

10 Ways To Increase Your Ministry Influence

By Nelson Searcy



Transcript

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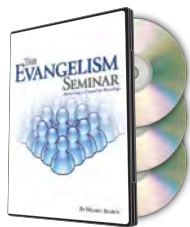
MEET NELSON SEARCY

Nelson Searcy is an experienced church planter, coach and church growth strategist, consulting with churches around the world, including many of the largest and fastest-growing ones. He's also the Founding and Lead Pastor of The Journey Church in New York City. Started in 2002, this groundbreaking church sees the majority of its growth coming from new believers and currently meets in locations in Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island, as well as San Francisco and Boca Raton, FL. Nelson is the recipient of the prestigious 2013 Donald A. McGavran Award for Outstanding Leadership in Great Commission Research. He's the author of over 75 church growth resources and 15 books, including *The Renegade Pastor: Abandoning Average in Your Life and Ministry*. He's trained more than 50,000 church leaders as founder of Church Leader Insights and the Renegade Pastors Network, which is designed to help pastors abandon average and strive for God's best in their personal lives and ministry. For more accelerated growth, pastors also participate in Nelson's Senior Pastor and Advanced Coaching Networks. His continued mission is to help church leaders around the world cooperate with God in creating healthy, thriving churches.

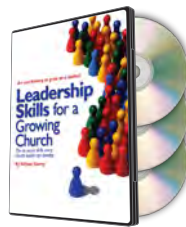
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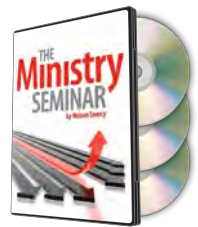
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Nelson Searcy: The word influence, I think, is an interesting word because most of us, when we think about leadership, we think about this classic definition that we've all heard. That leadership is influence, and whoever you first heard that from, that's sort of who you attribute it to. As far as I can tell, this goes back to the early 1900s which excludes some of the modern day folks. It has been making its rounds, that leadership is influence. I think that's a pretty good start of a definition of leadership. It's clearly not comprehensive enough, it's not inclusive enough, but it's not a bad start. Now, I might also argue that effective ministry, that this thing that we have been called to do, is also all about influence. So in a way, if you think about it, ministry is influence. That's really all that we've got. If you've ever tried to do ministry any other way, you will very quickly realize that influence is not only the best way, but it's also probably the only effective way. If you've ever tried to do ministry by intimidation that doesn't work very well, either.

Out of influence comes ministry by invitation, it comes ministry by invitation. I think this thing of influence is really interesting. We make our living, if you will, we fulfill our calling, which is the better way to say it, and I'll finesse that a little bit more later, by influencing people. That's what we try to do. We try to influence people through our preaching, and I do it better some days than others, but we try to influence people through our preaching. We try to influence people through our leadership, and we'll talk in some of our sessions about how leadership is not only taught, but leadership is caught, and it's caught through that level of influence. We influence people through our writing, whether it's formal writing like writing of books or it's a writing of what you might put in your newsletter or what you might put on a pastor's note to your congregation, or even what you might put in an announcement, or what you might put in a letter or a quarterly giving statement. You try to influence people through your writing. Most of us spend a lot of our time trying to influence people through meetings. Over the years we've learned influence techniques for meetings, that you don't wait till you get to the meeting to try and influence people, you have meetings before the meetings to try to influence people so that the actual meeting will go better than if you haven't had those meetings. We're in the influence business, and today I want to talk to you about how to increase your ministry influence.

This talk is based on a foundation, I hope, of Scripture, because I have tried to look at what God says about influence and what God says about our calling, and what God says about is the unique, divine appointment that He's placed on our life but also, trying to look at church history. Most of you know and some of you are wondering if I'm ever going to get around to doing today in church history kind of stuff. Unfortunately, the only thing that I could find about today in church history is that "today in church history" John Wesley got really sick and he died seven days later, and I didn't think that was very encouraging to share with you.

Maybe tomorrow, there's hope for what we may find in church history. I have tried to make it a study of characters in church history, particularly post-Reformation and forward to see how they influence people; Why do we still talk about them? What is their legacy? Then building on that is this incredible network that I've been a part of now for arguably? Jamie, over ten years, that is coaching pastors. I've seen pastors, and I've tried to look at how you exercise influence and how we use influence inside of our churches. I hope to bring all of that to bear, even though from here on out I'll mention very little about church history, I'll mention very little about pastors that I've coached, or very little even about Scriptural influencers. Just kind of know that's the underpinning. Now for me, as I've tried to clarify my calling over the years, particularly the part of my calling that is to equip pastors and coach pastors, I've narrowed my focus into this phrase, "helping you abandon average." That's what I'm all about. I want to help you abandon average, and to do that I've learned that I have to help you avoid falling below average as well as try to help you operate above average.

A couple years ago, not too long ago, actually it hadn't even been that long, I put together a training called The Finishing Well Seminar. The goal of that, and some of you were here, was to help you abandon average by helping you avoid the pitfalls that will trip you up or disqualify you from ministry. I looked at that from the negative perspective of, here are the seven or eight things that are common tripwires for pastors that lead to failure in ministry, that lead to disqualification in ministry, or lead to operating a below average ministry. Well for this I want to flip it and go to the other side. I want to talk about what are those things that increase your influence. What are those things that help you stay on the positive side of average, to help you be above average. My goal here is to help you abandon average by increasing your influence. I want to give you some specific steps that you can take, some of which you know but need to be reminded of, others you may have heard of but you've never implemented, and then some that may be new to you. I want to give you steps that you can take to increase and multiply your influence, perhaps even exponentially. Easy for me to say, it's the speech impediment. Perhaps even exponentially.

Now I believe that any minister, and I hope this applies to you, I believe that any minister that is seeking to abandon average has a desire to increase their influence. I've violated already one of the key rules of introducing a topic, and that is I have no story, I have no excitement, I have no joke, but I hope I have your attention. If we have the right crowd in this room, that you already want to abandon average. You are already interested in operating at a higher level, you already have a desire to be an influencer. You already want to make the biggest difference possible, you want to fulfill your calling to its highest potential. You want to be the best minister that you can be. Do I have the right crowd?

All right, if you do, let's get started. Let me give you, as a foundation to the talk, three truths about influence. There are more than three, but three will lay the foundation as I get into what will be, I think, ten ways to double your influence. Now the problem with announcing how many you have if you get into it and realize you only have eight, or you get into it and realize you have eleven, you've boxed yourself in with ten. I wrote a book that went to print before it was properly edited, and I announced that there were ten ways to do something, and many of you caught it and said, "There's not ten, there's eleven." Oh, how did that happen? Then two chapters later in that same book I said, "Here are four ways to do something," and there were only three. I reserve the right for this to be nine, ten, eleven. I might think of one at the break. We'll see how it goes. I will give you these three as a foundation.

Truth number one about your influence. Number one: you are a steward of your God-given influence. God gives us this influence and we are to be a steward of it. You are a steward of your God-given influence, and that's my longest point, by the way. All the other points are like three words. Once we get past this one, you'll be okay. You are a steward of your God-given influence. There's several things tied up in this truth. First of all, none of us, as ministers, have influence of our own ability. We have skills, we have gifts, we have abilities of course that God can use, but we are on the receiving end of God-given influence. I am grateful that my God-given influence is greater than any influence I might be able to exert just as a creation of God. As a minister of God, I'm given what we might think of as delegated influence. We often use that in theological circles as delegated authority, but really here it's delegated influence. So God, who has all influence, gives us a portion of it to do His Kingdom work in this world, and then we are stewards of that.

Here's the second part of that. Truth number two: if you manage your influence well, God will grow it. If you manage it well, God will grow it. As a steward, we are to be a good manager. All throughout the Scripture, Jesus gives examples of people who managed His delegated influence or authority well, and some who didn't manage it so well. Probably the most famous passage on this is found in Matthew 25, what we commonly call the Parable of the Talents. Arguably, this should be called the Parable of the Steward, because

it's really not about the money, per say, or about whatever it was they buried in the ground or doubled, it's about the person and how they handled it.

One person is given one, one person is given a few, one person is given more. One person does nothing with it, one person doubles it, the other person doubles it. At the end of that, Jesus chides the person who does nothing with what they've been given, and then He praises the person who multiplies it. At the end of that is those famous words in verse 27, I believe it is, of Matthew 25, where Jesus says, "Well done, good and faithful servant." We all want to hear that in our ministry, we all want Jesus to say that about us. I love the fact that He says it to the guy who had little, who started with little, and the guy who had a lot. I'm not the guy who has a lot, I'm the guy who has a little, but I hope I don't bury it under the ground. I'm hoping that I can take what little I've been given, and use it for God, double it in the case of the parable. I, like you, want to hear those words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Then Jesus gives us the principle after that, where He says, "because you have been faithful with the little, you will be given—" what's the word? "More." Because you've been faithful with the little, you will be given more. When you manage your influence well, God will grow it. Sometimes I hear people say, "Well I only have a little influence." Well, it doesn't matter where you start, it matters how you manage. What are you doing with what God has given you? If you're faithful with the little, God will give you more. Sometimes we see examples of people that we consider to be great influencers, and we say, "Of course they have a lot of influence, look, their Dad was in ministry and they're just building on top of their father." Or, "Of course they have great influence, they pastor this megachurch," or whatever it is, or, "Of course they have great influence, they have such an education or they have such degrees," and all of this kind of stuff.

We automatically assume that they started with more. You know what? Maybe they did, I don't choose who has the one talent, the two talents, or the five talents, but I can tell you wherever you start, if you manage it well, it can grow. I didn't get to choose how many talents God has given me, you didn't get to choose how many talents God has given you, but we can choose what we do with it. Both people who use their talents well in the parable heard the phrase, "Well done, good and faithful servant." That's ultimately who I'm responsible to, I'm responsible to God, and what Jesus has given to me, and I'm responsible to be a steward of my God-given influence. I can assure you, if you manage it well, it will grow.

I actually think sometimes I'm like the one talent person. The only thing I'm different than that guy in the Scripture is I didn't bury it in the ground. Now don't get me wrong, I've tried a lot to do that. I've tried to bury things sometimes, in the ground, but I can tell you it will grow. I'll share a few stories as we go along, of that. Number one: you're a steward of your God-given influence. Number two: manage your influence well and God will grow it.

Then number three, just to make this point: influence precedes impact. Influence precedes impact. Influence, by itself, doesn't necessarily mean that there's change, there's transformation, there's impact. It comes before all of that can happen, and I say that because just because your influence grows, you can still be unfocused, you can still be diffused. I'm going to get to that before we wrap up. Influence does come before impact, and then I hear a lot of pastors say, "Well, I really want to double my impact, I really want to make a bigger impact, I want to make a splash, I want to put a dent in Hell." I do, too. What comes before that is influence. Often the way God grows you and changes you, it happens before the impact. People want the impact but they don't want to have all the stuff that happens before. I teach this all the time, that before God grows a church He first grows a pastor. The problem is, there's a gap of time between when God grows a pastor and when God grows a church. In the parable itself, the manager went away for some period of

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time, and then came back. God often grows you over a period of time, and then after that comes the impact. Some pastors, they're right on the edge of making the impact and they stop doing the very thing that would lead through the breakthrough. Influence precedes impact, and I want you to understand how that works.

Now as a side-note, let me just clarify something that is popular in our culture, and maybe if we record this and you're listening to this 20 years from now this will no longer be an issue, but for us right now let me just say influence does not equal celebrity. We live in a time where we talk a lot about celebrity, and I don't have really a personal issue with that. I think sometimes people can use their fame and use their celebrity to do some really great things. There are some people on television that are very well-known religious spokespeople, and they've actually helped my ministry. They've opened up doors so that when I talk to a lost person, they say, "Is your church anything like that person?" Whoever that person is who they like on TV, my answer is, "Yes, we're exactly like that. Why don't you come on over on Sunday?" Then they show up and I don't look like that person, I'm not as good a teacher as that person, but still the Gospel works, and I'm so thankful to that.

I'm not against any of that, and I'm not saying you should avoid or not avoid celebrity. I will say that it is very clear from church history that often the people you've never heard of at the time make the biggest impact. Very few of the people that we look up to now would be considered celebrities in their day. This is I think even more important, they are quote unquote, and I hate doing air-quotes, they are quote unquote celebrities to a very small crowd. I don't think that's bad, to be a celebrity to a very small crowd. I like to joke with young Scott that I'm an international celebrity because I was flying through the Toronto airport one time and one of you spotted me, and so because it was outside of my home, international, and you spotted me. I think we even took a selfie together. I am now an international celebrity.

I embrace that, I embrace being known by you. I hope you embrace being known by us. I'm fine with that, but don't confuse the two. Sometimes people are famous, but they have no influence. Does a name come to mind, right now, to you? Not necessarily in our religious world, but in the secular world? People can have famous TV shows, they can have famous reality shows, but they really have no influence because as soon as they're off the air five months from now no one's going to remember them. Even if we only have a small piece of that recognition that the big celebrities have, whatever it is we do has eternal consequences. Would you rather do a bunch of stuff that doesn't last, or would you rather do a few things that matter for eternity? Did you catch that? I'll do the few things that matter for eternity. Know that influence comes first, God grows you, God expands your influence, there are seeds that are planted and then over time that will bring about impact. Maybe there's some things you can do immediately that will lead to impact, but influence often precedes impact.

Having said that, let's move to our ten influence multipliers. Admittedly the first couple are rather plain, but hopefully they serve us well. Influence multipliers, and I like that phrase because in my opinion these are all things that if you do them, if you embrace them, they will multiply your influence. Multiply them by one, multiply them by two, maybe even five, ten, or one hundred. The first one, the first of our ten influence multipliers is to fulfill your calling. Number one, and I wrote it this way: fulfill my calling. God has given you influence, you are to be a steward of it, and if you are to manage it well and see it grow over time and see your influence lead to impact, the foundation of that is your calling. To talk about calling in this room with us means that it's a twofold calling. The foundation of your influence, of course, is your call to follow Jesus, that's really where it all starts. We're called to follow Jesus, we're Christians, we're adopted into God's family. Then we have an additional calling, which I would call the focus of our influence. That is our call to ministry, that we've been called to fulltime, vocational ministry, and we have both of those in our lives. Any person

who is called to follow Christ has the foundation of influence and if they follow Christ and obediently obey Him, they will have influence as well. Then on top of that we have this extra calling, not because we're better but because we need more, maybe. That is the call to ministry, and what that does is that gives focus to our influence and allows us to apply our influence in a certain way. Your source of influence, if you will, is the calling that God has placed upon your life. That's your God-given influence. Your God-given influence comes from the calling that God has placed on your life. This is why if you feel like you don't have all the resources you need to do all that God has called you to do, you're in good company, because you don't. God's call is what gives you the authority to do it, God's call is what gives you the power to do it. God's call is what makes up the difference between our imperfections and God's plan for our life. I'm grateful for that, God's not dependent on me. I'm dependent on Him.

