

TRANSITIONS: Living in the Almost... but not Yet!

Navigating Life's Defining Moments

self-leadership

[quietness]

“Your life is shaped by the end you live for... you are made in the image of what you desire, and who you are living for... no man can serve two masters. Life is either all spiritual or not spiritual at all.” (Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*, p. 49).

Often the poorest man in the community is the one who is at everybody else's disposal. He or she is used by all, but never takes time for himself (or herself), to be ministered to by God, and therefore they are little used by God. (Merton, p.49)

[self leadership]

“Self-leadership” can be defined as the capacity and commitment to take full responsibility for one's own responses to life situations and corresponding change and growth. and to create a life that is personally meaningful and fruitful. It is the antithesis of shifting responsibility to others or circumstances.

Christ-followers must take responsibility for his or her own development. Parents, the culture, ethnicity, income, gender, denomination, all impact your development, but are not your real obstacles or trials. In the end, it comes down to each of follower owning the need for intentionalizing personal development and working beyond the obstacles.

David understood the importance of self-leadership. In 1 Samuel 30. David, the

future king of Israel, is a young emerging leader at the time. On one terrible day, David and his men discover that soldiers have attacked and destroyed their campsite, dragged off the women and children, and burned all their belongings.

Tired, worried and angry at God, a faction of his men spreads word that they've had it with David's leadership. They decide to stone David to death. In this critical moment David realizes a foundational truth: he has to lead himself before he can lead anybody else. Unless he is squared away internally he has nothing to offer his team. So "David strengthened himself in the Lord his God" (1 Samuel 30:6).

It is by no means easy to exercise self-leadership. It is easy to become sidelined in blame, victimhood and distraction. For many, self-leadership runs against our natural tendency and feelings. Furthermore, life's circumstances are difficult to change—whether a career, a marriage, financial difficulties, cynical colleagues, a tyrannical boss.

But in the end, when we fail to exercise self-leadership, we give away power to others and/or circumstances. The price we pay when we fail to exercise self-leadership is huge. But how can we increase our practice of self-leadership? How can we cultivate self-leadership as a new habit? Here are four suggestions.

First, accept at a deep level that you are responsible for your past and present responses to what life has brought your way. Don't deny the past or present and their impact on you. Accept that you had a role in adopting whatever negative beliefs, attitudes, and self-concepts that may have become imbedded in your life as a result of your past and present responses to life's hardships.

Give up the very understandable and natural desire to blame others for your difficulties or negative emotions. Choose to accept that your outlook and emotional responses to life's challenges were/are your own choice.

Second, start monitoring your self-talk and assumptions in specific situations. Watch to see when you say things to yourself (or others) like, "Well, if only they would..." or, "There's nothing you can do when..." or, "You make me so..." These types of statements take away self-leadership.

Third, when faced with a difficult moment as you seek to develop new behaviors, consciously ask yourself, "What would it mean to exercise self-leadership right now?" By asking the question you create the chance for you to be proactive rather than reactive. If you have the time, journal your situations and the answers you chose.

Fourth, deepen your own self-awareness. The more you know and accept your strengths, weaknesses, needs and values, you can become aware of your blind spots. The more you can make choices from a growing self-awareness, the better you will be able to have your needs met, manage your stress, and compensate for your weaknesses.

Self-leadership isn't easy. It takes regular practice. I have actually been able to make advancements not possible in earlier in my life. Ones I never would have thought possible. I am more and more convinced that self-leadership is critical for the days ahead.

Most of us are not drawn to running marathons. If we ever did, we would need lines and arrows marked on the pavement, signs are in place, and others who can help keep us on course. A 26-mile endurance race needs a lot of resources and encouragement along the way if we are to finish. The role of coaches and coaching by others is a valuable asset to deepen the breakthrough from a transition, into behavior. When

available, coaches are a crucial in cementing new behavior.

[**breakthrough coaching**]

The hunger for coaching today, in all types of life endeavors, is indicative that the pace of change is pushing many people beyond their ability navigate the corresponding transition. The need and desire for coaching is indicative we are not processing the change through a focus on transitions. Coaching helps to fill-in the blanks.

