Rock Solid
Occupational Hazards

October 2013 – They're called "occupational hazards."

By definition (compliments of Wiktionary), an occupational hazard is a*n unpleasant, inconvenient, or unusual circumstance which occurs or is likely to occur during the course of one's employment.*

Let me paint a picture.

If you are a carpenter by trade (or by weekend), you know that smashing your thumb with a hammer is an occupational hazard. It's just gonna' happen. Someday the law of averages catches up with you and you flatten your thumb creating "an unpleasant and inconvenient circumstance"—to put it mildly. If you've been there, you know the excruciating pain at the get-go, followed by the throbbing pain for the ensuing hours, followed by the black-and-blue thumbnail, etc., etc. (Why do I know these things so well?).

Have you ever called time-out to think about the occupational hazards of leadership? What are the "unpleasant circumstances" that can slowly and subtly, yet steadily, worm their way into your life as a leader?

Allow me to roll out several hazards for your reflection.

A leader is called to go further than anyone else.
—Dan Allender

- Neglecting to create space to hear from God
- Forgetting that leading is all about serving
- Creating a team where there is plenty of head-nodding, but very little push-back
- Focusing too much on doing, but not enough on being
- Forgetting to say "thank you" to those with whom you serve
- Seeing people as a means to an end
- Running off of adrenaline
- Living without margin
- Being present with people, but not really with them
- Failing to identify what only you can bring to your sphere of leadership
- Delegating what only you can bring to your sphere of leadership
- Disregarding that the real battles are the unseen ones
- Ignoring the reality of how much the enemy wants to take you down
- Starving your soul

- Developing a jaded view of people
- Neglecting to bring clarity when faced with uncertainty
- Taking credit instead of dishing it out
- Minimizing the indispensability of think time
- Believing that you are worthy of all the praise you receive
- Toying with the idea that perhaps your blind spots are not that noticeable
- Believing that you are bullet-proof to temptation
- Thinking that your 'sweet spot' is larger than it really is
- Overlooking the priority to develop leaders
- Settling for managing conflict instead of resolving it
- Ignoring the truth that God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble
- Forgetting that your leadership is a stewardship, not an entitlement

Truth be told, that's just page one of what could very well be a long chapter.

So I've got a question: As you lumbered down that list, which one of those "occupational hazards" slammed your mental thumb—made you wince a bit? Or maybe a lot?

And I've got a challenge:

- Rehearse the reality that the pathway to leadership longevity resides in an unrelenting commitment to never stop growing.
- Choose one "occupational hazard" that needs to finds its way into the CHANGE REQUIRED column of your life and leadership.
- Set up a time of solitude where you and God can create a game plan—based on His grace and His empowerment.

At the end of the day, your ultimate leadership deliverable is a life that is constantly being remade after the One who said, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all."

What "occupational hazards" do you wrestle with?

Join the conversation. Post your comments below.