

CHRIS CRANE & LLOYD REEB

SAGE

STAGE

The Most Important Leadership
Season—And How to Make It Count

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Season—And How to Make It Count

CHRIS CRANE & LLOYD REEB

This book is dedicated to all the mentors and Sages who have multiplied their impact by investing their wisdom in the lives of others, shaping legacies that last for generations.

Sage Stage

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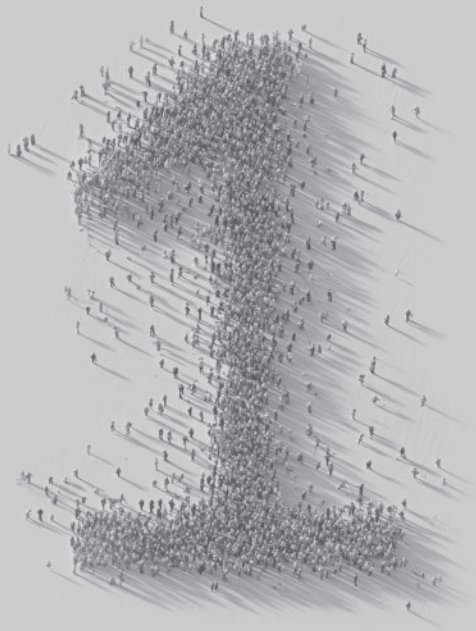
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Section 1

THE MOST FRUITFUL LEADERSHIP SEASON



MAKE THIS SEASON COUNT

Lloyd

“I’ve decided that since my business and investments have been successful and I’m satisfied with what I have, I now want to squander the rest of my life. My desired legacy will be that during my last season, I used neither my experience nor my resources to benefit anyone but me and my family. I want to drift along without focus or intentionality so that, on my deathbed, I’m deeply disappointed that the things I invested my time and money in are all but gone. I want to experience the regret of knowing that the things I could have done or given to might have multiplied a hundred times in blessing to others and joy to me in this very moment.”

That’s how I (Lloyd) opened a recent talk with a roomful of wealthy investors.

At first, they laughed. But then the laughter gave way to quiet smiles, and eventually . . . stillness.

For a long moment, the room was silent. I could feel the weight of the audience's introspection. It felt like I had just put words to a quiet fear we all carry: that our best contributions might be behind us, especially as we transition out of the first half of our careers into the rest of our lives.

I'm a real estate developer. I've spent much of my career building beautiful communities for seniors and, by God's grace, I found financial freedom more than thirty years ago. That freedom opened a door for me to co-found the Halftime Institute with Bob Buford. It's a professional community that now spans the globe, helping thousands of leaders find deeper meaning, purpose, and joy in what Bob called their *second half*—a time when we naturally are asking, "What's next?"

I've walked with businesspeople as they uncovered extraordinary ways to use their influence, experience, and resources to tackle the needs in the world that made them sad, mad, or glad, and here's what I've seen over and over again: Their joy increased as they stepped into more intentional, impactful roles; it did not decline. Their sense of purpose grew; it did not diminish or fade.

A Fresh Calling

- Dan, after the sale of his company that practically invented distance learning, used those same entrepreneurial skills to help build a thriving company

that employs hundreds of visually impaired people, and he's scaling it nationally.

- Cheryl, well into her seventies, is mentoring young female leaders after selling her portfolio of McDonald's franchises.
- Mike, a former Fortune 500 CEO, acquires companies with his adult children. The family's aim is to raise up hundreds of values-based leaders and give away the profits using the same wisdom they apply to investment decisions.

They're all practicing something I learned from *my* mentors—that each stage of life requires a fresh sense of calling. Our roles and our contributions must be renewed if we are going to maximize the season we are in.

After twenty-five years spent building Halftime, I sensed it was time for something new for me too. So as I turned sixty, I asked a very unsexy, sobering question: “What are the odds I'll live to be eighty?”

It turns out, a healthy, happy sixty-year-old man in the US has about a 60 percent chance of making it to age eighty.

That means there's a 4 in 10 chance I won't.

That statistic didn't depress me; it clarified me. If time is short, then every year, and every yes, and every no matters more than ever. The cost of being “sloppy busy”—unintentional and haphazard about my schedule—is too high. Spending time on things others could do, at the expense of what only I can do . . . that cost rises daily.

I've too often watched high-impact leaders spend a few years tinkering with personal projects after a career exit. They'll downsize from the family home to the perfect condo, or they'll build that dream place in Montana, hoping the kids and grandkids will visit often. But their kids are busy. Life moves fast. And the family visits only once or twice a year, if that.

That's not the legacy I want. And I know it's not the legacy my co-author and dear friend, Chris Crane, wants either.

Something I admire about Chris is this: he's now in his mid-seventies and arguably at the most productive season of his life. He's done two reinventions already—one at age fifty and again at age sixty—and he continues to mentor social entrepreneurs, invest in impact-driven ventures, and multiply his wisdom into the lives of hundreds of emerging leaders.

Chris's life is a picture of what he and I hope to help *you* discover in this book: how to maximize your *third act* as your greatest opportunity for impact.

He and I want to show you how to move from being the one out in front to being the one who helps others flourish in their callings. It's a different kind of leadership . . . and a deeper kind of joy. And its headwaters are deep inside our hearts.

I remember ninety-year-old Peter Drucker counseling my mentor Bob Buford, who was in his sixties: "Bob, in this next season of life, your job is to release and direct the energy of others and no longer supply the energy."

If something inside you is whispering that your next season of life could be your most important one, you're in the right place by reading this book.

Chris and I are honored to walk this path with you.

“When someone has been given much,
much will be required in return.”

—Jesus

Luke 12:48

THE POWER AND PROMISE OF THE SAGE STAGE

Chris and Lloyd

If you're an accomplished entrepreneur, a founder, a CEO, or a senior executive—someone who has spent decades scaling organizations, solving complex problems, building teams, and driving impact—this book is written with you in mind.

It's also for those who aspire to become that kind of leader.

It's for those of us who, after years of achievement, find ourselves asking a deeper question: *How can I use all that I've gained (my experience, networks, insights, and resources) not just for more success but for more significance—to add value to the lives of others?*

That's the question that brought me (Lloyd) and my co-author, Chris Crane, to this journey. We've each spent our careers leading companies, mentoring leaders, and building initiatives that aspire to make a meaningful

difference. Along the way, we've wrestled with the same restlessness you may be feeling: Is there more to this season of my life? Am I really making the most of it? What does it look like to be deeply useful now?

In our reading and research, as well as our decades of personal experience, mentoring, and conversations with thousands of leaders, we've realized that there is indeed a "Sage Stage"—a season of life that isn't about retiring or relaxing but about reimagining how your hard-won wisdom can multiply impact through others.

For Mentoring *and* Legacy

This book is a guide for highly accomplished entrepreneurs and/or CEOs who want to mentor ultra-capacity leaders, which we define as businessmen and -women who are capable of positively impacting *millions* of lives. It will walk you through the skills required to mentor at the highest level while also showing you how your legacy could grow exponentially through others.

You don't have to be a top-tier CEO to benefit from this book. If you're a leader hungry to learn, eager to deepen your influence, and curious about how wise mentorship works at the highest levels, *Sage Stage* will give you insight into what is possible and a path to lean into over time. Even if you determine that you're called to mentor a different category of leader, this book can heighten your purpose, strengthen your skills, and help you develop your processes and your discernment.

Believing that wisdom ultimately comes from God and that our greatest joy and impact come from walking with Him, we do write from a Christian worldview. But whether you share our faith or not, the principles and practices in this book will serve you well.

You can make the Sage Stage of your life not just successful but eternally significant.

The Opportunity for Greatest Impact

Our friend David Weekley is the founder of David Weekley Homes, the largest privately held homebuilding company in the US. With his company leadership now handed to very seasoned leaders, David invests his time mentoring leaders. In a recent conversation, he mentioned that in this season of life, he's more selective than ever.

He's looking for ultra-impact leaders with strong track records of accomplishment. Leaders with the vision, experience, and resilience to rapidly scale organizations and transform millions of lives. For David, mentoring is an investment too, and he seeks the highest return—not in profit, but in lives changed and communities transformed. He is intent on mentoring those who are the most likely to create maximum benefit from his mentoring.

That conversation was one of the sparks for this book. It gave Chris and me clarity: *The leaders most likely to create exponential impact are those who have already proven they can build, launch, and scale effective enterprises and overcome adversity.* They are visionary entrepreneurs and

C-suite executives capable of growing organizations that can transform entire sectors, nations, global regions, or even the world.

Extraordinary leaders need extraordinary mentors like David—wise sages who understand that their opportunity for greatest impact comes through others, by helping the next generation scale faster, avoid pitfalls, expand their network, cultivate next-level skills, and multiply their influence.

When a seasoned leader connects with an accomplished younger leader, something remarkable happens. The mentee doesn't simply replicate their mentor's path. Instead, they combine their talent with the mentor's accumulated insight, experience, and influence to create innovative new possibilities and accelerate change.

A Paradigm Shift with a Distinct Advantage

We're referring to this as the *Sage Stage* of mentoring, and it is a paradigm shift with a distinct advantage: the sage-mentee relationship brings together *two proven, high-level achievers*.

Sage mentors are typically over age fifty with decades of executive-level or entrepreneurial experience, and they bring with them deep, hard-earned wisdom. They've faced critical challenges, made tough decisions, and learned from their failures. This equips them to guide others through complex, high-stakes leadership situations. Their mentees—often thirty to fifty years old, with strong track

records of their own—bring with them fresh energy, a drive for impact, and a hunger to learn.

Whereas traditional mentoring often pairs an older leader with somebody who may still be unproven, Sage mentoring creates a multiplier effect where the accomplishments of both individuals synergistically generate exponential outcomes. The Sage's depth of insight provides more than wisdom and support. It provides the edge that fuels growth and impact within the mentee's pursuits to serve others, *into the hundreds of thousands or even millions*.

Do these numbers sound exaggerated? Both Lloyd and I (Chris) received much Sage mentoring, and we have seen the multiplication in our own lives in addition to our work with other leaders. I co-founded an organization that is improving the education of 10 million impoverished children in Africa and Latin America. I then had the privilege of passing the CEO baton to the co-founder while continuing as executive chairman. And my co-author and friend, Lloyd, has developed real-estate communities in addition to the nearly 25,000 hours he's devoted to mentoring and coaching business leaders and executives.

Now we are working together to take everything our mentors gave us and equip other Sage mentors for maximum effect. We believe that a number of you who are willing to pursue the Sage journey will guide your mentees to achieve far more in the future, and we are here to help you do that.

Why This Book Matters Now

This book matters now more than ever because we are confronted with a world of complex, urgent challenges, many of which affect billions of people. From deprivations such as physical, educational, and spiritual poverty to limited access to clean water, healthcare, and economic opportunity, traditional solutions are falling short. The family structure has broken down completely in some cultures, causing multi-generational damage. The countless number of suffering people demands innovative leadership and scalable models that can drive systemic transformation.

This is where Sage mentoring shines. It can take a variety of forms:

- One-on-one guidance from accomplished CEOs and entrepreneurs who have sold their businesses and are seeking to transition from success to significance by helping others
- Group mentoring through forums and peer communities
- Writing, speaking, or teaching to share insights with a broader audience

In any case, when a seasoned leader helps highly capable mentees avoid years of trial and error, they don't just save those mentees time; the trajectories of countless lives are changed. In other words, this process isn't about incremental progress. It's about transformational breakthroughs

accelerating impact through a dynamic combination of God-graced experience, vision, and talent.

The focus of this work is to explore the unique dynamics of the Sage-mentee relationship, its profound joys, its potential for global impact . . . and its challenges. Throughout these chapters, we offer practical frameworks, decision-making methodologies, and proven strategies to help Sages multiply their wisdom through others. You'll find information on:

- The roles and characteristics of an effective Sage
- The do's and don'ts of a Sage
- Identifying high-capacity mentees who are ready to scale
- How to build and deepen these transformational relationships
- Making the most of communities of practice for ongoing learning and support
- Staying mission-focused amid competing priorities

You'll also meet successful mentors who have embraced their Sage Stage, along with some of their mentees who are impacting millions of people around the world.

As mentioned above, this book is grounded in a Christian worldview. Scripture has shaped Lloyd's and my individual understanding and application of wisdom, leadership, and legacy, and we know it can do the same for you because its principles are both universal and timeless. *Anyone* who values mentorship, influence, and impact will find

valuable tools and insights in the pages of the Bible. We've taken steps to incorporate a number of those tools and insights here, in addition to our years in business and our long histories of coaching and mentoring business leaders.

We've focused on what works in the real world, not abstract theories. Each chapter builds on the previous one, creating a roadmap for anyone who is ready to step into their Sage Stage and multiply their influence. We expect that if you've picked up this book, this likely includes you! That's why we want you to start this journey ASAP.

Because the world needs you.

Because your wisdom is too valuable to be lost.

Because your greatest contribution may now come through the leaders you raise up.

Lloyd and I believe that, together, as Sage mentors, we can change the world—not through what we build for ourselves, but through what we invest in others like you. And perhaps, by the grace of God, millions—maybe even hundreds of millions—will be blessed through the wisdom *you* share.

This is the power, and the promise, of the Sage Stage.

MAXIMUM IMPACT

Chris and Lloyd

“**R**emember, Lloyd, our fruit grows on other people’s trees.” These words from my (Lloyd’s) mentor, Bob Buford, echo in my mind every day. They’ve become more than just a saying. They’ve become a guiding principle in my life. They’ve shaped my heart, influenced the worldwide Halftime and Faith Driven movements, and prompted me to start the Sage Stage movement with Chris.

I’ve shared this simple yet profound idea with thousands of business leaders, many of whom now lead organizations like Goodwill and World Vision. And each time I share it, I see that spark—the realization that our truest, deepest legacy isn’t about what we build for ourselves but about the harvest we help others produce.

Sages don’t measure success by personal achievement, or the size of their portfolio, or the number of homes they own. These seasoned professionals measure it by following their calling and how much fruit grows on other people’s trees.

Think about it for a moment: What would it look like if your best ideas, your most valuable lessons, and your deepest wisdom didn't end with you but instead lived on, actively reproducing in the lives of others? That's the kind of legacy Bob was talking about.

And here's the thing. It's not just reserved for the business "greats" like Peter Drucker or Bob Buford, or widely respected inspirations like the late Barbara Bush (wife of former US president George H. W. Bush), who did so much for adult literacy after completing her term as First Lady. It's not limited to names on bestselling books or those who've spoken to stadiums filled with thousands.

This legacy is available to you.

Right now, you could be shaping leaders, mentoring others, and passing along wisdom. And some of those people? They would eagerly take what you give them and multiply it in ways you've never imagined.

The Miracle of Compound Mentoring

When Chris was stepping into his Sage Stage, I asked him a question. He had previously taken his private-equity-backed company public and sold it, and now he was serving as CEO of an international nonprofit that was annually providing 227,000 impoverished children with quality Christian education in six emerging nations. My question to him was: "If I could show you a way to have ten times the impact over the next fifteen years compared to your previous forty, would you be interested?"

His eyes lit up. “Of course!”

We sat down and imagined a different path. Instead of continuing as the head of Edify, an organization he co-founded, what if Chris stepped back and poured his time into mentoring high-capacity social entrepreneurs? What if, instead of leading one organization, he led through other organizational leaders?

We played with the numbers. If Chris mentored ten leaders over fifteen years, and each of them mentored others, the impact would compound exponentially—kind of like the magic of compound interest, but with something far more valuable: *lives changed*.

Chris called it “the miracle of compound mentoring.”

Here’s what I love. This wasn’t just a concept to Chris. He embraced it. He helped scale social enterprises, he documented his learnings, and together we poured that wisdom into books like *The Social Entrepreneur*. Now, through *this* book, we’re encouraging others to consider the metrics awaiting the business leader’s third act.

Putting the Metrics to Work

As an accomplished entrepreneur or leader, you’ve spent decades building high-performing teams, scaling operations, overcoming immense challenges, innovating methodologies, and measuring success by traditional metrics. But what if your greatest impact still lies ahead? Not in continuing to run organizations but in architecting a legacy that keeps multiplying long after you’ve stepped away from

daily leadership—continuing even after your time on this earth has ended?

The day that Lloyd audaciously suggested I (Chris) could have ten times more impact in the next fifteen years than I'd had in the previous forty years of working in thirty-five countries around the globe, I was astonished at the thought. Yet I immediately bellowed an enthusiastic yes! The proposition seemed a bridge too far, but our ongoing conversation unveiled for me the profound and miraculous concept of compound mentoring.

The idea is simple but powerful. When you mentor ultra-capacity social entrepreneurs in their thirties, forties, and fifties—individuals who are already leading or have led meaningful enterprises—you're influencing not just one organization and the current generation but future generations. These leaders often have thirty or more years of active leadership ahead of them, which may well be followed by another twenty years or more of mentoring influence. With advancing longevity, someone's window of impact today could extend far beyond what was imaginable even a decade ago. And, as technology continues to develop, each of those Sage leaders has the potential to transform hundreds of thousands or possibly millions of lives.

Through their experience in scaling organizations, they ideally bring know-how, skills, contacts, influence, financial acumen, and drive to the process. And as they reach the Sage Stage and grow in their Sage skills, their impact will only expand as they learn to effectively invest in others.

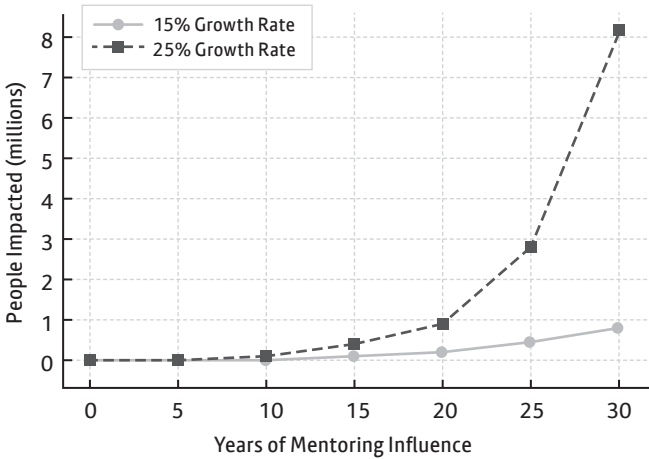
This is the exponential legacy created by just one Sage mentor who will invest in one or more exceptional, rising leaders.

The Numbers Speak

Let's consider the math:

- Assume you mentor *25* accomplished leaders over the course of a decade.
- *10* of them embrace your advice, leading to an annual impact growth rate of *25 percent* in their business or nonprofit (instead of the 15 percent they might have achieved without you).
- If each of those 10 individuals initially impacts *10,000* people per year, then in *20 years* they would individually be impacting just over *865,000 people* instead of roughly *165,000* people.
- But that's only after 20 years. If these leaders continue scaling for *30 years*, each would then impact *8 million lives!*

The Exponential Impact of Sage Mentoring



The math is compelling, but the decision is deeply personal (Lloyd). Many successful entrepreneurs or executives face a crossroads at retirement. Some choose a path of leisure punctuated by board service and perhaps some volunteer work. Others pursue luxury in the form of lengthy vacations, expensive hobbies, a hyper focus on longevity, and so on. In time, they typically experience a growing sense of purposelessness (our observation at the Halftime Institute was that this often happens within two years). This then leads to a gradual decline in their joy and relevance, which can sometimes produce personal crises like depression, addiction, or broken relationships.

I saw this firsthand as a young developer. My business partner and I were pouring our hearts and ambitions into

a luxury seniors' project perched beside a quiet river, just blocks from one of Ontario's prettiest downtown areas. Then the phone rang.

"Hello, this is Patrick," the calm, gravelly voice said.

Patrick. *The* Patrick. The man who built Canada's first indoor mall and dotted the country with architectural landmarks. Now in his eighties and in failing health, he was calling to inquire about him and his wife moving into *our* luxury seniors building. I set an appointment to go see him.

On the day of our meeting, I climbed the broad stone steps of his home, a white-pillared mansion that felt more like a museum than a residence. I had blueprints and brochures in hand, but my palms were sweating. I was eager to impress him. Maybe I'd even learn something from the legend himself.

Patrick met me at the door, sharp-eyed and upright. He moved slowly, but with purpose. He led me through room after room—each one quiet, pristine, and lined with photographs. Not of family or friends. They were photos of buildings. Shopping centers. Monuments to a storied career.

"This one," he said, tapping the frame of a glossy print, "was the first of its kind in Toronto." There was pride in his voice, but something else too. A kind of reach—like he was still trying to prove something.

We sat in his formal living room, which echoed only silence. As we spoke, bits of his story surfaced: a fractured family, declining health, yet still chasing deals, still

sketching plans. The man hadn't slowed much. He couldn't seem to.

When Patrick agreed to move into our new retirement community, I could hardly contain my excitement. As the heavy front door of his home clicked shut behind me upon my departure, I felt an aspiration surge through me: *If I stay focused and work hard, I could be just like him someday.*

But halfway down the steps a second thought struck, just as sharp: *If I'm not careful, I might end up like him someday.*

This entrepreneur had traded the priceless things in life for the valuable: deep relationships for square footage, a good name for a legacy of concrete and steel. And now his home echoed with absence. The photos were trophies, but there were no people in them. They had no warmth. No one was around for him to share those stories with.

A few years later, I read that the mall he had built in downtown Toronto was being demolished. A new project was going up in its place.

That visit to Patrick's home became a turning point. On the way up the steps of his home, I had ambition. On the way down, I had perspective. Wealth, I realized, is not the villain. Money, it turns out, is a terrible master but a brilliant servant, if I make it my servant.

From that day forward, I began asking a new question: *How can I use my time, talent, and treasure to build something that lasts—not in steel and glass, but in people and purpose?*

Legacy Leverage

So, as I discovered, there's another path. A path that leverages your unique assets as a highly accomplished, seasoned leader with decades of experience, deep networks, financial resources, and battle-tested wisdom. When strategically deployed toward mentoring ultra-capacity leaders who then mentor other such leaders, the ripple effects can span a century or more.

This is what Chris and I call “legacy leverage.” Deploying your wisdom for exponential impact isn't about satisfying ego or gaining recognition. It's about answering a high call.

Are you willing to move from being the protagonist in your own success story to becoming the catalyst in the journeys of numerous others?

The question isn't whether you'll leave a legacy. You will. The question is whether you'll *architect it* intentionally.

Either you will strategically send out your wisdom in a way that transforms lives long after you're gone . . . or you will allow your influence to plateau (and ultimately wane) just as your potential for impact is at its peak.

Your greatest contribution to the world will likely not be what you've built, but *who* you've helped build. Your wisdom, invested in energized and ultra-talented leaders, could catalyze tremendous progress and impact, not just for organizations but for millions of people—and for many generations to come.

The next chapter of your impact story awaits. Will you write it so that the Sage Stage is the most important, meaningful, and joyous chapter of your professional life?

You can. Let's get after it.

