministry.

He said,

...I am not the Christ but...I am sent...

John 3:28

If you are not willing to let others know that there is someone more senior to you, surely, there must be something wrong with your loyalty.

10. The good assistant tells his admiring congregation where he learnt all that he knows.

Jesus often said,

...The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do...

John 5:19

11. When you minister to church members, let them know that what you are doing is actually being done on behalf of the head, and not on your own behalf.

When we say, “In the name of Jesus”, it makes the people know that we are acting on behalf of Jesus, our Head. For instance, all ministers on

earth represent Christ. We do not come in our own name. We come in the name of Jesus.

12. Be genuinely happy at the promotion of your pastor.

Do not secretly think that he does not deserve the fame and popularity that he is getting. Notice what John the Baptist said when the popularity of Jesus was reported to him:

“Behold...all men come to him.” Notice again the classic reply of a good assistant:

He must increase, but I must decrease.

John 3:30

A bad associate gets worried as his pastor is promoted. He feels he is being left behind and people will see too great a difference between himself and his head.

13. Ensure that everything is well with your head.

Ensure that he has a seat and is comfortable. Give up your own chair if necessary. Ensure that he is acknowledged and respected by everyone. This is the duty of a good assistant.

14. Be genuinely excited at the arrival and involvement of your head pastor in any function.

You must announce the visit of your pastor to your department or branch with excitement. If you see his visit or involvement as an intrusion and a bother, then there must be a problem with you. You are probably a rebellious and independent assistant at heart.

15. Honour your pastor’s wife as well.

Minister to her and give her gifts.

I take note of any person who doesn’t respect my wife. It is an important sign to me. If you receive my wife, you have received me. In the same way, if you disrespect and disregard my wife you have done the same to me.

He that receiveth you receiveth me...

Matthew 10:40

16. Regard your association with your head as a learning experience.

Decide to learn something from him everyday. A good assistant or deputy or associate learns from his head. The bad associate sees many mistakes in him.

Two Pastors, Two Opinions

I remember once when two pastors visited from their branch churches outside Accra. They were present on Sunday morning as I ministered. Later, we had a meeting with all the visiting pastors.

One of the pastors told me, “As I listened to you minister on Sunday morning, I thought to myself, ‘This man is repeating himself.’ He went over these points in last week’s sermon.” “However,” he said, “I happened to speak to the other visiting branch pastor who thought otherwise.”

This other branch pastor also passed a comment about the Sunday service. He said, “I really enjoyed Sunday’s message. The Bishop was very relaxed as he emphasized the points from the previous week’s sermon. It makes the congregation understand the message even better.”

Repetition or Good Teaching?

While one pastor saw it as useless repetition the other saw it as an effective teaching approach. These two pastors confirmed what I believed all along. You can either take your relationship with your head as a learning experience or as a fault-finding mission. A good assistant is always learning something new. A bad assistant is always tired and bored.

17. Acquire your pastor’s tapes.

“Soak in” his messages on audio and video tapes. Catch the anointing on his life through faithfulness and loyalty.

18. In your preaching, do not hesitate to refer to your pastor as an example of a successful person.

Use your pastor as an illustration of noble things.

19. Flow with decisions and policies made by the head. Do this even if you have a different opinion.

Only one idea can work at a time. Only one strategy can be implemented at a time. If you are the associate, you are supposed to submit to the leader.

You may say, "I don't think this is the right thing to do, but if that is the decision you have taken, I will abide by it."

20. A good assistant does not establish a private, side-fellowship in the church without the knowledge or approval of his pastor.

21. Periodically organize pleasant surprises for your pastor.

Spontaneously celebrate the birthday of your pastor, and give him gifts. This will draw you closer to his heart. The church will be full of the love of God.

22. When your head is going on a journey, you must be at the airport or the station to see him off. It is also important to be there to welcome him with joy.

On some occasions you must organize a "welcome home" party. Associates must be glad to have the pastor back home. A bad assistant will say, "If he is going, let him go. He has a wife, I'm sure she will see him off."

