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Values

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## **Introduction**

Vision and mission statements are fundamental tools to guide professional and personal outcomes. Peterkin proposes that “a personal vision/mission statement is the framework for creating a powerful life” (2003, para. 2). She goes on to offer three questions that individuals need to ask in order to create a mission statement, “1. What is my life about (Purpose)? 2. What do I stand for (Values)? 3. What actions do I take to manifest my Purpose and my Values” (Peterkin, 2003, para. 7). Individuals can trace a route to align their beliefs with an appropriate response to their lifestyle by answering these questions.

To know what to focus on in life, individuals must understand their purpose and values. Delineating these core values is much like creating boundaries; as Cloud explains, a boundary “is a structure that determines what will exist and what will not” (2013, p. xv). When individuals create boundaries for their lives in the form of core values, they create preconceived decisions. Anything outside those boundaries exists in a zero-flight zone. Thus, individuals need to be selective when creating such guidelines because “making everything a priority means nothing is a priority” (Nieuwhof, 2021, p. 28). Core values determine what individuals consider priorities and what they will not prioritize.

## **Personal Purpose and Core Values**

One year ago, during the summer of 2021, I decided to embark on an examination to delineate personal core values. After much thought and prayer, the answer to the purpose question was *to maximize every opportunity to develop people around me to impact their communities for Christ*. This purpose stem from determining eight core values: (1) a personal relationship with God, (2) health of my marriage, (3) family relationships, (4) the belief that people have God-given value, (5) the Church and its mission, (6) ministerial occupation, (7)

excellence in any endeavor, and lastly, (8) a focus on time-management. After much consideration, these are the eight priorities that will consume all “time, energy and talent” (Christensen, 2010, para.18).

### **A Personal Relationship with God**

A personal relationship with God begins by finding delight in him and his presence. Therefore, Christian leaders must prioritize, above all else, their relationship with God. As Wood explains in *Core Values*, “we need to make every decision in life with the next life in view” (2007, p. 28). Therefore, Christian leaders must prioritize this relationship because it keeps eternity in perspective, recognizing that the work the leader performs for God is not the only thing God wants from him. Scazzero points out that an emotionally unhealthy leader “operates in a continuous state of emotional and spiritual deficit, lacking emotional maturity and a being with God sufficient to sustain their doing for God” (2015, p. 25). Everything stems from this source; that is why God is core value number one. Sadly, it is not uncommon for people in ministry to lose sight of this fact.

Although God wants his people to work for him, that is not his primary focus for them. It is easier to work for God than be with God because “doing” is more straightforward. In addition, being with God requires time and patience, something driven leaders do not often want to relinquish control and surrender completely. For example, it seems even more complicated to have the patience to sit down to listen to him during dry spiritual seasons. In those moments when life is rougher and too many variables cloud our thinking. However, being with God brings lasting change to every area of life. Therefore, if I want to stay true to my purpose to maximize every opportunity to develop people around me to impact their communities for Christ, first, I need to be in Christ.

### **A Healthy Marriage**

The second value pertains to maintaining a healthy marriage. This essay aims to establish that leaders lead from every facet of their life. Nieuwhof states that “driven people often excuse having terrible personal lives because they’re winning at work” (2021, p. 33). However, specifically in spiritual organizations such as a church, marriage becomes a megaphone, a testimony to the leader’s ability to lead. Their life at home and work must coincide. Scazzero states that “if (leaders) want to lead out of (their) marriage, then (they) must make marriage - not leadership- (their) first ambition, (their) first passion, and (their) loudest gospel message” (2015, p. 92). The leader’s marriage is a testament to their spiritual maturity. In a way, his relationship with his wife speaks to his relationship with Christ. The closer the leader is to his spouse, the closer to Christ. To maximize every opportunity to develop people around me to impact their communities for Christ, I need to value my wife and love her the way Christ loves the Church.

### **Family Relationships**

There are around nine hundred thirty-six weekends from when a child is born until they turn eighteen and move away to college. Of course, any healthy person loves their family. However, often the reality is sad, and that desire is not always reflected as a priority on their schedule (Stanley, 2011, p. 44). As Christensen points out, “People who are driven to excel have this unconscious propensity to underinvest in their families and overinvest in their careers - even though intimate and loving relationships with their families are the most powerful and enduring source of happiness” (2010, para. 23). I do not want to take for granted my greatest ministry opportunity which are my wife and children. Therefore, my daughters are the first people I need to maximize every opportunity to develop for Christ; they are the first ripple I make in my community. I need to show them the love of Christ.

### **People Have God-Given Value**

As ordinary as this value sounds, not everyone understands this principle firsthand. As abhorrent as this sounds, many leaders rushing to arrive at the top of the ladder stop looking at people as humans and start seeing them as objects. However, leadership is not about a position but rather about serving the people who work under the leader (Prziborowski, 2021, para. 1). Furthermore, Christian leaders need to see the value of people because God does: “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NLT, 2004). So to maximize every opportunity to develop people around me to impact their communities for Christ, I need to see them the way God sees them and love them because he does.

