

Lessons on Life and Leadership

Lesson 2...Learn Thoroughly and in Depth—Don't Be Shallow

When you are choosing a physician, an auto mechanic or a computer technician, what kind of person do you look for? Not someone who is mediocre, but a tried-and-true expert who really knows his or her profession.

In my last letter we discussed the importance of knowing our specific gifts, talents and abilities and not trying to be expert in everything. Paul knew how to zero in on the one thing God wanted him to do (Philippians 3:12-14). Once we know what we can and should be doing, we can proceed to this principle of Lesson 2: *Learn Thoroughly and In Depth—Don't Be Shallow*. I developed this conviction after realizing that my early tendency to do too many things resulted in my becoming "a mile wide and an inch deep."

When Architect Chuck Bollar designed our new International Building on a sloping hill, the engineers instructed the contractor to dig a hole 18 feet deep and wider and longer than the building. They installed a system of drains for the ground water, then repacked the clay in alternate layers with granular fill to create a level base for pouring the concrete foundation. All this before any part of the building appeared above ground!

In my secular profession of astronautics, I soon found I could not just "get by" but I had to work hard to become an expert in some specific aspects of my specialty.

Moses, David and Solomon did not recruit mediocre people to build the Tabernacle and the Temple. They found craftsmen whom God had skilled and filled with His Spirit. *Then the LORD said to Moses, See, I have chosen Bezalel...and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts...(Exodus 31:1-5)*. As we develop our skills under the leading of the Spirit, it will become apparent not as an issue of our accomplishment but of our commitment to serve God well.

At age 24 I realized I did not know the Scriptures well. I knew what I believed, but not why. So I began to dig into the Word firsthand, studying and teaching the Bible. My teaching—both in astronautics and Scripture—forced me to go deeper. Then as I became more involved in leading people, I had to apply more of the Word to my own personality and learn how to lead with skill and integrity (Psalm 78:72). Although motivated and determined, I made many mistakes and had much to learn.

So let me urge you to go deep in a few selected areas. High on the list should be regular times of studying Scripture, both broadly and by topics like the Gospel, maturity, the covenants and grace. If you are employed in a secular job, learn more about it and be the best you can be. Attend professional conventions and learn from your peers. In our Nav ministry, expertise in small group dynamics, communication, teaching, Bible study methods and team building are fertile areas for study. Take time to go deep. Do what you do with excellence. *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men* (Colossians 3:23).