THE CALLING OF A SAGE

Chris and Lloyd

Entrepreneur and author Bob Buford was taught by his mentor Peter Drucker that “historically, leaders transitioned from Warrior, to King, to Sage.” In other words, the making of a Sage begins with being a great warrior. And over time, Bob lived that entire journey—a journey that Chris and I (Lloyd) will focus on in this book—modeling it with remarkable clarity and generosity.

Bob joined his family’s small cable television business as a young man. In his Warrior phase, he worked tirelessly to grow the company, which was competing against much larger, well-funded corporations that specialized in securing municipal cable contracts. Through persistence, courage, and sharp execution, Bob not only held his ground but expanded the business so effectively that he was named president by age thirty-one.

Recognizing that he needed help to develop a winning strategy for the next phase, Bob reached out to Peter

Drucker, the renowned “father of modern management.” In a surprising twist, Drucker agreed to mentor Bob. Their relationship became the cornerstone of Bob’s success, fueling a bold strategy that led to 25 percent compound annual growth for the company.

After selling the business, Bob could have settled into comfort. Instead, he stepped into his Sage Stage with tremendous purpose, launching three influential nonprofit ventures that have touched thousands of lives:

- *Halftime Institute*, where I was privileged to be his founding partner, has guided countless leaders in making the shift from success to significance.
- *Leadership Network* convened senior pastors of large, innovative churches to learn from each other (and from Peter Drucker) how to better serve and scale their ministries.
- *The Drucker Institute* was established to preserve and expand Drucker’s wisdom for future generations.

Along the way, Bob mentored a generation of younger leaders, including Chris and me. His life is proof that the Sage Stage is not a time to drift but a prime time to give your best wisdom, influence, and love—strategically and generously—for the sake of others.

Change Can Be Challenging

When most of us begin our careers, it often feels like hand-to-hand combat. As our leadership skills are recognized, we

increasingly take on a King's (CEO's) oversight role. With just a vision, some risk capital, and the ability to inspire and garner great teams, entrepreneurs create organizations from scratch. Others move up the corporate ladder to the C suite. Then, once we're older, we face the challenge of passing off the control of the King role and exchanging it for the reduced intensity of the Sage.

How does the thought of "reduced intensity" and "passing off the control of the King role" sound to you?

It's often a mixed bag for longtime leaders. As a Warrior, you focused on direct action and personal achievement. As a King (founder, CEO, etc.), you learned to lead and direct others for a specific cause or purpose. But being a Sage is different. It's not just a different pace. It requires fundamental shifts in how we think and operate, as well as how we view success, leadership, and legacy. This transformation calls us to move from giving directives to sharing wisdom. From pursuing personal achievements to multiplying our impact through others. From being in the spotlight to serving as more of a silent partner. The upside is that, in this exchange, you discover even more influence *and* the profound joy of helping others succeed through wisdom, guidance, prayer, and patient counsel.

Did the transition described above prompt emotions of anxiety, loss, or trepidation in you? It did for me (Chris). Being CEO at my company as well as at the nonprofit I cofounded was fulfilling. Being CEO was part of my identity! What a difference to realize, *wow, I will no longer be in charge.*

Anxious emotions in this transition are natural. However, within a couple of months, I heard myself saying to people, “I loved being CEO; now I love not being CEO even more.” It was exciting to mentor accomplished younger leaders determined to make a difference in the lives of many disadvantaged people. It was thrilling to see and hear how my advice was greatly helping them.

I remember sitting across from Mike, a highly successful CEO who had built and sold multiple companies. He leaned forward, his eyes reflecting both wisdom and humility, and said something that would forever change my perspective on mentoring: “You know, Chris, I used to measure success by what I could accomplish. Now I measure it by what others accomplish because of what I share with them.”

His description of this profound shift in thinking perfectly captures the essence of becoming a “Sage mentor”—that seasoned leader who finds his or her greatest fulfillment in helping other leaders create positive change that extends far beyond what they could achieve alone.

The Call to Multiply Impact

The journey to becoming a Sage is ideally illuminated by a deep-seated recognition of a divine calling—a calling to share the wealth of one’s life experiences and wisdom with others, to guide them through the trials and tribulations that being the CEO or founder inevitably presents.

Scripture provides numerous examples of mentoring relationships that transformed lives and advanced God's kingdom. Consider ancient Israel's leader Moses mentoring his successor Joshua, the prophet Elijah passing the mantle to Elisha, or the apostle Paul investing in the fledgling pastor Timothy. These relationships weren't just about transferring knowledge; they were about multiplying impact for God's purposes. As Paul wrote to Timothy, "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim. 2:2, NIV).

This calling often manifests itself after an individual has achieved significant success, encountered and overcome notable failures, and grown in wisdom and character as a result of both. These experiences form the bedrock upon which a Sage mentor can connect with and build up others who are navigating similar challenges.

I can personally attest to the transformative power of both success and failure. I have been fortunate enough to experience the exhilarating heights that come with achieving significant business success. I have also faced the gut-wrenching anxiety and uncertainty that accompany failure, and, more than once, the very real prospect of losing my company, my life savings, and even my house. I can provide valuable lessons that I learned through the crucible of experience, lessons that cannot be gleaned only from having been a CEO who wrestled with many significant challenges.

As a Sage mentor, however, you're not just sharing leadership experience and expertise; you're answering a call to use the gifts and talents God has given you to make a profound and lasting impact for someone else. This divine calling often emerges once you've experienced the benefits of being mentored yourself.

I remember when this call became clear to me. After receiving invaluable guidance from several mentors throughout my career, I realized I had a responsibility to pass on what I had learned. Scripture says, "Freely you have received; freely give" (Matt. 10:8, NIV). Applied to mentoring, we give freely of our wisdom and experience because others have invested in us.

Who are those people in your life who freely gave of their time to help you along? During one particularly challenging period in my business career, when a much larger competitor cut their prices in half in an attempt to drive my company out of business, I faced a cash-flow crisis that threatened everything we had built. It looked like I would not be able to meet payroll in four days, and after that, the prognosis only got worse.

My mentor, Merrill Oster, provided industry-specific guidance, giving me a roadmap for my next steps. More importantly, he provided the emotional support I needed to navigate the storm. Today, when I sit with leaders facing similar challenges, I feel particularly called to deeply empathize first (because of what I experienced), ask thoughtful questions like Merrill did, and then share from

my experience what worked and what didn't work, along with the invaluable lessons learned along the way.

Not only have Lloyd and I found that such mentoring helps mentees but it keeps Sages intellectually sharp, professionally connected, and spiritually engaged long after they've stepped away from day-to-day operations.

The 100x Vision

(Lloyd)

Effective Sage mentoring also has the power to multiply your impact a hundredfold and become the most productive stage of your life. When your hard-earned wisdom helps an accomplished leader navigate critical decisions, seize opportunities, and scale their vision, the ripple effects are profound.

Imagine looking back decades from now and seeing not only the organizations you led but also the number of organizations influenced by the leaders you mentored. Imagine the families who worked their way out of poverty, the children educated, the communities transformed—not just because of what you did but because of the wisdom you passed on. One of the most rewarding aspects of the Sage Stage is witnessing this multiplication of your impact over time through others.

I've been fortunate to watch Chris embrace this vision and calling. A decade ago, he mentored Deborah, an accomplished CEO and social entrepreneur in Liberia, which is one of the most impoverished countries in

the world. She wanted to scale her assistance to desperately poor mothers, to help them work their way out of poverty and educate their children. Through their mentoring relationship, she not only refined her business model but also expanded her vision of what was possible. Today, her great diligence, combined with a new initiative that Chris suggested, has Deborah's organization serving ten times as many women and children as when Chris started mentoring her! She is training other entrepreneurs to replicate her model in different regions and interventions too.

Another example that stands out is his Sage mentoring of Reuben Thiessen, who worked with Chris starting at age nineteen. Though he did not have a college degree, Chris saw much potential in him and encouraged Reuben to enroll in community college, where he graduated with highest honors and was invited to be the graduation speaker. He then completed his bachelor's degree online. Chris encouraged this young man to apply to Stanford University's Graduate School of Education for a master's in Learning Design and Technology, supported by encouragement and a recommendation from a professor-friend of Chris's. Despite Reuben's doubts, he was accepted and excelled, graduating at the top of his cohort. Reuben has gone on to impact the education of millions of children living in poverty in Africa and Latin America. Later, he joined the staff at Stanford, where he conducts workshops for the Graduate School of Education and the broader university community, equipping faculty, staff, and researchers with practical ways to use AI in education.

These mentees of Chris's illustrate the impact of Sage mentoring. Every leader you pour into as a Sage carries forward part of your wisdom to generations of people you'll never meet, in places you'll never visit, extending the legacy of your influence. This type of multiplication embodies what Chris and I call the "100x Principle"—the idea that, by investing your wisdom and experience in others, you can help transform many more lives (potentially a hundred times the number of lives) than you could impact directly. The principle is taken from the Parable of the Sower in Luke 8:

A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. *Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.*" (vv. 5–8, NIV)

The danger, of course, is that you will squander your Sage years if you do not respond to this calling. Explaining the last two seed conditions, Jesus said: "The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop" (vv. 14–15, NIV).

The same parable is told in Matthew 13 and provides a slightly different phrasing for the seed that is choked: “The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful” (v. 22, NIV).

“The deceitfulness of wealth” can affect any of us who come into significant prosperity. Have you ever heard someone say, tongue in cheek, “I will never be able to spend it all, but I’m going to try”? In its own distinct way, money has a sneaky ability to rob us of fruitfulness. In fact, the seed that fell among the thorns emphasizes how especially vulnerable successful people are to squandering their life. Scottish historian and political philosopher Thomas Carlyle wrote in his book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic*: “Adversity is sometimes hard upon a man; but for one man who can stand prosperity, there are a hundred that will stand adversity.”

The Path Forward

The potential legacy of the Sage Stage is being the soil for a 100x harvest in others’ fields or orchards.

It isn’t easy. It requires humility to relinquish control and your desire to force outcomes. Patience to guide others who think differently than you do. Discipline to pursue ongoing spiritual growth for yourself. And it calls for genuine care, prayer, and an attitude of service to those you mentor and the millions they will impact.

If you believe you are called to become a Sage to ultra-capacity entrepreneurs and/or CEOs, consider these additional reflection points:

- Are you (or have you been) a top-tier leader of rapidly scaling, complex organizations or an entrepreneur who has significantly grown an organization?
- Do you wish to help highly accomplished people scale their organizations in their desire to transform lives?
- What experience and wisdom has God given you that could benefit others?
- How might your failures and successes provide valuable lessons for other leaders?
- Can you shift from giving directions to being transparent and sharing wisdom with patience and empathy?
- Are you willing to accept that you (likely) have significant room for growth in your mentoring skills, even though you have often dispensed good advice that was favorably received?
- Are you motivated to invest concerted effort to improve your skills?
- Are you committed to a diligent, vigorous pursuit of spiritual wisdom and maturity?
- Are you eager to find fulfillment in others' achievements rather than your own?

In this stage, it's about you *giving* of yourself rather than *doing* the work yourself. In a very real sense, it's the

ultimate exercise in delegation—like a football coach on the sidelines sending in suggested (not mandatory) plays to a talented quarterback.

Not every leader can make the shift. Not every leader wants to. But for those who are capable, motivated, and called, a life-changing shift lies just ahead.

THE HIERARCHY OF SAGE MENTORING

Chris

Ideally, you're not only shifting from King (CEO) to Sage but progressing from casual to skilled, or even transcendent, mentorship as well. Thus, it's useful to determine what kind of mentor you are now, identify the kind you wish to be, and understand the pathway for the journey from mentor to Sage mentor.

First and foremost, Sage mentors do not view mentees as inferior to themselves. Rather, they view mentees as fellow travelers with fewer miles under their belts. Meanwhile, mentors vary in their "mileage" too. Some have been mentoring for decades; others may have worked with only a few mentees; still others may be new to this altogether, even though they have the potential and the passion to do so.

With potential Sages in mind, Lloyd and I (Chris) have developed a pathway for your growth consisting of five stages that we have represented in a hierarchy or pyramid (see below).

How did we arrive at this? Many of the seasoned leaders Lloyd has coached have expressed a desire to mentor after they exit their career. So Lloyd began asking them to do the mentoring self-assessment featured in chapter 14.

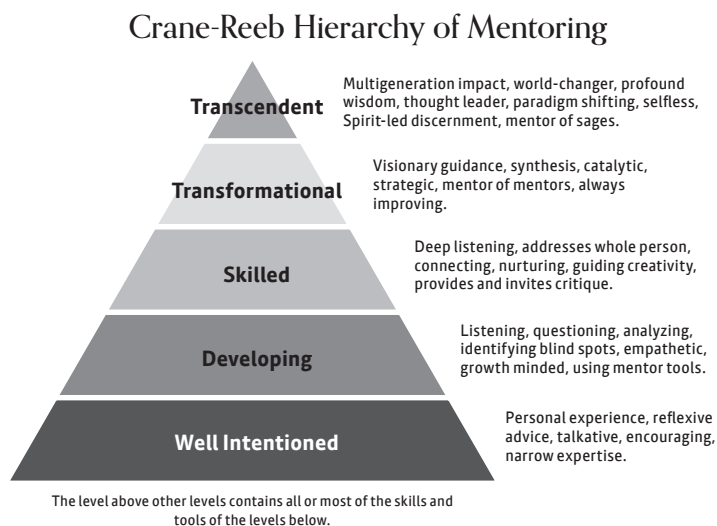
Once they complete this assessment, he invites these leaders into a peer-learning group to learn from other seasoned mentors as well as to share their own best practices. What has been interesting is that, prior to their first peer-learning call, these potential mentors typically score themselves very high on the ten key mentor skills defined in that assessment. For example, they may on average score themselves as a 9 in their effectiveness in using well-curated stories. But after just one peer call where they hear how others match select stories with focused learning points, they almost inevitably smile and admit, “Wow, I really overestimated myself on this topic!”

Over time, we noticed certain patterns corresponding with a leader’s level of mentor training and skill—a hierarchy of ability that we believe is helpful to those who are seeking the learning edge for their growth. We are pleased to share it with you here.

As you read, keep in mind that the base level of our hierarchy does not describe someone with little life experience but rather a highly accomplished individual with little training *in mentoring*. The world’s best athletes, from tennis players and Olympic athletes to Major League pitchers and NFL quarterbacks, all have coaches even at the peak of their careers. We believe that highly accomplished people can become more than good mentors; they

can progress to being remarkable catalysts for their mentees—if they approach their skill development with the same diligence that it takes to develop management or other professional skills.

We hope that this visual and the definition of the five stages below inspire you to advance through the levels and become the best mentor you possibly can, to benefit the most people you possibly can.



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The Five-Stage Pathway to Growth

As you read, remember these principles:

- *Developmental Nature:* Each of the five stages builds on the previous ones. Advancement requires mastery of the preceding stages.

- *Bi-directional Flow*: Lower levels inform higher levels. At the same time, the higher levels enhance lower-level practices.
- *Flexibility*: Effective mentors can operate at multiple levels as needed.

Stage 1: The Well-Intentioned Mentor

Basic Level: Personal Experience-Based | Reflexive Advice | Talkative | Encouraging | Narrow Expertise

The Well-Intentioned Mentor represents the natural starting point for most successful leaders entering the mentoring space. Having achieved significant success, these individuals are eager to share what they've learned, and they genuinely want to help others succeed. Their approach is characterized by generous availability and an abundance of advice drawn from personal experience.

Although they may have received positive feedback from previous mentees, these mentors often overestimate their skill level, as Lloyd noted above. They may think, *I have been successful so I must be wise!* Yet Proverbs 28:11 states, "A rich person is wise in his own opinion, but a discerning poor person can evaluate him properly" (NET).

These mentors can be overly talkative during sessions, measuring their effectiveness by how much wisdom they dispense rather than how much the mentee grows. They rely heavily on storytelling from their own journey: "When I faced this situation" or "Here's what worked for me." Their

primary tools are personal experience and basic analytical frameworks like pro-and-con lists.

Well-Intentioned Mentors may excel at providing tactical solutions, especially when it comes to issues in their personal areas of expertise. They have been known to offer valuable shortcuts based on lessons they learned the hard way. However, they tend to respond reflexively, jumping in with solutions as soon as challenges are presented. They quickly identify a perceived similar experience and express an opinion. Their guidance is typically prescriptive, with their assumption being that what worked in their context will work for their mentee.

Among the significant limitations of this stage are these: Well-Intentioned Mentors may not distinguish between their personal preferences and universal principles, and they rarely address the mentee's deeper needs for development or leadership growth. When a mentee doesn't follow their advice exactly, Well-Intentioned Mentors may feel frustrated or unappreciated.

Because they thrive on positive feedback from mentees, some mentors remain in this entry-level stage, never achieving the much greater impact their experience and gifts could offer.

The growth edge for the Well-Intentioned Mentor lies in recognizing that their effectiveness requires more than sharing success stories. Developing the patience to truly understand each mentee's unique situation *before* offering guidance is fundamentally important. The change point typically comes when these mentors realize that despite

their best intentions, their prescriptive approach isn't creating transformational results.

As Proverbs 20:5 reminds us, "The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out" (NIV). The Well-Intentioned Mentor's journey toward Sage-level impact begins with learning to draw out rather than pour in—shifting from telling his or her story to helping mentees discover solutions, develop problem-solving skills, and gain important insights.

The biblical foundation for growth beyond this stage rests in understanding that true wisdom isn't just about having the right answers but about asking the right questions that lead others to discover their own best path forward.

Stage 2: The Developing Mentor

Growth Level: Active Listening | Questioning | Identifying Blind Spots | Empathetic | Growth-Minded | Using Mentor Tools

This stage is characterized by a genuine commitment to growth—both the mentor's and their mentees'—and a willingness to develop new skills, tools, and frameworks.

In essence, the Developing Mentor has discovered the transformative power of curiosity over certainty. These individuals have moved beyond the Well-Intentioned style of immediately offering solutions to recognizing that understanding must precede advice. They speak only 30 to 40 percent of the time in mentoring sessions, and they actively seek feedback on their effectiveness. Additionally,

they invest time in learning better approaches and have begun building a toolbox of analytical frameworks beyond basic pro-and-con lists, incorporating tools like SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, Stephen Covey's four quadrants for time management, and basic personality assessments. They're serious about learning to read body language and emotional cues, understanding that effective mentoring addresses both rational and emotional dimensions.

Developing Mentors create safe spaces for mentees to think aloud without immediate input. They've learned to hold back rather than interrupting with a solution, instead asking follow-up questions like: "What assumptions are you making here?" or "What would success look like for you?" They understand that the process of articulating challenges often helps mentees discover their own solutions.

The growth mindset for Stage 2 mentors involves being proactive in their mentoring relationships. They maintain notes from sessions, track which approaches seem most effective with different types of mentees, and actively work to improve their questioning techniques. They start to recognize "hindering patterns" in their own thinking (such as biases and blind spots) and seek to minimize the influence of these hindrances on mentees' decision-making.

The growth edge for Developing Mentors involves learning to discern questions that get to the heart of the mentee's issue or challenge. Esteemed management consultant, author, and professor Peter Drucker said, "Asking the right question is 50 percent of the way to the best solution."

James 1:19 provides the biblical foundation for this stage: “My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (NIV). The Developing Mentor has learned that wisdom often emerges, not from having the best answers but from creating the space for truth to surface through patient, skillful inquiry.

Stage 3: The Skilled Mentor

Competency Level: Deep Listening | Whole-Person Focus | Connecting | Nurturing | Guides Creativity | Invites and Provides Critique

The Skilled Mentor has achieved a level of competency that transforms the depth of their mentoring practice. Having learned that their most powerful contribution often comes through the quality of their listening and the precision of their questions, they speak only about 25 percent of the time during mentoring sessions. They’ve developed the ability to hear not just the immediate challenge being presented but to identify the underlying patterns and root causes that create recurring issues.

Their most valuable contribution is in working with mentees with strong track records and a genuine commitment to growth and implementation. Thus, these mentors are selective about their mentoring relationships. They use clear criteria to evaluate a mentee’s potential, and their toolbox has expanded significantly to include sophisticated frameworks like decision trees, risk-preference curves,

enterprise risk-management mapping, comprehensive personality assessments, and systematic approaches to strategic planning. They understand how to apply different tools based on the specific situation and the mentee's learning style. They've also developed the ability to recognize organizational dynamics and help mentees understand how personal leadership patterns affect entire enterprises.

Skilled Mentors excel at addressing the whole person, not just the business-related or professional challenges. They recognize that sustainable success for their mentees requires growth in multiple dimensions—leadership capacity, emotional intelligence, spiritual grounding, and life integration. They are comfortable discussing how a mentee's family situation might be affecting their decision-making or how that individual's spiritual practices (or the lack thereof) might be influencing his or her ability to handle stress and uncertainty. These mentors also recognize the higher-level tensions and implications that can exist in the giving of advice. A lower-stage mentor might encourage spending more hours at work, unaware that this could lessen family support when family support is so important to professional success. A Skilled Mentor, on the other hand, understands that recommendations which might enhance the mentee's professional pursuits could undermine his family relationships and ultimately ruin everything that leader has tried to build.

The approach of the Skilled Mentor becomes more systematic and intentional. These individuals prepare for sessions by reviewing previous conversations and thinking

strategically about what questions might be most helpful. They follow up between sessions and help mentees track progress against agreed-upon goals. They've learned to balance encouragement with honest feedback, understanding that constructive criticism is one of the most valuable gifts they can offer.

The growth edge involves learning to adapt their sophisticated approach to meet mentees where they are while maintaining the depth that makes their mentoring transformational. The change point typically comes when they recognize that their individual impact, while significant, could be multiplied through systems and approaches that extend beyond one-on-one relationships.

Proverbs 27:17 captures the essence of this stage: "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (NIV). The Skilled Mentor has learned to create the kind of constructive friction that produces genuine transformation in both thinking and action.

Stage 4: The Transformational Mentor

Mastery Level: Visionary Guidance | Synthesizing | Catalytic | Strategic | Mentor of Mentors | Always Improving

The Transformational Mentor's synthesis and systems thinking elevates both the scope and impact of their mentoring. They have developed the ability to see patterns across multiple mentees, industries, and contexts, from which they provide insights that transcend individual situations. In other words, their thinking has become chess-like—they

can see multiple moves ahead and know how to help mentees understand the effect of current decisions on future options. They deeply listen to mentees and typically speak less than 30 percent of the time.

They are Sages who have embraced technology as a force multiplier for their wisdom and have mastered dozens of mentoring tools. They maintain sophisticated databases of insights, frameworks, and case studies; they use AI tools to enhance their preparation, identify patterns they might miss, and even simulate potential outcomes of different strategic approaches. Because their mentoring toolbox is robust, the Transformational can quickly access relevant experience from across their extensive mentoring portfolio.

These Sages excel at multiplying mentors. Yet they don't just mentor individuals; they think systematically about how to create frameworks and approaches that can be replicated and scaled. They often mentor other mentors, teach at conferences, or develop curricula that extend their influence beyond direct relationships.

