

# The Heroic Venture

*Wise Leadership in Uncertain Times*

The Heroic Venture  
Wise Leadership in Uncertain Times  
Second Edition

Don Allsman

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## Dedication

To Al Ewert, my stalwart friend, who has walked with me through all my years in vocational ministry. You taught me how to endure hardship with joy, and to celebrate success with humility. Thank you for your years of faithfulness to Christ and the people He loves in the inner city and around the world.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to Cathy Allsman for encouraging me to write this second edition. To Dr. Hank Voss and the students at Taylor University who have used *The Heroic Venture* as a leadership textbook, thank you for your invaluable input on how to improve this second edition for future readers. To Harold Roesler, thank you for your help in the editing and publishing process, and your service as Chairman of the Board of *Completion Global*. Lisa Hoffman, thank you for your editing and your Kingdom service for Jesus.

I am deeply grateful for Stephen Ambrose's description of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, entitled *Undaunted Courage* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996). This remarkable account provided me with the historical details provided in *The Heroic Venture*. While there are many excellent narratives of the Lewis and Clark adventure, I highly recommend this book for anyone who wants to learn more about this amazing journey. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes about the expedition are from this work.



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## Foreword to the Second Edition

It is my privilege to write a foreword to this second edition of *The Heroic Venture*. Over the last fifteen years, this book has encouraged thousands of Christian leaders with a practical vision for how God accomplishes Kingdom projects in local communities. Leaders have found this book helpful in at least three ways: 1) its narrative structure, 2) its deep scriptural engagement with some thirty biblical projects, and 3) its emphasis on developing the practical skill of leadership reflection through the PWR model. It may be helpful to say a bit more about each of these points by way of introduction to this second edition.

When John Bunyan wanted to help the Christians of his generation understand vital truths about the Christian life, he wove these truths into a parable called *Pilgrim's Progress*. In a similar way, Rev. Don Allsman has woven vital truths about Christian leadership into the story he tells in *The Heroic Venture*. The use of the Lewis and Clark Expedition provides a narrative backbone that helps readers stay engaged through the complexities of Christian leadership that Allsman describes.

Second, Allsman recognizes that faithful Christian leadership will carefully attend to leadership lessons found in Scripture. Allsman uses his keen eye for leadership principles to draw out many of these biblical lessons and to focus them in relation to the skill of project management. Over the course of the book he discusses some thirty different projects completed by biblical leaders. Allsman is confident that just as God used biblical leaders in their generation, so He wants to use leaders in this generation to accomplish Kingdom projects.

Finally, in this second edition, Allsman has especially emphasized the importance of a Christian leader's disciplined habit of reflection

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and evaluation (see especially chapters 20–21). He especially draws attention to the concept of PWR, a threefold leadership cycle involving Prepare, Work, and Review (PWR). Over the last two decades, I have discovered few leadership principles more vital for leaders than an embrace of a PWR model of leadership reflection. Let me share a word of testimony regarding three ways I have found the PWR model to be helpful.

As a church planter, I found the practice of quarterly PWRs with my team to be absolutely essential to maintaining and building team unity in a rapidly changing context. Three to four times a year we would set aside a whole day or two, in order to reflect on how ministry had gone in the previous quarter, and to plan for the new quarter that was approaching. These regular pauses were transformational in my life and for our church plant team.

It is not just within the sphere of church leadership that I found the principle of PWR helpful. Personally, in my relationship with my wife, Johanna, and as a parent of four amazing emerging adults, I have found the practice of “marriage PWRs” and “parenting PWRs” to be of great benefit. Finally, a careful study of the gospels reveals that even Jesus seems to have embraced a regular PWR rhythm. By my count, at least eight times in the gospels Jesus leaves the crowds and pauses for a “soul PWR” with his Father in heaven (e.g. Matt 4:1–11; Luke 4:42–44; Luke 5:16; Luke 6:12–16; Mark 6:31–34; Matt 14:22–23; Luke 9:28–36a; Luke 22: 40b–46). Students of Christian leadership will discover much of value in this text, but if nothing else, I hope you listen and carefully apply the advice Allsman provides on the importance of regular PWRs.

Allsman is right. The practice of Christian leadership is a challenging journey, and it is not for those who are easily frightened; it is an



## Foreword to the Second Edition

*Heroic Venture.* May God provide grace and wisdom as you use this book to grow into the Christian leader you were called and created to be.

Grace,

Dr. Hank Voss  
Muncie, IN  
Lent 2022



## Introduction

We live in an age where we are deluged by information, with instant and persistent access from digital devices. But finding meaning out this flood of data is rare. Most people do not know how to channel knowledge that results in wise, life-giving decisions.

The problem is not just an overwhelming amount of information, it is the expectation to make wise choices quickly. As a leader, sometimes you will be called upon to make a decision right on the spot, where people have conflicting opinions and everyone is looking to you to make the call. In these cases, you will have no time to think before a decision must be made. Other times, you may be leading a large, complex project, with several moving parts, requiring wisdom to navigate the enormity of the task from day to day.

In both cases, *The Heroic Venture* is designed to help you grow in wisdom in all kinds of uncertain situations, to provide wise leadership in uncertain times.

Growing in wisdom is an iterative process discovered through lived experience. In other words, you cannot become a sage all at once. It is a progressive process that comes by making frequent mistakes, and then learning from each one. However, you can also accelerate your growth in wisdom by observing the good and bad decisions other leaders have made. The stories and principles from real-life people who went before you provide a head start in your journey. It is for this reason that I chose the epic Lewis and Clark Expedition as a narrative to illustrate several timeless leadership principles.

### Why Lewis and Clark?

I did not choose their voyage because of their exemplary character. In fact, Lewis and Clark had many moral failings. Clark was a slave-

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holder, and both are widely criticized for opening the West to Native American genocide. But the indigenous tribes were not above criticism either. Like all cultures, each group had some elements that were good, some that were evil, but most were morally neutral. None of the tribes, nor the expedition itself, can be held up as an ideal of virtuous living.

The reason to use the “Corps of Discovery” (as their group was called) is because they offer a classic example of a huge undertaking into uncharted waters, a fascinating illustration of turning vision into reality, and an ideal backdrop to observe the universal aspects of wise leadership in uncertain times.

Another reason to use the Lewis and Clark saga is the variety of cross-cultural experiences they had with the various Native American tribes. Their encounters with different languages and customs forced them to be culturally sensitive to survive, although their efforts were awkward on many occasions. Their struggles with cultural differences are useful to study because you will also face a variety of organizational cultures, personality types, and ideas that will challenge your pre-existing categories.

The final reason for highlighting the Corps of Discovery is the sheer amount of detail recorded in their journals. Their abundant and unembellished narrative provides a rich variety of material that is difficult to find in other adventure stories. Some are highly exaggerated or even fictional, omit embarrassing aspects of their journey, or lack the dramatic impact of world-changing discoveries. The Lewis and Clark Expedition stands out as the ideal analog for *The Heroic Venture*.

## Introduction

### The Structure

The chapters of this book follow the chronological narrative of their journey (a map is included to follow their path). The opening section of each chapter reports the expedition's events, followed by commentary on leadership principles drawn from those events. Then each chapter concludes with real-life examples from the Bible: Noah (built an ark), Joseph (saved people from famine), Moses (led the exodus from Egypt), Joshua (conquered the Promised Land), Gideon (defeated the Midianites), David (designed the temple), Nehemiah (rebuilt the wall), and Esther (rescued people from genocide). Each one is an example of success or failure to help you grow as a wise leader in the midst of uncertainty.

The first three sections offer 18 leadership principles that track the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The fourth section ("Your Heroic Venture") offers practical ways for you to apply the principles from the first three sections. It describes how to employ a simple and easy-to-use paradigm for wise leadership, called PWR® (Prepare/Work/Review). The PWR acrostic has proven useful in various settings including work, family, and personal life, exemplified in this section's case studies. So if you find yourself longing for personal application in the first three sections, be assured it will be coming in the final part of the book.

### The Bible is About Jesus

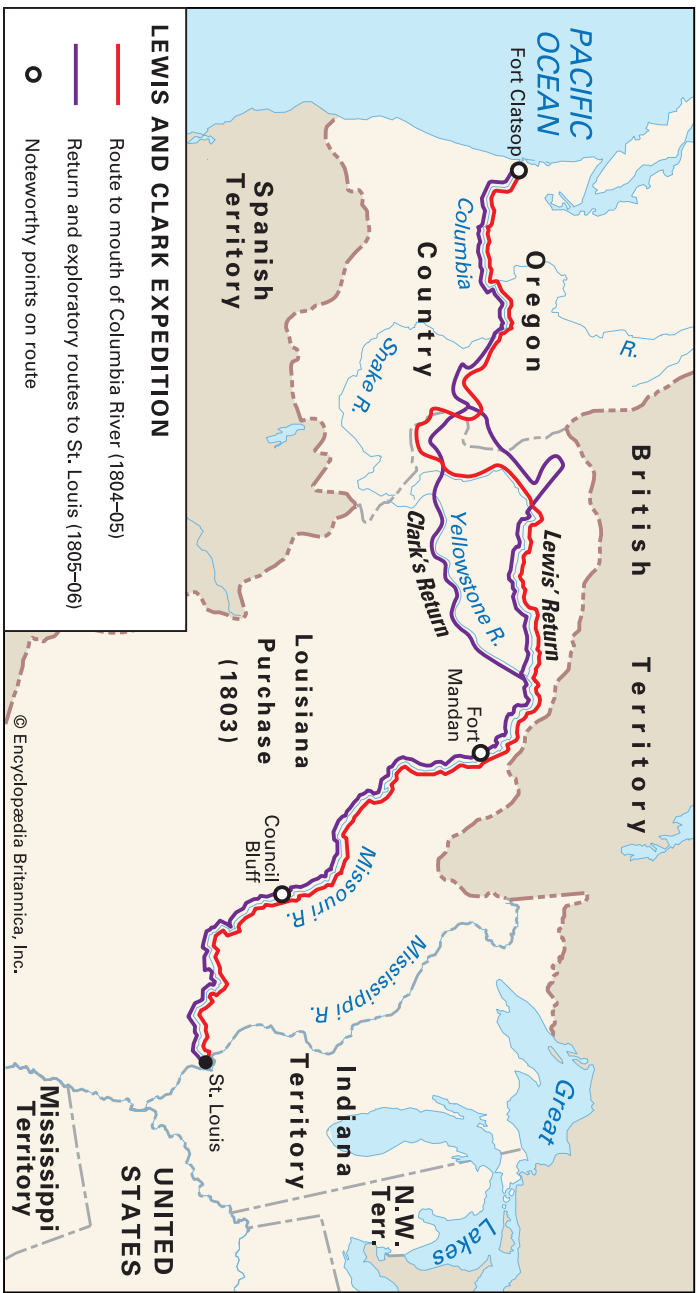
Despite the helpful references to leadership principles drawn from the Bible, it is crucial to point out that Scripture is not intended to be a collection of leadership principles, nor is it meant to be read as an ethical guidebook or a handbook for living. Instead, the Bible's single, unifying theme is *God's work in human history, fulfilled in the life of Jesus of Nazareth* (see more in Appendix 1: How to Become a

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Follower of Jesus). In other words, the Bible is a book about Jesus (Jn. 5:39), but at the same time, it also contains useful examples of good and bad leadership.

### A Lifelong Resource

Over the years, I have gone back to *The Heroic Venture* as a reference to help me handle difficult decisions and challenges, and I am confident it can be a helpful reference guide for you as well. Like me, you can come back to it again and again as you grow in wisdom, facing new uncertainties in various seasons of life. My prayer is that it will become worn-out and dog-eared from frequent use, a rich source of lifelong encouragement in your pursuit as a wise and courageous leader.







## Section I: Beginning the Adventure

*“Entertaining as I do, the most confident hope of succeeding in a voyage which had formed a darling project of mine for the last ten years, I could but esteem this moment of my departure as among the most happy of my life.”*

*~ Meriwether Lewis*

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## Chapter 1

### Compelling Context

*If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it.*  
~ Nehemiah 2:5

The Lewis and Clark Expedition was an epic journey that rivals the greatest ventures of world history. It is a classic story of courage, danger, suffering, unexpected turns of events, and intense resolve to accomplish a burning vision. The expedition was set in the context of international politics, undercover spies, secret missions, and the prospect of unprecedented new opportunities for commerce. It was also an exploration into one of the earth's final uncharted frontiers and one of the greatest adventures of all time.

It was triggered by a famous real estate transaction called *The Louisiana Purchase*. For centuries the French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch had been sending colonists and traders to claim the riches of the Americas. By 1800, European colonization in North America was over three hundred years old and colonial governments were starting to consolidate their activities. The Dutch and Portuguese were minor players, Spain was a fading influence, and the French emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte, was engaging in costly European wars that left him in desperate need of cash.

Meanwhile, France had claim to the Louisiana territory that ran from the Mississippi River to what is now modern-day Montana (see map), an area covering 15 states of the current United States. Napoleon knew that France was powerless to

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defend such a large area of land with armies stretched thin in wars close to home.

One person who understood Napoleon's dilemma was Thomas Jefferson, the newly elected president of the United States. Having recently served as ambassador to France, Jefferson was well aware of Napoleon's need for money and the impossibility of defending the French claim to Louisiana. So in 1802, Jefferson began negotiations that ended in the next year with a massive land purchase for a mere \$15 million.

### The Search for a Shortcut

In 1802, water travel was the primary means of transportation. Although there were more gadgets, weapons, and scientific knowledge than the Greeks or Romans could have imagined, for 2000 years there had been virtually no improvement in the speed of moving goods. Nothing moved faster than a horse, and as far as the people of 1802 were concerned, nothing would *ever* go faster than a horse. There were only four roads that crossed to the western frontier, and the conditions were terrible, taking 6-8 weeks to move items from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River.

Ever since settlers arrived in the New World, their dream had been to find a faster way to move goods from the Atlantic to the Pacific, without the long voyage around the horn of South America. Centuries of eastern exploration had uncovered the best waterway connections from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River, but the western part between the Mississippi and the Pacific was a huge expanse of unknown territory. No one knew the exact distance, what the people were like who lived there, what wildlife existed, what plants grew there, or

what the landscape was like. Even the tribes who lived in local regions did not know how one area connected to another.

### Failed Attempts

Several previous attempts were made to explore this region to establish trade with the indigenous tribes and open a direct trade route to Asia. Three of these were instigated by then scientist/philosopher Thomas Jefferson, each ending in failure. It was impossible to prepare without knowledge of the continent's size and terrain. The Western Continent proved much easier to speculate about than it was to explore.

In 1789, British explorer Alexander Mackenzie found a Canadian water route from Montreal to the Pacific, about 400 miles north of the Louisiana Territory. This news brought new hope that there might exist an open and easy route from the Mississippi. The news of this British discovery threw Jefferson into manic activity, and it could be said that Mackenzie's Canadian discovery gave birth to the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

In 1792, there was more good news. Robert Gray sailed a few miles inland from the Pacific on the Columbia River, into modern day Portland, Oregon. This provided useful information about the geography's western edge, making the width of the Continent less of an unknown. Jefferson's desire intensified for an all-water route across the continent, including reports on its soil, rivers, mountains, animals, plants, and indigenous tribes.

In 1793, the American Philosophical Society (of which Jefferson had been a key leader for decades) offered \$1,000 to any explorer who could make it to the Pacific and back. A small expedition

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was planned that would not raise the suspicions of the French, Spanish, or native tribes. A number of men volunteered to lead the party, and a French botanist was chosen, but he turned out to be a spy who was raising an army to attack the Spanish. It was another failed attempt.

### Converging Events

By 1802, Jefferson was not only President of the United States, but also among the most knowledgeable people in the world in many scientific areas, possessing a thirst for more information about the world. He believed that all the great western rivers, including the Missouri, came from a single, low-lying height of land. If so, there would be an all-water route across the American continent, except for a short, easy overland haul (called a “portage”) across western hills, that connected to the Columbia River on the other side. This would essentially link the Atlantic to the Pacific by water. By 1803, with the purchase of the Louisiana Territory, Jefferson now had an open door to freely explore this northwest water passage without fear of French resistance.

Jefferson believed the western tribes were noble and that mutually beneficial trading relationships could be developed, resulting in peaceful co-existence with the nation’s first citizens. But he was racing against the English who were expanding south from Canada. Jefferson hoped to cement strong relationships with the native tribes before the British could interfere.

All the pieces were in place to proceed with this epic adventure: Jefferson had authority as newly elected president; with the Louisiana Purchase, there would be no French interference;

## Compelling Context

recent discoveries reduced unknowns that contributed to previous failures. Centuries of exploration, scientific advancement, colonization, and commercial development created the compelling context for Thomas Jefferson to clearly articulate his vision: *Find the most direct all-water route from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean across the western two-thirds of the continent and return safely with scientific information about the land.*

The race was on between America and Britain, two superpowers intent on securing the greatest business prize of the century.

\*\*\*\*\*

THE EVENTS OF JEFFERSON'S day compelled him to action. It is impossible to appreciate the importance of the Lewis and Clark Expedition without understanding the historical context from which it came. The background and circumstances of a situation drives people to action, and keeps passion alive in the face of obstacles. When people see suffering, an unmet need, or an injustice, it spurs them to take action. *Context is the birthplace of passion.* The Bible gives many good examples where people were motivated by the context of their situation.

### Joseph

Joseph received a vision that he would one day be a leader of his people, only to be sold into slavery by his own brothers. Upon his arrival in Egypt, he quickly demonstrated his administrative abilities but was wrongfully accused and imprisoned. He languished there for years, waiting for an opportunity to fulfill his destiny (Gen. 37, 39-40).

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### Moses

Moses believed he would rescue his people from centuries of Egyptian slavery, but was forced to flee as an exile to the desert. Years later, when the people cried out for deliverance, God called Moses to return to Egypt. His task was not only to convince Pharaoh to release the people from bondage, but also to transform a group of slaves into a nation of God's people, living in a new land (Ex. 3).

### David

David had been king of Israel for a number of years and had just settled down in his Jerusalem palace. Meanwhile, the Ark of the Covenant resided in a distant town, housed in a simple structure. David was not satisfied with the Ark of God being in such an obscure place. One day, he said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent" (2 Sam. 7:2). David's discontent with the present situation was driving him to build the temple. Nathan responded by saying, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you" (2 Sam. 7:3).

### Esther

Esther was a young Jewish exile who was chosen to replace the deposed Babylonian Queen Vashti. At the same time, Persian prime minister Haman was plotting a secret genocide of the Jews. When Esther became aware of Haman's plot, events were set in motion for an epic showdown between them (Esther 1-3).

### Nehemiah

Some years later, another Jewish exile named Nehemiah was serving as cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah received news that his native Jerusalem was in shambles. He was told, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble



## Compelling Context

and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire” (Neh. 1:3). Nehemiah was devastated. He wept, mourned, and fasted, and prayed for many days, waiting for an opportunity to rebuild the broken wall in his home country.

### Jesus

When Jesus came, humans were under the curse of sin and the domination of Satan. The world was in need of a Savior, and the people were like a sheep without a shepherd. For centuries, God had prepared the Jewish people to be the culture from which Messiah would come. His coming had been promised and foretold throughout their history.

God knew the appropriate context in which to send Jesus to deliver people “from the domain of darkness” (Col. 1:13). Or as Gal. 4:4-5 says: “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” It was the right time in human history and the right geographic place in the world for Jesus “to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

### Jesus’ Followers

After Jesus accomplished His earthly mission through His sacrificial death, He delegated the next part of His work to His disciples in what is called “The Great Commission” (Matt. 28:18-20). In this, the greatest project ever given to humanity, Jesus’ followers are responsible to be witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), teaching people from every tribe, people, language, and nation to obey Christ’s commands and then “the end will come” (Matt. 24:14). Within this grand vision, God gives people specific projects to accomplish His work, igniting their passion to represent Jesus locally and around the world. God still leads people into a *Heroic Venture*.

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In all these examples it was the context of their situation that compelled them to their task. It was their circumstances that kept them pushing ahead, despite the difficulties involved. Joseph, Moses, Nehemiah, Esther, David, and Jesus never lost the passion that emerged from the pressing needs around them until they completed their assignment.

Compelling Context drives people to their *Heroic Venture*.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Of the Biblical examples given, which do you find most interesting and applicable?
2. What do you think of the idea that “context is the birthplace of passion?”
3. What is the context that you find yourself in?
4. What excites you about your context? What frustrates you? What motivates you? What other emotions do you have when you think about your context?
5. What dreams do you have about the future that might be forming from your context? Write it down even if it is somewhat unclear at this time.

## Chapter 2

### Personal Calling

*And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this? ~ Esther 4:14*

Meriwether Lewis, Jefferson's presidential secretary (what today would be called Chief of Staff), was the obvious choice to lead the expedition. As a protégé of Jefferson, he had learned about a variety of scientific and political topics over the years, sharing Jefferson's passion for plants, animals, geography, languages, and cultures. As a young man, Lewis served in the army, eventually becoming paymaster, requiring him to travel the western frontier. This is where he learned his frontier skills.

In 1793, at age 18, Lewis had been one of the eager volunteers to lead the western expedition that was eventually led by the French spy. Lewis was passed over because of his youth, but his passion for the mission was noteworthy, and helped him become the front-runner for the job when the time was right. Jefferson had no question about Lewis' loyalty or his ability to take on the complex task, but critics said he was undereducated, prone to depression, and took too many risks.

#### Undereducated

Despite Lewis' broad interest in science, it was true that he lacked formal education. He would need specialized training in many areas. During the journey, enormous amounts of scientific information would have to be recorded about the people, wildlife, and geography, and he would also have to learn how to take precise measurements with which to construct a map. No one knew what the Western continent looked like or

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how big it was, so the establishment of a credible map would be a significant scientific development.

### Prone to depression

Jefferson had observed several instances of depression in Lewis, which seemed to worsen when Lewis drank too much alcohol. Jefferson had seen signs of depression in Lewis' father before him, so there was a familial link as well.

### Risky

The charge of recklessness was not without merit. For example, in 1803, when the expedition waited for supplies in St. Louis, Lewis thought he could make better use of time by taking a side exploration into New Mexico, which was hostile Spanish territory. Jefferson was appalled at the idea of putting the mission in peril by introducing the Spanish into the mix. He ended the discussion by firmly re-emphasizing Lewis' mission: find a direct water route to the Pacific.

Despite his weaknesses, few people had Lewis' credentials in botany, natural history, minerals, medicine, and astronomy. Coupled with his firm constitution, leadership qualities, ability to learn quickly, knowledge of the western woods, and contact with indigenous cultures, there was no doubt that Meriwether Lewis was Jefferson's person for the job.

\*\*\*\*\*

ONCE THE VISION IS defined, the right leader is needed to carry out the task. Meriwether Lewis had many weaknesses, yet Jefferson was certain that Lewis was the ideal person to lead the mission. In the

## Personal Calling

same way, God chooses men and women from varied backgrounds, ages, and occupations to represent Him, despite their flaws. God has used, and will use, imperfect people to carry out His plans.

Looking at the examples in the Bible, there is no single profile. They were old and young, experienced and neophyte, prideful and unsure. The leaders God chose were as diverse as could be, and far from perfect:

- Noah got drunk at the end of his mission.
- Abraham lied to save his life.
- Joseph had major conflict with his brothers.
- Moses balked at his assignment and had to have Aaron as a spokesman.
- Barak insisted on Deborah's help in defeating the Canaanites.
- Gideon was a "nobody" who needed four different confirmations to ease his doubts before he believed God.
- Samson was undisciplined, controlled by sensuality, and confided in untrustworthy people.
- Jephthah, an illegitimate son of a prostitute, made a rash vow.
- David was an adulterer and murderer.
- Hezekiah's heart was proud, not responding to the kindness God showed him.
- Jonah took a ship in the opposite direction from his assigned destination.
- Peter denied the Lord.
- Paul killed Christians.
- The apostles were rough, uneducated men.

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Just about every vice and weakness is demonstrated in these representatives of God's tasks. Yet despite their imperfections, God worked through them. This gives hope that He can use anyone to do His work, including you.

### Excuses

Sometimes, when people get a vision, they shrink back from the responsibility. Like Moses at the burning bush, they want to make excuses, or ask someone else to take their place. Here are other excuses people make:

- "I am too old" (Abraham started out old).
- "I am too young" (Mary was probably a teenager when she was called).
- "I do not have the right education or background" (Peter was a fisherman who had less education than most modern fourth-grade children).
- "I am not the right race or culture" (Jonah was very different from the people of Nineveh whom he led to repentance).
- "I am not from the right family" (Gideon was from the least family from the least tribe in Israel).

### God's Advance Work

Despite their feelings of inadequacy, God has often prepared people in advance for their chosen assignments:

- Moses had world-class training in the court of Pharaoh, and also knew the "backwoods" of the desert through which he would lead the Israelites out of slavery.

## Personal Calling

- David's years as a shepherd exposed him to protecting the sheep and defeating fierce animals, helping him become a mighty warrior. Years of solitude made him a reflective "man after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14).
- Nehemiah, as cupbearer to the king, had access to the king of Persia and all his resources when it was time to rebuild the wall.
- The seventy-two disciples watched Jesus minister before they were sent out by twos to preach the Good News.
- Paul's training as a Pharisee served him well in debating the Judaizers and other heretical teachers.

God especially prepared Esther for her task. Among the beautiful women of King Xerxes' time, Esther was in Persian captivity when she was selected as queen to replace the deposed Queen Vashti. Esther was in the palace only a short time when she received shocking news from her guardian, Mordecai. The king's top official, Haman, was about to exterminate all the Jews living in the land. Mordecai urged Esther to use her influence to seek the king's mercy on their behalf.

Esther explained that getting an audience with the king was not as simple as it seemed, even in her queenly capacity. While the king could summon people whenever he wanted, no one initiated contact with the king, upon penalty of death. It had been thirty days since Esther had been called in to the king's presence, but Mordecai pressed Esther, saying:

"Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will

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perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:13-14).

### You Can Do Great Things

Esther is one example of God’s people exercising faith to accomplish great things. They “conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight” (Heb. 11:33-34).

God still issues a Personal Calling to His people to complete *The Heroic Venture* for His glory.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Which one of the biblical characters do you relate to the most? Why?
2. Looking at the people God used to accomplish his purposes, what shortcomings stand out to you? How do their failures compare to yours?
3. God was at work in the lives of His people, even before they were called to their *Heroic Venture*. Looking back, how has God worked in your life to prepare you?
4. Many of God’s people made excuses when God gave them their assignment. Have you ever made excuses to God or have you heard others disqualify themselves by making excuses?
5. What would have happened if any of the leaders mentioned decided to disobey their call? What might happen if you shrink back from your God-given assignment?



## Chapter 3

### Vital Preparations

*And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ~ Genesis 45:7*

In the midst of crash courses, Lewis also needed to prepare for the journey. Supplies had to be procured, a team assembled, and a timetable predicted. They would be out of supply range for an unknown period of time and predicting the required quantity provisions was especially difficult when the plant and animal life was unknowable.

How many rifles and how much ammunition would be needed? Could they live off the land? What kind of medicine might they need with strange animals or reptiles lurking about? How many men were needed and with what skills? How big a boat would be needed and what should be its design? How many cooking pots, tools, and rations could be carried? What scientific instruments and reference books should they bring? How many fishing hooks would be needed? The list of questions went on.

