When the Leader Gets Stuck, the Organization Gets Stuck

If you continue to grow as a person and as a leader, what you lead is much more likely to keep pace with you. The opposite is also true. If you stop growing, in time, so will what you lead.

Change, adaptability, and improvement are essential.

Over many years in ministry and thousands of conversations with church leaders, the ***one thing*** that seems to separate those who keep moving forward and those who don't is continued *personal growth*. (That includes spiritual growth.)

Personal growth never gets old. In fact, it keeps you mentally young, increases your energy and has a dramatic impact on your whole life.

Your ministry success, impact in people's, lives and leadership legacy is not dependent on how smart you are, luck, the current size of your church, whether you've written a book, personality, or who you know.

Next to the power and presence of God in your life, **personal growth** is the key to deeper and continued impact in other's lives and a deep and meaningful leadership legacy. And that's up to you.

Be careful not to confuse busyness with growth. You can be working hard and running fast, but that doesn't mean you are learning, changing and growing. It sometimes indicates the opposite.

Don't connect the size of your church with the rate of your growth. You can be in a smaller church and growing personally like crazy, or just doing the same things repeatedly. The same is true if you lead in a larger church. You can be so busy you barely have time to think. Or you may be growing, changing, and continuing to adapt.

If you think you're stuck, you don't have to stay there. Whatever your circumstance, if you feel a little stale, in a rut or just plain stuck, there is a way out. And that path is always connected to personal growth.

3 guidelines for personal growth:

1) Your motivation matters.

Discipline is important, but by itself, it's not enough. Discipline without fruit will suck the life out of you in time. The question is… what drives you?

Why do you do what you do?

Grow your church? Gain Spiritual Influence? Drive Change? Buy a brand new Lamborghini Veneno? *(just kidding)*

I don't know what motivates you, but my hunch is that it has something to do with making a difference in people's lives on a spiritual level – because of Jesus. Therefore, personal growth for the sake of personal growth can become stale.

That would be like going to college indefinitely, which would eventually become a hollow experience. At some point, a deeper drive that results in action is needed to keep you going.

The practical point here is to align your goals and dreams with your *motivation*. That means your goal *isn't* personal growth; it's making a more profound impact in the lives of more people. And the value you add to people can be as specific as you desire. Pick your lane.

2) Your method needs to fit your wiring.

For decades I've listened to people I respect and admire talk about the value of journaling, and how important it is for their personal growth. But it just doesn't work for me.

It's not about writing; I write thousands of words every month. Candidly, I think it's because I write so much, and I'm tempted to turn my journal into something to be published. Writing does help me figure out what I think, but the model of classic journaling doesn't fit me.

Discover what works for you.

Some leaders love podcasts. Some love talking with a mentor, and others need the focus of their undivided thoughts. It also changes according to your age and stage, so continue to experiment and try new things.

For me, in this season, **I focus my growth avenues in three areas:**

Books. I love and appreciate good books that contain deep wisdom and practical truth. *I'm a thought junkie. Wisdom inspires me.* I can stand up from reading one sentence or one chapter and feel like Rocky Balboa running up the 72 steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. (If you're a young leader, google it.)

Young Leaders. I love hanging out with young leaders, especially young leaders in their twenties. I learn so much. I want to know what they think, but more importantly, *how they think.* They keep me fresh and on my toes. I want to know what music they listen to, what TV shows they like, and I'm always getting hot tips on where the best tacos are!

I'm intentional in learning how young leaders think about the gospel, church, and leadership, but mostly I just love being with them.

Mentors. I love, and I'm grateful for those who invest in me, whether it's one time over lunch or those who have believed in me and added value to me for years and years. You don't need many mentors; it's more important that you *put to practice* what they tell you!

Please notice something here.

Each one of my paths for personal growth began with the words, “I love.” Each one reflects and connects with my wiring. That’s so important if you want to keep growing. **Figure out what works for you.**

3) Measurement helps you make progress.

How you measure your growth helps you determine if you are making progress. For example, if I measure my growth by how many books I read or the number of conversations I have with young leaders, I’m not going to get an accurate sense of how I’m growing. I won’t really know if I’m making progress.

It’s not the books and conversations; it’s what I do with them. How I apply new realities, wisdom and practical ideas get me closer to true measurement. But growth can’t be measured without a connection to change. If I’m not changing, I’m not growing. The same is true for you.

Ultimately, for me, and I’ll take a risk and say for you too, the end-game-legacy kind of measurement is how many lives you’ve touched for their good. Don’t make the number a competition or treat it like a scoreboard; it’s all about stewardship. God gave you gifts, and you want to make a difference.

If you change just one life, but that life is the next Billy Graham, I’d say you are making significant progress in God’s plan.

What about your kids? How many do you have? 1, 2, 5? Start there.

It’s not a number, but as leaders, we do want to reach people, as far as our gifts and opportunities will allow. Ask God to clarify your motivation, grant wisdom and open doors of opportunity.

The growth process requires that you keep praying and all the while keep investing in others. Don’t wait till you’ve arrived… I’ll let you in on a little secret. You will never “arrive,” so make a difference now.

> Read more from Dan.