With their cross-cultural and cross-industry perspectives, they deliver insights from unexpected sources. A Transformational Sage might help a healthcare entrepreneur by sharing lessons from a successful education technology company or assist a US-based social entrepreneur by applying frameworks developed in emerging markets. These mentors have learned to extract abstract principles from specific contexts and creatively apply them to new situations.

They have also learned to create and leverage networks. They regularly connect mentees with each other, facilitate collaboration between organizations, and orchestrate partnerships that multiply impact. They think bigger than individual success, to ecosystem transformation.

The growth edge involves learning to package their sophisticated insights in accessible ways while maintaining their systematic approach to multiplication. The change point typically comes when they recognize that their ultimate impact lies not in the breadth of their influence but in the depth and transformational power of their wisdom.

Proverbs 14:8 anchors this mentor: “The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways” (NIV). The Transformational Sage has learned to think systemically about ways to multiply wisdom across time and context.

Stage 5: The Transcendent Mentor

*Peak Level: Multigeneration Impact | World-Changer |
Profound Wisdom | Thought Leader | Paradigm-Shifting |
Spirit-Led, Discernment | Exponential Innovations | Mentor
of Sages*

The Transcendent Mentor represents the pinnacle of mentoring effectiveness—the highest Sage stage. These individuals have devoted thousands of hours to mentoring highly accomplished people. Their impact extends well

beyond individual mentees to shape entire movements, fields of endeavor, or areas of practice. They have transcended ego concerns to focus fully on multiplying their wisdom through others, finding deep fulfillment in watching their “fruit grow on other people’s trees.” Meanwhile, they are thought leaders who create original work and advance the field of mentoring.

Having developed sophisticated discernment about where to invest their time and energy, these Sages actively seek what Jesus called “pearls of great value” (Matt. 13:45–46)—mentees whose character, capacity, and calling position them to transform many thousands or millions of lives. While the Transcendent Mentor may have numerous casual relationships, they invest most deeply in catalytic leaders, understanding that their mentoring will compound across generations.

This Sage embraces mentoring as a sacred calling. They have learned to integrate prayer, spiritual discernment, and timeless wisdom (such as the Bible’s “Wisdom” books, like Proverbs) into their mentoring. They understand that the most important guidance often comes not from their accumulated experience but from their ability to discern God’s leading for each unique situation. Consequently, they often speak less than 25 percent of the time during mentoring sessions, seeking to simultaneously listen to the one they’re sitting with *and* the One who divinely directs all our steps.

These Sages have not only developed comprehensive toolboxes and systems for capturing and sharing their wisdom, but they have mastered many mentoring tools. They

maintain curated databases of insights and stories, create frameworks that can be taught to other mentors, and often write books or develop curricula that influence many, many people. They think futuristically about how to preserve and multiply their wisdom for future generations. Their AI databases can ask mentees prescient questions, with answers that allow real-time mentoring to be conducted on a higher level.

The Transcendent Sage has achieved what former corporate founder and CEO Terry Looper calls a “sacred pace.” This person has learned to slow down enough to hear God’s voice clearly and to help others do the same. Their mentoring sessions often include times of prayer, reflection, and spiritual exploration. They understand that the most important question for mentees isn’t “What should I do?” but “What is God calling me to do?”

They have also transcended the need for credit or recognition. They mentor other highly experienced mentors and genuinely celebrate when their mentees surpass them. Having learned to hold their influence lightly, they recognize that their role is to be faithful stewards of the wisdom God has entrusted to them. They exemplify the opening words of Proverbs 13:14: “The instruction of the wise is like a life-giving fountain.” However, even at this stage, Transcendent Sages continue to grow and diligently seek greater wisdom. In the humble embodiment of another ancient proverb, “Instruct the wise, and they will be even wiser” (Prov. 9:9), they actively seek feedback and course

corrections, understanding that wisdom is not static but continues for a lifetime.

The growth edge at this stage involves continuing to deepen their spiritual formation while finding new ways to systematize and multiply their approach so that others can learn to mentor at similarly transformational levels.

Proverbs 11:30 provides the biblical foundation: “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives” (NIV). The journey of the Transcendent Sage to this level represents the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise in Matthew 13:8: they have become good soil that yields a hundredfold return on the wisdom invested in them, creating exponential, eternal impact by growing fruit on other people’s trees.

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Not every mentor needs to or wishes to achieve Stage 5 or Stage 4. Reaching Stage 3 is a noble and wonderful achievement in itself! The right level for you depends on your calling from the Lord. Mentors who excel at Stage 3 can transform the lives of many people through one-on-one interactions. Some of their mentees may even have world-changing impact.

Lloyd and I consider Stage 3 (Skilled Mentors), Stage 4 (Transformational Mentors), and Stage 5 (Transcendent Mentors) to all be Sages.

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Remember, ascending the hierarchy to one of the three Sage levels isn’t about achieving perfection but about continuous

growth in service to those you mentor. Whether your calling is to become a Skilled, Transformational, or Transcendent Mentor, the journey itself transforms *you*! And the effort you invest will multiply exponentially through the leaders you develop and the generations they will influence.

THE JOYS OF BEING A SAGE

Chris

In 2025, I (Chris) had the opportunity to give the following update to one of my mentors, Dr. James Tooley, the pioneer researcher and world authority on low-cost, financially sustainable schools in low-income nations:

Dr. Tooley, you opened my eyes to the great difficulty of children living in poverty in developing nations to get a decent education. Eighteen years ago, you showed me a way to do something about it. The organization I co-founded, Edify.org, now helps over 10 million children annually in Africa and Latin America obtain a good Christian education. In addition, I am mentoring other school entrepreneurs and organizations to improve education as well as enrolling more impoverished students every year. Those entrepreneurs and organizations are now, in turn, sharing their knowledge with even more organizations. You transformed my life, which, in turn, transformed many other people.

Can you imagine receiving such a gratifying report from one of your mentees someday?

When you transition from King (CEO) to Sage, it will probably happen. But what matters more is what happens *in* you: you begin to measure impact by what others are accomplishing because of your guidance rather than by your personal accomplishment. This multiplier effect fundamentally transforms how you view success.

I recently had lunch with the CEO of a large international microfinance organization. He became CEO of this organization several years after me. The man told me that the vision I had cast eighteen years prior (to provide loans and training to low-fee schools educating disadvantaged children on four continents) had resulted in those schools receiving \$1 billion in microfinance loans, with which they built more classrooms and other school infrastructure. Not only did those loans give far more children access to quality education, but the repayment rate on the loans was 98 percent. Thus, the organization was able to continually recycle the loaned money to expand more schools indefinitely, and that microfinance institution has now guided dozens of other institution CEOs in developing nations to loan money to schools to expand educational opportunities and access.

I already had experienced one of the deepest intrinsic satisfactions of a Sage mentor: using one's hard-earned wisdom to create exponential impact through others. But to hear how my advice and initiatives were cascading through generations of mentees—often building upon

and expanding on what they've learned—was just icing on the cake.

The impact compounds as each person you mentor goes on to help others, creating ripples of positive change that extend far beyond your direct reach.

Additional Joys

There are other joys of being a Sage mentor as well.

Full Engagement

Knowing you're fully utilizing the gifts and experience God has given you provides a special satisfaction. Rather than retiring to a life of leisure, Sage mentors find themselves more deeply engaged than ever, but in a different way. Instead of being consumed by operational details, you're investing your most important learning in others, helping them become better leaders and better people.

This engagement often puts you on the front row of some remarkable transformations. Some of the entrepreneurs Lloyd has mentored have developed systemic changes that they've been able to scale nationally or internationally, thereby transforming millions of lives. Being part of these world-changing advances has brought a profound sense of purpose and fulfillment to his life, not just to theirs.

Learning in Both Directions

An unexpected joy is seeing firsthand that wisdom flows both ways. Every mentoring relationship becomes an

opportunity to learn from highly intelligent and competent mentees, who bring fresh perspectives and innovative approaches to solving problems. This is especially true when mentoring ultra-capacity leaders. *They* are going to teach *you* new things that will prove to be invigorating to you!

For several years, I mentored Peter Greer, CEO of the microfinance organization HOPE International. Peter is one of the best CEOs I've known during my fifty-year career. When I started reflecting on what I was learning from Peter, it quickly became apparent to me that I was benefiting from the relationship at least as much as he was.

Creating Enduring Legacy

Legacy is the fruit we've talked about. Recently, Lloyd and I had the privilege of documenting forty-five years of entrepreneurial insights in a book, *The Social Entrepreneur*. As we wrote, we both realized that these lessons would now be available to future generations of leaders that we'll never meet.

But the true legacy, as we've been saying, isn't in books or recorded wisdom. It's in the lives transformed through the compound effect of mentoring. When you help a social entrepreneur build a more effective organization, you're not just impacting their immediate beneficiaries. You're influencing how they will mentor others, how those people will lead their organizations, and how countless lives will be affected through this expanding chain of shared wisdom.

One of the best things about the Sage Stage is the one-of-a-kind opportunity it offers. Where else in your

professional life do you get to combine the Great Commandment of loving God and neighbor with the Great Commission of sharing Jesus' transformative message, well after your direct involvement ends?

Harvesting the Power of Community

Another great satisfaction comes from being part of a dynamic community of accomplished peers. Lloyd and I bring mentors together with their peers several times a year in what we call "Wisdom Circles." These gatherings spark remarkable collaborations that demonstrate the unique power of peer relationships and peer learning.

Dale Dawson's story illustrates the profound nature of these relationships. Dale is an accomplished business entrepreneur who earlier headed investment banking at the firm that managed Walmart's IPO. Yet it was his transition to social entrepreneurship—establishing transformative enterprises in Rwanda—that led him to discover an entirely new dimension of professional relationship. Dale soon saw that social entrepreneurs who earnestly seek to benefit others out of a sense of divine calling form bonds that transcend typical business relationships. These connections, forged through shared purpose and spiritual alignment, go to a level that is rarely seen in the marketplace. They often become profound friendships and/or partnerships in service to others.

Dale founded Urwego Bank, the largest microfinance bank in Rwanda; and Bridge2Rwanda, which is helping hundreds of thousands of small, subsistence-level farmers

vastly improve their production. Brian Oldreive, a Zimbabwean farmer who developed a revolutionary agriculture method for subsistence farmers, mentored Dale in how best to assist those farm families, who constitute 67 percent of the Rwandan population. Crop yields doubled or tripled. Farmers were able to pay for healthcare and school fees to educate their children. And now, thanks to that relationship with Brian, Dale is bringing the revolutionary program to other countries in Africa.

In my career, I scaled a for-profit company as well as two nonprofits. When I was looking to scale Edify rapidly, I consulted Rod Dammeyer, who has been CEO of two New York Stock Exchange companies and is a longtime private-equity investor. Rod had a wealth of experience at scaling organizations, and he asked me valuable questions along the way. Questions that opened the door to innovative ideas such as failing fast (if an initiative is not working, identify it soon and pivot) and establishing metrics that measure meaningful impact for donors as well as management. Rod also introduced and paid for a world-class education expert, Paula Cordeiro, dean of the University of San Diego School of Education, to assist our partner schools in Africa and Latin America for three years. The model she developed improved education for millions of children living in poverty.

Because of Rod's mentoring and the community he brought with him, a harvest was reaped: scaling Edify faster and ensuring that it provided much more benefit to its partner schools. I am filled with joy when thinking about

the Sage guidance Rod gave me. That joy is amplified when I share those important ideas with those I mentor.

Safe Spaces

These peer relationships often extend beyond formal meetings. Many community members have formed smaller accountability groups where they meet regularly to discuss not just organizational challenges but personal growth, spiritual development, and healthy work-life integration. These intimate groups provide a safe space where accomplished leaders can be vulnerable about their struggles and help each other navigate the challenges that come with success, such as ensuring that wealth and achievement don't derail their higher purpose. The collective wisdom in these gatherings often leads to breakthrough insights that none of us could have reached alone.

For example, I was in a Young Presidents' Organization (YPO) peer mentoring forum for fifteen years. I can't count the number of times that I or another member came for advice on very challenging issues and, through careful questioning and insightful advice from the group, gained several excellent ideas for solving the problem at hand.

Additionally, eight members of our peer YPO Forum group would go on an annual retreat organized by one of us. The setting and focus of the retreat were up to the member whose name came up in the rotation, which in 1994 happened to be me. My family had built a home for an impoverished Mexican family through Youth With A Mission—San Diego Baja, and it had been such a meaningful

experience that I decided this would be a great opportunity for our peer group to bond over as well.

One member of the group was Steve James, CEO of a high-tech company that had eighteen different venture-capital investors. (If you think having one outside investor complicates things, and I can tell you that it does, imagine having eighteen outside investors!) Steve thought that building a small home in Tijuana, Mexico was a poor idea, and he tried to talk me out of it. After all, our previous forum retreats had been to exciting places like ski resorts or exotic beaches. Tijuana was about as unappealing to Steve as anything I could have suggested.

To this day he says, “Chris dragged me kicking and screaming to that event.” Yet Steve had a life-changing experience. He was so moved at the closing ceremony, when we gave the keys to the mother and father of five small children, who cried tears of gratitude. Their tears caused all of us to cry. The family had been living in a mostly cardboard shack. The door was an old sheet, which provided no protection. The roof was a blue tarp, which, if it rained much during the night, would collapse, drenching everybody inside and leaving them exposed until the rain stopped.

Since that long-ago retreat, Steve James has brought more than a hundred groups, typically numbering forty to sixty people that have often included company CEOs and their family members, to build over three hundred homes for extremely grateful families. Steve and his bride even chose to have their wedding on the YWAM Tijuana base

during a weekend when they were also building a home with their wedding party!

These peer-consulting relationships help prevent the isolation that often comes with leadership (and with stepping down from it). As one community member recently shared, “For the first time in my career, I’m surrounded by people who truly understand both the burdens and blessings of running rapidly growing, mission-driven organizations. We speak the same language and share the same deep desire to transform lives.”

Sweet Memories Without Regrets

You’ve probably heard seasoned leaders—men and women of great talent—share quiet regrets near the end of their journey. We’ve heard confessions like these:

- “I missed the chance to truly understand my daughters. I didn’t love them in the way they needed to be loved. Without seeing what a healthy, loving man looks like, they ended up choosing men who weren’t good for them.”
- “I pushed my son-in-law to overachieve, thinking I was helping him succeed. Only later did I realize I never paused to see his unique gifts or ask what *he* wanted.”
- “When my management team came to me during a crisis and asked how I stayed so calm, I froze. I couldn’t find the words to explain my faith—the

relationship with Jesus that grounded me. So they walked away with curiosity unanswered.”

When you reach your later years, the joy of having been a Sage mentor becomes even sweeter. You’ll have the deep satisfaction of knowing you have helped many people, directly and indirectly, change their lives for the better. You’ll likely find that highly accomplished people still seek your wisdom and friendship, even as you’re rocking in that porch chair in your eighties. But perhaps most meaningful will be knowing that you’ve been faithful with the wisdom entrusted to you, and that you’ve multiplied it many times over through others who are transforming the world for good in ways you never would have imagined.

The Joyful Measure

The joy of the Sage Stage isn’t just in what you give; it’s in what you receive through the process. The late Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen, who coined the terms *disruptive innovation* and *innovator’s dilemma*, wrote a *Harvard Business Review* article entitled “How Will You Measure Your Life?” His concluding words offer a fitting conclusion to this chapter:

I have a pretty clear idea of how my ideas have generated enormous revenue for companies that have used my research; I know I’ve had a substantial impact. But as I’ve

confronted this disease [cancer], it's been interesting to see how unimportant that impact is to me now.

I've concluded that the metric by which God will assess my life isn't dollars but the individual people whose lives I've touched. I think that's the way it will work for us all. Don't worry about the level of individual prominence you have achieved; worry about the individuals you have helped become better people. This is my final recommendation: Think about the metric by which your life will be judged and make a resolution to live every day so that in the end, your life will be judged a success.¹

Section 2

PREPARING TO BE A 100x SAGE



MAKING THE SHIFT

Chris and Lloyd

Now that we've broadly discussed what a Sage is and why this is such an important and fulfilling role, we are going to cover some of the key elements involved in making the shift to being a Sage.

Transitioning from a King role (such as CEO) to a Sage role requires establishing both a new mindset, as we've just discussed, and some new ways. But first, it involves letting go of some old ways.

For me (Chris), when I sold my company, I was deeply impacted by losing my CEO identity and not being captain of a 420-person team. Previously, when I'd show up for work in the office building I owned, I'd receive respect and friendly greetings from everyone as I walked to my office. My phone calls were almost always answered by whomever I called. I was regularly invited to events and often asked to speak at them. Losing this platform felt like a part of me had been torn out. The people who bought my company had me on a six-month consulting contract, but they only called *once* during that time, and it was to ask

me to come in after work hours and look through my files to see if I could find a particular document. So much for being indispensable!

However, I have since discovered that in return for giving up control, power, and prestige, it is possible to gain influence and leverage. For many Sages, this transition also involves developing new skills such as writing, speaking, storytelling, and learning to serve on nonprofit boards.

Transitioning to Your New Role

Here are four key steps to make this shift smoother and more fulfilling for you.

1. Define What You Want from the Sage Stage

(Lloyd) If you desire to make this next season the most impactful yet—albeit at a different pace—clarity is essential. This is the pursuit of intentionality without insisting on control. Take significant time to reflect on what success now looks like for you. Attempt to get clear on your deepest desires and the great good you can do.

A useful exercise is to imagine you're sitting on a park bench thirty years from now with a friend, reflecting on how fast those thirty years went by. Your friend asks you how it went for you, and you pause, look off in the distance, and then contentedly turn to him and say, "It went perfectly." What would you scroll through in your

mind to reach that answer? What would you have accomplished? Who would you have become? Write down your “perfect-life metrics.”

Some examples:

- I enjoyed a deep, life-giving relationship with God and learned how much I can trust Him.
- I developed a habit of eager generosity.
- I maintained my health and energy.
- I surrounded myself with beauty and inspiration.
- I built intimate, long-lasting relationships with my family and close friends.
- I leveraged my impact as a Sage for 100x results.

Chris and I have found that it’s helpful to share your answers with trusted family members and peers and adjust things based on their insights. Keep this list visible, letting it help guide your decisions and choices.

Personally, we use these perfect-life metrics as a plumb line by regularly asking ourselves, “Am I living my life in alignment with these desired results?” and then evaluating, “*How well* am I living in alignment with these desired results?” We each then annually turn these metrics into a one-page, written plan that drives our daily and weekly actions for that year.

2. Exit Your First-Half Role Well

Even your departure offers an opportunity to leave a lasting impact. Approach your transition with intentionality by asking:

- *What does a “good finish” look like?* Define success beyond business metrics. Think about mentoring, gratitude, and deeper conversations.
- *What’s my deeper reason for stepping away?* Frame your transition in a way that inspires others, perhaps by sharing how your perspective on meaning, purpose, or legacy has evolved. Incorporate some of your perfect life metrics from Step 1.
- *Who should hear my story?* Consider different “stakeholder” groups—mentees, executive teams, staff, customers, or peers—and tailor your message to each.
- *How will I communicate my transition?* Through personal emails or notes, one-on-one lunches, blog posts, webinars, podcasts, and/or speeches, use this opportunity as you exit to pass on wisdom, vision, and encouragement.

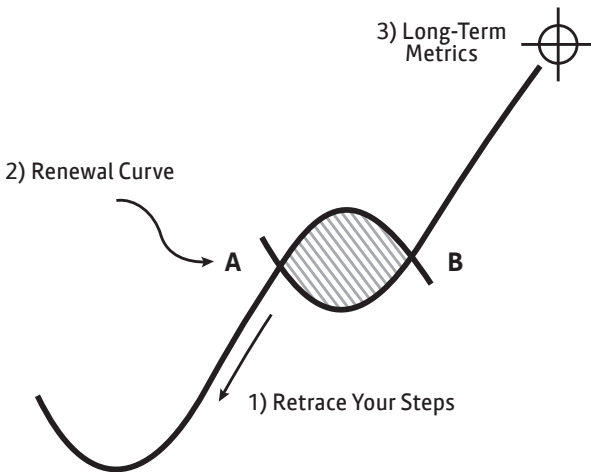
3. Find New Ground

Letting go of the King role can be difficult. As Chris experienced, your identity may feel tied to your title. You may worry about your wisdom being forgotten and the company culture being lost. Or maybe you hate the thought of facing an empty schedule. You worry that you might be a

nuisance to your spouse around the house. To address these concerns, look for ways to lay claim to this new territory:

- *Rethink this season.* Embrace this time of transition as a chance for growth, not a void to be feared. This is a wonderful opportunity to be the best you can in the most important season of your life! That's where you're headed. But like all good things, it will take some time, so be especially patient with yourself.

This classic sigmoid curve illustrates what to expect: that moving from King to Sage involves a renewal that trends downward before it goes back up.



- *Be honest about your concerns, and brainstorm strategies to counteract them.* For example, you're concerned that you will be around the house too much and not only bother your spouse but feel like you are completely

out of the action. What about finding shared office space or creating a workspace with friends to address this fear? Mike Baughan and his buddies bought and renovated a historic building in downtown Winston-Salem, North Carolina that provides not only private offices for each of them but a kitchen, great meeting spaces, and room for some of their art collections.

- *Redefine your identity.* Reflect on who you are beyond your job title. Write a “Being Statement” that describes the person you aspire to be. My statement is: *To be a kind, wise, inspiring husband, mentor, and thought leader, guided by the Spirit of God and with the courage to act.*
- *Gather a personal advisory board.* A personal board of directors is a small group of three to five family members, friends, and colleagues who will give you input, honest feedback, and encouragement as you go through this transition. After years of mentoring others through this shift, I have noticed that those who transition in the healthiest way have at least a few loving, supportive people to help them process the spiritual, emotional, financial, marital, and relational aspects.

I have benefited from a personal board for more than twenty years. To be honest, the biggest challenge I have faced is finding the courage for the vulnerability and intimacy it requires. After all, this is not a business board of directors helping you analyze your organization’s strengths, weaknesses, and

opportunities. Thankfully, stepping into this deeper conversation pays huge dividends because it forces you to look at your tendencies, thought patterns, and fears. More importantly, you'll get a better understanding of what your next steps should be.

- *Preserve your wisdom.* Start now to capture your experiences and insights in writing, videos, or structured, recorded conversations so they remain available to future leaders. Terry Looper, for example, who founded Texon L.P., has captured his lifelong learnings in the wisdom-packed book *Sacred Pace* and has since shared that wisdom in talks and podcasts that have impacted thousands around the world. But he had to start by recognizing that he has layers of wisdom, and if he didn't capture them in some way, he was not being a good steward of what God had given him to share.

