

“In our world, we like to ‘get things done’ but seldom take time to mold the leaders of tomorrow. Preston Poore’s new book combines spiritual insight with the nuts and bolts of solid leadership. In *Disciplined Leader*, Preston offers readers practical guidance on how to apply timeless Christian principles to leadership. It’s a must-read for every leader.”

DAN T. CATHY, chairman and CEO of Chick-fil-A, Inc.

“You have the potential to be a difference-maker in today’s chaotic, leadership-starved world. But to see positive change in others, you must first allow yourself to be changed. In *Disciplined Leader*, Preston Poore connects a Christian leader’s need for personal discipleship to their leadership calling. This inspiring and practical book, written by a man who’s been in the trenches of both life and leadership, will guide you toward better leadership by way of better discipleship.”

CHRIS ROBINSON, executive vice president of The John Maxwell Team

“Preston Poore has learned through life experience that leadership truly flows from who we are, not from what we do. In *Disciplined Leader*, Preston provides the rationale and tools to help leaders develop a strong, Christ-centered foundation for unimpeachable character and lasting influence.”

ANGIE WARD, assistant director of the doctor of ministry program  
at Denver Seminary

“Preston’s years of wisdom, gained from integrating and living out his faith in the workplace, are displayed in *Disciplined Leader*. Leaders will be challenged and encouraged to bring their whole selves to the workplace as they learn from the practical experiences Preston shares.”

DAVE KATZ, president and COO of Coca-Cola Consolidated, Inc.

“Preston Poore has written the field manual for anyone who aspires to be an effective, impactful leader. *Disciplined Leader* makes a clear and persuasive case for development through discipleship. Future difference-makers who apply these biblical principles will see powerful results!”

JOHN FEATHERSTON, senior director of new ventures at Chick-fil-A, Inc.

“Experience is the most powerful teacher, and today’s Christian leaders must quickly grow from all experiences—both good and bad. Through inspiring stories and wisdom, Preston Poore gives guidance to Christians who can learn from his life and career challenges. Odds are you will find counsel for your own situation in *Disciplined Leader*.”

DEAN CROWE, founder and CEO of Rally Foundation for  
Childhood Cancer Research

“*Disciplined Leader* provides practical tools, tips, and action points for living out the basic Christian disciplines. Preston’s personal stories are moving and lead the reader to see how applying these principles makes a difference. This resource is useful for new believers or someone who has followed Christ for years. It encourages and equips the individual but can also be used as a group study with the discussion questions and facilitator guide. *Disciplined Leader* is a great resource for anyone desiring to walk closer with the Lord.”

BRYANT WRIGHT, president of Send Relief, former senior pastor  
at Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, and founder of Right from  
the Heart Ministries

“I recommend this book for those who desire to take their relationship with God to the next level. *Disciplined Leader* provides a good balance between teaching principles and practical application. The personal stories are powerful in connecting the principles to real life and compelling you to action. Preston does a wonderful job of appealing to both the head and the heart, which is key to growth. Buckle up and get ready to be transformed.”

DAWN S. KIRK, owner of Kirk Coaching Group, author of *Heartbeat Leadership*, best-selling coauthor of *The Success Blueprint*, entrepreneur, speaker, and former Fortune 100 executive

“Whatever leadership is, it isn’t easy. Business leaders face the daily challenges of ambiguity, uncertainty, risk, conflict, and much more. In *Disciplined Leader*, Preston Poore shows how Christian values and beliefs can guide leaders to do the right things, which in secular commerce

may be called governance, stewardship, equality, engagement, and empowerment. In truth, these are all entirely congruent with the Christian faith, and being a disciplined leader ensures unparalleled and infectious strength, faith, and courage. The undeniable connection between discipleship and effective leadership in modern-day business is beautifully highlighted in this must-read book.”

STEPHEN GIBSON, managing director and chartered business psychologist at Gibson Hallmark Ltd.

“There is no command to make converts in Scripture! There is a command to make disciples. However, that command is ignored, watered down, redefined, and disobeyed. Preston Poore not only lays out the biblical mandate in a very real manner but also makes it practical. I especially like that *Disciplined Leader* is geared for small groups where encouragement and accountability can and should exist. Read this book and join in the excitement of becoming like Jesus. Pass it forward.”

DR. HAL HADDEN, founder of Christian Leadership Concepts

“*Disciplined Leader* offers spiritual and practical tools to lead exceptionally with prayer, peace, perseverance, and promise. As leaders, it can be difficult to see how your faith and leadership interact, but this book helps readers understand effective ways to lead with power.”

ALLISON LIDDLE, best-selling author, leadership trainer at Allison Liddle Consulting, president of Prosper Wealth Management, and participant on *The Social Movement* TV series

“A serious book for people seriously wanting to become, and help others become, disciples! And if you’re not serious about wanting to be a disciplined and discipling leader, about what are you serious? *Disciplined Leader* is a well-executed effort to help believers be strong in the Lord and help others do the same. An unashamed mix of solid theology, intentional action, and strict accountability, this is a book to put into practice! I pray that God will use *Disciplined Leader* to produce just that—leaders who are disciples making disciples.”

