

MY VIRTUAL MENTOR



7 DISCIPLINES OF A GREAT LEADER

Activating Transformational Habit

DAVID ROBERTSON



OVERVIEW

*“Hold fast to discipline, don’t let it go; guard it, for it is your life”
Proverbs 4:13 CJB*

The purpose of this short eBook is to make you a better leader. Ultimately, a great leader. It won’t happen by fate, luck, chance, accidentally, or incidentally. It will happen if, and only if, you commit to growing your leadership capacity. I suggest focusing your energy on one discipline at a time over a twenty-day period. That’s long enough to see noticeable results. Then move on to another one. You won’t have to wonder if it’s working, you’ll know. Others will too and tell you.

To keep this a short read, I’m going to cut to the chase. Just the facts in as few words as possible. I’m not going to attempt to define what leadership is. You already know that. I wrote this to help men like you narrow your focus to what it takes to move beyond mediocrity, complacency, passivity, or ignorance. This is not rocket science. It’s doing the basics extremely well and consistently.

The seven disciplines are real-world tested. They will work if you will work them into your lifestyle until they become habitual. Once you begin to get the hang of it, you’ll start to stand out. You’ll differentiate yourself from other men who have settled for less than their potential on the job, in their marriage, or in any number of other areas that count.

Let’s get right into it. Here are seven disciplines that I practice in my own life that have helped me become a better leader.

DISCIPLINE #1

YOU'VE GOT TO DIG YOUR WELL

For our purposes, “digging your well” is a metaphor for doing the hard work of digging deep in your relationship with God. Here’s what I believe: who you are in private will directly, proportionately determine who you are in public as a person of influence. For those of us who purport to be Christian leaders, this is all the more true.

EXCAVATION TIP #1 - DIG DAILY.

“Daily” is the key. We must prioritize this. We must neutralize excuses as to why we cannot commit to a daily time with the Lord. Of course, you’re busy! What man isn’t? Bear in mind that being busy doesn’t release us from the responsibility of “seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Mathew 6:33).

Friends, if you want to become a great leader, you need to follow the greatest leader that ever lived. And while this statement will be controversial in some circles, I believe Jesus Christ is the greatest leader in the history of the world.

Brother, if we’re going to get the results that Jesus got then we are going to have to start doing the things that Jesus did. Jesus prioritized a daily meeting with His Father (Mark 1:35). How long is this daily meeting? Five minutes? Fifteen? Fifty-five? Not important. Just start, and let it grow naturally into what it needs to be to stay connected. Make this time non-negotiable.



Here are three helpful tips:

- Select a specific time.
- Choose a special place.
- Follow a simple plan.

EXCAVATION TIP #2 - DIG DEEP.

So many times, leaders are a half-inch deep and a half-mile wide as far as their spiritual lives are concerned. They use many words but they aren't saying much.

If you're going to overcome the challenges that every Christian man must conquer, you must not settle for being merely successful. You owe it to yourself to make your goal to achieve significance, the highest expression of a great leader. And this will require that you dig your well deeply, every single day

This is the patriarch level. With time and practice of disciplines you become a spiritual father who can make a significant impact on those who look to you for leadership.

To dig deep you've got to:

- Feed daily on the greatest book ever written - the Bible
- Read great devotional material
- Hang around great people
- Ask great questions
- Listen to great sermons
- Go to great places that inspire you

Don't settle for a shovel to dig deep - use a backhoe! Find you some power tools to help you go further faster in your leadership development.



EXCAVATION TIP #3 - DIG TOGETHER

I am smart enough to know that I am not smart enough to know it all. I know I am not the sharpest tool in the shed, and I am good with that. Proverbs 13:20 says - "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm" (ESV).

Newsflash: you and your Authorized King James Version Bible, sitting under a palm tree on a deserted island, will not provide you with the full revelation of God's truth. The Bible teaches that "...we all know in part and prophesy in part" (1 Corinthians 9:12). For this reason, God gave us the gifts of the five-fold ministry: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11-13) to help us mature in our faith. God's plan is for each of us to be better, wiser, stronger, and more effective together.