23. During counselling sessions you must learn to assist properly.

First of all, the assisting minister must not contribute any counsel that is contrary to what is being said. He must also not try to develop a completely new train of thought, which may only be confusing to the one receiving counsel. Do not try to impress anyone with some high-sounding wisdom.

Just Emphasize What Your Pastor Says

Simply help your senior to say what he is saying better and emphasize what he has already said. Do not remain quiet during counselling sessions, this will only make you look like a spectator and will make the counsellee feel awkward.

I teach all assisting ministers to use these simple but very powerful phrases whilst assisting their seniors in counselling. These phrases can be introduced at intervals during the counselling session.

1. Do you understand what pastor is saying?
2. Do you understand that pastor is only trying to help you?
3. Pastor is only saying this because he loves you.
4. I wish I had had someone to speak to me in this way when I was in a similar situation. When you insert comments like these as the senior

minister counsels, you lend greater impact to his words.

24. A loyal assistant takes notes at meetings whilst his senior pastor is talking or ministering.

You must realize that it takes a certain amount of humility to write notes when someone is talking. That is why not writing notes is significant. Writing notes means that you are learning something.

It Takes Humility to Write Notes

It means that someone senior or someone with more insight than you is imparting knowledge to you. If the most senior associate writes notes, it will encourage all the others to do the same. All my pastors, from the most senior to the least of them, write notes when I am speaking.

25. A loyal assistant personally gives gifts to his senior pastor.

Why a Gift?

A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.

Proverbs 18:16

A gift means a thousand different things. It means the giver loves you, he appreciates you, he respects you and he honours you. It also means the associate admires you, thinks well of you and wants to be like you.

A gift is also sending a message of encouragement, telling the head that he has been a real blessing.

A gift also says, "I want the anointing that is upon you." All these are not evil thoughts and rule out (to some extent) traitorous plans. The head may not necessarily need the gift. It is most likely that the one giving the gift needs it more! However, when a person ministers a gift to you, a thousand messages are spoken.

26. A loyal assistant is protective of his Senior

Pastor. He is prepared to defend against any problems arising out of his pastor's mistakes.

Everyone is capable of making mistakes. I can assure you that every senior pastor will make several mistakes during his ministry. Woe to you, if you have a disloyal assistant by your side in the day you make a blunder. A loyal assistant is supposed to cushion the effect of any mistake and protect you.

27. A good assistant is not ignorant of the fact that his pastor is human and capable of making mistakes.

Because of this, a good assistant constantly prays for his pastor. He hopes for the best and prays that God will keep them all on the right track. He sees himself as someone who is linked to his senior pastor. They will either sink or swim together. A good associate does not think that his head is infallible. He knows that his pastor can and does make some mistakes. This is why he prays so hard for him.

28. A good assistant gives his head pastor wise counsel. He does not feed him with lying praises or flatteries.

A good assistant knows that he is very close to his head. He knows that his input may be the most valuable. He knows the damaging effect of flattering his senior pastor and misleading him.

29. A good associate is content to be an assistant.

A good associate is happy to stay in his position. Pastors must look out for the spirit of contentment in assisting workers. A content assistant does not covet his pastor's position or anything that is his pastor's.

Thou shall not covet...any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Exodus 20:17

Chapter 3

A Disloyal Assistant

A bad assistant is often difficult to detect. The Bible teaches us to mark them that cause divisions.

Senior ministers should use the following signs to identify disloyal behaviour in assisting or associate ministers.

Honest branch and assisting ministers who identify any of these traits can also judge themselves.

Take note, whenever assisting pastors exhibit the following characteristics.

20 Characteristics of Disloyal

Assistants

1. When things go wrong, unfaithful assistants are quick to say, “I knew all along that this would not work.”

This is because they were not in full support of the idea from the very beginning. Therefore, they are glad that something went wrong.