4. Establish a New Rhythm and New Habits

Without structure, you may quickly become “sloppy busy,” filling your time with low-impact activities. To prevent this:

- *Take a rest season.* Initially, give yourself several weeks or months to rest and explore new interests. What new passions or skills intrigue you? As you transition, begin to add more structure into your schedule with meaningful commitments to avoid feeling adrift.
- *Create and carry out a new schedule.* Once you've taken some time to decompress, define your

priorities (family, health, friendships, mentoring, spiritual growth, etc.) and block off time for them. Set recurring appointments, giving first priority to your relationships.

- *Dedicate space for discovery.* Explore new passions and roles intentionally rather than waiting for opportunities to come to you. Note: Opportunities to serve on corporate or nonprofit boards are almost sure to come your way. We encourage you to respond that you are making no big commitments during this season. Explain that you are doing several low-cost probes in this year of discovery. This will help you avoid the trap of being stuck with multi-year commitments before you have thoughtfully designed the true path forward for your life.

While this transition marks the end of one era, it heralds the beginning of another that affords a wonderful opportunity for personal and spiritual growth. By embracing it with courage and intention, you can create a future full of deep meaning, influence, and joy.

The best years of impact are ahead of you. Plan to make this next phase your most influential by giving the shift from King to Sage the attention—and intention—it deserves.

HOW (NOT) TO SQUANDER YOUR SAGE YEARS

Lloyd

After more than twenty-five years coaching high-capability leaders through the Halftime Institute and 100xForum.org, I (Lloyd) have observed three key factors that can prevent us from fully embracing the joy and impact of the Sage Stage: *complexity*, *comfort*, and *complacency*. Let's explore each of them here.

Three Obstacles

1. Complexity: When Life Becomes Too Full

When we sell our companies or retire from a big career, we have not only accumulated financial resources but also typically homes, club memberships, acquaintances, and commitments. Our investments tend to get more complex. Even our relationships can become complex if we've moved often or have an extensive network.

Each addition, while potentially valuable, demands time and attention. This is especially true with toys such as boats, planes, and resort homes. As the old saying goes, “The more things you own, the more things that own you.” A friend of mine who has purchased many expensive toys says, “Everything that you own takes time, and more time than you thought.”

The unintended result? Less space for silence, reflection, and innovation in our Sage Stage. The busyness of managing assets, relationships, and obligations can crowd out the time we hoped to use sharing our wisdom to bless others and spread God’s love wider and deeper.

How to Avoid Complexity

- *Declutter your life.* Just because you can afford another [fill in the blank] doesn’t mean you should say yes. Which investments take up disproportionate amounts of time with minimal returns? Which relationships are not building you up or may even be holding you back?
- *Simplify your responsibilities.* Prioritize what aligns with your mission and let go of the rest. For example, if you got off those governing boards and just provided direct mentoring from time to time to the organization’s executive director, would that save you time and travel and make a more focused impact?
- *Socialize with thoughtful people.* Spending time with someone is an investment. Invest most of your social time outside of family with people who provide a

good return on investment to you, and you to them. Well-read, discerning people who like to think deeply and discuss important topics will challenge your thinking and keep you sharp.

- *Carve out solitude.* Create space for silence, deep reflection, and learning. I find I must impose this into my calendar. I schedule three, one-day silent retreats every year in a beautiful location in order to be quiet, process my thoughts and feelings, and listen to God. Looking back through my notes from more than twenty years of regular practice, I can clearly see: this habit has been a game changer. In my younger years, I remember feeling like I could not afford to take a silent day with God. Now I know that I can't afford NOT to take this time away.

2. Comfort: When We Prioritize Ease Over Impact

It's natural to seek physical and emotional comfort. After decades of leadership, we may feel we've earned the right to step away from challenges that require risk or effort. But the subtle drift toward ease can lead us to withdraw from meaningful work.

One leader, deeply moved by the plight of children who had lost a parent in military service, found a "perfect fit" organization where he could apply his thirty-five years of experience. I coached him shortly after the sale of his company, and he developed a ten-year plan for how this organization could greatly benefit many children of deceased warriors. Yet as time passed, his availability to the

organization got crowded out by travel, adventures, and leisure activities. The opportunity to make a lasting impact slipped away.

When I connected with him years later, the man lamented that he had pursued comfort and luxury rather than applying himself on behalf of those kids. He had become like the people in the Parable of the Sower in Luke 18: “The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature” (v. 14). Unfortunately, the natural de-evolution (Chris and I have carefully chosen that word to contrast with the word “evolution”) is to be distracted by riches and pleasures after coming into some financial freedom.

What are some of the long-term implications? Back in 1995, Bob Buford began following twenty-four entrepreneurs who had sold their companies. Most were between forty and fifty-five years old at the time their companies were acquired. About 75 percent of them decided they were going to live “the good life” because they had more money than they thought they could ever spend. They purchased fancy cars, boats, planes, and luxury homes in various places. Within two years, a significant majority of them were divorced and unhappy.

The other 25 percent had decided to start or buy another company, or to start or become CEO of a social enterprise helping disadvantaged people. All these individuals remained married and reported being happy two years

after selling their companies. They were working hard and enjoying it.

These findings really caught Bob's attention. It was one of the reasons he decided to start the Halftime Institute. Halftime (and now the 100xForum.org) shows people how they can invest their significant track record, skills, influence, contacts, and money to continue contributing to the world. This is in accord with the Bible.

King Solomon, who had everything any man could want, said in Ecclesiastes 2:10, "I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors." In 3:22 he said, "So I saw that there is nothing better for people than to be happy in their work." In 5:19–20 he said, "To enjoy your work and accept your lot in life—this is indeed a gift from God. God keeps such people so busy enjoying life that they take no time to brood over the past."

How to Avoid Too Much Comfort

- *Be intentional with leisure.* Rest and enjoyment are very important, of course, but as you look at your calendar for the year ahead, do you sense that fun things are displacing your calling? If so, what could be removed that would open more time for the impact you want to make and the legacy you want to leave?
- *Stay engaged in meaningful challenges.* Stretch yourself with projects that align with your calling and involve risk and hard work.
- *Take calculated risks.* Be willing to step into the unknown when it serves a greater purpose. When

Chris and I came up with the idea of Ardent Mentoring—to match high-capacity leaders as mentors to young Christian entrepreneurs—I really didn't want to take the risk on another startup: the risk of failure, the risk to my reputation, the financial commitment it would require, not to mention all the hard work that would be involved.

I was surprised and, frankly, a little disappointed by my internal temptation to forgo the opportunity for this one reason. I had to rely on the learned habit of coming back to my long-term metrics and my personal mission statement. Those two written statements helped to remind me of what I really wanted for my future and find the resolve to take such risk once again.

Today, I'm thankful. Ardent Mentoring is flourishing, and I am so excited about it. I have absolutely no regrets.

- *Dip your toe in the water with social enterprises you are drawn to.* Try mentoring the leaders of an organization you are curious about (we can match you at ardentmentoring.org), or volunteer for a nonprofit's international work trip or local event, or just go have an exploratory research meeting with the executive director. Then see what comes from your forays into new possibilities.

3. Complacency: When Your Heart Stops Breaking

A subtle shift in my thinking creeps in from time to time that goes something like: “I’ve already contributed. I’ve done my part. I have taken risks, written big checks, chosen my calling over leisure, and persisted through discouragements. For goodness’ sake, now it’s someone else’s turn.” This scares me because I know it will gradually lead me to a place where my heart no longer breaks for what breaks God’s heart. Where I am still doing good and bringing wisdom, but I am layers removed from the lives of people who are suffering every day.

I remember speaking to a group of business leaders in Atlanta, and part of the program was a presentation from a well-known ministry that fights human trafficking. The lady who heads that effort shared real data about the hundreds of young girls who are sexually abused every night just in the city of Atlanta. As I tucked into bed that night at the JW Marriott in the wealthy suburb of Buckhead, I was confronted by how complacent my heart felt—sleeping on a comfortable mattress while at that very moment, young girls were being abused just miles away.

Wow. That drift to complacency is exactly what I *don’t* want in my life.

How to Avoid Complacency

- *Get clear on the work, the cause, or the specific organization you are called to and jump in.* A priceless byproduct of getting engaged at a heart level is that

your grandchildren will be inspired to know their calling when they hear your stories and see your tears about the people you are called to serve.

- *Engage with younger, impassioned entrepreneurs and CEOs whose efforts are making a real difference.* Offer mentorship to them when it makes sense, but also keep your own heart open to their pain and the urgency they feel for the causes they're committed to. And be sure to introduce them to a wonderful concept developed by the terrific early-stage mentoring organization for Christian social entrepreneurs, Praxis.co, which coined the term *redemptive entrepreneurs*. As defined on the Praxis website: "The Redemptive way is creative restoration through sacrifice—to bless others, renew culture, and give of ourselves. Redemptive actors pursue an 'I sacrifice, we win' approach with the agency and resources available to them. The motivating force behind the Redemptive way is fundamentally other-centered: to love and serve."²
- *Surround yourself with other inspiring people.* Get connected and stay connected with those who encourage you to greater heights and depths.

The Power of Inversion

The late Charlie Munger, former vice-chairman of Berkshire Hathaway, used the inversion method to avoid failure. This method, which he developed, involves looking at a problem from the opposite perspective, or flipping it on

its head, in order to learn what you need to know before you take action. In his words: “It is not enough to think problems through forward. You must also think in reverse, much like the rustic who wanted to know where he was going to die so that he’d never go there. Indeed, many problems can’t be solved forward.”

Here is how he described his method: “Invert, always invert: Turn a situation or problem upside down. Look at it backward. Where *don’t* we want to go, and how do you get there? Instead of looking for success, make a list of how to fail. Avoid these qualities and you will succeed.”

With his approach in mind, try this exercise: Assuming you want to make the most of your next season, invert that objective and write down your ideas for how you could completely squander your Sage years. In other words, if your goal was to waste your wisdom, minimize your impact, and look back with regret, what steps would you take?

My list includes:

- Filling my schedule with shallow relationships and social obligations.
- Accumulating more properties, boats, classic cars, and investments that each require a slice of my attention.
- Avoiding difficult work that requires true emotional or intellectual effort and risk.
- Choosing comfort over calling, avoiding opportunities that require sacrifice.

By inverting the question, we become more aware of the small, seemingly harmless choices that can lead us away from a fulfilling Sage Stage.

Designing a Sage Stage That Matters

With these insights, I made some integral decisions:

- With my personal mission statement in mind, I focused my time on a select group of leaders I could mentor deeply. This required having a set of “filter questions” that allowed me to say no to many good opportunities.
- I eliminated unnecessary possessions and commitments, choosing simplicity over excess. For example, I got rid of my boats, and my wife and I joined the nearby boat club. This cleared my mind of the many small things that needed attention so I could just focus on the people. For five years I haven’t been to the marine parts store or needed to schedule the repainting of the bottom of a sailboat. Each time I step off a boat now, I feel a sense of relief. I don’t clean it, gas it, or even know its name. Instead I have been able to focus my boating time on the family and friends who join us out on the lake.
- I committed to traveling to places I didn’t necessarily enjoy when it meant serving in a meaningful way.

- I resisted the temptation to buffer myself from the world's suffering, choosing to engage with real needs that break God's heart.
- I chose to learn AI and other new technologies to take full advantage of the efficiencies and be able to better advise those I'm mentoring.

You can make similar types of decisions that set the stage for *your* Sage Stage.

You have an incredible opportunity to amplify your wisdom and impact. But if you're not careful, complexity, comfort, and complacency can rob you of the joy and fulfillment of the Sage Stage. By making conscious choices to declutter your life, embrace risk and discomfort, and seek environments and people who inspire and move you to action, you can ensure that this next season is one of depth, purpose, generosity, and lasting influence.

LIVING A 100x LIFE

Lloyd

What does it mean to live a 100x life? As the Parable of the Sower described in Mark chapter 4, Jesus invites us to see our lives as fertile soil, where God plants seeds that can grow and multiply far beyond our imagination. With intentionality and discipline, the 100x life isn't a lofty, unreachable ideal. It's a reality Jesus invites us into—a life of deep purpose, abundant fruit, and eternal impact, not to mention joy.

Reflecting on the 100x Life

Let's revisit the parable from Luke 8, and then we will apply it personally as you continue your preparations to be a Sage.

A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. *Still other seed fell on good*

soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.” (vv. 5–8, NIV)

Jesus went on to explain it clearly:

The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. (vv. 14–15, NIV)

When I (Lloyd) deconstruct Jesus’ parable, six components for reaping a 100x life stand out to me:

- Cultivating a noble and good heart.
- Attentive listening to God’s guidance.
- Internalizing your sense of purpose.
- Recognizing what God has already sown into you—training, wisdom, resources, talents, experiences, influence, and most importantly, a relationship with Him.
- Embracing God’s direction, even when it’s hard or risky.
- Persevering through challenges and over time.

Now think about your own aspirations considering Jesus’ challenge. Here are some questions to help you consider what it means to live a life that yields a hundredfold harvest as a mentor.

1. Picture someone whose life yields 100 times what was sown into them.

- *What might it feel like to live such a fruitful life?*
Imagine the joy, peace, and purpose that would bring.
- *How can I cultivate more of these six elements in my life?*

2. What keeps me from producing the greatest results?

- People often shy away from pursuing a 100x return, fearing arrogance or the sacrifice involved. But Jesus' words make it clear: our role is only to cultivate the soil; God produces the fruit.

Three Elements for 100x Impact

If I had to condense everything I've learned about the 100x life into a billboard that could be read in a three-second drive-by, it would be this:

BILLBOARD: Pursing 100x Compound ROL

FOCUS + LEVERAGE +
+ PERSISTENCE =

100X COMPOUND RETURN
ON LIFE (ROL)

Living a 100x life requires three key things: *focus, leverage and persistence*. These help us align with God's purpose and maximize what He's entrusted to us.

In this chapter, we are concentrating on the strategic elements of this equation: focus and leverage.

The Power of Focus

When you have clarity about your calling—the purpose God has uniquely designed you for—it acts as a powerful filter. It tightens your focus, helping you say no to good opportunities so you can say yes to the best ones.

Without putting the power of focus to work, I have found that many seasoned leaders get sloppy busy. Taking on board roles, for example, out of a sense of obligation where they feel their real contribution is negligible. Or giving money to dozens of organizations with minimal impact rather than focusing on a well-curated few where they can also bring wisdom, opportunities, and credibility alongside their money for a compounding impact.

Two scriptures beautifully capture this:

- “We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Eph. 2:10)
- “Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don’t be impressed with yourself. Don’t compare yourself with others. Each of you must take

responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life.” (Galatians 6:4–5 MSG)

There is an important distinction between calling and a career or volunteering. Your calling may manifest through your career or service, but it is deeper. It is where your God-given strengths, passions, and desire to make an impact align. The fastest way to gain focus is to develop or refine your personal mission statement. This statement is a utility tool that you pull out every time you are deciding about commitments that require your time or money. A well-functioning mission statement will help you say no to most opportunities.

My (Lloyd’s) personal mission is: *To be a thought leader, guiding high-capacity leaders to make a lasting kingdom impact.*

Chris’s personal mission is: *To empower successful entrepreneurs and/or CEOs to use their experience, know-how, track record, and wealth to start or scale organizations that will transform the lives of thousands or millions of people while combining the Great Commission with the Great Commandment.*

Developing Focus

1. Craft your mission statement.

If you haven’t yet articulated your mission or calling, start with this simple prompt:

I feel called to use my strengths of _____ and _____ to serve (the people or cause you care most about), so that (the impact you most want to make).

2. Create filter questions.

Now give some thought to filter questions based on your mission. For example, my mission statement has three elements. First, I feel called to serve high-capacity leaders, so a logical question I ask myself when I'm invited to speak or get involved with an organization is: "Do they have high-capacity leaders?"

Second, my strength is thought leadership, not organizational leadership, so another logical filter question is to ask myself, "Is this a thought-leadership role or an organizational-leadership role?"

Finally, my mission states that my desired result is to help people make a lasting kingdom impact, so my third filter question is: "Does this opportunity enable me to serve people who want to make a lasting kingdom impact?"

What might your filter questions be?

Q1:

Q2:

Q3:

Once you've drafted your mission statement and filter questions, share them with your family and a few trusted

friends. Ask for their insights and perspectives to refine your sense of calling.

The Importance of Leverage

Leverage is about maximizing your impact. It refers to mechanisms and strategies that can amplify the depth of your influence while minimizing the effort and resources required. Rather than simply working harder (especially as your natural energy levels shift), you're creating compounding impact through better, more intentional strategies.

Chris and I have identified four key areas of leverage:

1. Platform(s)
2. Processes
3. People
4. Power of the Spirit of God

Before diving into these, let's address a fundamental question: Should we always try to scale up our work? It's a great question. *Is bigger always better?* What if your calling is to serve only a few people? And behind all of this is an even greater question: Does leveraging your work risk making it about your influence rather than God's purpose?

The answer is simple: leverage is not about ego or ambition; it's about stewardship. God has entrusted us with gifts, wisdom, and opportunities, and seeking leverage allows us to serve the ones He has called us to with what we've been given. That could mean being a Sage to only a few high-yield leaders.

Areas of Leverage

1. Platform: Finding the Right Organization(s).

To live out your calling effectively, you generally need a platform—an organization, a movement, or a structured community that allows you to extend your reach. Trying to operate entirely alone, without any support system or community, will limit your ability to maximize what God has entrusted to you.

Defining Your Ideal Platform

Consider these questions as you evaluate the best platform for your calling:

- How much structure do I need to thrive? Do I prefer established organizations or nimble startups?
- Am I *cause-focused* (dedicated to a particular issue) or *contribution-focused* (bringing my unique skills to multiple areas)?
- Do I operate best with multiple engagements or by focusing deeply on one initiative?
- Do I want to be part of a local team where I show up in person, or would a virtual team suit me better? What about an international team involving lots of exciting travel?
- What are the cultural and faith elements that are essential for a good fit?
- How much time will I invest in this work per week?

Example: Ardent Mentoring

Chris and I co-founded Ardent Mentoring along with two talented young leaders in their early forties, Ryan King and Steve Soars, as a platform that connects seasoned leaders in the Sage Stage with young Christian entrepreneurs. This platform leverages our networks of leaders who would love to continue mentoring deep into their later years but who don't have a simple way to find and vet younger entrepreneurs. At the same time, the platform is leveraging the talents and energy of Ryan and Steve, who have created a pipeline of well-vetted entrepreneurs and a matching system so that we can continue to scale hundreds of matches.

My Dream

My dream is that many years from now, I will still be hearing from hundreds of Ardent mentors like Rich Stearns, who was CEO of World Vision USA for twenty years, about how they are regularly helping young, talented entrepreneurs and the wisdom-transfer that is happening. I want to hear that these are *among the most joyful and productive hours of each month* for our mentors. That feels like real leverage to me.

Your Turn

- Take a moment to define key characteristics of the platform(s) that would best fit your calling:
-

2. Processes: Multiplying Impact Beyond Yourself.

One of the most effective forms of leverage is creating repeatable processes that extend your influence even after you're no longer actively involved.

Examples

- *Ken Blanchard, Lead Like Jesus*: Packaged his leadership insights into a widely used framework in this timeless book, which is still a much-used, oft-reprinted resource in updated form, decades beyond its original release.
- *Dan Horner, truehomes.com*: True Homes is the largest privately owned home builder in North and South Carolina. Dan founded True Homes with his business partner on the core value that a company that is owned and run by Christians should be a completely different kind of company to work for and to buy a home from. So, they created an enrichment program for their employees called True Love that has three elements: The Best Me, Healthy We, and The Strength of Us. But it starts with their Me focus—meaning they are focused on helping every associate grow into their Best Me through annual personal-development programs and individual mentoring. Now they are replicating that with other faith-driven home builders around the country. I have watched Dan living out these values, and, in his words, “At True Homes, we don’t just build homes—we craft

opportunities for people to thrive, families to grow, and communities to flourish.”

- *Henry Kaestner, faithdrivenmovements.org*: Co-founder and CEO of Bandwidth (NASDAQ:BAND) and its sister company, Republic Wireless (which spun out of Bandwidth in 2016). Together the companies have grown from \$0 to more than \$600 million in revenue. The founding values of Bandwidth are: Faith, Family, Work, and Fitness (in that order). Henry is also a co-founder and partner at Sovereign’s Capital, a private-equity and venture-capital management company that invests in faith driven entrepreneurs.

After years of integrating faith into his entrepreneurial work, he realized there is a need for a simple process that could scale and leverage his learning by equipping thousands of faith-driven entrepreneurs around the world. Today, more than twenty thousand people have been through a Faith Driven Entrepreneur Foundation Study, one hour a week for eight weeks. The process connects them with ten to fifteen like-minded entrepreneurs to walk through and discuss what it means to embrace your call to create and fulfill God’s purpose for your life and work. That’s not all! After the eight weeks end, a member of his team meets with them to help them define their best next steps exploring ministry that might uniquely align with their calling.

Pat Hamill, buildstrongacademy.org: A highly successful home builder in Denver, Colorado who

recognized that many young people would be better off with a living-wage job in construction, an industry that desperately needs qualified employees who have the skill and desire to move up in life. So, he created a set of repeatable processes that he calls the BuildStrong Academy, to find, train, and match these young hires with local contractors who will give them an opportunity. Today, it has already been replicated in seven cities and will likely be in a city near you shortly.

Your Turn

- What process could you develop or enhance that would allow others to benefit from your wisdom and experience?
-

3. People: Building a Team That Multiplies Your Influence.

Another essential aspect of leverage is the people around you. The right team can help extend your impact, ensuring that what you've built doesn't rely solely on you or your ongoing involvement.

Example: Bill Bright

Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade (now called CRU), hired young MBAs to travel with him and handle follow-ups, which ensured continuity of leadership. Steve

Douglass joined Bill immediately after receiving his Harvard MBA in the top 5 percent of his class. Decades later, Steve became Bill's successor.

Your Turn

- Who do you need around you to extend your impact?
 - What roles (formal or informal) should you prioritize to create greater leverage?
 - Who will you mentor to ensure your wisdom is passed down effectively?
-

4. The Power of the Spirit of God.

The final and most critical form of leverage is aligning your efforts with what God is already doing. The greatest leaders throughout Christian history—such as Moses, David, and Paul, and modern-day mentors like Bill Bright—understood that true impact comes from listening to the Spirit of God. Acts 13:2 refers to such a time in the early church at Antioch: “As [the leaders] were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’” (NET).

Practices for Aligning with God's Spirit

Here are some habits that wise Sages cultivate:

- *Eliminate hurry.* Create space in your schedule to hear God's voice.
- *Daily prayer and reflection.* Dedicate time to seeking divine guidance.
- *Regular spiritual retreats.* Step away from distractions to refocus on God's leading.
- *Fasting for clarity.* Fasting is a spiritual tool for discernment, especially for major decisions.
- *Obtain wise counsel.* Surround yourself with spiritual advisors who will be invested in helping you stay aligned with God's purposes.

God's power is the ultimate leverage. Aligning our work with His will allows us to accomplish exponentially more than we could on our own.

Your Turn

- How can you better align yourself with God's Spirit and what He is already doing?