One favorite Bible verse is Hebrews 10:24-25: "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the day approaching."



DISCIPLINE #2

YOU'VE GOT TO KNOW YOUR "CHAZOWN."

Proverbs 29:18

"Where there is no VISION the people perish..."

The word translated "vision" is the Hebrew word "chazown," which can also be translated as "dream" or "revelation."

Where there is no dream, no revelation, no vision – people just perish. I learned this from Craig Groeschel, senior pastor of Life Church. Pastor Craig wrote a book titled "Chazown," and it rocked my world when I read it. Pastor Craig writes:

"Everyone is going somewhere; few people are going somewhere on purpose."

We all know of examples in our world of people who were living out their Chazown." In other words, they were doing the very thing their Creator gifted them to do. For instance..

- **POLITICS:** Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Ronald Reagan
- **ENTERTAINMENT:** Walt Disney, Steven Spielberg, Don Knotts (Barney Fife)
- **SPORTS:** Michael Jordan, Tom Brady, Michael Phelps
- **RELIGION:** T.D. Jakes, Reinhard Bonkke, Billy Graham

You get the idea. A person living out their "chazown" is the man or woman living according to their true self. It works exactly the same way for you and me. We need to find God's purpose for our lives. According to Pastor Craig, there are three circles that when they intersect, there is a strong chance that this is your "chazown," or God's vision, dream, or revelation for your life.



Our Core Values & Passion

Dream

What brings you pure joy when you do it or see it? What makes you mad as heck? What would you get up early for? What would you stay up late for? What would you gladly do for a living if money were no object? That's a core value; that's a passion.



Our Spiritual Gifts & Natural Abilities

Courage

How has God hard-wired you? What do people say you're good at? What do you find to be easy for you to do? This circle includes our natural abilities – those God-given talents we possess even before we are born again. Then, when we get saved, God puts us into the body of Christ as a living stone, and fits us in according to His ingenious design.

Are you able to take a microphone and speak to large crowds? Sit at a computer and journal thoughts about God? Teach? Serve the underserved? Witness to strangers? Sit with the elderly?

It is extremely important to identify what your spiritual gifts are and discover how they combine with your natural abilities to enhance your leadership.



Our Past Experiences & Future Opportunities

God uses all our past (the good, the bad, and the ugly) to mold us into being exactly the kind of person He needs to fulfil specific purposes He has in mind. He then guides us daily towards opportunities to serve Him in just the way He had planned. Does this amaze you? It certainly amazes me.



DISCIPLINE #3

YOU'VE GOT TO LIVE A BALANCED LIFE

A balanced life is a blessed life.

A blessed life is a balanced life. If we aspire to be a great leader, our lives have to come into balance. We see this graphically portrayed on Animal Planet. We watch as a cheetah stalks its prey. It is laser focused, crouching, waiting, and then...off goes the fastest land mammal on earth. In slow motion we see the cheetah instinctively flicking the back leg of the gazelle in an attempt to knock it off balance. The cheetah knows, as does the gazelle, that if it falls, it dies.

In the same way, our adversary, the devil, prowls like a lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

In our case, the demonic realm seeks to lure, entice, or seduce us to lose our balance and fall into sin.

For example, the devil is happy when we live in the extremes. Perhaps we are so extremely busy we can't join the small men's group at church. We can't seem to find time to meet for coffee with an accountability partner regularly. Consider these three questions to test if we are in balance:

BALANCE QUESTIONS # 1 - AM I FIT?

- Am I spiritually fit? How am I more like Jesus Christ today, than I was a year ago?
- Am I intellectually fit? Do I have a plan to grow as a leader every month?
- Am I relationally fit? Who are my close Christian friends?
- Am I physically fit? Am I taking responsibility for the health of my body temple?

BALANCE QUESTION # 2 - AM I FAITHFUL?

- Am I faithful to my marriage? – Am I the lead-her of my home?
- Am I faithful in parenting my children? – Is my first ministry to my own family or do other things take precedence?
- Am I faithful to my career? – Do I enjoy a good reputation at work or is this a growth area?
- Am I faithful in my finances? – Am I living paycheck to paycheck or am I being a faithful steward of the money I earn including tithes and offerings?