Your greatest multiplier of influence is faithfulness to your calling. Your greatest multiplier of influence is faithfulness to your calling. This is true if you study through the Scripture. There is no one in Scripture that we look at as an influence multiplier that failed to fulfill their calling. There's stories, there's warnings in Scripture of people who were called but they did not fulfill their calling. We can learn from them. You can learn a lot from failure, by the way. We were talking in our coaching network earlier this week that one of the ways to succeed in ministry is find somebody who's failed, take them to lunch, take all the notes you can, then go do the exact opposite of whatever they did. So if you have no roadmap for what to do, you can learn from a failure, but we will admit that even though we can learn from them, they did not multiply their influence. In Scripture, the people we see as influential are the people who fulfilled and remained faithful to their calling. So it is with church history. Church history is littered with people who were disobedient to their calling, who failed in their calling. The ones that we remember, the ones that were influenced were those who were faithful. Again, faithful doesn't equal famous. Faithful doesn't equal well-known, faithful doesn't equal easy life. Faithful doesn't mean intellectual giant, faithful doesn't mean equipped from birth with the modern day silver spoon in their mouth or whatever. Faithful means God placed a calling on their life and they did it.

As you fulfill your calling, your influence will multiply. Think about your call to ministry for just a moment. I do this so often on coaching calls and coaching networks that if you didn't expect that we were going to think about our calling, you just haven't been around enough. Think about your calling. When did God call you to ministry? What was going on around that time of your call? Some of you in here- by a show of hands, how many of you knew you were called when you were in high school? Just out of curiosity. Look around the room, that's really really interesting. That's like 30% of the room. How many of you were called before you were 30? Let me see your hands. How many of you were called after you were 30? How many of you don't know how old you are?

Okay, all right. Good. For those who may be listening, that was about 60, 70% of the room was called before they were 30, which by the way means we have to help a lot more young people understand this call to ministry, but that's another talk for another day. Then about another 30% said they were called after age 30. Huge trend right now in society, that people are entering ministry as a second career. A lot of you who were nodding your head, that's where you are, and maybe some of the other of you are here as guests or uncertain right now what God might be calling you to do. I think that's worth thinking about, how were we called to ministry? I was thinking about this in relation to influence.

Some of you know my story, I had the good fortune of early on, like at age 13, discovering something I was good at. This was after trying to work at my Dad's business of putting auto glass in cars, and breaking the glass consistently. Very quickly I realized I was not good at auto glass repair. Then I tried mowing lawns

for a while, and actually I didn't think I was that bad at it. It was just really hot to do that. Then at age 13, if you've heard me tell this story, for Christmas I asked my parents for an Atari computer. They did not give me that. They gave me a Commodore computer. Now, an Atari is a game machine. A Commodore is like a programming computer, boring kind of stuff, but I took a liking to it. I actually found that I had quite a knack for it. Within a few months I submitted a computer program and won a prize for that program. I very quickly realized that writing computer programs and getting paid for that was much easier than moving lawns and getting paid for that. I became kind of addicted to this little machine, that in those days you had to hook up to your TV. That's what computers were back then.

Then I grew in that computer business and I had a successful little business. In fact, some of you know I was given some awards for my early entrepreneurial efforts. I went to school on a full scholarship to Engineering, I started early and started that summer. I was offered internships at places today that are still very well-known for computers, like IBM and things like that. I think back on that and I was speaking the other week in Silicon Valley. Just as I woke up that morning to go down and do that event I thought, "I wonder if I would have ended up here, had God not called me to ministry? Is this where I would have kind of, somehow or another, made my way out here?" I think I would have probably had some influence in that world, except God interrupted my life and He placed this calling to ministry on my life. Now some people gave up a lot to go into ministry. I had a lot but I didn't see it as giving up a whole lot to go into ministry. I did back then, and I do today, see the call to ministry as the highest calling that you can have on your life. Somebody jokingly said the other day, "You should run for election." I'm like, "Don't put that curse on me Ricky Bobby." But nonetheless, okay.

Even if you ran for election and you won the highest office in the land, not going to make any jokes, just going to let it sit right there, that would be a demotion, if God has called you to ministry. Because this is the highest calling. It doesn't mean we're better in any way than anybody else. It just means that from God's perspective, in the potential that we have to change things for eternity, there is no higher calling. I've messed up a lot in fulfilling God's call, I've made a lot of missteps, mistakes, things I would do differently if I could go back. I can say that by answering God's call I found myself in the middle of God's will, and somewhere in the middle of that has been my circle of influence.

I would say to you that when you live in your calling, in God's will for your life, that is where your influence will be the greatest. It's right there. That may be a reminder for some of you, and you just needed to hear that. Stay with your calling, fulfill your calling. It's not a call to ease, it's a call to difficulty. It's a call to warfare, spiritual warfare. It is the highest calling that God can place on your life, and if God has called you, I believe He's called you for a lifetime. I believe He's called you to ministry. For some of you, just be reminded of that. You're in good shape, ministry's tough but you're okay. Some of you may have come today, and you may have thought, "this is my last-ditch effort. If this doesn't work out this week then I'm going to go back to doing something. I'm going to go back to Egypt," or in my life, I'm going to go back to Silicon Valley. I don't think they're going to hire me to be the president of Apple so I guess I'll just continue to do what- no, I'm just kidding. I wouldn't take that either, that would be a demotion, to do that. Maybe God brought you here because you've been on the edge about your calling and right now is just a moment that God has for you to renew your calling.

Just one more, maybe you came and you're not really sure. You find yourself in a church job, but you're not sure if it is a calling. Perhaps just even in these couple of moments, right here in this room, God is sort of pointing at you and saying, "Yes, ministry. Yes, this is the calling." If so, welcome to the family. Welcome to those of us who have been called to do ministry. Calling to ministry, fulfilling your calling, it is your greatest

source of influence. That's number one. If you want to multiply your calling, number one: fulfill your calling, or fulfill my calling.

If you want to multiply your influence number two: invest in myself. Invest in yourself. Invest in myself, it's how I wrote it down in my notes. If I want to multiply my influence I have to fulfill my calling, I also have to invest in myself. Unfortunately, when you're called to ministry and you've been given this assignment for ministry, God doesn't immediately give you everything that you need to fulfill that calling. You have to gather it as you go along. You have to equip yourself as you go along, you have to grow as you go along. Now I wish at age 18 when God called me into ministry, that He would have given me all the skills that I would have needed for the rest of my life. But that was not the case. I knew how to program a computer, I didn't know how to execute a Bible text. Two different skills by the way, in case you're wondering.

I had to learn that, I had to grow. Sometimes, I think, I have been equipped for the next task that God has called me. Other times, I've had to learn in the moment, I've had to have real time training. That's the way this works, that God doesn't give you everything you need to fulfill your calling when He calls you, but He will provide it for you along the way if you're willing to ask, if you're willing to seek. If you're willing to knock and gather as you go along. Many of you know I constantly pray this prayer. "Lord, make me into the pastor I need to be to lead my church over this next year, because I'm not that person." The person I am now is not the person I need to be to lead our church this December, a year from now, or next February, a year from now, or next Easter, a year and a half from now. I have to grow. I have to invest in myself.

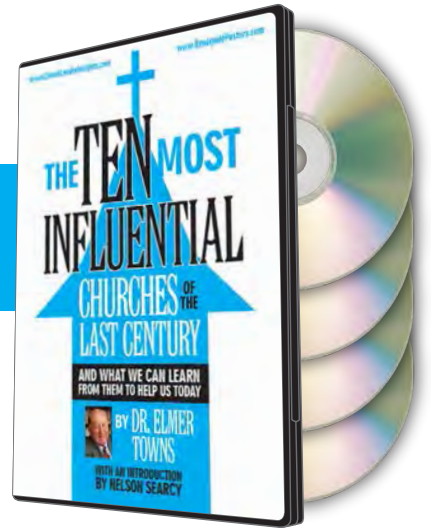
When you invest in yourself, when you invest in your own personal growth, this isn't being selfish. I want you to get past that. Sometimes pastors feel like, "Well if I take time for myself, or if I take time away from my ministry field," like you're doing here this week. Somehow or another, you feel guilty about that. Investing in yourself isn't being selfish, it's being a good steward. Remember, God has called you to steward your influence. God has called you to gain these skills that you need to do, and God's plan to grow you is a strategic process of moving you from where He found you to where He wants you to be so you can fulfill this calling He has on your life.

To say it rather directly, education, if you will, is connected to influence. Proper education, if you will, and I want to finesse that, nuance that, proper education is an influence multiplier. Just to be clear, notice I said proper education, not formal education. I'm not against formal education, I have one, I've got a Master's degree, my doctoral advisor's going to be speaking this afternoon, so I'm not against formal education. Proper education, for this thing we do in ministry, goes well beyond what you might learn in Bible college, or what you might learn in seminary. That may give you a good foundation, but as many of you have heard me say, it's the books you read after seminary that are really going to help you. You've got to invest in yourself, you've got to figure out a path for proper education. Whether that's self-education or whatever that might be, you've got to invest in yourself. Let me give you what I consider the three best investments you can make in yourself. The three best investments you can make in yourself, and if I cover this with enough time left I'll give you what I consider the three worst.

The best investment you can make in yourself number one is books. Books. Books are powerful tools. Books are really amazing in their design. Now as ministers we're called of course to be people of a book, this wonderful marvelous book that is above all others, the Word of God. I don't want to take anything away from Bible study and your time in the Scripture. Assuming we're all in agreement as the Bible as the foundation, I would encourage you to add additional books into your reading list. If you read the Bible in a year, you've read 66 books. People say, "How do you read so much?" Well I read the Bible twice, that's like 132 right there.

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"How many books did you read last year?" 200, it was the Bible twice and then these others. It's not exactly how it works but for a few books you make a big investment. In fact, what I love about books is really how cheap they are for what you get. Books have gotten cheaper in my lifetime, like with electronic books and selling books online, and all of that stuff. When I first went into ministry if you wanted a book, it was \$22.95. Now they have the audacity on Amazon to sell my books for \$9.99.

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I'll tell you my story with books, and another influence multiplier later, but I've got a reading goal for this year, of books I want to read. The problem right now with my goal is yesterday three of you brought me a book, so I really appreciate it. I looked through some of those last night, but now I'm like, "Got more books," so I've got to adjust that, because you brought me some books this week. Maybe you were trying to help me, "Hey, you need to read this." Somebody gave me a book called How to Communicate to a Crowd. I'm like, "Well, not sure... what you're trying to say, here." This is really intimidating, by the way, if you've never done this, at the break just come sit up here and look. It's quite intimidating, because most of my communication is done in my little coaching cave, which is about the size of this room and I've got a picture of Spurgeon on the wall, a little microphone. I don't have to look at you.

Books are important. What's your reading goal? Set a goal, maybe your goal is to read 12 books a year. That's what we read in senior pastor coaching. Maybe it's to read 24 books a year, now you're reading two a month. Maybe it's to read a book a week. Books multiply your influence and they're one of the ways God grows you, in fact, let me just share a little bit of my love of books, this wasn't even in my notes but I'll share it with you. Most of us can remember powerful books that we've read. There was a very very powerful book that I read in 1995, and some of you know later I actually went to work and served as a pastor on this guy's staff. I remember where I was sitting when I read that book. I was at a Baptist conference center on the coast of North Carolina, sitting on the coast of that conference center reading that book. That book just opened my eyes to everything. Powerful kind of insights that I just couldn't imagine. I could remember right after being a pastor of the Journey, I was struggling with a staffing thing and how do you invest in staff? How do you manage staff? How do you grow staff? I went and bought every book I could possibly buy on staff, because that's how I do it. I just go buy everything and read it. I don't believe you have to read a book from start to finish, just get out of the book what you need. If I can get four, five ideas out of a book, then I count that as success. I just read all that, so now when I walk past my library, and I have a pretty big library, I haven't read all the books in my library but I just feel smarter walking past it.

I got like a whole shelf there, just like staffing books. I remember that. I'm still reading staffing books, because I keep changing and finessing. I remember when I was stressing with getting everything done, I just went and bought all the books on time management I could possibly buy. For my time management thing, I read a book one time called The 90 Minute Hour. Don't look for it, it's a terrible book, but it's a great title.

In fact, Scott was joking this week. We were driving up, and he's like, "You had ripped off a book cover and had it posted up by your desk. What's the deal with that?" I'm like, "The only thing I got out of the book was the title." The title was really good!

If you're curious, by the way, the title of that book was called *Your Opinion of Me is None of My Business*. The only thing I got out of the book was the title, ripped it off, I put it up. We'll talk about criticism tomorrow morning. I got this book that I - here's where I'm saying with that, whatever issue you are dealing with right now, chances are really good somebody has written about it. This is available to you for like \$9.99. You can go get it and they're influence multipliers. Who you are five years from now in many ways is dependent on the books that you read. I think it's books. Not blog posts, not tweets, not 140 characters, not comments on the Facebook, books, because we had this conversation in advanced coaching just this week. Anybody can post anything out on the Internet. I love it. I'm all for it, post whatever you want, but don't believe it. Books are still edited, books are still filtered. There's generally like a group of people that say, "This is good, and this is not so good." I was going to use two initials, but I'm trying to do the tongue-pierced 30 day cursing thing so I don't even want to do initials. Nobody calls BS on a blog, nobody calls that on social media, but generally speaking, for it to make it into a book form, somebody has said, "This is filtered," and then also the thought process. It amazes me that some very smart people in our world, they say stupid stuff on their blog. There's no filter. With a book you've got to at least think about it and it takes a little while to be published so you can recant before it ever makes it in print.

Books are really really powerful. This is not just me, by the way. Steve Reynolds sent me something the other day where a lot of business people and all that, they're rebelling against some of that more quick-read kind of stuff. Some of the more online kind of tools for reading, and they're moving back to physical books. I like that. Books are an investment you make in yourself.