The Benefits of Wisdom

Proverbs 2:1–7, 10–11

My child, listen to what I say,
and treasure my commands.

Tune your ears to wisdom,
and concentrate on understanding.
Cry out for insight,
and ask for understanding.
Search for them as you would for silver;
seek them like hidden treasures.
Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord,
and you will gain knowledge of God.
For the Lord grants wisdom!
From his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
He grants a treasure of common sense to the honest. . . .
For wisdom will enter your heart,
and knowledge will fill you with joy.
Wise choices will watch over you.

Your Personal Plan

Now take a moment to summarize your thoughts on focus and leverage and your plan for moving ahead. With clarity about your focus and how to strategically leverage your strengths, calling, and time, you'll be positioned to create lasting, compounded impact—extending your calling much further.

Later, we will explore the third element of the 100x life, the attitude of persistence, to help you stay engaged over the long haul. In the meantime, let's turn the ideas we've explored here into an even more specific action plan.

If you'd like a trusted space to go deeper with the ideas in this chapter, Lloyd cofounded the 100x Forum

(100xForum.org) to walk alongside high-capacity leaders like you. In a confidential, small circle of 7–8 peers, you'll explore these themes together—paired with personal, one-on-one coaching from Lloyd—to help you clarify your calling, strengthen your platform, and multiply your impact.

NOT ALL SAGES ARE THE SAME

Chris and Lloyd

As you enter this new season and consider the contribution you'd like to make as a Sage, it's helpful to think about what makes you unique. Every Sage brings different strengths, experiences, and perspectives to their role. Understanding your distinct qualities will allow you to make the most meaningful impact.

To make the most of this chapter:

- *Reflect* on the different types of Sages described here.
- *Ask* those you've mentored about the most valuable contributions you made to their growth.
- *Consult* your mentor(s) or personal advisory board for insights into your strengths as a Sage.
- *Review* your personality and strengths assessments, such as CliftonStrengths (formerly StrengthsFinder 2.0), for additional clues about how you best serve others. gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/home.aspx

Types of Sages

Below are several common types of Sages we have observed, though there are more. While you may resonate with more than one, identifying your primary role can help you refine your approach to Sage leadership.

The Advisor

You naturally invite others to walk alongside you, offering them a front-row seat to how you perceive the world, shape priorities, solve problems, and inspire teams. You guide them through your thought process, helping them apply those lessons in their own leadership journeys and assisting them in how to measure the impact of what they do.

Deborah Farrington — The Advisor Who Helps Organizations Scale

Deborah Farrington is co-founder and managing partner of StarVest Partners LP, a New York City-based venture capital firm investing in technology-enabled business services. Founded in 1998, it is one of the largest women majority-owned venture capital firms in the US. She is an experienced public and private company director and has in-depth experience in software, investing, corporate finance, and scaling companies.

Debby has advised many dozens of CEOs seeking to scale during her more than four decades of financing companies. Her firm was the first and primary venture investor in NetSuite in 2000: it had \$100,000 in revenues when

Debby joined the board; she helped it grow to \$1 billion in revenue. Debby was Lead Director of NetSuite from its IPO in 2007 to its acquisition for \$9.4 billion by Oracle in November 2016.

She has been on the Forbes *Midas 100 List* of top venture capitalists multiple times and was the top woman on the list in 2008 and 2011. She holds an MBA from the Harvard Business School, from which she received in 2025 the Alumni Achievement Award, the highest honor bestowed upon alumni.

The Expert

Your greatest contribution lies within a specific area of expertise that you have developed over many years. Your deep knowledge and insights are difficult for younger leaders to access on their own, making your mentorship invaluable. You provide the wisdom they may not even realize they need.

David Weekley — Subject Expert in High-Impact Giving

David Weekley is the kind of expert who doesn't just give generously, he gives strategically. He has reviewed hundreds of grant proposals received by his foundation and met with many of the executive directors and CEOs applying for his funding. As the founder of David Weekley Homes, he grew a company that built and sold more than 100,000 homes across nineteen cities, all while focusing on people first. His leadership earned the company a spot on FORTUNE

Magazines “100 Best Companies to Work For” list an impressive eighteen times.

But David’s true passion? High-impact philanthropy.

Since 1994, he has committed to giving away half of his time and half of his income to philanthropy—a commitment that has brought him deep joy and purpose. “When I made that decision, I had no idea how fulfilling it would be,” David reflects. “It’s not soft work. It requires the same strategic thinking and heart that made our business thrive.”

Through their Dovetail Impact Foundation, David, his wife Bonnie, and president Robin Bruce have partnered with over 115 organizations in thirty-five countries, working to confront some of the world’s most pressing challenges. But David doesn’t just write checks. As an expert advisor, he walks alongside serious givers, challenging them to sharpen their strategies and maximize their impact.

David believes in “giving while living” and encourages others to do the same. He’s passionate about helping high-capacity givers move from incremental giving to exponential impact—ensuring that every dollar and hour invested creates a ripple effect for generations.

Now in his Sage Stage, David loves mentoring already-accomplished entrepreneurs who are ready to go deeper, helping them align their passions, skills, and resources to make the greatest difference possible for other people.

Having sought funding from David several times, I (Chris) have benefited from the fact that I prepared more for meetings with David than with any other philanthropist.

He asks the challenging questions that make the social entrepreneur a better leader. David even had presentation consultants on retainer who would work with CEOs and executive directors of organizations that he thought had great potential to improve their presentation. I took advantage of this and learned a lot, even though I had made hundreds of presentations, including ninety-one presentations while on my first company IPO roadshow. This is just one example of the difference the Expert Sage can make.

Merrill J. Oster — Industry Expert

After I purchased a commercial real estate information company, I approached Merrill, an expert in financial and agricultural publishing and information companies, for help. The company I purchased was a turnaround: it had lost money for five years in a row. That was the bad news. The good news was, companies like that were cheap to buy. I had only a small amount of life savings for purchasing the company. After completing my two months of due diligence, Merrill invited me to come and spend two days analyzing the company's prospects and how to restore it to profitability. He told me to concentrate on taking five steps: (1) Double the sales force because there were too few salespeople. (2) Stop pricing based on the cost to obtain data, and start pricing based on the value of the data to customers. (3) Price our product based on the number of users at each customer rather than a flat price regardless of the number of users. (4) Stop spending money collecting data that customers don't value. (5) Acquire companies operating

in large cities we did not cover rather than starting our own operations in those cities and delaying profitability for several years.

Within one year, the company became profitable because we implemented the five steps. Merrill's industry expertise was invaluable to me, proving the truth of Proverbs 15:22: "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (NIV).

The Coach

You excel in listening, asking thoughtful questions, and helping leaders reflect, assess, and uncover their own solutions. Rather than giving direct advice, you guide mentees toward self-discovery, enabling them to solve both organizational and personal challenges more effectively.

Terry Looper — The Coach Who Found a Sacred Pace

At the age of thirty-six, despite his wealth and accomplishments in working long hours, Terry Looper found himself completely burned out—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The relentless pace and pressure had drained him, leaving him questioning everything.

That moment of crisis became a turning point. Through much therapy and the gentle guidance of his wife, family, and the Holy Spirit, Terry embarked on a profound journey of transformation. He discovered that the relentless drive for success had distanced him from God, his loved ones, and even himself. But God wasn't finished with him.

Terry developed a deep, personal relationship with Jesus—not as a distant figure but as his Best Friend and Business Partner. Terry then built a multibillion-dollar energy company, achieving the kind of success many only dream of. He believed the Lord instructed him to work only forty hours per week—a commitment he abided by for the thirty-plus years that he owned the company. In his book *Sacred Pace*, Terry details this decision and shares the four-step process that helped him align his other leadership decisions with God’s will, culminating in a step he calls “getting neutral.”

In his Sage Stage, having sold his company, Terry walks alongside others as a compassionate coach, helping them navigate life’s pressures, rediscover their purpose, and, most importantly, deepen their relationship with God. His legacy isn’t just about business success; it’s about leading others to find peace and clarity in the presence of Christ.

Terry now coaches accomplished leaders on how to slow down and make decisions at what he calls a “sacred pace”—where the heart is calm, the mind is clear, and God’s voice becomes unmistakable. We encourage you to read his entire book and to thoroughly study pages 59–110 in particular. It is the best book we have read regarding making godly decisions.

The Disruptor

You have a gift for looking deeply into a leader’s enterprise and identifying blind spots and new, major opportunities. Your intuition helps you see where mentees may be at risk

or where they haven't thought things through. While your insights may initially feel uncomfortable for them, you guide them toward a stronger, clearer path forward.

Jessica Jackley — The Disruptive Innovator

There were more than ten thousand microfinance organizations in the world, virtually all operating in a similar manner, when Jessica Jackley cofounded Kiva. However, none of the others were using the Internet to directly match borrowers in low income nations with everyday people in the West who were interested in lending to people living in poverty. This methodology was so innovative that Jessica was invited on the Oprah Winfrey show. Excited viewers eagerly went to the Kiva website and started making loans to people living in poverty in Africa. She and colleagues successfully grew Kiva staff to keep up with demand. Kiva had developed a wonderful disruptive innovation! Within two years of its founding and introducing a totally new approach of doing microfinance, Kiva was one of the two best-known microfinance organizations in the world—and extremely efficient.

The Big Brother or Sister

Your heart is drawn to a leader's inner world—their struggles, fears, and personal growth. You recognize how their spiritual and emotional well-being directly impacts their effectiveness. You provide wisdom rooted in

Scripture and personal experience, offering both guidance and encouragement.

Pete Chambers — The Big Brother Sage Who Helps Leaders Finish Well

Pete Chambers embodies the heart of a Big Brother-type Sage, someone who comes alongside high-capacity leaders with wisdom, compassion, and a deep desire to help them finish well. With decades of CEO experience, scaling acquired companies, and a life rooted in faith, Pete has dedicated his Sage Stage to investing in others through his simple yet powerful mission: *“To invest in high-capacity leaders in thriving organizations by helping them prioritize their lives, achieve excellence, and finish well.”*

Over thirty years, Pete participated intentionally as a member of YPO Forum peer groups to sort out his unique calling. He actively pursued both Sage mentoring and peers—and I have watched him diligently put that learning into practice for more than twenty years. At age fifty-seven, he leads the Chambers Interests family office but has stepped out of CEO roles because he has a clear and compelling understanding of his unique contribution. He lives out this mission across several impactful platforms.

Foremost, he invests in the leaders of the portfolio companies inside Chambers Interests. After all, serving should begin at home, and the companies they own are his home base. Then, as a founding partner of 100xForum.org, he mentors CEOs and top executives, guiding them to not only scale their businesses with purpose and integrity but

also to zero in on their calling and kingdom impact. His Sage approach focuses on the whole person, helping leaders balance the demands of success with the deeper callings of faith, family, and service.

But Pete's influence doesn't stop with just business leaders. As the chairman of Rivertree Academy in Fort Worth, Texas, he teams up with the dynamic Dr. Justina Jenkins, one of America's most talented leaders in inner-city education. Together, they're helping students PreK through 5th grade from underserved communities Learn Well, Love Well, Work Well, and Lead Well. Rivertree exists to serve Christ by educating His children, offering scholarships to students who might otherwise be left behind. Pete's heart for the poor shines through in this role, where he combines his strategic mind with his passion for lifting up the next generation.

Pete knows his strengths and knows his purpose because he has worked on it for more than twenty-five years with the Sages in his life, like Bob Buford and Lloyd Reeb. Pete has learned over time to ask great questions and has the intuition through experience to help leaders move to clarity and purpose. Whether he's advising company executives in the Chambers Interest family office, mentoring a CEO through the 100x Forum, or walking the halls of Rivertree Academy, Pete brings the same steady, caring presence. His wisdom is gentle yet firm, encouraging others to focus on what matters most—faith, family, and leaving a legacy that lasts. In his words, “God has blessed me with

much, and now I find extreme joy in helping others on the journey from success to significance.”

The Transformational Servant Leader

You have a gift for looking deeply into a leader’s enterprise and identifying blind spots. Your expertise helps you see when a turnaround is needed and the steps needed to succeed. You see things are not working, the organization is at risk, and/or the leader has not thought things through. Servant leadership is needed to change the culture. While your insights may initially feel uncomfortable for mentees, you guide them toward a clearer path forward to put the right landmarks in place and equip the leader with the right attitude for accomplishing a turnaround.

Cheryl Bachelder – The Transformational Servant Leader

Chery Bachelder was recruited as CEO to turn around Popeyes® Louisiana Kitchen after having been a senior level executive at Domino’s Pizza and KFC. Popeyes® was on the brink of another bankruptcy. She immediately established a Roadmap For Results, resulting in Popeyes’ enterprise market cap growing from less than \$300 million to over \$1.3 billion in eight years. She created a culture of servant leadership. The tenets of her turnaround at Popeyes® are chronicled in her book, *Dare To Serve: How to Drive Superior Results by Serving Others*. Ms. Bachelder spent one-third of her time at Popeyes mentoring her direct reports.

Defining Your Sage Role

Of course, there are many other types of Sages than those shown above. By gaining clarity on the kind of Sage you are, you can approach your mentoring relationships with purpose, confidence, and a clear sense of how you can best serve the next generation of leaders.

- Which of these descriptions best aligns with your strengths and natural mentoring style?
- Do you see yourself in a combination of these roles, or do you identify with a unique approach not listed here?
- How will understanding your Sage type help you communicate your role and value to those you mentor?

CREATING A SAGE ROADMAP

Chris and Lloyd

We've covered a lot of ground so far, and by now, you've likely learned of and identified a handful of action areas that will really benefit you in your Sage Stage journey. But knowledge without follow-through doesn't lead to transformation.

One of the most powerful ways to ensure progress is to write down your action plans and share them with others. Doing so greatly increases the likelihood that you will achieve your goals. Early in his career, Bob Buford wrote down the amount of money for which he wanted to someday sell his company. Decades later, the sale price was almost exactly that amount.

That's why we (Chris and Lloyd) have created a simple but powerful tool—*the Sage Stage Roadmap*. It will help you consolidate your insights, focus on next steps, and create a practical, action-oriented plan.

This isn't meant to be complicated or time-consuming. We encourage you to block off just one hour to complete

your roadmap. Using automated prompts, you'll be guided through the process to create a framework that you can print or keep on your phone for easy reference.

To get started, visit sagestage.org.

The Sage Stage Roadmap: Your Personal Guide

The roadmap is built around a simple nine-box framework designed to help you capture your key action items, commitments, and focus areas. It's a living document that will grow and evolve with you.

Here's how it works: When you visit the website, you'll be prompted to answer nine questions according to the categories below. Don't overthink your responses—just write what comes to mind. Once completed, you can download, print, and share your roadmap with a few trusted people who can offer encouragement and feedback.

The 9-Box Roadmap Framework

1. Clarifying Your Mission
2. Letting Go of Low Value Activities
3. Testing Your Mission
4. Ideas for Creating Leverage
5. Identifying Complexity and Eliminating Distractions
6. Moving up the Sage Hierarchy
7. Building Your Team

8. Anticipating Future Challenges

9. Ensuring Long-Term Persistence

Why This Roadmap Matters

The purpose of this roadmap isn't to create just another to-do list. It's about helping you:

- Focus on what matters most
- Align your daily actions with your long-term mission
- Eliminate distractions that dilute your impact
- Gain leverage to multiply your influence
- Create a simple plan that's easy to follow and adjust as needed

This roadmap is meant to be a living tool. Review it regularly and update it as you grow. Life changes, opportunities shift, and your mission may evolve. Having a clear, adaptable plan ensures that you stay on course.

Taking It Further

Once you've completed and shared your roadmap with your accountability partners, schedule regular check-ins, perhaps quarterly, to review it with them and make necessary adjustments. With focus, intentionality, and perseverance, your Sage Stage can become the most impactful season of your life.

The roadmap is just the beginning—it's your guide to turning insight into action and dreams into reality.

Ready to get started? Head to sagestage.org/roadmap and create your Sage Stage Roadmap today.

IDENTIFYING HIGH-YIELD MENTEES

Chris

In the realm of entrepreneurial mentorship, the quality of your mentees directly determines your impact and legacy. This chapter explores strategies for identifying and attracting high-yield mentees—those extraordinary individuals who will maximize the value of your guidance and time investment.

Strategic Positioning for Access

First, you want to position yourself within networks of high achievers to attract mentees with exceptional potential. This requires raising your profile and establishing presence in these circles. Here are a few ideas:

Build Your Own Platform

- Develop a reputation for consistently guiding and inspiring mentees to achieve far more than they would have otherwise. They will share their experience within their network.
- Sign up to be a mentor at ardentmentoring.org
- Speak at conferences and other key gatherings.
- Publish insightful articles, blogs, and books.
- Appear on podcasts.
- Contribute to respected business publications.
- Maintain an active presence on professional platforms.
- Make known your industry-specific skills and accomplishments to high achievers in that industry.
- Have a listing with your expertise on SageStage.org.

Cultivate Strategic Networks

Join and actively participate in exclusive organizations where high achievers gather:

- Young Presidents' Organization
- C12
- CEO Forum
- The Faith Driven Movement & Halftime Institute
- Tiger 21
- R360
- Praxis Accelerator
- The Wellspring
- Bohemian Club

- Convene
- Alumni club of your graduate business school
- Vistage
- 100x Forum

Leverage Your Existing Networks

Your current and former mentees represent a valuable source of qualified referrals. For example, I mentored Ryan King during our time working together at Edify. Recognizing Ryan's potential, I continued mentoring him, and eventually I handed off the CEO baton at Ardent Mentoring to him. Once that transition was complete, I was in full-on Sage Stage mode. I took the time to divide my giftings into "High Skill" and "Some Skill" and then gave Ryan that list. Ryan used his understanding of my expertise to make meaningful mentee referrals among those he knew who were seeking high-impact mentorship in those particular areas.

Note: If you decide to establish a website offering mentoring, you may wish to list your skills in addition to your resume/CV. You may wish to consider SageStage.org as a place to host your online mentoring skills and opportunities.

Cultivate These Relationships

- Regularly communicate your interest in new mentees.
- Create opportunities for mentees to network with each other.
- Establish a formal referral process.

- Define your criteria for whom you will mentor.
- Offer to be an occasional guest mentor at peer consulting groups organized by your mentees or other mentors' mentees.
- Appreciate and recognize successful referrals.
- Identify entrepreneurs and or CEOs in the former industry you worked in and offer to be a subject expert mentor for them.

Also, encourage your mentees to build peer groups among themselves. This naturally attracts prospects who are aligned with your mentoring criteria.

Discerning Who to Mentor

There are some important things you can do to filter and evaluate who would be a good mentee fit for you.

Manage Your Time

Ultimately you want to protect your time. This is crucial for high-impact mentoring. So do your part to implement practices such as standardizing your initial screening processes and gracefully transitioning out of lower-yield relationships. That way you can reserve your capacity for exceptional candidates.

At the Silicon Valley offices of Summit Partners, the private equity investor in my former company, they displayed portfolio company logos on two different walls: a “Hall of Fame” (yielding a 30 percent or greater CAGR

to Summit) was on one wall and less successful ventures on another. This visual reminder reinforced focus on high-impact investments. Each of Summit Partner's senior executives wanted the companies he or she championed to be a big success to qualify for the Hall of Fame.

Similarly, you may wish to display the names of mentees or their organizations (with their permission) where you have made the greatest impact. Such reminders encourage you to focus on mentoring leaders capable of transforming lives at great scale.

Set and Communicate High Standards

Clearly communicate your selection criteria to attract the right mentees and deter those who aren't ready to work with you. Be explicit about:

- Their responsibility to request and reserve time for regular mentoring sessions
- Expected levels of effort (be sure to emphasize that failure is acceptable if advice is carefully considered and frequently applied)
- The time commitment that will be involved
- A growth mindset focused on continuous learning
- Your desire to also learn from the relationship and what you look for mentees to contribute

Upon hearing the criteria, some candidates will opt out on their own. Don't fight it. This saves you precious time.

Evaluate Who Isn't Ready

Some mentees are ready for your help. They earnestly seek wise counsel and carefully consider the advice given. They're open to constructive criticism and will actively ask for help to identify blind spots. They communicate what they've learned, what they have done about it, and the results they are seeing. They come to mentoring meetings on time and are well prepared. And they take good notes during the meeting and follow up with their mentor afterward.

Other candidates, however, are not ready. Watch for some of these telltale signs:

- *Pre-Beginner*: Undecided regarding a field or venture to pursue. This person should probably be taking aptitude tests and seek out a less rigorous mentoring situation first, such as meeting occasionally with a former professor or a friend of the family they trust.
- *Beginner*: So early in the process that he or she is not ready for mentoring but should prepare by studying up on the field they wish to pursue.
- *Busy*: Sincerely wishes to get good advice but is so busy that there's not sufficient time to contemplate or act on the advice given.
- *Casual*: Has heard that it's important to have a mentor but likes the *idea* of being mentored more than the reality. Is nonchalant about meeting preparation, punctuality, attendance, note-taking, and the mentoring relationship itself.

- *Disinterested*: A board member or donor or other person pressured this person to receive mentoring against his or her will. There is little openness to change or new ideas.
- *Connection Seeker*: Wants you to invest in his or her organization, make introductions to investors, or wants you to serve on their board rather than receive your mentoring.
- *Presumptive*: Expects the mentor to do the work that the mentee should be doing, such as research between meetings or taking notes during a mentoring session, editing them afterward, and sending them to you, the mentor.
- *Overly Confident*: Only wishes to be affirmed for great ideas or plans. Is not interested in hearing about flaws, pitfalls, blind spots, or misguided aspects of those ideas or plans.
- *Deer in the Headlights*: This entrepreneur has a significant problem, and sincerely wishes to solve the problem, but advice is wasted because he or she is paralyzed by the problem (or something it has triggered from their past) and psychologically unable to act. Such an individual would probably be better advised to seek therapy.

Keep in Mind the Primacy of Past Performance

The most reliable predictor of future achievement is past achievement. Therefore, look for a demonstrated track record of success. When evaluating potential mentees,

examine their history of executing on ambitious projects, overcoming significant challenges, and delivering measurable results. Look beyond surface-level achievements to understand the complexity of problems they have solved and the scale of impact they have created.

Here are some specific indicators to consider:

- Rapid career progression relative to peers
- Successfully scaled multiple ventures previously
- Drove innovation in their field or industry
- Recognition from respected institutions or peers
- Pattern of increasing responsibility and achievement
- Evidence of overcoming many significant challenges and a variety of obstacles in the past

An important question to ask yourself is: What in this person's track record strongly indicates that they will be successful at achieving their mission and multiplying their impact if I mentor them?

Recruit Proactively

While traditional mentoring wisdom suggests waiting for mentees to approach you, consider taking the initiative with exceptional candidates.

Once you think you've identified a high-potential individual, Lloyd and I have found that proactively reaching out to the person can be appropriate if an introduction is unavailable. But first, do check LinkedIn to see if a mutual connection can refer you.

