

Rock Solid Leadership Temptations

BLOG

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We loved our new home. To be sure, it was a fixer-upper, but we loved the possibilities. We loved that it sat at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac—a perfect place for our kids to play. We loved the large backyard and pool that would quickly become center court for umpteen parties. We loved our new neighbors—even the Ohio State alum next door (fyi: I'm a huge USC fan).

We were on a roll—until we discovered some unwanted house guests...

Evidently, during escrow when the home inspection took place, the inspector didn't secure the small screen door that covered the crawl space to get underneath the house. This meant for a couple weeks our home provided complimentary room and board to Mrs. Skunk and her three amigos.

As you can imagine, at the top of the to-do list was the task of expelling our furry friends—WITHOUT incident!

For this dicey assignment, the better part of wisdom was not to “corner and capture” (which would have yielded an endgame of a regrettable and irreversible stink), but to patiently wait until they broke camp and set out on a midnight romp to forage for their next meal. So in the wee hours of the morning as the skunk family left the comforts of our crawl space, Pattie and I hurriedly ran outside in the pitch dark, armed with flashlights and duct tape, and convincingly sealed off the grand entrance to their subterranean homestead. Mission accomplished. Disaster averted.

When I think about that story through the lens of leadership, I have to stop and ask the question: What unwanted guests have set up shop in the underground arena of my life and leadership?

Friends, let's shoot straight. The world of leadership is filled not only with demands, but with TEMPTATIONS. Temptations whose endgame can yield a world of stink. Let me tee up a few of those temptations for your personal consideration.

There's the temptation of arrogance. When you are planted in a position of leadership where people are looking to you to provide guidance, it is easy to lapse into a sense that you are bigger and better than you really are. At your own risk, you begin to over-estimate yourself and under-estimate those around you.

There's the temptation to entitlement. The higher you climb on the ladder of leadership influence, the greater will be the number of perks tossed your way. And the challenge is to take what was once received as a blessing of leadership and not to clutch it as a right and expectation. You begin to believe that you are owed certain privileges—that you are a cut above the standard.

There's the temptation to control. The moment you shift from seeing your leadership role as a stewardship to seeing it as something you own, you rapidly move into a realm where you now need to manipulate people and outcomes. More and more time is spent maneuvering the chess pieces to ensure that you and your plans prevail.

And there's the temptation to self-absorption. Too often a leader's world becomes small and self-centric. There is little time or interest for the ideas and input of others. Try this: the next time you are in conversation with such a person, take note of how restless he is when the topic turns away from him and how promptly he is able to navigate the dialogue back in his direction. It's almost an art form. But it's not pretty.

In *Derailed: Five Lessons Learned from Catastrophic Failures of Leadership*, author and leadership expert Tim Irwin serves up these haunting words: The big lesson is that no matter how brilliant, charming, strategic, or commanding in presence a leader is, the consequences of a failed character are extraordinarily disabling and will bring down even the strongest among us.

So have you allowed access for any skunks to subtly slip into the crawl space of your life and leadership? If God were to don some overalls and show up today with clipboard in hand for a home inspection, what might He check that NEEDS REPAIR?

Got an idea. How about a take two on these four temptations—re-reading them and asking God to highlight the one that you need to call out for needed repair and seeking His redemptive grace?

Mark it down: when it comes to leadership (and skunks in your crawl space), an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Lord, I long to lead well. Help me see what has slipped into the crawl spaces of my life and leadership. I give you full access to remove anything that is counterproductive to Your purposes.