

Today Matters: Leadership and Personal Growth

(Stop Learning Today and You'll Stop Leading Tomorrow)

"... We are to continue to grow in all aspects, in Him, who is the head, even Christ." (Ephesians 4:15)

BIBLICAL
BASIS

Personal growth is vital to your leadership. If you cease to grow, you cease to be a healthy leader. Healthy things naturally grow. To grow personally requires you to seize opportunities daily. Each day – you must determine how you can grow as a leader.

Benjamin Franklin wisely said, "One today is worth two tomorrows; what I am to be, I am now becoming." It is true. You will become what you are becoming right now. Poet and novelist Oscar Wilde ended his life with great regret. He had failed to seize the day. Late in life he wrote: "I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or breaks my character; ... I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and didn't know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace."

Key Principle:

Successful people make right _____ early and _____ those decisions daily.

Preparing or Repairing

Without a plan for your personal growth, you will be reacting to life instead of living on purpose. You'll be forced to make repairs on your life because it will fall short of its potential. So, here is the question: Do you want to invest time _____, or spend time _____?

Martha and Mary are vivid illustrations of these two drives or compulsions. Martha wants to impress Jesus, and she attempts to perform for Him. Mary determines she must first be served by Jesus before she attempts to serve Him.

Preparing

1. Allows you to focus on today
2. Increases efficiency
3. Increases confidence
4. Saves money
5. Pays now for tomorrow
6. Takes you to a higher growth level

Repairing

1. Makes you focus on yesterday
2. Consumes time
3. Breeds discouragement
4. Increases costs
5. Pays now for yesterday
6. Becomes an obstacle for growth

- Good decisions without daily discipline equals:
_____.

- Daily discipline without good decisions equals:
_____.

- Good decisions combined with daily discipline equals:
_____.

Twelve Important Decisions to Manage for Personal Growth

**KEY
POINTS**

1. _____: Choose to display the right attitudes daily.

Leadership Truth: Today's attitude gives me possibilities.

- a. My attitude as I begin a task affects its outcome more than anything else.
- b. My attitude towards others often determines their attitude towards me.
- c. My attitude, not my achievements, gives me happiness.
- d. My attitude – good or bad – is contagious.

The earlier you make a decision about possessing a good attitude, the greater the compounding effect on your life and leadership. Remember: attitude is a decision.

Personal assessment: Where is it most difficult for you to keep a positive attitude?
What is one step you could take to improve your attitude?

2. _____: Determine and act upon important priorities daily.

Leadership Truth: Today's priorities give me focus.

- a. Time is our most precious commodity.
- b. We cannot manage time, we only manage opportunities.
- c. We cannot change time, only our priorities.
- d. Priorities help us choose wisely.

Your time is priceless. Someone wisely noted that time is more valuable than money. You can always get more money, but you cannot get more time. Ralph W. Emerson said: "Guard well your spare moments. They are like uncut diamonds. Discard them and their value will never be known. Improve them and they can become your brightest gems."

Personal assessment: What are your top three most important priorities?
Do you stick to them?

3. _____: Know and follow healthy guidelines daily.

Leadership Truth: Today's health gives me strength.

- a. Lasting leaders recognize their body is a vehicle that carries them to their mission.
- b. Proper diet and exercise provide the energy to lead well over the long haul.
- c. Your physical health will impact your spiritual stamina and perspective.

Our health is often the gift we take for granted the most. Frequently, we don't think about it until something goes wrong. Then, we live with regret that we didn't do something earlier about it. Once again, we do more repairing than preparing.

Personal assessment: Rate your diet, your exercise, and your rest. Are you healthy?

4. _____: Communicate with and care for my family daily.

Leadership Truth: Today's family gives me stability.

- a. Families are often lost – spent as the price for successful ministries.
- b. If we cannot lead our homes, we cannot expect to lead the Church.

- c. Success is having those closest to me, love and respect me the most.
- d. Families are like gardens; they must be cultivated and watered regularly.

Values that foster healthy family relationships include: 1) commitment to God, 2) continual growth, 3) common experiences, 4) confidence in each other and the Lord, and 5) making a contribution to life together. Even with these in place, balancing work and family life is a challenge!

KEY
POINTS

As leaders, we must...

- Put our family on the calendar first.
- Find ways to spend time together.
- Express appreciation for each other.
- Be honest and resolve conflict as quickly as possible.

Personal assessment: How do you demonstrate that your family is a top priority?

5. _____: **Practice and develop good thinking daily.**

Leadership Truth: Today's thinking gives me an advantage.

- a. A major difference between successful and unsuccessful people is how they think.
- b. God is the original Source of creative ideas, and He has made us in His image.
- c. All that a man achieves or fails to achieve is the direct result of his thoughts.

