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find a
**BROKEN
WALL**

7 ANCIENT PRINCIPLES for
21st century LEADERS

BRIAN C. STILLER



CASTLE QUAY BOOKS

Find a Broken Wall: 7 Ancient Principles for 21st Century Leaders

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Introduction

This began with one of many conversations with friend and mentor Henry Wildeboer. He asked, “Why don’t you write about what you really understand?” Without waiting for me to ask what he meant, he said, “Leadership.”

So began this journey. It took a few starts. After many words in the hard drive I asked Don Loney, editor at John Wiley & Sons, to review my second draft. He had my manuscript with him when delayed at the Halifax airport, and so for those hours pored over it, and in our next time together said I was going in the wrong direction. Lifting one chapter, he focused on the Nehemiah story, giving me the title and outline. His interception was timely. For his interest and help I’m grateful.

Herb and Erna Buller were interested in this from the start, for over the years, the four of us have often sat into late evening hours, reflecting on life, telling stories and trying to decipher the ways and needs of leadership.

There are many who have contributed to my learning. In danger of missing some I want to point out those who were chairmen: Al Setter and Jim Hill, Youth for Christ in Montreal; Bruce Mathewson and Geoff Moore, Toronto YFC; Vince Walters and John Neufeld, Canadian YFC; Mel Sylvester, John Redekop, Donald Bastian, Don Jost and Ken Birch, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada; Archie McLean, Tyndale University College & Seminary. Of course there were many in these organizations and others with whom I’ve worked that have had much to teach me.

Audrey Dorsch has been an editorial colleague for a number of my books. Her expertise, wisdom and editorial smarts never cease to amaze me.

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One wonders what else you have to contribute to a topic that many others have written about. In reviewing the literature I saw many describe various forms and styles of leading, but none spoke about rebuilding troubled and broken organizations.

Right out of university, I learned firsthand what it takes to reconstruct a tired and out of step organization. This began a life experience of lifting and restoring ministries.

Nehemiah has been a friend of many years. Often I would read his story, looking for ideas and insights to fuel my heart, and help me see what was needed in creating new enterprises of value.

Brian C. Stiller
March, 2012

Prologue

Nehemiah wrapped his robes around him for some warmth in the cool early morning as he stepped onto the patio of his lavish apartment in Susa, capital of the Persian Empire. Last night he had been told of the impending arrival of Hanani, his brother, from Jerusalem. Bureaucratic insider gossip told him the news was troubling. But only his brother's version would he trust.

When Hanani arrived, they greeted as brothers. Their life history, friendship, and life in exile had maintained their bonds in spite of long separation. They understood each other's words, spoken and unspoken. Little chat was needed to get to the core of an issue. They also knew their roles.

While Hanani was a family man, Nehemiah had ended up in the king's court with the trusted role of senior minister to the king. The decision was not without cost: now a eunuch, Nehemiah could have neither marriage nor family. Without the prospect of descendants, his life was on a different track—his king was his life. Loyalty would not be complicated by wife or children. Sexual opportunity had no attraction. Little distracted his interest or attention—that is, until today.

Brothers embraced. As they sat on the eastern edge of the courtyard, servants brought early morning drinks and fruit. The sun pushing its way up over the horizon promised another hot day. Yet in the cool air, Nehemiah sensed another heat. There was something troubling today about his brother. Hanani's eyes hinted at a story that would soon affect Nehemiah's life.

Politics. It wasn't everything, but in Nehemiah's world everything was political. Nothing touched his world without some overlay of political intrigue.

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As senior minister, he knew the goings to and forth in the court. Stories of insider manipulations came to his desk. He had eyes and ears to know what was going on, any time, any place. He was expected to know. Only Nehemiah did the king ultimately trust. He was even the last to inspect the king's food to guard against a favorite enemy ploy of poisoning.

In 586 BC, almost a century and a half before Nehemiah's time, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar had overrun the Jewish community nestled on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, destroyed the Temple and took captive craftsmen, artisans, and skilled leaders: fifty thousand to eighty thousand Jews were exiled to Babylon.

The raid occurred on a chessboard of shifting powers. Babylon (now Iraq), north and east of Israel, was in ongoing battle with Egypt to the south and west. Israel, stuck in between, was bounced back and forth, century after century, ruled by one power after another.

Cyrus, king of Persia (now Iran), took over Babylon in 539 BC without much resistance. Benevolent and tolerant, he allowed Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem. Many Jews, led by Zerubbabel, returned and rebuilt the Temple. Other Jews, prosperous and successful where they were, saw little value in returning to their homeland.

In 529 BC Cyrus was killed and internal fighting broke out over who would be king. Eventually (519 BC) Darius took over the vast Persian Empire, which stretched from India across into North Africa. A brilliant governor, Darius organized the empire with regional leaders and by taxation built up central wealth and power.

When he died, his son Xerxes took over but lacked his father's skills in organization and leadership, and soon the empire began its long slide. The only bright spot in Xerxes' career was when he gave in to the pleas of Queen Esther to save the Jewish exiles.

