

Avoid the 'Wouldas' and 'Couldas'

Charisma tracked down a few veterans in the faith to give young people sage advice about faithfully standing the test of time. Go to and get advice to avoid your own “wouldas” and “couldas.”

Embrace Change

One of the most important lessons for any leader to embrace is that change is constant, and change is our friend. God has ordained a life of change, for our entire lives. David wrote, “Because they do not change, therefore they fear not God” (Ps. 55:19). It is during times of change that we realize our need of God.

Every leader will go through changes, and your happiness in life depends upon your attitude, preparation and acceptance of the changes in your life. When changes have come in my life, I have accepted them, prepared for them and made the next era richer. Then I trusted God more because I had to. And the older you get when change comes, the more you’ll have to trust Him because the harder it is to change.

So here are a few quick thoughts on how to make change your friend: 1) don’t rush change; 2) prepare for the next change; 3) enjoy the time when you need God more because of change; 4) embrace change as a means of developing your dependence on God; and 5) resist hanging on to the old. It is challenging to live with change but impossible to live without it. Make change your friend and trust God more.

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Become More Like Jesus

There are two kinds of spiritual gifts. First, there are the famous ministry gifts Paul lists in 1 Corinthians 12 that are meant to help others. Then, there are the gifts known as the “fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22 that are meant to help us become like Jesus.

In my experience, most people want to receive the ministry gifts, but it is the fruit of the Spirit that will cause us to become more like Christ. And isn't that the real goal of our lives? People can have spectacular ministry gifts and still be involved in grave sin, as strange as that may seem. Many leaders with extraordinary ministry gifts often seem to display glaring personal weaknesses. Jesus advised us not to seek the ministry gifts unless our personal lives were noted for holiness (see Matt.7: 22-23).

By all means, pray for the ministry gifts that help others, but do not neglect the personal gifts that help you become like Jesus. We desperately need the power of the Spirit to transform us so that we can be like Jesus, especially in truly loving people-even our enemies. Pray for the power of the Spirit to transform you until you become like Jesus. It's the greatest thing that could ever happen.

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Put Your Hope in God

When times of inner turmoil steal your hope, remember this story: In 1873, the people of South Carolina elected the former slave Robert Smalls to the U.S. House of Representatives. Despite racial prejudice, he compiled a brilliant record and was known as a powerful orator. Later he served as customs collector in Beaufort, South Carolina, until Woodrow Wilson was elected president and fired many blacks,

including Smalls.

This wasn't the first time Smalls was forced to humble himself in the face of injustice. He became a hero during the Civil War. While still a slave, he piloted the Confederate ship Planter out of Charleston Harbor and into Union hands while the captain and crewmembers were ashore. With the reward money he received, he purchased the house where he and his mother had been slaves. One day, the wife of his former slave master, Mrs. McKee, returned to the house. She was elderly and confused and thought she still lived there. Instead of turning her away, Smalls moved her into her former bedroom and served her.

Smalls died in 1915 at the age of 76 and was much honored, but he didn't see his greatest reward in his lifetime. In 2001 the Army Reserve commissioned the Maj. Gen. Robert Smalls, the first ship named after an African-American. If Smalls had spent his life looking for his reward, or even for justice to be served, he likely would have been deeply discouraged. As leaders, we must put our hope in the Lord, and remember the words of David: "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God" (Ps. 42:11).

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