

[TWELVE DON'TS THAT: GAURANTEE MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT]

[excerpt from **THE VANGUARD LEADER** by **FRANK DAMAZIO**]

1. Don't move away from a mission mentality to a maintenance mentality.

Managers concentrate on doing things right, but leaders want to do the right things. A sense of mission gives a person the feeling that his own contribution has helped to build the world. A person who lives for a cause greater than himself truly lives. Jesus kept His mind on His mission.

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (**John 4:34**; see also **Luke 19:10**).

2. Don't lose your radical spirit of faith.

Reach forward and reach beyond to fulfill your mission. Never give up. Take risks. Move out. Grasp opportunities to stretch your faith. Be adventurous. Great necessities call forth great leaders. Develop faith like Caleb and Joshua had (**Hebrews 11:1-3**).

Faith in God requires boldness to state our desires, unshakable confidence in the trustworthiness of our Father, and a willingness to wait for Him to fulfill our needs. Success requires faith. Anyone in the vanguard of a mission must have great faith. The greater your belief, the greater the degree of your success in fulfilling the mission. Success comes to the person who stays in the race in spite of opposition. Success comes to persistent leaders.

For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity.

Proverbs 24:16

Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me.

Micah 7:8

The **Great Wallenda** was a tightrope walker who fell to his death because he became obsessed with failing. He and his family had entertained circus crowds with tightrope shows for several years. However, this time, he planned to walk a high tightrope stretched across a large chasm between two large buildings. For weeks leading up to the event, he led a life of fear. He feared failing. He did fail and paid for it with his life. They call this the Wallenda Factor—concentrating on failing more than succeeding. Concentrate on succeeding and doing the will of God.

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The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way.
Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with
His hand.

Psalms 37:23-24

Faith is what you have after everything else is gone. Dare to think big. Faith is maximum use of the God-given power of imagination. Dream up possible ways to reach a desired end. Rid yourself of pessimism and cynicism. Become an incurable optimist. Faith-taking is a risk. Change is natural and challenges accompany every change. Every change invites the unfamiliar and unexpected. Instead of retreating into a shell, become vulnerable. Risk it.

George Mueller faced one of his greatest challenges as he attempted to build the largest orphanage in his ministry. He fasted, prayed and asked himself the following questions. I call these “Guidelines for Faith Leapers and Faith Riskers.”

- Would I be going beyond my spiritual capabilities?
- Would I be going beyond my physical or mental strength?
- Have I reached the limits of my faith and mission?
- Am I tempting God, to limit Him in any of His attributes? I do not wish to limit His power or His willingness to give me all the means I need to take this step.
- Would this step cause me to be lifted up in pride? Can I handle promotion?
- Am I violating any principles of wisdom in pursuit of this dream?

3. Don't allow your cutting-edge vision to be dulled by wrong thinking.

Research shows that the mind processes more than 10,00 thoughts per day. Stop thinking like a victim, preoccupied with the past and things you cannot control. In your mind God places vision for His mission (**Acts 26:19**).

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3:13-14

Self-talk about what shoulda-, coulda-, or mightabeen fills people's minds. Victims are fatalistic, pessimistic about the future and feel they can't do anything to change it. Instead, lean on God and go into the future with great faith. **Winston Churchill** said,

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“Empires of the future are empires of the mind.” **Ralph Waldo Emerson** said, “A man is what he thinks about all day long. A man’s life is what his thoughts make of it.”

Stop thinking like a sustainer, preoccupied with present needs and doing only enough to get by. He does what is safe and wants guarantees on everything. He has no faith to reach out, take risks, or push forward.

Stop thinking like a dreamer, preoccupied with the future. He is full of vision but no plans, no steps to reality, no real actions. He says, “I could have done that.”

Stop thinking like a controller, preoccupied with controlling every circumstance in life. He can’t stand change or surprises. The only One who can control everything is God. We are God’s servants. We are not in control.

Get your mind out of its rut where it goes in a circle of routine boredom. Stubbornly it stays on the beaten path without accomplishing anything for God. Conventional thinking runs in deep ruts worn by what everyone else says. It presses people into the negative atmosphere of the culture.