Any assistant who is happy that things have gone wrong is a bad assistant and must be displaced and replaced.

2. When you come up with a suggestion, new idea or vision they have no comment to make - either good or bad.

Silence, especially in time of trouble is often indicative of someone who is not in full agreement.

3. The disloyal assistant is often thinking, “I would be a better head if I had the chance!”

He is often thinking that he could actually be the head. A good assistant does not think that way. He is conscious of how difficult it must be to be the head. He has no wish to replace his head but is content to continue assisting until the very end.

4. A dissatisfied assistant is not happy about the differences

between himself and his head that make him look subordinate.

A bad assistant wants to have all that his head has. He wants to have the same authority, the same status, a similar income and the same car as the head. He sees no reason why there should be a difference. He does not like it when people see that there is a difference between himself and his head pastor.

5. He is very concerned about his image rather than being concerned about raising the image of his head.

John the Baptist was a good associate of Christ. He said Jesus must become more important and prominent than he was.

He must increase, but I must decrease.

John 3:30

That is the attitude of a good assistant. However, a bad assistant gets irritated at the slightest event that in any way lowers his image.

He will ask you, "Why did you talk to me that way when we were outside?"

If you instruct him in public, he will pretend that he is not even listening. He gives the impression to the flock that although he is an associate, he is his own boss.

6. A treacherous assistant will eagerly look for opportunities to sit in his head's chair.

Such bad assistants cannot wait for opportunities to preach in the stead of their heads. They eagerly look forward to the time when the head travels so they can pose as the leader. This can get so bad that when he is away, they actually use their head's office and take decisions which they are not entitled to make. In contrast, a good assistant constantly realizes that he is not the head and cannot fit into his head's position.

7. The bad assistant sees all the faults and mistakes in the senior minister's life. He rarely sees any good thing.

The bad assistant sees mostly mistakes in what the head says or does. He thinks the head does not speak well in public. He thinks the head prolongs the services.

He has information that a lot of people are offended about the way the head speaks to them. In other words, the bad assistant has a catalogue

of the “sins” of his head. But he has no such catalogue of the good attributes of his head.

8. The disloyal associate notices the good attributes of external ministers, but never speaks positively about his own pastor.

A bad associate constantly observes the successes of outside ministers and praises them. Meanwhile, he is always complaining about the shortcomings of his own ministry. The fact is that everyone has faults!

If you have a critical attitude (third stage of disloyalty) you will notice twenty-one mistakes in everything your head does.

This fact is highlighted by the way you notice and praise the good in other ministers.

9. A subversive associate constantly listens to tapes from external ministers and learns from them. But he never listens to his own head pastor’s tapes.

Surely, an associate must listen to the tapes of his own head pastor. Even though he is an associate and the next in rank, the head is still his pastor. The feeding that comes from the pulpit is a blessing even to assistant pastors. The fact that an associate has nothing to learn from his head is a serious indicator. There is nothing wrong with assistants who are constantly learning from outside ministers. But there is something very wrong when these associates never seem to learn from their own pastors.

10. A disaffected associate always feels that things should be done in a different way.

As he watches the senior pastor, he thinks to himself, “My head should have brought in more Scriptures when he was teaching.” As he looks on during counselling sessions, he says to himself, “He’s not handling this case properly.”

He calmly observes his head handling administrative issues, but feels that there is a far better way of going about things. This is a mind of discontentment and disloyalty. The bad associate is not happy and convinced about his head’s ministerial capabilities. I wouldn’t like to have such an associate around me. I would never know what he is thinking.

11. A disloyal associate is a habitual and persistent receiver of complaints. In other words, he is a magnet for complaints.

Some members of the flock seem to find their way to these bad assistants with all sorts of complaints. Often they say to them, “You are more approachable than the head.” Watch out for these so-called “approachable” assistants. If I love my wife, I will not allow people to complain about her.