In terms of the tribes they might meet along the way, Jefferson's orders were clear: "In all your intercourse with natives treat them in the most friendly and conciliatory manner which their own conduct will admit. Invite the chiefs to come to Washington to meet with me." The rumor was that the indigenous peoples in the first part of their journey were hostile and well-armed. They had a reputation for demanding ransom for safe passage along the Missouri River.

## The Heroic Venture

There were also legends about the other western tribes, especially the Sioux. Some speculated they were the lost tribe of Israel or a wandering tribe of Welshman. Such wide speculation created a new set of questions. How could friendly relations be introduced if the first tribes they encountered turned out to be hostile? What kind of presents would be welcomed by the tribes about which they knew nothing?

It was an overwhelming task to answer all the questions and procure what was needed, all while attending intensive classes in every scientific area known to Americans in 1803. But eventually, an initial plan was decided: A party of 12 men would depart St. Louis on August 1, 1803, spend the winter in the Mandan village, cross the mountains to the Pacific, and return to St. Louis before the winter of 1804 set in.

### The Iron Boat

Another of Lewis' tasks during this time was designing and constructing a specialized modular iron boat for the journey down the Columbia River. Lewis loved his new craft but had trouble building it. He spent inordinate amounts of time on it, much to Jefferson's dismay, who feared Lewis would miss the August 1 deadline. Jefferson's concerns about the schedule were soon realized. By the time the boat was assembled and Lewis' education completed, it was clear the expedition would not be ready to leave by August 1803 and would have to wait until the spring of 1804.

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LEADERSHIP INVOLVES ATTENTION TO details and advanced preparation. The Lewis and Clark Expedition was among the more complicated

## Vital Preparations

endeavors in history, but even the simplest project requires consideration of what lies ahead.

Training is one aspect of preparation. Some people need to serve under an experienced person before taking the mantle of leadership. For example, God placed Joshua under Moses' leadership to prepare him for the future. After Paul's conversion, he went through many years of training and instruction before God sent him out as a missionary with Barnabas (Acts 13).

Even Jesus "grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40) and He "increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). He went through many years of preparation in His parents' household before His time for public ministry would come.

### Logistics and Details

Besides training, there are logistical details to consider. Even before the king knew what was on Nehemiah's mind, Nehemiah had done his homework, figuring what supplies and support would be needed to rebuild the wall. When the king asked Nehemiah what he wanted, Nehemiah was prepared. He asked for letters to governors of the provinces beyond the River (so he could get safely through to his destination in Judah), and a letter to Asaph (the keeper of the king's forest), so he could get timber for constructing the wall and his house (Neh. 2:7-8).

Moses received precise details from God about how the tabernacle was to be constructed, including which craftsman was to be assigned to each task. In chapter after chapter of Exodus 25-31, God tells Moses what materials are needed, how to gather them, and what each part should look like.

## The Heroic Venture

To ensure the fall of Jericho, Joshua was given a specific set of instructions for the people to follow. They were told to march around the city seven times each day for a week, and then to give a great shout, at which time the wall of Jericho would fall. God did the work, but Joshua and his leaders had to mobilize such a large group of people to execute this plan.

The Holy Spirit gave David a detailed vision for the temple's construction, including the portico, storerooms, treasuries, upper parts, inner rooms, outer courts, and the place of atonement. David gave Solomon instructions on the division of labor for the priests and other workers, including how the services should be conducted. He was specific about the details of the lampstands, tables, dishes, and the altar, including the weights of silver and gold in each article. David had a clear understanding of the work to be done according to the plan (1 Chron. 28:19).

When Esther determined to put her life in danger by interceding on behalf of her people, she instructed Mordecai to assemble all the Jews in Susa to join her in a three-day fast, along with palace attendants. She said, "Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law" (Esther 4:16). Prayer is always a Vital Preparation.

### God's Preparation for Joseph

Joseph's entire life-purpose was to provide a way of salvation for his people. Joseph had developed expertise in management by running Potiphar's household and was gifted by God in the area of logistical details.

When summoned to interpret Pharaoh's dream, the king's officials were amazed not only by Joseph's ability to predict the future, but at his wise strategy to deal with the calamity. Joseph proposed storing

## Vital Preparations

grain that could be kept in reserve during the lean years, “so that the land may not perish through the famine” (Gen. 41:36). Pharaoh was so impressed that he said, “Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?” (41:38).

Joseph recognized, many years later, that God had prepared him for this task. He confessed to his brothers, “And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors” (Gen. 45:7).

As God prepares people through previous experiences, leaders must be willing to do the hard work of Vital Preparations before pursuing *The Heroic Venture*.

### Questions for Reflection

1. How has God prepared you for your present situation?
2. Of the leaders mentioned in the Bible stories above, which example is most striking to you? Why?
3. Why do you think God had His people go through so much work and preparation to achieve His purposes? For example, why not simply create the temple instead of having David and Solomon take all those years to build it?
4. When have you found yourself tempted to skip over Vital Preparations in order to speed up the process of seeing vision come to reality?
5. What further training or preparation might you need to be more effective?



## Chapter 4

### Committed Team

*Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.*  
~ Acts 13:2

As Lewis considered his plans, it became obvious that he needed a second officer. If Lewis died, another leader could bring back the journals and discoveries, and a second officer could also enforce discipline. Lewis immediately thought of his old army commander, William Clark, a tough woodsman accustomed to command, a good waterman, an experienced surveyor, and an excellent map maker. The inclusion of Clark would yield an additional asset, the inclusion of York, Clark's trusted African American slave. York's experience, talents, and bravery would prove essential in the mission's success.

Where Lewis was shaky, Clark was strong and vice versa. Both were competent for the task, reliable, and effective leaders of men. While divided command almost never works in the military (disagreeing commanders can result in death to the unit), Lewis believed it would work with Clark.

Although they would share joint command, each would have specific roles. Clark would manage the boat and take map readings, while Lewis would walk along the shore to collect data and specimens. Lewis also appointed himself the doctor, since he studied under the famous physician of the day, Benjamin Rush. Lewis knew how to set broken bones, deal with dysentery and croup, and was familiar with the use of wild herbs for treating various ailments. With only a few medical supplies, he would have to improvise, using what was available from nature along the way.

## The Heroic Venture

### The Rest of the Team

With the command structure in place, Lewis assembled the rest of the team. The success of the enterprise would depend on selection of capable and compatible men. A long journey into the wilderness, full of unknowns, would be difficult if the team was not committed to the vision. He needed 12 healthy military men of good character, who were proficient hunters.

When the Louisiana Purchase was announced to the public on July 4, 1803, national interest in the expedition expanded, allowing Lewis and Clark to be highly selective. They would have a large pool of interested applicants.

To contribute to the expedition's success, Lewis was also given authority to hire non-military guides and interpreters, but they needed to share the soldier's hardiness and character. One such non-military member was George Drouillard, a frontier hunter-trapper and scout. He was proficient in indigenous cultures and languages, knew French and sign language, and had a calm confidence about him that made him a welcome member of the expedition.

### Their First Surprise

In November 1803, the recruits assembled in St. Louis for a short ride up the Mississippi River toward the confluence of the Missouri River at St. Charles. This is where they would spend the winter and depart in the Spring. The power of the Mississippi awed them. Instantly it became clear they would need a bigger team providing greater muscle. More specific roles would need to be assigned, such as watching for trees



and changing currents. As a result, they decided to double the size of the expedition.

This change in plans meant ordering additional supplies, but first Lewis needed authorization from the President to spend more money. This reorganization was no small task since it took several weeks for mail to travel to Washington and back, and then an additional 6-8 weeks for supplies to be shipped from the east.

Meanwhile, the men were eager to start their journey. They knew the expedition would be the high point of their lives (if they survived). But they were confident, eager, and ready to make history. However, having young men in great physical shape, stationed in St. Charles for four months without anything to keep them occupied, was a recipe for trouble. They got in fights, drank too much, and were sometimes insubordinate.

In addition to the difficulty of managing the men, another problem emerged. Lewis received Clark's commission in the mail and was surprised to find it below the rank of captain that Lewis had been promised. Lewis was furious, but Clark was willing to overlook the insult for the sake of the expedition. The men were never told; as far as they knew, both Lewis and Clark were captains.

### Ready to Depart

Finally, as the launch date approached, a ceremony was held for the 25 members of the Corps of Discovery, "destined for the expedition through the interior of the Continent of North

## The Heroic Venture

America.” Another five members would go to Mandan winter quarters and return with reports and specimens. They would depart as three squads, each one led by a sergeant.

On May 14, 1804, the party left St. Charles with joyful spirits. Their *Heroic Venture* up the Missouri River had begun. They were leaving connection with the outside world for at least two years. There would be no orders, commissions, fresh supplies, reinforcements, or guidance from superiors. Lewis and Clark were given an independent military command, the likes of which had never been given before or since.

Once they were on the river, they worked against a steady current among a variety of islands, sandbars, and narrow channels. Uprooted trees that had fallen into the river had to be pushed out of the way, along with branches and limbs that threatened to poke holes in the boat. It was more treacherous than they expected.

Their keel boat was ungainly, and with cargo weighing it down, moving upstream was almost impossible. Unless there was a wind they had to push and pull the boat upriver. At times they had to rush from one side of the boat to the other to keep it from capsizing. Conditions required everyone to be tough, quick, and alert, but they were always ready to make any effort for the sake of the enterprise. Thanks to their continual exertion, the boat and its contents were rescued from overturning.

As they proceeded, their responsibilities became increasingly defined. Some were assigned daily hunting duty. Sergeants were given command over various parts of the boat. Privates under their command handled steering, baggage, compass,

## Committed Team

sails, oars, and lookout. Others were tasked to ward off floating debris, or call out warnings of dangers ahead, such as sandbars or whirlpools.

They were beginning to gel as a team.

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LEWIS AND CLARK ASSIGNED specific roles to talented people, so each person contributed to the overall enterprise. As joint commanders, each used their respective strengths for the common good. Collaboration like that requires unselfishness and a belief that successful outcomes often come from teamwork.

Clark exemplified unselfishness when he overlooked the insult of not receiving the promised rank of captain. He had a right to complain and create a stir, but he stayed quiet for the good of the expedition.

Teamwork offers the strength of diverse talents, experiences, and mutual encouragement. Tasks can be completed with less time and effort than they can individually, where each member brings something to the enterprise that is missing from the other members.

### The Power of Team

Moses and Aaron served together, sharing the load of responsibility. God also used Aaron to confirm Moses' call. For example, at the burning bush, God told Moses that Aaron was already on the way to meet Moses to help him.

Esther and Mordecai worked together as a team. Esther was in the position of power but was humble enough to listen to Mordecai's

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advice. She could have proudly exercised her authority as queen but remained teachable to his wise counsel. Mordecai trusted Esther to follow through with wisdom and courage.

Another form of teamwork emerges when one person gets the vision and a second person is the one to complete it. Such was the case with David building the temple. It was in David's heart to construct a dwelling place for the ark, but it was his son, Solomon, who actually completed the job.

During his missionary journeys, Paul repeatedly showed his commitment to team ministry by forming apostolic bands to accompany him. Paul and Barnabas formed the first of these teams after being commissioned by the church at Antioch, but Paul had many other comrades including Luke, Silas, Timothy, Erastus, Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus, and Trophimus (Acts 20:4-5). In the churches he planted, he mentions several men and women who served as co-laborers.

Jesus sent His 72 disciples to do ministry in teams of two. He knew the power of shared experience, mutual encouragement, and interdependence.

### A Gifted Team Builder

Nehemiah showed how to build a Committed Team. When Nehemiah first arrived in Jerusalem to rebuild the wall, he kept his mission a secret. After staying three days he took a few men with him by night to examine the destruction of the wall. Then he said:

“You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision. And I

## Committed Team

told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, ‘Let us rise up and build.’ So they strengthened their hands for the good work (Neh. 2:17-18).

Nehemiah’s team was on board because he showed them the need, reminded them of God’s provision, and then waited for them to express their commitment. He is a great study in delegation and inspiration. He appointed a team of leaders to be in charge of various parts of the construction project, and under his skillful leadership the work was completed ahead of schedule, because the people worked “with all their heart” (Neh. 4:6).

### Dangerous Team Members

Sometimes a leader needs discernment to recognize the danger of including the wrong people on their team, as Zerubbabel did in rebuilding the temple. When his adversaries heard that the returning exiles were starting construction, they pretended to be supportive and asked to join his team, saying: “Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him” (Ezra 4:1-2). But Zerubbabel saw through their deception and said: “You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the Lord” (Ezra 4:3).

Sometimes people want to join when they have the wrong motives and can be a cancer to the team. But a gifted, Committed Team will make the task enjoyable in *The Heroic Venture*.

## **The Heroic Venture**

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. How did Meriwether Lewis make use of teamwork?
2. In the examples above, which one stood out as most helpful? Why?
3. What has been your experience of working on a team?
4. How do the gifts of the Holy Spirit make a difference in completing a project?
5. What are the drawbacks of having a team?

## Section II: Triumph and Heartbreak

*“I will cheerfully join you and partake of the dangers, difficulties, and fatigues and I anticipate the honors and rewards of the result of such an enterprise.”*

~ *William Clark’s acceptance of Lewis’ invitation to co-lead the expedition*

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## Chapter 5

### Internal Complications

*All the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt!"*  
~ Numbers 14:2

On July 4, 1804, the expedition rejoiced at the entry to a new terrain, a beautiful, open, extensive prairie. They discovered an uncharted creek, naming it "Independence Creek," in honor of their America's birthday. The beauty of the grass, hills, and valleys was overwhelming. They were excited about cataloging the new animals and plants, unseen on the eastern continent, including the badger, prairie dog, buffalo, antelope, jackrabbit, mule deer, elk, magpie, and coyote. A special ration of whiskey and a shot from the cannon helped them celebrate Independence Day.

After the festivities, the men turned their attention to the dangers ahead. Always on their minds were threats from the indigenous tribes along their route. The captains were aware that the Corps of Discovery carried an unprecedented arsenal of weapons that could tempt the native groups to attack. Anyone in possession of these weapons would dominate their region for a long time. Although the expedition's weaponry was intimidating enough to scare away smaller war parties, a large group could easily overpower Lewis and Clark's men.

The captains' preference was to talk and trade, rather than fight and kill. They did not want a confrontation, but they made every effort to ensure the group would never be caught by surprise. Since a camp of sleeping men would be enticing, they camped on islands whenever possible.

## The Heroic Venture

On August 2, they met with their first tribe, the Otos. When Lewis and Clark asked if a peace treaty could be brokered, the Otos said it was possible, but it would cost the party some whiskey to make it happen (the Otos were not impressed with the tobacco, paint, and beads initially offered to them). The expedition's first cross-cultural encounter had gone relatively well.

### Team Member Problems

In spite of their strong morale at the start, difficulties began to emerge from within the team. Private Moses Reed deserted the party, and when he was found, he was court martialed and forced to give up his rifle. He would also be sent back to St. Louis the next spring. But he continued to be a grouching malcontent and poisoned the attitude of Private Newman, who was also tried and discarded from the team.

Meanwhile, one of the expedition's key leaders, Sergeant Floyd, had grown increasingly ill. By August 20, he died from what was probably an infected appendix. They buried him at a beautiful bluff along the river and named it Floyd's Bluff in his memory.

The journey was also becoming dangerous. As Lewis walked along the cliffs making journal entries, he slipped and was headed toward a 300-foot fall into the river below. Just as he was about to go down, he thrust his knife into the hillside and pulled himself to safety.

The next week was uneventful until they met another tribe, the Yankton Sioux. They appeared in full regalia, accompanied by four musicians. They had a sense for the dramatic that caused

## Internal Complications

initial concern, but they quickly proved to be friendly. The party was invited to the Sioux's ceremonial dance and spent the night in the village. It was another positive experience.

Back on the river a few days later, Private Shannon failed to return from hunting and Colter was sent to find him. When Colter did not return, Drouillard was sent to work with Colter. They found Shannon's tracks and concluded that Shannon was ahead of the party. But thinking he was *behind* the group, Shannon's tracks indicated he was racing to catch up. Since he was not the best of hunters, they feared Shannon may be starving and in a panic. They finally found him after a 16-day chase, 12 days of which Shannon had been hunting without bullets, surviving on fruit and berries and killing small animals with pointed sticks.

The journey was becoming complicated.

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HAVING A TEAM MADE the expedition possible, but teams also can be the cause of difficulty. Team members rebel against leadership or they get bored or lazy. Like Shannon, they can get lost, requiring time and energy to get them back on track. Sometimes leadership feels more complicated because of the failings of your team members.

It is especially frustrating when setback, heartache, and failure come from those who were once committed to the vision. In war, when soldiers die at the hands of their own comrades, it is called "friendly fire." Sometimes friendly fire takes place when people criticize, create dissension and confusion, or fall into sinful behaviors. Leaders

## The Heroic Venture

should not be surprised to discover that their team is comprised of fallible people who fail in many ways. The Bible is full of examples.

### Criticism

Moses felt the sting of constant complaining from fellow Israelites. Time after time, the people had seen the delivering work of the Lord as they were led out of Egypt. But at Kadesh Barnea, on the brink of their entry to the land promised to Abraham, ten of the twelve spies brought a bad report that incited rebellion among the people. The people of Israel, despite the good report from Joshua and Caleb, rebelled against God.

They raised a loud cry and wept, grumbling against Moses and Aaron, saying:

“Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?’ And they said to one another, ‘Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt’” (Num. 14:1-4).

This response plunged the leaders into despair as “Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel” (Num. 14:5). The rebellion at Kadesh Barnea was a devastating setback, causing Joshua and Caleb to wander the desert for 40 years before getting another chance to enter the land.

### Bad Advice

Internal complications can come from well-meaning team members who offer bad advice. As David prepared to fight Goliath, Saul

## Internal Complications

“clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail” (1 Sam. 17:38). David refused Saul’s armor because he was not accustomed to them. Saul’s motives were right, but it was the wrong approach for David’s situation.

### Disagreement

Sometimes there is legitimate disagreement between people of goodwill and shared commitment. These situations are perplexing. Paul had wonderful friendship with his teammates, but his team dynamics were not without Internal Complications. Because John Mark had failed Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, Paul refused to include John Mark on their next trip. This caused such a rift between Paul and Barnabas that the team broke up and the two went their separate ways (Acts 15:39).

### Betrayal

One of the most devastating Internal Complications is betrayal. The proverbial case of betrayal is Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus’ chosen twelve disciples, who handed Jesus over to arrest.

Another example of betrayal is Achan. After Joshua’s spectacular victory at Jericho, the Israelites were surprisingly routed at Ai. Although the Israelites were clearly instructed not to take any plunder from Jericho, Achan secretly kept some trinkets, burying them beneath his tent. God revealed to Joshua that Achan’s disobedience was the cause of Israel’s defeat (Josh. 7).

Disagreement. Bad Advice. Criticism. Resentment. Betrayal. These are some of the Internal Complications that block the progress of *The Heroic Venture*. They should come as no surprise when they occur.

## **The Heroic Venture**

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. What were some of the Internal Complications that Meriwether Lewis faced with his team?
2. From the biblical accounts, which Internal Complication stood out to you the most? Why?
3. How do you explain so many Internal Complications in the effort to carry out God-ordained tasks?
4. In your own experience, what Internal Complications have you already experienced?
5. Are there any Internal Complications listed in this chapter that you doubt will ever happen for you? Why?

## Chapter 6

### Fierce Opposition

*Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die." ~ Exodus 10:28*

On September 23, 1804, the Corps of Discovery met the dreaded Teton Sioux. As the warriors waded ominously to their boat, the captains were on their guard, having been warned that this tribe was plotting to rob them of their goods. Lewis and Clark indicated their intention to come as friends but that they would not hesitate to defend themselves if attacked. The two cultures cautiously exchanged gifts, speeches, and whiskey.

When the chiefs demanded more drink, the captains declined and formed a party of soldiers to politely escort the chiefs to shore. The chiefs resisted and had to be forced onto a canoe. Two warriors grabbed the boat's bowline (the rope attached to the boat) and a third grabbed the mast. Clark drew his sword, ordered his men to arms and swung the cannon around. Warriors strung their bows and aimed their guns at the outnumbered expedition. This was the kind of moment Jefferson feared when he ordered Lewis to show restraint with the tribes.

Lewis held the lighted taper over the cannon, ready for combat. Clark kept his sword out of its scabbard. Finally, one of chiefs, Black Buffalo, stepped forward to avert hostility by motioning the warriors to go ashore, even though their bows were still strung with arrows. The captains indicated their intent to proceed. The chiefs huddled and then asked permission to sleep on board overnight. Clark agreed.

## The Heroic Venture

Peace had been restored. But they barely managed to avoid disastrous exchange, raising concern about their return trip home.

As the expedition continued on their way, they encountered a new threat: their first meeting with a grizzly bear. They would find out later how dangerous this foe could be.

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LEWIS KNEW IT WAS likely they would encounter tribes who would oppose their passage along the Missouri River. In the same way, it should be no surprise when people from outside your team stand in the way of your work. You will face Fierce Opposition in many ways.

### Slander

Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, and when she was rejected, she lied about Joseph and had him put in prison.

### Discouragement

Zerubbabel had been sent by King Cyrus to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, but the enemies of Judah and Benjamin who lived nearby were concerned about losing their political control. So they bribed people to frustrate Zerubbabel's labor for over 15 years, overlapping the reign of two different kings (Ezra 4:5).

### Death Threats

During the days of the Judges, the Midianites, Philistines, and Ammonites were among the regional peoples seeking to destroy the Jews, prompting the work of Samson, Deborah, Barak, and Jephthah to defend Israel from extinction.



## Fierce Opposition

### *Moses*

Pharaoh set himself like stone against Moses' repeated pleas to let the Israelites go free. When Moses and Aaron first approached Pharaoh, the king responded by punishing the Israelite slaves. Pharaoh's heart progressively hardened in response to each plague against the Egyptians. Finally, by the time the last plague had come, Pharaoh threatened Moses with death saying, "Get out of my sight! Make sure you do not appear before me again! The day you see my face you will die" (Ex. 10:28).

### *David*

Goliath defied the God of Israel and made vicious threats against Israel's army. His fearsome size caused Saul and his men to be "dismayed and greatly afraid" (1 Sam. 17:11). When David volunteered to fight, Goliath despised David saying, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks? Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field" (1 Sam. 17:43-44).

### *Esther*

Haman was the most powerful man in Persia, second only to King Xerxes. He hated Mordecai, the Jew who refused to bow down to Haman. Therefore, Haman determined to kill not only Mordecai, but all of Mordecai's fellow exiled Jews by manipulating the Persian king to issue an edict of genocide.

### *Nehemiah*

Nehemiah faced opposition when he attempted to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. As soon as the news leaked out, regional officials Sanballat and Tobiah mocked and ridiculed him (Neh. 2:19). Then, as Nehemiah made progress, Sanballat became outraged and joined

## The Heroic Venture

other Ammonites and Arabs in a plot to kill the workers and stop the work (Neh. 4:11).

### *Joseph and Mary*

Joseph and Mary were newlyweds when they traveled from their Nazareth home to Bethlehem in compliance with a Roman census. It was there that Mary gave birth to Jesus. At the same time, astrologers from far away had passed through King Herod's court seeking a king heralded by the star they had been following. When Herod realized a rival king may have been born in Bethlehem, he ordered the slaughter of all boys under two years old. Jesus' life was spared when an angel instructed Joseph to take his family to live in Egypt until Herod's death (Matt. 2:12-14).

### *Jesus*

Jesus narrowly escaped being stoned by an angry mob (John 8:59) and was almost thrown off a cliff in His hometown (Luke 4:39). Later in His life, He was continually harassed by Jewish leaders, who eventually had Him arrested and killed.

### *Paul*

When Paul received Christ outside Damascus, his former colleagues became his fierce opponents. These new adversaries sought to kill him, but Paul narrowly escaped when his allies lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall (Acts 9:25). Paul also faced opposition in many cities during his missionary journeys (e.g. Acts 20:3). In Jerusalem some Jews from Asia provoked a mob, leading to Paul's arrest. Two days later, a group of 40 formed a conspiracy, binding themselves by an oath, to abstain from food or drink until they had killed Paul (Acts 23:12).

## Fierce Opposition

Although people may oppose *The Heroic Venture* out of fear, misunderstanding, or other selfish motives, the real source of Fierce Opposition is the devil and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. You do not battle against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12).

### Questions for Reflection

1. Describe a time when you faced opposition in ministry.
2. In the biblical examples, what were the motives to oppose God's work?
3. In the biblical examples, how did God's people react to opposition?
4. How might people oppose the good work you seek to do?
5. If you face Fierce Opposition, how should you handle it?



## Chapter 7

### Redemptive Setbacks

*And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.*  
~ Exodus 12:36

Shortly after their treacherous encounter with the Teton Sioux, they encountered the Arikara tribe, who seemed to be farmers oppressed by the Tetons. Lewis had a good exchange and believed he could broker a peace treaty with another one of the Arikara's rival nations, which would enhance diplomacy and friendship with the United States. When they offered the Arikaras whiskey, Lewis and Clark were surprised by their response, "Why would you offer something to us that makes us act like fools?" They were finding that no two tribes were alike.

By late October 1804, the party reached their long-expected winter quarters at the Mandan village, where about 5,000 came out to greet them. The dancing and socializing lasted multiple days.

To prevent problems related to idleness, the men were kept busy building a fort, repairing equipment, crafting canoes, hunting food, and trading. For example, the Mandans asked them to make battle axes that became so popular, they could barely keep up with demand. Despite the long winter, with considerable time spent indoors, morale and discipline problems were few.

#### Cultural Differences

The captains offered to negotiate peace between the Mandans and other tribes. But peace and war had different meanings to

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the natives than it did for the colonists. War among rival tribes was the best way for young men to show leadership ability and earn political favor, so hostilities between tribes were constant, perpetuated by revenge raids. When Lewis talked about the importance of peace, one of the warriors asked, “What then would we do for the chiefs?” War was a normal way of life for many of the tribes the expedition encountered.

Also, the Mandans resented the expedition’s patronizing attitude, represented in the gifts offered to them, and felt disrespected for their prowess as warriors. Still, the Mandans were patient with their guests and taught them important medical knowledge, including a remedy for snake bites, which was later incorporated into the body of the world’s medical knowledge. Without the Mandan’s food and hospitality, the Corps of Discovery would not have survived the winter.

### Important New Members

The winter with the Mandans brought a key addition to their crew, a French trader named Charbonneau, hired as an interpreter. He was married to a Shoshone woman named Sacagawea, who had been kidnaped by a rival tribe and sold into slavery to the Mandans. Her skills were believed to be important for establishing a friendly relationship with the Shoshone, the indigenous tribe linking the Missouri and Columbia Rivers in the mountains ahead.

Also, the Shoshone reportedly had plenty of horses, which would be needed to make the portage between rivers and the passage over mountains. Having experienced the difficulty of communicating only in sign language, the captains also hoped she would be a useful interpreter.

## Redemptive Setbacks

While the men were unimpressed with Charbonneau's lack of courage and character, they held Sacagawea in high regard. Although she was ready to give birth soon, it was believed she could manage a newborn baby when they departed in the Spring. In February, Sacagawea gave birth to a boy, Jean Baptiste, and Lewis served as the midwife. The Corps of Discovery now included a Native American woman and a newborn baby.