### **The Church and Its Mission**

As previously mentioned, “God loved the world” (John 3:16, NLT, 2004), and those who respond to his love become his people; the Church. Furthermore, Ephesians 3:10 states that “God’s purpose in all this was to use the Church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all...” (NLT, 2004). Thus, I value the mission of the Church to display God’s love and wisdom to others, and I will work to develop people to impact their communities for Christ so those communities can experience the love and wisdom of God.

### **Ministerial Occupation**

Christian ministry leaders must value the work they accomplish for God. Most ministers look at their calling as stewardship. Part of the stewardship that needs to happen is personal, as ministers need not forget why they do what they do and for who. Furthermore, to find happiness in any work, people need to enjoy the work so much that, as Maxwell says, they would “gladly do it for nothing” (2018, p. 38). Ministers must do ministry to the extent that it helps them build

the Church and support its mission, but not to the extent of neglect to their families. As Stanley points out, “it’s sad when men and women are forced out of the organizations they bled for to return home to the families they’ve neglected” (2011, p. 131). Sadly too many ministers give their all in a place where they are replaceable instead of at home where they are indispensable. With this mindset, ministers can then maximize every opportunity to develop people around them to impact their communities for Christ without putting their personal lives at risk of burnout.

### **Excellence in Any Endeavor**

Excellence does not mean getting things right all the time. However, that fact should not stop leaders from doing their best every time they can (Prziborowski, 2021, para. 11) because anything worth doing is worth doing right. Paul encourages Christians to “fix your eyes in what is true” and “think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise (Philippians 4:8, NLT, 2004). As a leader, this core value pervades all the aforementioned core values; its mark on everything must be evident. The value of excellence is inherent in the word maximize used in my stated purpose.

### **A Focus on Time Management**

Lastly, time management is the real test of all the other values; as Stanley suggests, “where you spend your time is an indication of where your loyalties lie” (2011, p. 76). When leaders learn how to manage their time well, they discover how to manage their life well. Furthermore, Christensen notes that knowing how to allocate these resources shapes the leader’s life (2010, para. 19). The expectations of leadership are such that the question is not if leaders are busy or not, but rather what are they allowing to shape the space of their agendas (Maxwell, 2018, p. 25) because “Parkinson’s law is true: work expands so that it fills the time available for

its completion” (Maxwell, 2018, p. 39). Work will always have a pressing matter waiting for someone to resolve it. Therefore, leaders need to understand when to switch from their work mode to the other facets of their personal life.

Perhaps it would serve the leader to understand their time constraints to limit the scope of what they will accomplish. Having the capacity to be successful in one matter does not mean that leaders will be able to succeed in every matter (Nieuwhof, 2021, p. 55). A key aspect is to learn to leverage “the time everybody else wastes” (Kennedy, as cited in Maxwell, 2018, p. 30) to maximize the time we have available to execute at work and in other rubrics of life; specifically, as my purpose states, manage time to maximize every opportunity to develop people around me to impact their communities for Christ.

### **Conclusion**

Though priorities change throughout stages in life, they help leaders guide their existence and determine where they will spend their time, energy, and priorities (Nieuwhof, 2021, p. 17). Furthermore, personal and professional efficacy increases when individuals can leverage these priorities to guide their life over the long run (Maxwell, 2018, p. 43). Therefore, leaders must first start with a future preferred outcome to establish purpose and core values. To activate these objectives, they must look to what needs to happen today. The leader’s mandate is to express their vision and mission and contend for them.

The result of having core values is that individuals can look at events through the lens of their values. Stanley states, “when you eliminate certain options, it’s amazing how resourceful you become” (2011, p. 91). In addition, the more alignment behind the mission, the more focus on one direction will exist, increasing effectiveness, productivity, and efficiency.

### **Restatement of Purpose**

Then, the list of my core values is as follows: (1) a personal relationship with God, (2) health of marriage, (3) family relationships, (4) the belief that people have God-given value, (5) the Church and its mission, (6) ministerial occupation, (7) excellence in any endeavor, and lastly, (8) a focus on time-management. Applying these eight core values as a framework transforms my original purpose statement by adding a structure to support it. Therefore, I need to be in Christ to maximize every opportunity to develop people around me to impact their communities for Christ. I need to prioritize family relationships; first, my wife, to love her the way Christ loves the Church, and then my children, maximizing every opportunity to help them develop their walk for Christ. Moreover, to develop people, I need to see them as God sees them and love them because he does.

Furthermore, value the mission of the Church that has transformed communities for millennia. Therefore, I will maximize every opportunity to develop people around me to impact their communities for Christ without putting my personal life at risk of burnout. Finally, I value looking at these core values through the lens of excellence and time management. The value of excellence is inherent in the word maximize used in my stated purpose. To maximize the time we have available to execute at work and in other rubrics of life, specifically, as my purpose states, manage time to maximize every opportunity to develop people around me to impact their communities for Christ.

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