In 465 BC Artaxerxes came to the throne, desperate to keep the kingdom intact. With Egypt on the cusp of rebellion, the king had to play his cards right to keep the outer edges of his kingdom—in this case Judah—from slipping into the hands of the Egyptians. Artaxerxes sent Ezra to Jerusalem to modernize the language and document the events of the city.

Then to add to Artaxerxes' woes, the Athenians in 460 BC cast their lot with the Egyptians. Not only was the Persian king faced with Athens and



Prologue

Egypt ganging up on him, one of his generals, Megabyzus, turned on him (449 BC). The king was fighting battles without and within.

Jerusalem was strategic. Through it ran a primary trade route from the Tigris and Euphrates valley to Egypt. Whoever controlled Jerusalem had economic dominance.

Now Nehemiah heard devastating news from his brother: the walls of his beloved city were lying in disrepair.

Hanani's face, creased with years in the desert sun, was shadowed by sorrow. Waiting until the servants slipped away, Hanani slowly began, choosing his words carefully. Hanani, close in age to his older brother and possessing the same faith in the God of their patriarchs, knew Nehemiah had issues and concerns far beyond his own. He had no wish to encumber Nehemiah with an increased burden. But to whom could he turn? Wrestling with whether to tell him, Hanani concluded his brother would not forgive him if he was kept out of the most critical issue their people had faced in their years of exile in the Persian world.

“Brother, the news I have to tell you from our beloved city is not good. We live in ridicule and abuse. Jews who escaped when we were taken captive have finally come out of hiding. They live as scroungers and beggars. They scratch away at the soil, and are run off by our enemies, who try to keep our people from Shabbat worship.

“Then—and this will be hard to believe—while a few of our countrymen were quietly singing King David's songs, those half-breed Samaritans heckled them, attacking them with insults and clubs.

“I was humiliated. Not only did the Persians rob us blind and kill and carry off many of our best families, now the locals are making us look as if we are religious nothings. They've tried to take our faith; now they are showing signs of taking our city.

“Nehemiah, when we rebuilt the Temple, we could at least sacrifice and worship. Here is the critical issue and the one we must address: the walls of Jerusalem are in rubble. Even the doors have been burned to ashes. The stones that gave the city such protection are tumbled around. It's a disgrace. But more. It shows the Samaritans, our enemies, that we don't care. It's one thing for people to attack us, but if we do nothing, what message does that send?”

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Nehemiah's heart seemed to stop. Nothing held his affection as did the Temple. "It began the night our ancestors left Egypt," he thought. He recalled the story.

The final warning Moses gave to Pharaoh was this: "In any house that is not sprinkled with lamb's blood tonight, the death angel will kill the oldest son of the household."

From that moment—the night Moses began leading the Israelites from Egypt—the Temple began. A slain lamb became the cornerstone of their religious ritual. In the wilderness they built the Tabernacle, and finally under King David's son Solomon the great Temple was built. It housed God. No mobile wilderness tent, Solomon's Temple was not only an architectural wonder, it was the holy place where confessed sins were forgiven and where voices co-mingled in praise and homage to the God of life.

Nehemiah's rise to influence in the Persian world had been remarkable. An immigrant's son becoming a senior official in government, living in luxury in the most powerful of nations, was a rare achievement. No longer a despised Jew, Nehemiah had class, status, and influence.

Now his world was about to change, his comfortable life upended by the news of catastrophe in Jerusalem. The city was not simply his ancestral home; it was the seat of his spiritual life, religious memory, and identity. While much had been done to reconstruct the city and Temple, what use was that when everything that had been built up was exposed to danger because the city's walls were in disrepair? Weeping was not foreign to his world, and Nehemiah let his feelings show.

In the following days, he found comfort in seclusion, fasting and praying. Time alone gave him focus and opportunity to craft a plan. As a Jew, and senior government official, Nehemiah made it his business to discern the intricate web of political entanglements. Time in prayer was not simply asking God for a way out; he was giving his mind to seeing what kind of plan would work. In his early years as king, Artaxerxes had been hard on the Jews in Jerusalem, ordering that all building be stopped. Nehemiah wondered whether he could persuade the king to reverse that order. He knew the news from Jerusalem might upset the Jewish exiles in Persia, and he was confident the king would do his best to keep the Jews from unrest. It was the opportunity Nehemiah needed. He watched for the right moment to lay out his proposal.



It had been four months since Nehemiah heard news of his homeland. With the king's court now back in session, it was time for Nehemiah to swing into action; mourning over his stricken city would be left for another day. Visiting satraps sat with their entourages as the king opened the session. Times were tough. Rebellion was in the air. Taxation was a festering issue in many regions. The effect of conquered regions being forced to raise enough taxes for their own needs and also deliver the levies Artaxerxes expected was crippling. Nehemiah understood. Now Egypt was prowling, sending noises of its readiness to battle Persia. Sitting in between was Judah.

This was the best card Nehemiah had to play. It wasn't a story he had made up. His loyalty to the king was too deep for that. But it was a factor, and there was no need to spell out the consequences.

The king called for Nehemiah. Nehemiah answered, following protocol and meeting the dignity of the occasion. The king noticed something was amiss. When time allowed, he took his trusted bureaucrat aside.