### Gathering Intel

Lewis spent considerable time getting information from the Mandans about the unknown territory on the next leg of the journey. Most of his previous intelligence was based on second-hand reports. But from what Lewis could patch together, there was some clarity about what was ahead.

After about 115 miles would be a large river (the Yellowstone), after which there would be a second, more imposing river (the "River Which Scolds at All Others)." After another 120 miles they would hear a great noise in the distance and find a wide open plain indicating their proximity to the Great Falls of Montana. After the Great Falls, there would be 60 miles to a mountain range.

After 75 miles into those mountains, the Missouri would split into three forks. This was the place where Sacagawea had been captured five years earlier. North of Three Forks were to be mountains dividing the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans which could be passed on foot in one day, reaching a river on the other side.

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This was exciting news. If these reports were true, Jefferson's hope of finding an easy water passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific was about to be realized. Lewis relished the idea of returning a favorable report to the president. It would be the first systematic survey of the area west of the Mississippi, a valuable contribution to the world's knowledge. Morale was high, and the party was eager for winter to end so they could get on their way.

On April 7, 1805, part of the group was sent back to St. Louis with a report to Washington, D.C. Later that day, the rest of the Corps of Discovery left the Mandan village heading west, ready to see new, uncharted terrain. They were about to penetrate a vast country of unknown dimension, the good or evil of which could not be predicted. They had very few provisions, but they were excited. This was the moment they had been waiting for, making their departure among the happiest days of their lives.

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EVEN THOUGH THE PARTY could not make any progress toward their destination, they tried to make the most of their winter with the Mandans. What appeared at first to be a "lull in the action," turned out to be helpful to their mission. They rested, made repairs, gathered vital intelligence about the journey ahead, and even added Sacagawea to the crew, who turned out to be an invaluable member of the team. In the same way, God takes what seem like setbacks, and uses them to actually strengthen the team's ability to complete the work.

### Samson

Samson's parents were unable to have children until an angel foretold Samson's miraculous conception. They were to set Samson apart as



## Redemptive Setbacks

a Nazirite for the purpose of delivering Israel from the Philistines. As Samson grew, the Lord blessed him and the “Spirit of the Lord began to stir him” (Judg. 13:25).

Obedient to God’s instruction, Samson’s parents must have been appalled by Samson’s first recorded act. Samson said, “I saw one of the daughters of the Philistines at Timnah. Now get her for me as my wife” (Judg. 14:2). Instead of defeating the Philistines, he was marrying into them! His parents asked, “Is there not a woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?” (v. 3). But Samson was convinced that this was the woman for him.

What the parents did not know was that God was planning to redeem this situation as a way to infiltrate the Philistines from within (v. 4). A disappointment to Samson’s parents was an opportunity for God.

God’s final act of redemption in Samson’s life came when he had been imprisoned and humiliated by the Philistines. Robbed of his eyesight, Samson finally was listening to God. Although he had wasted his life on several occasions, by the end of his life, Samson was finally ready to fulfill his calling. But his circumstances made this look impossible.

Chained to two pillars in the Philistine temple, blind and without his notable strength, he was an object of scorn for those who sat mocking him. Samson prayed for one last opportunity. “Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life” (Judg. 16:30). God redeemed what looked like a hopeless setback.

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### Joseph

Joseph was favored among Jacob's 12 sons. Joseph had a vision about his future leadership over his brothers, and brashly reported this vision to them. Out of resentment, the brothers sold Joseph into Egyptian slavery. This was a serious setback.

But God had plans to redeem the situation, using Joseph to save the Israelites from a future famine. In order for this to happen, Joseph would need to move to Egypt and be placed in a position of influence. But God also used this setback to develop Joseph's character, blunting the edges of his arrogance. He was physically transplanted to his assignment in Egypt, and was humbled in the process.

Joseph eventually understood that God was the author of his Redemptive Setback. Many years later, when Joseph had reached the pinnacle of power as governor in Egypt, Joseph's brothers miraculously visited him, but did not recognize him. When Joseph finally revealed himself, the brothers were afraid because of their past betrayal. Their fear grew to terror when they realized the authority Joseph now wielded in Egypt. But Joseph calmed their fears because he understood the redemptive nature of God's plan. He said to his brothers:

“I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors” (Gen. 45:4-7).

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Later, when their father Jacob died, the brothers again feared Joseph's revenge, and sent word to Joseph asking for forgiveness for their sins against him (Gen. 50:17). When Joseph received this message, he wept, replying in kindness saying, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" (Gen. 50:20).

When leaders accept the assignment God gives them, and keep their focus on that vision, even setbacks at the hands of others can be seen as redemptive. This allows for a grace-filled response and forgiveness.

### Moses and The Exodus

God used Moses' years in the desert as a Redemptive Setback. He not only crafted Moses for leadership, and prepared the Jews for their exodus, but He also was at work in the Egyptians, giving the Israelites the resources they would need to start a new society. In Ex. 3:30-22 God said:

"So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."

God had a plan to rescue His people, but also to send them on their way with the riches of Egypt. In order to do this, the people would need to experience what would appear as a setback. The Israelites would have to face more hardships that would seem to take them

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backward, rather than forward. God revealed, “I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go” (Ex. 4:21). When Pharaoh first heard their plea for release, Pharaoh ordered the slaves to make the same quota of bricks, but without a supply of straw. When they returned from their meeting with Pharaoh, the Israelites said, “you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us” (Ex. 5:21).

Moses was confused and angry, saying: “O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all” (Ex. 5:22-23). Moses had not yet understood that God was using this setback to achieve His purposes. It would take ten plagues before the Egyptians’ will was broken to the point of relinquishing their treasures to the Hebrews.

After the tenth plague, the Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. “And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians” (Ex. 12:36). The Israelites saw the plagues as a series of setbacks, but God knew it was all part of the plan to give the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. They departed, equipped with the supplies they would need to form as a nation and culture in the Promised Land.

### Paul

Paul and Silas were traveling on Paul’s second missionary journey when his team tried to enter the province of Asia and Bithynia, but “the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them” (Acts 16:7). When Paul received a vision of a man begging him to come to Macedonia, he concluded God was calling him to preach there (Acts 16:10). So they

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went to the leading city in that district, called Philippi. Given the dramatic leading he felt a few days earlier, Paul was probably eager to see what God had in store for them.

While in Philippi, they encountered a slave girl who made her masters rich by telling fortunes. The girl harassed Paul and Silas by continuously following them, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation” (Acts 16:17). After many days of this annoyance, Paul had enough and commanded the evil spirit to come out of her. She was healed, but also lost her fortune-telling ability. When the owners realized their money-making machine was gone, they seized Paul and Silas to face the authorities. When a mob formed, the officials had Paul and Silas beaten and imprisoned, giving instructions to the jailer to keep them under heavy guard.

How could this be? Paul had received a clear vision to go to Macedonia and the first place he went landed him in prison. But Paul and Silas showed no signs of despair. At midnight they were praying and singing hymns when suddenly, an earthquake caused the doors to open and their chains fell off. In a panic, the jailer was about to kill himself for letting the prisoners escape, but Paul shouted, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here” (Acts 16:28). As a result, the jailer and his whole household received Christ and were baptized that very night. God used what looked like a setback to not only bring a whole family to Christ, but also to launch the initial spread of the Gospel in Europe.

Setbacks come in various forms. Samson, Joseph, and Paul were in prison. Moses and the Israelites were enslaved in a foreign land. No matter what the circumstances, God is at work in Redemptive Setbacks, accomplishing His purposes in *The Heroic Venture*.

## **The Heroic Venture**

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Lewis and Clark were forced to stop their progress because of winter conditions. How did they make good use of this time?
2. How did God make use of serious setbacks in the lives of Joseph, Moses, and Paul?
3. How was God able to redeem Samson's reckless behavior?
4. Describe a time when you faced a setback and felt like giving up.
5. What kind of setbacks might you experience in your ministry?  
How should you react if these things happen?

## Chapter 8

### Painful Suffering

*... in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ~ 2 Corinthians 11:27*

The party was only a few days out from the Mandan Village before a problem emerged: the absence of timber. Lewis said, "The country is one continued level fertile plain as far as the eye can reach in which there is not even a solitary tree or shrub." To the eastern settler, a treeless plain was menacing, in fact none of them had ever seen anything like it. The joke of the time was that a squirrel could jump from tree to tree from the Atlantic to the Mississippi without touching the ground.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, a prairie without trees was a new and fearful sight.

This also created a practical problem. The party not only needed wood to fuel their campfires, but they also needed trees to yield pitch that would hold the skins together for Lewis' modular iron boat that had been so carefully designed before he left Pennsylvania.

Also, food was also becoming scarce. But Sacagawea, carrying her newborn baby (nicknamed "Pomp" by the crew), was talented in finding wild artichokes and roots to keep the men alive. Another problem was strong head winds that slowed them down and even forced the party to stay in camp a whole day.

By April 25, 1805 they reached the Yellowstone River, just where the Mandans said it would be. A dram of whiskey was issued to celebrate the event and the evening was spent singing and dancing, forgetting past toils. Next, they expected a clear run

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on the Missouri to the base of the mountains, followed by a one-day march to the other side.

### A Fearful New Foe

By May 9, the mountains could be seen in the distance, but events were about to change. Late that afternoon, Private Bratton came running to camp, making frantic signs. Out of breath, he explained that he had wounded a grizzly bear that pursued him for a considerable distance. The men went after it and shot it multiple times until it finally died.

Three days later another bear was encountered. Four men fired at the same time, with two guns held in reserve (it took two minutes to reload in those days). The bear rose with a roar and launched a counterattack. The two reserve guns were fired, slowing the bear only for an instant. The men took flight, some to the boats, and others into hiding.

The creature was shot several more times which only helped the bear locate the direction to chase the men. Two shooters abandoned their rifles and dove into the river. The grizzly jumped in and was about to reach them when another shot was fired that finally killed it. Upon examination, it had taken eight bullets to bring it down. The men had new respect for their dreaded foe.

### Near Disaster

Shortly after, Charbonneau was at the helm when a sudden squall hit and almost overturned the boat. Charbonneau panicked as the craft filled up to within an inch of sinking. From the shore, Lewis watched in horror as precious cargo,



journals, maps, instruments, and supplies started to drift away. Lewis wrote in his journal, "If they had been lost, I should have valued my life but little." Cruzatte threatened to shoot Charbonneau if he did not regain his composure and right the boat.

Meanwhile, Sacagawea was calm and collected. She responded with resolution and fortitude, gathering up the drifting articles. Once again, she had proven her worth to the expedition, while disrespect toward her husband grew. With everything accounted for, they thought it a proper occasion to console themselves with a drink of grog.

### First View of the Rockies

Despite these many problems, they marveled at the exquisite hills and cliffs, reaching 200-300 feet high and nearly perpendicular, shining almost pure white in the sun. On May 26, Lewis climbed a bluff and had his first full view of the Rocky Mountains, bringing a fresh joy to his heart, but also a concern about the potential difficulties ahead. The snowy barrier would provide suffering and hardship for the party, but beneath the joy and dismay was a deep sense of optimism. Lewis said, "As I have always held it a crime to anticipate evils, I will believe it a good comfortable road until I am compelled to believe differently."

With the mountains in view, the desire to get over them intensified. But progress was slower than ever because of frequent bends in the river, head-on winds, shallow water, and protruding rocks. The men had to pull the boats by hand. The water was cold on their legs, while the sun was hot on their backs. Their footing was either slippery and muddy, or the

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rocks cut and bruised their feet. Walking on shore was difficult because cactus thorns easily penetrated their thick moccasins.

In addition, the nights were cold, rainy, and miserable. They often slept in watery beds. The mosquitoes were the worst plague of all, getting in their teeth, ears, and mouths. Even Lewis' Newfoundland dog, who accompanied the party, howled all night from the constant swarm of mosquitoes.

To top it off, Lewis also got dysentery and could not proceed for a few days until a strong laxative brought relief.

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THE PARTY EXPERIENCED MANY kinds of suffering along the way. In the military, these difficulties are called *privation*. Napoleon Bonaparte, the famous French general, said: "The most important qualification of a soldier is fortitude under fatigue and privation. Courage is only second; hardship, poverty and want are the best school for a soldier."<sup>2</sup>

*The Heroic Venture* sometimes involves Painful Suffering, such as persecution, danger, hot weather, cold weather, financial problems, lack of sleep, criticism, false accusation, or imprisonment. In the Bible, God's leaders encountered suffering of many kinds.

### Material Sacrifice

Abraham gave up the safety and security of his father's home in Ur and set out for a land he knew nothing about. His future well-being was uncertain.

Nehemiah sacrificed financially for the good of the cause. For twelve years as governor, neither Nehemiah nor his close relatives

## **Painful Suffering**

ate the food allotted to them, even though earlier governors taxed the people heavily to pay for their food and wine (Neh. 5:15-16).

### Persecution

In Hebrews 11:35-38, the heroes of faith faced many kinds of hardship, but they were willing to be obedient to God, even to the point of death. They were:

“ ... tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”

### The Apostles' Suffering

Paul described the Painful Suffering the apostles experienced in the fulfillment of their mission. He said: “But as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger” (2 Cor. 6:4-5).

And he went on to give his credentials as an apostle (2 Cor. 11:23-27):

“Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger

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from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.”

The Apostle Peter warned Christians to be ready for Painful Suffering. He said: “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed” (1 Pet.4:12-13).

### The Example of Jesus

Jesus himself was “despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3). He “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:6-7). In order to complete His mission He gave up the stability of home to become a traveling preacher. He said, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Luke 9:58).

In the final part of Christ’s mission, He suffered a terrible beating followed by vicious execution on the cross. No one knew Painful Suffering like Jesus. But even in light of Jesus’ difficulties, He encouraged His disciples, saying, “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Painful Suffering is productive in *The Heroic Venture*. Paul said, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22, NIV) and that “we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that

## **Painful Suffering**

suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (Rom. 5:3-4).

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Peter said we should not be “surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.” Think about some examples when you were surprised by suffering.
2. When you look at the biblical examples of the suffering of God’s servants, do you feel frightened, inspired, angered, or confused?
3. How does God view the suffering of His leaders?
4. What kinds of Painful Suffering might you expect in your future?
5. How prepared are you to endure the suffering that awaits you?



## Chapter 9

### Confident Command

*Joshua commanded the officers of the people, "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, 'Prepare your provisions.'" . . . And they answered Joshua, "All that you have commanded us we will do." ~ Joshua 1:10, 16*

At dusk on June 2, 1805, the party pulled onto the south shore, surprised to see two considerable rivers flowing into the Missouri. The Native Americans, whose information had been accurate so far, had said nothing about a confluence of two rivers. The Great Falls was to be the next landmark. It was too dark to explore, but this shock created a crisis that forced a difficult decision for the captains.

Which of the two rivers was the Missouri? The north fork or the south fork? Lewis was astonished that such an important item was omitted from the tribes' intelligence report. Jefferson's orders were explicit: "The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri River." So making the right decision was critical to the venture. They were at the proverbial fork in the road. How could they decide?

One reason to favor the north fork was that it was deeper, running in the same boiling and rolling manner which had uniformly characterized the Missouri to date. Its waters were of a whitish brown color, characteristic of the Missouri. By contrast, the south fork was perfectly transparent, ran with a smooth surface, and had a swifter current than the north fork.

The air and character of the north fork was so precisely like that of the Missouri that the whole party (with two exceptions) firmly believed it to be the right choice. The only two advocates

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for the south fork were captains Lewis and Clark. Each side was equally firm in their opinion.

Lewis argued against the north fork by assuming it had travelled an immense distance through the plains to make it so cloudy with sediment, while the south fork appeared to have come directly from the mountains. Also, the bed of the south fork was composed of smooth stones like most rivers issuing from mountainous country, while the bed of the north fork was mainly mud. Despite their confidence in the south fork, Lewis and Clark split up to explore each river to find more evidence.

### Saving Private Windsor

During Lewis' side exploration, he was passing across a bluff when he slipped at a narrow walkway, going straight down a craggy precipice of 90 feet, saving himself with his sword. He just barely managed to reach a place where he could safely stand. Before catching his breath, he heard Private Windsor cry out behind him, "Captain, what shall I do?" Lewis turned to see Windsor, overwhelmed with fear, holding on as best he could with his left arm and foot, his right-hand arm and leg hanging over the same precipice Lewis had just passed.

Lewis calmly told Windsor to take his knife from his belt and dig a hole in the bluff's face to receive his right foot. Windsor obeyed and was able to raise himself to his knees. Lewis then instructed him to take off his slippery moccasins to crawl to safety.

### Asserting Command

After completing their short explorations, the two groups reunited. The men continued to believe the north fork was the



real Missouri, but Lewis was so sure the south fork was right, he named the north fork “Marias,” in honor of his cousin. The captains tried once more to convince the men that the south fork was correct, but without success. To a person they were firm in their belief. But despite their certainty, they cheerfully said they were ready to do whatever Lewis and Clark thought best.

Out of respect to the group, the captains wanted to make one more attempt to make sure the south fork was right. So they split up again, but this time they also decided to scout the upcoming Great Falls. But first, in order to lighten the load and provide a supply depot for their return voyage, they left a boat secured on an island.

On June 13, Lewis moved up the south fork, reaching a beautiful, level plain extending 50 miles or more, seeing infinitely more buffalo than he had ever witnessed. He also heard the sound of a waterfall and saw spray rise above the plain like a column of smoke. Within a few hours he reached the Great Falls, which confirmed the captains’ decision that the south fork was indeed the Missouri.

But shortly after this good news, Lewis had another shocking discovery. The indigenous people reported only two sets of rapids above the Great Falls, a major one followed by a second smaller one. But Lewis’ group found *five separate falls of the Missouri, not two*. The portage around the falls was going to be far more difficult than first imagined.

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## The Heroic Venture

LEWIS AND CLARK INVITED the whole expedition to give input regarding the critical decision to pick the right fork of the river. But when it came time to act, the captains were ready to use their best judgment, even though every member of the crew disagreed. Effective leaders get team members involved in decision making. They know that people respond best when they give input, even if the decision does not go their way. But in the end, leaders know they must use their best judgment, even when their decisions are unpopular.

Leaders can make Confident Command decisions knowing they have been entrusted to carry out the wishes of the leaders who assigned them to lead. Lewis and Clark were acting on behalf of their commander-in-chief, Thomas Jefferson, representing his vision. Dr. Don Davis defines leadership as “the ability to receive authority from another to stand in their stead.”<sup>3</sup> Every leader is under the authority of someone, just as Jesus was focused on representing the Father (John 5:19-20).

### Defining Reality

Max Depree said, “The first job of a leader is to define reality.”<sup>4</sup> Leaders care for their team by giving clear direction, making sure everyone knows what is happening, and clarifying what the future might hold. In the Bible, leaders cut through confusing nuance, communicated with their team, and made confident decisions in the face of uncertainty.

Confident Command instills trust and assurance in team members. When it was time to move on, the team was behind the captains’ decision. When leaders keep the vision in mind and make tough decisions in light of that vision, it helps the team fall in behind. When everyone is focused on the vision, it becomes easier to submit to leadership. Heb. 13:17 says: “Obey your leaders and submit to

## Confident Command

them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

### Well-Intentioned Advice

Paul listened carefully to his friends but was not deterred from taking the action he thought best. Luke tells the story about a prophet from Judea who took Paul’s belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles’” (Acts 21:11). Paul’s associates pleaded with him to change his mind about going to Jerusalem.

Paul answered, “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (v. 13). When it was clear that Paul would not change his mind, they gave up and said, “Let the will of the Lord be done” (v. 14). Despite their good intentions, and the clear message from the Holy Spirit about what was coming, Paul had solid conviction about what he should do.

### Loyalty

While leaders are responsible to care for their team by giving clarity and direction, followers are responsible to be loyal to their leaders. Joshua, Gideon, Nehemiah, and Jephthah were good examples of leaders giving clear direction, and their followers’ response showed respect for their leadership.

### *Joshua*

Joshua commanded the officers of the people, “Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, ‘Prepare your

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provisions.” . . . And they answered Joshua, “All that you have commanded us we will do” (Josh. 1:10, 16).

### *Gideon*

When Gideon received God’s direction, the people responded to his leadership when several eastern peoples joined forces to attack Israel. As the Spirit of the Lord led Gideon to sound the trumpet, the Abiezrites came out to follow him. Then he sent messengers throughout Manasseh, and they joined in as well. Finally, he sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, who responded, making the company complete (Judg. 6:34-35).

### *Nehemiah*

Nehemiah explained his intent to do the work, and the people responded by saying, “Let us rise up and build” (Neh. 2:18). They were ready to begin right away under his leadership.

### *Jephthah*

Jephthah, when asked to lead Israel, tested the people’s loyalty before he accepted command. He had been sent into exile years before and now he doubted their willingness to follow. He said, “If you bring me home again to fight with the Ammonites, and the Lord gives them over to me, I will be your head.” His recruiters responded by saying, “The Lord will be witness between us, if we do not do as you say” (Judg. 11:9-10).

In these examples, for Confident Command to be effective, there must be loyalty from followers.

## Confident Command

### Encouragement

Sometimes, when delegating authority, people need extra encouragement. Deborah was leader over Israel when she summoned Barak and said: “Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking 10,000 from the people of Naphtali and the people of Zebulun. And I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin’s army, to meet you by the river Kishon with his chariots and his troops, and I will give him into your hand” (Judg. 4:6-7).

But Barak balked; he would only go on the recruiting mission if Deborah promised to go with him. So Deborah agreed and the 10,000 men followed Barak into the battle that completely defeated Sisera.

### Conflict Resolution

Nehemiah was an effective leader who could confidently resolve conflict. The people complained that they were going hungry because their Jewish brothers were charging outrageous interest rates. The poor were powerless to act since the fields and vineyards belonged to the mortgage holders. Not able to stay current on their payments, families were starving, and some even sold their daughters into slavery to make ends meet.

Nehemiah was outraged when he heard these charges. He told the lenders:

“You are exacting interest, each from his brother. . . . The thing that you are doing is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations, our enemies? Moreover, I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Let us abandon this exacting of interest. Return to them this very day their

## The Heroic Venture

fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the percentage of money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them” (Neh. 5:7, 9-11).

The lenders responded, “We will restore these and require nothing from them. We will do as you say” (v.12). Still not completely satisfied, Nehemiah brought in priests to witness them taking an oath, threatening God’s punishment on those who did not keep their promise. “And all the assembly said ‘Amen’ and praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised” (Neh. 5:13). Nehemiah brought peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Leaders must make clear decisions that are consistent with the vision. In *The Heroic Venture*, there must be Confident Command.

### Questions for Reflection

1. If teamwork is so important (see chapter 4), why is leadership important?
2. Using the examples of leaders in the Bible, what are three key characteristics of effective leadership?
3. How do leaders both listen to counsel and still make confident decisions?
4. How do vision and calling help in the decision-making process?
5. What stands out in this chapter as most helpful in making wise decisions?

## Chapter 10

### Creative Adjustments

*The people are still too many. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. ~ Judges 7:4*

On June 14, 1805, after shooting a buffalo for dinner, Lewis stood on the shore, feasting on the beauty of the landscape. As he relished the moment, he forgot to reload his rifle. Suddenly, a grizzly bear appeared 20 steps away and advancing. There was no tree in sight and the river was only three feet deep. When the bear opened its mouth, Lewis started to run toward the river, losing ground as he went. Reaching the water, Lewis drew his sword and raised it. Suddenly the bear wheeled around and retreated. Lewis determined to never again leave his gun unloaded.

Lewis was barely out of the river when he saw three buffalo bulls running toward him at full speed. Not sure what to do, Lewis decided to charge at them head-on. When they were within 100 yards of Lewis, the bulls stopped and turned away. It was proving to be an eventful day.

#### Creative Medicine

Two days later, Sacagawea became ill with a fever, irregular breathing, and alarming twitching of the fingers and arms. The key to a friendly negotiation with the Shoshones, she was the expedition's best hope for a successful passage over the mountains to the Columbia River. Sacagawea was also a respected and beloved member of the team, having proved her worth on many occasions. She, not to mention the baby Pomp, had become dear to all the men, so her survival was critical.

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Her care fell to Lewis, whose medical treatment was remarkable, probably beyond what any physician of his day could have done. Even without proper supplies, she improved within a couple of days. But when she ate some raw fish and apples against her doctor's orders, her fever returned. Lewis rebuked Charbonneau severely for not watching over the patient, but when Lewis treated her again, she recovered after two days of rest.

### The Portage

Meanwhile, still looming on the horizon were the mysterious mountains. As they drew closer, the Rockies grew greater and higher than anything the men had ever seen in the east. They realized that Jefferson's assumptions about their height was grossly in error, but they were eager to vault over the mountains before winter set in.

First, they would have the difficult portage, carrying all their goods around the Great Falls. The tribes had promised a short, easy trek across a smooth landscape, but a scouting party reported a 16-mile ordeal over rough terrain through deep ravines. As a result, they decided to further lighten the load by storing another boatload of items for the return trip. The party split up with Clark in charge of the portage while Lewis prepared his prize possession: the custom-made iron boat he had designed before the expedition started.

On June 22, Clark's arduous portage around the Great Falls began. The men had to pull with all their might, with wheels catching on grass and stones. The cactus stabbed them. They were assaulted by hail the size of apples. They faced ferocious mosquitoes, hot sun, and cold rain. The winds were fierce.



Bears came close to camp at night. They grew faint and their feet were sore, but they continued cheerfully on.

Although they were entering the most dangerous part of the voyage, there was no complaining, only resolution and determination. The party knew they were making history and that this would be the most exciting and important time of their lives. They were linked by an uncommon experience and a keen sense of dependence upon one another.

### Adjusting as a Team

By this point in their journey, they knew each other's strengths and weaknesses, who could start the best fires, who was the best shooter, who liked which foods, where each person came from, and what their hopes and dreams were for the future. The party was fully committed to the vision. They would succeed or die in the attempt.

Months earlier, when he accepted co-command with Lewis, Clark seemed prophetic when he said, "I will cheerfully join you and partake of the dangers, difficulties, and fatigues and I anticipate the honors and rewards of the result of such an enterprise." Together they were living out the triumph and heartbreak of a monumental task, carried out in tight-knit community. Like many soldiers who experience hardship together, they were developing close bonds of friendship.

Despite these good feelings, Lewis was getting impatient. They were not keeping pace to reach the Rockies, so they had to give up their original idea of reaching the Pacific and returning to winter with the Mandans. Also, they could not count on a friendly reception by the Shoshones.

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Therefore, they needed to pivot from their original plan, which was to send three men back to St. Louis with a report to Jefferson. They needed the full complement of people going forward, and a party of only three might be too small to survive an attack from the Sioux. It seemed wiser to keep the party intact. Their conditions required significant Creative Adjustments to their plans.

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LEWIS AND CLARK RESPONDED with Creative Adjustments to the surprises that came their way. Whether it was a grizzly bear, a buffalo, a life-threatening disease, an unexpectedly difficult portage, or getting behind schedule, the leaders of the Corps of Discovery found a way to adjust to the situation and move toward the goal.

In the same way, leaders are subject to every kind of surprise. No one is exempt from unforeseen circumstances. As a result, it can be said that the most important leadership quality is the ability to adjust to changing conditions. The Bible provides many examples.