BALANCE QUESTION # 3 - AM I FRUITFUL?

- Am I fruitful in reproducing the character of Christ in me in the life of someone else?
- Am I reproducing myself as a leader?

I opened this discipline with this statement but it bears repeating for emphasis: a balanced life is a blessed life. A blessed life is a balanced life.



DISCIPLINE #4

YOU'VE GOT TO BUILD YOUR TEAM.

We pick up a box of Honey Nut Cheerios from the shelf at Walmart and toss it into the cart. We rarely if ever consider how many people it took to make this minor miracle possible. Manufacturer General Mills brought together teams from product development, manufacturing, quality control, maintenance, administration, shipping & receiving, payroll, management, administration, purchasing, marketing, distribution, and point of sale vendors to allow toddlers around the world the chance to have Cheerios on their high chair tray. In fact, nearly everything in our society requires a team to make their product or service available. You are probably part of such a team or lead one of these teams where you work.”



Here are three kinds of teams we need if we are going to become a great leader:

Team # 1

The Inner Circle

This is your dream team. These are the people you are gathering to you personally, to your mission or brand. In the classic business book, Good to Great, author Jim Collins observed that great leaders of great organizations got the “right people on the bus.” This means that not only must we find the right people to be in our inner circle, but we also must work hard to maintain these relationships. This involves more than communicating effectively, it also involves connecting personally.” We see examples of the inner circle in the Bible:

- Jesus – had Peter, James, John
- King David – his thirty-seven mighty men (led by “The Three”) - see 2 Samuel 23:8-38

I have an inner circle I call, wait for it, the Ironman Inner Circle. These are men I have personally led through a triathlon experience I designed. Currently, there are over twenty men in the Inner Circle that I meet with monthly, do online devotions with regularly, and interact with through technology frequently.



As I purpose to go from good to great as a leader, I make special effort to...

- Eat with them
- Pray with them
- Play sports with them
- Work with them on projects
- Remember their birthday
- Be present with them on their best and hardest days

The bottom line is build you an inner circle of trusted friends and then be intentionally available to them.

Team # 2

The Leadership

Men in your Leadership Core will be led by men in your Inner Circle, not by you directly. I have trained my Inner Circle to teach the Leadership Core the nuts & bolts of running the ministry. Once the Core has been trained in the essentials, the Inner Circle then does for these trained leaders what I do for my Inner Circle.

Team # 3

Legacy Leaders

There are a number of men with whom I have formed such organic, energizing friendships that I do not want ever to lose track of them. I have put them on a digital list called my “Legacy Leaders.” Some of these men once served with me on a team. Some are graduates of one of my 21-Day Challenges.

I schedule a few minutes each week to review my Legacy List to see if I feel a prompting by the Holy Spirit to reach out. If so, I usually use technology such as Marco Polo or email. If possible I also try to facilitate a face-to-face meeting with each man on the list once or twice a year.

I want to leave with you two important words to keep in mind as you build up your team. These two words are probably the most important words you can ever have in your leadership vocabulary. No, these words are not,

