Grandma falls out of car!

It was a typical Sunday. But that was about to change.

The Olson station wagon circa 1965 (with faux wood paneling) had just rambled up the driveway of our Halm Avenue home for a quick stop between church and lunch at Bob's Big Boy. My parents, sister, brother and I got out of the car, while my grandmother and my two-year old brother stayed in the car. While we ran into the house for a brief pit stop, my little brother decided to jump into the front seat and managed to shove the gearshift into neutral. That's when the fun began.

As the station wagon started its descent down the driveway, two things happened. My grandmother jumped out, rolling onto the driveway in stylish fashion (which we still laugh about to this day), and I jumped in thinking that my little brother could use a little protection provided by his 12-year-old brother. Needless to say, our wild ride took us down the driveway, across the street, landing in the Arico's rose garden. Film at 11:00.

Our little road trip that day reminds me of one of the inevitabilities of leadership: a typical day can quickly become a wild ride. A day that at one moment looked pretty non-descript is now suddenly out of control. That's the reality, the bad news. The good news is that it is possible to ratchet down the number of "wild ride" days. Let me explain.

Here's the key. How you START the day is essential to the TRAJECTORY of the day.

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So, how do you start your day? How do you start smart?

A few years ago, a friend gave me a HBR article entitled An 18-Minute Plan for Managing Your Day. It's worth the read because at minimum it will prompt some reflection.

The article got me thinking.

Believing that our everyday activities need to be driven by our overall values, I'd like to take a step back to mull over the values that inform our daily allocation of time and energy and attention.

Here's the question: What are the values that dictate how you start your day? Let me stir up a conversation by putting three values on the table for your consideration:

- **Reset, don't reload.** As a follower of Christ, at the start of each new day, I want to recalibrate my heart and my mind. I don't want to wander thoughtlessly into the day. I want to deliberately pursue my relationship with Him and to reflect on His truth, resetting any points of departure. I rehearse my identity (Who am I?…Whose am I?) and my calling (What is my part in God's big story?). And

believing that we are defined by our choices, during this personal time of reflection, I have a set of statements that I profess (often audibly) that speak to the spiritual resolves that by God's grace I will embrace in the ensuing hours.

• **Lead, don't chase.** I want to avoid aggressively the number of days where my MO is simply REACTING to the events and agendas that swirl around me. In their thought-stimulating book, Life Launch: A Passionate Guide to the Rest of Your Life, Frederic Hudson and Pamela McLean deliver this cold slap of reality: If you refuse to initiate your own path, your choices will be the leftovers from those around you who did entrepreneur their futures. Convicting, huh? During the early hours of the day (which I refer to as my Focus Time), with the same deliberation pilots use in their pre-flight preparation, I craft out my strategy for the day—a strategy that lines up with the work and mission to which God has called me.

• **Go BIG.** The final value that drives my day is lifted from Stephen Covey's book First Things First where he talks about the priority of putting in the "big rocks" first. My personal application of this principle is to intentionally take the first hours of the day (when my mind is at its peak of focus and creativity) and invest them in those things that require the most energy, time, and concentration. At the get-go, I want to take a sizeable step in the direction of the most significant initiatives in my life. I want to frontload the day by doing the heavy lifting first. In doing so, not only do I create momentum for my day, but I walk into it with a deep satisfaction that my day has already had a formidable measure of success.

What values drive your day?

And what are the daily activities that flow from those values?

Chuck Olson
Founder | Lead With Your Life