"Nehemiah," he asked quietly, "what's wrong? My goodness, you look like you've haven't slept for days."

"With permission, Your Majesty, at the end of today's session, might I have a word with you?"

It was agreed.

And so began the remarkable journey of Nehemiah as he requested of the Persian king permission to leave his high position in Persia and return to Jerusalem to make his home city safe from those who sought its demise. This was no small request, for by such authority he affected the political dynamics of the ever-explosive Middle East. For the next twelve years, he led a ragtag group that was underfunded, underarmed, and under attack, nationalists who had a will to recreate in the city of David what any Jews worth their salt would give their eyeteeth for: protection of the very building in which Yahweh lived, the Temple.

PRINCIPLE 1

Listen for Opportunity in Chaos

“Our rabbi talks to God every Saturday.”

“What makes you think so?”

“The rabbi told us himself.”

“What if the rabbi lies?”

“Don’t be ridiculous. God wouldn’t talk to a liar every Saturday.”

—George Jonas, *Beethoven’s Mask*

People often lead because no one else is available or interested. You may not have visualized yourself as a leader, but then you saw a need, observed an opportunity, or felt a pent-up urge to do something, so you acted, which in turn drew people to the idea. With people following your lead, you became a leader.

Most of us end up doing something we never had in mind in the first place. When I graduated from the University of Toronto in 1966, I had laid out my goals and strategy. I missed on both counts. Almost thirty years later, in 1995, when I responded with a throwaway line to Geoff Moore, a businessman and member of the board of Ontario Bible College/Ontario Theological Seminary (OBC/OTS), I had no idea where it would lead. As Geoff and I stood with Billy Graham a few days before the area-wide meetings at the Toronto SkyDome (now the Rogers Centre), Geoff said, “Brian, we are having trouble at the school.” I responded with, “Let me know if I can help.” Little did I know my response would result in my life being taken over by a bankrupt college and seminary and immerse me in the bone-crunching task of creating a Christian university.

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Who can predict the end? Life isn't a straight line from A to Z; it is a zigzag. Decisions made for less than stellar reasons can lead into a calling of significance.



After completing an undergraduate degree (1966) and twelve months of floundering I had two offers: director of the Montreal chapter of Youth for Christ (YFC) and youth minister at a Montreal church. At that time Lily, was expecting our son, Murray, and our car was on its last legs. One position offered \$65 a week salary and the other \$55. Both were of equal interest. With no sense of clarity but highly aware of our coming needs, we chose the first.

Finding, to my surprise, that the YFC organization was in serious debt, I learned how to rebuild, developing skills that led to a series of wall-building ministries. Next was Toronto, where the local YFC had folded. Another rebuild. Then, following mentor John Teibe, I further developed the Canadian national YFC. Sixteen years later I accepted the call to build an idea and shell of an organization: the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. And then a late evening phone call to help rebuild a financially under-the-water college and seminary.

That initial decision back in the '60s turned into what became my calling: to lead broken-down, distressed, and undeveloped ministries.



From watching others and testing ideas, I discerned critical ingredients in building broken walls.

This analysis comes from overlaying the story of Nehemiah on what I've experienced.

Where does one begin?

Begin with hearing the cry—it may be soft and boisterous, understated or self-directed. Listen for tones of survival, for noises from places and people wanting to tell those who listen that survival matters.

Eileen Henderson leads the most unattractive group one might imagine. As director of Circles of Support, she works with convicted pedophiles released from prison. Hated by the world and turned away by their own

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families, they are today's "lepers." Understandably, citizens are frightened by what these released prisoners might perpetrate again.

When Eileen and I had earlier worked together in Youth for Christ, I noted her instinct was on high alert: when someone was in trouble she heard. Her passion to help was linked to an uncanny ability to discern, mixed with a loving and tough ability to find solutions.

Today, through the noise of public outrage when a released pedophile is allowed to live in the community, Eileen hears other sounds: a trembling heart, the muted cries of a man often having been abused as a child, frightened, unloved, hated, and forced to flee from one community to another. As soon as people learn he has found a place in their community, the crowds descend, justifiably afraid for the well-being of their children but forgetting that he must live somewhere. What ministry is more counterintuitive?

The story of Eileen raises an important question: Why does she catch sounds that others don't? Why did I hear the call for help when Tyndale was teetering on bankruptcy and others didn't? Could it be that the reason that a person hears one voice and not another is because their ability to hear is rooted in their gifts?

LINKING LISTENING AND ABILITY

A corollary to listening: when one's imagination is caught by the importance and dimension of a need or an idea, this is matched by the capacity and ability to do something about it.

In working with people in an assortment of ministries I've noticed that what you hear is in line with what you can do. I use "hear" in this sense: I pick up messages that connect with my desire, passion and skill. We hear certain things because we have capacity and skills to respond with solutions. Implicit in this kind of hearing is a native or learned understanding of the nature of the need, rising out of a corresponding capacity to do something about it.

Listening to a pedophile's story, I would understand the person's plight—needing discipline, a place to stay, friends, and a job. Eileen, however, hears in an uncluttered way and identifies the critical solutions. Why? Because she has commensurate gifts and skills that give her authority to speak to the problem.