Second investment that you make in yourself, and don't feel selfish doing it, because it's about stewardship and it's about being strategic, is conferences. Going to a place where you can be on the balcony as a teaching coaching and get away from your ministry setting, and receive either from the speakers at the conference, from the program of the conference, or from the people that you meet at the conference, insight and input into your ministry. When you come to a conference for a few hours that you invest in that conference, you might walk away with years on insight. What might have taken you years to gather or years to learn or even years to filter through all the books, you come to a conference and somebody does that for you.

Somebody speaks into your life. Then as much as things are moving online, and I like it, I mean I'm able to do coaching and sit in my coaching cave and coach pastors around the world. It's a phenomenal world that we live in. We're here in a pretty good-sized room, but if I wanted to go online we could multiply this, five, ten, fifteen times, through the Internet. There's something about still being in the room, there's something about still coming live, there's something about what that does for you. When I'm coaching sometimes in my little coaching cave with my picture of Spurgeon and my front cover of the book that says *Your Opinion is None of My Business*, I've got my little microphone on, I sometimes drift off and I think, "I wonder what is going on on the other end of this microphone." I think most of you are pretty engaged and you're taking notes and you've got your blueprint and all of that, but I always have this image of you know, I'm squeezed up into some little corner of somebody's laptop, and they've got their e-mail open. They've got their social media open, they're playing Candy Crush Saga, something like that.

Then the dogs coming in and out, with it the phone's ringing, their cellphone's buzzing and I'm thinking,

"Ah!" It ain't the same as coming here. It ain't the same as being in an environment. It ain't the same as pulling away, which is what Jesus did. Pulled away, I'm sure if he could have gone to a conference like this, he would have. We'd let Him lead if He shows up. There's something about conferences and a few hours, and they can be long like this one, which is three days, or they can be short, just a few hours. You can learn a lot. You learn when you go to a conference, not only from the speakers that are there, but also from one another, and I'll hope that you take advantage of that this weekend. Learn from one another, learn from each other. Also, listen to God while you're here, and I will hear this next week after this conference. I came last week to the Renegade Pastors conference, dealing with this issue, and it is an issue that no speaker will address, it is an issue that I won't even touch. It's not even something we even thought about at this conference. God will speak to you about it because you're here.

How in the world can that be? It's because God needed to get your attention. God needed to get you to turn off your cellphone for a few minutes, close the Candy Crush jelly thing, and focus for just a few minutes at a conference. Another tool that you can use to invest in yourself is audios. So books, conference, audios. Not necessarily in that order, but audios are pretty interesting, I have a general belief that pastors are generally auditory learners. People learn in one of three ways, they learn visually, they learn auditorily, and they learn kinesthetically. We all learn in all three of those, but in a lot of times just because we are preachers and we've been called to preach, we learn with audio. That's why I don't feel a lot of desire or need to razzle-dazzle you with video screens which I think are hidden over here behind that thing, or PowerPoint or things like that. Also what I like about audio is that it's so portable. It's hard to watch a DVD when you're out walking around the neighborhood. I've seen people try it, they're out doing it. I was out teaching in New York City the other day and I've always sort of felt sorry for dogs in New York, since cellphones have been invented. When I first moved to New York City in 2001, if someone was out walking their dog, they didn't have a cellphone with them. They were like talking to the dog, walking the dog, out playing with the dog. Now like you fast forward, 15 years later, nobody pays attention to their dog anymore. They're on their cellphone. I see them out there, like 7:00, 6:30 in the morning. I'm thinking, "Who's up? Who are you talking to?" I realize they're talking to other people walking their dog, that's what they're doing.

"How's your dog doing?" "Oh, he's doing great! Did you bring an extra bag?" "Yeah I have an extra bag." They have to be talking to each other! Then I'm like, these poor neglected dogs. Nobody just pays attention to their dog, they've got to talk on their phone. Where was I going with that? I also see people are trying to watch the Walking Dead while they're walking their dog. Then they're like the walking dead walking their dog while watching the Walking Dead! It's so bad, they've had to put little signs at the crosswalk that says, "Look up!"

This is true! They're having to put these signs because people are just walking into the street. Videos are just not all that portable, and with all due respect to your dog, when you're walking your dog I think it is okay to listen to something. When you're out walking through the neighborhood, or you're out running around the block like I'm trying to do every morning to try to keep my health in good shape, you can listen to something. When you're driving to a hospital visit, you can be listening to something good. As much as I love country music, and you know I do, and I'll try to work it into some talks a little bit later. A little bit of country music, a lot of good audio. Listen to good audio driving to the hospital, listen to classic country coming back. Listen to it in reverse, your dog comes back. Anyway, that's a whole other joke, as some of you know. Here's the thing, a few idle minutes can be powerful learning time for you. Most of you know I'm a fanatic about this. You don't have to be as fanatical as I am. My long-suffering assistants, they speed up the audio for me. I've now found they don't have to do that, they just download it. I've got this app on my phone that does it, it just speeds it up. When I listen to a sermon, I listen to it at 135%. If it's like RC Sprawl it's at 200%. You've got

to do it a little faster on some people than others.

I listen to a 60 minute audio, I listen to it in 45 minutes. You can find it's pretty cool. I'm kind of into this stuff, audio. These are investments that you make, so you read these books, you go to the conferences, you get audios. Books you can read all the time, audios you can listen to all the time, conferences you can make part of your overall yearly calendar. This is proper education, and nothing wrong with formal education. For most of us, we're not going back to seminary, we're not going back to school. In fact, I actually have a beef with people who leave my coaching network to go back and get their degree. You'd be better off staying in the coaching network, I promise you. You'll learn more about how to pastor a church. Seminary teaches you to grow a church to 100, after that you have to go to seminars and coaching networks and conferences. Nothing wrong with that.

Quick, the three worst investments in yourself, just if you're curious. Number one is talk radio. Don't bother. I know some people sometimes, that they can't think so clearly in putting together their sermons, because they're always listening to talk radio. People have, seems to me, have one of two addictions. I had a guy on my staff like this one time, he couldn't get anything done because he had sports radio playing in the background of everything he was doing. Sports radio, God bless them, same thing with talk radio, they're really good at what they do. When I listen to those guys, they're really good at keeping your intention for hours at a time. At the end of the day, is that really helpful? So turn off the talk radio, it's not going to help you. Somebody will tell you what happens. You don't have to watch the news. I've been here all week, I haven't even turned the TV on. People will just tell me what happened. Somebody was telling me about this Apple lawsuit, walking down today. Hey great! I didn't even have to watch the news, you just tell me. If something bad goes wrong, they'll tell us, and we'll figure it out.

Turn that off, you can live, it's that old thing about you've all got people in your church who said they can't memorize Scripture but they can tell you who won the 1973 World Series. It's all about what you listen to, so turn off the talk radio. I'm not talking about the religious radio, that's fine I don't listen to religious radio, I just download the sermons and speed them up and listen to them as audio, I don't have time for all of that, sorry Chuck Swindoll. Talk radio.

Number two, stay off the social media. Social media is one of the worst investments you can make in yourself. I think we're doing something later with social media so with apologies to our team [laughs] other than what our team is going to tell you to do at this conference....

Stay off the social media. A limited diet may be okay, so if one day a week you want to go on there for 15 minutes or whatever, that's okay. But most of us don't have the discipline to limit it to 15 minutes. If you don't believe me, set your countdown for 15 minutes, and then just like this block of time, it's like a time vampire, this social media stuff. You get on there and I always feel bad after I get off Facebook, because apparently you never have a problem. When I read your Facebook it's always smiles and puppy dogs and happy stuff and I mean, you're like so great and my life sucks. I see how good you are and it reminds me of how sorry I am, because here's the thing, nobody posts the worst day of their life on social media. Nobody posts the day they didn't baptize anybody. Nobody posts the lowest attendance they had at their church. I'm just telling you, so you are actually getting a false impression, and here's the other thing, anybody can look good on social media. Avoid the comments, like why are you even bothering? Somebody posts something, and you disagree with it, get in there and write all kinds of- don't bother. It ain't going to make a difference anyway, and then don't get into arguments on this, it's just a wait of your time. Some of you have it so it pops up on your phone, like if somebody likes something you posted or they commented on something you

posted. Right now some of you have comments that people have made on your social media, and you can't focus in here because you can't wait to pop it open on your phone.

There was a study that was done recently by a Fortune 500 organization, they paid their employees to uninstall the social media apps. They said, "It was better for us to pay them to do, than to deal with the loss of work when they're doing it." Then like why would you have that turned on? I don't have it turned on. I turn all that stuff off.

Then number three, the worst investment you can make, is just what I'm going to categorize as trivial pursuits. Let me try to explain that, not the game, I'm sure the game is just fun. Is it still around anymore? Trivial Pursuit? I'm not talking about that, I'm talking about as pastors sometimes we get caught up in learning about something that is never going to be anywhere related to anything else that we do. I guess the thing I would say on that is it's okay to follow sports a little bit, but if you're being a sports fanatic, you're probably hurting the time that you could use in better ways. It's okay to follow politics a little bit, and I love the convention times and the speeches and I enjoy trying to figure out the leadership things on that, but to be a political junkie, and to be able to fulfill your calling as a pastor is probably at odds. I love history in general, and there are some things that happened in history that are extremely interesting to me. They're historical, but not related to church. Do you see what I'm saying? There's nothing wrong with reading about those things or if I'm relaxing and a documentary comes on the History Channel about that, but other than just a few minor points that I might be able to pull away, that's not the best way I could spend my time. Given a choice of reading a church history book or reading another book about the people that lived in the underground during the London bombing of the Blitzkrieg, I don't know. It seems like I shouldn't be pursuing all of that stuff.

What I find is sometimes pastors read stuff and they engage stuff that requires massive amounts of time, but it's intersection with your key focus areas is slim at best, and nonexistent at worst. I think sometimes this can become a distraction to you. It's like I'm telling you, if you shut down all of your social media stuff, you'd be able to read more books. I guarantee you. I'm not against watching television, I think that can be used to relax or something like that, reading a fiction book from time to time. I'm not talking about that kind of stuff, I'm talking about minor stuff. I'm talking about when you become a fanatic about something that just really isn't in line with your proper calling. Trivial pursuits, let that be whatever you want it to be.

Number two, invest in myself. Number one, fulfill my calling. Number three, manage my energy. Manage my energy. One of the ways you can multiply your influence is you can manage your energy. I read a book one time by a guy who actually lives not too far from where we are right now, and he made the point that energy management is more important than time management. I think that's probably true. You can manage your time, but then if you're fatigued or don't have the energy to do it, you may have a block of time where you just want to take a nap, so you don't really get anything done. I'm not against naps, by the way. Naps are a pretty good thing. I wish I could do more of it. Spurgeon loved to take naps, by the way. You ever heard the story about Spurgeon and his naps? Spurgeon would take his keys, back in the old days, I guess it was these old key rings with skeleton keys, I'd like to have one of those. He would hold his keys out on his chair and he would lean back and he would fall asleep, but he would only fall asleep to the point where he would relax enough to let his keys fall, and so when his keys fell it would wake him up. That was enough, just to give him that little moment of energy and refreshing, that he had. If you hear keys falling in the afternoon session, it's because you're falling asleep with your naps.

Now, Winston Churchill was the exact opposite. He took a nap in the bathtub with a big bottle of bubbly,

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that I cannot endorse, okay, because I'm Baptist. The Lutherans among you, you can do it you just feel guilty about the bathtub.

A little denominational humor...don't worry Vineyard, I'll get to you too.

Vineyard's lie, "nap, praise the Lord!" We're not taking a nap. Heal somebody. Energy management is more important than time management. I just tried to give a little energy boost to the room, that's what that was all about. Here's the thing, it's hard to be influential if you're tired. Managing energy is more than just resting well, although I think resting is part of that. Managing your energy is managing your life for diligence. It's managing your life for maximum output. We've done a series, we've actually done it twice at the Journey, on the seven deadly sins. We're just going to keep doing it till our people deal with it, as long as they keep committing the seven deadly sins we're just going to keep preaching on it. You know that old joke, about the pastor who preaches the same messages from last week. "Why'd you preach the same message?" "Because you're still having the same problems." We have done the series on the seven deadly sins a couple of times now, and I think about every three or four years there's nothing wrong with redoing a series.

One, you're going to do it better when you do it again, secondly they've all forgot it, from four, five years. Really, it's only four, five weeks they forget but we'll just pretend that it's four, five years. I was just struck again when we did this series, that one of the seven deadly sins is sloth. A sloth is not exactly what you think it is, because when you first look at the seven deadly sins, let me see if I can name them. Pride, anger, envy, greed...gluttony, lust, anger, pizza, I don't remember.

With that, but somewhere in there, but sloth is one of them. You're like, "I kind of get that one, like pride I get it's the root of all of them. Anger, I get, but where is sloth?" What I've learned is that slothfulness is really the result of managing your energy very poorly. What I'd like to do is quote from a sermon we did at the Journey on what sloth is, and I think Kerrick Thomas wrote this, our Executive Pastor, and he'll be doing some things here with us. I think this is Kerrick's words. He said, "Sloth is much more than just being lazy. It's a deadly sin that attacks and slowly kills your career, your relationships, and your happiness. What is sloth? Sloth, our fifth deadly sin, is the avoidance of physical or spiritual work." Isn't that good? "Sloth is the avoidance of physical or spiritual work. Its opposite is diligence. For each of the deadly sins we gave the opposite. Yes, sloth is the deadly sin that tempts you to be lazy, to leave things undone. But sloth is far more than just laziness, sloth is where comfort wins over effort, and you fail to do the right thing." Continuing, last paragraph, "it is the sin that chooses the easy path instead of doing the right thing. Sloth is the sin that keeps you from doing what God wants you to do, it keeps you from making a difference, from living a life of significance, from being the person God created you to be."

That's good stuff, Kerrick. You ought to write a book on that. Like those other two books you wrote, let me put my name on them. That'd be even better. Diligence and having the energy to do what God wants you do to, let me give you three ways to manage energy for maximum influence. Three ways to manage energy for maximum influence, number one: work on major things during major hours. If you're still trying to get the sloth stuff, so let me let you catch up with me. Three ways to manage energy for maximum influence, number one. They're in no order, but first, work on major things during major hours. One of the things about energy management that I find interesting is that you naturally, just by the way you're wired up, have more energy during certain times of the day. This changes over time, so you have to constantly evaluate. It changes as you get older and all of that, but the point is you want to try to figure out what are the major times in your life and then during those times you work on major things. Most of us get it mixed up. We work on minor things during major time. I've learned and grown a bit as a writer, and I've learned that if I write at

10:00 in the morning or 11:00 in the morning I get about half of what I would do if I write at a different time. Now I discovered that because originally I tried to write in the late afternoon, like three, four in the afternoon which most of the time I never got to it because I had so much stuff to do, it kept pushing into the day. I could write more in the late morning than I could in the late afternoon, and now I've learned I can write a whole lot more in the early morning. I can get like two or three hours' worth of writing done between five and six in the morning, than I could ever get between ten and noon or one in the morning, and I hate it.