DR. BOB EWELL, church discipleship consultant with The Navigators

“Powerful, insightful, foundational, practical, life-altering, timely, and a must-read! Preston has written a work that is not just another book but a tool that can help any sincere individual empower their faith to go from head knowledge to heart knowledge and then to practical life knowledge. Our culture is not in desperate need of more knowledge but of more application that results in real-life transformation! Maybe like no other time in American history, Christianity is at a crossroads of conviction and faith. Tools like what Preston has developed are essential for such a time as this. Having known Preston for almost forty years, I can attest that this book is not simply what he wrote but something he lives. Do yourself a favor and immerse yourself in this work.”

JEFF CRABTREE, lead pastor, founder, and president of Connections Church, and founder and president of Life Connections Network and Next Level Life Coaching

“Preston Poore has written a masterpiece. *Discipled Leader* is a must-read for anyone focused on moving their life’s work from ‘ordinary’ to ‘extraordinary’ in the area of spiritual leadership. The book serves as a dynamic balance for positive action for Christians who truly want to make a difference, change their world, and lead with joy.”

IRA BLUMENTHAL, founder and president of CO-OPPORTUNITIES, Inc., and best-selling author of *Managing Brand You*

“Jesus equipped his disciples for a singular task and a simple strategy: make disciples who make disciples. *Discipled Leader* builds a bridge between Jesus’s training of his first-century followers and the day-to-day lives of twenty-first-century believers. Those who humbly traverse this bridge will find themselves informed, transformed, and re-formed as Jesus’s disciples. My advice: Learn from the content but don’t fail to listen prayerfully to the heart. If you listen, you will hear the voice of a Savior reaching through you into the world.”

RICK DUNN, lead pastor of Fellowship Church, coauthor of *Shaping the Journey of Emerging Adults*, and author of *The Northfield Way*

# DISCIPLINED LEADER

*Inspiration from a Fortune 500 Executive for  
Transforming Your Workplace by Pursuing Christ*

Preston Poore



*Disciplined Leader: Inspiration from a Fortune 500 Executive for Transforming Your Workplace by Pursuing Christ*

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## FOREWORD

MY FIRST MEANINGFUL leadership discussion with Preston Poore occurred on the patio of a small diner on the campus of the University of Tennessee. Like true Southerners, we talked faith, family, and football over plates of fried chicken and ice-cold Coca-Colas.

The conversation naturally turned toward our shared passion for leading well. Preston offered, “I want to tell you my story.” With that simple, humble introduction, he invited me further into his life. In doing so, he also invited me to journey further into the life of Jesus.

Long after we had consumed our Southern cuisine, Preston and I eagerly explored the practical realities of Jesus’s singular missional command: make disciples. The longer we talked, the more substantially two very specific desires planted their roots deep within me. First, I longed to understand more about how gifted leaders can take daily, practical steps toward becoming discipled leaders. Second, I wanted to learn, not only from Preston but with him, how to take those steps in my own life.

*Discipled Leader* stirred those desires once again. I am confident it will do the same for you. By telling his story, Preston offers both himself and his Savior to the reader. As he pairs his story with key discipleship principles in the Scriptures, Preston unveils Jesus’s powerful vision for our leadership journeys. To personalize that vision, he provides critical reflection questions that guide us on a practical path forward.

On the one hand, this book cannot quite reproduce the personal intimacy of the conversation Preston and I had on that patio years ago. However, if you read *Discipled Leader* prayerfully, with or without fried



chicken and a Coke, I am confident you will come very close to that moment. I am also convinced that you, like Preston, will soon find yourself sitting across the table from a friend or colleague, offering your own story as a pathway to Jesus. That's just what disciplined leaders do.

And it's precisely how God changes the world, more simply and more profoundly than we could ever have imagined, one disciplined leader at a time.

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Eph. 3:20–21 NIV).

Entrusted by Grace,  
Rick Dunn, PhD  
Fellowship Church, Lead Pastor

## INTRODUCTION

# Where Are Today's Christian Leaders?

*Everybody thinks of changing humanity,  
and nobody thinks of changing himself.*

—LEO TOLSTOY, “THREE METHODS OF REFORM”

SHORTLY AFTER I was promoted to a management position in 2005, I had two direct reports quit within six months of each other. I will never forget their similar reasons for leaving, which they made sure to tell me: “I just don’t like the way you treat me, Preston. And, well, you’re condescending.”

*Me? Condescending? I thought. As if they know the pressure I have to deal with. Like they have the experience to do what I do.*

Before their departures, I thought I was on the fast track to success. I figured that if I continued driving change, performing well, and delivering results during my new assignment, I would be promoted again. My leadership skills were blooming, and I was confident in my ability to make a positive difference.

But somewhere in my ambition to succeed, I lost my focus on God.

I started leaving him at home and did not live out my Christian faith in the workplace. I saw my faith and work as two separate things. My priorities got out of whack; my thoughts and actions were self-serving. I didn't necessarily care about people, only what they could do for me.

All too soon, our results nose-dived. I struggled to gain traction with my new manager, team, and business partners. I constantly bickered with my manager and always felt like I had to prove myself. I felt maltreated and disrespected.

I saw my team as a means to an end and never made any true connections. Then those two direct reports left. Covering for my lost employees, I constantly traveled and consequently exhausted myself.

Careerwise, I had hit rock bottom. At that point, I journaled:

My heart is heavy today. I feel crushed. The past few weeks were extremely difficult. Another employee quit, I received feedback on my condescending tone again, role shift, and an overall feeling of devaluation. My manager continues to dissect every comment I make and criticize my actions. This year's been a valley of despair. I feel torn apart and weak.

Inevitably, my challenges at work spilled over to my home life, where I was always irritable. To top it off, my beloved grandfather, Papa, passed away.