Thinking Skills of Effective People:

- Big Picture Thinking: ability to think beyond yourself and your world
- Focused Thinking: ability to think with clarity by removing distractions / clutter
- Creative Thinking: ability to break out of your "box" and explore new ideas
- Realistic Thinking: ability to build a solid foundation on facts and reality
- Strategic Thinking: ability to implement plans that increase potential tomorrow
- Possibility Thinking: ability to unleash enthusiasm / hope to solve the impossible
- Reflective Thinking: ability to revisit the past and gain perspective
- Questioning Popular Thinking: ability to reject common thinking; gain new ideas
- Shared Thinking: ability to include others to go beyond your own thoughts
- Unselfish Thinking: ability to consider others, and to think with collaboration
- Bottom-line Thinking: ability to focus on results and reap the best rewards

Personal assessment: Do you have a place and time to simply sit and think?
Where and when do you do your best thinking?

6. _____: **Make and keep proper commitments daily.**

Leadership Truth: Today's commitment gives me tenacity.

Why Commitment Matters Today:

- a. Commitment can change your life. (Most life changes are connected to decisions.)
- b. Commitment helps you overcome many of life's obstacles.
- c. Every day your commitment will be tested.

"The moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issue from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and materials, assistance which no man could have dreamed would happen." William H. Murray

KEY
POINTS

Ken Blanchard writes: "When you're interested in something, you do it only when it's convenient. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses, only results."

Personal assessment: What are the top three commitments of your life?
How could you deepen your commitment in those areas?

7. _____: Make and properly manage money daily.

Leadership Truth: Today's finances give me options.

Three simple truths about finances:

- a. Money won't make you happy.
- b. Debt will make you unhappy.
- c. Having financial margins give you options.

"Money doesn't change men, it merely unmasks them. If a man is naturally selfish or arrogant or greedy, the money brings it out; that's all." Henry Ford

John Wesley's Rule for Money: Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can.

Personal assessment: How does your spending reveal what's in your heart?
What changes should you make in where your money goes?

8. _____: Deepen and live out my faith daily.

Leadership Truth: Today's faith gives me peace.

- a. Faith gives me divine perspective today.
- b. Faith gives me strength for today.
- c. Faith gives me resilience today.

Where there is no faith in the future, there is no power in the present. We need it to live our lives well. The Bible says without faith, we cannot please God. Philip Yancey writes: "Faith is trusting in advance what will only make sense in reverse."

Personal assessment: As a leader, do I model strong faith?
How can I grow in my faith?

9. _____: Initiate and invest in solid relationships daily.

Leadership Truth: Today's relationships give me fulfillment.

- a. You'll enjoy life more if you enjoy people.
- b. You'll get further in life if people enjoy you.
- c. Most people can trace their successes and failures to the relationships in their life.

Leadership is about relationships. Leaders must connect with people. Christianity is about relationships. Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God...and you shall love your neighbor..." It all comes down to relationships.

Personal assessment: Do I experience healthy, close relationships?
Or do I isolate myself and withdraw from them as a leader?

10. _____: Plan for and model generosity daily.

Leadership Truth: Today's generosity gives me significance.

- a. Giving turns your focus outward.
- b. Giving adds value to others.
- c. Giving helps the giver.

King Solomon said: "The world of the generous gets larger and larger; the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller. The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed; those who help others are helped." We are in the world to enrich it, to bless it, to advance God's Kingdom-and we impoverish ourselves if we lose sight of that. You cannot light another person's path without lighting your own.

Personal assessment: Do others see me as a generous person?
How can I increase my generosity?

KEY
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11. _____: Embrace and practice good values daily.

Leadership Truth: Today's values give me direction.

My values function as...

- a. An anchor-holding me fast to what I believe in and know to be true.
- b. A faithful friend-keeping me true to myself and to my God.
- c. A north star-guiding the decisions of my life and keeping me on mission.

Every individual needs to identify their personal core values they will live by. Every family should do the same. Every church needs them, too. Core values are the principles that guide the major decisions you make. They are the horsepower behind those decisions as well. Methods are many, values are few. Methods always change. Values never do.

Personal assessment: What are your personal core values?Your family's?Your church's?

12. _____: Seek and experience improvements daily.

Leadership Truth: Today's growth gives me potential.

Pulitzer Prize winning composer Gian Menotti said, "Hell begins on that day when God reveals all that we might have achieved, all the gifts we wasted and all that we might have done that we did not do." Robert Louis Stevenson said, "To become what we are capable of becoming is the only end of life."

Misconceptions about Personal Growth:

- a. Growth is automatic. (This is not true-we must deliberately pursue growth.)
- b. Growth comes with experience. (Some never learn from it. We need to evaluate it.)
- c. Growth comes from information. (Knowledge doesn't guarantee growth.)

"The greatest gap in life is the one between knowing and doing," says Dick Biggs.
Deep down, our problem is not a lack of information. Our problem is application.

ASSESSMENT: *In which of these twelve areas are you growing? Which ones are weak?*

APPLICATION: *What is one step you could take to grow in each of these twelve important areas?*

ACTION PLAN