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When I met with the survival committee of the board of Tyndale, although I didn't understand the business of education, I knew what was needed to right the ship, raise the sails, steady the rudder, and move it into quiet water. I had done it before. I knew it would be tough, but the elements and strategy needing reconstruction were evident.

Here is my point: there is a link between what we hear and what we can do.

Let me put it another way. My dreams—of what I would like to be and do—rise out of my ability. We are wired in such a way that our hopes and dreams connect to our gifts.

I'm not speaking of romantic or wishful dreams. As a boy I wanted to be a hockey star. After all, I learned to play street hockey in an alleyway between our church and the house of the parents of Detroit Red Wings' star Gordie Howe. Playing in the National Hockey League was a romantic dream. It came and went. Though I wasn't a slouch on the rink, I wasn't NHL material.

Let me note the distinction between *visions* and *dreams*. A dream catches my interest; it is fantasy fabricated of self-interests but not that which drives my life. A vision is compelling, that which absorbs my thinking and is linked to capacity.

A fawning fan of the pianist Paderewski gushed after a concert, "Sir, I'd give my life to play like that." To which Paderewski replied, "I did." It was more than a dream. It was a compelling vision grounded in his musical capacity and perfected by years of practice.

LEARNING THE ART OF LISTENING

Endemic among leaders is the tendency to not listen to what another has to say. Filled with our own interests and the importance of our task, we understandably are anxious that the world know. Such intemperance, however, engenders two subtle and self-destructing flaws.

It shuts off our listening: an active mouth distracts a listening ear. You may notice it's hard to do both well. And in not listening we fail to hear those noises of life waiting to be born. Do you know how many people have no one to hear their story? And how few have someone they respect who will take time to listen with interest and feeling?

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So in not listening, we lose. The story, the idea, the opportunity is screened out by our compulsion to be heard. What may be next for us, what may very well be a voice of God's creation in need of an audience, is muted. A treasure designed to be given so we might take of its wealth and invest in a greater good is missed. We lose what our heart has yearned for, what in our most quiet moments we have longed for. There it was—if I had only listened.

Equally tragic are people who need to be heard. Their sense of being is diminished when dismissed or ignored. So as you listen, listen with your heart. Take note of what stirs you. Take heed when it recurs, coming back to you day after day. It may be of little interest at first. Indeed, your decision to engage may precede an inner love or passion.



After sixteen years in Youth for Christ, I resigned. Board members and staff knew it was the right decision and so did I, even though I had no other job waiting and no definite ministry interests to explore.

There were, however, two possibilities on the horizon.

I had been serving on the board of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), a member of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). During an EFC executive meeting a month before I announced I would leave YFC, Mel Sylvester, president of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church of Canada, asked. "Brian, isn't it time you left YFC and took up the leadership of EFC?"

I was surprised—I had not announced my resignation from YFC—and could only sputter non-committal platitudes. At coffee break, I pulled him aside. "Mel, how did you know I was leaving?"

"I didn't know," he said. "I just sense that this is right for you."

A few days later, when speaking at a spiritual emphasis week at Trinity Western University (TWU), philosophy professor Phil Wiebe asked me point blank whether I'd be interested in the role of senior minister at Christian Life Assembly (CLA). CLA was, and is, one of the largest churches in British Columbia, attended by several thousand people every week. Lily and I flew to the west coast early in the New Year. The preaching assignment was an opportunity for us and the congregation to get to know each other.

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We had a remarkable weekend. I was moved by the congregation's vision and considered the position seriously. I asked for some time to come to a decision. Back in Ontario, I retreated to the vacation home of our friends George and Pauline Spaetzel in the Blue Mountains of Collingwood. I was several time and weather zones from balmy B.C.—and a few spiritual zones from certainty about our future.

I barely stirred. With only a Bible and a notepad, and fueled by a simple prayer, "Lord, guide my thoughts," I began reading, slowly a verse or chapter, all the while making notes. Toward late afternoon, I came to Nehemiah. Loving stories, I read on. I finished and then looked at what I had written:

Find a broken wall.

Find a broken wall most ignore.

Find a broken wall others ridicule.

But whatever you do, find a broken wall."

I called Phil Wiebe. "Phil, I can't come."

Surprised, he asked, "What are your plans?"

"I have none."

Within an hour, a long-time friend, Mervin Saunders, a Baptist minister in Edmonton, called. "Brian, I understand you are considering a church on the west coast. I'm calling to tell you how wrong that would be for you."

I told him of the call I had just made.

"I've just been speaking with Harry Faught, and he and I believe that it is time for you to take up the leadership of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada," he responded.

"EFC?" I queried. "There is no organization, no funding. It has no significant place in our community and little credibility in the wider church, and for sure none in the political life of Canada."

The more I spoke, the more I heard myself describing a broken wall.

Listen for Opportunity in Chaos



Listen to stories of broken dreams; walk through rubble of failed plans; hear hurting hearts speak of missed opportunities; step over the pieces of fallen monuments. Instead of searching for the good places, rewarding salaries and benefits, popular communities and nice people, look for run-down, bankrupt communities in need of someone to lift and lead.