Something had to change.

Thankfully, my manager directed me to engage an executive coach to help me fix things. And so I did. I also began to pray and read the Bible more intentionally. I sought God's help in the depths of my despair. As I prayed and worked with my coach, I realized the common thread in all my issues was *me*.

I was not acting like a leader—at my job, in my home, or of myself. My spiritual life and work life were incongruent. I went to church on Sunday but acted like an atheist during the workweek. At work, I thought I had all the leadership and management stuff figured out and did not need God's wisdom, help, or direction.

In other words, I was condescending even toward God.

Still, through these trials and tribulations, God answered my prayer and broke me. In my breaking, I realized I needed to change before I could create positive change in the workplace. I discovered that the surest way to realize my leadership potential was to become a follower of Jesus—not just on Sunday or at home but twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. I needed to take what I learned in the church pew and live it out in the workplace.

I needed to become a disciplined leader.

I have worked at Fortune 500 companies for decades. I know what it is like to be responsible for multimillion-dollar budgets, to lead employees of all kinds, and to work for highly driven executives. I have been blessed to be recognized within my industry many times over for the work that my team and I have accomplished. I believe I am a hard worker who asks the best of myself and my employees. My professional path has not always been smooth—whose is? But I remain grateful for every job I have had. My career has given me much.

But I never want to lose sight of my first calling as a disciple of Christ.

Yet, when you spend forty to eighty hours a week at your job, it is easy to lose perspective. You slide into the false belief that what you do defines who you are rather than allowing who you are to define what you do. And if you are a Christian, who you are is a disciple of Christ.

By *disciple* I mean someone who passionately pursues an intimate fellowship with Jesus, seeking his presence, will, wisdom, and guidance in every facet of life—family, work, school, and community. In collaboration with the Holy Spirit, disciples are intentionally growing in their faith through consistent practices like Bible study, prayer, and fellowship with other believers. As disciples develop Christlike character, their changed lives can't help but change the world around them. God works in them and through them to accomplish his purposes as the disciples actively participate in God's work.

So why does it seem like there is a dearth of disciples in today's secular marketplace? Why does it sometimes feel as if you're the only Christian

at your workplace? How are you supposed to bring the world-opposing tenets of the Christian faith to bear on your everyday professional decisions?

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*Who you are must change before what you do changes.*

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Honestly—and it took me a long time to figure this out—it is not about changing your leadership style. While learning how to be a better leader is necessary, and many excellent books have been written to that end, changing your style will not change who you are.

Who you are must change before what you do changes.

In the following chapters, I will share personal stories that delve into the seldom-discussed connection between personal discipleship and corporate leadership. Each story is accompanied by two imperatives: one for your spiritual life and one for your leadership. I hope you will see how these imperatives are connected to each other within each chapter. I pray that you will begin to notice and experience how what you hear from God in the quiet of your morning prayers translates to effective leadership, even in the noise of a busy workday.

If you are a struggling Christian leader in the secular marketplace, I pray you will be challenged to engage in the hard work of daily discipleship. If you are an experienced leader, I pray you will be reminded of the fundamentals of the faith and the desperate need to disciple other Christian leaders.

Becoming who you are meant to be as a Christian leader does not begin with focusing on *leadership*. Your calling toward better leadership is a calling toward deeper *discipleship*.

That's how you become a disciplined leader.

## HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK

***Set your intention and remain intentional.*** Why did you decide to invest time reading this book? What do you hope to gain regarding discipleship and leadership? Understand the why and what, and then be intentional to achieve them.

***Focus on the anchor Scripture.*** Each chapter starts with a key verse. Take time to read it and the surrounding context in your Bible.

***Pause and reflect.*** It is easy to read and not think about what you have read. Pause while you are engaged in the material, then reflect on what it means and how you would apply the principles. Consider highlighting, marking, and writing notes in the margins.

***Answer and discuss the study questions.*** Review and think deeply about your answers. Compare your thoughts with the material and with other people's responses.

***Apply, apply, apply.*** You learn by doing. Apply each principle to your everyday life, otherwise the material will go in one ear and out the other.

***Take notes on what you've learned.*** After applying a principle, write down what you experienced and learned. Did you succeed or fail? What will you do next time?

***Share your story.*** Once you have read, applied, and learned, share your story with someone else. Sharing your story will help you to teach others or will enable them to hold you accountable to living out the principles in this book.

## CHAPTER ONE

# SEEK

*As a disciple, invest time with God.*

*As a leader, seek God when  
making decisions.*



*Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness (in holy living, in conformity to God's will in thought, purpose, and action), so that the man of God may be complete and proficient, well fitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

—2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17 AMPC

MY WIFE, CARLA, sat silently in the passenger seat. We had just left dinner with some new professional acquaintances, and I thought the opportunities that had been presented to us looked very promising. I was lost in a whirlwind of hopeful thinking when Carla's voice broke into my future plans.

“Preston, something doesn't feel right about Hunter and his wife. Everything sounds great, but I don't think the role is the right thing for you or us. I don't want you to take the job.”

I could not believe my wife's words. Why couldn't she see the incredible opportunity Hunter was offering us? I was so frustrated. We drove the rest of the way home in silence.

A few months earlier, I was a struggling salesman. I could not close accounts or secure large orders. I did not understand how to open a sales call, handle objections, or present benefits over features. So I enrolled in a local sales-training course.