listen up

■ watch me

■ do it

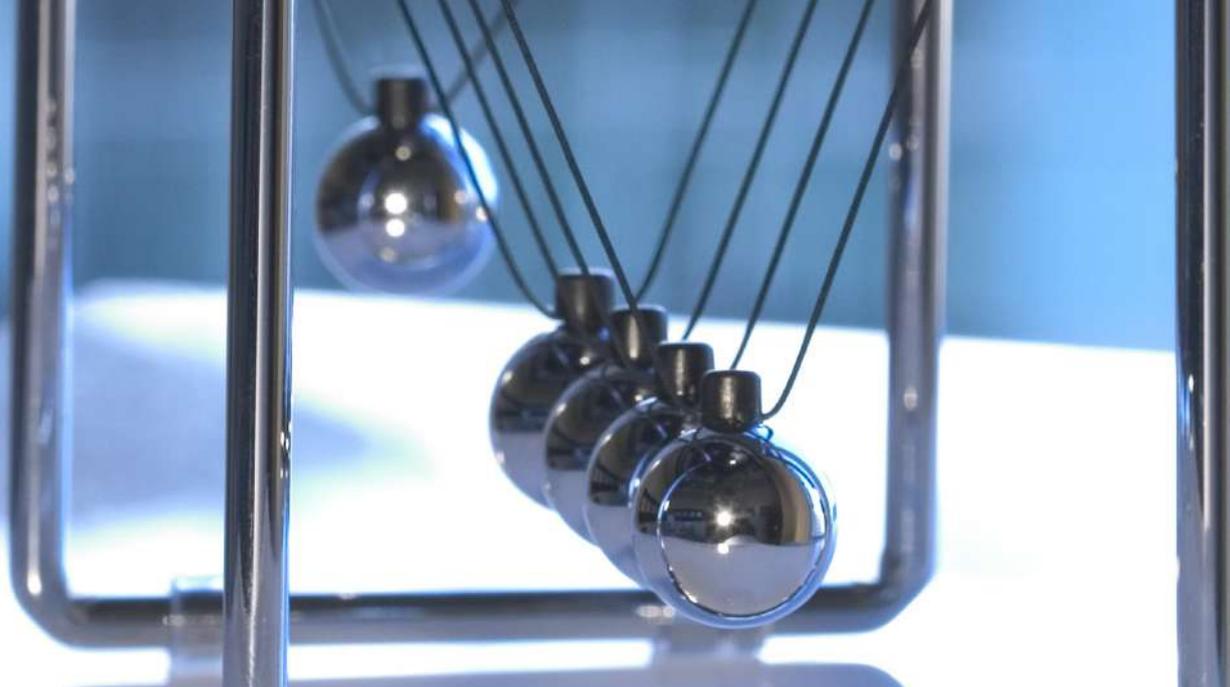
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The two most important words in a great leader's vocabulary are "THANK YOU."

Don't underestimate the power of these two words. Don't worry about using these words too often! You cannot over-encourage your team or affirm it too much. Whenever the situation warrants it, just say, "Thank you!"





DISCIPLINE #5

YOU'VE GOT TO DEVELOP A SYSTEM.



SYSTEM # 1

A Photographic Memory

It is imperative that you don't forget to do what needs to be done. Equally important is to do what you say you are going to do. To do less is to undermine your credibility. Your ability to keep a commitment is fundamental. In a word, this is your integrity.

POWERTOOL

Your smartphone is the key to accessing a digital "photographic memory." Apple or Android, both platforms offer solutions to capture voice recordings. This is my recommended solution because an app can be launched and within a finger's reach to record a task, appointment, or creative thought virtually anytime, anywhere. I have used this system for years, all the way back to the days when dinosaurs still roamed the earth and we used micro-cassette recorders (younger readers may have to Google this).

To make this system work, it is vital that you allocate time into your daily ritual to offload the voice snippets every single day. Most recordings are less than ten seconds long. These are just reminders to add to your computer's task list or calendar. These, of course, now sync across all platforms so your smart devices are always up to date.



