Are You Ready?

A few years back, while out of town, the place I was staying at had an indoor sports court. For 30 minutes, it was a well-worn Wilson basketball, a hoop with a partially torn net, and me. And it was good. Very good.

I've been shooting baskets for over 50 years and as I shot that day I was reminded of the inordinate amount of time one spends PREPARING for the game of basketball in contrast to the amount of time one spends PLAYING the game.

No spoiler alert here. What is true in the game of basketball is true in the game of leadership: **You prepare a whole lot more than you play.** It is a fundamental reality of leadership that seasons of success are preceded by seasons of preparation.

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[It comes as no surprise that leadership expert Robert Clinton in his landmark book *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development* identifies six stages of leadership formation with the first FOUR being about **preparation**].

I believe that one of the best ways to prepare for the task of leadership is to have a set of thoughtfully curated core values that serve as a north star. James Kouzes and Barry Posner in their classic book *The Leadership Challenge* put it this way: *Values comprise the things that are most important to us. They are the deep-seated, pervasive standards that influence almost every aspect of our lives…Values constitute our personal "bottom line."* **For my part, core values are a list of non-negotiable markers that guide my way as I encounter the all-too-often unpredictable terrain of leadership.**

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While some people enjoy collecting coins or stamps or baseball cards, I love to collect core values. Here are some "keepers" that may serve as prompters as you identify (or renew) your own set of core values:

- Be God's person before I do God's work.
- Extend to others the same grace God extends to me.
- Autograph my work with excellence.

- Choose to live in a big story.
- Go out of my way to encourage and build up others.
- Under-promise and over-deliver.
- Live this life in anticipation of the next.
- Never let my stage outsize my soul.
- Take the high road.
- Extraordinary decisions are the by-product of everyday choices.
- Arrange my daily life so that my public life is simply the overflow of my private life.

In the arena of leadership, no two days are exactly alike. No photocopies. No reloads. Each day brings a fresh set of challenges. **And for the leader who is prepared with a carefully crafted set of core values, these challenges can be seen not as obstacles, but embraced as opportunities.**

Chuck Olson
Founder | Lead With Your Life