When you reach out:

- Remind yourself that your core motivation is to serve them. Your clarity that this is about service will give you the right posture to open a conversation around how they plan to grow in impact in the next season.
- Listen deeply for their sense of need or desire for growth, assessing if you might be the right next person that God is bringing into their life to help them reach their full potential.
- Be clear about your interest and rationale. I often share something like this: *“As I listen to your story and the desire you have for even greater impact, I would love to explore if there are ways I can help you by sharing the pains, struggles, wins, scars and lessons learned that God has taken me through. My calling now is to invest deeply in a few leaders like you. If that is of interest, I would love to map out a simple pathway to begin that conversation. I believe that investing in leaders like you is perhaps the highest return on my time . . . greater than anything else I could invest my time in, other than my family.”*
- Cast a vision by sharing a couple of clear, succinct stories of how others you’ve mentored have been able to expand their effectiveness and impact.
- Offer a list of mentees who are willing to be references for you.

It might feel as if you are promoting yourself. Well, in some ways you are. But, you are also simply offering your strengths, and I find it helpful to remind myself that *strengths are for service, not status*. Your advice can help the prospective mentee transform many, many more lives. The objective is for you to work with those people who can do the greatest good with your wisdom. That intention merits leaving your comfort zone and risking a polite rejection. As Pastor Rick Warren says in the first sentence of his best-selling book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, “It is not about you.” Lloyd and I believe it is about God’s calling on your life.

Having learned that a relaxed, conversational style allows for authentic discovery, I employ a “low-key high-pressure” approach to recruiting great mentees. My questions often reveal gaps between where a prospective mentee is and where they aspire to be. It’s not uncommon for this internal realization to create motivation to pursue mentorship, where they eventually say something to me like, “Wow, these are tough questions . . . How do you suggest I begin to sort this stuff out?”

Put Systematic Evaluation Frameworks to Use

To evaluate potential mentees efficiently and objectively, you’ll want to implement structured assessment methods. It is so important to approach any evaluation with humility and sensitivity to the guidance of the Spirit of God. Since there are billions of people on earth, and you have only 168 hours a week in which to accomplish *everything* (including sleep and time with your family), a selection framework

is necessary. You can either let it be haphazard—whoever shows up and asks for your time—or you can prayerfully test your way to a clear focus on those you are best equipped to serve. Often, saying yes to a subpar mentee causes you to miss or have to say no to a qualified mentee.

Lloyd's Approach: The 9-4-9 System

Lloyd feels best equipped to serve people who have been very accomplished in their work but who believe they have a lot more potential and have a burning desire to know and live out God's call on their lives. This forms a very helpful filter, enabling him to go deep with fewer individuals for greater impact.

As he meets with prospective mentees, he is thoughtfully assessing, "Does this person have the three fundamental characteristics I look for, at the level I look for?" (The numbers below are on a scale of 1–10.)

- **9–10 in Success:** Anyone in their industry would say this individual is extremely successful.
- **4 in Impact:** They have already been following the Lord, and serving and giving back, but they feel they could make a greater impact with more focus and leverage. In other words, they have six points of upside. Lloyd believes that a mentee who has tasted the joy of giving is better positioned for growth. Someone who is already making maximum impact

won't benefit as much from Lloyd's thought leadership or processes.

- **9–10 in Desire:** The person deeply desires to thoroughly discover God's call on their life and is eager to do all they possibly can to advance His agenda.

Chris's Approach: Weighting and Rating Assessment

I use the criteria below for evaluating prospective mentees:

1. Is the person involved in redemptive entrepreneurship?
2. Do they have high integrity, a high commitment to their social venture, and high potential to impact many people significantly? If so, will my time invested with this person yield a greater return in future years than if I spent the time on a different mentee?
3. Is the entrepreneur truly passionate about serving others, or are they focused on personal achievement, winning awards, or other individualized motives?
4. Does his or her track record indicate that they are a high performer?
5. Has the entrepreneur already started an organization that has been operating for a few years and overcome obstacles, thereby indicating that he or she will persevere?

6. Will the entrepreneur take notes on the advice given, edit those notes, and email them to me so I can adjust the notes as needed (either correcting some misunderstanding or adding new ideas) and potentially share this material with others I mentor?
7. If this individual is a Christian, are they combining the Great Commandment (“Love your neighbor”) with the Great Commission (“Go and make disciples”)?
8. Do my skills fill important gaps between this person’s other mentors? If not, if I am bringing redundancy or my skills do not apply, I take a pass.
9. Is there a good reason to believe the mentee will seriously consider my advice and implement some of my recommendations? As I work with the person, is there evidence they are implementing the recommendations we have agreed upon?
10. Is the entrepreneur regularly executing on a good plan to grow spiritually?
11. Will I learn much from this person that will add value to my work with other social entrepreneurs? Will my association with this entrepreneur’s social venture provide me with input, perspective, and creative ideas?
12. Do I enjoy being with this person?
13. Is this person likely to share with others what I teach them? If so, then my efforts may multiply many times.

I use a simple rating template, scoring each criterion above on a scale of 1–10 importance or weight. Next, I rate prospective mentee on their estimated strength in each category and multiply that rating by *my* rating of the importance of that category. This gives me a quantitative score for each criterion. I then add up those quantitative scores to obtain an overall score. It is simpler than it sounds and very informative about how good a fit the mentee is.

This quantitative measure helps guide my mentee selections. I almost always move forward if someone's total score is above a certain level. The only exceptions would be if the chemistry is poor or the mentee sends signals that they will not be diligent.

The Key

Identifying high-yield mentees requires a combination of positioning yourself, taking the first step to make contact if needed, and diligently evaluating prospective mentees.

The key is to remain selective while proactively understanding that ultra-capacity mentees may need an explicit invitation to benefit from your guidance. By investing your time and wisdom in those who are both very receptive and prepared to take advantage of your counsel, you participate in God's multiplication process as only a Sage who is empowered by the Spirit of God can.

PREPARING TO PERSIST

Lloyd

Your impact as a Sage will compound over time—if you persist.

Not only is persistence the third necessary element for a 100x compound return on your life (introduced in Chapter 4), but this truth is woven throughout Scripture:

- “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” (Gal. 6:9, NIV)
- “As for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded.” (2 Chron. 15:7, NIV)
- “The seeds that fell on the good soil represent honest, good-hearted people who hear God’s word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest.” (Luke 8:15)

I (Lloyd) particularly love these words from Jesus Himself: “You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit” (John 15:16).

As rewarding as it is to serve others, however, it isn't always easy. Life throws obstacles our way—setbacks, illness, family needs, or situations that make us wonder if our wisdom still applies in such a rapidly changing world. Yet the Sages who persevere through these challenges produce far more fruit and leave a legacy that keeps on multiplying.

What Helps Sages Persist?

A few years ago, while preparing for a “Finishing Great” conference with Jim Collins, the author of *Good to Great*, I reflected on this very question. Jim was intrigued because many high-level leaders he studied had not finished well after leaving corporate America.

I revisited coaching files from past Halftime clients and asked: Who is finishing well? Who isn't? What made the difference?

Surprisingly, money and talent—which I expected to be the key factors—had little bearing. The leaders who finished well shared five common traits that fueled their persistence and ongoing impact:

1. They Get Crystal-Clear on Their Mission or Calling

Your calling is like the keel of a sailboat—it stabilizes you in stormy seas, helping you move forward even when life gets rough.

A Chinese pastor once told me: “Your calling is a gift to receive, not a goal to achieve.” Calling isn't about striving;

it's about surrender. It's about aligning yourself with the work God has prepared for you.

Those who finish well are deeply anchored in their calling. They see their Sage role not as a hobby but as a sacred assignment. This clarity keeps them moving forward even when serving others feels difficult, and it makes them more willing to pivot when circumstances call for it.

Reflection:

How clear are you on your calling as a Sage?

How might you refine your understanding of the work God has set before you?

2. They Surround Themselves with Encouragement

Persisting through the ups and downs of life requires a steady flow of encouragement. Those who finish well intentionally create systems of support to sustain them.

Here are a few ways to build encouragement into your life:

- *Keep a "legacy file."* Save notes, emails, and cards from people who have been impacted by your work, to revisit during seasons of discouragement. To have tangible proof that God can use an ordinary person

to bless others is the kind of encouragement you will need to help you persist.

- *Keep an eternal perspective.* Focus on God's promises, especially those about perseverance and eternal rewards. One habit that has helped me is to study the topic of heaven every August, as summer is ending and people's lives seem to ramp up again. This prepares my heart and mind for another season of serving others.
- *Reach out to members of your personal advisory board.* This small group of trusted people isn't only there as your sounding board. When you're losing perspective or feeling really discouraged, be honest—and let them lift you up so you can keep going in tough times.

Reflection:

Who are your primary sources of encouragement?

How can you build more consistent encouragement into your life?

3. They Practice Adaptability

Many leaders falter later in life because they are rigid. They're resistant to change. Stuck in their ways. But those who finish well remain adaptable.

- They regularly assess what's working and what's not, letting go of what is not.

Peter Drucker called this “planned abandonment”—intentionally letting go of what no longer serves your mission.

- They seek feedback from family, friends, and trusted advisors. I find it helpful to ask these people specifically for feedback. Here's how I frame it: “I really need your insights. Is there anything else you need to say that may be hard to say or hard for me to hear? Please tell me the last ten percent.”
- They embrace new ideas, skills, and technologies. As an example, I use AI (when permission is granted) to capture and distill my mentoring conversations, efficiently drawing out action items from our time together but also allowing mentees to *hear in their own voice* their answers to difficult questions. I actively study other disciplines that will enhance my ability to mentor as well. For example, lectures on Masterclass by the famous photographer Annie Leibovitz taught me that great photography is about seeing—really training your mind to see what others may not see. I've sought to learn this powerful discipline as a Sage, patiently looking deep into a mentee's life and experience so that I can help them see themselves in new ways.

Example: Lloyd's personal adaptability practices

Here are a few more things I do to stay nimble about my commitments year after year:

- *Annual life plan update.* Every December, I review and revise my one page of goals and action plans for the coming year and then share it with my wife, our kids, and my close friends for feedback.
- *Spiritual retreats.* I go on three silent retreats a year, asking God where I need to grow, change, or stop certain activities.
- *Time tracking.* I regularly assess how I spend my time by color coding my electronic calendar. Then I adjust it to align with my calling.

Reflection:

What systems can you put in place to remain adaptable over time?

Where might you need to apply the idea of “planned abandonment” in your life?

4. They Prioritize Family

Some Sages begin with the best intentions but lose sight of their most important relationships—their spouse, kids, grandkids—while pouring themselves into their calling. Those who persist for the long haul prioritize family,

ensuring their legacy at home before extending to their public impact.

Best practices for prioritizing family

- *Block time for family* before accepting external commitments. I block off my time with family like recurring appointments, with a commitment that I can *move* those dates and times if need be (with permission), but not *remove* them. For example, every Friday is a Linda Day, where I just do things with my wife that she finds restorative. I also have a monthly mentor lunch with my son, Carter; a monthly video date with our daughter, Caroline, who is a missionary with CRU in Germany; and I spend Thursday afternoons with our two grandbabies, who live locally.
- *Invite family into your calling.* Bring grandkids on trips, involve family members in philanthropic work that might be of interest to them, and share your vision so that they understand the why behind what you're doing.
- *Hold family vision meetings* to discuss shared goals and values, and to celebrate stories of how God is using each member to bless others and advance His agenda.

Reflection:

How well are you balancing family and your Sage calling?

Where do you need to make adjustments?

5. They Steward Their Health

Once, while speaking to a group of pastors at a conference, I noticed two things: overflowing breakfast plates and more than half the room noticeably overweight. I couldn't resist making a lighthearted comment: "The word 'buffet' has two meanings—one is to strike repeatedly; the other is a meal where you load up your plate with whatever you want. In 1 Corinthians 9:27, Paul says, 'I buffet my body and make it my slave.' I think we might be taking the wrong meaning at breakfast!"

We all laughed, but finishing well requires maintaining bodily strength to persist. And though we can't control everything about our health, we can be wise stewards.

Dan Buettner's Blue Zones study offers powerful insights into the habits of the world's longest-living people.³ Here are his "Power 9" habits that have been statistically proven to promote health and longevity:

1. *Move Naturally*. Integrate movement into daily life (gardening, walking, household chores).
2. *Purpose*. Know your "why." Having a sense of purpose adds years to life.
3. *Downshift*. Develop daily routines to reduce stress (prayer, naps, meditation).
4. *80 Percent Rule*. Stop eating when you're 80 percent full.
5. *Plant Slant*. Prioritize plant-based foods (beans, grains, fruit) and limit meat.

6. *Wine @ 5*. Moderate alcohol consumption (with friends/food early, if at all).
7. *Belong*. Engage in faith-based communities. Regular participation adds years of life.
8. *Loved Ones First*. Prioritize family and close friendships.
9. *Right Tribe*. Surround yourself with a community that supports healthy habits.

These nine simple practices have worked around the globe, enabling people to live healthy well past the normal life expectancy. Chris and I find it useful to remember: *Stewarding health is spiritual stewardship*. As Sages, we need energy and strength to persist in serving others.

Reflection:

Which “Power 9” habits do you need to adopt?

What steps can you take to improve your health as you pursue your calling?

Persistence Pays Off

The leaders who finish well aren’t necessarily the wealthiest, the smartest, or the most talented. They’re the ones who discipline themselves to persist, remaining anchored in their calling, encouraged, adaptable, attentive to family, and who faithfully steward their health.

At the end of his life, the apostle Paul was able to say, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7, NIV). This wasn’t a claim of perfection but a declaration of completion—one that we should all strive for.

Finishing well is within reach. Perseverance is possible. And when you stay the course, that persistence pays off. Your impact as a Sage will continue to compound, bearing fruit up to 100x.

Section 3

SAGE SKILLS AND TOOLS



SAGE SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Lloyd

The art of being a Sage mentor extends far beyond simply sharing experiences or giving advice. A true Sage combines deep wisdom with practical tools to help mentees overcome challenges, make wise decisions, and scale their impact effectively.

Chris and I (Lloyd) have identified ten fundamental Sage skills. We will highlight each one first, and then we want to help you assess yourself in each of those skill areas to encourage your growth and development.

1. Building Trust

It all begins with building trust. With trust, Sages have the opportunity to pose powerful questions, bring new perspective, share stories that make ideas come alive, and offer constructive criticism. Trust is built when your mentees perceive you as caring, competent, and committed. Trust

erodes when, on either side, there is dishonesty, lack of follow-through, or a failure to connect authentically.

Here are six steps to building trust in a mentoring relationship:

1. *Deep understanding.* Give your mentee uninterrupted time to share their story.
2. *Affirm their desires.* Reflect back what you hear about their goals and aspirations.
3. *Share your story.* Thoughtfully communicate your journey, including challenges and lessons learned.
4. *Define a win.* Ask them: “If our mentor-mentee relationship were a home run for you, what difference would it make in your life?”
5. *Create a gap.* Help them see the difference between where they are and where they want to be.
6. *Demonstrate care, competency, and commitment.* Show them how you have journeyed with others over time with genuine concern, guidance, and persistence.

Deep Understanding

- Ask: “I’d love to hear your whole story. Start where it feels most important to you.”
- Take notes and, if online, use an AI note-taking tool (with their permission) to capture key insights.
- Ask follow-up questions: “That was a big transition. How did you navigate that?”

- Draw some conclusions: “This is what I’m hearing from your story . . .” and “When you reflect on your story, what stands out to you?”

Affirm Their Desires

- Reflect back what you hear: “It sounds like you desire more _____. Is that right?”
- Offer encouragement: “Your next season could be your most joyful and impactful yet.” Or “Although you feel the situation is hopeless, I have seen others solve a similar problem.”

Share Your Story

- Ask permission: “Would it be helpful if I shared a bit about my journey?”
- Be vulnerable—share successes and failures, and don’t always end on a win. It’s okay to admit you’re still in process too.
- Relate to their struggles: “I faced a similar challenge when I was at your stage.”
- Emphasize lessons from your own mentors to model the importance of seeking wisdom.

Define a Win

- Ask: “What would success in our time together today look like for you?”
- Ask about their learning styles and preferences.

- Help them articulate clear goals for their growth and development.

Create a Gap

A skilled mentor creates gentle pressure, generally not as much through direct advice as by asking the types of questions that help a mentee recognize the gap between their current reality and their aspirations. Here are a few that I have used with my mentees:

- Think thirty years ahead. If your life turned out perfectly, what would that look like?
- What has your success cost you in other areas of life?
- If your spouse rated your marriage on a scale of 1–10, what would they say?
- What would your leadership team list as your strengths? Your weaknesses?

Or sometimes Sages pose quiet challenges to create this gap. I think of what I learned from the example of one of my first mentors, Mr. Fred Lafontaine, a soft-spoken French Canadian with a thick accent who recently turned one hundred years old. At the time, he owned dozens of retirement communities, and he generously allowed me, a young real estate developer, to shadow him through several of his properties.

Though he spoke few words, what he did say revealed how he viewed his business and the people who worked for him. As we walked through some of his communities, I

noticed that he knew the name of every employee at each location. He often stopped to talk with them, asking about their families and their work.

It was eye-opening. I realized what a gap there was between how he fostered a culture of care and how I approached my work. He wasn't just managing properties and building wealth—he was building communities filled with compassion and respect for seniors, beginning with a happy, highly qualified staff.

I saw that I had much to learn if I wanted to create that same kind of culture.

2. Asking Great Questions

Peter Drucker said, “Fruitful questions are more helpful than smart answers.” He also said, “Asking the right question is 50 percent of solving the problem.”

The foundation of Sage mentoring is the ability to ask transformative questions and listen deeply to the answers. While many mentors are quick to offer advice, the most effective ones operate with the deep understanding that helping others discover their own solutions through thoughtful questioning leads to better, longer-lasting outcomes.

This approach to mentoring through questions reflects the wisdom of the Bible. Consider how Jesus often answered questions with questions, helping people discover truth through their own pondering and reflection. As Proverbs 20:5 tells us, “The purposes of a person’s heart

are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out” (NIV).

Skillful questioning draws out the wisdom already within those we mentor. In contrast, direct advice—even when wise—often meets resistance. When mentees discover solutions by answering thoughtful questions, they almost inevitably take ownership of those insights and become more committed to implementing them.

This principle emerged clearly in my experience mentoring Sarah, a social entrepreneur grappling with scaling challenges at her organization. Rather than sharing my thoughts on her growth strategy, I asked, “If you had to achieve your five-year goals in just two years or risk losing everything, what would you do differently?” This question opened her mind to possibilities she hadn’t previously considered. More importantly, because she arrived at these insights herself, she felt deeply committed to implementing them. The solutions became hers, not mine.

The Path to Clarity Through Questions

Often entrepreneurs seek advice about one issue when their real challenges lie elsewhere. Through careful questioning, a Sage mentor helps them uncover their true objectives and concerns.

For instance, James initially sought help with his fundraising strategy. But as I asked probing questions about his long-term vision and operational priorities, it became clear that his real challenge was maintaining mission focus while

scaling. Without that deeper exploration, we might have solved the wrong problem entirely.

The Art of Pre-framing Questions

One powerful technique for better questions is *pre-framing*: providing a context or analogy to focus the mentee's response, like I did with Sarah. I knew that in crisis situations, people often achieve results in half the time. That's why I put my question to her in terms of a tight time-frame. Pre-framing helps direct mentees toward actionable responses, especially when they need to challenge their assumptions or stretch their thinking.

I remember sitting with Will, a passionate social entrepreneur working to provide educational solutions in a very poor community. He came to our meeting frustrated with slow growth and operational challenges. Rather than immediately offering solutions, I asked him to describe what success would look like in five years. This simple question helped shift his focus from day-to-day obstacles to long-term vision. Through our discussion, it became clear that his real challenge wasn't operational efficiency. It was that his organizational structure couldn't support the scale he envisioned.

The right questions help cut through the fog of battle that often clouds an entrepreneur's thinking in difficult times. While mentees always have more detailed knowledge of their specific situation, they're often too close to see the bigger picture. A Sage mentor's questions can help:

- Clarify the core problem rather than peripheral issues
- Challenge assumptions and blind spots that may be limiting progress
- Reveal new possibilities not previously considered
- Identify patterns from past experiences that provide insight
- Surface hidden opportunities within apparent challenges

Teaching Mentees to Ask Themselves Good Questions

Ultimately, the goal isn't just to help your mentees solve immediate problems but to teach them to ask better questions themselves. When mentees learn to challenge their assumptions, they become more self-sufficient. This multiplication effect embodies the essence of Sage mentoring.

One Sage mentor advises his mentees to ask themselves, "What questions would my mentor likely ask?" and then answer those questions before reaching out. This often provides enough clarity that a follow-up conversation isn't even necessary.

I saw this transformation with Tom, an entrepreneur who initially sought my advice for nearly every decision, big or small. Over time he internalized the types of questions I asked. Eventually, he began questioning his own assumptions, exploring alternatives, and making better decisions independently.

3. Listening Strategically

Sometimes the most powerful thing a Sage can do is simply listen. Not casual listening, but deep, strategic listening that helps entrepreneurs process their challenges and arrive at actionable objectives.

Entrepreneurs facing setbacks often need a safe space to voice fears and doubts. By listening without judgment, and without jumping to solutions, a Sage mentor can help them:

- Process complex emotions that might be clouding their judgment
- Identify patterns in their thinking and decision-making
- Gain confidence in their own problem-solving abilities
- Feel supported and understood in their entrepreneurial journey
- Build resilience through reflection and self-awareness

Powers Greater Than Advice

Mastering the art of asking great questions transforms you from an advice-giver to a catalyst for deeper thinking and better decision-making. When combined with the skill of careful listening, great questions help good mentees:

- Gain clarity about their true objectives
- Discover solutions they already possess but did not see
- Build confidence in their decision-making abilities

- Take ownership of their choices and consequences
- Develop their skills to mentor others by asking better questions themselves

Guiding mentees to good decisions of their own, especially when they are stuck, is a significant part of unlocking the kind of wisdom that produces transformation.

4. Bringing Perspective

Providing perspective can help mentees see their ventures from a completely different vantage point.

I remember advising Scott, a talented entrepreneur who was struggling with scaling his organization. His focus was on operational challenges, but I helped him see that his real limitation was the arbitrary limitations being imposed on him by his board. They required that his combined fundraising and general and administrative expenses never exceed 15 percent of funds raised. As a result, Scott could not afford to hire a fundraiser and had to do all the fundraising himself while also running overseas programs in several emerging nations.

This change of perspective led to major changes that enabled the thirty-year-old organization—which had been plateaued in fundraising for a dozen years—to expand from serving tens of thousands to serving millions. Once Scott persuaded the board to remove the 15 percent limitation so that he could hire fundraisers, the organization's revenue increased eightfold over the next dozen years.

Moments like these remind us all that wisdom accumulated through decades of experience can help others avoid costly mistakes and seize opportunities they might have missed. When combined with the mentee's energy, creativity, and fresh ideas, breakthrough solutions to seemingly intractable problems are not far behind.

