

Win With What You've Got

by Patrick & Dwaina Six

Have you ever found yourself caught up in the “If only” syndrome? *If only* we had more money. *If only* we had a bigger house. *If only* we had children. *If only* our children were grown. *If only* our grown children would act like grown-ups! *If only* we had more time. *If only* he would talk more. *If only* she would talk less! It is easy to get so focused on the shortcomings of our present circumstances that we fail to see the potential of what could **BE** with what we **DO** have.

Recently, we were reading 1 Samuel 22. The context of this portion of Scripture is that the future King David was running from Saul, the present king of Israel. Verses 1-2 tell about the four hundred-or-so men who had joined David. The New International Version describes his followers as being in distress, in debt, and discontented. Not exactly the type of supporters David was looking for! He could have succumbed to the tyranny of “*if only*” thinking and chosen not to fight because his men were not well-trained, not fit for battle, nor well-equipped. David could have complained that God was being unfair because He gave him such a motley group of people to lead.

But rather than complaining and quitting, **David proved himself to be a real winner**. With his men now numbering about six hundred, he led his troops in a victory against the Philistines (chapter 23). He took what he had been given, committed their efforts to the Lord, and made winners out of them all. He was faithful with his *little*, so God gave him *much* at the appropriate time.

Jesus illustrated the same point in Matthew 25:14-30 in His parable of the talents. To the servants who had taken their talents, invested and multiplied them, the master said,

“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness” (vs 21 & 23).

David’s rise to leadership began very humbly and perhaps not the way he had envisioned. After all, Samuel had already anointed him as the next king of Israel, so why didn’t God just hand him the kingdom? Why was there so much strife and stress along the way? Because God used this experience as a part of David’s training to develop him as a leader. **The process was at least as important as the placement!** In order for David to be an effective ruler, he needed to understand what real, everyday people go through. Through the process of God’s “leadership development training,” David learned to lead from the position of humility. His followers learned to love and follow a man who truly loved them, even when he had to make some unpopular decisions.

**God doesn’t
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ought to.**

In the study Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God, Henry Blackaby observes that whenever God gives you an assignment, **He begins to develop in you the character needed to match the assignment**. God is patient and He is willing to take whatever time is necessary to develop your character. Consider Moses, who was a shepherd *for forty years* before God called him to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt. That might seem like wasted time, but it wasn’t. Moses spent forty

years shepherding unruly, stupid sheep, which prepared him to lead more than 1 million* frightened, disgruntled people – God’s people – out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and to the Promised Land.

At this point, you may be saying, “But, I’m not like David or Moses. I’m not a leader of anything! **How does this apply to me?**” Keep reading.

A leader is defined as “a person of **authority or influence**” (www.miriam-webster.com *emphasis added*). Think about your positions in life. What about your involvement at church? Do you lead a Bible study or small group or serve on a committee or a ministry team? In any church “position” you have influence and some measure of authority. If you are a parent, you certainly have authority. And you have more influence with your children than you may think.

“Extensive research shows that **parents are more influential in their children’s lives than anyone else**, shaping their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors” (<http://www.search-institute.org/families/InfluenceofParents.pdf>, Building Strong Families, Insights from Research, Number 3, November 15, 2002). As a husband or wife, you have a lot of influence in your mate’s life. **You play a large part in how they see themselves** – as a success or a failure. And perhaps unknown to you, there are others watching you and are influenced by the way you react to the circumstances of life. You *are* influential whether you realize it or not!

Whether your level of leadership or your positions of authority or influence are small or great, remember that the same God who was at work in David’s leadership development is at work in yours as

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well. Remember David's example and don't succumb to the tyranny of *if only* thinking.

When we operate in an area of authority and/or influence, we can become discouraged. Often this is because God doesn't always do things the way we thought He would or the way we think He ought to. Can you relate? Too often, we believe God has called us to something, but after we've begun and things get tough or don't go as planned, we assume we must have misunderstood the calling. The "*if only*" thoughts begin... *if only* they cared, *if only* they would listen, *if only* they would respond, or *if only* they would just "get it"! The temptation is to give up. We sometimes justify quitting by saying we must have missed what God was telling us.

"If only" thinking leads to giving up.

Sorry, but that line of thinking just does not line up with God's Word. Let's return again to the example of Moses. Remember how Pharaoh laughed in Moses' face when Moses first confronted him about letting the Hebrew slaves go? And the Hebrews themselves nearly mutinied against Moses when Pharaoh increased their labor. Do you wonder if Moses ever went back into his prayer closet and

asked, "God, did I hear you right?" It would have been easier for Moses to go back to herding his sheep and goats, saying, "Well, I guess that wasn't God's will after all," or "God must want to use someone else besides me to do this."

Just because something isn't easy does not make it any less God's will. When we are seeking to live out God's will in our life, we can be assured of facing challenges. After all, we have an enemy who is out to steal, kill, and destroy us (John 10:10).

What challenges are you facing? What circumstance are you in that holds little or no potential as far as you can see? Is it a struggling marriage? Is it a job that seems to be going nowhere? Is it a child who has gone A.W.O.L.? The answers aren't easy, but we must resist "*if only*" thinking, which too often leads to giving up. Here are some actions we have found helpful:

- **We refuse** to beat ourselves up over things we don't control.
- **We make sure** we, as a couple, are giving priority to our prayer time together and reading God's Word together.
- **We re-examine** what God has said.
- **We determine** to have an attitude of gratitude for what we DO have!
- **We reaffirm** our commitment to faithfulness – to our Lord, to each other, to where we sense

He is leading, and to all the people we influence.

Regardless of the potential we see or do not see, we need to be faithful with what we have. Our faithfulness will result in a good and godly influence. Allow God to do His "leadership development training" in your life, in your spouse's life, and in your circumstances to bring more success than you could ever have imagined.

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21, NIV).

*Exodus 12:37 indicates 600,000 men plus women and children would equal more than 1 million people.

More sites with research that indicate the huge influence of parents on children:

<http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/dept/d46/psy/dev/Spring99/schoolage/family.html>, The Developmental Psychology Newsletter of Mesa Community College Psychology Department, Mesa, AZ.

<http://www.pmusa.com/en/prc/facts/research.asp>, Parent Resource Center.

Note: The sites listed here are not expressly Christian, and may not be in total agreement with GTO's views or Statement of Faith.

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