

Episode 025

Lead Yourself Before You Wreck Yourself (Self-Leadership)

Introduction

When we drive a car we need to steer the car. If we do not steer the car, we will eventually have a crash. In the same way, you may become a wreck if you fail to lead yourself. Have you ever tried to operate a remote-controlled car? Very difficult to not crash. Because you are not right there, in full control or unable to be responsive enough.

As you were growing up, your parents or carers led the way. They told you what to eat, to wear, what to do basically. The older you get, you start to make more and more decisions for yourself. Thus, the more you need to learn to make leadership decisions over your own life. If our parents make too many decisions for us, we do not develop the skills nor confidence to make significant decisions ourselves. We may remain too reliant on them or others.

However, others can only lead you so far, you have to lead yourself the rest of the way. When others lead you, there will be insufficient momentum, insufficient timeliness. Lead yourself and get further, go faster and be better. Especially with God's help.

“Mastering Others is Strength. Mastering Yourself is True Power.” states Lao Tzu, an ancient Chinese philosopher. That is the power of self-leadership.



Some benefits of leading yourself

You can:

- Go much further. So many areas of my life, I have managed to get further ahead than many. Because I led myself to go beyond what others would lead me to. Because I refuse to be mediocre. Because I refuse to be average.
- Grow greater in maturity. You will have more opportunities to learn to deal with, tackle and solve a lot of problems. Even if it is mostly your own! You gain more experience. Mature more. Increase in resilience. Find greater fulfilment in life.
- Grow higher in leadership. How well you lead others is correlated to how well you lead yourself. Why? You gain significant respect from others if you are doing well in your own life. Also there are many lessons and skills you learn from leading yourself that you can use to lead others. Effective leaders are effective at leading self. John Maxwell “A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way.”
- Accomplish much more. Most of those who have accomplished much have exercised strong self-leadership. You can accomplish more of your dreams. If you lead yourself well.

Now self-leadership does not mean you totally lead yourself all by yourself. Not at all. We all need others. People can help us along the way. We need God. But at the end of the day, the more responsibility we take for our own development, where we are headed, the better.

One of the most important keys of self-leadership is to take responsibility for key areas in our life.



PILLARS OF SELF-LEADERSHIP

PILLAR #1: SELF-DISCOVERY

To improve, we must first understand ourselves. It is hard to improve when you lack awareness of who you are and where you are at.

Genesis 4:6–7 (NIV84) 6 Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.”

God was challenging Cain to understand his own heart and the present danger of his heart orientation. We cannot build upon the foundations of who you are unless you are aware what those are. God can and does help us along that journey. He has revealed things to me and given me insight about myself. He has brought people into my life to help me.

Personality type

In our Art of Mentoring Class we teach about temperaments. It is about discovering something of your personality type. Why you tend to look at things a certain way and respond to things in a certain way.

God made each one of us in a certain way with a certain slant. Every personality or temperament has strengths and weaknesses. Is an oak tree better than a reed? Neither. But each has strengths and weaknesses. If we know how to build upon our strengths more effectively and minimise our weaknesses, we can go much further. There are various schemes to categorise personalities such as Myers Briggs.



Beliefs and values

What are these? Beliefs - what do we believe in? Values - what is important to us? Why is this important? They are our true north. We are naturally drawn in that direction, if left to ourselves. The stronger our beliefs and values, the more strongly we are drawn in that direction. Whether we appreciate it or not. It is not what you say. But what you actually do under pressure. This is shaped often by our upbringing and what we feed our mind and hearts.

The world's beliefs and values does not align with God's. It will lead us away from God. It leads to destruction and ultimately death. If we align with this world, we will face God's judgment upon this world. If we align with God, we will soar heavenward. Question is how much will we allow God to shape our beliefs and values? That is why it is so important to know God's Word and God. That is why it is so important to be connected in God's family.

When our beliefs and values align with God's we are naturally drawn towards God and His ways. It leads towards transformation of our minds and hearts, and ultimately life.

Improving through self-discovery

Self-leadership involves working upon discovering self and adjusting self.

- Enhancing our personality. Working on our personality type to reduce weaknesses, increase strengths and gain new strengths. We become better balanced. We gain better foundations for greater success. .
- Adjusting our belief systems and values. By gaining or replacing with better ones. Godly ones..
- Aligning for greater achievements. We can become our best leader when we live and lead building upon who we are..
- Aligning for greater fulfilment and joy. When what we do, what we pursue aligns with our personality type, beliefs and values – there is greater joy and sense of fulfilment. We are more energised.