Stop thinking like a loser with a prejudiced mindset. Losers make judgments and reach opinions before the facts are in. They also maintain their opinions after facts have changed. Prejudice limits vision and keeps people focused on what exists. Prejudice stifles creativity, insisting on one way to do everything. A stubborn, prejudiced, loser leader will not be flexible enough to allow the Lord to lead him into new realms of faith.

Leaders need to improve their thinking skills. Intelligence does not dictate how a person thinks. The ability to think well is a discipline that can be developed. Lift your mind out of its rut and try new possibilities. Be adventurous. Don’t merely react to change; create change yourself. Make things happen by moving in faith and believing God.

4. Don’t tolerate jealousy in your spirit.

Jealousy is one of the most despicable sins. Not only does it damage others, it destroys the person harboring it.

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Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?

Proverbs 27:4

A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones.

Proverbs 14:30

Jealousy expresses itself in fault-finding and evil-speaking. When vanguard leaders move in faith to accomplish a God-given mission, they can grow jealous of others who already accomplished similar missions. Jealousy rejoices when others fall. It feeds on ungodly competition and comparison. Jealousy of David was King Saul's root problem.

So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him... So Saul eyed David from that day forward.

1 Samuel 18:7-9

Selfish ambition nurtures jealousy. It grows in the garden alongside a desire for fame and recognition.

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Genuine leaders have a sense of calling, not a sense of being driven. The strongest leader has been made strong by God who affirms authentic leaders in their personhood and identity.

God's affirmation frees the leader not only to lead a cause but

also to serve others. A sense of identity is found in servanthood. Security comes from knowing who you are. Jealousy has no place in the heart of a leader at the head of a mission.

5. Don 't lose patience. It produces long-lasting excellence.

God is not concerned with how quickly you build but how well you build. Building for excellence is painfully slow. Reject pressures to be relevant, spectacular, and powerful. Jesus told a story about two houses. One was built quickly on sand but it fell (**Matthew 7:24-27**). If you are working for a year, plant rice. If you are working for a century, plant a tree. If you are working for an eternity, plant a man.

When you deal with God's people, instilling character and God's mission in them, it takes a lifetime. God's purposes cannot be hurried. No step can be left out. Excellence takes time.

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6. Don't compromise quality in times of discouragement and testing.

Quality will be tested. Depth will be exposed. Quality is revealed over time. You need to ask: Is the dream His vision? Is the method His way? Is the timing His moment? You must become a wise master builder who lays a good foundation using right materials. Building for eternity demands quality.

According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.

1 Corinthians 3:10

7. Don't allow distractions from your God-given vision and mission.

You have been sent. You have a work to do, a mission to accomplish.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Hebrews 12:1

The Lord Jesus Christ frequently spoke about being sent to do His Father's will. He had an inner sense of destiny evident from his conversation. "I was sent... I came... My Father's will... My Father's work... To finish His work... The work of God..." Begin to confess and pray that these phrases get into your spirit.

Set your sight on worthwhile things and work continuously toward their fulfillment. People with goals and direction accomplish fifty to a hundred times more in their life than people who wander aimlessly. What are your goals for this year? For the next five years? The next ten years? Jesus saw history as an arrow shot toward a target, a fire cast on earth, a lightning flash across the sky, a door opened to fulfillment, a task to be completed. Jesus' mission-mentality told Him a new time had arrived; a new reality had come. He embodied that new reality and called people to see it and follow Him. His sense of destiny determined His strategy.

8. Don't give Satan any ground in your life.

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Take a stand. Take control. The devil must be driven out of your conscience, mind, and habits.

nor give place to the devil.

Ephesians 4:27

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Ephesians 4:30

Any disobedience to the known word of God invites the devil to get a foothold into your life. Mission-minded leaders must not give the enemy any room. They must take a stand and take control.

9. Don 't avoid difficult tasks or perplexing problems.

Go through them. If you avoid them, they will meet you later in life or around the next corner.

And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me (**Acts 20:22-23**).