Hearing is more than listening, more than having gifts that connect to hearing. It requires honing.

The Jews asked about Jesus, “How did this man get such learning without having studied?” (John 7:15) His response was unexpected: If you do what you already know is the will of the Father, then you will come to know. Hearing is a learned discipline. The more one works at hearing, the more likely one will hear. Like any other ability, we use it or lose it.

While we suffer from media overload—as streams of passionate, need-laden stories wash over our hyper-stimulated feelings—nurturing a hearing heart helps us hear what’s important.

UNDERSTANDING GIFTING

Nehemiah, hearing of his beloved city, listened, which led to doing. He was grieved to learn of Jerusalem’s vulnerability. He was angered by the humiliation of his people, ridiculed and offended by their enemies. He was so moved by this frightful situation that he spoke to the king. But without inherent skills in moving from idea to reality, he would have been passionate but not much more.

Passion is an indicator that gifts are commensurate with the need. Hearing is connected to skills. I may think it’s a good idea to design a sculpture to honor a person or event, but it will go nowhere, for I am not a sculptor. As much as I believe in the value of education, and while I’ve given part of my life to provide for a center of Christian higher education, I don’t have passion to construct an educational curriculum. That’s a clue that I’m not best suited to the task of teaching.

My generation was not familiar with theories on personal gifts. Learning about personal gifts was revolutionary. Pressured by colleagues to be like them, I was liberated when I clued in to an understanding that skills and gifts are commensurate with passion or calling: the ability to envision what

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needs doing is rooted in a capacity to do it. Driving ambitions move within circuits of abilities. What I'm not gifted to do I don't have passion for.

Desires to become are linked with gifts that enable the becoming. When someone asks, "What should I do in vocation?" I ask, "What do you like to do? What do your friends and family say you do best?" Once we establish that groundwork, I suggest that it makes sense to see God's call within the person's gifts.

The logic goes thus:

What I like to do is an indicator of what I do best.

God has gifted me.

Education, training, and experience serve to strengthen those innate gifts.

It would not be out of character for God to want me to use gifts he has given.

So identify your gifts.



Profiled as a type A personality, I was not strong on self-awareness. With a focus on accomplishment, reflection wasn't high on my list. Others outshone me in school grades, hockey, and music. Though I seriously studied piano, my friend Mel Bowker was star pianist at both YFC and the Lyle Gustin Studio in Saskatoon where we studied. His unusually gifted and creative talent bypassed me.

This wasn't disconcerting. My goal was ministry. I loved church, music, summer camps, sermons, and preachers. After my last year of high school, attending our denominational college was a seamless choice. After college and another three years of university, I thought I was prepared for ministry. But what was that to be? Nothing held my attention as much as preaching.

I set out on my own. Lily and I traveled, we did music, and I preached. I was a disaster. Broke, we returned home. To pay bills I did roofing—until too many snow storms pushed me from roofs. Then I shoveled off skating rinks in the night and filled in as a substitute high school teacher during

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the day. Deeply disappointed that my boyhood dream was falling to pieces, I admitted this wasn't working.

What was missing? I needed discernment of gifting.



Note Paul's outline of personal gifts.

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. (Romans 12: 6–8)

This list of seven gifts, though not exhaustive, outlines seven primary motivations: what you or I find to be renewing. A gift is like a pair of well-fitting shoes: we can walk for extended periods without fatigue. When we try to serve with the wrong gift, soreness sets in—and we don't get far.

The gift	The related natural ability
Speaking	Able to speak in public or write, (e.g., minister, politician), often in a position requiring public speaking with the goal of persuasion
Serving/helping	Inclined to help and serve, often in fields of health care or hospitality
Teaching	Interested in relating knowledge so others will understand, often as a schoolteacher, professor, instructor
Encouraging/ motivating	Loving to support and motivate others—a gift required in positions in which encouraging others is key: management and HR

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Giving	Able to give, often as entrepreneur or businessperson who can generate funds out of wise investing and management
Leading	Able to gather, inspire, and organize people toward a goal
Showing mercy	Having an instinct for people's needs, suited for work that requires empathy and wisdom in finding solutions

Figuring out your ministry includes finding what best matches your natural gifts. I played fullback in high school football. Short and stocky, I wasn't suited for the long throws or end runs as much as I was for running up and over the defense. My football nickname, appropriately, was "the bull."

In time I learned that, as much as I loved public speaking, my primary strength was not in preaching but in leading. I finally admitted it and was set free from expectations of others and especially myself.

Analyze Paul's outline and you will see the pattern of key motivational strengths.

Let's work with some models.

- ◆ A pastor with a combination of the teaching and mercy gifts will tend to find teaching and counseling as the base of ministry.
- ◆ If you are strong in leading and giving, it may suggest you have the capacity to lead a parachurch ministry or manage a multi-ministry church.
- ◆ A visionary with high ideals and grandiose plans but little interest or skills in sitting quietly and listening to needs may be just the person to take a moribund church, agency, or business and push it into a new plan and strategy.

