

How Much Do You *Really* Want What You Say You Want?

Dan Smith and Mary Sellon

What pastors long for often stems from that thing that rubs them raw. The place where they continue to be held back—the perpetual burden in their life.

“If I could just be myself.”

“If I could just find balance in my life.”

“If I could just stop being sidetracked by the latest crisis.”

It’s their biggest challenge. And every week, every place they turn, every church they serve, that recurring challenge pops up. It slowly continues to wear them down, draining them, keeping them from achieving what they would like to achieve. They never seem to be able to live the life they’d like to and end up saying and believing, “That’s just the way life is.”

Not true. Life doesn’t have to be that way. You can change your patterns and move out of ruts. You can create the life you truly want . . . if you truly want to. The question is: do you?

What Is the Single Greatest Challenge You Face as Pastor?

Grab a piece of paper and a pen. The first step is to identify that single greatest challenge you face—not make a list of ALL the things that are challenging. Others have identified their greatest challenge as: “Dealing with conflict among congregational leaders”; “Being driven by my need to be perfect”; “Having the courage to follow what I think is my

direction in life”; “Setting aside those negative voices within me that stop me from being bold”; “Establishing boundaries and living with balance.”

What is yours? What is the single greatest personal challenge you face as a pastor? That is the current reality you live in. Take time to be clear about it. Actually write it down.

Now, from that place of being aware of that challenge and, in response to it, what do you truly desire? Be careful. A true desire is different from wishful thinking. A true desire is different from “Wouldn’t it be nice if . . .” A true desire is more like love. It is something felt deep within you, rather than a pleasant fantasy you make up in your head.

So . . . from that place of being aware of the challenge and how it limits you, what do you truly desire? Describe that new place clearly and graphically. Write that description down.

Great! You have done good work. Now it’s time to stop and ask the question: “Is this what I really want?” The answer may seem obvious: “Why, of course, I want to be in that new place.” Don’t settle for the obvious. Take your time and get curious.

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you want it? Would you be willing to change the way you spend your time to get it? Would you be willing to invest a significant amount of money to achieve it? Would you be willing to make people angry? Would you be willing to look inept and foolish? Would you be willing to put your job at risk? Write down the number that corresponds to your level of desire. Does that number correspond more with, “Yes I really want this” or “No, I don’t really want this”?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you want it? Would you be willing to change the way you spend your time to get it? Would you be willing to invest a significant amount of money to achieve it? Would you be willing to make people angry? Would you be willing to look inept and foolish? Would you be willing to put your job at risk?

If your answer is yes, write it in large, bold letters and move on to the next step. If your answer is no, your job is to get curious about what it is right now that you want more than that. It may be that you'll find that the rut you are in serves you in some way. How does it serve you? Is there a better way to get that? It may be that the desire for the new way is there, but needs to be nurtured until it is stronger. What is the yes you can fully say now that would be a step in that direction? You may find that what you really want is radically different than what you initially wrote down. Work on identifying what it is you really want until you can answer a whole-hearted yes to it.

Next step. Nothing changes without structures put in place to bring about the change. A jogger who currently runs five miles three times a week may dream of running a marathon. He or she may discover that is a true design and fully says yes to it. But, the marathon doesn't happen, it doesn't become his or her new current reality without putting structures in place to improve strength and stamina. Those structures will call for the jogger to step into new behavior and practices over a period of many months and alter how he or she spends her time and focuses energy.

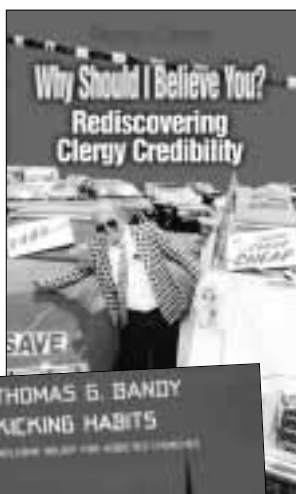
What structures do you need to put into place to create what you want? What are the little "yes's" that you will need to say, each day and in each interaction, if you are going to honor the big YES?

How will you monitor how you are doing? Set up regular times on your calendar to check to what extent you're honoring those little "yes's." The runner who finds he or she isn't keeping up with a training schedule has discovered something. He or she either doesn't really want to run a marathon OR the training schedule set needs to be adjusted in some way. Create a training program and schedule for yourself and review how you're doing with it once a week. If you find you are not giving yourself to it, you have discovered something. Your true desire is either something different from what you had said yes to OR the training program needs adjusting. Don't beat yourself up. Simply adjust what needs to be adjusted.

You can create the life you truly want—once you have discovered what that life is and established structures for moving into that new reality. □

This article is reprinted from the Congregational Development Newsletter of CourageousSpace.com with permission of the authors. Dan Smith and Mary Sellon are church leadership consultants; their website is www.CourageousSpace.com. They are co-authors of *Practicing Right Relationship* (Alban, 2005), *Redeveloping the Congregation: A How To for Lasting Change* (Alban, 2002), and *Preparing to Call a New Pastor in When a Congregation Is Betrayed: Responding to Clergy Misconduct* (Alban, 2006). To order these books, go to www.circuitrider.com and select Easy Order Form in the March/April issue.

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