5. Curating and Using Powerful Stories

Storytelling is a core mentor skill that helps make your insights clearer, more memorable, and emotionally compelling. However, effective storytelling requires preparation. The good news is, you only need a couple dozen stories. But they need to be really well-developed, to enable mentees to draw clear insight.

I use a five-part approach to finding and shaping powerful stories:

1. *Identify key topics.* Make a list of common challenges mentees face or topics they want help with. On my computer, I have a folder titled Mentoring Toolbox. Within that folder are files for every topic my mentees have queried about or requested assistance with over the past twenty-five years. To build your own Mentoring Toolbox, see sagestage.org/mentoringtoolbox.
2. *Think of relevant stories.* Recall moments from your own career or others' experiences that illustrate possible solutions.

3. *Shape your stories.* Ensure they are clear, concise, and compelling. Write out those stories in point form so you can stay on topic. I add these stories to my Mentoring Toolbox folder.
4. *Practice telling them.* Rehearse until the story flows naturally. As you share each story in your coaching, you will learn which elements are clear and which ones need improvement. Reshape the story to make it better over time.
5. *Capture new stories.* Whenever you hear a great leadership story, document it for future use.

Precision Storytelling: A Five-Step Method

When a mentee describes a challenge or opportunity that they are facing, I ask myself, “What is the essence of this issue?” and “Which story in my toolbox will most help them discover a path forward?”

1. *Make the point first.* Before telling the story, state its core lesson so the mentee knows what to focus on.
2. *Set the scene.* Help them understand the context and the stakes.
3. *Create emotional connection.* Highlight what was at risk for the main character.
4. *Show the discovery.* Instead of just stating the lesson, let the mentee experience it through the story.
5. *Focus on the meaning and implications.* Ask: “What stands out to you?” and “How does this apply to your situation?”

6. Providing Constructive Criticism

Your mentees likely have a hard time getting honest, constructive criticism. As organizations grow, entrepreneurs often find themselves surrounded by direct reports who are hesitant to challenge their thinking or point out potential blind spots. Their board likely does not know enough of the day-to-day details to have the knowledge to do so. Family members only see them outside of daily leadership roles. Beyond all that, constructive criticism is a gift that few people are willing to give. So, when you give it, encourage your mentees to embrace it thoughtfully rather than be defensive. When you receive it, express gratitude.

The key to effective constructive criticism lies in combining genuine care with clear insight. This might mean:

- Highlighting potential risks in a strategic direction
- Questioning assumptions about market opportunities
- Identifying gaps in team capabilities
- Challenging unrealistic timelines or resource requirements
- Pointing out mission drift or value misalignment
- Exploring why certain relationships or situations deteriorated

7. Curating Your Toolbox

A Sage's toolbox is a thoughtfully curated collection of items that the Sage can share with mentees to help them break through barriers and seize opportunities in their

journey toward greater impact. Like a seasoned mechanic who brings just the right wrench or gauge for the job, a Sage selects from a wide array of resources to assist mentees in clarifying their vision, strengthening their leadership, and taking wise, decisive next steps. These tools might include insightful exercises, diagnostic assessments, frameworks for decision-making, articles, case studies, scriptures, diagrams, videos, or questions that spark breakthrough thinking.

These resources enable mentees to discover new pathways. Then a Sage helps them turn those into action plans so they don't dissipate over time. The goal is to extend the impact of the mentoring relationship beyond face-to-face time, empowering mentees to act with wisdom, courage, and clarity in between sessions. Over time, a well-organized toolbox becomes a powerful multiplier of a Sage's influence.

Here are some examples of categories of resources in Chris's and my collective toolboxes:

- Strategic planning tools
- Team building and team-health tools
- Decision trees for evaluating complex choices
- Mission alignment matrices
- Work-life integration exercises
- Spiritual formation practices
- Building a thriving family content
- Financial stewardship and generosity materials
- Risk-preference curves
- Risk/reward analysis frameworks
- Enterprise risk-management mapping

- Strategies for creating healthy boundaries and time allocation
- Board-skill mapping for choosing excellent board members
- Simulation analysis to evaluate probabilities of success and failure
- Identify blind spots and limiting beliefs
- Methods to develop breakthrough innovations
- Resources for scaling organizational impact
- Next-gen leader coaching materials
- Content for growth in emotional intelligence

We would love to help you quickly enhance your personal toolbox in an interactive way. Just go to sagestage.org and click on Tools.⁴

8. Opening Up a World of Connections

At this season of life, you have a large and diverse network of people who know and trust you. When you introduce your mentee to them, providing summary background about the mentee and being clear about what you hope he or she will gain from the introduction, your network will almost always be willing to help. They are inclined to help, and likely to be open-handed with their time, because you are modeling to them that this person warrants an investment of time.

The skill here is to think through who in your network might best supplement your mentoring with some unique

experience or knowledge that your mentee likely cannot get elsewhere. Chris and I have found that this takes patience: to clearly identify the need and what kind of connection might help and then to search your network for who fits that bill is rarely a quick process.

Here are examples of the kinds of connections we make almost every day on behalf of our mentees:

- Building bridges to resources and expertise beyond the Sage's direct experience or network
- Creating opportunities for collaborative learning and growth
- Introducing mentees to potential technical advisors or board members
- Connecting them with aligned funders and venture philanthropists
- Facilitating peer relationships with other social entrepreneurs

9. Turning Ideas into Action

Great ideas and discoveries can too easily go unexecuted. Particularly if a mentee is not paying for your help and guidance, there is an even greater chance they will not value the learning as much as if they paid for it. Sages have to provide a pathway for those they coach to turn their discoveries into sustainable action. We have found there are three primary steps:

1. *Notes and action items.* Set the expectation that the mentee capture and send you notes of what they learn from your conversations. With permission, we use AI as well to capture and summarize notes when we mentor on video.
2. *A written plan.* I work with mentees to build a roadmap similar to what you find in Chapter 11. As I begin a new mentoring relationship, I always share my own personal roadmap so they can see that I am constantly learning and growing and we can talk about the power of a written plan. As well, this is a very concrete way of communicating that you expect to see real results, not just have great conversations. Some mentees are tempted to have pages of notes and a dozen action items, but our experience has taught us that if someone cannot distill it down to one page and five primary action areas, they are not truly focused.
3. *Return to the plan.* Come back to the plan during each call and ask your mentee to tell you what they did and what the results have been so far.

10. Celebrating Results

The joy of being a Sage is in large part the results. When you have a discipline of celebrating the results, you are reinforcing with your mentees (and in your own heart) that the focus is not on the process but on the results.

The celebration, however, should focus on the mentee—not on you as the mentor—and should recognize

God's hand in making it possible. I (Lloyd) do this in several ways, but this is certainly an area I want to grow in.

- *In my home.* I try to have mentees over to my home and cook them a meal and share stories of what they are doing to change the world.
- *With their family.* Sometimes I go visit them and their family and share with their wider family the changes I've seen in the mentee's life and the impact they are making.
- *At their big events.* I make an effort to attend ribbon cuttings when a mentee's initiative takes wings.
- *Sharing a photo.* I often take a photo of that event and share it with other mentees if they are in a group together.
- *Sharing their story on my platform.* Lastly, with permission, I capture mentee stories in my *100x Podcast*, which I cohost with mentee Micah Lacher. (See the 100x Forum YouTube channel.)

All of these are simply examples for celebrating mentee results. You will come up with more of your own. The main thing Chris and I want to communicate here is: Don't skip this last step! When we fail to celebrate those we're working with, we miss much of the joy and intimacy that comes from having gone on the journey together and remembering it in a special way.

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These are our ten foundational skills of a Sage, although it's not meant to be comprehensive. Other skills could certainly be added.

Likely you have been honing some of these abilities for decades; others here present opportunities for growth. Now what?

That's probably the question you have in mind: Now that I understand the hierarchy of Sage mentoring, the progression of Sage mentoring, and the skills of a Sage, what's next?

We have found that the following one-page self-assessment aligns well with everything you've read so far. This assessment is designed to help you get a quick sense of the skills you have and the skills you need to cultivate as you move up from the Well-Intentioned and Developing levels all the way to the Transcendent level. Consider it a sort of gap analysis to highlight your strengths and focus you on those skills that might not be fully formed, so that you can onboard and develop them.

If, after doing this self-assessment, you discover that you have already matured in any of these categories, let that be your assurance that you are building on a strong foundation.

The Sage Stage Self-Assessment

The journey to becoming the best mentor possible never ends. Below are some of the key skills of a world-class Sage. Score yourself from 1 (not effective) to 10 (highly effective)

and then decide on specific areas where you'd like to focus on growth.

1. *Trust*. How effective are you at developing trust early in a mentoring relationship? ____
2. *Questions*. How effectively do you use questions to enable your mentees to discover their own solutions and learn to ask themselves these powerful questions? ____
3. *Strategic Listening*. How well do you provide the setting and opportunity to really listen and understand the background, longings, and needs of your mentees in order to help them think strategically? ____
4. *Perspective*. How well do you diplomatically help mentees see their enterprise from different vantage points, discover blind spots, and unearth false or unseen risks within a plan? ____
5. *Stories*. How well do you use real-life stories to make ideas clear and memorable? ____
6. *Constructive Criticism*. How capable are you of identifying areas where your mentees need to change or grow and communicating that feedback so that it can be received? ____
7. *Toolbox*. To what degree have you curated your own leadership learnings, problem-solving techniques, analytical tools, resources, and research to pass them on effectively? ____

8. *Connections*. How effective are you at mapping your mentees' needs to your network of relationships and making strategic introductions? ____
9. *Sustainable Action*. How effectively do you help mentees develop sustainable personal habits and leadership patterns? How well do you help mentees translate discoveries into concrete action plans with accountability? ____
10. *Celebrating Results*. How well do you capture and celebrate the transformation and the results in your journey with your mentees? ____

Focused Growth Strategy:

Rather than trying to improve in each of these areas all at once, give some thought to:

- Which one or two areas are you most motivated to grow in as a mentor?
- What next steps will you take to improve, and who can help? Add these to your Sage Stage Roadmap.

By committing to your own intentional growth, you will become a more effective Sage, equipping the next generation of leaders with the wisdom they need to thrive.

At Sage Stage, we provide peer-learning groups designed to sharpen each of the ten core mentoring skills and effectiveness featured above. If you're serious about growth, join us at sagestage.org and explore being part of a peer-learning cohort of highly accomplished leaders.

SAGE DO'S AND DON'TS

Chris

The life-changing power of Sage mentoring comes with a sobering reality: your time and wisdom are precious resources that must be invested wisely. After decades of mentoring hundreds of leaders, Lloyd and I (Chris) have learned that effectiveness isn't just about what you do—it's equally about what you stop doing. This chapter explores the mentoring practices and patterns you may need to eliminate to maximize your impact and multiply your influence.

The Cost of Low-ROI Mentoring

Think of your mentoring capacity as a finite investment portfolio. A wise investor both selects opportunities that offer the highest potential returns and cuts their losses upon seeing that a good ROI is unlikely. A Sage mentor must be equally discerning about where they invest their time and wisdom. Poor investment choices waste time and forfeit the opportunity to create the most meaningful outcomes.

I remember sitting across from Tom, an enthusiastic young entrepreneur. His energy and mission were compelling, but as our conversation unfolded, it became clear that he wasn't ready to implement the guidance he was seeking. He eagerly accepted every suggestion but hadn't acted on advice from previous sessions. That experience led me to realize that even the most well-intentioned mentoring relationship can become a poor investment if certain fundamentals aren't in place.

The hard truth is that many Sages diminish their potential impact by continuing ineffective practices. The result is frustrated mentors, disappointed mentees, and lost opportunities.

Seven Mentoring Practices to Stop

1. Continuing to Work with Unprepared Mentees

Signs of an unprepared mentee include:

- Lacking basic systems or processes necessary for growth such as discipline, accountability, and focus within their enterprise
- Unable to articulate clear goals
- Consistently overwhelmed by responsibilities
- Lacking fundamental leadership skills
- Operates mostly in crisis mode

Rather than investing in these unprepared mentees, suggest that they address foundational needs first.

Sometimes, the wisest counsel is directing someone to other resources better suited to their current situation and level.

Also, pray for clear guidance after initial sessions that seem fruitless. Sometimes you will feel that God is leading you to continue with the mentee for a little longer. But if or when you get clarity that a mentee doesn't meet your criteria, point the person elsewhere.

2. Providing Scattered, Ad-Hoc Advice

Random acts of mentoring rarely lead to lasting impact. Structured relationships allow for deeper engagement, better understanding and accountability, and measurable progress over time.

Lloyd has observed that accomplished entrepreneurs often love mentoring others but lack a structured approach. This leads to sloppy mentoring that isn't leveraged. The Holy Spirit may occasionally prompt you to counsel someone unexpectedly, at a very specific moment in time—and in those cases, you should be responsive. But the rule of thumb here is: avoid being haphazard with your time.

3. Neglecting Accountability

Without accountability, mentoring often becomes a series of interesting but inconsequential conversations. Every mentoring relationship—but especially that of a Sage mentoring relationship—needs clear expectations, specific action items, and regular follow-ups. So establish an accountability framework:

- Have mentees document key takeaways and action items within forty-eight hours after each session
- Set timelines for implementation
- Schedule regular progress reviews
- Address patterns of non-implementation promptly

Of course, a mentee will almost never implement all the advice you give. Upon reflection, the mentee may decide some of it is not a priority or not a good fit. He or she would do well to share such situations with you, not only for the sake of transparency but to give you a chance to follow up and possibly probe deeper or in a different direction.

4. Ignoring Red Flags

Early warning signs often predict a mentee's future failures. These might include:

- Being consistently late or missing scheduled meetings
- Dodging accountability with excuses
- Resistance to feedback rather than healthy debate
- Too inexperienced to grasp and apply wise advice
- Not responding to questions you posed before the meeting
- Not following up on agreed-upon steps or actions
- Lack of progress between sessions
- Disinterested in making changes
- Arrogance
- Apathy about achieving their stated goals

If these patterns emerge, address them directly. If they persist, be willing to end the mentoring relationship rather than continuing in an unproductive investment of time.

When evaluating any mentee's performance, remember the old saying: "Your actions speak so loudly that I cannot hear your words."

5. Forcing Poor Chemistry

Not every mentoring relationship will be a good fit. If after a few sessions, you notice:

- Strained communication
- Clashing values or styles
- Lack of trust
- Draining interactions

... it's typically better to acknowledge the mismatch and guide the mentee to another option rather than forcing an ineffective relationship. But do confirm first that the seeming mismatch is not simply a miscommunication or a misunderstanding—either of which can happen when two people are first getting to know each other.

6. Failing to Set Clear Boundaries

Boundaries keep mentoring relationships effective and sustainable. Establish and maintain:

- Specific time commitments and schedules for future sessions
- Clear communication preferences—not just “Is email, text, or phone the best way to reach you?” but discussing communication style (direct, diplomatic, etc.)
- The defined scope of the relationship (example: you will not financially invest in their venture)
- A healthy balance between guidance and implementation (the mentee is implementing a reasonable amount of your guidance relative to the amount of your time invested)
- A process for graciously concluding the relationship if needed

7. Saying Yes Too Often

Two of the most critical skills for a Sage are learning to say no and learning when to say no. Every time you say yes to a low-impact relationship, you say no to a potential high-impact opportunity. Think of the difference in your life-impact in twenty years if you mentor virtually all high-performers who embrace your wisdom, rather than a few high-performers mixed with many low-impact relationships that took much of your time.

Effective mentors know when to say no to opportunities that don't align with their highest calling. Develop clear criteria for evaluating opportunities:

- Does this align with my core expertise?
- Is the mentee prepared and able to implement guidance?
- Does this relationship have ultra-multiplicative potential?
- Are the right systems in place?
- Is there good chemistry and alignment of values?

Building a High-Impact Mentoring Practice

Instead of ineffective practices, focus on approaches that maximize impact:

1. In addition to our recommendations, develop further criteria for selecting mentees that fits who you are.
2. Create structured frameworks for engagement. If that sounds complicated, Sage Stage offers proven frameworks, training, and tools.
3. Participate in communities of practice. SageStage.org hosts peer mentoring groups where seasoned mentors gain new insights that elevate their practice.
4. Establish strong accountability systems.
5. Regularly evaluate and adjust mentoring relationships for multiplied impact. For example, reallocate your time to mentees who are achieving the highest impact and reduce time with mentees who are scaling slowly with your advice.

Your Current Practice

It is important to periodically evaluate your current mentoring practice. Consider:

- Which relationships need to be restructured or ended?
- Which boundaries need to be reinforced, changed, or newly created?
- Can you reasonably expect a high ROI with each current relationship?
- How can you create more impact for a greater harvest?
- What systems would strengthen your effectiveness?

Ascending the Crane-Reeb Mentoring Hierarchy®

The journey upward through the stages in Chapter 5 isn't automatic. Growing from one stage to the next in this hierarchy requires treating mentorship as the sacred work it is. Those you mentor are counting on you to bring wisdom, care, discernment, and skillful guidance to their most pressing challenges. They need you to have mastered numerous tools—and more importantly, the judgment to know precisely which ones to use and when.

Here are some of our recommendations for helping you heighten your knowledge, abilities, and impact.

Access Resources and Courses

Naturally, you'll wish to read books, listen to webinars, and watch videos on mentoring. Training courses are also available, both online and in person. And organizations like the International Coaching Federation or specialized Sage mentoring programs provide both skill development and credibility through mentor certification.

Observe Other Mentors

Seek out opportunities to observe Skilled, Transformational, and Transcendent mentors in action. With appropriate permissions, sit in on their sessions or review recordings. Notice not just their techniques and methods but their presence—how they create psychological safety, when they lean in versus pull back, how they manage silence, and how they redirect or focus the conversation.

Pursue One-on-One Mentoring

Engaging a mentor who is at least two stages above you is perhaps the most powerful accelerator of growth. Especially since you intend to mentor ultra-capacity leaders.

Invite this mentor to sit in on either a couple of real (with the mentees' permission) or various AI-simulated mentoring sessions with you and give you feedback on your questioning technique, your balance of speaking versus listening, your ability to identify patterns, your blind spots, and your skill at creating actionable insights. Examples

of how they would handle challenging moments you've encountered will be invaluable to your training. Additionally, ask this person to teach you ways to customize, document, and assess your progress.

Hire a Spiritual Director

The progression from Skilled to Transformational to Transcendent increasingly requires spiritual depth and discernment. A trained spiritual director can guide you in developing contemplative practices that sharpen your intuition and help you recognize when you're operating from ego or forcing outcomes versus allowing them to emerge.

Ask this person to introduce you to several spiritual disciplines that you can try out, and then make permanent the ones that help make you a better person and servant to others. The closer your relationship with God grows, the wiser and more caring mentor you will become.

Join a Peer-Consulting Group

Regularly meeting with peers who are dedicated to becoming better mentors is an opportunity that cannot be replaced. Ideally, the group will consist of four to nine people with at least two or three mentors at higher stages than you. The collective wisdom of this group will provide the kinds of insight and perspective that you would not access alone.

Become a Member of Sage Stage

Apply for our fifteen-month course, with one in-person meeting every three months and mentoring in between. Lloyd and I will help you develop a personal roadmap customized for where you are and then advise you in how to ascend to the mentor you wish to be.

Remember, the goal isn't necessarily to mentor more and more people but to create greater transformation. By stopping ineffective practices, focusing on high-impact opportunities, and growing your mentoring skills, you can multiply your influence and create lasting change beyond your direct reach.

The wisdom God has entrusted to you is too valuable to be invested poorly. As you refine your mentoring approach, you'll find deeper joy and fulfillment in seeing your experience truly transform lives and organizations for His kingdom.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS A SAGE MENTOR'S TOOL

Chris

The emergence of artificial intelligence offers Sage mentors powerful new ways to enhance their impact and effectiveness. Thoughtfully applied, artificial intelligence can amplify a mentor's wisdom, streamline processes, and scale influence. But it's up to us to preserve the essential human connection and hard-earned wisdom that are at the heart of mentoring.

Start with You!

Clearly, AI is a major timesaver for all sorts of practical tasks and functions. But Lloyd and I (Chris) highly recommend that when you are using AI for content purposes, you first resort to your own experience and wisdom. This will keep

your intellectual muscles toned up and also ensure that the excellent ideas and applications you've gained across a lifetime are incorporated into your work with mentees. Once you have thought through issues and prepared your ideas, *that's* the time to turn to AI to prompt additional ideas that will enhance your thinking.

Artificial intelligence isn't meant to replace wisdom. In fact, it cannot replace what only God can instill. It should always be the complement to human insight, playing a supporting role, helping mentors prepare more thoroughly or capture and organize their knowledge better. In other words, instead of viewing AI as a technology that replaces you in some way, *think of AI as an always-available research assistant and thought partner.*

Whether you want to:

- Prepare for mentoring conversations with additional insights or topics
- Document and categorize content for broader future application
- Stay current with geopolitical happenings, mentoring best practices, and social enterprise trends
- Structure and systematize your mentoring approach
- Track advice given and outcomes, offering refined guidance based on results

. . . AI has all these capabilities and more.

A Hypothetical AI-Enhanced Mentoring Scenario

Imagine you're mentoring a CEO who is leading a rapidly scaling organization. After you've processed and outlined your own perspective and ideas, use AI to:

- Analyze historical data, market trends, and operational metrics
- Identify patterns, opportunities, and subtle challenges that might derail growth
- Generate potential solutions, innovations, and risk assessments

Then it's time for you to jump back in. You'll be the one to apply your judgment to suggest and customize the most viable strategies, ensuring that they align with the organization's culture and goals.

While AI provides options beyond what you've already developed, it is the Sage's wisdom and experience that discerns which paths are best. The technology amplifies, but it cannot replace, the giftings of a wise mentor.

Practical Applications for Sage Mentors

Lloyd and I both hired AI tutors, and we continue to consult with those tutors to hone our skills with this world-changing technology. But let me share some of the ways that we've already integrated it.

Pre-Session Preparation

When a mentee sends you issues to discuss, and you document your thoughts after careful consideration, you can leverage AI to:

- Develop probing questions you might not have thought to ask
- Identify relevant case studies and examples
- Prepare additional, context-specific questions
- Generate targeted questions for mentees to consider in advance
- Surface potential blind spots to explore
- Identify/develop innovations to test or used by others
- Structure your thoughts and approach for a more focused conversation
- Create structured frameworks for discussion

For example, if you're mentoring someone who is scaling an education technology venture in developing nations, AI can provide current market data and trends, challenges in the sector, local laws and culture, and innovative solutions that are being implemented globally. It can then suggest new interventions to consider. The mentor can then focus the session on refining these ideas within the mentee's unique context.

By sending AI-enhanced preparation materials to mentees before sessions, you can start your live conversations at a much higher level. The mentee arrives having already

considered initial insights, data, and questions, making your time together more productive.