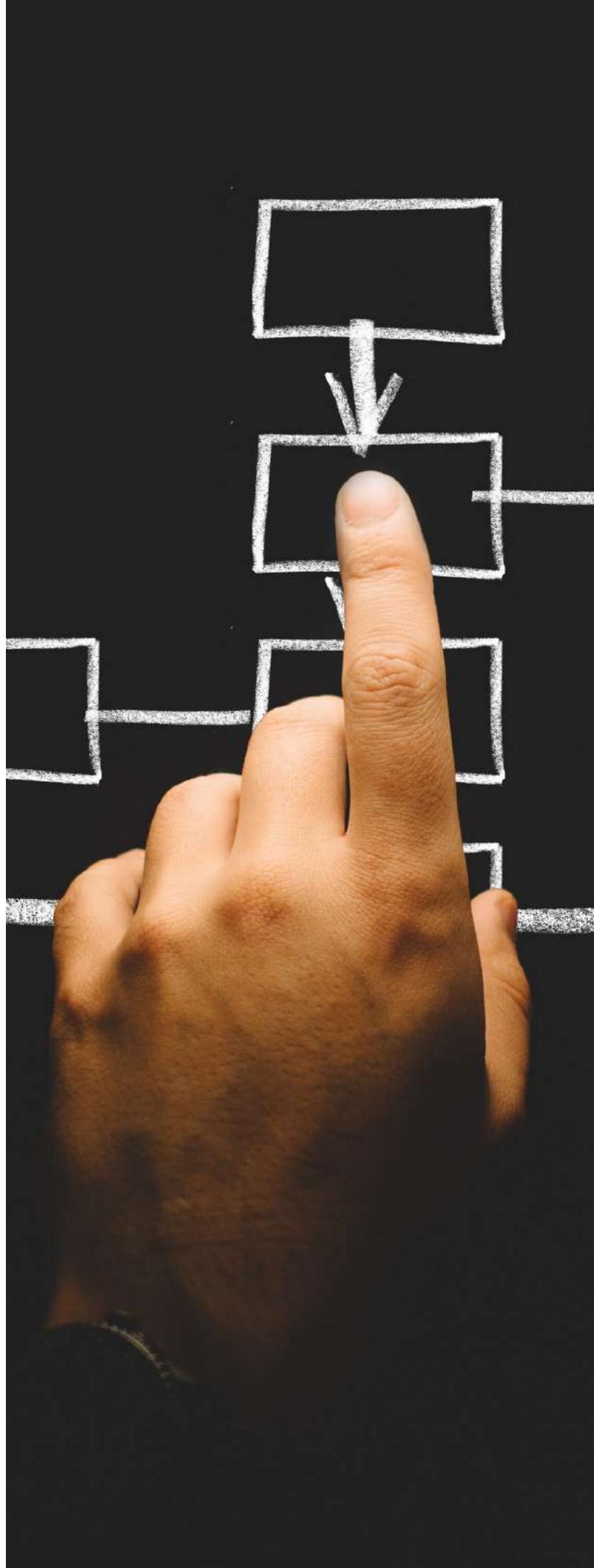
SYSTEM # 2

Instant Information Access

According to leadership guru John C. Maxwell, "The #1 time waster is looking for lost stuff." Once again, technology to the rescue. Although there are many solutions, my go-to is Evernote. I am not an affiliate, but I've got to say that Evernote does provide an easy way to keep up with most everything and get as close to going paperless as possible.

I use its Web Clipper feature often, plus it's built-in Outlook add-in to send desired email content to Evernote with a personalized tag. This makes the retrieval process easy, and nearly instant. I no longer spend hours trying to track stuff down. I even built an index in Evernote to categorize all my hardcopy files in the filing cabinet so I can now search physical files quickly and easily.

It may not be THE solution but it is A solution for the quest for instant information access. Not all information, but at least enough to win you back some time.





SYSTEM # 3

Get A Grip On Your Hectic Schedule

The question is never: “will my calendar be full?” The question should always be: “who or what will fill my calendar?” Here’s some quick hitters that I factor into my own personal time management philosophy. Managing time and energy is such a big deal for 21 st century men that I dedicated an entire eBook on this subject that can be found in the free eBook section of My Virtual Mentor. The eBook is called “Get a Grip on Your Hectic Schedule: Ten Proven Steps to Create Margin For What Matters Most.” I will share three of the ten steps below in this discipline to give you a head start.



Time Management Step #1

Pray Things Through

This may seem obvious, especially for the man reading this who is a Christian, but don’t miss this. Personally, I’m trying to develop the discipline to make prayer my first response instead of my last resort. Joshua made a critical error in judgment when he did not “inquire of the Lord” when the local Gibeonites made a peace treaty with him against God’s will (Joshua 9:14). The temptation for us as men is to rush into a decision without consulting with God first, sometimes presumptuously. The point here is we could save loads of time (and grief with our wives) if we invited the Holy Spirit to help us in our decision-making process.



Time Management Step #2

Do the Right Things.

There's simply no time to waste. We've all found ourselves caught up in a dead-end project. We bit off more than we could chew. Perhaps you committed to doing something or being somewhere when saying "no" would have been wiser. Getting things done is not the way to productivity, getting the right things done is. We will be rewarded on many levels for being in the right place at the right time with the right people doing the right things.