### Opposition

Jesus gave the 72 disciples specific instructions on how to adapt to opposition along their journey. He explained what to do when a town welcomed them, but He also knew there would be instances where they would be rejected. He said, “Whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you’” (Luke 10:10-11). His strategy was to move on to the next town rather than persevering in the same town against clear resistance.

## Creative Adjustments

Another example is Nehemiah, who had to alter his approach when Sanballat, Tobiah, and other foes plotted against Nehemiah and his workers. Nehemiah had everyone focused on building, but at the onset of resistance, he re-assigned laborers to guard duty. He said, “We prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night” (Neh. 4:7-9).

As opposition mounted, the people warned Nehemiah, “The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall. Wherever you turn, they will attack us.” So Nehemiah adjusted again by stationing people at strategic low areas of the wall. Half the people were assigned to building, while the other half were equipped with weapons. Even those assigned to carrying materials “did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other” (Neh. 4:10-17). Nehemiah was a master of Creative Adjustment.

### God Does the Math

God seriously adjusted Gideon’s strategy. After finally being convinced of his calling, Gideon assembled an army of 32,000 to defeat the Midianites. But the army was too large. God knew that Israel would boast about its own strength rather than give glory to God, so He instructed Gideon to send anyone home who was afraid to go to battle, leaving a force of 10,000.

But the group was still too large, so He instructed Gideon to separate the men into two groups: those who lapped up water like dogs versus those who got on their knees to drink water. This reduced the army to 300 men that God said would “give the Midianites into your hand” (Judg. 7:7). Sometimes, leaders have to step out in faith with fewer resources than they think they need. God provides the victory without regard to the size of the team.

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### Listening to the Father

Jesus was always ready for abrupt changes in plans, carefully following the guidance of the Father: “The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing” (Jn. 5:19-20).

One example was when Jesus was in Galilee, staying away from Judea because the Jewish leaders were waiting to take His life. When the Feast of Tabernacles arrived, Jesus’ brothers urged Him to go to Judea to make himself more famous. But Jesus told them the right time had not yet come and urged them to go on to the feast without Him, which they did.

Sometime after His brothers had gone, Jesus secretly went to the feast as well, waiting until half the festival was completed. He went to the temple courts to teach publicly (Jn 7:1-14). The passage does not say when Jesus decided to go to Judea, but it is reasonable to assume that the Father led Jesus to change His mind right after His brothers left. Jesus was ready to change plans on short notice.

Jesus, Gideon, and Nehemiah were ready to set aside their plans and chart a new course when confronted with a new set of conditions. Leaders must be constantly aware of shifting situations, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But behind the scenes, the enemy is constantly trying to thwart God’s work, so engagement in spiritual warfare requires keeping in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). Creative Adjustments are the norm in *The Heroic Venture*.

## Creative Adjustments

### Questions for Reflection

1. What were some of the surprises that Lewis and Clark faced in their expedition?
2. Describe your reaction to the statement: “the most important quality of leadership is the ability to adjust to changing conditions.”
3. When the biblical leaders needed to creatively adjust to their circumstances, how did they react?
4. In what ways was Jesus especially good at adapting His approaches?
5. What are specific ways you can improve in leading with Creative Adjustments?



## Chapter 11

### Dead Vision

*Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering. ~ Genesis 22:2*

As Lewis waited for Clark to complete the miserable portage around the Great Falls, he began the construction of his beloved iron boat, designed to carry bulky items down the Columbia River. A lot was at stake, but assembly was proving to be difficult. The prairie continued to be without the trees necessary for providing the pitch that would hold the skins together, so he was forced to experiment with other materials.

After many days of testing with beeswax and buffalo tallow, the boat was completed and carefully placed in the river. Within moments, a strong wind overwhelmed the boat, tearing the skins and leaving the craft in ruins. Lewis had to relinquish his dream (many would have called it an obsession), but more importantly, a substitute transport would need to be found since they had left other boats behind.

By July 12, 1805, the two groups reunited, ready for departure. If the information was right, they would soon meet the Shoshones, carry their goods one day over the mountains, then float down the Columbia River on the other side. Whatever was ahead, they believed it could not possibly be worse than what they had already experienced. Nothing was more grueling than the portage around the Great Falls, and nothing was more disappointing than abandoning the iron boat. The worst had to be behind them.

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### The Search for Shoshones

As they proceeded, they could not figure out why they had not yet encountered the Shoshones. After a week with no contact, they decided to send Clark to find the evasive tribe. The Corps of Discovery was getting worried.

The next day Lewis saw a column of smoke which he believed to be a retreat signal from one Shoshone to another. They speculated that the Shoshones were aware of their presence but were not willing to meet with the expedition. Their discouragement deepened.

By July 22, the riverbed was growing narrower and the mountains growing higher. The men had to start pulling canoes up the river. Their feet often slipped and were cut on the rocks. They needed a boost in morale. All of a sudden, Sacagawea recognized the place where she visited as a girl, where the Shoshones lived during the summer. This greatly cheered the men.

However, the going was tough, each day's progress measured in yards instead of miles. The mosquitoes were relentless. The river started turning southeast, so they were now going in the wrong direction. The men were weakening under the continual state of exertion. Clark returned from looking for the Shoshone with no good news, his feet bleeding and raw from prickly pears. After a day of rest, he was off again in pursuit of the elusive Shoshone.

On July 27, the party was at a breaking point when, at 9 a.m., they reached the breathtaking view of the next expected landmark, called "Three Forks." But at 3 p.m. Clark came



back into camp sick, exhausted, feverish, with sore muscles but no Shoshone.

### Mounting Concern

The captains were now beyond desperate. If they did not find the Shoshone to negotiate trade for horses, their voyage would be in peril. Soon they would be in the mountains with a scarce food supply, and without adequate information about the geography. They could wander in the mountains and die. Without Shoshone horses, turning back seemed like the wisest option. However, the captains thought if the indigenous people could survive the mountains, maybe their men could do the same.

Suddenly, Sacagawea informed the expedition they had reached the spot where the raiding Hidatsa tribe had taken her prisoner five years before. On August 7, they reached a junction of several rivers, forcing yet another decision. They were fatigued and morale was sinking fast. The men wanted to carry what they could on their backs and leave the rest behind, but the captains thought it was unwise. However, they hid another canoe to lighten the load. What they needed were horses, and soon.

They also had a growing doubt about the navigability of the Columbia on the other side. Logic indicated the Columbia had a shorter time to descend the mountains, resulting in more waterfalls and more portages. But the captains remained optimistic. Their approach was to stay positive until events proved otherwise. They hoped that by reaching the mountain top, they would see smooth sailing on the other side.

## The Heroic Venture

In desperation, they split up again, sending a party with Clark and Sacagawea to find the Columbia and horses, even if it took a month. It was a do-or-die moment. But Lewis continued to have unshakable confidence in their ability to find the Shoshone, and then successfully negotiate with them.

### A Glimmer of Hope

On August 9, Lewis looked through his telescope and spotted a man on horseback, presumably a Shoshone, about two miles ahead and coming toward him. Lewis assumed he was a scout looking for an invading Blackfoot war party. Lewis was overjoyed and knew if he could get close enough, he could prove his peaceful intent. But when they were about a mile apart, the scout stopped. Lewis laid out a blanket on the ground as a signal of friendship.

Meanwhile, Shields and Drouillard were accompanying Lewis along parallel paths, unaware of what was happening to Lewis, and out of shouting range. Lewis walked slowly ahead while the scout focused on Drouillard and Shields. Suddenly, the rider turned his horse about, gave it the whip, leaped the creek, and disappeared in the willows. This destroyed all hope of obtaining horses. Lewis was devastated by this missed opportunity.

### Startling Discovery

Three days later, Lewis discovered a fountain representing the headwaters of the Missouri. He then proceeded to the top of a dividing ridge, looked up to the west, and was shocked by what he saw. It was an immense range of high mountains partially covered with snow.

## Dead Vision

Lewis was crestfallen by this sight. There would be no easy, one-day portage over low-lying mountains, as reported by the tribes. Instead, he was facing the full impact of the towering Rocky Mountains, which were far bigger and more imposing than anything he had imagined.

With this shock, hope gave way to despair. There was no easy water route with simple portage over a gentle divide. The vision of finding an all-water route from the Mississippi to the Pacific was now dead. With this sighting of the Rockies, decades-old assumptions about the American landscape were shattered.

The expedition was deep in Shoshone territory, with no contacts to trade horses. And even if there were, they had nearly nothing to trade. To make matters worse, a scout may have alerted the Shoshones to stay away from the new strangers. Perhaps the most depressing fact was the realization that there was no all-water route to the Pacific, as Jefferson had hoped.

The vision was dead.

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MERIWETHER LEWIS EXPERIENCED THE death of his vision. With the sight of the Rocky Mountains on August 12, 1805, Lewis saw his hope of finding a North American all-water route go down the drain.

This feeling is not unprecedented. In fact, there are many biblical characters who experienced circumstances that ended their dreams. God seemed to give them a vision that raised their hopes, only to have them dashed, resulting in the death of their vision.<sup>5</sup>

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### Abraham

Abraham was told he would be the father of a great nation, that in him “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). After years of waiting for a son, well into old age, Sarah finally conceived and Isaac was born. His vision seemed fulfilled until one day, God said to Abraham, “Take your son whom you love and sacrifice him as a burnt offering” (Gen. 22:2). Abraham took Isaac on a three-day journey to Moriah, struggling with the idea of taking the life of his beloved son. Leaving his servants behind, Abraham and Isaac climbed the mountain. Abraham bound Isaac’s hands and feet, laid him on the altar, and raised his knife to slay his son. (Gen. 22:1-10). Abraham faced not only the death of his vision as the father of a great nation, but also the death of his own son.

### Joseph

Joseph had a vision that his family would one day bow down to him, instead he was betrayed and sold into slavery. But in captivity, he prospered as Potiphar’s administrator and his life was looking up. Then he was falsely accused of attacking Potiphar’s wife and was imprisoned.

While in prison, God blessed Joseph again, finding favor with the warden. Joseph was put in charge of the other prisoners, and was so effective that the warden did not need to supervise Joseph’s work. Among those under Joseph’s administration were two men imprisoned by the king of Egypt: a cupbearer and a baker. One night, each had a different, but troubling, dream.

Noticing their distress, Joseph asked them why they were dejected. The men lamented that there was no one to help interpret the dreams. Joseph invited the men to tell him the details (Gen. 40:8).

## Dead Vision

Joseph listened, then told the cupbearer the good news that the king was going to restore him to his former position in three days. The baker, however, got the tragic news that he was going to be executed. Joseph pleaded with the cupbearer to seek Joseph's release when the cupbearer received an audience with the king.

Just as Joseph predicted, three days later, the cupbearer was reinstated during a feast of the Pharaoh's birthday, while the baker was hanged. Joseph's hopes must have been raised. Surely, the cupbearer would advocate for him. But the cupbearer did not remember Joseph (Gen. 40:23). Forgotten, and still in prison, Joseph must have believed his vision was dead.

### Moses

Moses was born 400 years after Joseph, while the Israelites were slaves in Egypt. Miraculously rescued as a child from Pharaoh's death order, Moses was raised by Pharaoh's daughter, and received the world's finest education. As a member of Pharaoh's court, he had the promise of a great future.

Although Moses was raised in Pharaoh's palace, he understood that he was an Israelite. Having a sense of his destiny as rescuer of Israel, he was grieved to see his people mistreated under forced labor. One day he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. Looking around and seeing no one watching, he killed the Egyptian and hid the body. The next day, he saw two Israelites fighting and intervened as Hebrew protector. This time one of them said, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" (Ex. 2:14).

This statement gripped Moses with fear. With his murder now public knowledge, Moses fled Egypt to live in Midian, 150 miles

## The Heroic Venture

away. Displaced from the luxury of Egypt, rejected as the Israelite savior, and a stranger working among foreigners in a lonely desert, his vision for greatness was dead.

### Joshua

Joshua was second in command to Moses and had seen all the miracles of the Exodus, including the trip with Moses to receive the Ten Commandments. Joshua and Caleb were assigned to represent their tribes as two of the 12 spies sent to scout the Promised Land. They would be among the first to see the land God pledged to His people after hundreds of years of Egyptian bondage.

Returning from their expedition, Joshua's hopes were dashed by the bad report given by the other ten spies. Joshua tore his clothes in anguish as he pleaded with the people to have faith in taking the land. Instead of trusting God, the people discussed stoning Moses, Joshua, Caleb, and the other leaders (Num. 14:7-10). As a result of this disobedience, God caused the people of Israel to wander for forty years. Joshua's vision for entering the Promised Land was significantly postponed. His vision felt dead.

### The Apostles

The apostles believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the one that prophets had predicted would save Israel. When Jesus was crucified and buried, the apostles' vision died, along with Jesus. Their hopes of seeing Jesus deliver Israel were dashed.

*The Heroic Venture* can result in Dead Vision. But there is more to most stories like these. The true test of a leader's passion and wisdom is their response to Dead Vision.

## **Dead Vision**

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. What thoughts and feelings did Meriwether Lewis have when it became apparent that his dream would not come true?
2. Which of the biblical characters can you most relate to in this chapter? Why?
3. Why does God sometimes take his people through times of Dead Vision?
4. Describe a time when you experienced the “death of a vision.”
5. What should your response be if you face the death of your vision?





### Section III: Courage to the End

*“Of courage undaunted, possessing a firmness  
and perseverance of purpose which nothing but  
impossibilities could divert from its direction,  
I could have no hesitation in confiding the  
enterprise to him.”*

*~ Thomas Jefferson’s recommendation of Lewis to command  
the expedition*

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## Chapter 12

### Renewed Vision

*“He has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee.” So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ~ Matthew 28:7, 8*

On August 13, 1805, the day after discovering the demoralizing view of the Rockies, Lewis’ search party traveled nine more miles and stumbled upon a group of three Native Americans (two women and an elderly man). Lewis offered them gifts and persuaded them to take him to their tribe. Two miles later they found the sight they had long anticipated: 60 Shoshone warriors on horseback armed for war.

When the Shoshones halted Lewis’ party, the colonists laid down their rifles as a sign of peace. The Shoshones expected to find enemy Blackfeet warriors and would have attacked Lewis’ party if not for the presence of the three guides accompanying them. The chief approached Lewis and warmly placed his arm around him. They had finally met the Shoshones and received a friendly welcome.

While waiting for Clark’s group to arrive, Lewis inquired about the passage to the Pacific. The Shoshones confirmed that it started with inaccessible mountains, followed by impassable rapids so rocky that it was hopeless to get over by land, water, or horseback. It was official: There was no easy trans-continental trade route, or anything remotely resembling it.

#### Finally Some Good News

However, Lewis was encouraged to hear about the Nez Perce, a tribe who inhabited a river on the other side of the Rockies,

## The Heroic Venture

which was reported to “flow into a great lake of ill-tasting water toward the setting sun.” This obvious reference to the Pacific Ocean linked the two ends of the continent and renewed Lewis’ hope for a newsworthy discovery. Although there was no trade route for selling goods, there would be a map that connected the geography between the oceans.

In addition, the Shoshones said the Nez Perce crossed the Rockies every year to hunt buffalo on the plains, so the Nez Perce would know the best route. If the Corps of Discovery could work with the Nez Perce to find that ideal passage across the continent, part of their mission could be salvaged. There was still hope to fulfill their purpose.

Feeling encouraged, Lewis was eager to hear more about what was ahead. The Shoshones said the road was bad and there was no food, so travelers had to go hungry or eat berries to stay alive. But Lewis stayed optimistic: “If others could do it, we can too.” Every time they faced a bad experience, Lewis always believed that it could not possibly get worse. But it *was* looking worse. In spite of the facts, Lewis believed they would rise to the occasion for the sake of the mission.

But to get to the Nez Perce, Lewis needed to secure Shoshone horses and guides. Since the Shoshones needed guns to hunt buffalo, Lewis offered them future guns and support from the government. Negotiations almost broke down when some of the Shoshones suggested that Lewis was in alliance with their enemies and preparing an ambush. Lewis confronted them strongly, questioning their courage and challenging their manhood. The strategy worked; the horses and guides were secured, and negotiations completed.

A Dramatic Turn

However, Lewis was nervous that Shoshone suspicion might re-emerge when Clark's party came into camp, fully armed. Wanting to lessen their fears, Lewis gave his rifle to the Chief and informed them of a Shoshone woman (Sacagawea) in Clark's party. Then, to further inspire their confidence, Lewis asked one of the warriors to accompany Drouillard to find Clark's party and bring them to camp.

When Clark finally arrived, a commotion broke out. Jumping Fish, one of the young Shoshone women, recognized Sacagawea. They were childhood friends, and in fact, where together the days Sacagawea was abducted by the Hidatsas. The two women cried and talked all at once for a number of minutes. Then Sacagawea noticed Chief Cameahwait. She ran to him, jumped into his arms, and cried profusely, recognizing him as her brother! No novelist would dare invent such a scene.

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IT WAS LESS THAN 24 hours after the death of Lewis' vision (seeing the full sight of the Rockies) that his vision was renewed. Meeting with the Shoshones, who proved to be friendly, and having Sacagawea reconnect with her friends and family, was an amazing turn of events. The chief was even Sacagawea's brother!

In like fashion, God's people often experience a supernatural fulfillment of the original vision, where He fulfills their expectations in ways they never would have thought.<sup>6</sup>

## The Heroic Venture

Just when Lewis' vision seemed dead, new hope emerged. He gained new realization that there was a way to complete part of the mission Jefferson had entrusted to him. Renewed Vision often comes right after dreams are dashed. In *The Heroic Venture*, expect God to bring fresh hope in the midst of despair. It is important to keep going even when the outlook seems bleak because renewal of vision might be just around the corner.

### From Death to Life

When Abraham's knife was raised to slay Isaac, an angel of the Lord called out to him, saying: "Abraham, Abraham! Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me" (Gen. 22:11-12). Abraham's faith in God was tested, but God provided a ram in the thicket to serve as the sacrifice. Abraham went up Mount Moriah with a son that was as good as dead, but came back down the mountain with his vision renewed.

### From Prisoner to Prime Minister

Joseph was languishing in prison with little hope of reprieve. Joseph's request for the cupbearer to remember him went forgotten. Two years went by, and Joseph was still in prison.

One night, Pharaoh had two troubling dreams and he sent for his magicians and counselors for an interpretation. No one was able to do it. But the controversy about Pharaoh's dreams jogged the cupbearer's memory about Joseph's ability to interpret dreams. Pharaoh sent for Joseph, who replied, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer" (Gen. 41:16).

## Renewed Vision

Joseph went on to tell Pharaoh that seven years of abundance was coming followed by seven years of famine, and that God was bringing this calamity soon. Joseph offered advice for dealing with this upcoming crisis and said, “Now therefore let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt” (Gen. 41:33). In response, Joseph was given authority over everyone except the king. In a matter of moments, Joseph went from prisoner to prime minister. God brought Renewed Vision to Joseph’s life.

### From Shepherd to Deliverer

Moses was working as a shepherd in the Midian desert, 150 miles from his people who were living under Egyptian oppression. He had once enjoyed the “treasures of Egypt” (Heb. 11:26), but now he was living an insignificant life, without hope of delivering his fellow Hebrews from slavery.

One day, as Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law, an angel appeared in flames of fire from a bush. When Moses approached the burning bush, God explained Moses’ assignment to deliver God’s people from Egyptian bondage (Ex. 3:1-10). In one short encounter in the wilderness, Moses went from obscurity to one of the greatest project leaders in history. Moses’ vision had new life.

### A Slight Reprieve

Joshua’s excitement to take the Promised Land was extinguished by the Israelite rebellion at Kadesh Barnea. While the people were preparing to stone Joshua, God was ready to strike the people with a plague. But when Moses interceded, God forgave the people and spared their lives. However, God decided against letting the rebellious people into the Promised Land. Only Caleb and Joshua would be allowed to enter.

## The Heroic Venture

Joshua's hope of seeing the Promised Land was restored, although there would first be 40 years of wandering in the desert (one year for each of the 40 days they had spied the land). The ten spies who gave the bad report were struck with a plague and died. Only Joshua and Caleb survived (Num. 14:10-38). Joshua had to persevere for decades before receiving Renewed Vision.

### From Death to Resurrection

The apostles were devastated by Jesus' death on the cross. In fear for their lives, they hid in Jerusalem, stunned by the series of events that shattered their world. Early Sunday morning, a group of women left for the unhappy task of anointing Jesus' body at the tomb. As they approached, an angel appeared to them and said, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said" (Matt. 28:5-6).

Their gloom was turned to inexpressible joy. The angel told them to go back and tell the disciples. As they were on their way, they met up with Jesus himself. So the women hurried away from the tomb, exhilarated that their three days of Dead Vision had been resurrected to new life.

Even when it seems that vision is dead, if it is God's will to continue, He will revive it in His time and in His way. God is in the business of Renewed Vision for those who attempt *The Heroic Venture*.

### Questions for Reflection

1. With which biblical character did you most relate in this chapter? Why?
2. Describe a time when you experienced Renewed Vision after you thought your vision was dead.



## **Renewed Vision**

3. When you felt your vision was dead, how did you maintain the faith to keep going?
4. Joshua wandered in the desert for 40 years before he received Renewed Vision. How long are you willing to wait to see your vision renewed?
5. Hebrews 12:11 says, “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” How does this verse relate to the examples in this chapter?



## Chapter 13

### Nagging Discouragement

*Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build. ~ Ezra 4:4*

Although the expedition found the Shoshones, and they were united once more, they still had many challenges ahead. They had found the horses and the source of the Missouri, but they still had to cross the mountains, in complete dependence on the native guides.

As they started their perilous climb, they were nearly out of food. They went through thickets on steep, rocky hillsides. The horses frequently fell to what appeared to be certain death, but to their amazement, the horses got up with minimal injury.

Ahead of them was a snow-covered section of the Rockies, the Bitterroot Mountains, the most terrible terrain the men had ever seen. According to the Shoshones, it would take at least six days to cross. The fifth day was the worst day of the expedition to date. Eight inches of snow fell. Clark said he had never been so wet and cold in every part of his body.

With the horses and men near starvation, it made sense to kill some of the horses for food. Spirits were low, and the men were approaching their limits of physical endurance. Several of the men were sick with dysentery, yet retreat was unthinkable. They would rather die than quit. Besides, a five-day journey back was impossible. Killing more horses would mean abandoning most of the provisions, so Clark and six hunters were sent to find food.

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### Another Breakthrough

After Lewis' group travelled six difficult miles, they slogged their way up to a ridge, and to their inexpressible joy, they saw a large prairie descending to the west. The sight greatly revived their spirits. The next day Lewis found food that Clark had left for them. With the party's strength renewed, Lewis ordered an 11-day forced march over 160 miles of rough terrain before reaching the lodges of the friendly Nez Perce.

Amazingly, they had conquered the Rockies, thanks to outstanding leadership, disciplined perseverance from the party, and the skill of their Shoshone guides. During this ordeal, the Corps of Discovery did not sulk, lash out at their leaders, or insist on retreat. They had formed into a cohesive unit committed to the success of the enterprise.

They were relieved to receive the hospitality of Chief Twisted Hair, leader of the Nez Perce, and also encouraged to hear that the ocean was only a few weeks away. However, the captains had learned that the tribes' estimates were optimistic (or natives were able to travel much faster), so they listened cautiously to the report.

### Gut Wrenching

During their visit with the Nez Perce, several men were sick with complaints of severe bowel problems. They had eaten a boiled root that filled them with so much gas that they could scarcely breathe. For 12 days they became increasingly feeble and emaciated. It would have been easy for the Nez Perce to kill them and steal their priceless goods.

## Nagging Discouragement

In fact, Nez Perce oral history indicates there was consideration given to killing them, but they were talked out of it by a woman named Watkuweis. Years before, she had been captured by the Blackfeet and sold into slavery. Watkuweis maintained that the white traders she met had treated her better than the Blackfeet, and urged Nez Perce mercy for the Anglo expedition.

In a male-dominated world, this was the third time a woman had saved the expedition: Sacagawea (who rescued the supplies on the Missouri River), Jumping Fish (who accompanied Lewis to Chief Cameahwait), and now Watkuweis of the Nez Perce.

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FIRST, THE VISION WAS dead. Then there was Renewed Vision. The Corps of Discovery had fought through a number of grueling physical challenges. The trek through the mountains was difficult beyond description. The men were sick and vulnerable. Only the kindness of strangers kept them alive.

Discouragement is a persistent enemy. When facing emotional letdowns, one after another, it is tempting to give up. In *The Heroic Venture*, it is vital to persevere through Nagging Discouragement exemplified in the Bible.

### Noah's Perseverance

There are very few details about Noah's ark construction, but its massive scope can be inferred by the fact that it took 120 years to complete it to God's specifications. One can only imagine what it would be like to persevere for 120 years. Perhaps it was tedious. Maybe it was embarrassing to build a large boat on dry land. It

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certainly must have been difficult to collect the earth's animals into the ark. Perhaps there were those who opposed him, or maybe he got frustrated at times. Noah is the picture of perseverance in the face of Nagging Discouragement.

### Nehemiah's Distractions

Nehemiah built the wall despite opposition from Sanballat and Tobiah, arming the people to serve “as guards by night and workers by day” (Neh. 4:22, NIV). He kept the project moving until there were no gaps remaining in the wall. But as he prepared to set the doors and gates, Sanballat and his cronies appeared again.

First, Nehemiah received a suspicious invitation to a meeting. Knowing it was a plot, he replied via messengers saying, “I am doing a great work and I cannot come down” (Neh. 6:3). This annoying process was repeated four times and Nehemiah responded the same way each time. The fifth time, Sanballat accused Nehemiah of planning a revolt and threatened to tell the king of Nehemiah's supposed disloyalty.

Aware that it was another deception to discourage the people, Nehemiah sent a terse refusal and prayed, “Now, O God, strengthen my hands” (6:9). He refused to be distracted, but his steadfastness did not stop his enemies. Not long after this, another attempt to weaken the workers emerged, this time from Shemaiah.

Nehemiah was invited to a closed-door meeting in the temple, with the pretense that Shemaiah was trying to save Nehemiah from an assassination plot. Sensing the deception, Nehemiah refused to be involved. He realized Sanballat had hired Shemaiah “to intimidate me so that I would commit a sin by doing this, and then they would

## Nagging Discouragement

give me a bad name to discredit me” (6:13, NIV). Nehemiah kept going despite persistent badgering.

### Giving in to Nagging

Unlike Nehemiah, Zerubbabel’s team fell victim to Nagging Discouragement. He and Jeshua were successfully rebuilding the temple, under orders from King Cyrus. But their enemies pretended to be their allies and asked to join the team. Knowing it was a plot, Zerubbabel refused their request, but then a new threat emerged: “Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia” (Ezra 4:4-5).

After four years of work and opposition, the people stopped working on the temple, leaving it unfinished. “The work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill” (4:24, NIV).

### Samson and Delilah

Delilah worked hard to get Samson to reveal the source of his strength. In fact, after many failed attempts, Delilah said, “You have mocked me these three times, and you have not told me where you great strength lies” (Judg. 16:15). The author of Judges said, “with such nagging she prodded him day after day” (16:16, NIV) until Samson could not take it anymore. Delilah wore Samson down until he finally gave up and told her everything. Delilah sent word to her Philistine co-conspirators and Samson was quickly imprisoned. Samson gave in to Nagging Discouragement.