That's when I met Hunter.

He owned the training franchise and was my instructor. I instantly connected with him. He was a charismatic leader and a successful salesperson, and he was out to make a positive difference. And he backed it up with an impressive résumé. He was the number-one salesperson for his international training organization two years in a row. He conducted training with many Fortune 500 companies, played on the PGA tour, and even hosted a local radio program. Hunter's success enabled

him to live in a luxurious house, enjoy a country club membership, and drive a sports car. Hunter seemed to have it all.

I wanted to be like Hunter.

He was also a gifted facilitator, and I was inspired by his selling principles. With Hunter's help, I grew personally and professionally as the class progressed. In fact, I ended up winning the class sales-talk competition. As I got to know Hunter, I learned about his mission to develop people and help them reach their potential. Hunter's mission spoke to my heart, his lifestyle appealed to my ego, and his work was in line with what I had dreamed of doing someday.

I wanted to change careers and achieve the same success. I believed if I attached myself to Hunter and his mission, I would move into a job with greater significance. So I told Hunter I wanted to work with him and transition careers to the training industry.

He liked the idea and offered me a robust compensation package, including a base salary, commission, and a quarterly bonus. All I had to do was fill training courses and develop new business opportunities. To close the deal, Hunter and his wife invited us to dinner. They believed it was essential to meet Carla and gain her commitment to the role as well.

The restaurant was on the top floor of a downtown skyscraper overlooking the city skyline. As we enjoyed great food and wine, I thought, *I could get used to this*. Hunter and his wife explained the business, the role I would play, and why they wanted me to join their company. They made the opportunity sound amazing.

At that moment, I told myself I wanted the role for all the right reasons: to make a positive difference in people's lives, to exercise my talents and skills, and to engage the community. Nothing was going to deter me from the future that surely awaited us.

Over the next couple of days, my resolve deepened. I convinced Carla to come along. I promoted my agenda and said all the right things. Was I in God's Word? Yep. At least, my eyes were passing over the pages of Scripture most days. Did I pray about it? Sure. But mostly to tell God what *I* thought would be best in the situation. Did I seek God's wise counsel? No, but I requested his "blessing"—by which I meant success, recognition, and a better lifestyle.

The truth is, I never slowed down to listen to God or Carla.

I invested all kinds of time in prospecting and speaking to civic clubs to drum up business leads. Sales rarely materialized, and I discovered how hard it is to sell an intangible, thousand-dollar product. The workdays were extremely long, selling during the day and attending training sessions at night. I always felt like I was on the verge of closing some big deals, but my activities rarely led to accomplishment. I had a hard time making any commission or bonuses.

Then my personal Black Monday hit. I walked into my office one day and found a letter from Hunter in my mailbox. My salary and bonuses were cut. I had been moved to a draw plus commission. The different compensation package meant Hunter would loan money to me monthly, and I would pay him back through a percentage of my sales. If my commissions were over the draw, I would be rewarded with additional income. If not, I would owe Hunter money.

I had known the role would be tough, but that kind of compensation package was not what I signed up for. I pressed Hunter. He told me I could leave at any time. Then he began distancing himself from me and no longer offered support. I was isolated and scared.

The next six months were challenging for Carla and me. I often did not earn enough to make up the draw and so owed Hunter money. The lack of income and job anxiety put a lot of pressure on our marriage. I wondered why God ever let me get into the situation. Then it hit me.

And I felt like an idiot.

Signs and messages had been all around me not to take the job. In fact, God's most vocal sign had sat next to me in the immediate aftermath of the job offer. To my chagrin, I ignored her and the inner conflict deep in my soul that I was seeking worldly fulfillment and accomplishment rather than the abundant life God was calling me to. I had exercised terrible judgment, and the pain we experienced was self-inflicted.

I got on my knees and sought God's forgiveness for not listening to him. I began to ask how I could seek his will rather than mine. I asked for wisdom, discernment, and help to navigate the rough waters. I also asked Carla for forgiveness for not listening to her and choosing to advance my agenda. I had been so sure of myself, and I had not led us

well. I had made a colossal mistake and admitted it to her in shame. Thankfully, she forgave me.

I accepted the consequences of my career decision and developed an exit strategy. I worked hard to break even with the draw. With God's help, I found a more stable job in another industry. Even though the situation was tough, God was glorified in the end, and he worked things out for my family's good.

But what an unfortunate and unnecessary detour!

### SEEK WISDOM

Maybe my detour was not totally unnecessary. I did learn an invaluable truth about leadership: discipled leaders seek God when making decisions. And leaders have to make *a lot* of decisions.

Typically a leader's daily decision-making process includes defining the problem or opportunity, determining root causes, brainstorming potential solutions and implications, choosing the optimal solution, acting on the decision, and examining its impact. (We will explore how to make sound workplace decisions and solve challenging problems later in this chapter.) Decision-making ranges from simple to complex. The more facts, logic, analysis, advice, and experience, the better. But what happens when the circumstances are ambiguous and you do not have all the facts? Where do you turn in a crisis, or while dealing with challenging people, or in the midst of a rapidly changing environment?

Good decision makers often turn to intuition, that inner voice, sense, hunch, or gut feeling that arises when making a decision. Intuition is a feeling you have about the decision, good or bad. Leaders combine information, experience, and intuition to make hard decisions.

