

Defining Moments
Volume 73—The Art of Self-Leadership

BECAUSE TRYING TO CONTROL our own behavior and attitudes is so demanding, many leaders shy away from the hard work of self-leadership. Instead, they spend their energy trying to control the behaviors and attitudes of those they lead.

It takes humility and discipline to tackle self-leadership, and to keep at it. But those who avoid self-leadership disciplines do so to their own peril.

The following paragraphs provide some guidance to leaders seeking to engage in the art of self-leadership.

TELL YOURSELF THE TRUTH

Learn to Recognize the Warning Signs

When you hear those internal alarms start to ring—pay attention. If your work pace overwhelms you, if escapist fantasies creep into your thoughts, take an immediate time out and look very deeply at what is going on in your life.

If you wait weeks or months to respond to those internal alarms, most likely you will do damage to yourself, others, and/or your organization.

Accept Your Own Limitations

It can be a very scary experience to face your own limitations. But once you do, rather than being trapped by the need to gain the approval of men, you can revel in the freedom of being exactly who God made *you* to be.

When an honest self-assessment requires you to say “no” to an opportunity, you can trust that God will get His work done through someone else

You Always Have Options

Too many leaders find themselves operating at an unsustainable pace, dreaming of escape, flirting with temptations that would normally fill them with horror. They know that they are over-extended but do not want to deal with the consequences of “right-sizing” their commitment level.

Remember: you always have options. They may be painful; they might diminish your sense of ego, pride, and accomplishment, but you always have options.

AN ART AND A DISCIPLINE

A significant investment of time must be focused on self-leadership. Leaders must have the courage to ask themselves and be ruthlessly honest when they answer questions such as:

Is my calling sure? Am I doing exactly what God has called me to do or am I doing my own grandiose version to win people’s votes or to try to be bigger than God made me?

Is my vision crystal clear? How can I lead people into the future if my picture of the future is fuzzy? It is my responsibility to keep my vision clear—whatever the price.

Is my passion burning hot? What do I need to read? What do I need to study? What do I need to pray? Where do I need to go?

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What people do I need to be around? What experiences must I have so that I burn so hot that people around me catch the heat and are ignited by my passion?

Is my character fully submitted to Christ? Is my pride subdued? Or is my own ego messing with my ministry decisions? Are my fears at bay or do I let my own worries and anxieties creep into the leadership picture? Is my psychological baggage affecting my leadership?

Are my ears open to the Holy Spirit? Do I live a life that has space for God's promptings? Is my pace sustainable? Is my heart for God increasing or decreasing?

THE WOUNDS OF A FRIEND ARE FAITHFUL

If you really want to uncover your character defects, turn to your closest friends for help.

Go to safe, loving friends who know you well and ask, "What would you tell me about my character and relating patterns if you knew there would be no retribution for doing so? What do I do that is less than representative of the character of Christ? What do I do that annoys you? What do I do that makes you wince? I really want to know. I am not going to challenge you. I just need your truthful observations so that I can take them to God."

Likewise, often the most effective way to encourage others to deal with the "planks" in their lives is by loving them deeply and accepting them fully. Not shame, not accusation, not ultimatums—just steadfast and tender love.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Christian leaders around the world are giving all they have to build prevailing churches and reach lost people with the Gospel—but sometimes we become so preoccupied with the mission that we neglect first becoming the Christ-followers God intends us to be.

The energy and vision, vitality and health leaders bring to the organizations they lead is critical at every stage of an organizations' development. Leaders who persevere in the disciplines of self-leadership experience rich personal blessings and, in turn, bless the organizations they lead.

If you are a man or woman after God's own heart, and your vision is clear, your passion is hot, your character is strong, and you are listening to the Holy Spirit, be encouraged—your leadership will be effective!



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