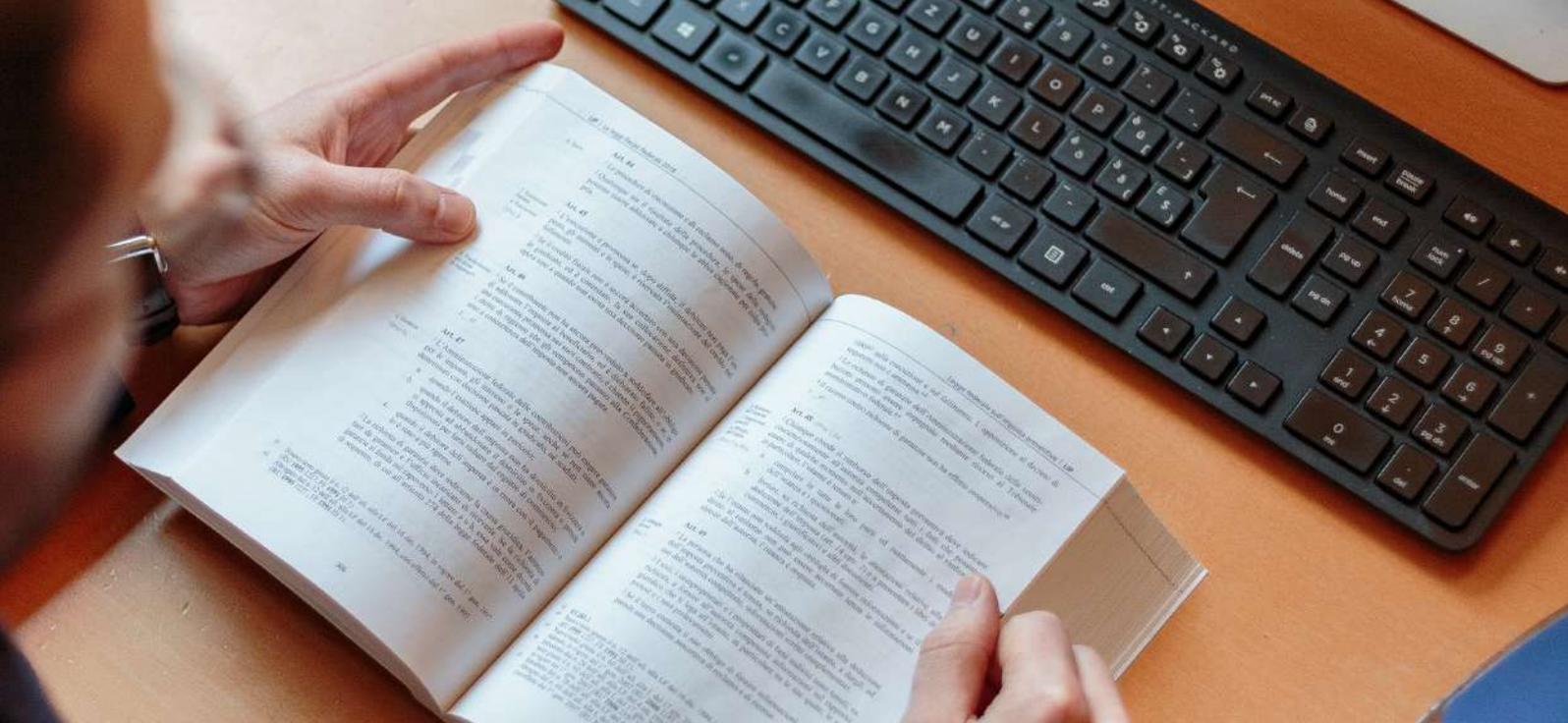


Time Management Step #3

Do Things Right

How many times have you had to re-do a project because you didn't do it right the first time? I've been there more times than I care to admit. We all have. But there's hope! As we pray about things, choose the best things over the good things we can be involved in, and then take the time to create a simple plan, if we'll work the plan, the plan will work. We will increasingly find ourselves doing things right, and managing our time more efficiently.