I don't like it at all. I don't like getting up that early, my head hurts when I get up, and I don't feel really good but man after I'm done I feel really great. That's like, I've learned, that's like major time. Now it's not necessarily sermon prep time, I do better in sermon prep at a different time. I've learned to do major things during major time, and you want to begin to look at the rhythm and flows of your life, and say, "Okay, what do I need to do during that major time?" There are minor things that we all have to do. Following up on e-mails, following up even on stuff that is very important but it doesn't require a bunch of thought or energy engagement. I hope you understand where I'm coming from on this. Sometimes following up with prayer requests, like I will pray for them but I don't have to do that during the major time, because it doesn't take a lot of emotional or intellectual energy for me to do that. Or to respond sometimes to different staff requests, or things like that. You lump that during your minor time, and then you do your major stuff during major time. We could do an entire talk on that, and you actually will learn more on that as this week unfolds. I'll leave it there.

Number two: eat and drink for maximum energy. Here I'm basically talking about candy bars and soda, just eat as many as you want.

Because the short-term result on that is fantastic, you feel really good when you eat a candy bar or soda, for like eight and a half seconds. Then you feel really really bad after that. Don't eat that, but you do have to eat and drink for maximum energy. You are all mature enough to know there are certain things that you eat that right after you just want to take a nap. Then there's other things that you eat and right after you have some energy. Sometimes you have to choose what goes on your plate based on what you're doing after, and think that through. The same thing with drinking. I'm not totally anti-caffeine, I've gone through major periods on my life where I've been off caffeine. My wife likes it a little better in the morning when I'm on caffeine, so I do caffeine in the morning and that's about it. I've also learned that for every cup of coffee you drink, you better drink a 12 ounce or 16 ounce bottle of water. One cup of coffee, one bottle of water, and then the rest of the day drink water. Water's really powerful, in the area of energy management. Some of you remember a few years ago, if you've been with me for a while, when I learned that when I get up to write from five to six in the morning, that if I start that 5:00 period by guzzling, because I can chug pretty good, I learned that in college. Actually, that's not true. I've never been a drinker.

Not like that. I can down a big thing of water, like a whole bottle of water. I go out there into my coaching cave and I have a bottle of water and I just chug it, right at 5:00 and then I get this instant sense of masculinity when I crush that bottle, and I hope- did that wake up anybody else? I crush that bottle and I sit down to write and I don't know if is the crushing sound of the bottle or the infusion of liquid. It's the infusion of liquid, by the way, because your body loses a lot of water at night. You're dehydrated when you wake up in the morning. I've actually found that it's given me maybe 20 or 30 more minutes of extra focus because now I'm writing and this water is going through me and it's filling up my organs, it's filling up my brain and it's rehydrating myself. Then I've got to be done by six because I've got to pee.

Nonetheless, it's a really powerful little tactic, as is. We'll cut that out of the tape, I'm sure.

We'll cut that out. There's a movie about that, about a radio commentator. It's got George Clooney in it, and he plays this guy that does these five minute radio talks and so before he does it he's just downing water, downing water, and then he goes in and does his five minutes because he's just gotta go. I've thought about that as a sermon strategy for people on my staff who want to preach too long. You just make them drink like six or eight bottles of water and then it's like, invitation time. If anybody finds that movie, let me know. It is really interesting because literally as soon as he walks out of the studio he's just like making a mad dash down to the restroom, like some of you are going to do if I ever take a break, here, in just a minute.

Number next, whatever we're on, is practice the Sabbath. Work on major things during major hours, eat and drink for maximum energy, and then practice the Sabbath. [laughs] Let me try that again, I just totally botched that. Three ways to manage energy, is how it's pronounced, thank you to my speech coach. Three ways to manage energy for maximum influence. Work on major things during major hours, eat and drink for maximum energy, practice the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a 24 hour period where you cease from your primary vocation. I have talked about it in many other places, I believe we have an entire resource of just me talking about the Sabbath, and what it is, how you manage it, and what you do on your Sabbath, but here's the thing for our talk. In essence, when it comes to energy management, the Sabbath creates forced efficiency during the six days that you work. The Sabbath creates forced efficiency during the six days that you work, then allows for a full day of rest, reflection, and recreation, on the day that you don't. It's a little mini Sabbath seminar right there, in a sentence. The Sabbath forces efficiency during the six days that you work- "I gotta get all these sheep in the pen, the Sabbath is coming, the sun's going down. I gotta get my work done." Then it allows for maximum rest, reflection, and recreation for the day that you don't, because you don't do your primary vocation. Then you're able to enter the next six days rested and full of energy, and maximized efficiency. Manage energy for maximum influence.

We'll do one more, and we'll take a break. Number four: associate with the right people. An influence multiplier is association. Associate with the right people. Just like there are people that can pull you up emotionally, and there are people that can pull you down emotionally. We call the people who pull you up emotionally encouragers, you speak courage into someone, you speak strength into someone. Just like there are people that can pull you up emotionally, encouragers, and there are people who can pull you down emotionally, discouragers, are the people who comment on your Facebook post. Discouragers. There are also people, and see if you agree with this, there are also people that can raise your level of influence and there are also people who can minimize your influence. Here's what I call the principle of association.

The principle of association. Your influence will expand or constrict based on the people around you. The principle of association says your influence will expand or constrict based on the people around you. Sad as it is, some people are unable to use their God-given influence because they're surrounded by people who constantly restrain, restrict, or constrict them. I looked it up to try to figure out which word is the right word, I've settled on constrict. Would you agree with that? The first church I pastored was in Charlotte, North Carolina. Truthfully, it was on the north border of Charlotte and another little town called Harrisburg, North Carolina. The church had a Charlotte mailing address, and I just felt a little more esteemed that I was pastoring in Charlotte. It seemed like a good thing, but here's the thing about the church. It was right by the Charlotte motor speedway, I think back in the day it was still called the Charlotte motor speedway, it's gone through a couple of names. Any NASCAR fans in the room? One guy in the back who reluctantly says...thank you to Xulon Press, for being a NASCAR fan, a NASCAR fan. You going to Daytona? Is that this weekend? Daytona this weekend? Chase Elliot, I like Chase. I digress.

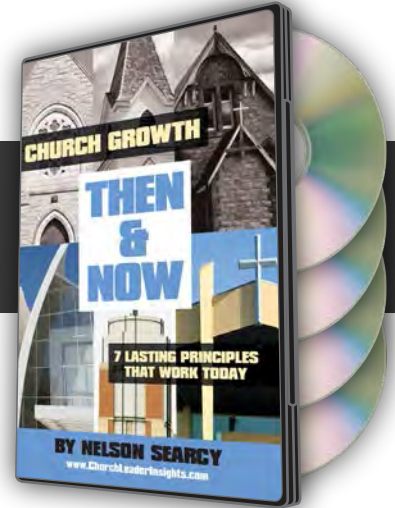
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At that time I'd known very little about NASCAR. I had assumed that NASCAR was not for me. The church was right by the speedway. Most of you know the story, they had 13 people in the night, they voted to call me as pastor. They were either going to vote to call me as pastor or vote to merge with the church up the street. True story. I don't think they made the right decision, they called me as pastor. My wife said there was only 11 people there but I was counting us, so there was 13 people that were there. I begin to try to reach this community, and it wasn't easy. I was driving two hours to go to school at Duke University for my Master's degree two or three days a week, trying to pastor this church on the side. Somehow or another, God blessed, and most of the people, just by the nature of where this church were, most of the people were involved in NASCAR in some way. I got to know a lot about NASCAR. I got to learn about how the automobiles are painted, how sponsorships were secured, I got to know about the business. I got to meet several executives. We had a very famous day in our church one time where Dale Earnhardt came to our church. Like the word got out, I think he actually brought in ten people, just over the next week, because people said, "Dale Earnhardt was at that church last week." He didn't stay, but I did get to meet him and stuff like that. I did reach a lot of NASCAR people, and over time I actually became sort of the chaplain of NASCAR. I did some formal stuff with them, but also just a lot of informal stuff with them. One of the reasons I was able to do stuff when NASCAR was in town is when they had a race at the speedway they closed the road in front of our church. I didn't have anything to do on Sunday anyway, but to go over and hang out with all the church members at NASCAR.

During that time I learned a phrase that stuck with me. It's a phrase that comes from one of the most controversial decisions NASCAR ever made. It's related to, and some of you may know this phrase, it's related to adding a restrictor plate to the cars. How many of you have ever heard that phrase? How many of you have a speedway near you that is a restrictor plate speedway? Because there are some that you don't have to have the restrictor plates, so some speedways because of the nature of how they're laid out, they require a restrictor plate.

Here's what a restrictor plate is, according to, I think, NASCAR.com. "For those not familiar, the restrictor plate is a metal plate with holes in it designed to slow the airflow into the engine, thereby reducing horsepower and speed. Depending on track conditions, NASCAR can mandate larger or smaller holes. Unrestricted airflow into engines at these super speedways, hasn't happened in decades." Restrictor plates aren't necessary at NASCAR's other tracks, either the tracks are too small or the banking not as severe to allow drivers to get caught up to the phenomenal speeds they do at Daytona and Talladega. They say that the concern was primarily for the crowds' safety, because cars were going so fast that they ran off. I guess they'd go off up into the stands or whatever. I learned this phrase restrictor plates, and it stuck with me over the years. Is it possible that sometimes I do things that puts restrictor plates on what God can do for me, and through me, and with me? If I can be honest, I would say some of you are putting restrictor plates on your God-given influence, because of the people you are associating with, or the people you refuse to associate with.

The principle of association says your influence will expand or constrict based on the people around you. Who are you associating with? Are they restricting your influence or are they multiplying your influence? With that in mind, let me introduce you to two phrases that may be of help to you. The first is a phrase that I've had to learn, it's a phrase called limited association. Limited association. These are people in your life that you can't avoid because obviously if they're just harming you and you can avoid them, you're smart and you would just avoid them. There are plenty of people in your life that you cannot avoid that you have to deal with, but you can exercise what I would call limited association. That is as much as you can, you restrict your association with the people who restrict your influence. Limited association. If there is someone coming to

mind beyond your surprised mother-in-law...

Then this might be the time to think about how do you limit your association with them? I know you perhaps have people in your church that you have to meet with, but I would do it the minimum that I'm required to do. There are perhaps people in your denomination that you are required to meet with, maybe they don't write you the check if you don't go to the meeting. Could you make it a limited association?

By doing this, you are limiting the negative influence that they have in your life. I've got some friends that I've had since college. To my shock and dismay, they've never read any of my books. They do not care that I'm here teaching to this enlightened group of pastors that are gathered here in Orlando, but I like to keep up with them. I do have a connection with them, and so I limit my association with them. They get together sometimes without me and it's fine, but I think they would consider me a good friend. On my perspective, I'm limiting the time because when I get with them, all they want to do is talk about how bad their church is, how sorry their deacons are. I actually spoke in one of the churches and he's right, they're pretty sorry.

They want to run down the list of all the other ministers that we know that they're doing better than. "Oh, you talked to Tony lately? Oh I hear he's really sucking it up over there in his church." A little bit of that so I can keep up with their family. Honestly I know they pray for me. I mean I know they care about me and all that, but it's a limited association. I'm not going to go do a long guys weekend with them, because it's too dangerous for me. I could fall into that kind of trap. Limited association. You want to think about the people that you are spending time with, because there's an old rule, and I know it's a little tricky but the rule is, you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with. You're the average of the five people you spend the most time with. Some of you are pulling up the people around you, but unfortunately the people around you are sort of pulling you down into that average. You want to avoid some of this. You can still be friendly, you can still love them in Jesus' name. Bless you brother, good to talk with you, but I ain't coming over. Bless you.

The people that are critics, that are critical. Unfortunately this is my real beef with some formal education stuff. We don't teach people anymore to think critically, we just teach them to be critical. I want to limit my association with them. Now, do I try to influence them? Yes. Do I send signed copies of books to some of my college buddies and things like that? I do. Have some grown over time? I've allowed them into my inner circle more, yes, of course. I think about who is around me, who is speaking into me, and I try to have limited association with some of them.

The flip side of that, the more fun one to teach is intentional association. These are people that you intentionally choose to associate with because they will pull you up, they will expand your influence. A lot of times this does require intentionality in your life. I've got a friend in another part of the country and I don't have his cellphone, but he is a major influencer, he is a major leader in our country and the kingdom. When I am in that part of town, even though I don't have access to that person by cellphone, I'm going to be in that part of town I can get on his calendar. More times than not, when I'm in that part of town I can have a lunch or I can have a breakfast, or I can at least stop by his office for a few moments. That lifts me up, I mean just being around him and his perspective increases and multiplies my influence. Yes, over time he has written a few endorsements of some of my books and things like that, but even if that wasn't the case, just to intentionally put myself around them.

People say, "How do you choose who the guest speakers are going to be at conferences like this, or the boot camp that I do, or these boutique events that we do from time to time?" I say, "I just think about people I

want to spend time with." Let's invite them here. You're going to get our speaker this afternoon, I got dinner last night with him. I get intentional association with those people. People say, "Why do you keep doing advanced coaching?" Because I want to be intentional about being around that group. The advanced coaching group, they gain a lot by being around each other, but I gain a lot by being around them.

Intentional association, this is why you have to go to things like this, this is why you have to be in networks like the networks we have, because it puts you around the right people. Be intentional. I hope you'll do that while you're here at the beginning of this first day, I hope you will intentionally associate with some folks. Intentionally meet some folks. I had those advanced coaching people stand up there earlier, not just because I want to congratulate them on their commitment to what we do in coaching, but because these are people that if you associate with them, I can speak from personal experience, they will lift you up. You will see some of our speakers floating around here, and the people that I've asked to do things. Intentionally associate with them, and then the person beside you has wisdom that God may want to bring into your life if you will be intentional about associating with them. Remember, the guy who is teaching you this and telling you to do this is like Mr. Introvert. My natural tendency is to go up to my room and read a book. I do sometimes like books better than certain people, but not you! I've intentionally chosen this. People say, "Why did you create these networks?" I wanted to have a choice in who I spent time with. That's why we don't make our events free. I want to choose who comes. Intentional association.

