

## Leaders Work With Their Eyes Open

Welcome to a new session of Guidestone University. Today, in this session, we're going to look at leaders who work with their eyes wide open, and why that's so important

I've thought about this session, the content that we're going to talk today, for the first time several years ago when my son was born.

My wife had a C-section delivery of my son, so, the first several hours of his life it was just me and him. We were together in the nursery; I gave him his first bath, and I hung out there with the nurses and with all the babies in the nursery. It was while I was spending time with him, in those very first few hours of his life, that I first thought about some of the things that we're going to talk about today.

Standing there in the nursery, I actually googled: "When can my baby see?" I heard all these things that babies can't see, in fact, it's weeks if not months before they can see, and I wanted to know, "Can my baby see me? Can this boy who is already so full of life, recognize me? When will he recognize his mom? Am I wasting time making faces at him and talking to him? Does he even know who I am? As he gets older, when is it going to be that he can bond with his older sister who's already fascinated by him? And why does he occasionally cross his eyes?"

I had all these things going through my mind, and as I was thinking about those things, I came up with all of this information about when babies can see. The Smith-Kettlewell Institute says that the vision of a newborn is substantially developed by the time that they are ten months old; most infants even have 20/30 vision by the time they are eight months old. So, I realized, for months, my son would function, he would eat, he would breathe, he would sleep, he would laugh, he would cry, he would grow among all other kinds of things without being fully aware of everything else that was going around him, because he wouldn't be able to see clearly.

In my work with teams and with organizations, I've witnessed a manager come in, and they ask a question, and after just a few moments of conversation, they go out and they make a significant decision, an organizational altering decision that's based on just a few

moments of conversation; I've been that guy more than once. I've made decisions without seeing clearly the path ahead. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not advocating analysis paralysis where we just beat the thing to death, we make all of these decisions, we have all of these meetings, we waste significant time and energy, and we make very little progress.

If we're honest, I think that we all have to admit, that the problem is not a vision problem. **We can see; we just don't see.** And, since I can learn from anyone, my newborn son, in the early hours of his life, there were **three reasons** that I realized **that great leaders approach their life, work and their leadership with their eyes wide open.**

**Number one: They learned that what they're looking for is often already there.** I've spent times with executives and with people who are leading— even entrepreneurs, small businesses, large companies, billion-dollar corporations. They are working every moment to build it bigger, to become better, to belong to something different, and yet, when I look at their life, and I look at their work, I'm like, "Man, you've already been so successful. What are you working toward?" Some of them articulate the vision, and you look around at what's going on, and they've already accomplished the vision, but yet, they're still working themselves to death, and they're working their people to death and the insatiable appetite of our culture for newer and more, along with the ever-evolving marketplace continually outdistances any progress that these executives make in their work; always a quest for something new, and something bigger, and something better.

Now, don't misunderstand what I'm saying. I'm for growth. In fact, every organization that I served with grew significantly while I was there. But, if you have intentionally evaluated your vision and your passion, maybe it's time to stop obsessing over them. They are enough.

If you're part of the team, maybe it's time to quit looking for another team. If you're in an organization maybe it's time to quit looking to hop over to another organization. If you're leading a team, maybe it's time to stop trying to get rid of people off of the team, and work at developing the people. People are so valuable, and they're worth developing. Try serving the team that you've been blessed with and help them to grow; help them to accomplish their vision. Like my new-born son, who frantically searches for a pacifier that's just inches away, you may find that what you're looking for and what you've been looking for is already there.

Leaders who work with their eyes wide open realize that what they're looking for is often already there. They just have to recognize it, and take the time to slow down and recognize it's already there.

**Number two: Everything that we're working for can often blind us to the treasures that are all around us.** We are thinking here, specifically, about relationships. More than once, I cheated relationships and priorities that would have added significant value and would have brought greater fulfillment to my life and in my work, because I was hurriedly working to improve my organization, or my home, or the non-profits that I was working with: the teams that I was working with, my financial position. But, effective leaders, leaders who are going to their life, work, and leadership with their eyes wide open, understand contentment. They have a high level of appreciation for where they are and what brought them there.

Every single one of us should spend a few moments, thinking about those things that are most important to life; thinking about those things for which we can be thankful. Maybe we do a weekly review. Maybe it's at a quarterly review. We're going to talk about a quarterly review, in fact, we have a session about a quarterly review, how to do a quarterly review, and how do we reflect on things just like what we're talking about here today.

These simple disciplines dramatically improved how I approached my life, my work and my leadership. So, number two, everything we're working for often blinds us to the treasures that are all around us.

**Number three: today is worth it, too.** There are people who, in a moment like the birth of their child, are at the office or away on a trip and totally miss the birth of a child. I thought about those things as I'm standing there in the nursery with my son. When it was almost as if time was standing still, and there was nothing else in the world that was more important than that moment. Those few precious moments when, even though I wanted my wife to be there, I treasured those moments alone, together with my son.

See, regardless of what we're working toward, how huge our vision is, how compelling our goals are, how passionate we are about the initiatives that we're leading or the organizations that we're leading or the people that we're leading, nothing is a worthy substitute for today, and **nothing is a worthy substitute for today's top priorities**; no project, no deal, no organization. Nothing is more important than investing in people and creating memorable moments today.

Few things that demand our attention or the urgency today are really all that important. So, whatever you do, don't miss today because you're overly focused on tomorrow.

**The way to have a great future is to have a lot of great "todays".** Quit being a baby, right? Open your eyes: you'll find more clarity and more focus than you ever thought possible.

So, leaders lead with their eyes wide open. Realize what we're looking for is often already there, they realize that the work we're doing often blinds us to the treasures that are around us, and they realize that today is worth it, too.

### **Action Step**

I want you to think about today. Take a few moments and just write down: How can I be more aware of what's going on around me?

1. In my work
2. In my relationships with people
3. With the top priorities that I have in my work today.

Here's what I want you to do: shoot it to me in an e-mail and I'll respond right away. I respond to every single e-mail, and I'd love to respond to you right away. We will look forward to seeing you in the next session of Guidestone University.