It is easy to get discouraged in *The Heroic Venture*, but Paul said, “Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if

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we do not give up” (Gal. 6:9). In their *Heroic Venture*, Nehemiah and Noah lived out this principle, while Nagging Discouragement got the better of Samson and Zerubbabel’s team.

### Questions for Reflection

1. What are some ways you get discouraged?
2. Have you ever experienced Dead Vision, then persevered to Renewed Vision, only to find a new set of discouraging events?
3. What are some of the forms of discouragement experienced by the biblical characters in this chapter? How did they handle that discouragement?
4. What do you think would have happened if Noah or Nehemiah had given in to Nagging Discouragement? How would their lives have been different? What would have happened in history?
5. How can you tell the difference between good counsel and nagging discouragement?



## Chapter 14

### Daring Decisions

*David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. ~ 1 Samuel 17:48-49*

The Corps of Discovery became friends with the Nez Perce, who showed them how to build burned-out canoes, something they desperately needed after the destruction of the iron boat. When Lewis was asked to stay for a while, he was torn between his desire to keep moving and the goal of bringing the Nez Perce into the American sphere of diplomacy. The captains decided they would stay for a longer visit during their return trip in the spring of 1806.

When their canoes were finished, the party was off once again. On October 6, 1805, the expedition swept toward the junction of the Snake and Columbia Rivers in present-day Washington, then on to the Columbian plain. The barren landscape sharply contrasted the wooded mountains they recently left behind.

As they proceeded, they found their canoes to be cumbersome, easily swamped, and subject to frequent leaks. Even though the party faced dangerous rapids, sometimes as many as 15 times per day, the men pressed the captains to run the rapids rather than waste time making portages. The Shoshone guide, “Old Toby,” was so frightened by their reckless actions that he left in the night without receiving his pay.

But at one point they reached a 20-foot drop that everyone agreed required portage. They hired locals and horses to

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help with the heavier items and received guidance on how to maneuver the river downstream.

When they reached a set of falls (now known as The Dalles, east of Portland, Oregon), Clark was appalled by the horrid appearance of this “agitated gut-swelling water, boiling and whirling in every direction.” In modern terms it was a Class V, meaning even a modern canoe, designed for rapids, could not survive it. The captains selected the priority items to be carried on land such as journals, rifles, and scientific instruments. Then they proceeded to run The Dalles in their canoes.

### Attracting Crowds

The native tribes, who were expert canoeists, came by the hundreds to watch the foolish white men drown themselves. The spectators were also prepared to collect the expedition’s equipment and supplies upon their demise. But to the astonishment of the onlookers, the travelers survived without incident. Later, they repeated this feat at Long Narrows, again with a large number of spectators watching them defy the odds.

As they made their way down the Columbia, the Corps of Discovery encountered the Chinook, Tillamook, and Clatsop tribes. They were not as warlike as the plains tribes, but the Chinooks were constantly stealing from the expedition. The team’s supplies were depleted, so any loss was significant. On a number of occasions, the men were so aggravated by these petty thefts that they had to be restrained from violence. After such a warm friendship with the Nez Perce and Mandan, the party was not looking forward to a winter with these tribes.

## Daring Decisions

On November 2, they reached western territory that had been previously identified by other explorers, making the maps of east and west come together for the first time. They were making good progress every day and, on November 7, sighted what they thought was the Pacific Ocean.

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A GOOD LEADER RECOGNIZES the opportune time to take courageous action. Lewis and Clark were willing to face Class V rapids to keep on schedule. The Bible gives examples of leaders making Daring Decisions.

### Esther

When Queen Esther found out about Haman's plan to extinguish the Jews, Mordecai asked her to intercede. But she knew such a plan would be risky. Her predecessor, Queen Vashti, had recently been deposed, so queens were not above being replaced. But Mordecai made it clear that Esther would not be exempt from Haman's execution. She was between a rock and a hard place. Knowing her life was in danger she said, "I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish" (Esther 4:16). She was ready to die for her mission.

### David

Every day, for 40 days in a row, Goliath came out to defy the ranks of Israel and challenge them to a one-on-one fight. David wandered innocently into this scene, delivering bread to his brothers. When David witnessed Goliath's daily spectacle of defiance against the Lord, he decided to volunteer. This news reached King Saul, and David was quickly brought to the king's tent for an interview.

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After convincing Saul he was up to the task, David went with sling in hand, choosing five smooth stones from an adjacent stream. Seeing David's youth, Goliath mocked David saying, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field" (1 Sam. 17:44).

Rather than shrinking back in fear, David responded: "This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel" (1 Sam. 17:46). As the enemy drew closer, David ran quickly toward the battle line, reached into his bag, loaded his weapon and connected, dropping Goliath unconscious (17:48). David showed incredible faith and daring.

### Peter

Five years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Gentiles had not yet received the Gospel, and were expected to become Jews before becoming Christians. At that time, a devout Jew was expected to keep the dietary laws and refrain from association with Gentiles. Cornelius, a God-fearing Gentile living in Caesarea, received a vision to invite Jewish Peter into his Gentile home.

Meanwhile, Peter was praying on a nearby rooftop when two of Cornelius' servants began their trek toward Peter. Although he was rash and impulsive by nature, it took some coaxing from God to convince Peter to enter Cornelius' home with the Gospel message. Peter knew he would be severely criticized by his fellow Jews for breaking such an important Jewish custom.

## Daring Decisions

In obedience, Peter bravely entered the house and proclaimed the Good News about Jesus. Cornelius' household believed Peter's message, inaugurating the Church's expansion throughout the Gentile world. Peter's brazen step of faith that made the Great Commission possible, even though he needed to be nudged along.

### Philip

Sometimes a daring response requires leaving a safe, fruitful ministry to start something new and unknown. Philip went to nearby Samaria to preach the Gospel, and was experiencing an amazing response, with miraculous signs drawing attention to his message. Evil spirits were being driven out, people were healed, and even a leading sorcerer was baptized. So much was happening there that Peter and John were sent as reinforcements to support Philip's ministry that was producing "much joy in that city" (Acts 8:8).

While Philip was enjoying this great response in Samaria, an angel abruptly instructed him to depart to a remote desert road between Jerusalem to Gaza, about 100 miles away. He was asked to leave a thriving ministry, full of miracles and good fruit, in order to walk alone on a desert road for some unknown reason.

His purpose became apparent when he encountered an Ethiopian official in charge of the queen's treasury, who was reading the prophet Isaiah as he travelled. God had prepared the situation for just the right moment. The official asked Philip to explain the passage, and upon receiving the Good News, the Ethiopian asked to be baptized at the side of the road. When they came out of the water, Philip was miraculously whisked away to a city 20 miles away.

Philip was willing to listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, even without a full explanation. Because he was willing to leave a

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flourishing work, his obedience resulted in the spread of the Gospel to Ethiopia. Daring Decisions include leaving the comfort of the familiar.

### Jesus

They also involve a willingness to confront others. Jesus was often hounded by Jewish leaders who wanted to catch Him in an awkward moment. Jesus was angry they were more concerned about their reputations than the people's welfare.

For example, one Sabbath day in the synagogue, Jesus saw a man with a shriveled hand. The Jewish leaders watched closely to see if Jesus would break the Sabbath by healing the man. Recognizing their motives, Jesus provoked the situation by telling the man to stand up in front of everyone. Then He irritated the Jewish leaders further by asking, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" (Mark 3:4). Angry and distressed by their hard hearts, Jesus confronted them by telling the man, "Stretch out your hand" (3:5). As he did, the man's hand was completely restored.

Jesus' passion to destroy the devil's work led Him to fight back against those who would trivialize human suffering. His zeal incited the Pharisee's wrath, and from then on, they began to plot how they might kill Jesus.

For Esther, David, Peter, Philip, and Jesus, Daring Decisions were an essential part of *The Heroic Venture*. "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion" (Prov. 28:1).

## **Daring Decisions**

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Describe the different ways that daring decisions were made in the examples from the Bible.
2. Which of the examples of bold biblical leadership stand out to you?
3. Give some examples of boldness you have seen in leaders that helped a situation.
4. Do you see yourself as a bold person by nature? Why or why not? Give examples.
5. If you were to counsel someone who is careful by nature, how would you explain how to exercise boldness at the appropriate time?





## Chapter 15

### Patient Waiting

*And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.  
~ Hebrews 6:15*

On November 10, the expedition reached a campsite, but a rainstorm trapped them there for 11 days. Fires were hard to start. Their bedding was soggy all night long. Their clothes were nearly rotted away. They looked more like survivors from a shipwreck than the triumphant members of the Corps of Discovery. On November 22, the wind increased with such violence that it threw immense waves over the banks and overwhelmed the party. Clark said, "O how horrible is the day."

They were miserable, evidenced by the absence of journal entries for nearly two months. Historians speculate that Lewis was experiencing the depression that concerned Jefferson before the mission began. Lewis may have been discouraged about the report he had to send home (the rigors of the Columbia's falls only reinforced that there was no easy water route across the continent). Or he may have been despondent about the risks of their return voyage, knowing what it would take to get back home.

If Lewis was suffering from depression, it was a special mark of heroism that he could lead the project under such conditions, especially when he may have been an alcoholic who had not had liquor for four months. He had quit "cold turkey" while leading a complex and dangerous mission across an unknown frontier.

Despite the silence of his journals, Lewis had a passion to press on. The journey would be a failure if he could not get the

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journals back to Jefferson. The water route was important, but reporting scientific discovery was now his primary objective, so he was determined to get the information back to his boss.

### Setting Up Camp

By November 27, the expedition needed to set up winter camp, but they were immobilized by the weather. The Clatsop tribe came to their rescue, giving them food and alternative locations for their winter home. The captains had three criteria in choosing a winter camp: 1) be close to game to provide food; 2) be near a lookout for passing ships carrying supplies; 3) be close to the ocean to refine salt for the return trip.

This kind of decision was typically made by the captains, but this time they let everyone participate in a vote. Even Sacagawea (a non-citizen woman) and York (a slave) participated in the first recorded vote in American history that included a woman and a Black slave. The group decided on a forested area between the Columbia River and Pacific Ocean, calling it “Fort Clatsop” (in reference to their tribal neighbors).

The party spent the winter repairing clothes and equipment, refining salt, and recovering from injuries. However, it rained constantly. Their camp was infested with fleas, and they were constantly ill with fevers and influenza. On top of this, they were unable to make celestial observations because of the consistent cloud cover. They were nearly out of supplies. It was difficult to be patient. They were eager to get back on their way.

One consolation was the completion of Clark’s map connecting the previously unknown section from Mandan to Clatsop, an

invaluable contribution to the world's knowledge. But for the other members of the party, the winter at Clatsop was unbelievably dull. On Christmas morning everyone exchanged presents, such as they were, which only made them more homesick. No ships ever passed by with supplies and Clatsop became more like a prison than a winter home.

### A Disturbing Report

As the party prepared to head home, the captains received reports that salmon was scarce upriver and the tribes were starving. But they could not afford to wait too long and get caught for another winter before reaching St. Louis, so on April 7, 1806, the Corps of Discovery finally set out from Clatsop. Compared to their plentiful supplies at Mandan, they departed with almost nothing.

As they travelled back, they continued to be victimized by rampant petty theft from the native people. Guards had to be assigned to watch the baggage. Anything left unguarded, even for a moment, was gone. Tempers were running high, and one day when Lewis' dog was stolen, his pent-up anger turned into full-blown rage.

He sent out a team to find the dog and shoot the thieves, if needed. The party was at the edge of serious violence. Giving in to their frustration would not only ruin relationships with the people they were trying to befriend, but also put the whole expedition in danger. The dog was quickly found, and Lewis calmed himself enough to reconcile with the chief whose people were responsible.

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Later, on April 24, the party was relieved to reach a friendlier group, the Wallawallas, who they described as the “most hospitable, honest, and sincere people that we have met with in our voyage.” Also, Chief Yellept told Lewis about a shortcut that would shave 80 miles off their previous route. Waiting at Fort Clatsop had been agonizing, and the constant thefts infuriating, but now they were not only among friends but thrilled to be on their way home.

But within a few days after leaving these new friends, their troubles returned. On May 1, the captains divided the last portion of food. There was nothing left to eat. The party was on the brink of starvation.

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FOR MANY, THE WAITING at Fort Clatsop had been the worst part of the journey. Waiting can be a difficult part of *The Heroic Venture*. With a clear vision from the Lord, the leader’s natural desire is to be busy in pursuit of that vision. But sometimes Patient Waiting is required, letting God do things behind the scenes. While Daring Decisions are often the right choice, there are many times when the wise thing is to wait and let things develop.

For example, Abraham waited twenty-five years for his promise to be fulfilled. He was 75 when God told him he would be the father of a great nation (Gen. 12:1) and 100 when Isaac was born. Abraham is the picture of Patient Waiting. A cake takes time to bake. There is nothing that can be done to speed the baking process.

### Esther

As Esther committed herself to approach the king, her first order of business was to dedicate herself to three days of prayer and fasting, and she requested her maids, friends, and family to do the same. Then, when she had opportunity to see the king, she did not directly address the issue, but invited the king and Haman to a banquet. During the festivity, the king knew there was something on her mind and inquired about it. But Esther, once again, was led to wait. She asked the king to come to another banquet the next day, at which time she would make her request known.

God used this time of waiting, in dramatic fashion, to set up the rescue of the Jews. That night, the king could not sleep and ordered a book of chronicles to be read to him. Of all the stories that could be selected, the story of Mordecai thwarting an assassination plot was chosen. Through this reading, the king found that Mordecai had never been properly honored for this courageous service to the king.

Knowing nothing about Esther's family connection with Mordecai, nor Haman's bitter resentment toward Mordecai, it was God's providence that Haman would walk in just as the king was ready to praise Mordecai. The king said, "What should be done to the man whom the king delights to honor?" (Esther 6:6). Thinking the question was directed to himself, Haman responded in lavish detail, including the placement of a royal robe and a crown, followed by a procession through the city with announcements of, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor" (6:9).

The king was thrilled with Haman's suggestions, but Haman was shocked and humiliated at the news that Mordecai would be the recipient of these honors rather than Haman. After Haman sheepishly ushered Mordecai through the city, Haman was immediately delivered

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to Esther's second banquet, where the king asked Esther again about the nature of her request. Now the time was right. Esther's Patient Waiting had prepared the king, and Haman, for the moment.

Esther revealed that her people, the Jews, had been appointed to destruction, slaughter, and annihilation. The king was enraged and asked who would do such a thing. Esther replied, "A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!" (7:6). In despair, Haman pleaded with Esther for his life. But the king had Haman hanged on the very same gallows that had been built for Mordecai. Waiting on the Lord was the wise choice. God vindicated Mordecai and brought justice to Haman.

### Nehemiah

When Nehemiah heard the news about Jerusalem's devastation, he was heartbroken. But he did not rush to action. He prayed, fasted, planned, and waited for an open door to act. It was four months before he had opportunity to mention anything to the king. Prayer is an important part of Patient Waiting.

### Diplomatic Waiting

Jephthah was selected as judge and deliverer when the Ammonites came against Israel. Rather than rush into battle, Jephthah waited for a diplomatic solution. He wrote the king of Ammon, asking for the reason for their invasion. After receiving the correspondence, Jephthah crafted a careful response to attempt a peaceful solution. After a period of waiting without an answer, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, who attacked and devastated Ammon's army (Judg. 11:11-33).

## Patient Waiting

### God's Patience

“God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built” (1 Pet. 3:20, NIV). God had determined to wipe out the people on earth, saving only Noah’s family. But He was willing to wait many years for the people of the day to repent. He is “slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ex. 34:6).

### The Strategic Moment

When Jesus heard His friend Lazarus was sick in Bethany, He waited two days before going there. By the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been dead for four days. It was the Father’s will that Lazarus would be raised from the dead at the proper time and place. Only two miles from Jerusalem, this news would travel quickly to those who wanted to arrest and kill Jesus. This dramatic miracle alarmed the Jewish leaders and set into motion the events leading to Jesus’ crucifixion (John 11:1-48). Jesus was willing to wait patiently for the right strategic moment, even when His dear friend’s life was involved.

Visionary leaders may find it difficult to wait. However, even when plans are delayed, it is important to exercise Patient Waiting, knowing that God is at work behind the scenes in *The Heroic Venture*.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Why was the winter at Clatsop more difficult than the winter at Mandan?
2. Which biblical example of waiting would have been most difficult for you?
3. Explain why patience is important in keeping a project moving.

## **The Heroic Venture**

4. Are you a patient person by nature? Is it easier for you to make Daring Decisions or exhibit Patient Waiting? Give examples.
5. If you were to counsel someone who is impatient by nature, how would you explain how to exercise patience at the appropriate time?



## Chapter 16

### Prudent Counsel

*Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you. ~ Matthew 2:13*

On May 4, 1806, after three days without food, the party encountered a band of Nez Perce who sold them food, saving them from starvation. They were rescued from extinction once again.

Then, their rescuers led the expedition to Chief Twisted Hair, who had been keeping their horses over the winter. During their absence the Nez Perce had become involved in a conflict with another tribal chief. But Lewis and Clark were able to mediate a peaceful reconciliation, which further strengthened the bonds of trust and friendship between the Nez Perce and Corps of Discovery.

They also had another pleasant surprise upon their return. The previous year, Clark had successfully treated an elderly man's knee, so while they were gone, Clark's reputation as a healer had become legendary. Upon arrival in the village, Clark was delighted to be in demand as a doctor for the natives in distress, which also proved to be an asset in trading for goods and supplies.

Also, they were happy to hear the Nez Perce offer to provide as many horses as they needed, an asset to help them cross the upcoming mountains. However, the pass was covered with snow, and the Nez Perce counseled them against attempting immediate passage. Morale sank at this news. They were eager

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to keep moving but would have to remain three weeks longer than planned.

To raise their spirits during the waiting, athletic contests were held between the Corps of Discovery and the Nez Perce. Spectators from each culture came out to cheer them on. The party enjoyed their time with the tribe and their friendship deepened. But at the same time, they were anxious to start their vault over the mountains.

### A Word of Warning

The snowfall that year was greater than normal and the natives warned them to stay for another month, into July. A premature departure could result in forcing the horses to go without food for several days, endangering their lives. But the Nez Perce advice went unheeded, and on June 9, the party started their journey home. Even though their advice was being ignored, the Nez Perce offered to send guides at a later date to check on them.

After a few days, the party reached the same site where they almost died eating gas-inducing roots the year before. However, they had become accustomed to the roots and ate them without incident. But when the Nez Perce guides failed to show up as promised, they became concerned. They considered waiting, but instead the captains decided to take a long march. This was a big risk, but Lewis felt the need to keep moving.

Within four hours, they faced extreme winter conditions. They were six days away from a safe destination, assuming they did not get lost along the way. If they did get lost, their horses would die and they would risk the loss of the journals and instruments

that were essential to their mission. The captains realized the foolishness of their decision and turned back to get help while the horses were still strong. On June 17, 1806, for the first time in the expedition, they retreated, and for good reason.

A small group was sent to find the Nez Perce guides, while the rest of the party waited. After one day, no help came. After two days, still no one came. On the third day, just as they were reaching a point of desperation, the group appeared with the guides.

### On the Road Again

With the Nez Perce leading the way, the expedition was back on the road by June 24. On June 27, they reached an elevated spot with an extensive view of the mountains, which filled them with awe, dread, and great respect for the guides. It seemed impossible to have escaped without their assistance. The trail was covered with ten feet of snow, heavily wooded, and often dangerous. For example, on one occasion, Lewis' horse slipped, and Lewis slid forty feet toward his death, but was saved as he grabbed a branch to stop himself.

On June 30, they safely reached a place they called "Traveler's Rest." It was time to say a sad goodbye to their friends. The Nez Perce had fed them when they were hungry, provided fuel when they were cold, gave them horses and guides, and offered the captains Prudent Counsel. The two cultures shared experiences that drew them together. The Nez Perce could not hide their anxiety for their new friends, expressing certainty that the Plains tribes would kill the party before they reached home.

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THE NEZ PERCE HAD become dear friends to the Corps of Discovery, which caused the tribe to offer heartfelt advice to preserve their lives. Although the captains wanted to press ahead, they realized that the Nez Perce were giving Prudent Counsel. It was painful to hear, but their mutual trust and affection helped them reconsider. As Proverbs says: “Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel” (Prov. 27:9), “faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Prov. 27:6), and “without counsel plans fail” (Prov. 15:22).

### Rebuilding the Temple

Zerubbabel, and the people who joined him in rebuilding the temple, had become discouraged after four years of persistent opposition. Their work came to a complete halt and for ten years, the temple sat unfinished while the people went on with their lives.

Then, God sent two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to counsel and encourage Zerubbabel. Haggai said, “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?” (Hag. 1:4). “Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord” (Hag. 1:8). He pointed to recent crop conditions as evidence that God was withholding blessing due to neglect of the temple project. Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the people obeyed the word of the Lord and got back to work.

As they did, Haggai encouraged them further with the Lord’s message, “Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the Lord. Work, for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts, according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not” (Hag. 2:4-5). The people were excited to resume the work.

## Prudent Counsel

As soon as the construction started, Zerubbabel's adversaries resumed their resistance to the project. The governor and his associates went to Zerubbabel and said, "Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure? . . . What are the names of the men who are building this building?" (Ezra 5:3-4). The adversaries were told that King Cyrus had given authority to rebuild the temple 16 years earlier, before the present King Darius had taken the throne. But despite this opposition, the people kept building because "the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews" (Ezra 5:5).

Meanwhile, the governor wrote a letter to King Darius to settle the dispute. Upon receipt, Darius ordered the matter to be researched, and a scroll was found corroborating Zerubbabel's story. King Darius issued a new decree, giving authority to rebuild the temple, financed by the royal treasury. The governor received threatening orders to cease interference with the project, at the risk of a violent and unpleasant death.

### Prudent Counsel for the People

Armed with this affirmation, Zechariah and Haggai encouraged the people, some of whom had seen the glory of the previous temple, by prophesying:

"Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former" (Hag. 2:6-9).

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These prophecies foretold the coming of a conquering Messiah King, who would defeat His enemies and rescue His people. This helped the people understand there were higher stakes involved beyond their own personal comfort and ambitions. They were part of reconstructing a temple that Messiah himself would visit one day. Zechariah said: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey (Zech. 9:9)” which was fulfilled through Jesus on Palm Sunday (Jn. 12:15).

In addition to the prophecies, God sent Zerubbabel a personal message of Prudent Counsel through Haggai:

“Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you” (Hag. 2:21-23).

This message revealed Zerubbabel’s participation in the lineage of Jesus (Matt. 1:12), filling him with confidence to lead the people. Haggai and Zechariah were tremendous sources of Prudent Counsel. Without them, the temple may not have been rebuilt.

It is important for leaders to listen to Prudent Counsel, because failure to do so can be damaging to *The Heroic Venture*. “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice” (Prov. 12:15).

## **Prudent Counsel**

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Why were Lewis and Clark open to the counsel of the Nez Perce?
2. What would have happened if they had ignored the counsel of the Nez Perce?
3. What role did Haggai and Zechariah have in God's plan?
4. Explain the meaning of Proverbs 27:6: "Wounds from a friend can be trusted."
5. Why is it important to seek counsel when making decisions?





## Chapter 17

### Tempting Distractions

*Jeboash said to the priests, "All the money of the holy things that is brought into the house of the Lord . . . let the priests take . . . and let them repair the house wherever any need of repairs is discovered." But by the twenty-third year of King Jeboash, the priests had made no repairs on the house." ~ 2 Kings 12:4-6*

By June 30, 1806, Lewis and Clark had escaped many dangers, were in familiar territory, and felt they were on their way home. While they had completed their mission for the most part, the captains still had a few more objectives. They wanted to provide Jefferson with an optimum land route across the continent, explore the northern boundary of the Louisiana Purchase, and strike a trade deal with the Blackfeet, whom they had not met on their trip west. So, on July 3, the captains split the expedition into sub-parties, according to a plan they had devised during their winter at Clatsop.

Lewis would follow the Nez Perce shortcut to the Great Falls, leaving three men to prepare for the portage. Lewis would take the remaining party north to ascend the Marias River.

A third group, led by Ordway, would proceed to the head of the Jefferson River to pick up the supplies they had left the year before, then meet up with the Lewis party. Clark would take the fourth group to explore the Yellowstone River and map the area until it connected with the Missouri. Then Clark would build canoes for the trip down the Missouri.

A fifth group, led by Pryor, was assigned to deliver a letter to an envoy at the Mandan village, inviting the Sioux to affiliate with the Americans instead of their British rivals.

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### The Expedition at Risk

This ambitious plan was exceedingly complex. They were 1,000 miles from any outposts and destitute of trading materials. Huge responsibilities were being given to sergeants and privates whose success depended on precise timing, a minimum of unexpected problems, and extraordinary performance from each person. Also, each group was vulnerable to attack from the warlike tribes of the plains. Roving parties like the Blackfeet were known to be heavily armed with rifles, making each group an easy target.

On July 26, Lewis's group was travelling with Drouillard at a distance on one side and the two Shields brothers flanking on the other side. Raising his telescope, Lewis was alarmed to see a band of Blackfeet watching Drouillard from a distance. Lewis slowly made his way toward the Blackfeet, who were then alarmed to see Lewis appear. The warriors sent their horses into a frenzied circle, then a single rider broke from their pack and came full speed toward Lewis. Lewis dismounted and stood waiting in a peaceful posture, hoping to avoid a confrontation.

Disarmed by Lewis' reaction, the rider suddenly stopped, wheeled the horse around and galloped back to the circling pack. Lewis' group assembled, now outnumbered nine to four. The Blackfeet stopped circling, slowly approached, shook hands, and offered to smoke a peace pipe together. During the conversation, Lewis discovered that there was a British outpost only six days away and that they were rapidly moving south. This confirmed Jefferson's fears about the expansion of British influence in the region.

## Tempting Distractions

Hearing this, Lewis made an attempt to strike a better deal with the Blackfeet than the British. He told them about his promise to sell rifles to the Nez Perce and Shoshones, which was a terrible political blunder since the Blackfeet were arch enemies of the Nez Perce and Shoshones. After 20 years of being the dominant power in the area, the Blackfeet would now have to contend with warring nations having equal firepower.

### A Terrible Lapse

The next morning, Lewis woke to the sound of Drouillard shouting that his gun had been stolen. Lewis reached for his rifle and it was gone also. Drawing his pistol from its holster, he saw a native running away with his rifle. Lewis ran toward him, ordering him to lay down the rifle or be shot. The man laid the rifle down, but another warrior resisted and was shot and killed.

The remaining invaders went to scatter Lewis' horses to leave the party stranded, but the men chased them away. One of the warriors turned and fired at Lewis, who felt the bullet fly over his head. Lewis fired back, wounding one of them, but Lewis decided to retreat before additional Blackfeet reinforcements arrived.

Their lives in danger, Lewis' party quickly loaded their horses and raced away without stopping until 2 a.m. After a few hours' sleep, they were on their way again. When they met up with Ordway's party, they quickly explained the need for speed, put their baggage in the canoes, released the horses, and started downriver. They soon reached the goods they had stashed the year before, some of which had rotted away, but most still in good working order.

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During their hasty retreat, Lewis found out the full story of the nighttime attack. Shields had slept during guard duty at the worst possible moment – right before dawn. This created a tempting opportunity for the Blackfeet. It was inexcusable to lay down a rifle while on duty, especially while camping near potential enemy combatants. After two years in the wilderness this kind of error was unexpected.

