

The Leaders Survival

by George Verwer

Christian leaders must develop a strategy for survival in the face of pressure and persecution, and prioritize humility, discernment, and casting every care upon God.

Duration: 56:58

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 6:1

Topics: "Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the challenges and crises that leaders often face as they pursue their goals. He shares his personal experience of facing a crisis in his mid-years and how he turned to golf as a way to cope. The speaker emphasizes the importance of maintaining a disciplined and balanced life, and encourages young people to embrace self-discipline as a path to freedom. He also highlights the need for a positive attitude and references Philippians 4:8 as a guide for cultivating positivity.

Transcript

Alright, let's just look a little bit at the Apostle Paul just to get an idea of the pressure he was under. And I don't think it necessarily is going to be any less for the contemporary Christian leader or pastor or youth worker because the enemy uses the same tactics. He's been practicing for several thousand years and he's got some very subtle tactics.

Let's look at verse 19. He had just reminded the Ephesian elders of his manner of life. That was the key in the Apostle Paul.

His life. And then verse 19. Serving the Lord with all humility of mind.

Humility of mind. With many tears and trials which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews. Remember, there was a little group that said they wouldn't eat until Paul was dead.

Do you have any of those down the road from you that have sent you a letter lately? A little group that don't like you and have said we're not going to eat until you're dead? I'm sure you'd find that quite an interesting reading. That's what Paul had. That's what Paul had.

And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you but have shown you and have taught you publicly and from house to house. Paul went all out. Dale Roton, a dear co-worker who's been a great encouragement in my life said this is 20-20 vision.

Acts 20-20. The public ministry, the house to house ministry. Testifying both Jews and also the Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

What does he get in reward for this faithful service? This 20-20 vision, doing God's will. What does he get in reward? He gets a promise. You know so many times when we do something right we want a reward.

I guess this goes back to our childhood when we did something right. We got some sweets. And as Christians we can be very immature and we mainly work with the thought that somebody's going to say wow that was a good sermon.

Or oh the Lord's really using you. Or some other little encouragement. Well Paul had a promise as a result of his faithfulness.

What was promised? There it is. And now behold I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem not knowing the things that shall befall me except that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city saying that bonds and afflictions await me. There's the bonds and affliction promise.

You get a lot of God's people have these little promise boxes. They go poking through them getting promises. We now have groups that tell us all who are spiritual are going to just prosper and they're going to have everything they need.

But Paul had a sort of different system. He went and had direct witness from the Holy Spirit that bonds and afflictions awaited him. What was his reaction to that? Interesting promise.

But none of these things moved me. He didn't care. And in some ways the Christian leader has to be a careless man.

Careless in the sense of not being too worried about the difficulties that are going to come as he plows up the fallow ground in the name of the Lord. None of these things moved me. Neither count I my life dear unto myself so that I might finish my course with joy.

And the ministry which I received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And he goes on and speaks about giving the whole counsel of God. Verse 27, he says in verse 28, Take heed therefore, he's speaking to these Ephesian elders, take heed therefore unto yourselves of all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.

And I know this, that after my departing shall greenest wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. So often times Christians speak with astonishment about the cults and astonishment about some of the extremist groups. None of these things should astonish us if we read our Bibles.

Just normal cults, extremist groups, young Christians going astray, false doctrines, false prophets. It's been going on for 2,000 years. That's why a Christian leader has to be grounded in the Word.

That's why he needs, of course, to have discernment. A.W. Tozer said the greatest gift needed in the church today was discernment. Wisdom.

And then he said, Therefore watch and remember that for the space of three years I cease not to warn everyone night and day with tears. Quite an active ministry. Night and day ministry for three years.

He went on to speak how he coveted no man's silver and gold, apparel. He had to even work with his own hands. Verse 34.

What a challenge. Well, let's just look at two other passages. We could spend easily all morning just looking at Paul, but I only want this in the way of introduction.

Let's look over at Corinthians. Let's try 1 Corinthians 4. This is a unique passage, and I think I'll just read it from this living Bible just to have a little bit of a change. I've been reading from the authorized, but let's just see how this sounds.

