



HOAW Newsletter

QUOTE

"Nobody cares what you have to say until they observe how you live. If you live a life of integrity and honor, people will ultimately want to hear what you have to say, even if they disagree with you. Why? Because they cannot get past a life well lived. They may deconstruct your faith claims, say your truth ends where their nose begins, but they cannot argue with a life well lived." GW Bourgond

Feb 2018

HELPING MEN LIVE LIVES OF INTEGRITY AND HONOR

Importance of Margin

by Dr. Greg Bourgond

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." 16 As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. 17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins (James 4:13-17).

Many of us are living hectic lives with little or no time to accommodate unexpected requests for our attention or engagement or address the things that are important but not critical. There is no 'margin' for such things. We are already at our maximum. We bristle at any new demand made upon us. We become irritated at the audacity of anyone making such a request. "Don't they understand I am at my limit?" We are living a 'herniated disk' existence where any petition for our time is experienced as pain.

One of the more painful ailments is a herniated disk. When someone has a herniated disk, pain can be felt wherever the body is touched. According to Mayo Clinic Staff "a herniated disk refers to a problem

with one of the rubbery cushions (disks) between the individual bones (vertebrae) that stack up to make your spine. A spinal disk is a little like a jelly donut, with a softer center encased within a tougher exterior. Sometimes called a slipped disk or a ruptured disk, a herniated disk occurs when some of the softer "jelly" pushes out through a crack in the tougher exterior."

Mayo Clinic Staff describes the symptoms...

Most herniated disks occur in your lower back (lumbar spine), although they can also occur in your neck (cervical spine). The most common signs and symptoms of a herniated disk are:

- **Arm or leg pain.** If your herniated disk is in your lower back, you'll typically feel the most intense pain in your buttocks, thigh and calf. It may also involve part of the foot. If your herniated disk is in your neck, the pain will typically be most intense in the shoulder and arm. This pain may shoot into your arm or leg when you cough, sneeze or move your spine into certain positions.
- **Numbness or tingling.** People who have a herniated disk often experience

numbness or tingling in the body part served by the affected nerves.

- **Weakness.** Muscles served by the affected nerves tend to weaken. This may cause you to stumble or impair your ability to lift or hold items.

Many of us live in a chronic state of business with little time for spontaneity or space to enjoy the abundant life promised in Scripture. In effect, we experience a 'herniated disk' existence where any additional responsibility, obligation, commitment, expectation, or requirement is felt as added pain. We know when we are living a 'herniated' existence when a simple request or an unplanned or unexpected event pushes us over the edge. Our response is out of proportion to the circumstance. We become irritated or lash out at the request feeling the pain of not having the space in our busy lives to respond. We resent the intrusion and we let others know.

For instance, our spouse asks us to take care of something that wasn't on the 'list' of things we planned to do. Our son or daughter asks us to spend some time with them when we had hoped to rest after a particularly stressful day. Our pastor calls us and asks us to take on a new role or task that we know will demand time we don't have. Our small group requires our presence every other week for two hours and is felt as yet another commitment we don't have time for given our busy schedule.

Our boss asks us to take on an additional responsibility that is not in our job description. We just can't seem to get to the things we enjoy the most or that breathes life into our harried existence. We feel like the world is pushing in on us with demands we feel we cannot meet. We resent the intrusion. There is no time for these things, no room in our lives, no space to accommodate one more thing. Every new demand is viewed larger than it really is in reality.

Dr. Richard Swenson defines *margin* in his book of the same title as the distance or space between our *load* and our *limits*.

Our *limits* include available time, innate and acquired ability, capacity, intellect, emotional stability, stress level, stage of life, physical health, and personality temperament.

Our *load* is represented by our current responsibilities, obligations, commitments, life circumstances, requirements, pledges, promises, duties, burdens, and liabilities.

When there is no margin in our lives our load overwhelms our limits and we are living a 'herniated' life. Margin is that free space that can be accessed to accommodate the unexpected, the things we love to do but aren't critical, the stuff we want to do but rarely have the time to do, the reasonable expectations of others that improve relationships.

So, how do we create *margin* in our lives? How do we make *room* in an already demanding schedule? How do we generate *space* for the unexpected? It has been said that nature deplores a vacuum. In other words, when a vacuum exists things cascade in to fill it. When *margin* exists in our lives we need to resist the temptation to fill it immediately with something we haven't had room for up until now. *Margin* is free space for worthwhile opportunities of a temporary nature that will not take up permanent residence, thereby diminishing our ability for any future opportunity. We need to be judicious on when, why, where, what and how we temporarily use up this valuable space.

First things first – how do we create margin in our lives? There is no short cut; margin can only be created by elimination of something we are already doing. Eliminating behaviors to make room for margin takes discipline, commitment, and courage. Some habits are difficult to change and will take time.

The *first thing* to go is any dysfunctional activity that robs our precious time. What behaviors are we engaged in that are time wasters, unhealthy, corrupting, or sinful that steal what little discretionary time we have available? What habits have we nurtured that need to be reined in? What hobbies do we have that time expended doing them are beyond reasonable limits? What activities are we engaged in that are not healthy or that are out of control?