Each of us, from time to time, is called on to operate in each gift. Even though my prime gift is not "showing mercy," there are situations in which I'm called on to counsel, to help a person through a stressful situation. Also, though my prime gift is not giving, I am called on to give and to do so with joy.

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The point is not to be trapped into allowing a personality test or gifting chart to be the final guide. It is to serve as conversation and in a growing understanding of oneself.

To help us to see where we fit into life ministry, I've organized roles of ministry into five basic categories: pastor/minister, evangelist/apologist, educator, advocate, and leader. These are not mutually exclusive. A pastor may have leadership gifts. A person with a heart for social justice may also be a pastor, evangelist, leader, or teacher. This list asks you to identify which area most naturally suits you.

Pastor/Minister

- ◆ has passion to shepherd a congregation
- ◆ will counsel and nurture
- ◆ coaches, encourages
- ◆ teaches

Teacher/Educator

- ◆ loves to make ideas understood
- ◆ pursues scholarship
- ◆ teaches
- ◆ writes

Advocate

- ◆ has a concern for justice
- ◆ serves
- ◆ seeks transformation
- ◆ represents

Counselor

- ◆ has intuition for people's feelings
- ◆ is patient

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- ◆ listens well
- ◆ builds trust

Apologist

- ◆ exhibits spiritual readiness
- ◆ loves to tell the story of faith
- ◆ represents the gospel
- ◆ is missional

Leader

- ◆ has joy in casting a vision
- ◆ is strong in team building
- ◆ instinctively networks
- ◆ sees the need to build resources

IDENTIFYING GOD'S CALLING

Linked into gifts is calling. The Spirit is ever moving and shifting us about to meet his agenda. Respecting our gifts, he moves before us and in times of opportunity helps us hear what is best—best for Kingdom purposes. In the end, what we do becomes his call.

Critical to hearing is a conviction of God's providential leading; he combines what we do best with what needs doing here and now.

In listening, Nehemiah knew it was now or never. The message delivered by his trustworthy brother allowed no mistaking of need. He also had capacity.



Few people have influenced my life as my brother David. In a previous book I describe the impact that the death of his beautiful eighteen-year-old daughter, Jill, had on our entire family.

From his boyhood experience in meeting Bob Pierce, founder of World Vision, Dave discovered he had a love for the poor. Successful in business,

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unrelenting in keeping people accountable, and operating with an unusually high work ethic and standards of integrity, he also had a heart that reached out to the poor, regardless of the cause of their poverty.

Following Jill's death he sold his business and gave his life, leadership, and experience to organizations helping the poor. As chair of Opportunity International, his life focused on providing microloans to men and women, especially in the majority world, lifting them into sustaining enterprise, helping them find freedom and justice.

I asked him, "What was the compelling part of that life change?"

During the four years prior to Jill's death I had made numerous visits to West Africa and Asia. I had walked in very poor places, and the pictures of those hopeless slums would not let me go.

Six months after Jill died, I returned to Mali as a volunteer to evaluate a project of ninety-six wells that had just been completed in the Dogon tribe area. The drive from the capital, Bamako, took a full day, and when we arrived in the evening, it was dark. We pulled into the work compound, and as I got out of the Land Cruiser, I was faced by seven Dogon men who stepped out of the shadows and stood in front of me. The Dogon greeting can last for many minutes as they enquire about family and life. Not being able to speak my language, instead they each moved to me, gently put their arms around me and rocked from side to side, moaning and in non-verbal ways, expressing their sorrow and solidarity with me. They had heard the story of Jill's passing since my last visit. As this was happening, I remembered the statistics. These men represented families who had buried, on average, one out of every four children before the age of five. They knew this pain, and they reached out and drew me into their fraternity. Pictures of places were replaced by living brothers. Any misapprehension, that those living in difficult circumstances somehow might hurt less in the specific because their lives were filled with so many trials, melted away. Their pain was no less than mine.

That day my calling had a face, many faces. It was personal in its focus, and whatever I did had to speak directly into the hopeless situation in which the brothers and sisters of my fraternity find

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themselves. It must be hopeful. It must personally provide them a hand up and bring strength to the family.

As it turned out, the next twenty years of our lives were given to microcredit programs in the developing world. The stories of economic and social redemption, borrower by borrower, are many. Children from these desperately poor homes finishing school, some gaining degrees from university; medical treatment being accessible for sick children; new roofs and floors being installed in shacks to protect from the elements are only a few of the outcomes of the work that are told many times over. Christ's love for the poor was the driving force, and as we reached out in his love, transformation was a constant companion. Although my work took me into governance at the international level, it was my fraternity that gave me roots and gave me purpose.

It took a listening heart and discerning mind tuned to those he cared for, linked to his gifts of organization and leadership. Hearing and doing are joined at the hip. What compels me suggests I am able to do something about it.



TRAINING ONESELF TO HEAR

What does it mean to listen?

1. Decipher the real story behind the emotion.
2. Envision what needs doing.
3. Connect the need with your capacity.
4. See that it can be done.
5. Discern that, difficult as it may be, it is possible.

It requires effort to hear. Inundated by a relentless cacophony—music; solicitations to make more money, to have more fun, to be sexier; or the ever-present newscasts of a frightening or vacillating nature—we are ever hearing of the now.