1 Corinthians 4, let's start at verse 9. Sometimes I think God has put us apostles at the very end of the line, like prisoners soon to be killed, put on display at the end of a victor's parade to be stared at by men and angels alike. Religion has made us foolish, and you say, but of course you are all such wise and sensible Christians. We are weak, but not you.

You are well thought of while we are laughed at. To this very hour we have gone hungry and thirsty without even enough clothes to keep warm. We have been kicked around without homes of our own.

We have worked wearily with our own hands to earn our living. We have blessed those who cursed us. We have been patient with those who injured us.

We have replied quietly when evil things have been said about us. Yet right up to this present moment, we are like dirt underfoot, like garbage. Well, those are strong words.

You may feel the living Bible is too blunt, but if you read it in the Authorized, it is just as blunt. He goes on to say, by the way, in verse 16, Wherefore I beseech you, ye followers of me. If it wasn't for the 16th verse, we might be able to worm away from that strong passage which I have heard very few people preach on.

We just say, well, Paul, he was our beginning apostle. I mean, we don't expect people to live like this today. But he turns around to these weak, struggling Corinthian Christians who had even had immorality in the church and an enormous amount of divisiveness and schism in the church, and he says, be ye followers of me.

And that's a challenge for us this morning as we think of the life of this man. One other passage, I think we'll go back to the Authorized, 2 Corinthians, chapter 6. This is one of the best passages we could ever study at a Christian leader's seminar because it's written specifically, seemingly, for those in the ministry. We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain.

For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation I have helped thee. Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation.

Giving no offense in anything that the ministry be not blamed. We don't want our ministry to be blamed. How can we do that? Here's a list.

But in all things, commending ourselves as the ministers of God in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses. Interesting list, isn't it? In stripes, in imprisonments, in torments, in labors, in watching, in fasting, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfamed or genuine or unhypocritical, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report, as

deceivers yet true, as unknown yet well-known, as dying and behold we live, as chastened and not killed, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things. There is real Christianity.

There's the kind of reality, the kind of leadership, the kind of example that we should be giving to God's people in our day. Jesus Christ, we always sing it. The same yesterday, today, and forevermore.

There's a lot of other things we could read about that it would indicate very clearly that a Christian leader is a man who is, and woman, under tremendous pressure. In a very unusual way, I was thrown into leadership in the body of Christ, strange as it may sound, at the age of 17. Because young people need leadership, and sometimes God raises up young people to help lead other young people.

The Holy Spirit saved me and thrust me into my own secondary school, where I had been elected sort of around the same time I was converted as the president of the student government. And so in this position of leadership, I also had the opportunity to witness for the Lord, to have a campaign distributing Gospels around the school, to organize campaigns and films, and then to organize an organization, to go door-to-door with literature, and all kinds of things. I was thrust into leadership before I was even 18.

By 19, I was on my way to Mexico, and I was forced to learn how to survive in a position of responsibility, how to lead people, encourage people. My first team was only three, we didn't even have a leader on that team. The second team that went to Mexico was five, and I had asked a group of men all twice my age to join and become a board of reference, a board of directors for this newly born movement.

That later was called Operation Mobilization. So I had to learn how to relate to these men. Many people in their leadership, the greatest problem they have is relating to those who are over them.

For you, it may be your elders, it may be the church council, or the trustees. And there's very little training given in seminary on how to relate to these people. We get our heads filled with theology, and we get very little understanding about understanding people, relating to people, living with people, loving people.

And so, of course, the great problems in the church are all relationship problems. They're not firstly theological problems, there are plenty of those as well. They're relationship problems.

Even men who feel called together to work in the same work, two years later, they're not getting on with each other. And no wonder the work begins to suffer, because I tell you, when the leaders are having shaky relationships, you can be sure the people down in the church can feel it, and they know about it. So I was forced to learn a lot of things, and I did a lot of reading, a lot of extra reading.

And whenever I was near a Christian leader, I would be asking him more questions than he would want to answer. I left university, where I was during the summers, the University of Mexico, and after two years of secular brainwashing, decided to go to a Bible college. It was a disastrous thing in my family, among my relatives, even my parents, that I would leave university studies to go to a Bible school that didn't even give a degree, give a diploma, which actually I lost, a week after I got it.