But let's be honest: our intuition is often wrong. The Bible says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death" (Prov. 14:12). Australian writer Christina Stead writes, "Intuition is not infallible; it only seems to be the truth."<sup>1</sup> If our intuition can be wrong, what is the discipled leader to do?

The key to not just good but great decision-making is to seek God. A discipled leader soaks in God's Word and asks for wisdom (James 1:5).

This is the surest way to seek God's guidance. A disciplined leader also recognizes other people (such as my wife) who are soaking themselves in God's Word and can speak wisdom into the leader's life. God is the source of wisdom, and he can see things you cannot. As the following sections explore, you can learn how to read God's Word to help you distinguish what is true and right. The Bible says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105). Regarding my opportunity with Hunter, had I honestly sought God and his wisdom instead of convincing myself that I knew what to do, I would have avoided the self-inflicted pain.

Perhaps this approach to decision-making both in and out of the workplace surprises you. The Bible is full of spiritual insight and moral teaching, you may think to yourself, but what does it have to do with making tough calls as a leader? Isn't it a little outdated for the business world? Before we consider how to read God's Word for wisdom in our lives as disciples and leaders, let's look at what the Word of God is and how it came to us.

## THE WORD BROUGHT TO LIFE

What makes the Bible special, more useful and life changing than any book on leadership, psychology, or business management ever could be? In a daily quiet time book titled *The Experience*, Henry and Richard Blackaby write about the Bible's uniqueness:

The difference between other books and God's Word is that the Bible is more than words on a page. It is alive and powerful. . . . When you need to make a change in your life, *the Holy Spirit will take the Scriptures and work them out in your life*. You can read your Bible with confidence that God has the power to do anything he wants in the lives of people.<sup>2</sup>

The Bible calls the Word of God "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions

of the heart” (Heb. 4:12), but to read the Bible for all its worth and to experience spiritual growth, you must have a specific partner in prayer: the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings God’s Word to life in our hearts. Once you trust Jesus and commit your life to him, he gives you a thirst for him and his Word. When you read the Bible, it shapes and forms your mind, beliefs, and behaviors. You are given the desire and motivation to obey the words of the Bible through the help of the Holy Spirit.

To some, the Holy Spirit is a nebulous part of the Trinity: an unknowable entity that hovers here and there and does something for us, but we are not sure what. But the Holy Spirit is much more than that and integral to the life of every believer. If you feel that you do not quite understand the role of the Holy Spirit in your life, it may help to think about a sailboat gliding on the water. What propels it? The sails capture the wind, and it moves the boat forward. In 2 Timothy 3, Paul writes that God “breathed” his Word, the Bible. The Greek word for *breathed* describes a ship with its wind-filled sails carried along the water.<sup>3</sup> Just like the wind with a sailboat, God blew wind into the sails of the Bible’s authors, guiding and carrying them along.

What was this wind God blew? The Holy Spirit. Also in 2 Timothy 3, Paul says that *all Scripture* is the product of the Holy Spirit’s work. The Holy Spirit filled the writers and propelled them so that the produced words—though they still bear the marks of the writers’ personalities—remained the true and certain words of God himself.<sup>4</sup> In other words, God revealed his truth and thoughts to men and inspired them to record it.

Because the Holy Spirit *is* God, and he inspired the Bible, we must conclude that it is not a book manufactured by humans with good thoughts, sayings, or moral advice. God actively superintended its writing. When you read the Bible, God is speaking to *you*, and the Holy Spirit helps you understand what he is saying. What a wonderful gift!

Because the Bible is inspired, breathed, and originated by God, it can be trusted. It is a divine-human book. It is unique. It has no errors. It is the truth and wholly true. It is *the* standard for all moral dealings. It defines reality. It is relevant, reliable, and infallible. It is credible and

authoritative. It reveals God's will. It is both spiritual and historical. It is transformative. It is living and active. It is worth dying for.

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*Time alone with God is at the very heart  
of the Christian walk.*

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The message of the Bible is also unified. Every Scripture communicates God's love for us and his continual pursuit of us, despite our depravity. He loves us so much that he gave his only Son, Jesus, to redeem us from our bondage and restore our relationship with him. This is the central, unifying message of the Bible. All of Scripture points to Jesus as our Savior. He is the source of life and fills our lives with hope and joy. God not only inspired his Word, but he also influences, motivates, and stirs us through his Son, Jesus, whose life, death, and resurrection are the culmination of Scripture.

## CONNECT DAILY

If God is going to mature, equip, and use you as a disciple of Christ and a leader in the workplace to have a ripple effect in the world, it is essential that you are in his Word daily, seeking his wisdom and listening to his voice. This simple act is commonly referred to as a "quiet time."

Time alone with God is at the very heart of the Christian walk. It is your appointment with God Almighty. It is more than a routine; it is about a relationship. God desires fellowship with you and wants you to get to know him better. A quiet time is an invitation to be with him, to hear him speak through his Word, to say you're sorry when you have wronged him, to be thankful, to lay your burdens at his feet, to gain wisdom, to renew your strength, and to receive hope. God loves you and wants to be near you. If you draw near to him, he will draw near to you (James 4:8).

Your challenge is that the devil does not want you to spend with God. The devil does not want you to be transformed so you can transform your culture. He will distract you and give you every excuse available

not to meet with God, read the Bible, or pray. If you are like me, you will hear the excuse that you are too busy to make time to read the Bible. Or it is going to be boring and you will not get anything out of it anyway. Or it is too complicated and too many people have argued about it to know how to read it right. Even when you do have a quiet time, your enemy will throw everything at you to prevent you from applying what you have learned from God.