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How then can we hear the deeper and less pervasive sounds of the universe? When I am brought face to face with reminders of an exploding catastrophe in sub-Saharan Africa or the devastating impact of an earthquake or tsunami, am I in danger of becoming heart-dead over these unimaginable disasters and the encroaching needs? I think yes.

Along the rough roads of leadership, God is in the moment. Our predicament may be of our doing. But failure in moral judgment or lack of insight to solve an issue is not the end of life.

Leaders, take a cue from your dreams—that which fills your mind with creative excitement. Reflect on your hopes and wishes. God is in that. It is more than psychological hype. He works out of our motivation, a clue to his gifting. It is an essential ingredient of a healthy self, the basis on which we dream our dreams. Kingdom leadership partners with God in transforming life, engaging a hurting and dysfunctional world in the power of his Spirit. We aren't selling another product or service. We are leading ministry whose mission is introducing people to eternal well-being. That takes a dream proportional to the task. Don't despise dreams. That's the stuff of God.



In my midtwenties I met Jay Kessler, president of Youth for Christ U.S.A., and was intrigued by his uncanny ability to listen beneath the noise waves of a radical culture brewing in the 1960s and coming to full bloom in the 1970s. He deciphered the mood and concerns of his generation, providing us with back-door thinking. While most people peered into the world from the front door, Kessler looked for the not-so-obvious. He listened.

King David, in rebuilding Israel, chose a number of groups for reconstruction of that national enterprise. One group caught my attention. The sons of Issachar “understood the times and knew what Israel should do” (1 Chron. 12:32).

I learned from them. I began to read, listen, write, and speak with an ear to the times, to the noise of my generation. Struggling to make sense of the conflicting ebb and flow of ideas I met Francis Schaeffer, a philosopher and evangelist. He taught me how to listen in new ways. Caught in the old super-spiritual paradigm that the world was evil and the only way to live was to wait to be rescued by Christ's Second Coming, I had unconsciously

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disparaged the immediate world as being of little value. Only the future mattered.

Schaeffer helped set the stage for the wider world. The radical ideas of the 1960s had emerged from thinkers a generation earlier. The world of art had its own underscoring rationale, providing my generation with ideas on how to think and metaphors on what was valued.

He enlarged my capacity to listen as I came to see that all of life is the Lord's: "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1). His logic was clear: if all of this creation is God's, then those of us in leadership need to take seriously the mandate of "running creation."

As I listened, what I had ignored now mattered: Great music and architecture, caring for the planet, understanding culture, crafting public policy, human rights. These and a whole host of issues, instead of being shoved outside of our mandate, mattered. I continued to have passion to tell the world of Jesus' love but that was now posited within a wider world.

It was this new kind of listening that helped me understand the importance of helping people of faith to see that if public issues matter to the Father, they should matter to us. This new worldview led in time to expanding a college into a university, shaping minds, building scholarship, and preparing leaders.

In the spring of 1995, I co-chaired, with Anglican Bishop Blackwell, the Billy Graham meetings at the SkyDome in Toronto, and was fortunate to spend time with the legendary evangelist. I watched him loving, serving, speaking prophetically, and calling our world to faith. Crowds the size never seen packed the stadium, with tens of thousands turned away.

Then, just days after his visit a phone call changed my world. Rev. Dave Collins, vice chair of the board of governors of OBC/OTS, (now Tyndale University College & Seminary), following up on my earlier conversation with Geoff Moore, said they needed a president, and needed one fast.

"I'm not interested in the job, but how can I help?" I asked.

"We need a president," he insisted.

I repeated what I had just said, and he repeated his statement. I gathered the salient facts: the schools were in serious debt, with no credit and banks refusing any further help. The entire faculty and staff—with the exception of one lonely security person—had been laid off ten days earlier.

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Bankruptcy was in the offing. Unless it was staved off, there was little chance for the schools to see another academic year.

I had immediate misgivings. I was aware of the institution's influence in preparing leaders for church and missional service, in Canada and around the world. But I also knew evangelicals had a history of lacking enthusiasm for supporting Christian education. Was this my new call?

That fateful telephone conversation was Monday, June 26, the day the schools learned they had been granted bankruptcy protection. I asked for thirty-six hours to decide. I consulted Dr. Ken Birch, EFC's chair, and invited three senior staff from the college and seminary—Lynn Smith, Ward Gasque, and John Franklin—for dinner. "Don't tell me the problems, but share with me your vision," I invited.

The summer weeks of 1995 on campus were a blur. I arrived on June 28, looking at the opening of the fall semester 60 days away. The bank would extend no more credit. We had to raise enough to get the schools running by the end of August and a cushion in the account to see us through the early days of the fall.

I wrestled with logic for my involvement. Though there was an adrenaline rush in leading the rescue, many issues and tasks were outside my interest and expertise. However, I knew that a crisis creates opportunities. Having attended a Bible college in my first post-high school days, I knew it to be a boot camp for people preparing for full-time church or parachurch ministry.

But the world had changed. Seminaries were becoming the primary place for preparing pastors and missional leaders. What then, would be the ongoing role of the undergraduate college?