But I thank God for that decision, because there at Moody Bible Institute, I was exposed to men like Alan Redpath, preaching down at Moody Church. I was exposed to some Christian leaders, and I was able to talk to these people. And with this, plus going back to Mexico every Christmas and every summer, the reality burst upon me, that this is a battle for survival.

I remember Chuck Templeton, who together with Billy Graham was a great preacher of his day. I remember just hearing about him being completely wiped out, becoming an agnostic, even began writing anti-Christian material. And it just more and more was impressed on me, that leadership is a battle for survival.

It's not a matter of us all becoming Apostle Pauls. It's not a matter of us trying to be Hudson Taylor, or whoever you aspire to. For many of us, especially the likes of me, it's survival just to get through, just two years later to still be breathing spiritually, to still have my sanity, and my wife, and my children.

So, rather than teach you how to climb mountains this morning, I thought I would give you some basic pointers on how to survive. Because probably if you do survive, you will be able to climb some mountains. And you will be able to do many of the things that you've already read about, you've already aspired to.

And I've written this strategy for survival here in the back of my Bible, and I refer to it all the time. I found in my Bible a lot of blank pages, so I figured there must be something that belonged there. So here is my strategy for survival.

Some of this is very, very basic. And I hope you already have it in your life, so it will just be in the way of remembrance to keep on keeping on. Some of these things you already have them in your life, then I think you're going in the right direction.

Just praise the Lord and press on. There may be some new light on some old areas. There may be some new areas that you haven't thought so much about.

I am a natural disaster case. I had people prophesy this ever since I was converted, that I wouldn't go past three years. At the end of three years they extended it.

Because my temperament, the choleric, loud-mouthed, aggressive, semi-hostile, highly-sexed temperament is dangerous. It's dangerous. We had one evangelist like this in America, left nine girls pregnant in one campaign.

One campaign. And believe me, the sex emotion and the religious emotion, they can run so close. And things happen even within the churches in this area that no one ever talks about.

I've had perhaps the opportunity to read some books that don't get into the normal libraries on how the enemy uses sexual promiscuity even within the church. But I think because I developed a strategy for survival, which includes, by the way, having people around you who will watch you and exhort you and encourage you. A Nathan.

Every man needs a Nathan. A fearless guy who doesn't care who you are. And if he sees you fiddling around with little Susie Bell down the road, he's going to come in with all guns firing.

And you know, you'd rather just not bother if you're going to have this guy coming in the front room exhorting you as Nathan took on David. And so I found that the Lord has kept me not only from catastrophe in that area that has taken so many Christian leaders down, but in the many, many other areas. Here's my simple strategy for survival.

Number one, to really bathe in God's forgiveness. My wife criticizes me for not taking enough showers. It is one of my weak points.

I'm so skinny when I turn on the water, most of it misses me. But we need to learn how to bathe in God's forgiveness. The reference that I often think on is Ephesians 1.6. You are accepted in the beloved.

Even after 10 or 20 years of Christian leadership, it's possible to be very insecure. Not really drawing enough upon the acceptance you have in the Lord. And if you're not drawing enough upon the acceptance you have in the Lord, then you keep looking for acceptance from other people.

And you get blown to and fro depending on whether people are accepting you and appreciating you and all this kind of thing. There's no Christian leader that's not going to make mistakes, not say the wrong thing at certain times, and bring some rejection with it. So knowing we are accepted, knowing we are forgiven, is absolutely basic.

And I think we need to dwell on it quite often. Number two, casting every care upon Him. 1 Peter 5.7. Philippians 4.6. All verses we know.

I hope you are memorizing the Word of God. And that was one of the things that helped me the most as a young Christian leader, to memorize the Word of God. Cleansing the subconscious, giving strength in the battle.

Casting every care upon Him for He careth for you is a verse everybody should have in their heart. 1 Peter 5.7. I have to continually do this. Continually do this.

So many things that as leaders we're exposed to. So many people. And if we're sensitive and we get involved with people.

One of my problems as a young Christian leader was over-involvement with people. You say, is that possible? Yes. We don't recognize our limits.

There's a new book out written by a theological teacher from Fuller, I think his name is Smedes, called Love Within Limits. He points out how if we don't know that in our loving, in our giving ourselves to other people, we have limits, we will eventually just burn out. We'll eventually just be drained out.