The devil will also cause you to doubt and ask, “Did God really say that?” Christian, be alert! If you struggle with your daily quiet time, you need to recognize that God is bigger than the devil. Ask for the Holy Spirit’s help to give you the desire to have a quiet time. Ask for a thirst for God’s Word, and seek him in prayer.

### EIGHT GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR QUIET TIMES

Along with the Holy Spirit’s help, we also need to do our part to prioritize our quiet time and glean God’s Word for wisdom. To ensure that I stay tuned in to God daily, I try to incorporate these eight principles for a productive and effective quiet time:

- *Place:* Find somewhere private without distractions. Do not allow your phone, TV, the internet, or any other thing to keep you from focusing on your time with God. My regular spot is sitting in our family room recliner because I can control the environment and I am able to concentrate.
- *Time:* I am a morning person and find that I am better able to concentrate at the start of the day. I have fewer troubles on my mind than at the end of the day. Consequently, I have more energy in the mornings. This might be the opposite for many. Choose a time that works best for you. Plan for ten to twenty minutes each day, and make your quiet time a priority.
- *Opening prayer:* This is the critical way to start your daily quiet time. I confess my sins and then ask the Holy Spirit to guide me and grant me wisdom as I read his Word.
- *Reading:* I typically use a daily devotional to guide my Scripture



selection (e.g., Oswald Chambers's *My Utmost for His Highest*). I read the context around the Scripture and then go to the commentary. It is important to be in the Bible and not use the devotional guide as "spiritual fast food." The true power is in the Bible, not the devotional or commentary. At other times, I read a chapter of Proverbs according to the date. For example, I read Proverbs 7 on June 7. Proverbs has thirty-one chapters, which works out to one chapter each day for a month. At other times I choose a book of the Bible and read a chapter per day. If you take this route, I recommend starting with the gospel of John.

- *Memorization*: Choose a few Scriptures that have special meaning to you and commit them to memory. This will allow you to recall them and think about them at any time.
- *Meditation*: J. I. Packer describes meditation as "an activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a means of communication with God. Its purpose is to clear one's mental and spiritual vision of God and let his truth make its full and proper impact on one's mind and heart."<sup>5</sup> In contrast to Eastern meditation, which seeks to empty the mind, Christian meditation seeks to focus and fill the mind with the truth of God.<sup>6</sup>
- *Write*: Author Joan Didion once said, "I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking."<sup>7</sup> Similarly, an adage goes, "There is no impression without expression, and there is no expression without impression." It is vitally important to journal your thoughts. What do you see in God's Word? How will you apply what you have learned? Articulating these thoughts will help them stick. Another benefit is that you can look back over your entries and see how God is working in your life.
- *Closing prayer*: At the end of my quiet time, I thank God for his Word, tell him what I have learned, and seek his help to apply it to my life.

These elements are not necessarily a method but rather practices I have developed during my over forty-year walk with the Lord. My daily

quiet time is a foundational discipline. Whether in times of trouble or bounty, I can set my eyes on the Lord. I gain wisdom, encouragement, and hope. I value this time more than any other. Honestly, sometimes it is drudgery, but most times it is the most wonderful part of my day! The key is to build a habit. If you do this, God will use his Word to shape your thoughts, beliefs, and actions. He will change you. And in changing you, he will change the world.

### THE FOUR RIGHTS OF THE BIBLE

When we make a habit of meeting God during our quiet time, we will find that he starts discipling us in four specific areas of thought and action. In his commentary on the book of Proverbs, Warren Wiersbe lists the “four rights of the Bible,” which are four ways that the Bible profits believers.<sup>8</sup> In other words, if you read the Bible and put its words into practice, you will gain wisdom for your decision-making as a disciple and as a leader. Those four “rights” are as follows:

- *What is right* (teaching and doctrine): The Bible is God’s essential means to teach truth, morality, and wisdom. Through the Holy Spirit’s help, we are enlightened to God’s ways and can comprehend the Bible’s teachings. The Bible enables us to discern truth from lies, know right from wrong, and exercise good judgment.
- *What is not right* (reproof and conviction): As we read Scripture, it helps us see who we really are in light of God. It points to our obedience or lack thereof. Painfully at times, it exposes our sinful nature, and it helps us sense God’s displeasure with our sinful actions until we confess and repent. When we do confess and repent, God restores our fellowship with him, and we continue growing in discipleship.
- *How to be right* (correction and discipline): The Bible instructs us how to think, feel, and act according to God’s will. It shapes our minds, hearts, and actions and puts us on the path toward growth in godliness and righteousness.
- *How to stay right* (training in righteousness): God’s Word provides

instructions and training on how to live a godly life. It provides direction for our priorities, our relationships, our work, and our use of money. It shows us what to avoid, like sexual impurity, drunkenness, pride, and other sins that separate us from fellowship with God.

God's Word is profitable and beneficial. It is living and active. Reading it is like hearing directly from God—his thoughts, his will, his ways. Once you begin reading and applying his Word, God will grow and equip you to help him advance his kingdom.