DISCIPLINE #6

YOU'VE GOT TO GO FROM GOOD TO GREAT

QUESTION

How do you build the team/ministry/ organization?

ANSWER

You build its leader. I've heard it said, "Great leaders lead themselves effectively before they can effectively lead someone else."



Good to GREAT #1

Develop Yourself

Here are three self-development tools I use to improve my leadership:

Leadership mentoring - I regularly meet with high level leaders who I admire and ask questions

Leadership podcasts - I subscribe to monthly leadership podcasts from proven experts like Craig Groeschel, Andy Stanley, & Michael Hyatt

Leadership books - Read everything you can get your hands on by Dr. John C. Maxwell



Good to GREAT #2

Recruit Others to Develop You as a Leader

I am a firm believer in having multiple mentors in your life at any given time. Be strategic. Note that these mentors can be people who you never actually meet or spend time with. Some may even be deceased but their leadership influence remains preserved through the content. Below are a few examples of mentors that are currently in my life:

- Ron Kairdolf – My senior pastor at Christian Life Church. I have enjoyed years of being on his ministry team building discipleship experiences.
- Brian Hardin – Founder of the Daily Audio Bible – I'm in community with tens of thousands of other people tracking along with the One-Year Bible podcasts
- Allen Parr – Allen is my mentor responsible for helping me build My Virtual Mentor platform from the ground up
- Trey Simon – Trey is an amazing web developer who that has helped my creative content come alive visually
- Craig Groeschel – Founder of Lifechuch.tv – I try to listen to every sermon this man preaches – he is innovative, creative, inspiring.



Faith giants like Billy Graham, Dr. Chuck Mislter, C.S. Lewis, and A.W. Tozer are just a few more names that come to mind. Their legacy lives on through their content delivered on YouTube and Amazon. Don't miss out on dozens of heroes of the faith who left us brilliant insight to glean from.