Just three or four really needy people, drug addicts, as I was working a little bit with, but more with alcoholics. Just two or three people of that type are enough to drain you completely. You wouldn't need any other ministry.

And I had to learn how to really lead these people with the Lord. Do what I could. Encourage, phone, write.

Leave them with God. I cannot play God. I am not the total answer to the alcoholics in my community, or to all the divorce cases, or to all the mentally ill.

That alone, I got involved in early years with the mentally ill, and emotionally ill. That alone can be a full-time ministry. Just five, six people who are mentally disturbed can drain you of your time, your resources, and it'll be the end to your ministry.

We go into ministry often very naive. We just feel we can do so much, and we've got our scriptures, and soon we're running out of steam. The number of Christian leaders, men and women, who have nervous breakdowns is quite amazing.

I haven't had one myself. If it comes, I don't believe it's the end of the road. I don't remember even getting near that kind of situation.

Therefore, I probably can do and push myself more than someone else. Everybody has to know their limits. I always try to warn people not to try to literally copy some other Christian leader in terms of what you do, in terms of your scheduling and whatever else.

We're all so different. My wife told me the other day, just look at her, that makes her tired. She's been relatively tired for 23 years since the wedding.

And we had to discover the hard way, that we were very, very different. And as we got older, we became almost more different. Though we've had a wonderful 23 years of marriage.

I've already been on the phone with her three times since coming here. We keep close contact. But it's amazing.

It's amazing how different we can all be. And we pick up these little Christian books, like, you know, Praying High. You know, his heart moved.

He prayed so much. And so you get little junior Christian leader trying to pray and pray and pray on into the night, trying to get his heart to move over to the other side. Oftentimes, in these old biographies, we only hear the good about these Christian leaders.

We don't hear stories like the man who helped to start Keswick. The founder of the great Keswick Convention actually never went. Because in an unwise moment, he put his arm around a girl in Bristol.

And of course, in those days, that would be sort of equivalent to, you know. But he put his arm around, and then he realized this was wrong, and it got all confusing. He felt guilty.

He never recovered from that experience. He had a mental breakdown. He's the husband of Hannah Whitehall Smith, who wrote the great book, The Secret of the Christian Life.

I, myself, must confess over the last 20 years, I've become a little more skeptical about the total sanctification books. Because the more biographies I've read, the more research I've done, the more I discover that people are human, and they all fail. Every Christian leader has had failure in his life.

Most of them in fairly serious areas. Now, some failure is easier to cover. For instance, a lot of Christian leaders have trouble with temper.

That's a little easier to cover. You know, A.B. Simpson, he almost threw a guy down the stairs. D.L. Moody had a little trouble in this area as well, much less Martin Luther, or C.T. Studd, or General William Booth, who threw his own daughter out of the Salvation Army.

But other sins are not so easy to cover, especially immorality. But we manage to do that as well. I noticed one man has been living in immorality a lot.

He's on his second or third wife. He's just republished another big book, and everybody's out buying it. We seem to be able to cover these things quite well.

Number three, making God your goal. I think that's so important. We get in church work and our church becomes the goal.

We become almost neurotic. The number of people in the church, what's happening in the church, the new building program, the new budget, the extension, the outreach, the number of missionaries. Our whole life becomes dominated by projects and goals and plans and accomplishments, and we easily get caught up into a syndrome where we're actually being motivated by the fear of failure.

The fear of failure. What if my church fails? What if my group fails? What if we launch this evangelistic campaign and it doesn't work? It's a very legitimate fear because we are human. But if God is our goal first, and these other things have their place, of course, then whatever else may happen, we don't get shaken.

So if plan one gets destroyed because our goal is God Himself and we're enjoying His fellowship and we're communing with Him even when our little plan collapses, then we can easily shift to plan B. Life isn't one plan. Life is many plans. And you say, well, what if plan B collapses? Well, you move to plan C. What if plan C collapses? Well, there's lots of letters in the alphabet.

It's a terrific scope. Terrific scope. Making God your goal.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God. His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you. It may seem unusual, but as a very young Christian, before I ever left for overseas except my trips to Mexico, I just saw that OM could not be my goal.