While Lewis was right to make efforts to get the rifles and horses back, chasing the retreating Blackfeet was a mistake that could have been fatal. He left the camp unsecured and exposed himself to unnecessary harm.

### It Gets Worse

Having escaped disaster with the Blackfeet, their troubles were not over. While Lewis and Cruzatte were hunting, Lewis raised his rifle and was hit in the rear by a bullet, spinning him around. Lewis cried out to Cruzatte, but there was no response, so Lewis assumed they were under attack from a native tribe. In an effort to rally the men, Lewis staggered 100 yards toward the boat, calling them to arms. After struggling to get in the boat, he waited in terrible suspense for the party to return.

Finally, after 20 long minutes, the crew arrived and they were on their way again. When the bullet was removed from Lewis' behind, it was found to be an Army-issue bullet, proving that Cruzatte was the shooter. Facing down in the boat, Lewis ordered the men to keep moving, suffering both pain and humiliation.

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## Tempting Distractions

WHILE THEIR MOTIVES WERE right, Lewis and Clark should not have split the party. In their attempt to accomplish too many goals at once, they put the entire enterprise at risk. They became distracted from their priorities, which is a common occurrence. This can happen to anyone.

### Abraham

Abraham gave in to Tempting Distractions when he tried to do God's work in man's way. Abraham showed great patience for 25 years, waiting for the promise to be fulfilled. But he had a lapse in judgment by fathering a son named Ishmael, through Sarah's maidservant, Hagar. Abraham was trying to fulfill God's promises in his own way. Although his motives were right, it was a bad idea that had lasting implications.

Once Isaac came along, Ishmael went from "the promised one" to second-class citizen. When Ishmael showed resentment toward Isaac (Gen. 21:9), Sarah requested Ishmael's banishment and Abraham agreed. It was only by God's intervention that Ishmael and Hagar survived. Decades later, the Ishmaelites were the ones who purchased Joseph and sold him into Egyptian slavery (Ex. 37:27) and the descendants of Ishmael continued to be hostile to God's people for generations (Ps. 83:6).

### Jehoash

King Jehoash instructed his priests to "repair the house wherever any need of repairs is discovered" (2 Kings 12:5). But 23 years went by and the priests still had not done the work they were assigned. When King Jehoash found out, he summoned the priests and made them finish the project. Jehoash gave the initial assignment but got distracted and never checked on the work. It is easy to get caught

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up in good activities and forget to see that others carry out their responsibilities, but a good leader makes sure delegated tasks are carried out in a timely manner.

### Samson

Samson was easily distracted from his responsibilities. Although he was set apart from birth as a Nazirite, assigned to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines (Judg. 13:5), he continually confided in the wrong people and was controlled more by pleasure than obedience to his mission. Ironically, his Nazirite vow required abstaining from alcohol, yet he lived a reckless and indulgent lifestyle.

Also, Samson made a silly bet with his Philistine in-laws, based on a riddle he gave them to solve. His wife easily coaxed the riddle's answer from Samson. Later, he visited a prostitute that left him vulnerable to enemy capture. Then he lived with another Philistine woman (Delilah), who served as an enemy agent.

Although Samson squandered his talents on practical jokes and foolish decisions, at the end of his life, God used him to accomplish his mission. Despite falling to several Tempting Distractions, in the end Samson showed enough faithfulness to be included in the hall of faith (Heb. 11:32). Samson's life is an example of giving in to Tempting Distractions. But his life is also a testimony to never give up because God can use anyone in spite of past failures.

Leaders can fall victim to Tempting Distractions in a variety of ways. When God gives a vision, leaders must maintain a disciplined focus in *The Heroic Venture*.

## **Tempting Distractions**

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. In what ways were Lewis and Clark distracted from their priorities?
2. How did Abraham fall to Tempting Distractions? What about Samson and Jehoash?
3. How have you seen people fall to distractions?
4. What areas of distraction are most tempting to you?
5. What is the difference between a distraction and a great opportunity?





## Chapter 18

### Celebrating Victory

*The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" ~ Luke 10:17*

The day after he was shot in the rear, Lewis met Clark's party, which had made it down river without incident. The joy of their reunion was dampened by Lewis' condition. But after two more days they were back with their friends, the Mandans, who were glad to see the Corps of Discovery alive.

However, Lewis was disappointed to hear that Pryor's group, assigned to deliver the letter to the envoy, had not made it to the Mandan village in time. Lewis' letter had asked for a group of Sioux chiefs to travel to Washington, D.C. for a meeting with Jefferson. This failure damaged chances for diplomacy, which was a primary objective of the expedition. This left the expedition with the hostile Blackfeet behind them and the dreaded Sioux ahead. The plan to bring the tribes into friendly American circles was evaporating.

Another blow came with the report that the peace plan they had previously arranged between the Mandans and Arikaras collapsed during their absence. Lewis and Clark had made no influence for lasting peace in the region.

#### The Amazing Sacagawea

After a few days, they prepared to leave the Mandan village after compensating Charbonneau and paying compliments to Sacagawea for her outstanding service. She had participated in an amazing transcontinental journey with a newborn baby. The captains appreciated her work on their long, dangerous,

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and fatiguing route to the Pacific Ocean and back. They said, “she deserved a greater reward for her attention and service on the route than we had in our power to give her.”

Furthermore, Clark had become so attached to her baby son, Pomp, that Clark offered to adopt him as his own. Years later, Pomp went to live with Clark and receive a Western education, and then traveled through Europe before becoming a western explorer in his own right.

### Back in Sioux Territory

As the expedition sped down the Missouri, Lewis was recovering from his gunshot wound. As they entered Sioux country they encountered nine warriors on the riverbank who signaled for the party to come to shore. Clark assumed they were the Teton who were so troublesome in 1804.

Meanwhile, one of the expedition’s canoes was lagging behind, so the captains pulled to shore to let them catch up. As they landed, they heard shots ring out and thought the other canoe was under attack. Lewis hobbled out of his boat and formed the men into a defensive line. After a few tense moments, the canoe came safely around the bend.

Then they were relieved to discover the warriors were not the hostile Teton, but Yankton Sioux, the friendly tribe they had met in 1804. In fact, one of the Yankton chiefs had traveled to Washington to meet President Jefferson while the expedition was out west. Also, they found out the shot they heard was simply the Yanktons taking target practice.

### Thinking About Home

With much of the peril behind them, the men were thinking more about home. They were starved for news. A presidential election had taken place, but they did not know the outcome. The country could be at war with another country for all they knew. They had become real-life Rip Van Winkles.

As they progressed, they stopped to visit Sergeant Floyd's grave (now Floyd's Bluff, near modern-day Sioux City, Iowa). On September 6, they met a trading vessel and got their first whiskey since July 4, 1805. As each day passed, they were meeting up with more traders, gathering more news. The country was deeply concerned for them, and rumors were plentiful about their status. Some said the Corps of Discovery had been killed, while others said they were captured by the Spanish and working as slaves in far-off gold and silver mines.

When they were 150 miles from St. Louis, they completely ran out of provisions and trade goods. All they had left were the clothes on their backs, their rifles and ammunition, the cooking kettle, their scientific instruments, and their precious journals. On September 20, the sight of a cow on a hillside triggered spontaneous shouts of joy.

When they approached St. Charles, the village from which they had departed, the men were granted permission to fire a salute from the cannon. Their three rounds were answered with three rounds from trading boats on the bank. The citizens rushed out to greet them, having believed they had long been lost. As celebrations began that would last for many days, Lewis immediately left the men to proceed to St. Louis so he could rush his report to President Jefferson.

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### Mission Accomplished

As Lewis paddled onto the Mississippi, he felt a deep sense of satisfaction. During their epic voyage, he had taken a multicultural group of 30 unruly soldiers and guides, molding them into the Corps of Discovery. They had become a tough, hardy, resourceful group of well-disciplined men, not to mention a teenage woman and her baby. Covering 8,000 miles, he brought the entire party back safely, except for one man who died of causes beyond anyone's control.

Lewis' passion for the mission never failed. At the critical moments, he made mostly wise decisions. They had found the most direct route across the continent, just as Jefferson had ordered. What was previously a blank part of the North American map was now filled in. Against great odds, they reported invaluable scientific data in their journals and safely delivered previously undiscovered specimens, including 178 new plants and a live prairie dog.

Their expedition experienced great adventures, tremendous mountains, terrible portages, turbulent rapids, and heart-breaking disappointments. He had conflicts with his men and conflicts with the tribes. He faced every kind of physical challenge including extreme cold, mosquitoes, disease, a gunshot wound, and gas-producing roots. He weathered mind-numbing boredom at Clatsop, and terrifying fear at the Columbia falls. He had seen a variety of animals, trees, rivers, canyons, cliffs, and indigenous peoples that no one had ever seen. All this was done under the cloud of apparent clinical depression.

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As he pulled up to shore in St. Louis, his mind shifted from his *Heroic Venture*. Now it was time to report to his boss. He shouted to someone on the bank, “when is the next mail leaving St. Louis?”

Lewis’ report read: “In obedience to your orders we have penetrated the Continent of North America to the Pacific Ocean and sufficiently explored the interior of the country to affirm with confidence that we have discovered the most practicable route which does exist across the continent.”

Jefferson received the report with pride, saying: “Of courage undaunted, possessing a firmness and perseverance of purpose which nothing but impossibilities could divert from its direction, careful as a father of those committed to this charge, yet steady in the maintenance of order and discipline, I could have no hesitation in confiding the enterprise to him.”

*The Heroic Venture* had come to successful completion.

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EVEN THOUGH SOME ASPECTS of the Lewis and Clark Expedition were unsuccessful, it was an amazing accomplishment, worthy of celebration.

One of the fruits of their labor was the relationships they made. The Corps of Discovery developed bonds of friendship they would never forget. In the same way, as Paul went on his missionary journeys, he made disciples among the Gentiles throughout Asia and Europe, fulfilling the mission Jesus gave him. The people he met along the way were not just “projects.” They became dearly loved friends.

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He called the Philippians his “joy and crown” (Phil. 4:1). To the Thessalonians, he said, “For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy” (1 Thess. 2:19-20). The pleasure of *The Heroic Venture* includes not only the completion of the project, but the blessing of new friends.

### God Loves Celebration

When a leader has finished strong, faithful to the vision, it is time to celebrate, reflecting on God’s goodness. Paul could say, at the end of his life, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7). Jesus instructed His followers to take communion in remembrance of His work of redemption (Lk. 22:19). There are several other examples of God’s people celebrating together.

#### *Passover*

God instructed Moses to remember the events of the Exodus by celebrating Passover each year: This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast. And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt (Ex. 12:14, 17).

#### *Purim*

When Haman decided to exterminate the Jews, he cast a lot (called a “pur”) to determine the timing of the genocide. The feast of “Purim” is still celebrated today, in remembrance of God’s deliverance through Esther. Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews to have them celebrate Purim: “. . . as the days on which the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from

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sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor” (Esth. 9.22).

### *Nehemiah*

Nehemiah rebuilt the Jerusalem wall in only 52 days, after much opposition. Nehemiah’s enemies were “afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God” (Neh. 6:16). After the project was done, the priests, Levites, gatekeepers, singers and temple servants settled in their towns, then Nehemiah invited everyone back to a formal celebration.

Ezra read from the Law of Moses while the people listened attentively, weeping as they heard the Word. The Levites instructed the people about its meaning so they could understand. Then Nehemiah said to the assembly: “Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh. 8:10).

The next day, the people acted on God’s Word through Moses concerning the Feast of Tabernacles, which was to remember the Jews’ Egyptian escape, when they lived in temporary shelters, or tabernacles. So the people brought branches from olive, myrtle, palm, and other shade trees to build shelters. They joyfully continued the feast for seven days, as Ezra continued to read the Book of the Law of God (Neh. 8:13-17).

### *Joshua*

As Joshua prepared to launch his campaign to conquer the Promised Land, God ordered one of the greatest celebrations of remembrance

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in the Bible. As the Israelites gathered at the Jordan River near Gilgal, Joshua gave a speech about how God would drive out those inhabiting the land. He instructed the priests to carry the ark into the river, and although it was at flood stage, Joshua said it would cease flowing at the proper time. Just as he promised, as soon as the priests touched the water, the Jordan stood in a heap and stopped flowing, allowing the whole nation to cross near Jericho.

When they finished crossing, Joshua appointed 12 men, one from each tribe, to stack 12 stones from the middle of the Jordan to be “a sign among you” (Josh. 4:6). These stones were to “be to the people of Israel a memorial forever” (4:7). After many decades of wandering in the desert, they had finally reached the Promised Land!

### *Solomon*

When Solomon finished the construction of the temple, he invited the whole nation to witness the delivery of the ark of the covenant to the Holy of Holies. A huge choir, accompanied by 120 trumpets, cymbals, harps and lyres, joined in praise to the Lord, saying, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever” (2 Chron. 5:13). God filled the temple with a cloud to display His presence.

Then Solomon pronounced a prayer of dedication to the temple. When he finished, fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifices, causing the people to kneel on the pavement, their faces to the ground, giving thanks to the Lord, and worshipping. The king and all the people offered sacrifices totaling 22,000 cattle and 22,000 sheep and goats. The festival went on for 15 days, and then Solomon “sent the people away to their homes, joyful and glad of heart for the prosperity that the Lord had granted to David and to Solomon and to Israel his people” (2 Chron. 7:10).



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### *Zerubbabel*

After many long years of hard work, discouragement, lapses in work, and resumption of work, Zerubbabel finally completed the construction of the temple. Then the people celebrated its dedication with great joy, offering sacrifices and installing priests for service, according to the Book of Moses. The next month, they celebrated Passover in the newly constructed temple: “And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the Lord had made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel” (Ez. 6:22).

### *Hezekiah*

Years after wicked King Ahaz shut the doors of the temple, his son King Hezekiah purified the temple (2 Chron. 28:24-29:19). He also instructed the Levites to re-constitute proper worship in the temple by clearing all unclean items, which took only 16 days. “Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced because God had prepared for the people, for the thing came about suddenly” (2 Chron. 29:36). Hezekiah invited all Israel to celebrate Passover in the renovated temple.

However, when the couriers delivered the king’s invitation to the people, the agents were met with scorn and ridicule. But by the time for Passover arrived, a large assembly came rejoicing and singing. It went so well that he decided to extend the festivities seven more days. There had been nothing like it since the days of Solomon, 250 years before. When they were done, the people went to the outlying towns smashing sacred stones, cutting down Asherah poles, and destroying high places and idolatrous altars.

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### The Ultimate Celebration

As you face each obstacle in your *Heroic Venture*, remember to keep the end in mind. Remember the privilege you have to represent the Living God as you look forward to that Final Day when the Lord Jesus Christ receives the glory He is due. The greatest celebration of all is ahead, at the Wedding Banquet of the Lamb:

“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” (Rev. 7:9-10).

“Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready’” (Rev. 19:6-7). When He comes, it will be the greatest time of Celebrating Victory in history! Come soon, Lord Jesus.

In *The Heroic Venture* many things are uncertain, but some things remain constant. The God who was with Moses, Joseph, Nehemiah, Paul, and Esther is also with His people today. He still intervenes in the work of men and women as they experience Compelling Context, Personal Calling, Vital Preparations, Committed Team, Internal Complications, Fierce Opposition, Redemptive Setbacks, Painful Suffering, Confident Command, Creative Adjustments, Dead and Renewed Vision, Nagging Discouragement, Daring Decisions, Patient Waiting, Prudent Counsel, and Tempting Distractions, all

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leading to the moment of Celebrating Victory to the glory of Jesus Christ.

### Questions for Reflection

1. Describe how you would feel if you were Lewis coming into St. Charles with your mission completed.
2. How does God show His love of celebration when projects are completed?
3. How did the project leaders of the Bible experience new friendships as they carried out their God-given task?
4. Besides new friendships, what other blessings did they receive due to their leadership?
5. Review the titles of each chapter. Which topics have been the most helpful to you in considering your *Heroic Venture*?



## Section IV: Your Heroic Venture

*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise  
but as wise, making the best use of the time, because  
the days are evil.*

~ Eph. 5:15

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## Chapter 19

### Growing in Wisdom

*And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.  
~ Luke 2:52*

GOD HAS BEEN USING men and women to do His work throughout the history of the Bible, and each of them faced difficulties along the way. They start with a Compelling Context that leads to a Personal Calling. As they make their Vital Preparations, God brings them a Committed Team. Going forward, they face Internal Complications, Fierce Opposition, Redemptive Setbacks, and Painful Suffering. But effective leaders also provide Confident Command and make Creative Adjustments.

In spite of good leadership and faithfulness, many experience Dead Vision, but persevere to find Renewed Vision. Pressing on, they often find Nagging Discouragement that requires both Daring Decisions and Patient Waiting. They receive Prudent Counsel and wrestle with Tempting Distractions until they finally experience the joy of Celebrating Victory. Just like Lewis and Clark's Expedition, leaders face triumph and heartbreak, but show courage to the end. Leadership requires a trek through each of these complex situations, over and over again.

Navigating all this complexity requires wisdom, which has been a central theme in my life. As a young man entering high school, my youth leader, Theron Friberg, met weekly with me so I could learn how to follow Jesus. Using the book of Proverbs, he taught me to grow in wisdom and listen for the Spirit's leading. Later in life, I crafted a personal mission statement that included wisdom as an essential ingredient: "To contribute to Christ's Kingdom by receiving and dispensing His grace and wisdom." Even now, writing

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on my 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of walking with God, wisdom continues to be something I eagerly desire.

### What is Wisdom?

I define wisdom as **“the ability to choose what is best among equally viable truths.”** Wisdom is the understanding that there is danger on either side. You can go too far to the right or too far to the left. You can pivot when you should stand firm. You can stand firm when you should be open to change. You can be too daring when you should be cautious instead. You can ignore counsel that would have saved you from disaster, but you can also follow counsel that ends up being a huge waste of time.

In other words, leaders continually face difficult decisions, conflicting information, and unclear implications. While there are biblical principles to help leaders make decisions, sometimes the principles can seem in opposition to each other. For example, we are told to have faith but also to be prudent. Wisdom is needed to apply biblical truth to each situation.

This is the point of Ecclesiastes:

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to



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“speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace” (Eccl. 3:1-8).

If wisdom is the ability to choose among equally viable truths, how can this ability be developed?

### Wisdom within the Battle

True wisdom is not found in a classroom, or on an isolated mountain-top, but in the process of struggling through every-day life. The key to wisdom is knowing the existence of an adversary who attempts to thwart our efforts to grow in wisdom. Therefore, wisdom is best learned in the midst of spiritual engagement. As Paul says:

“Put on the full armor of God, so that you can make your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world’s darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:11-12).

Since wisdom is the ability to choose *what is best* for the situation, learning to listen to God is the key to wisdom. This idea, growing in your ability to sense His direction, is why Paul said, “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:15-17). This can be done by becoming aware of the devil’s schemes, learning to recognize his lies, and separating them from God’s truth.

### Principles to Grow in Wisdom

The starting place is a humble and teachable attitude toward God, coupled with a healthy skepticism of your own judgment (Prov.

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9:10). God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (Js. 4:6). While all wisdom comes from Him (Js. 1:16), He also instructs us to ask for wisdom (Js 1:5), and to seek it through disciplined effort (Prov. 2:1-6). The following nine ideas have been helpful to me in this lifelong effort to pursue wisdom.

### *Understand the Big Picture*

In order to discern God's will, we need a clear understanding of His grander purposes in history. We tend to start from our own tiny, personal perspective, a reference point that is too small to give adequate guidance. By so doing, we overestimate our own importance, leading to confusion. It is better to start on a cosmic level, by thinking about what is important to God, and then evaluate how our personal experience intersects with His grand design.

We need to be like navigators who use fixed points for reference, like the North Pole, the sun, or the North Star. No one should start with their own personal experience to discern God's will. Instead, use God's unchanging plan, revealed in His Word, as a fixed reference point, which Jesus referred to as "the Kingdom of God."

The Kingdom of God was Jesus' chief concern<sup>7</sup> and can be defined as "the progressive expansion of God's life-giving rule over creation, until all things are under His perfect ruling authority."<sup>8</sup> The Kingdom can arguably be understood in three dimensions: Conquest, Rescue, and Coronation.

- **Conquest** over His enemy: "Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:24-25).

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- **Rescue** of people from the kingdom of darkness: “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Col. 1:13).
- **Coronation** where He reigns forever. “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15.)

This is the Big Picture around which our lives should be oriented. Jesus said if we “seek first his kingdom” all things would be added to us (Matt. 6:33). In other words, everything falls into place when we orient ourselves to His Kingdom.

### *Be a Living Sacrifice*

Understanding the Kingdom reveals our role as representatives of Christ in the world, creating urgency to be “transformed into the likeness of his Son” (Rom. 8:29). When we surrender ourselves to the work of representing Christ and His Kingdom, no matter the cost, we put ourselves in a place to understand His will.

Or as Romans 12:1-2 says:

“Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

By presenting ourselves as living sacrifices, we say “yes, Lord,” even before hearing what the assignment might be. Rather than negotiating your obedience, surrender to His will, whatever it may be.

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### *Grow in Intimacy with Christ*

Anyone who attempts to be a living sacrifice will grow in the knowledge of Christ and learn to recognize His voice, distinct from the static of worldly voices. John White said, “Though the Bible never uses the word guidance, it does talk about a Guide. You may seek guidance, but God desires to give something better: himself.”<sup>9</sup> When people walk with Christ, they get to know Him better, sharpening their ability to discern His voice (“My sheep know my voice” Jn. 10:27).

Also, Jesus sent the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, to “teach us all things” and remind us of everything Jesus said (Jn. 14:26). He not only leads us in making God-honoring decisions, but also comforts us in our distress. We have a Guide who gives both direction and comfort. Growing in intimate knowledge of God by the Holy Spirit enhances our ability to discern God’s will for specific situations (for more on this, read my book *Think Again: Transformation that Yields a Return on God’s Investment*).

### *Apply Scripture*

Our primary source of guidance should come from Scripture. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16).

Therefore, many questions are already answered in the Bible. “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your Word. I have hidden your Word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Ps. 119:9, 11). It is essential to be diligent in the study of the Word to know His mind. The Spirit speaks through the Bible, so He will never direct you in contradiction to His Word.

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### *Discern Your Passions and Gifts*

God gifts all believers for works of service, to build up the body (Rom. 12:3-8, 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4:11-13). While God may reveal His will in a direct way, He often directs us through the passions we have for ministry. For example, Hezekiah organized a large Passover celebration out of the gratitude of his heart. There are thousands of innovative ways to make God known when believers build on their creative passions.

In a similar vein, God also leads through a persistent discontent for an existing situation. Remember David's words about the temple: "Here I am living in this house of cedar while the ark of God sits in a tent" (2 Sam. 7:2). Dissatisfaction with the status quo may be a strong indication of something God wants to do through you.

Also, while God might lead you to something new, He often guides us into new assignments based on *past gifting*. Therefore, look for future opportunities that build on gifts and experiences He provided in the past. In other words, if you have enjoyed serving in administration in the past, look for expanded responsibilities using administration in the future.

### *Listen to the Body*

Another principle for discerning God's will is to be in community with godly people who respect their leaders. God uses leaders to protect those under their care, so when you submit to authority, you enjoy God's protection. "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Heb. 13:17).

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Therefore, if you have a vision for ministry and your church leaders do not confirm God's leading in it, pay particular careful attention to this "red flag." God can make His will clear through the affirmation (or lack of affirmation) of godly leaders over you.

Besides our leaders, we also need to get counsel from godly friends. Unfortunately, we can easily deceive ourselves about our own motives, tricking ourselves into thinking something is from God when it really comes from our own desires. Even after a time of prayer and fasting, you may feel good about your idea and "feel a peace" about it. But our feelings are not the best barometer of God's will. We can still fool ourselves into doing what we want, even after sincere prayer and reflection on God's Word.

This is why the input of brothers and sisters who know us is important in discerning our true intentions. "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure" (Jer. 17:9). "No one is good, not even one" (Rom. 3:12). Seek out counsel from godly people before making a decision. "Plans fail for lack of counsel but with many advisors they succeed" (Prov. 15:22). Great insight comes from friends who know you and will tell you the truth.

However, when you consider the counsel of others, remember that *you are responsible for the final decision*. Do not blame others by saying, "they made me do this" or "they would not let me do that." Make a choice and live with the outcome, being responsible before God for your own actions, even as you listen to the Body for counsel. Proverbs sums this up well:

"By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches. A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might, for by wise

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guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory” (Prov. 24:3-6).

### *Learn from Past Mistakes*

Much of our experience in discerning God’s will comes by learning from past mistakes. Even years after the fact, God has gently revealed my true motives, using those errors to help me grow. Because God redeems your mistakes, be bold to try new things for Him. Resiliency is important for developing wisdom. When you fail, get up and try again. Do not let fear rule over you.

### *Wisdom of the Ages*

Another way to grow in wisdom is to look to the believers who have gone before you. Men and women have spent decades learning to walk with God and have written down their experiences for our benefit. The practice of wisdom is a lifetime process and worthy of much study. Two excellent resources are Henry Blackaby’s book *Experiencing God*<sup>10</sup> and *Devotional Classics* by Richard Foster.<sup>11</sup>

Additionally, God can also speak through secular sources, even the counsel of non-Christians, so be open to advice from any source. However, give the most weight to the more reliable sources listed above.

### *Other Signs*

Finally, many people look at circumstances and say, “It must be God’s will—look what is happening.” Be very careful about basing God’s guidance on circumstances alone. A closed door may mean you need perseverance to open it. An open door could be a tempting distraction. Circumstances might be a helpful indicator, but they ought to be the last (and least) of all the measures to discern God’s will.

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### Schemes of the Enemy to Impede Wisdom

The previous nine principles are helpful in seeking the Lord's guidance. But you can also grow in wisdom as you learn to recognize Satan's attempts to lead you into foolishness. He has schemes to block us from growing in wisdom, and sometimes he uses phrases that sound wise on the surface but derail good decisions. While these phrases are not always diabolical, use them as warnings because they may be distractions that lead you in the wrong direction.

**“It's never been done that way before.”** God has no use for traditions that block His progress.<sup>12</sup> Just because it has always been done a certain way does not indicate that it remains a wise option. People depend on their experience so much that they miss a new thing God wants to do. The story of Peter and Cornelius (see Acts 10) is a classic example. Peter was willing to suspend his Jewish experience, which led to the salvation of the Gentiles.

**“You're doing fine, that's good enough”** or a related message: “It doesn't matter what you do, God will bless it.” This attitude reflects a lack of discipline. Do not confuse trust in God with laziness. Apparent (or real) success can keep you from even greater fruitfulness.

**“Forget the vision, this way is easier”** Watch for temptations to make decisions based on available resources or an easy way out.<sup>13</sup> Focus on the vision God gave you, engaging in activities which contribute to that vision. There are many good options, but only a few contribute to the vision, so it is poor stewardship to be distracted by unrelated opportunities. Consider the implications of your decisions, because the path of least resistance often carries a price to pay later.



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**“You’re tired, give up.”** Vince Lombardi, legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers, is attributed with the line: “Fatigue makes cowards of us all.” When you get tired, you are more resistant to anything which will tap your already-low resources. What otherwise would be an exciting opportunity can instead feel overwhelming. While sometimes it is wise to pivot away from a dead-end situation, make sure it is not just because you feel tired. Do not give up just because it is hard.

