

The Leader's Time I

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One significant difference between people who contribute as opposed to people who consume is found in how they use their time. There are people who waste their time, people who spend their time and people who invest their time.

Time is immensely valuable and utterly irretrievable. Without controversy, it is the most precious asset you have as a leader. You can lose money and regain it. You can lose your health and regain it. But when an hour or a day is past it is gone forever and can never be retrieved. We all have the same amount of time. The only variable is how we use it. Our clocks all run at the same rate; we all have 168 hours a week—no more and no less.

I believe there are five ingredients to the wise and best use of our time. These five ingredients take us through a process so that we are indeed investing, not spending or wasting our time:

- 1. Christ-centered power**
- 2. Compelling purpose**
- 3. Contagious passion**
- 4. Clear priorities**
- 5. Careful pacing**

Christ-Centered Power

At the center of who I am as a person and leader, and as the energy source, the foundation and motivation for all I attempt, must be the person, work, and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a Christian leader, one who deeply desires to be led by and used by Jesus, this is where it all starts. I am reminded of the prayer of a small girl, “Dear God, please take care of my daddy, and my mommy, and my brother, and my doggy and me. Oh, and please take care of yourself, God. If anything happens to You, we’re gonna be in a big mess.

The thing that can happen to God that creates a big mess for all leaders is marginalizing Him to some corner of our lives. Giving Him a howdy from time to time, just to let Him know we haven’t forgotten Him. Briefly referring to Him in an opening and closing prayer at our meetings. Being in too big of a hurry to spend daily time alone in His word and prayer. Charging into tasks and responsibilities without consulting Him and depending on Him.

I like 2 Corinthians 12:9 in the Living Bible, “Now I am glad to be a living demonstration of Christ’s power instead of showing off my own power and ability.” It amazes and troubles me how many leaders I know who spend very little time alone with God outside of preparation for teaching.

One thing I was taught by my mentors was to spend adequate, genuine time with Him on a daily basis, and to take a chunk of time monthly for prayer, reflection, evaluation and planning.

Compelling Purpose

Having a biblical purpose acts like a magnet. It pulls its owner around detours and distractions. If I make choices flowing out of my God-given purpose, I have a clear road map for my life. Albert Gray writes, “Why are some people able to do things they don’t like to do while others are not? Because they have a purpose strong enough to make them form the habit of doing things they don’t like to do in order to accomplish goals they want to accomplish. You will never succeed beyond the purpose to which you are willing to surrender.”

My life purpose, which took me months to write and crystallize reads. “To leave footprints in the hearts of God-hungry leaders who reproduce.” This simple statement of who I am and what I believe God wants me to do keeps me encouraged and focused. It helps me clarify my priorities. Now that I am clear about what God has left me here to accomplish, tasks become only a means toward my purpose, not an end in themselves.

I want to encourage you to take a block of time (perhaps a full day) alone to think through how God has made you. What gifts and passions do you have? What experiences have been yours? Look at patterns and trends in your life and try, in dependence on Him, to write a simple, short and energizing statement of your purpose in life. It should be broader than your vocation. Jesus had a clear purpose (to die for our sins and to train the twelve). His purpose helped Him decide how to act, what to do, and even what to say when certain situations arose.

Sometimes HG Wells wrote the last chapter of a book first, so he knew how the story was to end before he began. A compelling purpose will do that for you. You will find a fresh motivation and bounce you may have never had. I did! Next month, we will continue with Passion, Priorities, and Pacing.