This work I was involved in, it wasn't called OM at that time, it was called Send the Light. That it couldn't be my goal. My goal had to be God Himself.

Knowing God. Deeper understanding of Christ. That's been an enormous help to me.

Even when my faith has been under attack. Have you ever had your very faith under attack and begin to even doubt? I have found that when my faith is under attack, one of the ways I can battle back is to pull back into a more simple faith and start in the beginning. In the beginning, God.

That's one thing that I'm very, very sure of. I have a lot of other doubts about different things. But that one thing, I'm pretty unshakable on that.

In the beginning, God. So I just think about God and His creation and His love. Then I move on.

And of course, pretty soon, I'm back, you know, believing the whole Bible where I belong. God. God-centered faith.

This is why I like the writings of A.W. Tozer. Dr. Lloyd-Jones. Then number four, learning how to be hurt.

That's unusual, isn't it? That's why I like this book, Healing for Damaged Emotions. We know the Lord Jesus was hurt. We know the Apostle Paul was misunderstood, criticized.

He had just moved out of Thessalonica. In moved the gossipers. In moved the back biters.

Oh, he was just after your money. Oh, the Apostle Paul, this and that. That's why I wrote the first and second epistles.

Thessalonians. And I just believe we as Christian leaders, we've got to learn to be hurt. There's just no way that we can get through life without being hurt.

And sometimes a Christian leader, when he gets hurt, he becomes preoccupied with his hurts. And pretty soon, into a lot of his messages, he's always talking about the pain he's going through and the hurts he's going through. I mean, this is no big deal.

This is the normal Christian life. Don't make too much of it. Learn how to be hurt.

Don't think you're the only one being hurt in the battle. You may have hurt some people yourself. I hurt my own children.

I've hurt my own wife. Often the ones we love the most are the ones we hurt the most. Because it's one thing to maintain a relationship with a pen pal 6,000 miles away, writing every other month and sending tracts to each other.

It's another thing to live under the same roof with three wildcat teenagers and a tired wife and a dog and whoever else you've moved into the place. Maybe a budgie. Somebody's just dreamed up a new film in which people are massacred by an invasion of budgies.

I don't want to see it. But the littlest things can really go out of control. And a lot of that which we talk about in church never becomes a reality in the home.

We actually become schizophrenic. And we're talking about high-sounding sanctification theories in church, but actually in the home we can hardly get through making a pot of tea without some type of a crisis. Learn how to be curt.

Don't hold things against people. The word of God in Hebrews warns us against any root of bitterness. Joyce Landau, a brilliant writer, has written a new book called Irregular Person.

In her book she points out that most people have at least one irregular person in their life. Often a relative. Sometimes in the same family.

An irregular person is someone that after many, many efforts to get on with and to understand and to love, it just doesn't work. It's somehow neutrons and protons are not going in the right direction. The harder you try to love the irregular person, the more they misunderstand or the more problems come.

And it's just so difficult. I've counseled many young people and it's obvious their mother or father is their irregular person. There's many a mother who has a daughter who seems to be an irregular person.

The more they try to relate and understand and win, the worse the whole thing gets. Quite an amazing book. I actually haven't finished it, so I can't tell you the total solution to your irregular person, but at least I think I can convince you that these situations do exist.

And there is a way out, but it's not an easy way. It does take a lot of understanding, a lot of patience. One thing that's come to my mind is that we have to learn how to relax in our relationships.

We have different relationships with different people and as Christian leaders, we never want to be jealous about another person's relationship. If somebody you've poured your life into somehow leaves your church and goes to join a church down the road, even maybe after you've talked to them and fellowship with

them, leave it with God. Leave it with God.

Don't become bitter. Of course, if it's a false cult, there's a great difference between a false cult and a Christian group that you may not agree with. There are Christian groups all over Britain that I don't agree with, but I still love them.

And we have a number of exoemers that have joined fellowships where I personally wouldn't be happy. But I just praise the Lord. If they're going on for Christ and they're walking with Jesus, that's the first thing.

Nobody has perfect doctrine anyway. And most people have at least a few kinks or a few extremes. And I just feel it's not worth getting bitter about it.

It's not worth getting upset about it. It's not worth losing sleep about it. And yet so often as leaders we become small minded.

