

How to Play by Ear

I returned to college in the late '70s to earn an MBA and be on my way to brand management with Heinz Ketchup. I was married and in a hurry to learn and start my marketing career.

When I enrolled in the program, a former professor told me they needed an economics professor and the college could award me an assistantship and pay me to teach. Since I had no money and a wife, this sounded like a pretty good deal.

When it came time to teach my first class, "The History of American Economics" to a group of freshmen, I realized I was in deep trouble. Freshmen don't like 23-year-old professors who have never taught a class, and like economics even less.

I asked my department head about how to teach the class. His answer taught me a lot about leadership and what would soon become my career in college teaching.

"Young one," (that's what he called me every day) "I want you to think about the best teachers you had in college and do what they did with your students. And I want you to think about the bad teachers you had along the way and don't do what they did. Now, here's your textbook, go get 'em tiger."

This was my first lesson in "playing by ear."

I played guitar, and then piano, by ear. I parented by ear.

Malcolm Gladwell wrote that it takes 10,000 hours of study to reach mastery. New research indicates that effective learning can occur in much shorter time with frequent repetition.

No kidding.

Leaders learn most about how to lead from trench work. Books and blogs about leading help us to confirm feelings about what we have learned while leading. Some of the greatest leaders

quickly confess that they learned to lead by trial and error. I had a pastor tell me once to learn to pastor at a small church, and make all my mistakes there. Then move to larger churches and make fewer mistakes.

Perhaps “playing by ear” simply means to depend upon the voice of the Holy Spirit. I’ve never had a better teacher than the Holy Spirit. I’ve learned so much about leadership by simply praying for the Holy Spirit to lead me and help me through every day.

I want to lead by ear today, as I listen for spiritual direction.

Jesus is my Master Teacher.

Today’s Scripture

“Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the gospel is preached to the poor” (Luke 7:22).

NOODLING

Here’s something I’m trying or thinking about today ...

When we design for greater accessibility, everyone benefits.

Inventor and IBM Fellow Chieko Asakawa was blinded in a

swimming pool accident at age 14.

Listen to this inspiring ten minute Ted Talk and watch her demonstrate new technology useful in broad applications.

Platform Tip No. 23

Automate how you receive and respond to your audience. You won't have time to respond to every inquiry or request. Create autobots for first level responses. Create about 20 different responses that provide next-step direction. Read all of your inbound messages and learn what your audience is asking about. Then, create new responses as needed.

Questions from your audience will always provide material for new content.

Do you want to learn more about developing your personal platform?

Send for my free series of lessons titled, "The Fundamentals of Creating, Curating and Developing Content for Multiple Platforms." Send your request to: platform@.

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