

The One Calling of the Steward Leader Part 2

What criteria do you use when you allocate your time and talents?

What drives your daily schedule your personal goals?

What determines your vocational satisfaction?

What fills your deepest need for acceptance, meaning and self-worth?

Are your responses tied to the person you are and are becoming in Christ, or to what you have accomplished?

Is your self-worth connected to the quality of your being (Christlikeness) or the quantity of your doing (activities and accomplishments)?

I am not saying that our doing is not important, it is even necessary and commanded by God for the building of his kingdom. The question is not about the relative importance of our doing God's work, but a matter of priority. **Our being is foundational**, and our doing is built upon it. I acknowledge that there is circularity to this process: our faithful work for the kingdom nurtures our being, strengthens our faith and prepares us for even greater obedience and service.

In his book *Leading People from the Middle*, Whitworth University president Bill Robinson states that our behavior changes to the extent that our beliefs, attitudes, intentions, experience and environment drive the change. Being without doing cannot bring about transformation in our life. The two are integrally linked and equally necessary for our development.

The predominant temptation of leaders today however, is certainly not an overemphasis on being. We are doing ourselves to death. When the drive to succeed is rooted in the idea that we own our ministry, own our employees and own our vision, leadership consumes us. Vocational burnout and the moral failures that plague society and the church are not the result of too much focus on our spiritual health and transformation into the likeness of Christ. Instead, they are symptoms of a view of leadership that places value almost exclusively on what we accomplish regardless of the consequences for us and those around us.

Fortunately, leadership studies, both faith based and secular, are focusing much attention on the inner being of the leader as a key component to leadership success. The world (and the church) is waking up to the reality that inner character influences a person's effectiveness as a leader. Yet the remedies offered often throw us back on ourselves to somehow develop more integrity or nurture greater inner spiritual strength in order to be better leaders. Notice that the work is still ours, and therefore our doing is still the necessary thing. The lure of self-reliance is dangerous throughout leadership studies. **We** are attempting to heal our very being, but this is no cure.

When we say that God is more concerned with who we are than what we do, we acknowledge that God's work of transformation in us is his first priority. We also acknowledge that it must remain his work, with our vital and only role being to live as an open and obedient vessel for this work. Even here we must be careful not to make this our work. Our action is only response to the work God has completed for us in Christ. So, we humbly and joyously await and

welcome the Holy Spirit, who graciously works to transform us into the godly stewards, and steward leaders, we were created to be.

I cannot emphasize enough how important this priority of being over doing is if we are to be used by God to lead. It goes against so much of what we experience in leadership roles. It demands that we not only set aside time to nurture our spirit, but that we give priority and value to this time. Even if we manage to set aside this time and religiously adhere to it, we still may come away feeling guilty for investing precious time in something that seems so self-serving and nonproductive. Leaders are measured by reaching goals, achieving growth and improving the bottom line, so we must fight for an acceptance of being over doing. This is an internal fight as much as an organizational fight, and it is one we must win at both levels if we are to be true to our calling as steward leaders.

I sat at lunch with a beleaguered pastor who told me the story of his need for a day for spiritual preparation and growth. His congregation gave him only one day off each week and expected him to be in his office or making calls the other five and of course, to preach and visit church families on Sunday.

He had written out a carefully scripted case for his need for a day when he would take no calls and see no parishioners, but would dedicate himself to Bible study, prayer and personal preparation for the challenges of leading the congregation.

The church board met and read his letter. As they prepared to discuss his request, the board chairperson rose and said, "We will now entertain questions and comments regarding the pastor's request for another day off."

His church simply could not value time given to help their pastor grow as a child of God. If we seek to shift the paradigms in our organizations, we will face a conflict of values and expectations set more by the world than by its Creator. Yet we must enter this conflict and win it. It is the root of our survival and, more importantly, of our obedience as steward leaders.

Israel Gaither, Commander of the Salvation Army, shared this story with me:

It was August 2006. My wife and I were preparing to return to the USA from an overseas assignment in a developing sector of the world to take up senior-level leadership positions in the organization in which we both serve.

For several months prior to our actual arrival, while in preparation of my mind and heart, the Lord gave me a strong vision to cast for the movement. The direction of the Lord not only excited me, it gripped me! Within a very short time after taking up our new duties, I had the opportunity to convey the vision to about two thousand who are associated with the movement. I laid out the dream God gave me, and it was enthusiastically accepted, confirming that not only had I arrived in the responsibility at the right time, but the vision given to me was of the Lord.

But a few weeks later the bubble burst! Our organization underwent a change at the highest level of our international movement and the result of that process, to my surprise meant that my wife and I would once again be called to leave America to assume an even greater leadership responsibility on the international scene. While the appointment affirmed my gifts and skills, it seemed all wrong that God would give me a strong vision for organizational expansion and growth, and then so quickly take it from me by

asking me (after just three months) to move on to another overseas assignment. I was devastated But I learned the meaning of "being."

I struggled for several days and finally decided that not another day must pass without knowing that it was God who willed that I should take the next assignment. It was early Sunday morning, and as I prayed, read Scripture and reflected, the Holy Spirit challenged me with the reminder that I was called to serve His ideas -- they were not mine. I was a steward, and not in control of the timing of His purposes. I suddenly realized that God had me where He wanted me for "His time," not mine.

He had provided the vision for "His purposes ", not mine. It was about "Him," not "me." My business was to "be" obedient to His call on my life. Although it was a spiritually and emotionally draining experience, that lesson will never be lost on me.

The one calling of the steward leader is joyful obedience. This response is always joyful because it springs from a heart that is free. The first step in that response is valuing the work God is seeking to do in you more than the work he will do through you. We were created to reflect the image of God, and we do that not by our actions primarily, but by our character. We understand that in order to walk the path of the steward leader, we must love before we can serve, follow before we can lead submit before we can succeed. My colleague John Savage says, "It's not who you are leading, but who is leading you that matters."

If you will agree that God is more concerned with who you are than with what you do, it will start you down the road of your transformation as a godly steward and a steward leader.

- Foundation. Jesus talked about foundations Build Your House on the Rock in Matthew 7:24-27, ***“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”***
- Our foundation, which not only supports but directs our “being” is so important. It is made up of our convictions, which include our beliefs and values that we hold as unshakeable, things we refuse to compromise on. Often times, when our doing takes priority over our being, things can easily get distorted and maybe our being can even be set aside. The Idea of Pathway For Integrity Network is about developing and keeping a foundation of solid biblical values and instruction that directs every aspect of our lives.