Maybe you've thought of some people, and let's put a sort of punctuation mark on this, maybe you've thought of some people that you need to sort of limit your association in Christian love, God bless you, but I'm going to limit my time with you. Maybe you've thought, at least become aware of, intentional association. I'm going to give you a chance to do that because we're going to do something rather unprecedented on a morning session with me.

So, I will bring down some websites. The two websites that come to mind just immediately that I'm not going to give right now, because I want to give it in conjunction with four or five others, they're good websites, but sometimes you go to a website and they've got a lot of weird stuff, too. I get some audio from there, but I'd like to give you a few better ones.

Somebody was asking about the books that we read. In another seminar, I talk about the types of books that I read. I try to rotate through books on church history, theology, philosophy, and then best practice books. And so I try to rotate through those kind of books. I just recently reread Thom Rainer's book. We were talking about it at dinner last night, "The Book of Church Growth." I put that in the theology section, because it's about principles and practices in theology.

Then, I just finished a book last week on church history about Martin Luther, which was on the heels of a church history book that I read about Menno Simons. So, a couple of church history books there. And then this week is pretty much best practices books that I'm working on right now. I try to read about a book a day. Sometimes I do better. Sometimes I do worse. Sometimes I like to read really short books.

Just a few more people are making their way in, and we will get started. So, we're going to break at 12:30. My talk will not go to 12:30. We have some other special things that we are doing between now and then, so in case you were wondering, but that will be what we are working toward.

So, in review, we're looking at how to increase your ministry impact. For those of you that came in late, we started with three truths about influence. Number one, you are a steward of your God-given influence.

Number two, manage your influence well and God will grow it. Number three, influence precedes impact.

Then we got into what I'm calling ten influence multipliers. Number one, fulfill my calling. Number two, invest in myself. Number three, manage my energy. Don't be a sloth. Number four, associate with the right people, and that's where we ended. I gave you the principle of association: your influence will expand or constrict based on the people around you. I did notice that a few of you moved seats during the break. So, I don't know if that means anything or not. It could just be coincidence that people moved in their seats.

Then, we are up to number five, which is invest in leaders. Invest in leaders. Now, as ministers, we are, of course, called to take care of all of the sheep that God has placed in our flock. In my book "The Renegade Pastor," I remind you that as a pastor you have a three-fold rule when it comes to your flock. That, number one, you are to lead your flock, number two, you are to feed your flock, and number three, you are to protect your flock.

And when I talk about that in the "Renegade Pastor," I really did mean your entire flock. As a pastor, you are in charge of every person, whether they are first-time attendees, or whether they are in the middle of your church, they're the most committed member inside of your church, you are responsible to lead, feed, and protect the entire flock. And your role, according to Ephesians 11, as a pastor – your job description, if you haven't read it lately, is found in Ephesians 4:11 – is to equip God's church.

And so part of our calling as an equipper is to ensure that everyone in God's flock is cared for. And so I want you to understand I believe that. I am saying that. What we also see in the Bible, however, is a pattern for leadership development. So, yes, we are responsible for the entire flock, but then it does seem that we are also assigned to leadership development. So, simply put, as shepherds, part of our responsibility is to raise up other leaders. And so pastoring requires overseeing the entire flock, but then we must also invest a disproportional amount of time into raising up and investing in leaders.

Now, from our perspective for this talk, from an influence perspective, our influence is multiplied when we invest a disproportionate amount of time in the leaders, both current and future, of our church. Simply stated, when you invest in a leader, you multiply your influence. Why? Because when you invest in one leader, that leader then, by definition, is over 10, 20, 30, or more other people. So, when you invest in a leader, you are investing in a person who influences many. And so one of the ways that you multiply your influence is you invest in leaders.

And that seems rather simple, but it does raise a question, who are the leaders that God has placed around you? So, if I asked you to identify the four, five, or six leaders in your church that God has placed around you, could you identify them? Are you sure that they are, indeed, leaders in your church? And then, are you appropriately investing in them?

So, you want to be able to identify them. But then you want to identify not only the current leaders that God has placed around you, but who are the potential future leaders that you want to invest in. Maybe those are young leaders, or maybe they are people that are on the sidelines right now. But at the same time you're investing and equipping and multiplying your influence through leaders, you're also looking for those future leaders.

One of the more controversial ideas out of the old church growth movement, and one that I still teach in the Growth Barriers Workshop is that as a church grows, particularly as a church moves from 250 attendants to

500 attendants, in order to break that growth barrier that we call the “500 barrier,” the pastor has to make a mental shift in their mind. At 250 people, you can pastor a church and effectively lead a church by being a good shepherd, because a good pastor – not me, but like a good pastor – can effectively lead a church of 250 people. But there is really no pastor who has the ability as a solo pastor to effectively shepherd, lead, feed, protect a church of 500.

So, you have to move from what the old church growth guides called being a shepherd at 250 people to being a rancher at 500. Now, the problem with that is the language, because still, at 500, you are the shepherd. We’re not the chief shepherd in our church. We’re the under shepherd in our church under the chief shepherd, who is Christ, but then as an under shepherd, we also raise up other shepherds. And that was the idea behind the move from shepherd to rancher. At 250, you do all of the ministry through some level of leaders, but still, you have your hand in everything. And then when the church moves to 500 and you become the rancher, you make sure that it gets done, but you’re primarily doing it through other shepherds.

I’ve personally found that my sweet spot in managing leaders is about four. I’m good at overseeing and leading and influencing about four. So, if you look at the org chart of the Journey, it’s me, and then underneath that or beside that or above that, however you prefer to lay these things out, there are four leaders. And then each one of them has underneath them four other leaders. And then underneath them, four other leaders. And if you keep multiplying, that is very scalable and it multiplies very quickly over time.

Today, because of the nature of the Journey Church as a multi-site church and my particular role in the church, I really invest in pretty much only the staff at the Journey. And then they invest in even just a certain selection of staff at the Journey. And then they invest in the other staff, and they invest in the other leaders. I’m still responsible for it, but I have to be very clear about who I am spending time with, who I am investing in. So, this is not only key to multiplying influence, but it is key for you to lead a growing church and for God to do what God wants to do through your ministry. So, who are the leaders that you are investing in, and then who are the future leaders that you are moving forward and see as a future investment?

With that in mind, here are some ways you invest in leaders. To invest in leaders, first of all, you have to spend time with them. There really is no shortcut with this. Leadership development, investing in leaders best occurs face to face, knee to knee, eye to eye, spending time with your leaders. Now, that doesn’t mean always that it’s spending time in meetings, but meetings are important.

I was talking to someone on a coaching call just recently, and they were saying, “I have a staff person, but I’m having a tough time managing them. They’re not getting things done, and I’m not happy with how they’re doing things.” And if you were on that call, you remember as we dissected this that the issue was that they weren’t meeting with them. It’s very hard to manage someone that you don’t meet with. And technology is cool and Skype is cool, and we use all of that at the Journey because of the way our church is structured and has grown over the years, but you have to be face to face in a meeting with someone.

Meetings are sort of foundational. Meetings are where dynamic ministry happens. In fact, in another seminar that we have on meetings, we talk about how meetings are the playground of highly effective teams. And when somebody says they don’t love meetings, what they mean is they don’t love the way they’ve seen meetings done in the past.

I once went to speak at a church plant with a church that was growing fairly sizable. I’ve never told this story I don’t think, so I once went to speak at a church plant with a church that was growing fairly sizable. I’ve let

me just think a second. I went and spoke at a staff meeting at a church plant that was doing pretty good. Two or three years in, they were doing pretty well. They invited me to come in for their staff meeting. And I got there, and they had a pretty good agenda, which I give them credit for. You've got to have an agenda for a meeting. And I was first. I did my little talk, whatever it was that day. I don't even remember. And then afterwards, the senior pastor said, "We've got a pretty full agenda today, but I'll tell you what. Let's just scrap that. We're all going to go see a movie."

Now, at first, I was like, "Hey, we're going to go see a movie." And then I thought, "Well, I'm not even part of the staff, so I guess they don't expect me to go." But they all went to see a movie. And there's nothing wrong with doing that from time to time, but this actually was a systemic issue in the search that they just wouldn't come together. They wouldn't get things done. They were more interested in doing some of those. And the leader had the idea that somehow an agenda-driven meeting was too constraining or confining, and they never really went anywhere.

I know that was just one snapshot, but it's kind of always stuck with me that you have to meet. We have to talk. We have to be eye to eye. And so, there's no getting around spending time with your leaders. Now, it doesn't always have to be a formal meeting, but that at least should be part of it.

And then, a lot of times, meeting with leaders means informally meeting with them. It's why I struggle with my weight, because I have a lot of breakfast meetings. I have a lot of lunch meetings. I have a lot of coffee shop meetings. The hot chocolate is really good in New York City. So, we do a lot of informal meetings. But a large part of leadership and where I was going with spending time with them is taking them with you as you do things.

So, a large part of leadership is taking them with you as you do things, because leadership, as I said earlier, is caught as much as taught. So, if you're trying to raise up a team to help you with hospital visitation, take them with you as you go do it. If you're trying to raise up a team to go out and do kindness outreach or servant evangelism, take them with you as you do it.

I remember being in Cincinnati with one of my earliest mentors. Since I gave you the city and talked about servant evangelism, many of you immediately know who I'm talking about. He was trying to raise up a new servant evangelism team. And so it was come to this meeting, and I was going to talk about what we were doing in servant evangelism in New York City. And he was going to train them to do servant evangelism. And we had all these newbie people who would come to this meeting to learn to do servant evangelism. And my mentor friend walked in with toilet brushes, gave everybody a toilet brush, and said, "Follow me. We're going to go clean toilets." And we went and did a servant evangelism toilet cleaning.

You haven't lived until you've done a servant evangelism toilet cleaning. I happened to go with a guy who had just gotten off work, and he still had a white shirt and tie on. So, we showed up at the little Chinese restaurant right down the street from the church. They thought we were from the health department. [laughter] We're like, "No, no. We just want to clean your toilets. That's all we want to do, honestly, with that." "No, no, no. Don't go back there." So, we did not. And I didn't go eat there after the training either. [laughter] But after about 15 or 20 minutes of catching the spirit of servant evangelism, toilet brush in hand, we equipped a lot of leaders on how to do servant evangelism. So, sometimes there's just no better way than to go do it. Let's do it together.

So, I try to drive this home a lot and should do more. As a pastor, there's very few things you should do alone.

Do it with someone as a leadership investment in them. And you know the pattern. The pattern is, first of all, you do it well. Secondly, you do it and somebody else watches. Then, the third step is you do it with that other person together. The fourth step is they do it while you watch and give advice and feedback. And then the final step is what? You applaud. You applaud while they do it.

So, you've got to spend time with your leaders, raising up these leaders. And one of the reasons you learn time management and you develop systems that we'll talk about in a few minutes in your church is so that you have the time to invest in your leaders. But at least as much as is reasonable or possible in your ministry, don't do anything alone. We don't write sermon outlines alone at the Journey. We bring in the new teachers on our staff. Let me see how we're writing sermon outlines. Take them with you as you go. Hopefully that's sparked some thoughts.

The second way to invest in your leaders is to provide ongoing training for them. Provide ongoing training for them. When you read a book that is good, read it with them. When you listen to some audio that is good, listen to that audio with them.

When I'm putting together resources and things like that for you, I try to think about how this could be used in your setting. So, just recently I did a revised and updated version of the assimilation seminar. We broke it down into seven sessions. It was the first time I'd done that in a resource, because more and more of you were telling me, "This is how I'm using your resources." We're bringing people together. We're listening. Now, in the new assimilation, you can watch. We have a DVD of that. You'll probably see some of that floating around in here. There's a DVD, so it's 30 minutes. Your leaders and you can watch it, take notes, and then you can apply it. At the end of the senior pastor coaching or the stewardship coaching or assimilation coaching that I do – we just started another one on evangelism – there's a blueprint that you can take and use. Do this with your staff and leverage this.

So, you want to provide ongoing training. Now, this ties back to meeting. If you're building an assimilation team, you meet with that team and then you equip that team. Some things can be equipped on the fly, like toilet brush cleaning servant evangelism. Other things require a little more formal training, going through some material, working through something. So, if you've been on the assimilation team, study assimilation. If you're building an evangelism team, study evangelism. If you're building a small group team, you study small group kind of stuff. But you've got to provide them with ongoing training.

And one of the gifts you give your leaders is training. You give them books. You give them resources. You give them articles. Let me just say it this way. You balance leadership development training around helping them do ministry better, as well as helping them do life better. We tend to do one or the other. Some pastors, they have a team of people, a group of leaders they're investing in, and it's all about their life. And they never get around to helping them with their leadership.

Other pastors – and I tend to go this way – I want to just do leadership, leadership. Let's go over assimilation again. Let's go over the four boxes again. Let's just do all this stuff again. All the while, I need to also realize that as a leader, I teach them to do life bettering, teach them how to live out their faith at work, and teach them to be a better parent or whatever it might be.

But ongoing training, that's a very, very brief summary of things we talked about at other resources. And then, from time to time, you might want to bring them to conferences with you. Bring them to conferences with you. And you can see this parallels the investing in yourself. You grow as a leader, so you spend time

with other leaders. You read books and resources as a leader. You take a portion of those, the ones that you find most beneficial. You study them with your leaders. And then, you don't come alone to a conference. You bring them with you.

When I personally started doing conferences, I just wanted pastors. That's all I wanted, senior pastors. I'm a senior pastor. Let's just get senior pastors. But I've learned over time that there are certain events we do – for example, our big midyear event that we do every year, boot camp, it's now half and half. Half senior pastors and staff, half other leaders that people are bringing to be trained in our eight systems approach to ministry. And I've embraced that as part of your leadership development.

And we are conscious of that for putting together that conference and laying out the calendar for that conference and how we present at that conference. Sometimes you want to bring them with you to those. But you have to keep associating with higher level leaders so that you can raise the leadership level in your church. And then you have to keep growing as a leader so that these higher level leaders are attracted to you so that you can invest in, which means fundamentally that the church will never outgrow you.

