

Foundational Principles of Agri Dwala

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After being involved with the Agri Dwala project since 2011 as a documentary researcher, I have identified a few principles upon which the group spontaneously founded their success. These principles became clear over the last six years. This document is by no means conclusive, but only an attempt to list some of these foundational principles on behalf of Mr. Kosie van Zyl and the mentors of Agri Dwala.

With this document, I will attempt to explain the deployment of the foundational principles in our mentoring programme from which the success of the Agri Dwala Story originates!

I use the term 'deployment' because they don't exist only on paper, they are part of our daily conduct on the farm! Through the continual deployment of foundational principles of mentorship and custodianship, we became who we are today!

We call them our foundational principles because every decision we make and every dream we pursue, flows from these principles.

Without responsible mentorship, there is no one to be accountable to, and without mentorship and accountability the best plans fail! There is a general misconception that the acquisition of agricultural land equals wealth and food security. At Agri Dwala time has taught us that agricultural land, without mentorship and accountability equals destruction and poverty. Mentorship for us, is influence through relationships! We focus on a few relational areas throughout our agricultural programmes. They are our undeniable relationship with the Creator and His creation, our relationship with each other, not excluding the relationship with self, and our relationship with all the machinery, equipment, and livestock.

One of the key principals we embrace and mentor at Agri Dwala, is the principle of natural potential! Natural because we are learning from nature that the true produce of a seed, equals a harvest! Today we have a multitude of testimonies, the proceeds of the implementation of this principle on the farm, that true empowerment discovers and releases the priceless potential in people, it changes a fearful future to freedom and hope!

Mentorship includes a process of education! Through education we have changed our outcomes! Nature educates us. She taught us when to get the soil ready to receive the seed. We learn from nature, and we learn from each other! In the famous words of Nelson Mandela, "As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Before I get into the principles we mentor at Agri Dwala, I want to make it clear that we do not make it our primary focus to grow our business enterprise!

We don't grow our business!

This statement might come as a surprise to you, but let me explain. As a farmer, we are dependent on the Creator to send the rain and to grow the crops! We depend on nature, so learning from God's creation is an unavoidable part of our daily conduct on the farm. Agri Dwala works, because we don't overlook this reality! As a farmer, we deal with the principle of growth every day. A typical

example of this biotic approach to growth, is found in Mathew 6:28 where Jesus said: “See the lilies of the field, how they grow.” The word ‘see’ in Greek meaning “to learn”, “observe”, “study”, or “research.” So, we diligently study the principles of ‘growth mechanisms’ in nature, to understand what God is expecting from us at Agri Dwala. When we sow the seeds, we observe the ‘biotic potential’ in action, the seed’s ability to reproduce and survive, and this is the principle we want to release and mentor in our business. Every day we witness God’s intent to build this perpetuity into His creation from the start. We seek the same for Agri Dwala!

On the farm, we are dealing with natural processes. While growth cannot be ‘made’ or forced, it is important to keep the environmental resistance to a minimum in order to create the best possible conditions for growth.

This is the very reason we don’t attempt to ‘manufacture’ growth in our business, but rather release the biotic potential which God has put into it. The sole purpose of our mentoring programme, is to minimize the obstacles which might cause ‘environmental resistance’ in our business! Since we have very little control over outside factors, like rain, fluctuating markets, and the economy, we focus on removing obstacles through mentoring sound principles, and God Himself take care of the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6).

We believe that if we continue to truly honour God through our business, He will grow the business! In a world polluted by corruption, this principle is incorruptible! It simply cannot be faked!

With our mentoring programme at Agri Dwala, we seek to release the effects of crucial principles to remove the environmental resistance which might hinder the success of Agri Dwala. I would love to share some of these principles with you.

Mentoring the principle of faith.

We work ‘with God the Creator!’ Mentoring the principle of faith on Agri Dwala means that we unashamedly declare our dependence on the Creator! In doing so we practice the fact that it is not what God can do ‘for’ us, but what we can do ‘with’ Him for ‘His’ people! We see ourselves as custodians of the things God entrusted to us, and we do it wholeheartedly! Mentoring Agri Dwala God’s way simply mean that our Christian testimony changes the way we manage our responsibilities. We do things differently! Many land reform and empowerment projects fail, because the projects are not mentored God’s way, with no custodianship, only ‘ownership’! Practicing and mentoring the principle of faith also helped us to deal with times of uncertainty! Nature is unpredictable; therefore, faith is undeniable!

When we started Agri Dwala, I craved certainty! I wanted to know that where we are heading, is good and what we will get there, is excellent, etc. I wanted to be sure about the things on the farm. Although this was initially an attractive thought, I soon realized that this is more than often misleading! Proverbs 27:1 says, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring." From the inside, the journey often feels anything but clear, but I have come to believe that uncertainty is a valuable part of life on the farm!

You might disagree with me, but too much certainty can lead to a very dull life, well in my case it did!