The *second thing* to go are those things that impair our physical health, interfere with getting the sleep we need, prevent us from enjoying periods of rest and relaxation, hinder us from establishing and sustaining meaningful relationships and friendships, and thwart our spiritual development and maturation. As a side note, I find it ironic that we always seem to find the time for things we really want to do even when those things are not good for us.

The *final thing* to go is the notion that our jobs are our identity or the place where we are to derive our value. It is not what you do that determines who you are. It is who you are in Christ that should inform, condition and qualify what you do. Your job is the gift God gives you to provide for your needs and have some left over to give to the needy. Workaholicism is a dysfunctional pattern that sucks up what little margin we have left alone prevents us from other things that really matter.

Second – what will help us create margin in our lives? What will help us to determine what should be eliminated to produce margin in our lives? What will inform the tough decisions we might have to make to create margin in our lives?

Answers to these important and life-changing questions begin with prayer, self-reflection, honest evaluation, guidance from respected mentors, and heartfelt assessment. This personal appraisal must be informed and conditioned by some respected authority that will bring cohesion, consistency, coherence, and congruence to our lives. I believe that authority is God and His word, the Bible.

The framework for personal appraisal will include the following three considerations addressed in more detail in the previous newsletter...

What 'hills' are you prepared to die on?

The 'death' I speak of might be the sacrifice of a dream, the release of a plan, the rejection of a promotion, the setting aside

of a perception of success, the radical adjustment of pre-conceived beliefs or attitudes, or some other 'death' for the sake of what really matters.

The '*hills*' to die on should be few but important enough to not violate under any circumstance. Candidates might include one's faith, protection of family, godly character, a biblical worldview, or some other overarching theme.

What hills will you bleed on?

These hills will be situational but must always be God's hills and not our own. Certain issues might be very important to us but not hills we will die on. We may make a stand on the issue given certain circumstances led by the Lord.

Not every instance that gives rise to the issue will require engagement. It depends on the time, place, context, event, or circumstance. You can't bleed on every hill or you will die prematurely. If you bleed on every hill every time it becomes an issue people will simply discount the importance of what you have to say creating the opposite effect, you hoped to attain.

What hills are not worth climbing?

Hills not worth climbing are everything else. These hills are not a statement of worth or importance. They may be worthy and importance of attention but not ours. Hills not worth climbing for us may be somebody else's hill to die on or bleed on in God's economy. Hills not worth climbing will far outnumber hills to die on or hills to bleed on. In other words, the hills not worth climbing may be important to us but should be kept to ourselves. If we air them out they may cause more harm than good.

Answers to these critical concerns will greatly aid our ability to judiciously choose what should be eliminated in our lives to create *margin*.

One other worthwhile activity will help us determine what to eliminate in our lives to create margin. That activity is to discover our God-given and ordained trajectory which will clarify our unique journey and destiny.

We were brought into this world by God's sovereign initiative and design (Psalm 139:1-18). We are here to fulfill His divine purpose He determined in advance for each of us uniquely (Ephesians 2:10).

When we have clarity regarding our *personal life mandate*, our calling we will have the

confidence we need to say no to some things and yes to others.

Our *personal life mandate* consists of...

- Our *biblical purpose* (our beingness which provides the energy we need),
- Our *life purpose* (our doingness which provides the path we are to travel),
- Our *committed passion* (the people group we are called to serve or the cause we are called to embrace),
- Our *non-negotiables* in any role we assume (those things that must be present in any situation in order for us to thrive),
- Our *unique methodologies* (our toolkit that helps us effectively do what we are called to do), and
- Our *ultimate contributions* (the legacy we will leave when God calls us home).

In summary, *margin* is needed in our lives to accommodate unexpected or unplanned requests for our time that matter, that are important, that correlates with our calling, and that reflects God's priorities. *Margin* can only be produced by elimination of things that are not really necessary, are sinful or dysfunctional or unhealthy, are not hills to die on or bleed on, and are not in accordance with our personal life mandate.

FAST FACTS

95%

of men say they don't have male friends; less than 1/3 of men in church say they have a friend. *WACMM*

61%

The typical U.S. Congregation draws an adult crowd that's 61% female, 39% male. This gender gap shows up in all age categories. *WACMM*

70%

Over 70 percent of the boys who are being raised in church will abandon it during their teens and twenties. Many of these boys will never return. *WACMM*

DEBRIEF



Over 360 men attended the Summit, almost 3 times as many as the previous inaugural year. I spoke twice, at the beginning and at the end. My messages included *Fact or Fiction: Five Deadly Lies Men Embrace* and *What Will You Pass On?* I met many men longing to be all God intends them to be. One man had received a presidential pardon for crimes committed and now dedicates his life to serving Christ in a ministry called "Set-Free Sioux Falls." Another man came out of the gangs and now serves Christ in a vital ministry to men. During the Summit, I could see God working through His Holy Spirit. I had the privilege of personally blessing 12 men individually. Tom Henderson of Restoration Generation did a masterful job of organizing the gathering.

OTHER NEWS

Speaking Engagements

May 17th - 20th - Men's Base-camp Weekend sponsored by Grace Fellowship at Trout Lake Camp in Pine River Minnesota. Over 200 men are expected.



Donations

HOAW Ministries needs your financial support. Our ability to help men live God-honoring lives depends on the resources we can use to that end. Simply go to the donations tab on heartofawarrior.org.

Thank you for being a subscriber.