

## **QUITTING! THE QUICK FIX**

As the old saying goes, "If I had a dollar for every time I quit or thought about quitting, I would be a rich man." I have personally fought this battle for years. I have been tempted to quit because of anger, offense, disappointment, deep discouragement, feelings of inadequacy.

Leadership is hard. Leadership has always been hard. It was hard for Noah, Nehemiah, David, Paul, and Martin Luther. Here are three things that seem, in my experience, to make it harder today than ever before.

### **1. More is expected than we feel we can deliver**

Faithfulness and godliness used to be adequate, now there needs to be high and constant performance in addition to faithfulness. We live in a culture where followers have an expectation of excellence commensurate with what is experienced in music, TV, movies and advertisements.

If you don't produce and produce big time, regularly and with excellence, you might be looking for another job. Fifty years ago, when a leader retired, faithfulness, loyalty and hard work were the marks of success and the basis of praise.

Now, sustained excellence and outstanding results are expected and demanded. Today, a leader is under constant pressure to meet the various levels of expectation among his constituency. One leader I read about when high expectations were placed on him responded by saying. "I do my best to try and please at least one person a day and today is just not your day. Tomorrow is not looking too good either."

### **2. Things are changing at an unbelievable exponential rate**

Everyone seems to agree that we are experiencing change at a faster rate than is healthy and sane. Some feel that there have been more changes in the last hundred years than in the previous nineteen hundred years combined. And if that were not enough, that more changes happened in the last ten years of the 20th Century than in the first 90 years of the 20th Century. We're talking compounded changes.

Everything is moving at breakneck speed and the leader trying to keep up, keep going and keep growing is often plagued by discouragement, feelings of inadequacy and frustration. Thoughts of calling it quits and opting for early retirement start looking pretty good.

### 3. Because of all the demands and pressures, we don't take care of ourselves

We work too many hours. We worry too much. Time for family and close friends is slipping through our fingers. We aren't taking a regular day off, scheduling a relaxing vacation, spending adequate time alone with the Lord. We eat more than we should, sleep less than we should, drive faster than we should, don't have as much fun as we should.

Barbara Brown Taylor put it this way. "I do not mean to make an idol of health, but it does seem to me that at least some of us have made an idol of exhaustion. The only time we know we have done enough is when we are running on empty and the ones we love the most are the ones we see the least." Barbara decided to take a year of Jubilee in 2000, not accepting any out of town speaking engagements and working only 40 hours a week in ministry.

Now, in all honesty, there is a time to leave a position, responsibility, church or organization; but, before you take that step, here a few things you might want to consider doing:

1. Talk to a few close friends who know you well and will be honest with you. Thank God David had Jonathan in difficult situations Proverbs 15:22 assures us that in a multitude of counselors there is safety. Safety from hasty decisions, blurry perspective and attacks from the enemy.
2. If married with kids, let them know what you are feeling and thinking and get their input. It is amazing how many leaders try to deal with "thoughts of quitting" alone in isolation (especially and primarily men).
3. Take a long, hard, prayerful look at your God-given design, giftedness, and calling. Is your present assignment a good fit?
4. Take control of your schedule and your life. Nothing leads to discouragement, burnout and thoughts of quitting faster than feeling you are not in control of your life in Jesus Christ. Add in time for exercise, hobbies and family. Take time to eat healthily and slowly. Learn to say "no" to inappropriate and destructive demands on your time. From 1 Timothy 6:17 are you enjoying or enduring?
5. Get away for some extended time with the Lord. If you are highly relational, take a good friend with you. Allow time for thanksgiving, praise and worship. Leave your cell phone, pager, and computer at home. It is okay to be out of touch except for your family (in case of an emergency). Constant connectedness is killing us. Take off the electronic leash.

As you watch the waves gently lapping the shore or listen to the wind caressing the pines, here are a few probing questions to ponder:

- Why did God lead me to this responsibility in the first place?
- Can I honestly say I have finished what I came to do?
- Am I running away from something I will face in the next responsibility?
- Is my own spiritual dryness or neglect a major contributing factor?

In closing, it is not wrong to have thoughts of quitting. Actually quitting is another matter. Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah were all considering throwing in the towel, but didn't. Don't be too tough on yourself.

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