I just realize, that part of God's plan for us at Agri Dwala, is not to be certain about everything or every day, but to find happiness in the process of discovery! Uncertainty gave us the chance to explore, discover, connect, and share! You may be uncertain as to where life is taking you, but live with the uncertainty and go where the exercise takes you. In that way, we discovered what we

didn't expect. This doesn't mean we didn't plan! We did what we had to do, but only God can send the rain, and grow the crops!

Let me be clear, there are lots of things you must be certain of, like your relationship with Jesus Christ, and especially your motives, but life is unpredictable, so trust God and enjoy the journey! If you dedicate your life to pursue certainty, it will wear you down, and the only certainty will be missing your purpose! This is the very reason we at Agri Dwala practice and mentor the principle of faith!

For us at Agri Dwala it is more than just opportunities, it is about our demonstration of God's love towards the people in our circle of influence, as well as the people in our community. Today we at Agri Dwala can undeniably testify that God's purpose always includes people!

Mentoring the principle of self-sacrifice

Mentoring the principle of self-sacrifice helped us to define success in terms of people empowerment, instead of self-enrichment! Today we practice the fact that success is achieved by making others successful. The principle of self-sacrifice is continually mentored on the farm, because we as human beings will always be tempted to indulge in self-gratification to the cost of others. Mentoring the principle of self-sacrifice challenges us, to dig deep into personal motives, and explore our own attitudes, and alter the destructive habits to the benefit of Agri Dwala as a collective whole!

The principle of self-sacrifice accentuates the fact that action speaks louder than words. At Agri Dwala we are not afraid to ask when we don't know, and to acknowledge our shortcomings! Over the duration of more than one decade, the principle of self-sacrifice became the very reason we persevered long enough for emotions to turn into strategy's. A mentor become a fruit tree in the desert, through the principle of self-sacrifice! The rewards speak for themselves!

Mentoring the principle of custodianship

The word custodian comes from Latin *custos*, meaning "guardian," and anyone who looks after something can be a custodian. The principle of custodianship helps us to realise that we are only stewards of God's creation. This was initially a challenging principle to accept, because of our interwoven misconception that we own the soil. Without accepting the principle of custodianship, it was nearly impossible to share! Unresolved pain from the past, added to the blood, sweat and tears to make ends meet, contributed to the challenge. But through the grace of God, I was liberated from my land, and I embraced the principle of custodianship!

Mentoring the principle of interdependence!

One of the great miracles of God's creation is the interdependence between all things. Our minds can hardly grasp the wisdom of the self-regulating system of interrelated parts. Observing God's creation teach us that the biotic principle of interdependence, which states, that the way the individual parts are integrated into a whole system is more important than the parts themselves. This principle is fundamental because without it, our business cannot function or grow. This is an integral part of our success!

Our business consists of many people, each with his/her own unique gifts, talents, and personality. It is vital to understand this to mentor the group well, because the actions of one person, do influence others! For this reason, we make time to listen to each other, to care for each other, and to help each other. We don't leave our community behind, we uplift people so that they can uplift their

surroundings in return. It is essential to mentor a kind of interdependence that is conducive to the 'biotic potential' of our business, in other words; mentoring interdependence in a way which remove 'environmental resistance' to growth! That is why we draw inspiration from our natural surroundings!

Mentoring interdependence means that we 'do' create expectations, hope, and dreams! We are morally connected to this project in such a way that we commit to fulfil expectations, give hope, and make dreams come true as far as humanly possible!

Mentoring interdependence also mean that we acquire information, learn new skills, but don't keep it to ourselves! We share our knowledge and experiences! We are truly interested in people's unique gifts, and help them to grow in their field of expertise! The most important aspect of mentoring interdependence, is to be the key that unlock another person's potential!

Mentoring the principle of Multiplication

Everything that grows eventually reaches its limits. When we plant wheat, the plants don't just continue to grow, they reach a limit, produce seeds, which in turn produce more plants. This is the biotic principle of 'multiplication.' Although the principle of multiplication is nothing new to the farmer, we didn't realise the impact in our business until we started looking back and saw just how we spontaneously multiplied our efforts, talents, and people over the years. Mentoring this principle of multiplication, simply mean that we encourage our people to share their knowledge with others, and in doing so continue to multiply the lessons learned on the farm. So, the real fruit of Agri Dwala is not a new farmer, but a new farming enterprise! This is what we visualise, more successful projects like this! Hardly anything demonstrates the health of a farming enterprise as much as their willingness, and ability, to give birth to new projects! As a mentor, I continually invest myself into my people, just like Jesus did with his disciples, who in their turn, also went out and made disciples! With this said, we also realise that within the seed is carried the perpetuation of growth within itself. It will never grow endlessly, but reproduces, which surpasses its own individuality! In Psalm 90:12 we read: "So teach us to number our days, That we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom." Agri Dwala might reach its limits one day, but until then, we will continue to produce more seeds of knowledge, hope, and efforts. In God's creation, the genetic information remains and reproduces itself, even if the individual organism may die.