So, investing in leaders multiplies your influence. Leadership development is leverage. It's a type of leadership leverage that makes everything better. Here's another type of leverage, number six.

Leverage systems – number six. So, if you have the list in front of you, number four and five were all about people that you are investing in – associating with the right people that can invest in you, you can invest in them, and then, specifically inside your church, investing in leaders. Well, this one is a slightly different take on that. The right people give you leadership leverage, but at the same time, so do right systems. And so what are systems? Systems are the processes that you establish in your life that increase your influence.

So, a system is something that you want to embrace, because it is an influence multiplier. And as pastors, we need two types of systems. We need life systems, and we need church systems. And in case you don't know, I could spend, like, four days on either of those, because I love this idea. What are life systems? Well, life systems are systems designed to leverage the influence of your time, your energy, your finances, your priorities, and things like that. It's the personal side of life, and you need to develop life systems.

In many ways, like the foundational network, the Renegade Pastors Network is designed to help you with life systems. And over the course of this week, if you engage the lunch and learns and you engage the bonus systems, you will walk away with some new systems for managing time. Maybe even earlier you got a few new ideas for managing energy. There are partners and sponsors and things here that can help you manage other parts of your life, but you have to develop life systems.

Sometimes you can't implement the church systems well because your life systems are out of control. Unfortunately, I see that more and more that sometimes pastors can't be effective at work because things are so bad at home. It's like the old saying about "never hire a real estate agent who has a dirty car," because that may say something about them. Forgive me if you're in real estate. The Bible says that in order to be an effective leader, you have to manage your own household well. So, that's life systems, systems for your health, systems for your time, systems for your finances, for your priorities, so life systems.

But then you have to also learn to manage and build church systems. This is what we spend a lot of time on in senior pastor coaching and my system-specific coaching. Church systems leverage the influence of the people that God has entrusted to you. So, an assimilation system is designed to help you create a

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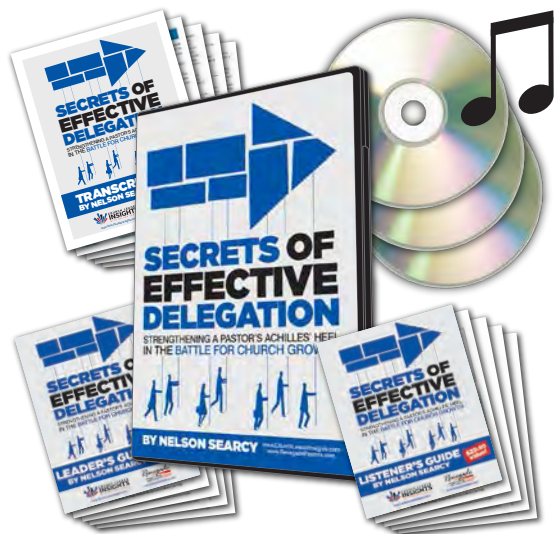
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great experience for first-time guests so that they want to come back and eventually grow and become fully engaged members. A group system allows you to have a stronger discipleship system or a stronger discipleship purpose and a stronger fellowship purpose. A worship planning system is good for your Sunday volunteers as well as your attenders.

A good evangelism system is good for those in your community and those who have not yet heard about Jesus, as well as the people in your church. So, on down the line we could go, and I won't talk about the eight systems of a healthy church, but there are eight. You should know all of them, and you want to implement them in the church and down the line.

Now, with those two systems in front of you, life systems and church systems, here's my favorite definition of a system. And some of you have heard this. It's anachronistic in some ways, but a system for both your life and your church is a sustainable, scalable, repeatable process that saves you stress, time, energy, and money.

That's what a system is, in case you haven't heard me say it lately. A sustainable, scalable, repeatable process that saves you stress, time, energy, and money. What's missing from that definition, as much as I like saving time, energy, and money and lowering my stress level, is that a system also increases your influence, because a system, by definition, means you put a little bit in and you get a lot more out.

So, you put a little effort in, and you get a lot more effort out. I like that. You put a little bit in, you get a lot more out. The way a system works is that when you invest the time to build the system once, and then you invest a little bit of time to keep the system running, it will leverage your impact over time so that there are many people that are influenced through the system. So, a little bit of input, a little bit of ongoing maintenance, a lot of influence on the backend. And I think that's a pretty good return.

I remember when we first built our assimilation system, I had been working on improving the assimilation seminar, and we'll hear some about that, but it reminded me of those early days of building the assimilation system. It took some work to get that going. It took some work to put it into our culture, to raise up our volunteers, but once we got it going, it has taken a disproportional amount of effort to keep it going compared to the thousands of first-timers that have gone through that system. So, a little bit of work, a little bit of maintenance – thousands of people.

So, we have about 3,000 first-time guests a year come through the Journey. I think one of the reasons that we have 3,000 first-time guests come through the Journey is because we built a good system, a system that will lead to about 40% of them coming back for a second time. That's our assimilation return. And then move the regular attenders and eventually move them into small groups and move them into a membership. So, it took some time to get it started. And when we first started working on it, we had no idea that would be the result, but that's what a system does. That's the power of systems. One system influences many.

So, you want to think about the systems that you need to build in your life. If you need a better system for time management, build it. If you need a better system for energy management, find it. If you need a better system for financial management, go looking for it. I can help you a lot in some of those areas and help you a lot, especially in the eight systems.

So, I won't say more about that. Just remember the power of systems. And I absolutely love it. If I didn't have it, I would have to create it, because I benefit greatly from it. In fact, people say, "How do you have time to do the stuff that you do with coaching?" It's because we've got great systems. We've got great systems at our

church. I try to have great systems in my life. And I kind of will nerd out on these systems, so let's move on.

For the next one, number seven, let me talk about another way to leverage your influence. Number seven going to be one of those things that, out of context, if you looked at it, it would be which one of these doesn't belong? So, just kind of prepare that I'm going to come at you sideways here for just a moment. Because you could kind of expect some of these others from me, but maybe you didn't expect this one.

Number seven is a big influence multiplier, and it's one I thought about not even talking about, but you cannot look at church history in modern times and see how leaders have multiplied their influence and not talk about number seven. So, I want you to give it a fair hearing before you immediately judge it.

Here's number seven – write a book. Write a book. If we had been doing this conference last week, it would have worked really well, because last week was the anniversary of Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. I had a chance to go to Germany not too long ago, and I actually went to the Gutenberg Museum. I got to see some of those early presses, those early Bibles, things of that nature.

Let's talk about writing a book. Earlier I talked about how books can influence you. I talked about how I remember sitting in 1995 when I read this one book and how it dramatically influenced me. I could talk about other books. I remember where I was when I read Oswald Sanders' book on spiritual leadership and how that influenced me. My salvation was influenced by a book in 1999, when I read "Peace with God" by Billy Graham. We all can point to books that have influenced each of us, but have you ever considered how your writing a book could influence others?

So, let me talk a little bit about my writing journey. Most of this will not surprise you if you've been paying attention just to the first part of this teaching. First of all, you should know that I've struggled with the English language my entire life. That is no surprise to you. I've dangled participles. I've mixed verbs and adverbs all morning long. It's a constant struggle. I did not have a solid foundation in English. I work at it. If you think it's bad now, you should have heard me a few years ago.

I've struggled with it all my life, partly because I happened to be at a school district as a kid that was all about science and math. We were doing STEM in my school district as a kid before it was cool. So, we didn't focus a lot on English and writing, but also I had a speech impediment as a kid. So, this speaking thingy wasn't something I was interested in. I was naturally geared to being kind of a math person. Numbers made sense to me. Words didn't. I still cannot diagram a sentence to this very day.

In fact, I was a pretty good student, but the only C's I ever made were in English. I remember one particularly devastating year was in ninth grade, because in ninth grade, I got serious about it and said, "I'm going to work really hard." And I really tried. I wanted to get a B- and I got a C. And I'm still bitter against the lady whose name I can remember. [laughter] And if she's listening to this, her name is Mrs. Ann Robbins.

I'll tell you a story about Ann Robbins in a minute. My parents moved to sort of their retirement home. They've been retired for 15, 20 years. They retired and moved to a retirement home, and they live beside – no kidding – Mrs. Ann Robbins. My dad fishes with her husband. Every time I write a book, I send two copies to my dad. One copy for him and one copy to give to his fishing buddy's wife. I have this image that she has this bookshelf of my books, and I've resisted the temptation in every one to inscribe it: "How many books have you written?" [laughter] But I digress.

Isn't that strange how things work? I mean, what would be the chances of it? God has a sense of humor, I suppose. Not only did I struggle with writing, but my biggest issue before I went into ministry was that I struggled with reading. And this may be a piece of the puzzle you don't know, but when I went into ministry in 1990, it would have been difficult for me to name two or three books that I had read in their entirety. Maybe that's more why I made C's in English, because I wouldn't read Shakespeare.

My wife all the time asks me, "Did you read that in high school?" "I didn't read it in high school." "1984?" "No, I was going to high school in 1984. I didn't read it." But when I went into ministry, I did ask God to give me a passion for reading. I said, "God, if I'm going to be able to do this thing in ministry, the big gap in my ability is I've got to be a reader. We're people of the book. I've got to be able to read the Bible." And it wasn't that I couldn't read. I just chose not to read, which is almost as bad as the person who can't read.

But by God's grace, since 1990, I've been a voracious reader. God has answered my prayer. In fact, my wife Kelly and I were taking some books from our home to a little overflow storage room that I rent to keep my books in. And she said, "Maybe you should stop praying that prayer about being a voracious reader." But the truth is I wouldn't be here if God hadn't answered that prayer. But this little section isn't about reading more. I have an entire seminar on that. This is about the result of that.

So, in 1990, I prayed, "God, help me start reading. Give me a passion for reading." Fifteen years later, I'm at my office in New York City, and out of the blue, a literary agent shows up. Now, our office at that time was on 35th Street by the Javits Center. It's not like they just ambled in. They meant to go to McGraw Hill in Midtown. They made a trek. And it was a trek over to our office, because we had to go where it was cheap. This literary agent said, "Have you ever thought about writing? We've followed the Journey Church. We've seen some of the press. You ought to consider it." I said, "What's a literary agent? What's this thing you mean about writing?" And I graciously exited her pretty quickly.

The next day, a publisher that was in town from a well-known Christian publisher made their trek over to our 35th Street office. They showed up for an impromptu meeting to which I said to my assistant, "Can we not schedule appointments? Never mind." [laughter] And I had an impromptu meeting with a publisher. They were not my kind of publisher. What they were wanting me to do was not even something that I was interested in, but a week later, another publisher showed up, this time scheduling a meeting with me, bringing full guns into this meeting. And it was what eventually became my first publisher, Regal.

And I was interested in what they had to say. They wanted to do a book on church planting. I wanted to write a book on assimilation. I said that I would do the church planting book if they would publish the assimilation book. We had a great conversation, but I was scared to death. But I did think after those three things happened in a series of a few weeks, "Okay, God, I get the idea." But once again, I said, "I need some help. I don't know how to do this. I'm not sure about it."

And within a month, God sent me my first partner in writing. Because I could create content. I could write. But I needed help. I needed someone who could smooth it out. I needed someone who could strengthen it. I needed someone to help me with things I don't like about writing, such as footnotes.

I hate them. I hate footnotes, so I don't have footnotes. I don't know why my publisher wants me to put footnotes. Isn't it just enough that I say it? [laughter] It should be true because of the [inaudible] [35:41] authority of the author, but no, no, they want me to back things up. It ought to be enough that I say Martin Luther nailed "The Ninety-Five Theses" on October 31st 1517, but they actually want me to footnote it. I hate

that. So, I have someone who helps me with that.

I sort of butcher the English language, as you've noticed. I have someone who helps with that. I remember that day when Jennifer Henson walked into my office and said, "I used to work for Charles Stanley. I've been going to the Journey. I just wanted to come in and meet you." And I thought, "Oh, goodness, I wonder what's going on here." I've had other people over the years, but Jen and I have had a good relationship, where I send her my stuff, and she sends it back to me at 3 a.m. in the morning and I don't care. And we've written some books together.

But God sent me what was needed when I was ready. He taught me to read, so I could read for 15 years, so I could get a handle on how to write. Now, I've been writing for almost that long – not quite, but almost that long.

I remember in that first meeting with Regal a guy I'm still friends with today. He asked me if I'd be interested in writing a book. And I told him that I would only be interested in writing books because books can go where I can't go. Because remember I'm this introverted guy. I sit in my little coaching room, do coaching, and splash it on the wall. I can write books now. Books go to all these places.

And that's been true. Books can go where I can't. They can go even where I won't go or be able to go. And that's been my publishing story. I am calculating for some other project we're working on how many books I have in print, but it's hundreds of thousands of books in print, actually. "Generosity Ladder" alone is pushing 200,000 copies in print.

These books have increased my influence beyond anything I could imagine. And my guess is that they've influenced you in some way or another. In fact, my best coaching person is someone who started with the books. Because if you're not a reader, you're not going to like my coaching networks very much. That's probably why a lot of you are here now and we have record attendance at this event.

On a related note, however, if you think about it, I would venture that if you made a list of the people that have influenced you in your ministry, 9 out of 10 of them have written books. So, why not you? Why not you? I had all the excuses in the world: speech impediment, C's in English, never really read many books, butcher the English language. I didn't have everything I needed to write a book on that week when those publishers showed up, but it's been gathered along the way. God sent me people. God sent me writers.

Now, because of the way the staff is organized, there's multiple writers that take little things that I write and create. It's amazing stuff that they do. I still have to do this. I wish we could hire people to do this, so I could just stay up in the room, but I still have to come down here and do this. But for some of you, you need to really consider this.

Now, here's what you don't know about my writing story. I've written a lot more books than you are even aware of. Some of them stay on my computer and never go anywhere, but I also write books just for the Journey Church for my congregation. You don't even see these. Every once in a while, somebody will come to the church, get one, and it shows up on Amazon. I quickly buy it to get it off of there. But you don't even know they exist. You won't ever see them in bookstores.

So, maybe you've never thought, "I want to be at a bookstore." Or, "I want to be on Amazon." But what about writing a book just to deepen your influence with your congregation? None of us is ever going to write a

book that's read by millions of people. Maybe you will, but generally speaking, the odds are against that.

That first literary agent, by the way, I was fairly convinced they showed up at my door because they knew of my affiliation with the guy who wrote the best-selling book in English history. You know that book. It sold 40 million copies. And I'm like, "If I could write that book, I wouldn't need a literary agent." They thought maybe because on my website I had an affiliation with them, they were looking for that next book. I am, too, but you know.