Our son, Murray, had graduated from Trinity Western University, a Christian liberal arts university. We had seen its impact on his life. Though he had been raised and trained in a strong church and a Christian home, his undergraduate years of learning to think as a Christian prepared him for his calling in the world of film making. I saw the importance of providing young people with a place to get a first-rate degree within a Christian worldview.

A vision began to solidify. It made sense that to build such a place in the most populous region of Canada was worth my energy and focus. I was

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not inspired to rescue an institution more than a century old. Giving my life to keep a relic on its wobbly legs was not to my liking. However, seeing something wider and linked to the needs of our world—now that could excite me. And it did.



FINDING YOUR WALL

How does one make choices? I have no formula: many factors influence our decisions. Identify the essential elements that weave an emotional and spiritual infrastructure that gives strength so you can lead with emotion, joy, and clarity. Here are a few from my repertoire.

— THAT I HAVE PASSION FOR IT

Passion is a barometer, indicating that I'm gifted to do what needs doing and seems right to do. Without passion I'm useless. If our lives are listless, feet shuffling with boredom of doing a task day after day, weeks dragging by in wait of the weekend or a holiday, we become a weight on the organization. While feelings run through cycles, and there are times when we struggle, if the actual vocation or location is not fueled by an inner drive to accomplish and get something done, then consider getting out, and getting out fast.

THAT I HAD A MOMENT WHEN I KNEW GOD WAS CALLING ME FOR THIS

Ask people how they came to their place and you discover there is often a moment or word that gave confirmation of a call. It is not surprising that Christians have stories behind which is a belief that the Spirit guided and directed.

We come to decisions in various ways. The more cerebral may see logical conclusions, while others, more mystical in personality and theology, may see more direct points of God's intervention. However, if you don't have an internal conviction that where you are matters, the tough times will be more difficult. Biblical stories have been critical in my decision making. I am grateful that while riding some rough patches during the Tyndale presidency I could recall a drive with Lily on Alligator Alley in south Florida when she recounted my vocational history. I heard—in my mind—the

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Spirit saying, “Brian, you’ve built the EFC as much as you need to. Now I have something else for you to rebuild.” That was important, for as much as at times I wanted to resign, that earlier “call” had not been lifted.

THAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE REFINED WITH CAREFUL DISCUSSION

Appointments don’t come out of thin air. Implicit in serving is that we are not alone, we don’t serve ourselves, and we don’t end up in successful service without having our calling reviewed by those we trust.

After eleven years with the EFC, I was asked if I would consider serving as president of the National Association of Evangelicals in the United States. It excited me. I was somewhat bored by the Canadian scene, so taking on the U.S. was a challenge. But Lily and I could not discern whether that was for us. Four candidates were asked to meet separately with the search committee in Chicago. Before I went, I arranged for seven friends to meet at our home the day after the Chicago meeting. Some were aghast that I would consider leaving Canada for the U.S. as they felt there was already too much of a drain of Canadian leadership to the U.S. I called Dr. Donald Reimer, who reminded me that in leaving Canada I would lose the banks of connections built up over thirty-three years and would have to not only develop new networks but learn the religious system and the political dynamics of a large and complicated country. Others thought it was a great opportunity. However, Lily and I saw this: there was no confirmation of what to do. And without that we decided to stay put. Seven months later Tyndale slipped into receivership, an opportunity we would have missed. Conflicting opinions were used by the Spirit to hold us.

THAT THE CALLING FITS WITH MY PRIMARY GIFTS

From time to time friends in struggling marriages ask if I will help. And I will, but only for a time. Most need someone gifted and trained in that area. I’m simply not able to help beyond some encouraging words. So it is with your prime calling. There are times you may be called on to fix something because it needs doing and you’re closest. The trick is to locate your main vocational responsibility within your gifts. Try running a marathon in athletic shoes that are too small or too large. Blistered feet and aching joints result. To use your gifts is to walk in a calling that fits you.

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THAT THERE IS A REASONABLE POSSIBILITY THAT GOALS CAN BE REACHED

At least you see it that way. Some may reason that the prize is beyond reasonable expectation. The point is that whatever is the goal, it has sufficient short-term objectives that allow you to build momentum: that what you are doing can and will be accomplished.

THAT RESOURCES CAN BE ACCESSED TO ACCOMPLISH THE GOALS

What one calls impossible another sees as a challenge. Get a fix on where resources are accessible. Launching a vision without having in mind where the essential resources can be sourced is a sure plan for failure.

THAT THERE IS A GROUP, A CELL, AND A FEW WHO WILL MAKE IT THEIR PRIORITY

Often we begin alone with an idea. The idea needs friends. Before a launch, recruit those who will make accomplishing the goal a top priority. As we built towards the purchase of a new Tyndale campus we needed a few to put this project at the top of their priorities. Two said they would give five million dollars; a few more invested three million; and others came in at two million and one million. By so doing, they signaled to others that this was a serious priority, an encouragement for others to do the same.

Learn to appreciate the connection between what catches your attention and what you are gifted to do. For it is out of our hearing that we can discern the calling.