



## *Goshen on Leadership*

### **Why So Many Live in Mediocrity**

I am currently at 35,000 feet flying from Orlando to my home in Houston, and I feel compelled to write this article. I hear so often about people who can't make it financially and about the many who are suffering with bad marriages, drugs, alcohol, and terrible relationships.

It seems we are quickly moving from a nation of gratitude to a nation of griping, from a respectful society to a rebellious one, and from taking responsibility to demanding rights. Many seem stuck—unable to move forward, to grow.

I had the privilege of speaking to a large group of business professionals yesterday, and I want to share some of that message. Please understand that my purpose is not to talk down to anyone or pass judgment, and for sure, I do not have all the answers to life's problems. But after 40 years of teaching personal performance and leadership skills, I do have a sense of what is missing.

I have had the honor of writing articles that have been published in more than 2,000 trade magazines, newspapers, and e-zines—sharing my philosophy of how to improve personal performance. Recently a magazine interviewer asked me a very pointed question: "What has been your biggest frustration during the past 40 years as you have instructed over a million people on advancing their personal human development?"

My response: "Looking into the eyes of people and knowing they have the ability and gifts to succeed but realizing they will remain in the world of mediocrity because they haven't engaged the most basic principles." Then I was asked, "After your 40 years in the field, what do you think are the top three reasons people fail to achieve success?"

I used the analogy of a visit to the eye doctor to explain my theory. We go to the eye doctor, and he sets us in this unique chair and instructs us to rest our chin on a piece of equipment that looks like a transformer. He tells us to look at an eye chart, and he begins spinning dials while he asks us which is better . . . 1 or 2, 2 or 3, 2 or 1, and with each of our responses he dials the letters until they become totally clear. I want to dial three letters that reveal a clear path out of mediocrity and into a restful pursuit of success.

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The first letter is I: Internal dialog. A gentleman went to a tattoo parlor to get a tattoo. The walls were covered with pictures of all the options, and he saw one that read "Born to Lose." He asked the owner of the tattoo parlor, who was Chinese, "Who would put that on their body?" The owner said in broken English, "Tattoo in mind before tattoo on body."

So many of us tattoo our minds with negative internal dialog. "I know my marriage will never work;" "I knew when I started that I would never win;" "I can never learn how to become better;" "I have never had any success, so why should I expect any now;" "I tried before and lost so I am not going to try again."

I could write a book on the internal negative words with which we fill our minds. You see, it is not what others say to us but what we say to ourselves that keeps us from moving forward. Ask yourself how often and how many times during a day you engage in disruptive internal dialog that is tattooed in your mind. Words are powerful! The book of Proverbs says "Life or death is in the power of the tongue." And the book of Job goes even further saying "Those things I have feared the most have come to pass." Our thoughts become part of this internal negative dialog. So what do I suggest to solve this dilemma? Write a list of ten items you are thankful for: "I am thankful for my mate;" "I am thankful for my children;" "I am thankful for my parents;" "I am thankful I have income;" "I am thankful I am healthy." You get the idea. Then from this day forward when those negative thoughts race through your mind or you find yourself engaged in negative internal dialog, immediately begin reciting those ten items of gratitude. Keep speaking them until the negative dialog becomes positive dialog.

The second letter I want to dial would be S. Separate yourself from your past failures. So many people spend more time looking in the rearview mirror than through the windshield. Let me give you an example. I had the opportunity to coach my son in high school football. Since I was a college linebacker, I was asked to coach the linebackers. I had this one young man who was incredible. His body was like chiseled stone—big arms, big legs, major definition. And even at 6'4" and 240 pounds, he was quick. Not only was he a great athlete, but he held a 4.0 in his studies. So here we had the perfect specimen to receive a full football scholarship to any major university. The problem was that he had a bad habit; when he made a mistake on a play, he came back to the defensive huddle angry at his performance, cussing, and throwing a fit. That was bad enough, but when the huddle broke, he couldn't release that mistake; he took it into his next play sabotaging his performance and guaranteeing he would never experience any real success. How many of us continue to huddle up around bad things that have happened in our past, not releasing them but carrying them into our new life each day? My friends, I have had some bad things happen in my life. I break them down in my new book, *Confident Hope*, but I refuse to carry them with me as I work toward the future. I block them out; I ask what I learned,

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and then I forget about them. I believe that success in life is having a bad memory, forgetting those things that can pull our energy down. What do you need to release? A failed marriage, financial disaster, drugs and alcohol, a terrible relationship with family or friends? Let's leave it in the huddle and move on to the next play. A solution I often suggest is to write down everything that is holding you in bondage to the past—take plenty of time. Then tear up that paper, go into your bathroom, open the toilet lid, and flush those negative memories. Never allow your past to determine your future.

The final letter would be D. Dream. I will soon be 70 years mature and people often say I have more energy and express more excitement than a 25-year-old, and they want my secret. I have been and remain a big dreamer! I am always reaching with great anticipation for things that seem impossible. I never stop developing new dreams. As I was boarding my plane this morning, I was saddened to see the young people around me walking with downcast eyes and body language that said they were just going through the motions of living. So many of my friends my age have adjusted to just "surviving" rather than "thriving." There is no magic to having personal hope; you just need a dream! When you stop dreaming, you begin dying. What is your dream? If I asked you to write down three things you would like to accomplish in the next year, what would they be? Don't waste your time comparing yourself to others. You become what you desire to be; get excited about the years God has given you and those you have left. My solution: write down what you would like to accomplish . . . forget about how old you are . . . forget your regrets . . . just write it down. Next, get a magazine and find a picture that matches your dream most closely, and post it in an area you view daily—the bathroom mirror, the refrigerator, the dashboard of your car, or someplace where your subconscious mind can view it daily. The more times you see it, the better. Then write a simple plan for how you wish to receive that vision or dream. My friends, I tell people this often only to have them look at me and say things like, "Bob, you need to get into the real world." To which I respond, "How is that real world working for you?" All entrepreneurs began with a dream; all great movements began with a dream. I am so glad that Martin Luther King did not begin his speech by saying "I have a strategic plan!" Know, my friend, that his speech began with "I HAVE A DREAM."

These three letters that I have "dialed in" are significant if we want to leave the world of mediocrity. It matters not where you are in life; it matters where you wish to be in life.

So I will conclude as I concluded my talk: We all know the story of Apollo 13, how Jim Lovell and his crew were stranded in their capsule nearly 250,000 miles from earth not knowing if they could ever reenter and come home. They experienced

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major problems. Jim Lovell's famous words of "Houston, we have a problem" have been used in hundreds of books and that many more speeches around the world as has the response of Gene Kranz, mission control director at that time: "Failure is not an option!"

But what we seldom hear are the words Gene Kranz spoke shortly after that . . . after his engineers told him about all the problems and why they could not succeed. Gene went to the microphone and said, "Apollo 13, mission control." Jim Lovell responded, "Go ahead, Mission Control." And Gene Kranz (after hearing all the reasons why they should fail) said, "Excuse me sir, but I believe this is going to be our finest hour!"

My friends, develop these three simple and basic principles, and I am more than confident that you will soon say, "This is my finest hour!"

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