



## *The Tap Root*

*April, 2010*

### ***You: Grounded, Effective, and Fulfilled***

By Nick Howard, Psy.D.

Welcome to the first issue of our Cypress River newsletter! Before launching into the essay, let me briefly share our hopes and dreams for the impact of our newsletter.

Our dream is that this monthly newsletter serves you as a Christian leader in a number of meaningful ways. We pray it serves:

- as a **resource** of ideas and frameworks that will equip and challenge you;
- as an **encouragement** to help you persevere in fulfilling your calling;
- as a **reminder** that you are a part of a larger community committed to honoring God and building His Body,
- and as an **inspiration**, to help you go further in pursuing greater groundedness, effectiveness, and fulfillment on your leadership journey.

The newsletter is designed to be read in about 5 to 10 minutes, in light of busy schedules. It is not going to be

#### ***Compelling Quotes***

People with high levels of personal mastery are continually expanding their ability to create the results in life they truly seek.

Peter Senge

They are to be called wise who order things rightly, and govern them well.

Thomas Aquinas

Hurry is not of the devil; hurry is the devil.

Carl Jung

Grace is given us for the precise purpose of enabling us to discover and actualize our deepest and truest self.

Thomas Merton

I have come that you might have life, and life to the full.

Jesus, John 10:10

super-formal (and there may be typos and errors on occasion!), but it will seek to give you something powerful to chew on and ideally incorporate into your life so you lead in more substantial ways. My hope is that over time it will be something you find yourself looking forward to, as a nice nudge and encouragement to engage your role with a greater commitment to leading well. May this be so!

To begin this first essay, it felt right to focus on my biggest wishes for you as a Christian leader, whatever your role—pastor, administrator, executive. We all have different callings, and it turns out that for us at Cypress River, our core calling is to support and challenge and strengthen Christian leaders. So, in that vein, let me hit three foundational hopes that I have for each of you as a Christian leader. (And, as you read through the list, please consider how you fare on each of them. Follow up newsletters will address how to grow in each of these areas.)

### **Grounded.**

From my vantage point, that has to be my first wish for you. To be grounded is remarkably compelling and yet is truly elusive. I believe it is one of the greatest gifts you can give to yourself, your colleagues and those you lead.

To be **grounded** is to be really clear in your heart and mind about 4 very fundamental things. These four things take time to gain deeper clarity on, but for the individuals who truly persevere in getting that clarity, the rewards are tremendous. These four things are about: getting really clear about who you are (a healthy, Christ-centered identity), about what really matters to you (your values), about where you really want to go and why (vision and mission) Creating a sustainable pace so that you can stay clear about these four things, will allow you to go even deeper with them. The most grounded leaders of course have each of the above rooted in their authentic, deepening walk with the Lord, as he is the ultimate source of groundedness.

Leaders who gain this kind of clarity experience and embody a deep level of peace and calm, which brings a much greater level of stability to their system. They are much more equipped to make stronger decisions and frame issues clearly as they are inclined to consider organizational issues in light of the values, mission and vision. Why? Because they think that way *habitually*, in light the personal work they've done. And, because they are grounded, they have greater mental energy and clarity in making decisions because they are not often exhausted or in a reactive mode. Imagine for a moment what it would look and feel like to be more grounded. It feels compelling, doesn't it? That can be yours to a greater degree.

### **Effective.**

To be **effective**, in my opinion, is to be executing really well on your top priorities. (Of course that implies the leader is really clear about their top priorities which is easier said than done!) Being effective is about **bearing fruit** in the most significant parts of your role. It is about seeing gradual change in the areas that lead to the most substantial impact over the long term, in light of your organization's mission, values and vision.

To be effective from a Christian vantage point also means that your most important priorities are shaped by authentic prayer, where you honestly bring your priorities to God and invite Him to shape and mold your priorities.

One of the toughest things I hear about in my coaching and training work with leaders is how overly busy schedules wreak havoc on effectiveness in the greater sense of the word. For a host of reasons, the undertow in organizations is towards busyness, reactivity and superficiality. These are dangerous agents, as they pull leaders away from clarity on the most important priorities, and from executing on the top priorities.

The strongest leaders, over time, find ways to carve their schedules in ways that honor and engage their most important priorities, tackling the most important issues that need to be faced. They are thus able to enjoy the richer fruit of knowing that they are shaping the organization and culture in ways that bring greater health and effectiveness to their organization. Imagine being more effective, engaging the most important things regularly, and gradually seeing the fruit flow out of that. That feels good too, doesn't it?

## **Fulfilled**

Ah, **fulfilled**. That is a sweet place, a delightful place. I believe we need to visit there as often as we can. To be fulfilled is to slow down and be grateful, happy and yes, even content about the good things that have transpired in your life. Generally, fulfillment comes only after having worked hard and skillfully on a project or relationship for quite some time, and seeing it bear fruit. Fulfillment is the richest when God is given honor and praise for his generosity and grace in being the “prime mover” in your fulfillment. Ultimately, fulfillment is about *feeling full in your heart*, giving thanks to God, and celebrating with others who are a part of realizing important outcomes.

Why is fulfillment so important? Because when we slow down to celebrate and soak in fulfillment, our humanity is honored—we are not just worker bees, or leader drones, we are humans with dignity and value beyond our production. And, when we enjoy fulfillment more, we are able to see others too not just as worker bees or drones, and honor them in more meaningful ways. Further, enjoying fulfillment deepens our relationships with God and others in a context of celebration. This gives us a glimpse of ultimate fulfillment, where we will enjoy the everlasting delights of the eternal banquet with God and His people. Imagine enjoying greater fulfillment and the life and peace and joy that will bring to you and your ministry. Great, isn't it!

## **Wrapping Up**

Well, there they are, our three biggest wishes for you...to be grounded, effective and fulfilled. Experiencing those three things on deeper levels can't help but bring you greater life and enable you to bless others and bring greater glory to God. Is it easy to get there? Nope. Can you get there on your own? No, and would you want to? But as we persevere in pursuing growth as Christian leaders, those things can be more and more of our experience on a regular basis. That is the commitment we are making at

Cypress River, and we hope to support you in that direction—through this newsletter and other services we provide. And, as you grow in those areas, you will have a greater and greater chance to hear the words that will fill you up more than anything else, “well done good and faithful servant, come and share your master’s happiness.”