*God is not in need of more people who know the Bible;  
 he desires followers who apply what the Bible says  
 to their everyday lives.*

I love how Josh McDowell puts it: “God changes the lives of those who take his Word to heart. . . . If you ask him to take control of your life, just watch how your attitudes and actions will change, because Jesus—the one who is at the center of everything in the Bible—is in the business of forgiving sin, removing guilt, changing people from the inside out, and healing relationships.”<sup>9</sup>

### THE “DBDAE” DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK

Applying God's Word to your life changes everything, including the way you see yourself and the way you treat others. The Bible takes your eyes off yourself and puts them on God, who, in turn, uses you to change your family, your church, your community, your place of commerce, your political landscape, and your culture. God is not in need of more people who know the Bible; he desires followers who *apply* what the Bible says to their everyday lives. He seeks believers who walk the talk.

One of the most vital leadership areas where you need God's wisdom

is in your decision-making. How you make decisions is crucial to developing trust, enhancing your credibility, expanding your influence, and delivering results. The key is to seek divine input before, during, and after making decisions or solving problems. As you soak in God's Word during this process, he will infuse you with knowledge, insight, discernment, understanding, and wisdom.

So what exactly does it look like to make sound decisions? Let's explore a five-step "DBDAE" decision-making framework: (1) define, (2) brainstorm, (3) decide, (4) act, and (5) examine the results.

## Define

Successful decision-making begins with plainly describing what's to be considered and then building a boundary of meaning. To do this, write a problem statement. Why should you do this? Because you'll know what you think if you read what you write.

I recommend this problem-statement formula:

- Currently (summary of the situation).
- As a result (consequences).
- We can expect (benefit).

### *Currently (summary of the situation)*

Examine your set of circumstances. What is your specific challenge? How did you arrive in your position? What is wrong or can be improved? What is the gap between where you are now and where you want to be? What is important? Gather as much data as possible to help shape your understanding.

### *As a result (consequences)*

Describe the situationally driven outcomes. What is the impact of the challenge you face? Maybe it is low productivity, excessive waste, higher costs, defective products, or decreased traffic. Regarding people, perhaps it is broken trust or low morale. Or individually, what about emotional, mental, physical, or spiritual tolls? What will happen if the problem continues and is not solved?

### *We can expect (benefit)*

Look to the future and anticipate what will happen if the problem is appropriately addressed. Set a goal. What will be the new result? How will it help you, others, and your organization? What will it look like if you close the gap between where you are and where you want to be? Why is the problem significant to solve?

For example:

- *Currently*, I am not closing sales because I lack the skills necessary to perform my job.
- *As a result*, I am not earning the income I need to support my family, and I am the lowest-producing salesperson on the team.
- *I can expect* that if I develop professional selling skills, I will meet or exceed my income needs by the end of the year and become one of the highest-producing salespeople on the team.

### Brainstorm

Once you have written your problem statement, you need to think deeply about the problem at hand and generate solution options.

How do you rack your brain and come up with potential breakthrough solutions? Having grounded yourself in Scripture to align yourself with God's wisdom, values, and creativity, follow these three steps.

#### *Establish your criteria*

Before making a decision, you need to define the conditions by which the potential solutions will be evaluated. Think in terms of absolutes and desirables. If something is absolute, the criteria must be met, and no compromise will be made. If something is desirable, the conditions may or may not be met. Absolutes are the must-have solutions, and desirables are solutions with room for compromise.

#### *Brainstorm multiple options*

John Steinbeck says, "Ideas are like rabbits. You get a couple and learn how to handle them, and pretty soon you have a dozen."<sup>10</sup> Using your creative thinking skills, brainstorm as many ideas or options as possible.

Start with one or two ideas, let them play off one another, and you will find they begin to multiply. When I am alone and need to come up with several ideas, I take a blank piece of paper, write the problem statement in the middle, and jot down everything that comes to mind, whether words or phrases. I treat each idea as equal and valuable. Even if the idea is absurd, I write it down. Quantity is more important than quality. The more options you have, the greater the chance of making the right decision. Then I group similar ideas into affinity clusters.

You can do the same exercise with a team and a virtual whiteboard or flip chart. Breakthrough ideas are generated when a group of people with diverse backgrounds, thinking styles, and experiences collaborate together. Before you know it, you will have a rabbit colony.

### *Carefully consider options*

Now, compare your options to the decision criteria. How many of them meet the absolute conditions? Of the absolutes, which options stand out by meeting the desirable conditions as well? Lastly, rank the options in terms of effectiveness, difficulty, risk, and future implications. Think about the following questions:

- What will be the impact of this option?
- What is the execution cost of this option?
- What is the risk level of this option?
- If this option is implemented, what will the positive and negative consequences be?

If you establish decision criteria, generate multiple options, and carefully consider all the options, you will be on your way to making sound decisions and solving difficult problems.

## Decide

Decisions follow an 80-20 rule. Eighty percent of your choices are recurring every day, like what to wear or where to eat. Twenty percent of your decisions are significant, like choosing whom to marry, changing careers, moving to a new city, or buying a house. With significant deci-

sions, you are typically in novel situations, and you need a thoughtful process to make a quality choice.