**“You will fail and look bad.”** No one likes to fail, and there are no guarantees that any given project will turn out as planned. But since God can use even failures, do not give up on good ideas simply because of the prospect of failure or embarrassment.

**“You will lose your support.”**<sup>14</sup> Wisdom may dictate action that alienates people, or causes controversy among those who financially support your work. But in the end, if that controversial action is clearly the right thing to do, proceed courageously.

**“Fight to the bitter end.”** Armies are known to continue fighting even when they know they will be defeated, knowing that prolonging the war reduces the humiliation of defeat. Therefore, you may be tempted by a survival mentality. George Barna said, “Encouraging people to pledge themselves to survival is an admission of defeat.”<sup>15</sup> Once survival becomes the goal, it is only a matter of time before defeat occurs. Wisdom not only involves perseverance, but also helps minimize losses by recognizing the time to retreat.

**“We’ve tried that before and it doesn’t work.”** Be wary of statements like, “I have been here a long time and I know what has been going on. I have been in this ministry for 15 years and I know

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this is not going to work.” Just because it has not worked before does not mean it will not work this time.

### Conclusion

You can grow in wisdom as you pay attention to God’s growth strategies, and recognize the devil’s distraction schemes. Search the Scriptures for the Big Picture, be a living sacrifice as you grow in intimacy with Christ, listen to the Spirit who gives passions and gifts, get counsel from the saints, draw wisdom from the heroes of the faith, and learn from your own blunders.

Trusting God to guide you, even through your mistakes, is the key to discerning His will. After carefully considering all these factors, if you do not receive clear direction, make the best decision you know to make and move ahead. “Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your path straight” (Prov. 3:5-6).

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. What do you think about the definition of wisdom given in this chapter? Can you come up with a better definition?
2. Consider the nine growth principles listed in this chapter. Which one is most helpful or new?
3. Can you think of an example where you ignored one of the nine principles, and it turned out badly?
4. Of the several ways the enemy can distract us and impede our growth in wisdom, which one stands out most to you?
5. Think about a recent decision you made. How much were you influenced by a distraction that impedes versus one of the nine growth principles?

## Chapter 20

### PWR: A Framework for Exercising Wisdom

*Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning. ~ Proverbs 9:9*

WHENEVER YOU TAKE ON a task, you need the right tool for the job. For example, you need a sharp saw to cut down a tree. Strength and stamina are important, but without a saw it will take a lot longer to fell the tree. In the same way, the right framework can help you grow in wisdom at a faster pace.

This is especially true for leaders who face complex situations, where it is impossible to have universal rules that apply to every circumstance. However, the following three-step framework, called “PWR”<sup>®</sup> (Prepare, Work, Review), can be used to apply wisdom in a variety of confusing situations, from overseeing a project to leading your family, from managing your spiritual disciplines to handling a difficult personnel situation.



PWR is based on the idea of continuous learning, the idea that a person can grow in wisdom bit by bit, month after month, year after year. In other words, wisdom is not something to attain, like

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earning a degree, but rather it is an iterative, ongoing process. As Proverbs suggests, a wise person is someone who is already wise, but learns from experiences in order to be *wiser still*. PWR helps a person grow in wisdom through incremental steps, decade after decade. Disciplined use of PWR (a form of design thinking)<sup>16</sup> has proven valuable in multi-year projects as well as simple decisions that must be made in minutes.

Another aspect of PWR is that it is flexible enough to work for different kinds of personalities. Some people are deliberate by nature (they like to pre-plan everything), while others are more emergent (they like to be spontaneous).<sup>17</sup> Sometimes wisdom dictates planning things in advance, while sometimes it is wiser to deal with things as they come. PWR helps in *choosing what is best among equally viable truths* without being forced to change your style or personality.

This chapter explains the mechanics of PWR while the subsequent chapter offers several case studies to practice PWR in real-life situations.

### **PWR: PREPARE**

When faced with a problem, decision, or a project, resist the urge to take action. “It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way” (Prov. 19:2). Step back and PREPARE using the steps below. For simple situations, run through these steps in your mind, but for large or complex projects write down your ideas as you go, because they will be needed for later steps.

## PWR: A Framework for Exercising Wisdom

### First: Set the Context

Just as understanding context provides for good Bible interpretation, understanding your context will lead to wise decisions. Be like the men of Issachar, who started with context and “had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chron. 12:32).

Also, the context provides the motivation that ignites your passion. The compelling context of finding the western water route kept Lewis and Clark focused on their mission. In the same way, Joseph, David, Nehemiah, and Moses were energized by their context. Therefore, PREPARE is not about planning and logic, but gut-level passion. Passion is the key factor in wise leadership because it generates the enthusiasm team members need to persevere through difficult times ahead.

Here are the essential steps for setting the context:

1. The single most important aspect of context is to **seek God**. Everything starts by humbly seeking God and listening for His guidance. “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (Js 4:6).
2. Examine the **history** leading up to this event. List what is happening in your situation. What led up to this decision, problem, or project? How did you get here? Think about the historical context Meriwether Lewis faced in preparing for the Expedition.
3. List the **resources** you have at your disposal. Lewis had the backing of the American government and the best training in the world at that time.
4. List the **issues that are beyond your control** but affect this decision or project. The captains could not control what the

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tribes would do, what weather they might face, or what geography they would discover.

5. **List 3-5 values** that will guide you in making this project or decision. These are the non-negotiables, guiding principles, planning assumptions, or essential commitments that help you navigate complexity. For example, when the expedition chose a location for the winter on the Pacific, they selected three criteria to guide their decision (close to game for food; near the ocean to spot a possible passing ship and supplies; a convenient place to refine salt from the ocean). This is a good example of how values will guide you in your decisions. Values are important because when you are overwhelmed with details, they help you focus on what is truly important. They help you say “no” to one thing but “yes” to another.
6. **Be clear about the vision.** For Lewis and Clark, their task was *to find the best water route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean*. Noah built an ark. Nehemiah repaired the wall. Esther saved her people from extinction. Moses led God’s people out of slavery. Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land. Your task might be choosing a Sunday School curriculum or planning a deacon meeting.

### *The Benefits of Clear Vision*

It is said that great artists envision what the artwork looks like before it is created. For example, Michelangelo reportedly said he “released” his sculptures from their marble prisons. People of vision see the completed task in their mind before it happens, but others may not see what you see. Therefore, be specific in your communication of that vision. If there is confusion up front, there will be confusion along the way. In battle, soldiers die from lack of clarity and direction.

## **PWR: A Framework for Exercising Wisdom**

Clarity also separates out those who are supportive from those who should quickly move on to a different enterprise. You do not want people on your team who do not support the vision. Their lack of commitment to the task will end up causing problems, so you are better off with a small number of committed people than a large group with mixed commitment.

For those who remain, clear direction minimizes confusion, giving a sense of confidence and hope. Everyone knows their assignment, sees how they can contribute to the vision, and understands whether progress is being made or not. Clarity also unleashes tremendous creative energy. For example, in 1961, President Kennedy said, “I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving this goal, before the decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth.”<sup>18</sup> This historic challenge stimulated a technological revolution resulting in hundreds of scientific, medical, and technological breakthroughs that benefited the world.

A clear understanding of the vision can help you decide when to push forward and when to hold back, when to persevere and when to pivot, when to be bold and when to be cautious. You can be proactive instead of being a victim of circumstances.<sup>19</sup> By keeping the end in mind, you can take control of your actions in response to changing conditions.

Lastly, clarity of vision helps everyone recognize the difference between legitimate opportunities and wasteful distractions. For example, when Nehemiah’s vision to rebuild the wall was clear, he was ready with a list when the king asked him what was needed to do the job. On the other hand, Nehemiah recognized when his enemies were trying to distract him from building with several bogus meetings.

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When the vision is unclear, people will waste time doing unnecessary activities, if for nothing else than to go along with the crowd. Such was the case in the “Abilene Paradox,”<sup>20</sup> named after a Texas family who piled into the car for a long, hot drive (without air conditioning) to eat at an Abilene restaurant 50 miles away. No one wanted to take the trip, but no one spoke up because each one assumed the others wanted to go.

### *The Bottom Line for Context*

When clarifying the vision, it is common to pack too many goals or decisions together, which causes confusion. Narrow your vision to *one central idea*, and if you cannot, consider forming them into separate projects. Your work to set the context is done when you have a **clear statement** of what you want to accomplish and no more than five **guiding values** (informed by the history, resources, and factors beyond your control).

Lewis and Clark example for **Context**: Jefferson provided the vision statement: “Find the most direct all-water route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean.” The values are not explicitly listed but can be safely inferred: 1) Build friendships with the native people; 2) Return safely; 3) Gather scientific information; 4) If the native people can do it, can we.

### Second: Choose a Strategy

Having set the context (a clear vision statement and no more than five values), the next step is to choose a strategy to implement the vision. The temptation will be to choose the first, most obvious strategy. Or as Proverbs 14:15 says, “A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps.” Before jumping ahead, **dream about various options** or get counsel from others until you have a variety of alternative strategies. Suspend the tendency to



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charge into action. “Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance” (Prov. 20:18).

Once you have considered alternative strategies, the next temptation will be to *try all of them*. Instead, **narrow your options** by evaluating them in terms of your vision, values, and available resources. Consider practical matters such as finances, facilities, and personnel.

Finally, **select a single strategy** from among the alternatives, then give it a sanity check. In other words, does your strategy make sense in light of your history, resources, issues beyond your control, values, and vision? If this is in written form, this is the time to proofread the document, ensuring it makes sense.

Lewis and Clark example for **Strategy**: Lewis chose joint command with Clark and a group of 12 men, departing August 1803, returning before the winter of 1804.

### Third: Give Assignments

If you have a team around you, make sure you clearly communicate both the vision and the values so everyone involved is on the same page. Using the vision statement, values, and the single strategy, **make a to-do list** so you and your teammates are not left guessing about the specifics of their assignments. Make it plain, like David, when he left instructions about building the temple. “. . . He gave me understanding in all the details of the plan ... be strong and courageous and do the work” (1 Chron. 28:19-20).

Lewis and Clark example for **Assignments**: Various teams were established with specialized duties such as hunting, clearing debris, and taking celestial readings.

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Finally, as you wrap up the PREPARE phase, it is essential to schedule a time when you will assess the results of your plan, which should be done at least every three months (quarterly) for big projects, and more often for simpler situations.

The PREPARE part of PWR is complete when you have **set the context, chosen a strategy, given assignments, and established a review date.**

### PWR: WORK

There comes a time to stop the PREPARE phase and start WORK. Planning is important, but the value of a plan can only be tested by real life. Winning sports teams know they have to adjust their plans at half-time, and sometimes right after the game begins. They can work on a game plan all week, get four plays into the game, and realize the plan is no good. In the same way, you have to be able to adjust even as you are in the middle of a project.

Ministry, like sports, is a chaotic environment of rapidly changing conditions, where events seldom go as planned, making creativity essential. Fighter pilots learn to engage in the chaos of warfare by continually adjusting and re-adjusting to changing conditions, using what he called the “OODA loop” (observation, orientation, decision, action).<sup>21</sup> Jesus taught the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) that celebrates the most creative steward who produces a rich return on investment.

In the same way, you can equip your committed team members to thrive in the middle of complexity. Armed with a clear picture of the task, they can generate new ideas to achieve the vision when you give them the freedom to use their spiritual gifts without asking

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for permission.<sup>22</sup> Jazz music is an example of innovation within boundaries. Each song has a basic structure in which musicians are free to explore.

As you lead this WORK phase of PWR, watch for two extremes. One danger is a rigid commitment to the plan despite the changing conditions. The other is a lack of discipline to follow the plan that has been put in place. Some hold on too long; others give up too easily. There is no easy way to know when to stay committed to the plan and when to go in a different direction. You will make mistakes, but they will help you grow in wisdom for the future.

Lewis and Clark example for **WORK**: Shortly into their journey, they discovered their team was too small and so they immediately adjusted their plan, requesting more men. Later, when they realized the river was filled with debris, they re-assigned men from other duties to clear the path so the boat could go upriver more quickly.

### PWR: REVIEW

After a period of WORK, it will be necessary to discipline yourself to stop and REVIEW your progress. The temptation will be to keep plugging away. But your situation may have changed, so you need at least a slight pause to get your bearings. WORK is tiring and time consuming, so the **last thing** you will want to do is REVIEW your activity. It is easier to assume (or hope) that what you did was effective. But “a prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it” (Prov. 22:3).

REVIEW is important because of the military term “friction” (meaning “things seldom go according to plan”). REVIEW allows

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time to observe your results so you can take corrective action going forward. Wise leaders are relentless in their evaluation because they know it is the REVIEW process that produces wisdom.

Also, when you set aside time for REVIEW, you become freer to take risks during the WORK phase. It becomes easier to make mistakes when you know you can formally evaluate your actions in your REVIEW stage.

An example of REVIEW comes from the United States military. They are committed to evaluating every mission, believing the most important part of a battle is the debrief. Margaret Wheatley said, “[The Army] has this wonderful process of learning from direct experience called ‘After Action Review,’ in which everyone involved sits down and discusses three questions: What happened? Why do you think it happened? And what can we learn from it?”<sup>23</sup>

### The Stockdale Paradox

Admiral Jim Stockdale was the highest-ranking officer in the Vietnamese prison camp called “Hanoi Hilton,” and was greatly admired by his men. Despite being tortured 20 times, he did everything he could to help his fellow prisoners survive the loneliness of their ordeal. For example, he purposefully maimed himself in order to prevent the enemy from filming him as a “well-treated prisoner.”

From his horrific experience, he developed what is known as “The Stockdale Paradox: **“Retain the faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, AND AT THE SAME TIME, confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.”**”<sup>24</sup> Stockdale understood that great leaders are tireless in their evaluation because the REVIEW process brutally

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confronts the present reality, but at the same time, offers hope for the future.

### Everything Is Redemptive

Failures are inevitable, and even valuable, when you learn from them. The most devastating defeats can be fertile ground for improvement. Jack Welch said, “Crises teach us where the system is broken and how to repair it so it won’t break again...Disasters, in business and in nature, have the potential to make the organizations that survive them so much stronger in the long run.”<sup>25</sup>

And sometimes re-framing a situation can turn a failure into success. For example, Ed Delahanty failed 65.4% of the time in his profession, yet he had the fourth greatest batting average in major league baseball history. By reframing this situation, his lifetime .346 batting average can be celebrated, instead of his 65.4% failure rate.

Perhaps the most important attitude in REVIEW is to have a sense of humor. Because God is with you, you can relax. Even when the results are disappointing, your work has not been wasted. You cannot always see the whole picture of what God has in mind. But you can always find something to celebrate, so remember to thank God for everything, even the setbacks.

### The Mechanics of REVIEW

In most situations you should REVIEW frequently at first (perhaps daily or weekly) and then at least quarterly until the task is complete. At the end of the project, there should be a final REVIEW of the whole enterprise, with a report back to your leadership. An important part of this final REVIEW should include appreciation to those who

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contributed to the vision. Make a list of all who served in any way, including financially and prayerfully, then thank them for their help.

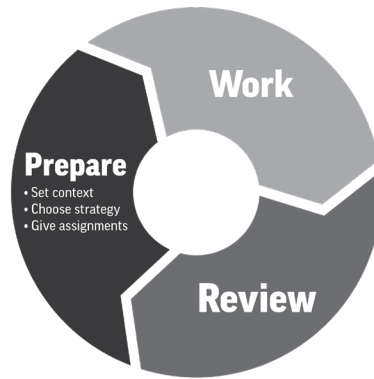
Lewis and Clark example for **REVIEW**: The crisis at the forks of the river provided a good opportunity for formal review, as did the winters at Mandan and Clatsop. Use moments of crisis or forced work stoppage as occasions to stop for REVIEW. At the conclusion of the journey, Lewis presented a final report to Jefferson to wrap up the project.

### THE CYCLE

You need to keep repeating the process of PWR, because your plans seldom work out the way you think. After REVIEW, go back to re-visit the three steps of PREPARE (set the context; choose a strategy; make assignments). Re-set the context based on your WORK, consider changing or modifying your strategy, then make new assignments based on any modifications or lessons learned. If you get bogged down, use your 3-5 values to get out of a rut. Values are a good compass when you get lost and need a way forward.

Based on your modifications during PREPARE, go on to WORK the plan a second time, and then REVIEW the results. Then repeat the cycle a third time because research shows that three rotations are needed to reach significant innovation. The first cycle yields obvious adjustments, and the second round will be more interesting, but pushing through to the third wave is where you will discover innovation.<sup>26</sup>

## PWR: A Framework for Exercising Wisdom



Prepare, Work, Review (PWR) is a simple tool to help you grow in wisdom. It is about adapting to situations and growing in wisdom. It is not about being organized, checking off tasks, or rigidly pursuing goals and objectives. It is not about bean counting, but rather fruit-checking. It is less about paperwork and structure and more about dreaming, scheming, assessing, reacting, and innovating.

In fact, the *process of planning* is more important than *the plan itself*. Plans can be thrown out, but the process of thinking and discussing imaginative ideas is critical. Dwight Eisenhower, leader of the Allied Forces in World War II said, “In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.”<sup>27</sup>

### Summary

The PWR framework is helpful in many areas of personal or vocational life, such as overseeing a project, planning a vacation, handling a personnel decision, leading your family, or managing your schedule. It is an iterative process that allows you to grow in wisdom over time. **In other words, victory is found when you are led by the Holy Spirit to PREPARE methodically, WORK creatively, and REVIEW rigorously.**

## **The Heroic Venture**

The next chapter offers several case studies from real-life situations for you to practice PWR.



## Chapter 21

### Practicing Wisdom Using PWR

THIS CHAPTER PROVIDES A simple example of PWR and then offers several case studies for you to practice using PWR in real-life situations. However, before launching into examples, it is important to clarify the difference between vision and goals, between your aspirations and your activities, what you want to see happen versus what you do to bring it about.

Vision is a picture of what is on your heart to accomplish, while goals are the activities you pursue to accomplish the vision. For example, if you are planning a wedding, you have a picture in your mind, a vision, of what will happen. Then, in response to that vision, you take steps to make that vision a reality. You select someone to deliver the message, determine the order of service, and assign someone to take pictures. While you cannot control the outcome of the wedding vision, you can take steps to accomplish that vision.

1 Cor. 3:5-8 says:

“What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor.”

We plant and water (goals), but God makes things grow (vision). Humans care for plants but God determines the growth of plants.

Goals are the steps you take toward the vision. However, the ultimate result is beyond your control. By taking responsibility for the things

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you can control, and sticking to your role, you avoid two dangers in leadership. One danger is over-spiritualizing, minimizing the part you play by leaving “everything in God’s hands.” The other danger is over-emphasizing your own abilities, forging ahead without God.

God accomplishes vision, but you respond to vision by pursuing goals.

### A PWR Example

To understand how PWR applies to even the most basic activities of life, consider a three-year-old boy playing with blocks, who asks his father to play with him.

*PREPARE (Set the Context):* The father quickly goes through a mental process: playing with blocks is good for kids’ motor skills, and children build security when their fathers play with them. This little boy loves to build and has ideas about what to do, while the father also remembers the fun he had playing with blocks from his own childhood. After a short conversation, assessing what they have to work with, they agree that the vision is to build a tower in order to knock it down in spectacular fashion. They now have a shared vision and several guiding values.

*PREPARE (Choose a strategy):* They discuss various building options. They can build for speed, build to a certain height, build with all the same colors, or build to some visually interesting design. They quickly agree that *building for speed* is their preferred strategy, with the objective to build it up to the boy’s height.

Next, dad reiterates what they are doing so there is no confusion: “We are building the tower up to ‘here’ (showing the boy’s height),

## Practicing Wisdom Using PWR

building as fast as we can, so we can knock it down together. The son corrects him saying, “No daddy, I want to knock it down myself.” Then dad checks to ensure there are enough blocks to build it to the desired height, and says, “it looks like we don’t have enough blocks to go that high, so let’s build it this high” (holding his hand up to the boy’s shoulders).

*PREPARE (Give assignments):* Next, they divide duties. Dad is assigned to separate the blocks by size, while the son builds the tower, with dad’s frequent consultation. They are both satisfied with their roles. Now, with PREPARE complete, the stage is set to WORK with speed.

*WORK:* They begin building, adjusting blocks as they go, in order to make sure it does not fall over before it reaches its desired height. At the end, the son gets the honor of kicking the tower over with a great crash.

*REVIEW:* They decide to build it again, but this time with a different building design, having all the red blocks on top. They build again, destroy, review, and celebrate the results, then build again with great satisfaction. After several cycles, they have created lasting memories.

This silly and simplistic example shows the essential steps of applying wisdom to a task. While most activities are much more complex and require greater effort, the same mental process is used.

At each step along the way, errors can be made that sabotage the endeavor. For example, if the discussion of context (vision and values) is skipped over, there can be an argument over their differing desired outcomes, resulting in conflict and disappointment. If alternative strategies are not considered and then priorities set, there

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could be multiple failed attempts before resulting in hurt feelings (e.g. “I wanted to sort the blocks and have you build”). Any one of these omissions can lead father or son to give up in frustration, making it less than a happy family moment.

### Case Studies

The following case studies come from real experiences. Read through each one, then select one (or more) to use for practice. For each one you select, write down each step of PWR (context, strategy, assignments, work, review).



1. At the conclusion of your small group, people start talking about how fun it would be to go on a retreat. Someone mentions that you would be great at putting the retreat together, and then the whole group agrees. How would you employ PWR to help you get started? Two weeks later, they ask you about the retreat and you give a report that is met with a lukewarm response. How will PWR help you see it through to completion?
2. You feel convicted about the lack of spiritual disciplines in your life. How would you employ PWR to help you develop what some call a “Rule of Life”<sup>28</sup> to develop healthy patterns in your

## Practicing Wisdom Using PWR

life? After six months of utilizing your Rule of Life, you are still unsatisfied and feel stuck. How can PWR help you get unstuck?

3. Think about the most difficult situation you have faced as an adult, such as a job loss or a broken relationship. Use the steps of PWR to analyze that situation if you had to go through it again.
4. At work your supervisor assigns you the task to oversee a conference to be co-hosted with a local church. Your organization's president is a good friend of the lead pastor of the co-hosting church, who is also a significant financial donor for your organization. After three weeks of meetings with the church's staff members, everyone seems happy about the event. But then you receive an angry phone call from the church's executive pastor, saying you have been too demanding in your emails to his church staff. How would the steps of PWR help you at this point?
5. You are a director of an urban ministry that runs several community programs, including a Christian school. Over the last months, you have received several complaints from parents, teachers, and board members about the rude and demanding behavior of your school principal. You encourage each person to talk directly with the principal, but they come back exasperated, declaring they tried to reconcile but without effect. Some of the teachers are threatening to quit if something does not change. You talk to the principal and he dismisses your concerns, saying the complaints are racially motivated or stem from jealousy. How would you utilize PWR to navigate this situation?
6. Your oldest child has been a star pupil, but now your second child is having behavior problems. The teachers consistently report non-compliance and aggression toward the other children. When you pick up your child at school, you sense the disapproving looks from other parents. After many weeks of correcting your child

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and making contingency plans with the teachers, you get a call from the school director informing you that your child may not fit in their school. How might PWR help you in this situation?

7. You are the supervisor of an English-as-second-language organization that ministers to a variety of immigrants and refugees. It is very hard to find qualified people locally so you recruit nationally and internationally. After several months of service, one of your teachers from Canada reveals that he falsified his immigration documents to get the job with your organization. Now the teacher's mother is dying and he wants to go back to Canada at semester break, but is afraid immigration officials will refuse entry upon his return to the U.S. You do not have enough time to recruit a replacement and everyone is already stretched thin with their existing caseloads. You ask him to give you some time to consult an immigration attorney to see what the options might be, but the next day he starts telling the other teachers about his legal situation. How would PWR help you in this situation?
8. You are a supervisor in a missions organization operating in several cities, planting churches and operating businesses that employ community people. In one of your remote locations, the local leader is on sabbatical when a visiting volunteer (a close personal friend of your boss) comes to town to help start a new business. Within a few days, the volunteer makes several cultural mistakes that deeply offend people in the community. Your boss sends you to look into the situation. Upon arrival you set up a public meeting to let people air their grievances. During the course of the evening, your ministry's missionaries are blamed for decades of offensive behavior, but you are the primary recipient of their vitriol. How would PWR help you navigate this problem?

## Practicing Wisdom Using PWR

9. You have some experience launching a coalition of ministries in your city. A colleague in another state asks you to help her to develop a similar collaboration in her city. She sets up a meeting of six people. After introductions, you explain your experience in collaboration and then ask for questions from the group. One person speaks up saying, “We should only allow organizations into this coalition if they agree with our theological statement regarding women in ministry.” This surprises the rest of the group but they fall silent. The meeting ends awkwardly with a pledge to meet again the next week. Your friend asks you to proceed because she respects the people invited to the meeting and does not want to alienate anyone. How would PWR help you in this situation?

### For More Practice

1. Look at each case study. How might you have used PWR in the beginning to avoid the problems before they become difficult?
2. Select one of the case studies and do a role-play exercise with a friend. Let your friend play the role of the other people, then go through three cycles of PWR for each role-play. For example, you play the part of the director overseeing the Christian school, and let a friend be the principal. Based on your friend’s reactions, go through three cycles of PWR.

### A Recap of PWR

PWR is a form of design thinking that can help you grow in wisdom within a variety of situations including decision making, problem solving, personnel issues, and project leadership. It is useful for major projects lasting years, and simple decisions made in minutes. Disciplined use of PWR allows for proactivity when situations become confusing at home, in the workplace, and your personal life.

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Also, PWR is flexible enough to work for different kinds of personalities (both deliberate uber-planners and the super-spontaneous). It helps you choose what is best among equally viable truths, without changing your personality. PWR is based on the idea of continuous learning, where you can grow in wisdom bit by bit, month after month, year after year.

### Conclusion

*The Heroic Venture*, the pursuit of wise leadership in uncertain times, begins with the adventure of preparation, and team formation. But it often leads to a mix of triumph and heartbreak, full of opposition, suffering, boredom, and even dead vision. But for those who show courage to the end, there can be renewed vision that leads to victory. *Your Heroic Venture*, your personal pursuit of wisdom, may follow a similar trajectory, even as it will be your own unique experience.

If you choose to walk with God, He will help you grow in wisdom bit by bit, year after year. Now go pursue *Your Heroic Venture* and as you do, pass on your life's lessons to the next generation.



# Appendices

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## Appendix 1

### How to Become a Follower of Jesus

*To become a follower of Jesus is to join God in His story of creation, incarnation, and re-creation.*

#### CREATION

**God Created: Beauty, purpose and evidence of His design are all around us.** The Bible tells us that God originally planned a world that worked perfectly, where everything and everyone fit together in harmony. God made each of us with a purpose, to worship and walk with Him. “God saw all that He had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).

**We Rebelled: The first humans refused God’s reign over them.** We selfishly insist on doing things our own way. The Bible calls this sin. We all sin and distort God’s original design. The consequence of sin is separation from God in this life, and for all eternity. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

**We Searched: Living life on our own does not work.** When we realize life is not working on our own, we begin to look alternative approaches. We tend to go in any number of directions trying different things to figure it out on our own. “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served something created instead of the Creator” (Romans 1:25).