Use During Sessions

During your mentoring conversations, AI can help:

- Track key points and commitments
- Identify areas you haven't yet explored
- Surface relevant principles from your experience that you might not have thought to mention
- Suggest expert resources to share

Post-Session Follow-up

Artificial intelligence can dramatically improve your follow-up process by:

- Summarizing key discussion points and action items
- Tracking which advice mentees implement and the results
- Identifying patterns based on what resonates most with different mentees
- Suggesting additional resources and connections
- Preparing thoughtful questions for the next session
- Playing out the implications of certain scenarios you discussed

Knowledge Capture and Organization

Many mentors accumulate decades of valuable experience but struggle to organize and share it effectively. You can use AI to:

- Document, categorize, and structure important insights and experiences
- Create frameworks that capture patterns and recurring strategies
- Organize case studies and examples for easy retrieval
- Build a searchable database of your advice and resources that mentees can access

Both Lloyd and I have developed customized Large Language Models (LLMs) for mentoring. Each of us has downloaded into our LLM the books we've authored, the speeches we've given, the articles we've written, the webinars we've presented, and the advice we've shared with mentees.

Here's another usage: I find that I can dictate numerous bullet points into my phone during my daily sixty-minute walk. I then prompt AI to provide ideas for an article, blog, book chapter, or email to a mentee. As of 2025, AI is not yet sufficiently reliable to write lengthy articles or book chapters. However, when you make the first effort at writing, it can provide additional ideas you may choose to incorporate. I'm also able to pose questions or real-life problems and prompt it for answers and potential solutions. I always carefully edit the AI work though. Be aware too, that while this technology often comes up with great ideas I hadn't thought of, it does sometimes

arrive at incorrect conclusions or make up untrue statements. So there will be occasions when you'll need to verify it with other sources.

You can easily refine AI outputs, ensuring that they reflect your voice and wisdom while being accessible to mentees and your family members. However, it is critical to start with the things you have learned over decades of decision-making and results.

Scaling Your Impact

While one-on-one mentoring remains invaluable, AI allows you to:

- Develop scalable methodologies from your insights
- Devise structured frameworks for broader application
- Share wisdom in multiple formats (such as social media posts, presentations, books, podcasts, articles, YouTube videos), reaching audiences beyond traditional networks
- Provide advice to mentees in underserved or remote regions. Lloyd and I published our book *The Social Entrepreneur* in a way that allows us to offer digital versions for free to any entrepreneur in the world instantly, extending our impact into the poorest countries where we may never be able to go ourselves
- Capture your insights in ways that can benefit future generations
- Create customized resources for family members
- Build scalable tools with which to share your wisdom

- Indirectly mentor hundreds more than would be possible otherwise. Eventually, your LLM could provide sound advice to other people's mentees or descendants of yours who you may never meet personally

Impact Tracking

This technology is great for gauging your effectiveness if you set up systems for:

- Monitoring which advice gets implemented most often
- Tracking results from different approaches
- Identifying which mentees are most responsive to guidance
- Measuring the long-term impact of your mentoring

Staying Current

With good prompts from you, AI can help you stay informed by:

- Noting emerging trends and developments in relevant sectors
- Identifying innovative models and new social enterprise strategies
- Filtering valuable insights from vast information streams

- Amplifying creativity and prompting innovative thinking
- Providing diverse perspectives to challenge your assumptions. You can even prompt AI to have a debate with you or your mentee on a particular subject!

As you use AI to keep you up to date on the latest knowledge and best practices, the quality of your mentoring will only be elevated.

Community Connection

Within the Sage community, AI can:

- Find other mentors with expertise for specific challenges
- Help coordinate introductions and connections
- Surface similar cases and solutions from other mentors
- Facilitate knowledge-sharing across the community

Why Human Wisdom Remains Essential

While AI is powerful, Lloyd and I want to reiterate that *it cannot replace the human elements that make mentoring transformative*:

- The genuine care and empathy of an experienced mentor
- The power of personal connections and introductions

- The nuanced judgment that comes from deep experience
- The innovative solutions that emerge from human creativity

And don't forget this either: sometimes AI makes mistakes.

The technology works best as an enhancer of human wisdom, not a replacement for it. The most effective mentors will be those who thoughtfully combine their experience with AI's capabilities.

Best Practices for AI Integration

What are currently the best practices Lloyd and I have found for using AI?

1. Start Simple

- Begin with one or two basic applications that enhance your current mentoring practice—maybe research and preparation.
- As you grow more comfortable, expand the use of AI thoughtfully, ensuring it aligns with your mission and deepens your ability to guide others. For example, allow AI to use your original work to develop detailed frameworks or publications.
- Learn from other mentors' experiences with AI.
- Engage in peer consulting groups that focus on AI and mentorship.

2. Maintain Human Connection

- Ensure that AI remains a tool for preparation and follow-up, not a replacement for you or for genuine conversation.
- Let the technology handle routine tasks so that you can focus on doing what only you can do, such as deepening your insights and perspectives.

3. Know AI's Limitations

- It provides information, not wisdom.
- It may overlook cultural or contextual nuances.
- Be aware of potential biases and factual errors in the content it generates.
- Validate AI suggestions with your experience and judgment, as well as other sources as needed.
- It is prone to unnecessary repetition and always needs the human touch in its voicing and messaging.

Role-Play and Rehearsal

Between actual mentoring sessions, practice with AI-powered simulations or peer role-plays. Create challenging scenarios based on real situations you've encountered. Practice staying composed when a mentee becomes defensive, maintaining boundaries when asked to invest financially, or navigating ethical dilemmas. These low-stakes practice sessions build muscle memory for high-stakes moments.

Looking Ahead: The Future of AI in Mentoring

The future of AI-assisted mentorship is evolving rapidly, but certain principles will remain constant:

1. Human wisdom and authentic connection will always be central.
2. The technology will become more accurate and better at “reasoning,” but you should always take the lead and apply your own reasoning first.
3. Successful mentors will be those who combine human and God-led discernment with technological proficiency.
4. The AI you are currently using performs worse than any future generation of AI. Embrace it now so that you are equipped to capitalize on what’s to come.

Thoughtful Integration for Amplifying Your Impact

Imagine mentoring a social entrepreneur and using AI to:

- Amplify your strengths and broaden your reach
- Pinpoint potential pitfalls and strategies for acceleration
- Provide a curated set of insights that expands your guidance

Few things can match the joy of witnessing your wisdom—rooted in biblical stewardship, powered by divine guidance, and refined and expanded by AI—transforming countless more lives.

If you're unfamiliar with AI, consider hiring an AI coach or joining a peer group to refine your approach. Lloyd and I both benefited from expert tutors in leveraging AI for this book, and we found the journey rewarding and transformative.

The goal isn't to become an AI expert. It's to thoughtfully use these tools to increase your ability to serve those you mentor. This is the stewardship of influence, aligning yourself with God's call to maximize your gifts for His glory and the good of others.

YOU'VE CAUGHT UP WITH YOUR DREAM

Lloyd

The Sage Stage isn't just another season of driving for results "but with a softer touch." No. It holds the promise of far greater things—joy and contentment and world-changing impact!

One of the last conversations I (Lloyd) had with Bob Buford revealed this truth to me in a profound way. He asked me a simple yet powerful question: "Lloyd, tell me, what are you learning these days?"

At first, my mind raced to find something profound to say. But then I remembered that I had been focusing on something that felt oddly foreign to me: learning contentment.

I had recently done a word study on contentment in the Bible and discovered something incredible. Contentment isn't just a nice-to-have; it comes with a sure promise:

Godliness with contentment is great gain.

(1 Tim. 6:6, NIV)

Where else do we find a written promise like that? No ethical financial advisor will promise you great gain. The government guarantees only modest returns on Treasury bills. But here, God lays out a path to true, lasting wealth—not necessarily financial, but spiritual and emotional.

Confronting My Fear of Contentment

I realized I had ignored this promise most of my results-driven life. In fact, I had trained myself to view contentment as a slippery slope to mediocrity. I feared that if I became content, I'd lose my drive for excellence and impact.

I shared this with Bob and told him how I had gone as far as changing all my passwords to a derivative of “contentment” to remind myself of this focus every day. Bob smiled; he could see the irony. Even in my quest for contentment, I was obsessive and results driven.

He looked at me and said something that struck deep: “Oh . . . Lloyd, you've caught up with your dream. That's what you do when you catch up with your dream—you learn to hunker down and savor the moments.”

The moment he said that I knew it was true. I had caught up with my dream. Now I needed to learn how to savor it.

The Art of Savoring the Sage Stage

Savoring isn't about slowing down to a halt or stepping away from purpose. It's about embracing the present, finding joy in the work you've been called to, and recognizing the fruits of your labor.

Here are three steps that helped me begin to savor the Sage Stage:

1. Changing My Beliefs about Contentment

I had to confront the belief that “contentment equals mediocrity.” Instead, I began to see contentment as a source of strength—a way to deepen my joy, increase my connection with God, and enrich my relationships.

Contentment doesn't mean losing ambition or impact. It means finding peace and joy in the journey, not just the outcomes.

Reflection:

Do you view contentment as a strength or a weakness?

What fears might be holding you back from embracing it?

2. Recognizing and Reflecting on Moments of Joy

I realized that I had been moving so fast that I often missed the moments worth savoring. I needed to slow down and

notice the small, beautiful things God was doing. Simple practices helped.

- *Pausing* after meaningful conversations.
- *Reflecting* on moments where I felt God's presence.
- *Giving thanks* for small victories and evidences of impact.

Reflection:

How can you create space in your day to recognize moments worth savoring?

3. Capturing the Journey

One of the most transformative practices I adopted was creating a "Book of Days." Inspired by Joshua 4, where the Israelites built a memorial with twelve stones to remember God's faithfulness, I began capturing daily artifacts signifying where I saw God at work through me in others' lives.

Here's how it works:

- Each year, I buy a blank, 300-page spiral notebook.
- Every day, I look for an artifact—a card, an email, a voicemail, a story—that reflects how God used me to bless someone else.
- At the end of the year, I paste these artifacts into the book.

Over time, I've filled more than a dozen of these books. For me, they aren't records of my accomplishments; they're testimonies of what God has done through me.

Anytime I feel discouraged or am tempted to drift toward comfort and leisure, I turn to these books. They tangibly remind me of God's faithfulness and help me savor the moments I might otherwise have missed.

Reflection:

Would a Book of Days or something similar help you savor your journey? What comes to mind?

How might you capture the results of your Sage work?

Learning to Hunker Down and Savor

Bob's words continue to echo in my heart: *"You've caught up with your dream. Now hunker down and savor the moments."*

That's what the Sage Stage offers us. Not just the opportunity to keep striving but to relish the fruits of what God will do and has done through us.

When it's all said and done, the Sage Stage is about enjoying deep relationships. Finding joy in helping others flourish. Recognizing God's hand in the present moment. Ongoing spiritual growth. And stewarding everything He has entrusted to you—past, present, and future.

What a gift it is! Don't rush past it. Chris and I pray that you'll find it to be what it has been for us: the most important, productive, and joyous time in your life.

Hunker down. Savor the moments. And celebrate what God is doing through you.

Reflection Questions

1. Where in your life have you already caught up with your dream? How might you savor it more deeply?
2. What steps will you take to grow in your ability to savor the moments?
3. How will you celebrate what you see God doing through you as a Sage?

A CLOSING THOUGHT

CREATING A LEGACY THAT LASTS

Lloyd

There's something beautifully humbling about realizing that your greatest fruit will grow long after you're gone. Think about it:

- When you mentor a leader in their forties, they might have thirty-plus years left to build their organization.
- Then they'll likely spend another ten to twenty years mentoring others because those who have been mentored well almost always want to mentor others.
- And those mentee leaders receiving that third generation of Sage mentoring? They'll go on to do the same.

That's the kind of generational impact that can last a century or more.

You may impact hundreds of millions of people! And the best part? It doesn't need your name on it. It doesn't

need applause. It's quiet, soulful, and a deeply powerful form of ministry.

A Picture of Legacy

I (Lloyd) have a photo in my office that reminds me of this every day. It's of Bob Buford at his desk, with a painting of his mentor, Peter Drucker, hanging on the wall behind him. That image captures three generations of legacy: Peter Drucker mentored Bob. Bob mentored me. Now I have the privilege of mentoring others like Don Wenner, who is already shaping his own incredible legacy.

Don Wenner: Building an Empire to Build the Kingdom

Don Wenner didn't grow up with wealth. Born to teenage parents in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, he was raised in a home full of children—both he and his siblings and day-care kids his mother cared for. The Wenner household was loving, crowded, and often chaotic. Don's family moved thirty-seven times by the time he was seventeen. Don left home as a high school junior, convinced he'd figured out the world.

That fire in his belly took him to Drexel University to study finance, and at age twenty-one, into the real estate world—right at the 2006 market peak. His early business was driven by fear: fear of failure, fear of letting down his parents who now worked for him, and fear of running out of money. But that fear produced hustle. Don sold homes

with bold promises, built new business lines to meet the needs of families in crisis, and quickly grew his company.

By 2014, he had built DLP Capital into a thriving enterprise. But something shifted. “I realized we weren’t going to run out of money,” Don says. “The fear that drove me wasn’t necessary anymore.” He began reading deeply, praying consistently, and asking the bigger question: *What am I called to do?*

That season of clarity ignited a transformation: “I didn’t just want to give a percentage of our revenue and time to good causes. I wanted to use 100 percent of our business as a ministry platform.” Don saw the full scope of his influence: employees, investors, residents, and developer partners. “I realized I was stewarding a million hours of people’s time each year. I didn’t want to waste that.”

Today, DLP Capital is a \$5.5 billion impact investment firm with one thousand employees and tens of thousands of housing units under management. But Don doesn’t measure success in dollars. He measures it in lives transformed.

“We exist to build thriving communities that transform lives,” Don explains. That includes the families living in the housing DLP develops, the investors they serve, and the employees who grow the business. “Ninety-four percent of apartment residents in America are unchurched. That’s a mission field.”

DLP brings ministry into its apartment communities through partners like Apartment Life, on-site hospitality teams, and faith-based programs like John Maxwell’s *Beyond Success* curriculum. “We host Bible studies,

parenting classes, worship nights—our goal is for neighbors to build trust and serve one another.”

This isn’t theory. It’s practiced compassion. In 2023, days after acquiring a 312-unit apartment community in Asheville, North Carolina, a massive storm cut off power and water to hundreds of residents. “We were there cooking hot meals, bringing in water, setting up porta-potties. If we hadn’t owned that community, those people might not have been cared for like that.”

Don’s vision doesn’t stop at individual apartment complexes. He’s now redeveloping twenty-nine city blocks in downtown Jacksonville—creating housing, grocery stores, schools, churches, and job opportunities in one of the country’s most underserved urban cores. “This isn’t just about real estate. It’s about human flourishing,” he says.

The company’s events don’t feel like typical investor meetings. At a recent DLP gathering, guests were invited not only to learn about financial strategy but to worship and even get baptized. Don’s two young sons were among those baptized that night, along with employees, investors, and even a homeless woman who wandered in off the beach.

What drives all this? A vision rooted in Scripture, stewarded with disciplined execution.

Don created what he calls his “Perfect Life Metrics”—a thirty-year vision he crafted in 2020 that includes raising sons of significance, loving his wife well, leading a global business, and deepening his relationship with Christ while living an unhurried life, taking time to hear the Lord while

operating with urgency in pursuing his calling. Don and his family currently have a BHAG (big, hairy, audacious goal) to experience and enjoy one thousand extraordinary days as a family in one hundred different places before his oldest leaves for college. “Last year, we hit 101 of those days,” he smiles. “And every one of them, we were all together, fully present.”

His philosophy is simple: structure brings freedom. At DLP, they run on a rigorous operating system that Don developed and outlined in his book, *Building an Elite Organization*. That same level of intentionality flows into his family life through rhythms, planning tools, and shared experiences.

For those wondering how to begin making an impact through business, Don encourages experimentation. “At first, I didn’t know if DLP would be my ministry platform. But through prayer, coaching, and testing, the path became clear. Sometimes it’s right under your nose. You just need the clarity and courage to act.”

Don’s story isn’t about building a successful company and then giving back. It’s about building a kingdom enterprise from the ground up—one where business growth and gospel impact go hand in hand. Through DLP, Don isn’t just building communities. He’s building a legacy.

In his own words:

The verse of my life is “To whom much is given, much is required” (Luke 12:48). One of the greatest gifts I have been given is the wisdom of incredible men and women

who have been willing to pour into me. I believe strongly in Carol Dweck's work on growth mindset—the belief that if you are willing to put in the work to learn and improve, you can accomplish anything and overcome incredible setbacks, failures, and obstacles. An important part of this to me is the knowledge that for anything I want to learn or accomplish, there are great people who have walked ahead of me who have learned the lesson I need to learn, who have mastered the skill I need to learn. I have sought out these mentors, first by being an avid reader, and second by seeking out the experts I read about.

I was blessed early in my career by many older business owners and leaders who were willing to share their experiences, expertise, and knowledge. I have been blessed to meet people like John C. Maxwell, who has become a mentor to me over the past few years and imparted so many incredible lessons on communication and leadership, but even more importantly, has shown me how to incorporate faith into my work and how to use my platform for Great Commission work.

I have also met many successful business owners who have become investors with DLP Capital and have been willing to share their knowledge both from successes and failures. One of those key Sage mentors is Peter Fioretti. Peter grew similar businesses to DLP Capital approximately twenty years ahead of DLP Capital's story. Peter became a significant investor in DLP Capital's investment funds but also took an active role in offering support; providing knowledge and insights as well as key relationships; and opening up multiple doors for me. One of those very important and life-changing doors Peter opened was

inviting me to join the 100x Forum with Lloyd Reeb in 2020. I entered the program thinking I was a 9 or a 10 in basically every area of life. I had been on a disciplined, intentional, and thoughtful journey for quite some time. I hosted events and training for families and leaders, helping them live more intentional lives; helping them implement the “8 F’s of Life” framework we developed and utilize tools we created for personal, family, and business success.

I remember when I shared with Lloyd my rating system on the areas of my life, as well as my friends’ and my wife ratings: they were pretty much all excellent. I was feeling proud of myself until Lloyd challenged me in the subtle way he has done many times since. He said, “Maybe it is time to change the rating scale, to raise the bar.” That took me back a bit, but I quickly realized he was right. I had so much opportunity to get so much better in all areas of life.

I could operate at a higher level.

I could be a much better leader.

I was not cherishing my wife, Carla, to the level I was capable of.

I was too busy, with too many priorities, lacking capacity and clarity in a number of areas.

There is no better way to grow as a person, to grow as a leader, and to grow as man of God than to walk along a few steps behind great men and women who are willing to provide honest Sage advice and wisdom. No book, no class, no training, and no consultant can provide the incredible value a Sage can provide, especially to a

young man or woman who is on fire to make a significant kingdom impact and transform lives.

Wow, what a powerful testament to how God can use a single leader who is open to His guidance and to learning from those who are a few yards ahead of him! But as we've talked about in this book, the only way that can happen is if people like you will choose legacy over leisure and mentor multiplication over the misleading of money when you face that fork in the road as a leader.

Chris and I are not suggesting that you give up enjoying leisure. I love a good round of golf as much as anyone. Rather, we're challenging you to challenge yourself to make ample space for something deeper. Something more lasting.

That's why we're building a community at Sage Stage—a place where world-class leaders:

- *Focus* on what matters most
- *Find leverage* to amplify their impact
- *Persist* in their calling, savoring the joy of seeing their legacy multiply
- *Transform* millions of lives

Imagine being surrounded by others who are as passionate about impact as you are. A tribe of Sages, each committed to growing fruit on other people's trees; a peer community of highly accomplished leaders enthusiastically pursuing their third and most important act.

It's Your Turn

You have wisdom, experience, contacts, and resources that others need. Why not use them to build something that outlasts you?

Mentor the next generation.

Watch your influence multiply.

Create a legacy that echoes for decades.

If you're ready, we'd love for you to join us.

Go to sagestage.org, and we'll connect you with faith-driven entrepreneurs who are tackling some of the world's deepest needs. Leaders who are just one click away from benefiting from your wisdom.

These relationships often blossom into profound friendships, united by a shared mission to deploy their gifts for maximum impact. You'll discover that these friendships are richer, deeper, and more purposeful than any networking event could offer.

Will it cost you time? Yes.

Will it challenge your assumptions? Absolutely.

Your golf and paddleball game will suffer; your leisure travel schedule may decline as your purposeful travels increase, but you will soar. You will be welcomed into a peer community of accomplished individuals collectively seeking the greatest professional impact of their lives.

Because in the end, our fruit really does grow on other people's trees. It's a legacy worth leaving—and the only kind of legacy that lasts.

NOTES

1. Clayton M. Christensen, “How Will You Measure Your Life?” *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2010, <https://hbr.org/2010/07/how-will-you-measure-your-life>.

2. For more information, see praxis.co/redemptive-entrepreneurship.

3. bluezones.com/2016/11/power-9/

4. Also, see Chapter 15 of *The Social Entrepreneur* by Chris Crane and Lloyd Reeb (San Diego, CA: YouPublish, 2022) or thesocialentrepreneur.org for numerous frameworks and templates.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Chris Crane is a serial entrepreneur and social impact leader with a passion for scaling ventures that change lives. With Lloyd Reeb, he cofounded Sage Stage, which equips highly accomplished entrepreneurs and CEOs to mentor other highly accomplished younger leaders for greater impact. He co-founded *Ardent Mentoring* in 2022 with Lloyd Reeb and Ryan King—a global community where seasoned Christian leaders mentor social entrepreneurs to accelerate growth, avoid pitfalls, and seize opportunities.

In 2009, Chris co-founded *Edify*, which now serves 40,000 financially sustainable Christian schools educating 10 million children living in poverty across 17 developing nations. Before that, he led *Opportunity International* as CEO, growing its reach from 375,000 to 1.5 million microfinance clients in 28 developing countries and growing private revenues from \$8 million to \$51 million.

Earlier as CEO, Chris built COMPS InfoSystems into a national leader in commercial real estate data, taking it through two private equity rounds, an IPO, and thirteen acquisitions before selling the company. Named an Ernst &

Young Entrepreneur of the Year in 1999, Chris is a Harvard MBA and long-time YPO member.

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Lloyd Reeb is a social entrepreneur, author, and catalyst for leaders seeking purpose, clarity, and kingdom impact in the second half of life. As a founding partner of the *Halftime Institute*, the *100x Forum*, and *Ardent Mentoring*, he has spent over two decades helping high-capacity leaders multiply their influences through mentoring, strategic generosity, and redemptive ventures.

Lloyd began as a real estate developer, building senior living communities that gave him financial freedom and sparked a bigger question: *What am I really here for?* That search led him to co-found the Halftime Institute with Bob Buford in 1998, now a global movement helping leaders move from success to significance.

A believer that “my fruit grows on other people’s trees,” Lloyd thrives on equipping others to build impact far beyond their own reach. He and his wife, Linda, live on Lake Norman, NC and have three married children and five grandchildren. He is the author of *From Success to Significance*, *The Social Entrepreneur*, and *Sage Stage*.

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