Once you have clearly defined the decision to be made or problem to be solved and carefully brainstormed your options, it is time to decide. I recommend following this nine-point checklist for making sound decisions:

1. *Identify values and guiding principles.* Will the chosen option be congruent with your core values and guiding principles? Does it align with the heart of God as revealed in Scripture? Will it honor God and benefit you and others? Why or why not?
2. *Gather information.* Do you have all the information you need to make a quality decision? What's missing? You will never have perfect data, let alone all of it. Glean insights from the data, but do not get stuck in analysis paralysis.
3. *Consider the timing.* When should you make the decision? How urgent and important is the decision? Recall the well-known phrase, "What is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important."<sup>11</sup> The level of urgency and importance should drive your decision timing. Do you need to make a choice now? Or can it wait? Why? What is the cost of delaying or not deciding?
4. *Think ahead.* What will the future be like after you decide? After one year, three years, even five years? I recommend writing a brief story about the expected result. Use your imagination. This will help you articulate expectations and develop a clear picture of success. Also, think ahead about scenarios where things may go awry, and then develop contingency plans to correct course if needed.
5. *Involve others.* Determine who needs to participate in the decision-making process. Engage people who have experience with an issue or problem similar to what you face. Seek diverse thoughts and opinions from your family members, peers, team members, and mentors. Try to engage those with different perspectives. This will help reduce your bias, gain clarity, and earn support. I recommend involving two to six people in this process—any more than six will result in diminishing returns.

6. *Create metrics.* When possible, attach qualitative and quantitative measures to your decision. A well-known saying in management is that “what gets measured gets managed.”<sup>12</sup> Metrics will help you understand your progress once the decision is implemented in terms of success, failure, or opportunity to correct course.
7. *Write it down.* Transferring a decision from your mind to the written word will increase commitment and establish the foundation from which the results will be measured. Also, articulate your decision rationale. Why did you make this decision? The explanation and metrics will help you evaluate the decision post-implementation.
8. *Make the call.* Decide. Given the conditions, choose which option has the best chance of success based on the parameters you identified and the advice you received.
9. *Overcommunicate.* Share the decision publicly and often. Tell people what was decided and why. You want them to buy into the decision. If people understand the rationale behind the decision—the why—they will be more likely to support its execution. Conversely, the less people understand the why, the less likely they will support implementation.

## Act

In the Bible, James states that faith—what is underneath—is dead if there isn’t any action (James 2:14–26). Without action, there is no tangible evidence of what we believe. John Calvin says, “It is faith alone that justifies, but faith that justifies can never be alone.”<sup>13</sup> Living faith is expressed by deeds of Christian love. Love acts. It cares for orphans and widows. Faith produces proof more than mere words. It produces action.

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*In all our decisions, especially in the workplace,  
 we should be putting our faith into action.*  
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What does this have to do with decision-making? Everything. As faith is dead without action, no decision is actually made until it is carried



out. And in all our decisions, especially in the workplace, we should be putting our faith into action.

As a leader, follow four steps to convert a decision into action:

1. Define your objective—what you want to achieve and by when.
2. Develop an implementation plan and break it down into specific tasks.
3. Define who is responsible for accomplishing the tasks. Your role as a leader is to empower the team to implement your direction and provide those responsible with the resources, support, training, and tools to carry out the decision. Consider how to inspire them to convert the decision into action.
4. Monitor progress by setting up routines and milestones with those responsible for converting the decision into action. This will drive accountability and keep the lines of communication open. In your meetings, recognize wins, share best practices, and discuss learnings.

Not all decisions are good decisions, and not all good decisions are executed well. If the decision objective is not being met, consider course correction, or make the hard call of abandoning implementation.

## Examine the Results

Sometimes you make the right decision and sometimes you do not. But you will only know which is which if you take time to examine the results of a decision. The ancient Greek philosopher Socrates famously said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.”<sup>14</sup> He was referring to living under the tyranny of the urgent and never considering the meaning of life. Playing off his quote, I say, “The unexamined decision isn’t worth making.” Many leaders invest time in the decision-making process, convert the decision to action, and then keep moving. They do not look back, examine the results, or test the outcomes. From my experience, I believe a very high percentage of leaders do not reflect on what worked or did not work and why. Without going the extra mile to examine the consequences of their decisions, leaders miss the

opportunity to build upon successes, learn from failures, or correct their course.

To examine a decision, ask these four questions:

1. Did I define the original problem correctly?
2. Did I choose the correct solution?
3. Did I select the correct solution but implement it improperly?
4. Has the implemented solution had ample time to succeed?

The examined decision is worth making. If you invest time scrutinizing your decision outcomes, results, and consequences by reflecting upon these four questions, you will discover areas where you did well or messed up. If you apply your learning to future decisions, you will grow in wisdom, continuously improve, and make sound decisions.



Leaders face countless decisions in the workplace, at home, and in their communities. To make wise decisions as both leaders and disciples of Christ, we need to root ourselves in God's character, values, and promises as revealed in Scripture. By making a daily appointment with God to seek his wisdom, you will find yourself changed day by day to become more like him. This deep-seated change will not just affect your relationship with God; the ripple effect will also cause your connection to him to flow out to those around you. Once changed, you will witness your other relationships change. You may see your culture at work change. But none of that can happen unless you allow God to change you first.

As a disciple, invest time with God. As a leader, seek God when making decisions.

Had I been daily in the Word and seeking God's wisdom when Hunter presented us with what I thought was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, I have to think I would have heard and heeded God's still small voice—and Carla's not-so-still-and-not-so-small voice.

## QUESTIONS

- Where do you find wisdom? Why is wisdom crucial in leadership?
- When did you last seek God's direction? What happened?
- What happened when you did not seek God's direction?
- If you do not have a daily quiet time, how and when will you cultivate it and make it a habit?
- How do you currently make decisions? How can you begin to use the DBDAE decision-making framework to help you make sound decisions?
- How will these discipleship and leadership principles help you transform your workplace through your pursuit of Christ?