#### INCARNATION AND RE-CREATION

**God Initiated: Because of His love, God had a plan to win all creation back from rebellion.** Through a chosen people (Jews), God revealed His plan to win back what was lost in our rebellion.

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He sent His Son Jesus, God in human flesh (incarnation), to live a perfect life according to God's design. Jesus came to rescue all creation (re-creation), doing what we could not do for ourselves. He paid the penalty for sin by His sacrificial death, restoring our relationship with God. Jesus was then raised from the dead, proving His authority to give eternal life. "For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son" (John 3:16).

**We Respond:** **We agree with His truth and turn away from our former life.** By admitting our sinful brokenness, we stop trusting ourselves and ask God to forgive us. We turn from sin (repent) and trust only in Jesus (believe), receiving new life, a new way of living, and a new community of fellow followers of Jesus. "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourself; it is God's gift, not from works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

**God Transforms:** **God changes us from the inside to be more like Jesus.** As we get to know God better through the Bible and His people (the Church), He empowers us to follow His design for life, assures us of His presence, and gives us hope for eternity to come. "For it is God who is working in you, enabling you both to desire and to work out His good purpose" (Philippians 2:13).

**We Represent:** **We are the continuation of Jesus' work on the earth.** Those who follow Jesus are assigned to continue Jesus' good works as His ambassadors in the world. We love and serve others, and invite them to join His story of creation, incarnation, and re-creation. "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

## How to Become a Follower of Jesus

**You Decide:** If you want to join His Story through Christ, all you need to do is ask. “For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13). You can talk to Him using words like these: “My life is broken and I recognize it is because of my sin. I need you. I believe Jesus came to live, die, and rise from the dead to rescue me from my sin and make me His ambassador. Forgive me. I turn from my selfish ways and put my trust in you. I know that Jesus is God, and I will follow Him.”

**If you have responded to God’s invitation to follow Jesus, the next step is to get to know Him better by studying the Bible so you can obey His teachings, join in regular relationship with His followers, and share what you discover with others.**



## Appendix 2

### Wisdom in Projects

PWR is especially helpful when you lead a project, which is an effort that has a beginning and an end, and which must be completed within defined constraints of time, resources, or quality.<sup>29</sup> Many activities can be viewed as projects. For example, every time you lead a meeting, conduct a service, design a new program, hold a counseling session, or host an event, you are leading a project.

#### The Constraints: Time, Resources, Quality

Time constraints are imposed on you by others, such as application deadlines that expire by a certain date, or seasonal restrictions (an Alaska outdoor barbeque is not feasible in winter).

Resource constraints can involve financial limitations (a church retreat in Maui may not be in the budget) but can also extend to facility or equipment availability (the community center may not be available on certain days).

Quality is usually the *least* recognized of the three constraints. Some projects expect extravagance, while others can be done with very few resources. When God gave Moses the specifications of the tabernacle, He gave great detail about what kind of materials He wanted to use, and how He wanted it constructed. On another occasion, God whittled Gideon's 10,000-member army down to 300 men in order to show His greatness. When there is ambiguity about the expected level of quality, conflict among the team usually occurs, so it is important to be clear about quality expectations.

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### A Classic Example

Ron Howard's 1995 movie, *Apollo 13*, demonstrates the interplay of the three constraints of a project (time, resources, and quality). While in space, the astronauts suffered a critical equipment malfunction, cancelling their moon landing, and threatening their safe return to earth. To avoid their death from carbon dioxide poisoning, their air supply needed to be re-designed.

Six engineers were thrust into the task of creating a new air supply. Their leader walked into the room with boxes of miscellaneous items available on the spacecraft. Dumping the contents on the table, he said to the group, "We got to find a way to make this [pointing to a square box] fit into this [pointing to a round hole] using nothing but that [pointing to the junk on the table]." <sup>30</sup>

If they took too long the men would die (Time Constraint). Only the junk on the table could be used to build this device (Resource Constraint). If the contraption leaked too much, the astronauts would die, so their design had to fit a specific standard (Quality Constraint). Working quickly, they designed a mechanism built with pages from the flight manual and duct tape. But it worked, and the astronauts made it home to earth safely.

With this example in mind, the following explains how PWR can be helpful in project management, under the constraints of time, resources, and quality.

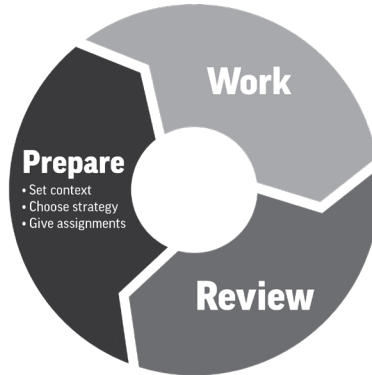
### Using PWR in Projects: PREPARE

The first step in using PWR in projects is to consider the scope of the project. The more complex the project, the more time you have to spend in PREPARE. Building a block tower with your son takes little



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planning, while designing a week-long conference requires extensive planning. The following steps are helpful in more complex projects.



### *Set the Context*

Remember to start by seeking God’s guidance (and at each step along the way). Then identify the context by asking these questions:

- How did this project come about? What compelling factors led to this idea? What was happening in the community, in my life, or the lives around me that brought me to this project?
- Who is involved? Who will benefit? Who might be affected?
- Why am I doing this? Why now?
- What are the underlying assumptions, convictions, and values?
- What resources (people, money, things) are available?
- What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats?

### *Define the Task*

Next, define the task in specific terms. You might have a number of goals, but there should be only one primary outcome. For example, the primary purpose of an evangelism training event might be “to

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equip the saints for service,” even through your other goals such as “networking with other churches,” or “developing leadership in the church.”

Alternatively, the primary purpose of the evangelism training could be “developing leadership,” while the equipping and networking issues are secondary. In either case, choosing one primary purpose will help you keep your priorities straight and navigate the inevitable difficulties to come.

### *Clarify the Values*

Armed with an understanding of the primary purpose, think through 3-5 values that will guide the project’s design and execution. In the example for the evangelism training, you can employ the secondary goals as values: 1) networking with other churches; 2) developing leaders in the process. The constraints can also be a source of values. For example, you may have a value of sparing no expense to make the training excellent (quality constraint).

### *Write a Vision Statement*

With the task in mind, and 3-5 supporting values, work towards a vision statement that describes the strategic intent of the activity. This articulates what the end product looks like in 1-3 sentences, including:

- **What** do you want to accomplish?
- **How** will you go about doing this?
- **Who** are you serving? (ethnicity, geographic area, economic level, personality, age, gender, specific need)?
- What are the **constraints** (time, resources, quality)?
- How is this **distinctive** from similar efforts you know about?

## Wisdom in Projects

A good example of a vision statement for a church plant would be: “Over the next four years, we seek to plant a culturally-conducive, indigenously-led church among the Portuguese in the Ironbound neighborhood of Newark. We will emphasize ministry to children that creates relationships with their parents.” Notice that the statement meets all the criteria (what, how, who, constraints, distinctive).

A poor example of a vision statement would be: “We will be faithful to God by sharing the Gospel. As people accept Christ, we will disciple them and form a church.” Notice how this statement fails to meet all the criteria. It does not mention a target audience. It does not mention time, resource, or quality constraints, so it is not a true project. The description of what the church will look like is unclear and there is little to distinguish this activity from others who might be doing something similar.

### *Choose a Strategy*

Now that you have set the context with values and a vision statement, it is time to pivot into the details of strategy, to define the steps and sequences in order to complete the project on schedule, within budget, and according to the quality specifications. The first step is to break the project into 3-5 pieces, because all projects, even complex ones, can be split into components. For example, when a company plans to make an airplane, they divide the plane into its major components: the wing, the fuselage, the tail, etc. Then they build each component separately and put them all together.

For example, in a project as complicated as the Summer Olympic Games, organizers can segment the event into major categories such as housing, governmental interfacing, competitions, transportation, and security. In managing a worship service, you might break up the

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project into sermon preparation, equipment and technical support, greeting/hosting, music, and announcements.

### *Create a question and task list*

Within each of the categories, assemble questions you have about the project, along with tasks that must be done, forming a single document. Such an inventory of all the issues allows you to begin organizing.

### *Consider the options*

While the approach to some items on the list will be obvious, others will require choosing a strategy among several options. Before you decide, you should consider several strategies, because you will tend to go with your first idea and not consider alternatives. A good way to consider optional strategies is through brainstorming, a process of quick-paced discussion about ideas, without evaluating the ideas. Ask people to brainstorm with you, allowing for even the most outrageous ideas, in order to get creativity flowing.

Brainstorming is effective because it presents the maximum number of ideas in a short period of time and it also sparks creativity among the participants. Include as many people as possible in the brainstorming process, providing they have knowledge in the subject. People will be loyal to the vision if they are involved in the process from the beginning.

Here are a few ideas about brainstorming sessions:<sup>31</sup>

- Explain the ground rules up front. For example, no ideas are bad ideas; there will be no discussion of each idea to keep it moving; each idea should be given in 10 seconds or less.

## Wisdom in Projects

- Cover one topic. For example, if you are talking about location for a retreat, do not confuse the session by also brainstorming about the food for the retreat. If unrelated ideas are raised, stay on track by writing them down on a list for discussion at a later time.
- Create a safe, relaxed, and playful environment where no ideas are criticized. Food often creates a relaxed setting.
- Assign someone to make the ideas visible, using a whiteboard or a shared document. Number the ideas as you write them down so you can reference them.
- Have a warm-up exercise to help people start thinking in the right direction. For example, if you are going to brainstorm about designing a class for new members, spend a few minutes telling stories about membership classes from other churches. Or give people an article to read before the session so they come in having thought about the topic in advance.
- Build momentum and excitement. Encourage people to keep adding ideas, even if you think you have enough ideas. That next idea could be the best one.
- Set a time limit. Brainstorming that takes too long discourages people from participating in future sessions.

If you are working on the project by yourself and cannot get help from others, brainstorm by yourself. Do not act on your first ideas, but consider unusual alternatives.

### *Narrow the options*

Having gathered several alternatives, bring order from the chaos of brainstorming. Narrow the options through prioritizing, combining,

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eliminating, or modifying, which can be done as a group or individually. Consider these two factors:

- Are the options consistent with the values and vision?
- Do the options fit into time, quality, or resource constraints?

Before you throw out good ideas that may not initially work, create a “not now” list for good ideas whose time may be yet to come or do not fit project constraints at the present time. Save this list so you can find it for the REVIEW part of PWR because some of them might come back into play.

Having done all this, finalize your best strategy.

### *Make Assignments*

Before listing specific action steps, mentally envision the whole project from start to finish, imagining in your mind’s eye all that will need to take place. If you do not do this, you will miss key details. As you do, add to your list of questions and tasks. Then follow these steps:

1. See if any tasks can be combined. For example, if you have a number of items that require shopping, combine them into one shopping task.
2. Estimate deadlines needed to keep the project on schedule.
3. Put the tasks in a logical time sequence, with the first deadline listed first.
4. Fact-check list, making sure you have thought through everything. Go through a second round of imagining the project in your mind as you consider the following:
  - a. People

## Wisdom in Projects

- b. Money
  - c. Equipment and technology
  - d. Information
  - e. Facilities
  - f. Prayer support
  - g. Approval
  - h. Communication (who needs to hear about what and how often)
  - i. Materials and supplies
  - j. Time for final review of the project
  - k. Unnecessary tasks or items that are redundant
  - l. Unrealistic or unreasonable tasks
  - m. Measurable and clear descriptions
  - n. Tools to do the job properly
  - o. Tasks consistent with the relative level of quality desired
  - p. Tasks consistent with availability of resources (e.g. is the van available that weekend?)
  - q. Alternatives based on cost
  - r. Tasks consistent with time constraint
5. Once the list is complete, delegate individual assignments, making sure people understand:
- a. Project's purpose
  - b. Expectations of quality, resources, and time
  - c. Frequency and format of progress reports

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### WORK

Having completed the PREPARE phase, start working the plan.

1. Monitor the task list daily or weekly. As a project nears completion, you will have to refer to your task list more often.
2. Follow up on delegated tasks. Some people need more checking than others. Some will appreciate you checking on them as a show of support, while others will be irritated, thinking you do not trust them. Be wise in leading each person.
3. Look for changes in assumptions or events and make adjustments accordingly.
4. Make vendors bid competitively. When you get three bids on items, you are likely to get the best price. Even if you have a relationship with someone, or have always done business with them in the past, it is still worth the effort to shop around. You will often find a better price, and it keeps all bidders motivated.
5. Run effective meetings. Come prepared with an agenda. Set the time and location for the next meeting before you adjourn. Clarify what the next steps are.
6. Keep notes on successes, failures, and ideas. If you do a similar project later, you will appreciate having the notes for future reference. Do not assume you will remember. Repeated events go 20% easier if you learn from your past experience.<sup>32</sup>

### REVIEW

Periodically evaluate your progress on the project by getting feedback from the participants, and from your own observations. Then go back to PREPARE by re-setting the context, consider any changes in strategy, and update assignments. Repeat this cycle throughout the life of the project.



## Wisdom in Projects

At the end of the project, conduct a formal review. Even though you think you know everything about the event, collect information from those who were involved by asking:

- What went well?
- What did not go well?
- What should we change, add, or delete?
- What should we retain or increase?

Compare results against your vision statement and values. Take any corrective action revealed in your evaluation. Keep the results for your next review.

At the completion of the project, remember to celebrate victory. Despite what the results were, and despite how satisfied or dissatisfied you were, thank God for His provision. Thank those who contributed to the project and report to whomever needs to hear about the results.

### Project Killers

As you PREPARE, WORK, and REVIEW, keep in mind some common mistakes that can cripple project execution.

- *Over-commitment to quality.* You can spend too much time and money trying to get it “just right” and miss the goal of excellence within reason. Hold to a high standard, but be careful not to kill the project by unreasonable expectations.
- *Overspending money.* Many failed projects run out of money before completion. Make sure you have adequate resources, or are able to make adjustments if money does not come in as expected.

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- *Taking too much time.* Projects often have a time constraint. Pay attention to deadlines.
- *Unclear expectations.* If people are confused about their assignments, the project can fail. Be clear up front, and follow up on delegated tasks.
- *Disagreement about expectations.* Some people will know exactly what is expected, but have their own agenda. If you discover this, you need to correct them, reassign them, or ask them to leave the project. Do not let anyone sabotage the project.
- *Too many meetings.* Have meetings only when necessary. Think twice before calling a meeting. Can it be handled over the phone, teleconferencing, one-on-one, or in writing? If you do have a meeting, come with an agenda so you do not waste time.
- *Poor leadership.* Most projects fail because of poor leadership. Seek to grow in all areas of leadership. Learn from your mistakes by asking for feedback.

### Project Example: Women's Retreat

To conclude this appendix, the following is a step-by-step example of using *PWR* to host a women's retreat.

#### *PREPARE*

1. You seek the Lord's guidance, then identify the context. You have just conducted an evangelism event and 32 women expressed a commitment to Christ. Now you need to follow up these new believers.
2. You define the purpose, which is "to orient these women to life in the church." You want to see all 32 women to become regular attenders to the weekend service and to join a small group.

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3. You break the retreat into major pieces: transportation, speaker/teaching, activities, food, follow-up.
4. You brainstorm options for each of these questions:
  - a. What can we do at the retreat to maximize the likelihood that the new believers will come to a weekend service and a weekly small group?
  - b. What kind of program should we have?
  - c. Where should it be held?
  - d. How will we follow up with people?
5. After that, you prioritize your brainstorming ideas. You eliminate or combine ideas in order to have a single approach for each question.
6. You develop planning assumptions. Out of the 32 women you invited, you assume 20 of them will attend. Also, you estimate another 15 women will come who are already regular attenders, for a total attendance of 35. You find that you have been given \$1000 for the retreat and have to work within that budget.
7. You make a list of tasks to be completed, thinking through the whole retreat from start to finish, imagining what will take place. Then you ask two team members to think through your list, identifying anything you missed, reporting back to you within a week.
8. You do a sanity check to see if you have covered all your bases. You find that you forgot to include the development of a detailed budget. So you add that to your list of items.
9. You communicate assignments to people on the retreat team, ensuring they know their duties, how much money they have to work with, and when they are to report back to you.

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10. You set the time for the next meeting and clarify what your next steps are going to be.

### *WORK*

1. You work your task list, monitoring it every other day to see how progress is being made.
2. Once per week, you check back with people who have been given assignments, encouraging them and making sure they have the information or tools they need to get the job done.

### *REVIEW*

1. You are on the lookout for unexpected events. For example, two days before the retreat, you find out that your speaker cannot attend because of a death in the family. You are not troubled or surprised, but react to surprises creatively and joyfully, knowing God is with you. You seek the help of others from your team to come up with ideas on how to adjust to changes. You return to steps in the PREPARE phase to help you make adjustments.
2. All along you are keeping notes on lessons learned so you can remember them later.
3. A few days before the event, you double check to see if everything is done. People may have forgotten what they were supposed to do, so you remind some of them about their tasks.
4. When the time for the retreat comes, you have returned to the PREPARE stage and created a new task list with all the things that have to occur at the event. You monitor it closely throughout the weekend, improvising as needed.
5. At the end of the event, you collect feedback from the ladies in attendance, and also from the team who hosted the retreat.

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6. You write a report on what happened and what you learned. For example, you note that 14 new women came to the retreat, in addition to 17 existing members. You also note that there was not enough food for dinner one night.
7. Two weeks after the retreat, you find out that three of the women from the initial outreach are coming to small groups. You think about the retreat and ask, what did we do well that helped us get the three women into a small group? What could we have done better to generate more interest?
8. You thank all the people on the team who contributed to the retreat. You find ways to celebrate what God has done. In this case, you host a tea for the ladies who served on the retreat team, thank them each publicly, and chat about the results.
9. You create a file containing your plans, notes, and a review of the results for future reference.



## Appendix 3

### A Word About Startups

You may have a passion for a new ministry. You believe it is from God. Now what do you do? How can you bring it from vision to reality? This may be a startup within an existing organization or a new ministry with its own legal authority.

Before starting your own organization, consider starting under the leadership of an existing network or organization for spiritual covering, legal protection, and wisdom. Starting your own ministry is very difficult and can be overwhelming. Learning from others is often better than launching out on your own. The day may come when you start your own organization, but a few years of experience under the covering of an existing organization is often the best way to start. However, if you feel confident God is leading you to start a new organization, the following principles can help you get started.

#### *Articulate the Vision*

While the vision may be clear in your mind, it will not be as clear to others. The task needs to be clear enough so others are inspired to join you.<sup>33</sup> Practice it, write it out, refining it several times as you get feedback from others. Use the steps in setting the context for PWR in Chapter 20. To further help you develop the vision of your startup, consider “the 4 P’s” (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion).<sup>34</sup>

#### **Product**

What is the product that you want to produce? Is it a youth ministry? A men’s retreat? A new church? A drug recovery ministry? Clearly outline the purpose of the product or ministry and what result you are trying to achieve. You can do this by answering some basic questions.

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- Whom do you serve? Think through the characteristics of the people your ministry will serve. Be specific about age, gender, ethnicity or other characteristics of your target group.
- What is the primary strength of this ministry?
- What is the primary way to measure the success of this ministry?

### **Price**

How will the finances work in this ministry? How much will it cost? Think through all areas of resources including the people you need, facilities, equipment, or technology. Determine how to communicate the cost. Sometimes this will be to garner donations, other times it will be to pass the cost along to people who pay for your product or service, or a combination of both.

### **Place**

Where will you deliver your product or service? In business terms, this is the “distribution” question. Will you have people come to your location? Will you take it to them?

### **Promotion**

How will you get the word out to those you want to serve? How will you connect the product or service with your target group?

Having thought through the 4 P’s, start explaining your vision to friends and have them tell you what they hear. Keep refining it until you have a three-minute version and a 30-second version. Memorize both versions so you can share it naturally in any given situation.



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### *Gather People Around You*

You cannot succeed by yourself. At minimum, you will need prayer support, and you may also need professional advice, such as an attorney or accountant. In some cases you will need employees or volunteers who work under your leadership. Start by sharing the vision to see who God brings to your team. Look for people with strengths you do not have, surrounding yourself with diverse perspectives and experiences.

### *Take Leadership*

As others join you, provide persistent energy to the task. People around you will get discouraged and others will drop out. But as the leader you must persevere. You can do this by rehearsing your values and vision, repeating them over and over again. If you get stuck, go back to these questions:

- Who do we serve?
- What are our values?
- What is our primary measure of success?
- What can we do next?

### *Start Small*

Many startups fail because leaders try to do too much, too soon. Enterprises that grow quickly often decline quickly. The best startups start slowly, build strength, and have capacity to last. Start small and be willing to let God grow your ministry over time.

Pilot-testing is an excellent method for startups. Start with something small and see how it works. Ask for feedback. If it is fruitful, try something bigger. For example, rather than starting a prison ministry,

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try visiting prison a few times to see if your visits are productive. Then expand to something more formal.

Think about Jesus' principle of the mustard seed. The Kingdom starts small and unseen, but grows into something to be seen and enjoyed by many. Start your vision on a small scale and be patient. God can grow it over time. Visions that are of God will be attractive, and people will join where they see God at work.

## **Appendix 4**

### **What If I Have No Passion?**

The single greatest aspect of leadership is passion. The simple truth is “no passion, no leadership.” No amount of wisdom, planning, or cleverness will make up for a lack of passion. Without passion, your endeavor will fall short.

As a leader, you must have a single-minded focus on the vision, a consistent energy that drives you toward the task. Passion will produce innovative ways to progress toward the vision. Passion is the source of innovation, the inner drive that thirsts for wisdom and generates effectiveness. But what if you find yourself lacking passion and motivation?

#### Praise

Without question, the single greatest way to increase your passion is to practice a persistent attitude of praise.<sup>35</sup> Praise turns your attention from thinking about yourself and focuses your mind on God. When you praise, you live out your highest purpose, the reason you were created. Praise allows God to renew your spirit and passion, positioning yourself to receive the knowledge of God, resulting in joy, despite your circumstances.

#### Ask God

Ask God for renewed passion. “How much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Matt. 7:11). “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matt. 5:6). Ask, seek, and knock, as Jesus instructed in Mt. 7:7-8.

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### The Basics

Always start with the obvious. Is there a broken relationship with Him that might cause your love to grow cold (Rev. 2:4)? Is there any unforgiveness in your life? Are you getting enough sleep and exercise? Simple health matters can make a significant difference in how you view your life and ministry.

If you have asked God for passion, checked your life for sin that would block your relationships, and attended to your health, then simply continue being obedient to what you know. Wait for the passion to come. Many times, God's people go through temporary spiritual dry spells, but God desires for us to persevere even when we do not feel like it.

### Peter's Prescription

2 Peter 1:3-7 outlines the process that keeps you from being “ineffective and unproductive” in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus:

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.”

## **What If I Have No Passion?**

When you hit a dry spot, push ahead, seeking faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. As you walk in obedience to Christ, passion and emotion will follow your obedience. “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). Trust that your passion will return in due time because God is faithful.



## Appendix 5

### Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible

|                 |          |                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|-----------------|----------|
| Genesis         | Gen.     | Nahum           | Nah.     |
| Exodus          | Ex.      | Habakkuk        | Hab.     |
| Leviticus       | Lev.     | Zephaniah       | Zeph.    |
| Numbers         | Num.     | Haggai          | Hag.     |
| Deuteronomy     | Dt.      | Zechariah       | Zech.    |
| Joshua          | Josh.    | Malachi         | Mal.     |
| Judges          | Judg.    | Matthew         | Mt.      |
| Ruth            | Ruth     | Mark            | Mk.      |
| 1 Samuel        | 1 Sam.   | Luke            | Lk.      |
| 2 Samuel        | 2 Sam.   | John            | Jn.      |
| 1 Kings         | 1 Kings  | Acts            | Acts     |
| 2 Kings         | 2 Kings  | Romans          | Rom.     |
| 1 Chronicles    | 1 Chron. | 1 Corinthians   | 1 Cor.   |
| 2 Chronicles    | 2 Chron. | 2 Corinthians   | 2 Cor.   |
| Ezra            | Ezra     | Galatians       | Gal.     |
| Nehemiah        | Neh.     | Ephesians       | Eph.     |
| Esther          | Esther   | Philippians     | Phil.    |
| Job             | Job      | Colossians      | Col.     |
| Psalms          | Ps.      | 1 Thessalonians | 1 Thess. |
| Proverbs        | Prov.    | 2 Thessalonians | 2 Thess. |
| Ecclesiastes    | Eccl.    | 1 Timothy       | 1 Tim.   |
| Song of Solomon | Song     | 2 Timothy       | 2 Tim.   |
| Isaiah          | Is.      | Titus           | Titus    |

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|              |       |            |        |
|--------------|-------|------------|--------|
| Jeremiah     | Jer.  | Philemon   | Phm.   |
| Lamentations | Lam.  | Hebrews    | Heb.   |
| Ezekiel      | Ezek. | James      | Js.    |
| Daniel       | Dan.  | 1 Peter    | 1 Pet. |
| Hosea        | Hos.  | 2 Peter    | 2 Pet. |
| Joel         | Joel  | 1 John     | 1 Jn.  |
| Amos         | Amos  | 2 John     | 2 Jn.  |
| Obadiah      | Obad. | 3 John     | 3 Jn.  |
| Jonah        | Jonah | Jude       | Jude   |
| Micah        | Mic.  | Revelation | Rev.   |



## About the Author

Don Allsman is the CEO of Completion Global, a Christian networking organization seeking to accelerate collaboration to accomplish Jesus' Great Commission. Founded in 2018, its mission is to mobilize the whole Church to its Kingdom purpose by getting every member involved, so every people group will be included. (Eph. 4:16, Mt. 24:14). This mission is expressed in three ways:

1. Awaken the Church to the opportunity of missions without leaving home
2. Empower the under-represented, especially people of color and the incarcerated
3. Create crowdsourcing tools to get everyone involved

*Prior to starting Completion Global, Don served with World Impact for 30 years, a ministry dedicated to empowering the U.S. urban poor through evangelism, discipleship, church planting, and leadership development. He led the expansion of The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI) by forming over 250 partnerships in 14 countries. He now serves on the advisory board of the Correctional Ministries and Chaplains Association and has authored books used to train leaders in the inner city and in prisons. He earned an MBA and a BS in Industrial Engineering before working in aerospace and management consulting.*

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Other Books and Training by Don Allsman  
(available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com))

- Jesus Cropped from the Picture: Why Christians Get Bored and How to Renew Them to Vibrant Faith
- Fight the Good Fight of Faith: Playing Your Part in God's Unfolding Drama (co-written with Dr. Don Davis)
- Think Again: Transformation that Yields a Return on God's Investment
- Climbing Up: Preparing on the Inside for Service on the Outside (co-written with Cathy Allsman)
- The Onesimus Workshop: Welcoming Former Prisoners into the Life of the Church (co-written with Cathy Allsman)

## Endnotes

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- <sup>16</sup> See <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/design-thinking>. Design thinking is a non-linear, iterative process that teams use to understand users, challenge assumptions, redefine problems and create innovative solutions to prototype and test. It involves five phases—Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test, and is most useful to tackle problems that are ill-defined or unknown.
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