Department of Complaints

If I love my associates, I will not create the environment for people to say negative things about them to me. In the same way, if my associate is loyal to me, no one can readily speak evil of me to him. There will simply be no good reception for these complaining and murmuring Christians. No one is perfect and we all make many mistakes. **If you are in the complaining department of the church, there must be something wrong with you.** Why do people choose to come to you whenever they want to grumble or murmur about something?

12. They do not clap, smile, say “amen”, shout, or laugh when the head is preaching.

These bad assistants look like diplomatic “know-it-alls”. They maintain straight and uninterested faces throughout the sermon. Certainly, a loyal and supportive associate would like to encourage his head to preach, rather than make things more difficult. If your associates become exuberant when others minister whereas they maintain their unsmiling and rigid faces when you are ministering, there is something wrong.

13. A disloyal associate does not sing, or lift up his hands during worship. Neither does he clap his hands during praise.

These diplomatic associates hinder the flow and the work of the Spirit by their very rigid presence. Get rid of all such unhappy people who do not really want to be around. The church is better off without them.

14. A disloyal associate does not flow with the general mood of the congregation.

When everybody is laughing, he does not laugh. On a good day, he may afford a faint smile. When everybody is exclaiming in agreement, he may give a diplomatic nod of consent. When everybody’s hands are raised, he will lift up only one hand. You see, they are simply not as impressed as the rest of the church.

15. A bad assistant is not happy at the wealth and blessings of his senior pastor.

He feels the head has too much anyway. Disloyal associates feel that they do the “donkey work” while the head reaps all the rewards. He thinks in his heart, “Monkey dey work, baboon dey chop”, as is said in Ghana. This is because he wants those same things himself.

16. A disloyal assistant openly disagrees with his head pastor.

Any associate who publicly displays disagreement with his head is sending a message to the whole church. Some associates may frown and you will see disapproval written all over their faces. What they are saying here is, “I am opposed to the decisions that have been made. And I want everyone to know I was against it.” When an associate comes out publicly instead of waiting for a private forum to express his opinion, something is very wrong. He is undermining the authority of the head.

Such a person is nearer the stage of full-blown rebellion because he doesn't care about what people think. Do you need me to tell you to get rid of this person?

17. The disloyal associate considers the privileges and honour bestowed upon his head as uncalled-for and wasteful.

Instead of seeing certain things as necessary privileges accompanying the office of a head, they are constantly unhappy (whether openly or secretly) about any fame, respect and rights of the head.

They consider all these as frivolous and as a waste of resources. You will notice that the one who thought in this way during the ministry of Jesus was the betrayer, Judas.

18. They constantly have thoughts flashing through their mind about leaving the church.

They may come to you and say they are confused as to whether they are in the will of God or not. As others are gladly receiving the message, they are contemplating handing in their resignation. They sit at pastoral board meetings, hoping in their hearts that they will not be there to implement the decisions made during the meetings. Identify such assistants and be careful not to discuss your future projections with them.

19. Disaffected associates do not make any extra effort!

Notice people who do not make any extra effort outside their specified duties. A lazy and reluctant assistant is a dangerous liability. When a person is unhappy in what he is doing, he does it listlessly and without

enthusiasm. Watch the apathetic characters around you, they may have already departed from you in their hearts.

20. Traitorous associates listen to bad advice from “empty” and non-spiritual wives.

Such a wife is prone to stirring up discontent in the assistant pastor’s mind. She passes comments and suggests things that make the assistant pastor feel dissatisfied with his rank and position. These “empty” wives think mainly of physical comfort, public impressions and their status in the church. They are often unaware of the spiritual implications of the advice they give.

A bad assistant is all ears to the carnal suggestions and pressure coming from his “empty” wife. There are many loyal leaders who degenerate into disaffected and mutinous people because of influence from their wives. The Bible teaches us that King Ahab was galvanized into doing much evil by Jezebel, his wife.

...Ahab...whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

1 Kings 21:25

Dear friend, decide to be a good assistant and determine not to be a bad assistant.

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