We could be out winning many more and accomplishing so much, but instead we get pushed into a corner on some little issue or some little relationship and it just drains us. It just drains us so that we're not able to meet the need. I know a number of churches that have had fairly serious divisions.

And instead of becoming bitter, they say, let's just get on with it. Let's learn from this situation and let's get on with it. I think there's scope in Britain today for many different kinds of groups to grow.

There are many different streams in which God is working. He's very gracious. He's never limited himself to any one Christian stream.

And it's exciting to see various cards of Christian growth and to see that some of the divisions and some of them were unfortunate. We never excuse sin or carnality. No.

And people will stand before God for some of the things that have taken place. But there's no purpose in being bitter. Let's get on with the job.

There's a nation to be won for Christ. There are millions out there who don't know anything about these theological arguments. They haven't yet heard what Jesus says.

And I think it's so important to not allow ourselves to become bitter or to become hurt and end up somehow on the shelf as a result of that. And then number five, learning the reality of praise and thanksgiving. Learning the reality of praise and thanksgiving.

This is so important in the life of the Christian and of course the Christian leader and it's been taught so much lately. I won't spend too much time on it. But I have found that when things are going wrong, it's great to just stop and praise the Lord.

There are always other things that are going right. There are always many, many blessings and I love that little song, Count Your Many Blessings. Name them one by one.

Too many of God's people are counting their problems. Even our prayer meetings become long negative syndromes of things going wrong. People who are ill, maybe we ought to have special praise for those who are healthy in the next prayer meeting rather than on and on and on about those who are ill.

You become ill listening to the reports about the ill. It needs to be brought into balance. And I think it's so important to emphasize praise and thanksgiving.

Number six, learning to live in the rest of faith. It's a controversial passage, Hebrews chapter 4, but I think it's worth studying. And I believe that this is a lifestyle.

Some enter into this by crisis. I had some crises in my life in which I was all caught up in worry and then somehow just through crying out to the Lord, He just brought me into a place of rest. And in a movement like OM with many, many problems every single day, every single day, you have to know how to really rest in the Lord.

Otherwise you just lose a lot of energy. It's a beautiful principle. Study Hebrews 4. And then number seven, realizing God is easy to live with.

I took that from Tozer. He marks even a cup of cold water given in his name. Some people, as Tozer puts it, become religiously jumpy because they know God sees their every action.

I'm definitely a potential for that type of thing. Very sensitive about what God is thinking of me. God is watching me all the time and God knows my thoughts.

You know, you could really become neurotic just thinking about God stalking behind you with a big club waiting for you to look at one piece of pornography in the local newsstand the moment you do. You already got a headache the rest of the day until you go through some kind of evangelical purgatory. God is looking at even the simplest thing done in His name.

And when we battle through some of these temptations, it's very meaningful to God. And our love is important. And He loves us.

And He is, in the full sense, easy to live with. We are His child. Number eight, accepting God's growth pattern.

I read an amazing book by Lane Adams, a pastor who had no short amount of problems. Ended up going to a psychiatrist, but at least he was honest enough to face his problems. I'm counseling a man now in a marriage situation up in Scotland.

It's just unbelievable. He's a minister. It's just unbelievable.

One of the greatest problems is that he and his wife have never been willing to go for any kind of marriage counseling. You know, pride is one of the greatest pitfalls in the Christian ministry. My wife and I went for some help when we were going through a difficult period.

She went into a year of depression. We didn't know whether it was physical. We went to the doctor.

It was spiritual. She had hepatitis in India. She had two major surgeries.

You know, a whole mid-life thing. We thank God for the help other people gave us. Don't be too proud to seek help and realize as you seek help they may be wrong.

You can get wrong advice. That's the risk. But at least you can evaluate that advice, search the scriptures, read some of these great books, and then move accordingly.

I think that's very, very important. Accepting God's growth pattern. We're all growing at different speeds.

Layne Adams brings out in his book that people who have severe emotional damage in their lives will grow much slower in their Christian faith. All of you have those kind of people in your youth group or in your church. They've got serious damaged emotions and hurts, and it's just going to take time and we need patience.