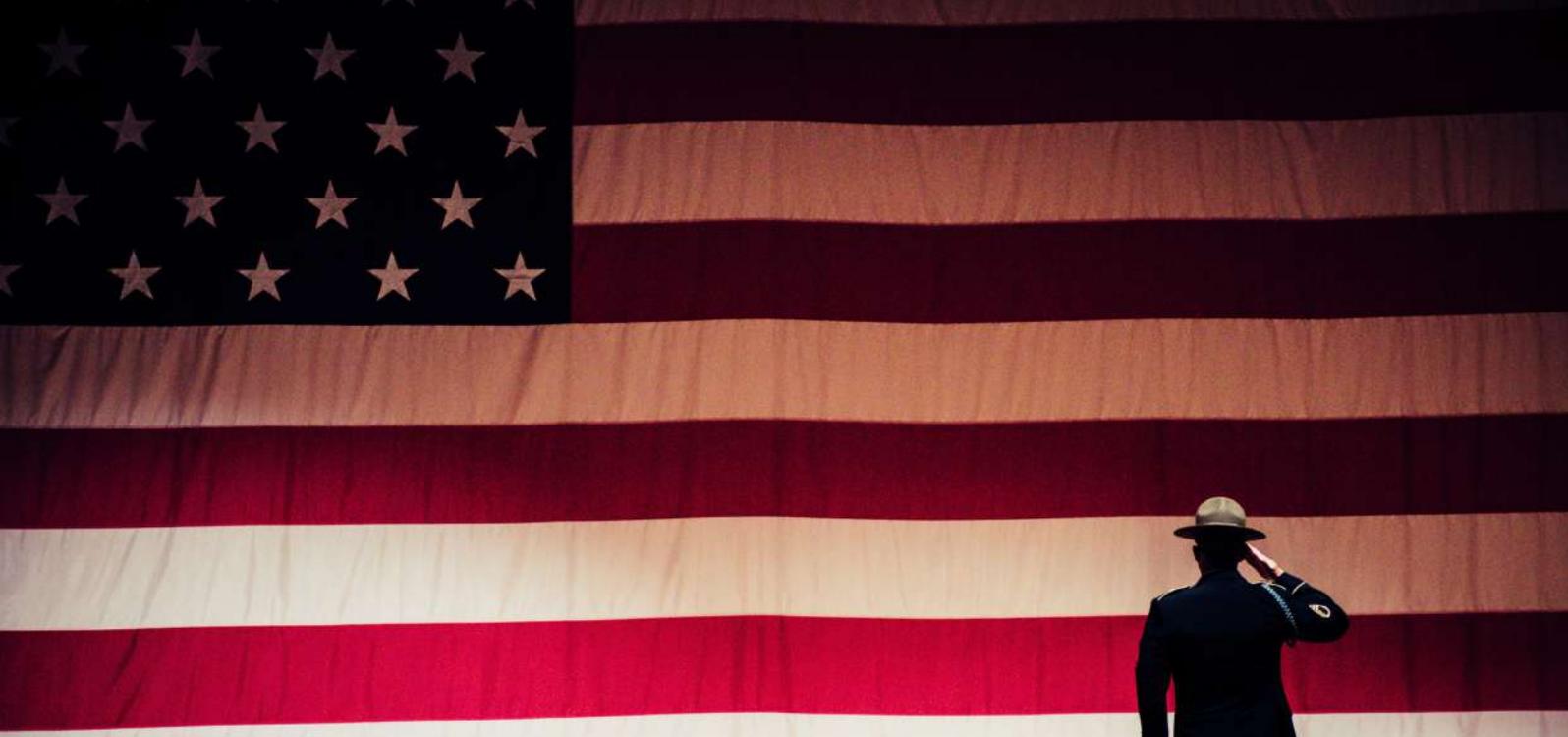
Good to GREAT #3

Develop Others

Every great leader needs to consider these three types of men in their lives:

- A Paul - a mentor
- A Barnabas - an encourager
- A Timothy - a disciple

Let us aspire to be rivers and not reservoirs. We have freely received; may we freely give.



DISCIPLINE # 7

LEAD AT THE PACE OF GRACE

Inch by inch it's a cinch -yard by yard it's hard.

"But Jacob said to [Esau], 'My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die. 14 So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the flocks and herds before me and the pace of the childre...'" - Genesis 33:13-14

It is imperative for leaders to be aware of the condition of those they are leading. Team members have life issues, situations, illness, and other variables that add to their stress level. In some ways, leadership is like stretching a rubber band. Stretching it makes it lengthen, pliable, and useful. Stretching it too far will cause it to snap. It's not a big leap to see the parallels in our own lives and leadership.

We should desire to lead people, not drive them. Our leadership should exemplify balance, wisdom, and a model of successful life management. That is, if we want to be a leader worth following.



Here's three grace gifts that that may help you to keep on pace.



GRACE GIFT # 1 – REST

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:28-29).

Jesus offers rest, with the added benefit of a light yoke and easy burden. May we follow His good example and not make being on our team a heavy burden.



GRACE GIFT # 2 – RELAX

"When you have done all then stand." (Ephesians 6:13). Leave the results in God's hands.



GRACE GIFT # 3 – LAUGH

Proverbs 17:22 says - "A merry heart does good like a medicine."

My friend, we've got to learn to laugh at ourselves, laugh with others, and find joy in the journey.

REVIEW

Here are the seven disciplines of every great leader.

1. You've got to dig your well.
2. You've got to find your "Chazown."
3. You've got to live a balanced life.
4. You've got to build your team.
5. You've got to develop a system.
6. You've got to go from good to great.
7. You've got to lead at the pace of grace.

THE CHALLENGE

I hope this abbreviated eBook has added value to you in some meaningful way. I offered seven disciplines, each featuring three suggestions. Here's what the formula looks like:

7 x 3 = 21

There is something special about the number 21! Consider exploring six levels of 21-Day Challenges in My Journey, a map to your best spiritual growth year ever. Find it at myvirtualmentor.org.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Robertson is the founder of My Virtual Mentor, an online platform leading man to go further faster in their faith. David has over thirty years of Christian ministry experience and is a triathlete. He and his wife Monica live in Middle Tennessee, and together they have one adult daughter, Abigail Grace. To explore a map to your best spiritual growth year ever, visit www.myvirtualmentor.org.