Opportunity comes from adversity. Welcome it. It is one of the best friends travelling with leaders. Problems can include the removal of a nonproductive leader, the need for a leader to stand by your side, or a personal problem of your own. Face them now. You can go through them. Don't go around them.

10. Don t travel through life alone.

Isolation slowly destroys leaders. Cultivate relationships. A person who can master human relationships is priceless. Do for others what you want them to do for you. It's hard to think about David without Jonathan, or Paul without Timothy, or D.L. Moody without Shankey, or Billy Graham without Cliff Barrows or George Beverly Shea.

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can

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one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken (**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**; see also **Proverbs 17:17**).

**Special, loving relationships are more than just good. They are essential. A shortage of friends will destroy you.

The Lord God Himself states in **Genesis 2:18** "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." A real friend is a treasure worth more than gold. Friends give you a special place in the world. Relationships confirm personal meaning, value and identity. Solitude casts doubt on them. Special, loving relationships are more than just good. They are essential. A shortage of friends will destroy you. A true friend hears you when you speak your heart, lets you think out loud, supports you when you are struggling, corrects you gently with love when you are wrong and forgives you when you fail. A friend prods you to personal growth, stretches you to your full potential, and celebrates your success as if it was his own.

By God's design, people hunger for contact with others. They want to belong. They want interaction and a sense of community with others. They want to overcome feelings of alienation and do not want to be seen as strange. However, people's need to belong causes anxiety. Unhappy personal relationships create frustration. In an affluent society, self-centered consumers ask for more mobility, privacy and convenience. Those three things cause greater isolation and worse loneliness. Add in the depersonalizing effects of technology and fear of rejection and it is easy to see why people are lonely.

Loneliness is the gut-wrenching feeling that follows being ignored or misunderstood. It knows no limits of class, race or age. It is a permanent condition for millions of leaders around the world. A public person with no personal life is lonely. He can be continually surrounded by people but have no one to share his heart with. Loneliness should not be viewed as a weakness or a character defect. It can be adjusted. Everyone has walls around their lives that should be turned into bridges.

Age tends to complicate personal relationships. Grade schoolers view classmates as a pool of potential friends. They simply pick ones they want to be friends with, like picking

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ripe, juicy fruit in an orchard. Children never contemplate the odds that the orchard might bear a bad crop or that they might not want to pick or lose the capacity to pick. As years go by friends become rarer, more like gold. Many people are forced to treasure the few they have. Many become skeptical, less optimistic about making new friends.

Baring bruised feelings and memories to strangers is a fearful process, but it is how true fellowship and true friendships are established. Show concern for other people. Talk to them about their interests more than you talk about yourself and your problems. Listen to them.

The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Proverbs 12:26

When building a friendship, never gossip or slander. Be honest in business and personal dealings. Always be quick to praise others with sincerity. Remember their names. Be kind and patient.

11. Don't allow bad habits to ruin your potential achievement.

God calls every believer to conquer old habits and sins just like he called Saul to destroy Amalek. Few do. Most pander to their self-interests.

In the beginning you make your habits; in the end your habits make you. Worry is a bad habit. It can paralyze progress. A person who worries also procrastinates, and that's a bad habit, too. Fear is a bad habit. Quit thinking about things to fear and have faith. Laziness is a bad habit. Be an early riser. Start each day with time to get your attitude and spirit on top. Get to work before you have to be there (**Proverbs 6:10; 10:20; 15:16**).

Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread.

Proverbs 20:13

12. Don't lose your perspective on life.

Life is a journey, a gradual process. Avoid extremes that damage home, health, friendships, godly character, and biblical values. True success abides in balanced stable

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living. Keep a steady pace. Keep in harmony with the laws of God and nature. Keep your sense of humor. Laugh at life. Laugh at yourself. At times you can even laugh at the devil.

A normal life lasts seventy to eighty years. You don't have three or four hundred years to do unimportant things before you attempt meaningful, significant things. You're running out of time. You may have wasted today, but you haven't wasted tomorrow.

True success is progressive completion of predetermined, worthwhile, godly goals during a lifetime kept stable by balanced, purified belief.