Mentoring the principle of Symbiosis

Every farmer can describe the differences between the types of symbiotic relationships experienced on his farm. We see the effect of parasitism on our plants and livestock. We see the symbiotic relationship of communalism when the cattle's movements stir up insects for the cattle egrets to eat. But one of the fundamental principles, we at Agri Dwala want to be known for, is the principle of symbiosis. We work, learn, and live in mutually beneficial relationships. Mentoring this principle on the farm eliminates any destructive competition. We cannot be excellent in everything! If any one of us had all the gifts and talents, we wouldn't need one another! Corporate literature refers to this principle as, a 'win-win' relationship! Apart from eliminating destructive competition in the workplace, mentoring the principle of symbiosis also means that decisions are made in such a way, that everybody benefit! Jesus didn't call this principle "win-win", "mutualism" or "symbiosis", but "loving your neighbour!" At Agri Dwala we love one another, respect one another, and add value to one another!

Mentoring the principle of Functionality

In nature, sometimes the shape of things gives them ability. Some seeds need to be spread by wind, so their design gives them the ability to move with the wind. Thus, nature adds information (structure) to matter. By adding information to matter, it gives it a function. How would things change if we add information to it? How would people change? If there is no structure in your thoughts, spirit, and soul, you don't recognise the function and purpose of your current situation and you lose the ability to move with the wind! In nature wind is the method to move things to new places, to function with a purpose! The wind that moves the trees is the natural demonstration of the Wind (the Holy Spirit) that moves people into places where God has intended them to be. Your talents and passions are God's way of adding information (structure) to your life to give you a function. When you miss this, your life ended up wasted! All living things in God's creation are characterised by their ability to bear fruit, and to fulfil a purpose. Where there is no fruit, life is condemned. In Matthew 7 Jesus referred to this principle when he said: "...every good tree bears good fruit", and "You will know them by their fruits." (verses 16 and 17). Fruit is visible! At Agri Dwala we love people enough to add function and purpose to their lives, by sharing information. This is important, not only to have functional people and systems in the workplace, but also to make people function in their God-given purpose. Mentoring this principle means that every decision we make, must agree to the fundamental principles we pursue at Agri Dwala, and it must be functional and purposeful.

Mentoring the principle of the Harvest

Life is filled with choices, choices that affect us on an everyday basis in everything we do, which means our everyday choices are not without significance. The principle of sowing and reaping thus applies to every area of our business, not just our finances. In 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 the Bible teaches us that: "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." This is one of our fundamental principles at Agri Dwala. Since the beginning of Agri Dwala we have committed ourselves to never underestimate this principle. As farmers, we testify to this principle, every year at harvest time. Every single seed planted, produced more than tenfold! If God can release the potential of the seed in the soil, we believe He will release the potential of seed we plant in people, and time proved this to be true! For more than one decade, God has never let us down with this! Much of what we reap today was planted either naturally or purposefully, either by God or by us! Not only are we blessed because of what God has done on our behalf, we are also blessed by what others have done. Others have laboured and we have entered into the blessings of their labours. Until today, we abide by the principle of the harvest, and we mentor this principle on a daily basis, because we need to do what we can, and must do, while leaving the results to God, knowing that our labour is never in vain.

Conclusion

At Agri Dwala our mentoring programme centres on the deployment of our foundational principles. These are the laws by which we govern our business. Without responsible mentorship, this program wouldn't be what it is today! The importance of these principles cannot be overemphasized, because they influence every decision we make and every dream we pursue. Mentorship for us, is influence through relationships! By closely examining the natural world around us, God teaches us through His creation and His Word, how these relationships work, and how we need to implement them in our business. As a mentor, I keep investing myself in the people involved! I always remind myself not to focus on growing the business, because God takes care of that, if we focus on

implementing the principles and remove all environmental resistance, that might hinder the growth of our testimony. Every day we witness God's intent to build this perpetuity into His creation from the start. We seek the same for Agri Dwala! Through all this we know that nature is unpredictable, therefore our faith is undeniable! At Agri Dwala we don't pursue certainty! We realize that part of God's plan for us at Agri Dwala, is not to be certain about everything or every day, but to find happiness in the process of discovery! The principle of self-sacrifice has taught me to become a fruit tree in the desert! The principle of custodianship liberated me from my land and made it easy to share. The principle of interdependence taught me that in order to be successful requires many people's gifts and talents, not just mine! The most important aspect of mentoring interdependence is to be the key that unlocks another person's potential! The principle of multiplication taught me that everything eventually reaches its limit, that within the seed; it carries the termination of growth within itself. It will never grow endlessly, but reproduces, which surpasses its own individuality! Until then, we will continue to sow seeds of hope, knowledge, and effort. The principle of symbiosis taught me that we need to love our neighbour enough to add value to them! The principle of functionality helps me to realise that our talents, gifts, and abilities give us the ability to function in our purpose! Lastly, mentoring the principle of the harvest, liberated me from things, and it released God's blessing upon Agri Dwala.