PILLAR #2: SELF-GROWTH

Self-growth is about striving to continuously improve yourself. To lead ourselves in this aspect, we need to supply the motivation, the incentive. This will come primarily from our beliefs and values. If we believe that God wants us to grow and we see the value of growing as a person – it will motivate us.

You must believe that you can be better than what you are now. You must be willing to invest in an improved self. A few key aspects that will aid our self-growth:

- Commitment to personal growth. Must be high on your priority list.
- Passion to learn and a sense of curiosity. You cannot improve or change your ways much unless you are willing, even eager to learn better or new ways.
- Observe those who are successful or effective. In areas of interest to you. This can help inspire us. It can open our eyes to what is possible.
- Willingness to receive feedback. Our perception of self can be distorted so only receiving feedback from our self will be inadequate. Besides, we cannot fully tell how others were impacted by our actions or inaction unless we receive feedback.
- Willingness of embrace failure as part of the journey. When we try to grow and change, we will make mistakes, stumble etc. But with the right perspective, we can learn from them. It is fine to make a mistake. Just don't make the same mistake twice! "Failure is an absolute prerequisite of success. You learn to succeed from failure." Brian Tracy.
- Willingness to make changes. As we identify what is working and what is not, in our lives. Definition of stupidity is expecting more when you keep doing more of the same things.
- Commitment to make self-development plans. We can only get to our preferred state if we make plans and stick to it.
- Look to God for His strength and empowerment. We can only get so far on our own strength and understanding. With God's help, we can get much further and also in directions we may not have imagined.



PILLAR #3: SELF-MANAGEMENT

When we are able to self-manage, we tend to be more focussed, more productive and a more independent worker. What are some key ingredients involved in self-management?

Managing priorities

We all have priorities, whether we realise it or not. Eg: If we choose to play computer games or scroll through social media most of our free time – that reflects a priority. Even though we may not have consciously made that our intention. Part of self-leadership is taking control of our personal priorities and being intentional about it. We must take responsibility to shape our priorities and manage it.

Shaping our priorities is a very important step. It will determine our destiny. Because what we choose to focus on will shape our lives. Identify our current priorities. This is the starting point. What takes up the bulk of our waking time? Activities that are not compulsory.

Determine key priorities.

- Start with some big over-arching priorities. Ask ourselves what should be the most important priorities in my life. What priorities will move us forward in God's purposes? To be the type of person God wants me to be and to lead in His ways? What should be truly important in my life? This goes back to what our beliefs and values are. I realise that not everyone can work out their big over-arching priorities easily. It will take some time of contemplation and seeking God, etc.
- Put SMART goals to it. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound. It is not set in stone, it can evolve as we mature or gain more insight. But it is important to start somewhere.
- Breakdown big priorities into bite size-priorities.



Managing time

We must manage our time or time will manage us. Our time is very valuable. In fact, our life is measured by our time. So part of self-leadership is about taking responsibility to manage our time well. So that we can focus on what is important. So we can make our priorities become reality.

- Manage tasks & activities. What is important vs urgent. What is priority? What is timely? What should we stop doing?
- Manage schedules. Think weekly and monthly schedules. Effective scheduling helps you get more out of the limited time. It helps you to give time to important things.
- Manage non-essential tasks. Perhaps delete? Do later?
- Manage impulses and distractions. What causes our best time management efforts is often our lack of self-discipline over our impulses and distractions. Self-awareness is a key part of dealing with this. Learning how to deal with our ability to concentrate, focus, patterns and habits, etc.

Conclusion

We should learn to lead ourselves well. For self-leadership is the key to personal growth. When you lead yourself in spiritual growth, it will bring great present fulfilment and eternal rewards.

Yet at the same it is not meant to be an independent self-leadership. Rather it should be a God-dependent self-leadership. For we need God's help.



Discussion Questions

These questions could be done personally or as part of a group discussion.

1. “Lead yourself and get further, go faster and be better. Especially with God’s help.” What are your thoughts about this statement? Why do you think so?
2. How important do you think self-discovery is to the journey of self-leadership? Elaborate your thoughts on this.
3. What do you see as the most important elements that will help in your journey of self-growth? Why?



Actionable Steps

Following questions are to prompt us on suitable actions. Importantly, come up with steps you will take to make progress. Give them datelines and priority.

1. What are some key steps you can take to increase your self-discovery? Perhaps to take some personality tests? Evaluate your values and beliefs?
2. In the lesson, a number of key aspects were recommended to improve our self-growth. Identify 2 or 3 key aspects you would like to focus on over the next few months. Then identify some concrete steps you can take in each.
3. Are there some aspects of managing your time that you need to improve upon? Identify 2 aspects that you will focus on and work out practical steps you can take to improve.





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