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Reminders to help leaders keep their eyes on the ball

During the holiday break I had a chance to watch a couple of NFL games. In one of them I observed something that brought a flashback of horror from my high school football days. I watched a receiver drop a pass that would have resulted in his team winning the game. When they showed the replay (unfortunately for him several times in slow motion) the camera angle showed his face very clearly. He took his eyes off the ball before he caught it; then after he dropped it the anguish, disgust, shock, horror, and the following realization of what the drop cost his team all showed up on his face in a moment.



I probably looked the same way at least 4 times during my Junior year in high school. I played tight end and had an unofficial record for *the most dropped touchdown passes while wide open*. They were drops that occurred when I was all alone, no one within 5-10 yards of me. They came with a certain play that we usually ran only once a game. Due to our type of offense it was kind of a trick play that usually resulted in my being wide open. By the third time (after dropping the previous 2) I could sense the anxiety coming in the huddle when we called that play, both on me and my teammates. They would say things like, "come on...you can do it...relax...keep your eye on the ball," which only reinforced my own anxiety.

The play was aptly called, "dipsy-doodle pass" which described the whole emotional experience of what I looked like dropping a wide open pass. I guess that is why I only played defense in college!

"Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least." Von Goethe

"Keep your eye on the ball" is a common phrase in sports that means do not get distracted until you have completed what is important. Leaders need to constantly keep their eyes on the ball of God's calling. It is about carrying through with the important things in an undistracted manner.

Leadership can be confusing with many distractions that can cause leaders to end up dropping important things. Here are some helpful, and healthful reminders to keep our eyes on God's ball.

Helpful Reminders

1. We must walk with God in order to hear from Him. People don't need a word from us they need a word from God through us. God's "presence" in both the OT and the NT means "the face, or in front of His face." We need to spend time before His face hearing from Him. This is the source of prophetic Holy Ghost power that we are to speak from. One God idea is worth more than a thousand good ideas. God ideas only come from Him.

2. We need Sabbaths that give margins to gain perspective. There is a god complex of legalistic work in which we subtly believe we are the god of the universe instead of Jehovah. If we don't control **our** schedule **it** will control us. The Biblical idea of the Sabbath was to rest and reflect on God and remember you aren't Him.

3. If you aren't stirred by God yourself it will be difficult to stir others. Find God and be moved by Him in everyday normal life and you will help move others in everyday normal life.

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4. Cynicism will spiritually kill you. *Ezekiel 12:21-24...I will cause this cynical saying to cease in Israel.* God isn't neutral regarding cynicism. Why? It kills faith and steals forward movement in His people. We have to deal with cynicism. There is a difference between constructive criticism and cynicism. Cynicism leaves you with an attitude that nothing will really work. What good does it do to take a step? It won't work anyway. It can leave you feeling justified with half-hearted or non-sacrificial efforts. One thing about cynicism and negativity is that it spreads like cancer. We need to avoid it like the sickness it is. The only way to avoid it is consistent trips to the presence of the Great Physician who is the *God of hope*.

5. If you avoid making tough decisions that need to be made they will only get tougher. People often wonder with confusion "How did I get here?" Most of the time it was steps they took, or didn't take according to the decision they made.

The Bible is clear with the concept that our paths (actual steps) more than our intentions determine our destiny. Don't neglect making tough decisions to take necessary steps.



6. Remember there are both sins of omission as well as sins of commission. Not doing things due to fear of making a mistake can be sins of omission. Even though Peter sank because he began to doubt after leaving the boat, Jesus rescued him. None of the others who stayed safely in the boat ever walked on water. One story of attempt and failure has more purpose than a million stories that never happen because of the fear of failure.

7. The vision you carry can't be determined by your circumstances. Some people's finances determine their vision from God. The vision God gives should be bigger than your finances. Some leaders' vision is determined by the actions of others, yet God's vision stands above everything and everyone. Don't let anything control vision. While circumstances can affect the administration of vision they cannot be allowed to determine vision.

8. We need both the short game and the long game. Entrepreneurial leaders tend to overestimate what they can do in a year. Leaders with weak faith tend to underestimate what can be accomplished in ten years. Leaders need to dream big but also dream long. The Shakers had a mantra when approaching furniture making, "Build it like there is no tomorrow, yet build it like it will last a thousand years." Instead of just thinking *as soon as possible*, add with it the perspective of *as long as it takes*.

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