So important to know the message of grace found in Galatians. Different people are progressing at different speeds. Philippians 1.6 is a verse you can claim in that connection.

Then number nine, the freedom of a disciplined and ordered life. We need to be able to show our young people that the way of discipline is a way of freedom. That self-discipline, of course, is the key.

Perhaps one of the most important words, I'll come to it again later on, is balance. And certainly in learning a disciplined life there needs to be a lot of balance. We have found that our own work was greatly hindered by false ideas of spirituality.

By looking too much at the outward. Here's a man that gets up early. Here's a man who always has his quiet time.

Here's a man that gives that tax at every opportunity. Here's a man that fights and told people and tells them about Christ every chance. He's in every night of prayer to the end.

He does what his leader tells him, finishes his study program. We have all these things in LA. The end of the year, spiritual man? No.

You can't master those spiritual people. Hopefully you're going to learn something through all that, of course. But spirituality is intrinsically linked with Jesus Christ.

And Jesus Christ has a unique way of working with different people. And it cannot be mass produced. We learned the hard way in LA that there's no one training program that is going to produce strong disciples.

We have graduated casualties like every other movement in history. And I hope that in your church when there are casualties and heartaches and people that backslide, you'll not allow that. It is normal.

In the best of churches it is normal. In the best of Christian unions it's normal. It happens on the mission field even to missionaries.

So you shouldn't be surprised what's happening in your little local congregation. And the last thing we want to do as Christian leaders is to allow that fiery God of discouragement to somehow get through our shield of faith to a vulnerable area where we become discouraged and therefore we can do even less to resolve some of these situations and to help produce spiritual men and women. And then number ten, learning to refuel and to relax.

And not neglecting the human side of your life. We are human. That sounds very basic but it took a long time for the full truth of that to get to me and I'm still learning.

There are some things that are classified as worldly which in fact may be battery charges or charges. There may be battery charges that will in fact help that person be more effective. I found myself as I moved into the mid-year subject to depression, subject to confusion, subject to a lot of things I didn't

And you're tested in different areas when you're 30 and then different areas when you're 40 and then different areas when you're 50. Don't think that Christian life is always just going on higher and higher and higher and higher. Yeah, that's true in a sense.

But sometimes we have to relearn. Sometimes we go back one step in order to go forward two steps. Sometimes there are dips and there are valleys and there are deserts.

It doesn't mean God has deserted you. And this concept that, oh, I've missed the Lord's will in my life. Now I'm in trouble.

I'll never get past it. We had a girl, a friend of mine recently committed suicide on the basis of that kind of thinking. Not really very far from healing.

At least I think that was part of her problem. The sense that God has deserted her. She had missed His will.

God's will is not like that. It's not like a little alley in the middle of a gigantic city and if you don't get on that one alley you're out. You're going to get the wrong wife, the wrong house, the wrong dog, the wrong season of the year, eating the wrong food, going to the wrong bathroom.

Nonsense. God is a sovereign almighty God who can overrule almost any blunder you're gifted enough to make. Even if you marry the wrong woman, wrong woman.

Some people, some places that's what happens. But you repent and put it right and God can make that marriage as happy and purposeful as marrying the right one. The other side works as well that if you marry the right woman and you get away from Jesus and just obey His word, that can be an absolute disaster.

The will of God isn't some little tiny hole in the top of a needle and you have to somehow throw a piece of string through it 30 feet. God is great. God forgives.

God restores. God has plan B, plan C, plan D. Don't purpose in your heart to fail at plan A. That's not what we're saying. But if you do, God has in God a merciful, loving, almighty, tender Father who is caring for you as a Christian leader and He will keep resurrecting and restoring and using you according to His purposes.

Let us pray. Father we thank you for your word. We thank you for just this opportunity to give these practical exhortations from scripture and from these almost 30 years of experience on the front lines of spiritual combat.

Lord I know I have much more to learn and many things to relearn but I believe that this biblical way is your way to go forward and to be abounding and to be pressing on even in the midst of pressure and difficulty and problems and whatever else may be assailing our soul from the arsenal of Satan. Lord we praise you for the shield of faith. We praise you for your whole armor and more than anything else for your indwelling Holy Spirit in us.

That can live out these biblical principles day by day. In Jesus name, Amen.

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