“The beauty of coaching lies in its depth and impact. A skillful coach rarely provides or prescribes the solutions,” says John Whitmore in his core work, *“Performance Coaching.”* (p. 3). Good coaching helps a Christ-follower move God-orchestrated breakthroughs into behavior.

The need for others to travel alongside is not new. Jethro’s approach of Moses in Exodus 20 was because he could translate the his new role, into a new behavior that could make a lasting impact. The long lines of frustrated and impatient Israelites waited in line all day, only to find out that there was not time for answer to questions, and for needs to be met. As the fuses began to explode all around him, Moses’ Father-in-law stepped in. “What are you doing? said Jethro. “Can’t you see how long these lines are? You don’t see the obvious. What you are doing is going to both kill you, and frustrate all those you are trying to serve.” (my paraphrase of Exodus 20).

Through a transition and breakthrough realization, Moses accepted the mantle of leadership. Living out God’s call, head down. Moses was buried in the details. He was lost. This was no easy task. His personal doubts and external challenges could potentially jeopardize the earlier breakthrough.

Transition coaching helps to cement new learning. It is one form of a new type of coaching that focuses on life development. Transition coaching provide overall life perspective, much like Jethro. Life development coaching puts insight and perspective into the hands of Christ-followers.

The help that is needed is help with integration. The “drilling down” of important insights and the establishment of a new set of practices. What is ahead is not a sprint, but a marathon. A Christ-follower must learn how to operate in new ways. It takes time. momentum to build that can take an individual into long-term change.

A few pages into any coaching handbook will reveal that they key to any form of coaching is the asking of questions. Questions provide focus, allows for the one being coached to think outside their current framework, and hold the potential for accountability to change.

The following set of questions provide a coaching cycle. They have been adapted from the Coaching Cycle developed by John Whitmore in his seminal coaching book entitled *Coaching for Performance*. The set of questions has been adapted by the author to apply for use by Christ-followers for the development of a 100-day plan that turns the breakthrough of a transition, into new behavior.

Coaching Questions fall into four categories:

The Challenge

- *What type of changes in behavior are you up against?*
- *Where area(s) of your life do these changes most apply to?*

The Commitment

- *Will these new actions be faithful to what God has told you to do?*

- *What obstacles might you meet along the way?*

The Companions

- *Who needs to know?*
- *What support do you need?*
- *How and when will you get this support?*

The Courage

One last look at the obstacles and the courage it will require to make the necessary changes you are facing:

- *On a scale of 1-10, what degree of certainty do you have that you will be able to make the changes necessary to meet the next set of challenges?*
- *What prevents you from being at level 10?*

(Adapted from Performance Coaching, Whitmore, pps. 89-91)

One more help:

[idea: **my breathru card**]

A 3x5 file card

Purpose: summarizing insights from a transition, detailing benchmark goals and behaviors that need to be implemented for the future.

Advantage: Convenience. Fits within shirt pocket, purse, large wallet or carry pack in order to be always present and reviewed.

How-to Steps:

1. Review your reflections from the rock pile exercise, the first 100-days, and the coaching questions into concise, declarative summary.
2. Using the four categories of coaching questions summarize your responses.

- **On the front of the card... WHAT!**

Benchmark statements about...

the **challenge** in front of you, and your **commitment**.

Turn the card over:

- **On the back side of the card... HOW!**

Benchmark statements about...

the **companions** you will choose to travel with, and

the **courage** you will call out to God for, in to allocate the strength and time to act and live differently.

final note:

When you are writing our your **statement of courage**... write it as a prayer. Make it a cry out to God for the strength to not return to former places, but to keep you aligned with what He is at work doing in your life.

[other **resources**]

[**leaderbreakthru.com**]

Free resources from Leader breakthru Coaching for your transition.

Guide sheets, additional examples, and links to other sites/resources.

Guide sheets help yourself (self-leadership) or your coach monitor your desired change.

Additional help:

Breakthru Coaching

Breakthru/One