

“Box out! Box out!”

If you have ever played on a basketball team, you know exactly what that sideline-shout is all about. Every year, every season, every coach will invariably drill his players on how to BOX OUT. Now for those who have somehow missed out on the agony and ecstasy of the hardwood, in hoops vernacular, boxing out is the fine art of “creating space” by aggressively backing away your opponent from under the basket. This activity in turn increases the chances of your team getting the rebound. Got it? (As I write this, my heart is pounding and the adrenaline is pumping!).

Creating space by boxing out is not only true for a basketball player, it is also true for a spiritual leader. Let me unravel that thought a bit.

It is my contention that job one of a spiritual leader is to create space to hear the voice of God. Now

admittedly that's a different mental model from what we are exposed to in the marketplace day-in and day-out. Right? For example, a CEO of a Fortune 500 company does not think or act in this manner. In her universe, it's all about hearing from directors and stockholders.

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But for the SPIRITUAL leader who is seeking to lead an endeavor in a manner consistent with God's plans and purposes, whether large or small, it becomes acutely necessary to hear clearly what those plans and purposes are.

Like so much in life, easier said than done. You know it like I know it. We live in a world of distractions. A world of noise. Traffic horns blast out impatience. Flat screens decorate the walls of public spaces with

breaking news. And Spotify playlists continuously echo in our ears.

So how do spiritual leaders “box out”? How do they create space to hear the voice of God?

To these questions, allow me to put a few thoughts into play for your consideration.

1. Finding the right posture.

What posture of body seems to best position you to commune with the Lord? Standing? Sitting? Kneeling? Personally speaking, my greatest moments of clarity in hearing God’s voice have come while I have been walking or jogging.

2. Creating the right pace.

When you are most apt to hear from God are your RPMs ramped up or throttled back? We get some pretty good clues to this question from Jesus who often retreated to a “secluded place” and from the prophet Elijah who heard from God not in the wind or the earthquake or the

fire, but in the whisper.

3. Seeking the right place.

What is the location that most often creates the space for you to hear from God? A backyard garden? Shoreline of a lake? A local retreat center? If you are like me, communing with God in the quiet and beauty of His creation is fundamental. Since I live in the San Gabriel Valley of Los Angeles, I am close to the foothills of the Angeles Crest forest and in minutes, I can be completely detached from the sights and sounds of the city—ready to listen.

While Wall Street leaders owe it to their constituents to hear the voice of their stockholders, spiritual leaders owe it to their followers to hear the voice of the One who most often speaks in the whisper.

Spiritual leaders owe it to their followers to hear the voice of the One who most often speaks in the whisper.

When it is all said and done, in the middle of the noise that attends the game of life and leadership, don't forget to...

"Box out!"