But to write a book that's read by 500 people? To write a book that's read by 1,000 people? How much effort would you go through if you could give a seminar to 500 or 250 people? And for it to be with them and impact them? The early church leaders that we all look up to, they were writing books for their congregation. That was their audience. There's only so much you can do on a Sunday, so now you have impact in your congregation.

I love it when my people give away my books to people who are not yet in the church. They use them as invite tools. It's a very time insensitive tool to give one of my books to somebody else, but once I wrote it, it's there for a long time. So, maybe you've thought about that.

I've had people go through my write-your-first-book workshops. And they decided to write a book just for their family. It's just a gift they want to give to the people they love most. Or perhaps you do have that big ministry idea that the Kingdom needs to hear. And there really is no better way to organize your thoughts, to finesse your ideas, to nuance your ideas in a way that people can use than to put it in a book. Because something happens when an idea goes from your head through your body and out through your fingertips. It's clarifying. I've had great ideas in my head that just are almost incomprehensible when I write them out. [laughter] So, we all know they weren't really that great in my head, but I thought they were.

So, in recent days, I've become more vocal about pushing my coaching networks to write a book. I was pushing advanced coaching this week. I wanted every one of them to write a book. I would love to see all of my coaching folks write a book.

Now, to write a book, you need a system. And I have one that is unsustainable. I have a book system that I teach that is sustainable, but the part of the formula that I don't give you is my formula for writing a book goes something like this. Massive input from books that I read plus hundreds of hours with my coaching networks equals one 250-page book. It's as simple as that. That's my formula.

Now, beyond that, I have developed systems. I've developed a system to turn a sermon series into a book. In fact, some of my most influential books are actually sermon series. "The Generosity Ladder," that's not a sermon series. That was a sermon. Then you need to have a formula. You can't just take your sermon notes and suddenly turn them into a book, because a sermon is not a book. This lecture that I'm giving to you is not a book. But you can develop a system. And you can decide to do some things before you deliver the sermon so that you set it up to make it easier to turn into a book. That's the kind of stuff I can teach you. That's the kind of stuff I can show you.

Beyond that, my regular ministry books have all been coaching lectures before. I lecture for two, three, four days, and then out of that, we get this book. Y you'll need a system to do this, but it is an influence multiplier. And it is a way for you to expand and multiply your influence. So, think about that. Consider that. Don't say no to it. And don't listen to all the excuses that you have in your own head. Some of those critics that you

associate with, your mother-in-law, Mrs. Robbins. She goes to church with my parents now. That kills me. But I'll see her one day. In Zion, we will meet.

All kidding aside, I've had some great conversations with them and gone fishing with her husband. When I went up to see my dad, I had some conversations. She doesn't remember it. She doesn't remember it at all. She's let it go. I've been holding this root of bitterness for years, and she hasn't thought about me one single time.

The only time she thinks about me is when she calls over to my parents' house. "Oh, is Nelson in town?" Okay, it's not that bad. I'm just having a little fun with it. I did try really hard that year. Still made a C. I probably would today if I had to go back to her class, actually.

Number eight, resist complacency. I know I said these were going to be all positive, but I had to at least do this one. I know it's a negative. Resist complacency. One of my favorite quotes about Christian ministry comes from a guy who I'm not even sure is a Christian. His name is Earl Nightingale. He often talked about Christian themes, but I cannot personally testify to his faith.

Earl Nightingale, who talked about success and about leadership for about 30 years in America before he passed, said something very profound one time when he simply said, "The opposite of success is not failure, but complacency." And Earl said it in a voice that sounded like God: "The opposite of success is not failure but complacency." I tried smoking cigars for about three years to see if I could get that voice. All I got was laryngitis, so I'll just stick with mine. [laughter]

The opposite of success is not failure but complacency. I might want to finesse that a little bit and say something like, "Between success, on the way to failure, there is the acceptance of complacency." But nonetheless, complacency is a big issue. My publisher tells me I should never quote a definition, but the definition of complacency is this: "A feeling of smug or uncritical satisfaction with oneself or one's achievements." That's actually what Webster defines as complacency: "A feeling of smug or uncritical satisfaction with oneself or one's achievements."

I've noticed this in certain pastors that I've worked with. They do fall into this smug satisfaction about where they are. And oftentimes, forgive me for perhaps being a little bit critical, it's an acceptance of average or worse. And so we get to this point sometimes where we begin to embrace average. We begin to be smug about average. We begin to be complacent about average.

And that is a disease, I think, in ministry, because there's always going to be somebody that you're doing better than. There's always going to be someone that you're baptizing more than or having more people than or whatever, but we have to be careful with this.

So, my favorite word for complacency is slack. It's kind of a phrase that I just kind of like saying, slack. But what happens is when you embrace complacency, you allow for slack in your ministry. Complacency is problematic because it comes in slowly. It comes in almost undetectably. It comes in unnoticeably. It's kind of like a gas leak. Oftentimes, you don't realize it's even there until it's too late.

The problem I teach about attendance is that the average church in America is declining by 9% a year. I think the devil has worked out the numbers that 9% is just enough that you don't notice it until it's too late. So, you're pastoring this church of 100, and over a year, it declines to 91. That's 9%. You think, "Well, that's not

that bad. 91, I can think of a few families that left the church, a key matriarch or patriarch that passed away." So, there's reasons why you're down to 91. Then, the next year, you fall down to 83 or 82. You think, "Oh, we had a tough year. The economy, the political season. I was out sick, whatever."

The next year, however, you're down to 74. Now, all of a sudden, you have this wakeup call that three years into this, you're down to 74. But the problem is the seeds of your destruction have already been sown, and now it's too late. It's much harder to turn that three-year decline down. It's almost like the devil is so crafty that he realizes, "If I cut the church in half, everybody would get real serious all of a sudden and start paying attention." So, he's just going to kill us slowly. That's kind of the way it works.

That's how complacency works. Complacency creeps into your health very slowly. It's not like you go to bed one night and you're fit, and then you wake up the next morning and you're fat. It doesn't happen like that. It's not like you eat one Big Mac, and all of a sudden, your cholesterol is up through the roof. It's slow.

And so this slack thing is so interesting to me, that complacency creeps into your health. You get slack about your diet, and you get slack about your exercise. Complacency creeps into your spiritual life, and you just slack off a little bit in your prayer time or in your bible study. Complacency creeps into your ministry like a gas leak, and you get slack about your personal growth or about your association with the right people. Complacency creeps into your church, and you get slack about church systems. And you're not following up with every first-time guest this week.

I teach this little equation in my coaching network that slack equals lack. I love that wordplay, because wherever you find slack, you will find lack. Because if you're slack in your health, there will be lack in your energy. If you're slack in your sermon preparation, there will be lack in your preaching. If you're slack with your assimilation efforts, you will lack when it comes to first-time guests. We can go on and on. Slack equals lack. But the paradox of complacency, and I think, the good news, if there is anything, about complacency...

If Mrs. Robbins could see my notes and see how I spelled complacency three different ways in the course of this page, she would give me another C. [laughter] I just looked down, and I'm like, "Com-pla-see-ahn-see-en-see-ah." I'm like, "I spelled that three different ways over two pages here." [laughter]

We all blame that now on autofill. Or what is it called? Autocorrect? On our phones, we send something and it autocorrects. I was sending something the other day, and I meant to say, "We'll meet day after tomorrow." I meant to say we'll meet day after tomorrow. Autocorrect changed "day" to "death." [laugh] So: "We'll meet death after tomorrow." And I thought to myself, I wonder how many times I've written death over the last year that it's been added to the autocorrect vocabulary. Or was I so far off on "day" that "day" became "d-e-a" or something like that. Sometimes I find that funny how these things work. I'm sure there's memes out there on social media of autocorrect that has really screwed things up, but you're giving up social media.

But here's the paradox of "com-pla-see-ahn-see-en-see" – complacency. The paradox is this. It's easy to fix if you catch it early. It's hard to fix if you catch it late. It's a paradox. Catch it late, it's very, very difficult to fix. Three years into a church decline, four years in, five years in, it's hard to catch. Four years into bad habits, it's hard to catch. Now, you've still got to fix it, but it's easier to catch it if you catch it early.

So, here's a few thoughts on how to catch complacency early. Actually, I spelled it right this time. How to catch complacency early? First of all, set high standards. Set high standards. Don't settle for anything less than best. How many first-time guests are you going to follow up on every week?

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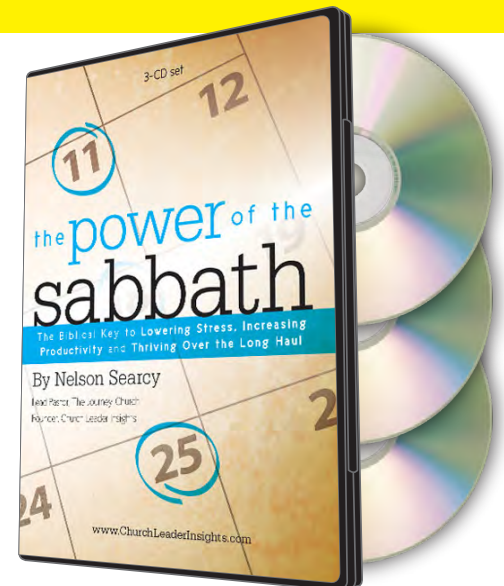
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All of them. that's going to be our standard. We're going to follow up on every first-time guest every week. We've got to set high standards. How many days when you get up in the morning are you going to guzzle down a bottle of water? Every day. I set it out now.

In fact, in my little coaching cave, I have them deliver the number of bottles of water that I'm going to drink in the course of a month. It's actually a lot cheaper than I thought. I was going to use one of those bottle services. Actually, I used an office supply delivery company.

So, about the 15th of every month, they show up with these cases. And I know I should be more ecofriendly, and I should wash out the water bottle. I've got a gazillion of these coaching water bottles that we send out. But there's something about the bottle and the crushing it. And I recycle, so give me a break. I recycle. They come pick it up outside my house every day.

So, I just have it delivered. And I can tell if I get behind. So, I'm here for four days. I've got to drink four bottles of water this weekend, because I'm behind, so it's two bottles of water next Sunday. But every day I'm going to do it. And I'm going to do it here. Before I go to bed tonight, I set the bottle of water in the bathroom sink. Because, you know, the first thing I go into is the bathroom in the morning. And there it is every day. You've got to figure out the things that are high standards in your life and say, "I'm not going to allow any slack to set in. I'm going to do it every day." Set high standards.

Number two, focus on the little things that have big results. In most areas of your life and in all systems of your life, there are a number of things that have big results. If you're going to – easy for me to say – if you're going to shortcut anything or if you're running behind on something, don't cut that thing. In another lecture somewhere, I call these keystone habits. That's not original with me. There was a book a few years ago called "The Power of Habit," and it taught me this term.

So, look, I would like to be able to tell you that I have a long, engaging, spiritually refreshing devotion every single day of my life. And I do, because I'm more spiritual than you. [laughter] But there are days when I don't. There are days when I'm under pressure. There are days when things don't go my way. But there are not days where I miss it. There's days where I have to shortcut it, if you will, but still, a prayer and a bible verse. If I don't do anything else, I'm going to at least say a prayer and I'm going to read a bible verse.

Now, honestly, it's not that many days that I have to shorten it that much. I remember the other morning I should have had a nice little time there. My wife had something and she was gone too, and all I had to do that morning was get up early, write, have my devotion, and take my son to school. That's all I had to do. Well, my son had a nosebleed at 6:15 in the morning. So, I get the writing done, the coffee on, and have a little devotion. He doesn't get up until seven. Nosebleed.

So, I'm trying to think of a verse and pray for his nosebleed to stop as I'm trying to help him. It got shortcutted. I picked it up a little more at lunch, but life happens. Things happen. So, you've got to say these are the minimums, the irreducible minimums of the little things. So, a little thing has a big result. I'm always going to do the bottle of water. I'm always going to walk 30 minutes if at all possible. Little things.

Then, pursue diligence. This is a little different than set high standards, by the way. Pursue diligence means that you go the extra mile. You not only try to do everything that you say you're going to do, but you push yourself to do just a little bit more. It's the baker's dozen. You're only required to do a dozen, but let's see if we can't do one more.

I write. I'm a pretty fast writer. This will surprise you. I write my 1,000 words. Maybe today I could push myself to do just one more paragraph, maybe just a little bit more outlining, just a little bit more. Not every day, not all of the time, but you stretch yourself to do just a little bit more from time to time just to overcompensate for the complacency that you know is going to set in.

My Sabbath is a bit like that. Most of the time, I have a pretty set routine. I have a pretty good devotional time. But on my Sabbath, I take just a little bit more time. Just slow it down a little bit more. A little bit more time in Scripture, a little bit more time in the journal, a little bit more time.

We're in a season right now where we're fasting. I don't fast all throughout the year. I've learned from Dr. Elmer Towns and other about the power of fasting at different times. But we're in a season of fasting. To me, it kind of picks up the slack that may be there, or it's preventative for the future slack that I don't want to have. That's diligence. It's just going a little bit beyond.

So, yes, I've got enough calories to have this meal tonight, but I'm not that hungry. I'm feeling pretty full. Let's just go ahead and stop. That's that diligence thing, where you're going the extra mile, or in this case, not going the extra mile, to create the slack that you know is going to come tomorrow morning when we have chocolate with our spouses. So, it just sort of works that way.

But I can tell you in working with over 3,000 pastors, complacency is the disease that impacts pastors most. I said it in another seminar called "Finish Well" that I have seen, having coached many pastors, that some pastors fall out of ministry because of the big three: money, sex, and power. But I've seen a lot more subtle. I've seen a lot more fall into a feeling of smug or uncritical satisfaction with oneself or one's achievements.

In my limited association with buddies that I have from college – not all of them but some of them – they've just settled for average. They built an entire repertoire, they built an entire system, if you will, that allows for complacency, embraces complacency, and in essence, they've fallen in love with complacency. My challenge for you is develop a holy discontent for the status quo. A holy discontent – you can talk to God about that in your devotion tomorrow. Develop a holy discontent for the status quo. Be diligent in your calling. Never settle. Resist and fight complacency with every tool that you can.

One of the ways that you do that is influencer nine. Number nine is to stay focused. I will do a quick review here. I won't go back all the way to number one. I'll review from the break. When we came back from the break, number five was invest in leaders. Number six was leverage systems. Number seven was write a book. You can get that done tonight. Just bring it with you tomorrow morning when you come down. [laughter]

Number eight is resist complacency, and number nine is to stay focused. These last two are really short, just in case you were wondering. Focus is an influence multiplier. It's also a very difficult thing to do. One of my early mentors used to say this all the time. I wish I could do it the way he said it, but all the time. Rarely did I hear him give a leadership talk to other pastors where he did not say in some form or another this phrase: "Light diffused has little power, but focused light can cut through steel." Isn't that a great phrase? Light diffused has little power.

Now, it has some power. It's lighting this room. That is diffused light. But for those of us who are sitting directly under a light, I don't think we're really worried about the impact it's going to have on us. If we took that same wattage – do we use wattage still, or is it lumens now? If you took that same wattage or lumens and you focused it like a laser, that literally could cut through the table, cut through the chair, cut through

the desk that we're sitting at. So it is in our lives that when we are unfocused, yes, we can do some things. Yes, we can have some impact. But when you can focus your life, there's real influence. There's real power.

I've noticed that complacency, if you tie it back to number eight, is often the result of failure to focus. And so trying to do too many things, trying to diffuse your energy, doing too many things at once. Studies have shown, by the way, that it's impossible to multitask. It is. I used to pride myself on being a good multitasker. I was just really good at switching in between things fast. Now, I've learned that's a bad way. Work one thing to completion, but that's another talk.

Complacency is often the result of failure to focus. And then I would say an unfulfilled calling is often the result of the wrong focus. You can be pursuing your calling and get diffused because you're not focused, but then you can really miss out on your calling because you've got the wrong focus. If you think about it, the most influential leaders, really not just in leaders, but in all areas of life, are focused leaders.

Now, I've got two Warren Buffett quotes before we leave. And I don't like to quote anybody twice. I wish one of these was Jimmy Buffett, and I wish one of these was Warren Buffett, but it's not. They're both from Warren Buffett. I have no idea of Warren Buffett's spiritual commitment, but I have two quotes, one now and one in just a moment when we wrap up.

One is not so much a quote, but it is something I've learned from Warren Buffet and I've heard him talk about several times. Because, whatever you think, he is focused and has done some amazing things in the financial world. And he said one time in explaining his success as an investor... I mean, he may be horrible to his kids, horrible to his wife, I don't know. I hope he's a believer and all that. But he did say in defining his success as an investor that he had an unwavering ability to stay within – and here's the phrase – his "circle of competence." I just love that phrase.

He had an unwavering ability to stay within his circle of competence. Competence, not complacency. Circle of competence. So, what he said is, in all the things he could put his money in, there's only a handful of things that he really understands. And he only invests in things that he understands. And every time he's gotten into an investment that was a little outside of his circle of competency, he's made a mistake.

I love this. He invests in Coca-Cola because he gets it. We drink it. You buy another one. It's a good thing. He did. He invested in Dairy Queen because he gets it. He invested in railroads because he gets it. They move stuff from here to there along tracks. And he avoided getting involved in the tech bubble that led to the first crash. And he wasn't in any of those big mortgage things that led to the second crash that's happened over the last 10 years.

I just find that phrase really interesting. It shouldn't be all that new to us, because most of us know the old saying, the old sole, if you will, pun intended, "He is a jack of all trades and a master of none." It's because there's no core competence. There's no circle of competence. And here's what I've observed that I think you will agree with. The most influential leaders have mastered a few things, just a few things. They've chosen to focus. And that's a challenge to you. My challenge to you, my suggestion to you is to focus on just a few things. Not that many, a few.

I am unable to do more than a few things well. Just ask my wife. I'm unable to do many things well. I'm unable to do many things well. I can't do many things. I'm worthless. I try to change the lightbulb, and the whole thing falls out. We've got a high ceiling. We bought this thing. You're supposed to reach up there. It's

an extension, and you're supposed to change it. I finally get it in the lightbulb. I unscrew the lightbulb. I pull the lightbulb down. The whole thing falls out. I'm terrible at this.

I'm not good at many things, but I've asked God to help me be good at a few things. And I've tried to be like Buffett in a way. Sometimes I'm more like Jimmy than Warren, but I've tried to be like Buffet in a way and say, "Okay, what is my circle of competency? And I'll just stay right here. I'm not going to get outside there."

Every once in a while, somebody will come up to me at one of these seminars and say, "When are you going to do a seminar on that?" And I'm like, "Never. Journey's not good at it. I'm not good at it. I'm sure I've got coaching alumni who are good at that, but I'm not going to do one on that. I'm not good at it." It's not inside my competency.

Now, my competency happens to be in an area I really love. I love church and I love pastors and all that, so I'll just stay right here. But I've tried to figure out in my life, and it does change a little bit over time, the three or four things that will be my focus.

I want to challenge you to do that, too. What will be the three or four things that will be your focus in ministry? And, of course, this ties back to your calling. When God calls you, He doesn't call you to do many things. He calls you to do just a few. What's going to be the focus of your life from a professional standpoint, if you will? I know, I read the book, too. We're not supposed to be professionals, but we are.

From a professional standpoint, my focus is pastoring the Journey Church. I'm less hands-on today than I've ever been, but then in other ways I'm more hands-on than I've ever been. It's just different. I pastor the Journey Church, I serve as a coach to other pastors, and I write. Those are the three things. Those may shift. They may change. One may replace another. We'll see. Ten, fifteen years ago, I wasn't writing, so I'm willing to let them shift over time. They don't shift every month. They don't shift every week. They don't change every hour.

By the way, I've got stuff I'd love to write about, but it's not in my circle of competency. So, until God releases me from one of these. Like, I've got this whole idea about this thing that would lead me to travel and go up and down a certain portion of the United States. I've got a whole book idea about it. And I'd kind of enjoy doing it. I'd like to do it. Not in my circle of competence. Under a different set of circumstances, maybe something would happen with that, I don't know. At least right now, it's a fascination, but it's not a focus.

Be careful about these things. You can get fascinated by something. You can get a fanatical interest in something, but it may not be in your focus. I actually think right now that if I turned down something in my area of focus, and I went and did this other little thing that's sort of fascinating, I'd be miserable at it. Because I'm not in God's will. I'm not in my circle of competence.

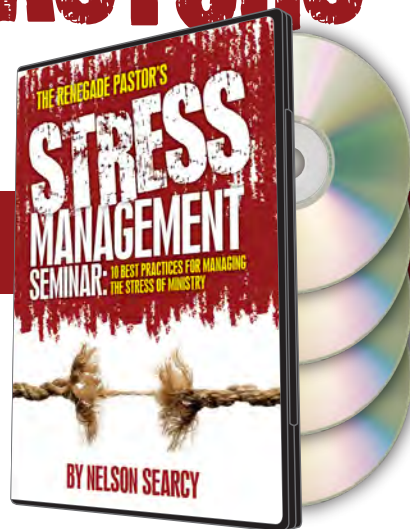
By the way, if you don't like my phrase "circle of competence" and you don't like Warren Buffett, just think of it as being in the center of God's will. You're Pentecostal. You've got to get under the spout when the Glory comes out. And if you're not in the spout, the Glory is coming out, but you're not getting any on you and somebody else is getting it. And bless them, Lord, bless them. So, that's it, just a few things.

Now, do I do a few other things occasionally? Yeah, I do, but I don't like it. You'd be surprised how many things I say no to. In fact, if you don't know Scott's story, when Scott first came on staff, he was a coaching network member, pastor in a church. I'm not in the business of hiring people away from their church to

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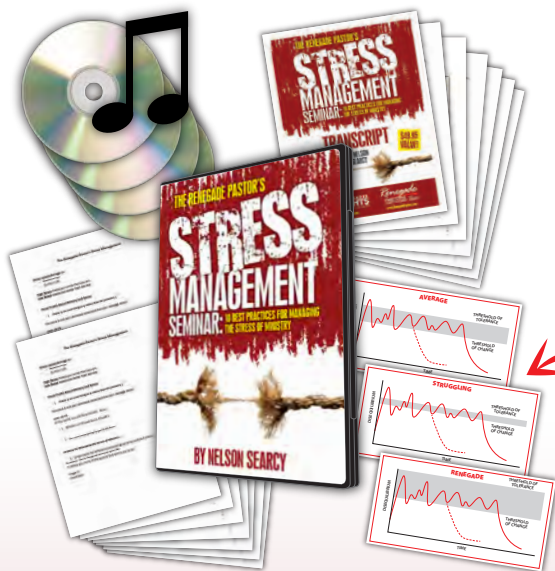
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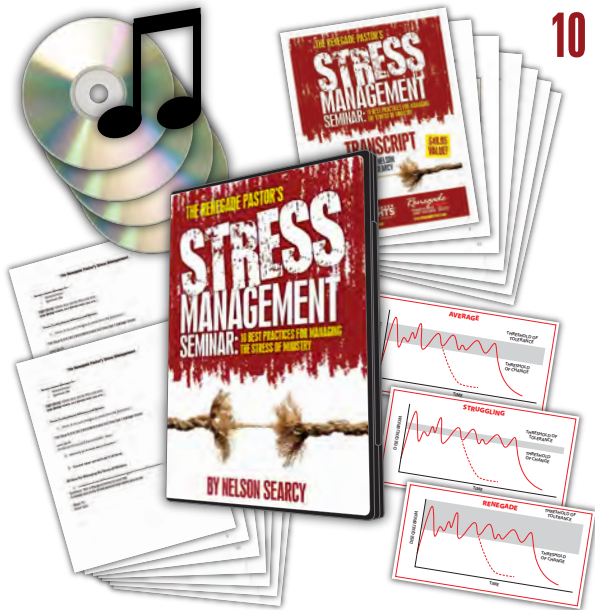
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come work for my ministry, but I said, “Hey, Scott. Do you have enough time in leading your church that you could just tell people no for me?” And he did so well, they’d never invite me again. He just told them no.

But I say no to all kinds of conferences, all kinds of speaking things. My publisher has a wonderful plan for my life. I say no to that. Because I’ve learned a life diffused – is that what my mentor said – life diffused has little power, but a focused life has great influence. Or maybe he said light diffused, but I think you get the point.

What’s your life focus? Is it focused enough? Are you trying to do too many things? And then, is it the right focus? Is there something that God wants to bring into focus right now in your life, something that God wants to adjust? Give Him permission to do that.

Finally – yay – number ten. You didn’t applaud, so you must be okay. Sometimes at the Journey, I say, “In conclusion...” “Yay.” [laughter] But what they don’t know is I learned to preach from the Apostle Paul, so I say “in conclusion” three or four times. “Finally, brothers, in conclusion, in my own handwriting, I write this final note to you.” They don’t know.

Number ten, finish well. Finish well. Even though I did not start with a joke or story or a compelling insight, I did start with a parable. The parable of the talent, we often call it, but it should be called the parable of the steward, I believe. And that’s the words that the steward heard. “Well done. You finished well.” Paul says it differently. In a moment, we’ll look at that.

Finishing well means that you avoid the big tripwires, pitfalls that will keep you from finishing well. In another resource, I talked about money and sex and pride, even a little bit on moral complacency, failure, things like that. In order to finish well, you do have to avoid those landmines. But you also have to have a commitment to finish well. You have to have a long-term view.

Again, not to quote Warren Buffett twice in two points, but I will. This is actually a quote from Warren Buffett. He said this: “It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it.” He then added, “If you think about that, you’ll do things differently.” I couldn’t have said it better. I wish I had said it. It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it, I’ve always said, because I heard Warren Buffett say it one time.

So, as leaders, we have to pursue influence multipliers. We have to also protect ourselves from things that would constrict, like a restrictor plate, constrict our influence. We have to certainly build hedges of protection against temptation, sexual temptation, financial temptation, whatever it might be. We have to also have this long-term view, this overriding commitment, realizing that it’s not about us. That it is about God’s grace. It is about God’s strength. It is about this great cloud of witnesses that we are surrounded by. It’s about being around people that have the same commitment that we have, the commitment to finish well.

And I say it just about at every talk that I give in a setting like this. Let’s you and I, by God’s grace, make a commitment to be in ministry for the rest of our lives. And that’s my prayer for you, that you would fulfill your calling, that you would finish well.

So, I end with the words of 2 Timothy 4:1-8, Paul talking to Timothy, but talking to us: “I solemnly urge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who will someday judge the living and the dead when he comes to set up His Kingdom: Preach the word. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching.” And that’s 2 Timothy 4:3. “For a time is coming

when people will no longer listen to the sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears wish to hear.”

Verse 4: “They will reject the truth and chase after myths.” This is actually the key verse for our entire network: “But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don’t be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the good news and fully carry out the ministry God has given you. As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near.”

Verse 7 – you know it: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me, the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give me on the day of His return. And the prize is not just for me, but for all who eagerly look forward to His appearing. Even so, come Lord Jesus.” Amen.

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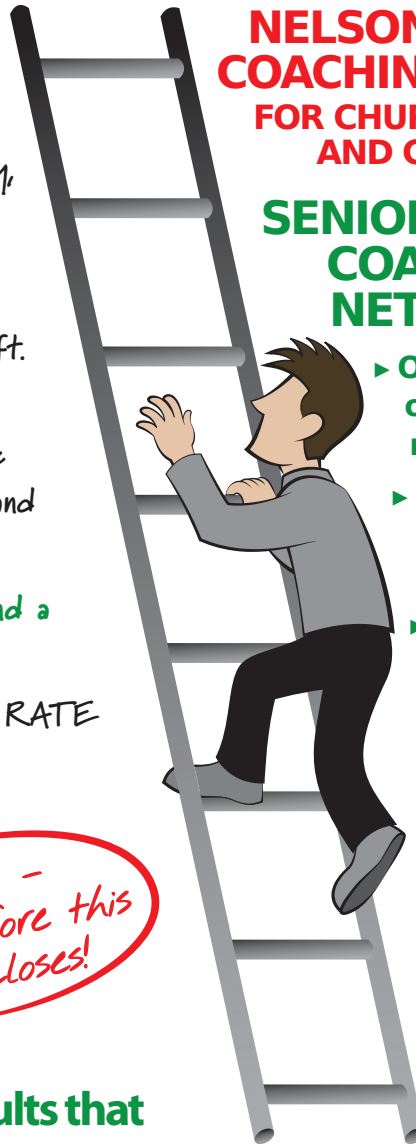
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