



**It's possible for women to be strong Christians and confident leaders.**

Mentor and longtime corporate leader Peggy Bodde views work as sacred and has invested her life in showing women how to thrive in the workplace. Peggy provides an invaluable and practical resource answering all your leadership challenges and questions.

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# Recognizing and Overcoming Imposter Syndrome

Your identity is secure when you believe  
that what God says about you is true.<sup>1</sup>

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I once helped a young professional prepare to interview for a promotion at her company. “Beth” had a documented history of stellar performance in addition to leadership experience, and she was excited about growing with her organization. Besides the standard interview prep, she created a 30/60/90-day plan outlining goals for each stage of the new job. If that wasn’t impressive enough, she also wrote a one-page project proposal to increase employee engagement while simultaneously improving client satisfaction. Beth practiced for the interview, prepared her questions and documents in advance, and felt confident about her chances of getting the job. The interview went well, and I wasn’t surprised a week later when she called to tell me they offered her the position. What *did* surprise me was how she sounded.

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Her excitement and confidence were gone, and instead of a person who had just received a promotion, she was anxious and doubtful. As we talked, she said things like:

“I’m not sure I’m the best person for the job.”

“I don’t think I’m qualified to handle these extra responsibilities.”

“They should have given the job to someone with better credentials.”

Unfortunately, what Beth experienced isn’t an unknown phenomenon: imposter syndrome had made an appearance. Understanding what it is, where it may come from, and how it affects us frees us to overcome it. Scripture tells us God values, loves, and accepts us. But because we live in an imperfect world, complicated factors can interfere with our ability to hear that truth. In this chapter, we’ll take those factors apart and look at ways to reclaim God’s truth about who we are.

### WHAT IS IMPOSTER SYNDROME?

*Psychology Today* explains that “people who struggle with imposter syndrome believe that they are undeserving of their achievements and the high esteem in which they are, in fact, generally held. They feel that they aren’t as competent or intelligent as others might think—and that soon enough, people will discover the truth about them.”<sup>2</sup> Women who suffer from imposter syndrome downplay workplace recognition and achievement and see others as more qualified than themselves.

### **You may be experiencing imposter syndrome if you:**

- are a woman of color working in a colorless company<sup>3</sup>
- are a woman working in a male-dominated industry
- have been a minority in your workplace for most of your career
- were overlooked at work for a long time before being recognized
- had a childhood where performance was emphasized but nothing was ever good enough
- were raised in an environment where women were not encouraged to pursue careers or become leaders
- place extreme pressure on yourself not to fail
- battle perfectionism, comparison, and workaholism

When I started my business career in the 1990s, very few women worked in the outdoor industry, where companies promoted outdoor exploration and activities. This unique group of businesses had even fewer women leaders, which created feelings of isolation. I experienced moments when I felt like Beth did, even before I knew what to call it. It seemed absurd, but even positive events triggered feelings of fraud and insecurity, such as career changes, promotions, or being recognized. Did I really deserve the \_\_\_\_\_ [promotion, raise, recognition]? At other times, negative situations happened and brought out the same feelings.

Once, while I was working with potential suppliers in a closed-door meeting, one of the executives barged in, interrupting us. He told me to have the receptionist order new urinal filters because he didn't like the smell of the existing ones. Being treated disrespectfully led to self-doubt about my value to the company. But as many women do, I stuffed my response—emotional and otherwise—and

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told myself to toughen up. I've since realized that if we can't name a problem, we can't confront it. And if we don't confront it, we can't overcome it.

**We tend to dismiss our feelings, but one of the first steps to overcoming imposter syndrome is to face our feelings and share our struggles.**

Women struggle with imposter syndrome more than men, and psychologists think this is largely because of cultural and societal norms. When women make strides in a direction that flows opposite of their upbringing or what they see and experience around them, imposter syndrome is likely to show up. They experience an underlying sense that they don't belong and aren't qualified to be where they are, regardless of experience, education, or competency.

For these same reasons, women of color are very susceptible to experiencing imposter syndrome. Clinical psychologist Emily Hu says, "We're more likely to experience imposter syndrome if we don't see many examples of people who look like us or share our background who are clearly succeeding in our field."<sup>4</sup>

Lean In, a US organization that helps women pursue their work ambitions, reported in 2022 that "for every 100 men promoted from entry level to manager, only 87 women are promoted, and only 82 women of color are promoted." The same report showed that "only 1 in 4 C-suite executives is a woman, and only 1 in 20 is a woman of color."<sup>5</sup>

Statistics and studies like these are helpful because they validate and reframe what we're experiencing. We tend to dismiss our feelings, but one of the first steps to overcoming imposter syndrome is to face our feelings and share our struggles. Talking about this topic may make us feel more vulnerable, but God designed us to be in community! We need each other, and I'm glad you're here.

### *What's the Big Deal About Imposter Syndrome?*

Experiencing imposter syndrome and *not* confronting it creates outcomes that stop you from fulfilling your professional goals and reaching your leadership potential:

1. Instead of being excited about a new job or position, you waste time and energy wondering if you're a diversity hire or if you fooled everyone into believing your qualifications. When you first step into a new job or role, the energy and focus you bring are critical. You can't afford to be distracted by doubt.
2. You may under-assess your worth, so you don't require others to treat you fairly or with respect. This can hold you back from asking for the raises or promotions you deserve. You feel less-than, so you accept less.
3. Instead of graciously and confidently accepting praise, recognition, or even a new title, you resist and deflect. Responding this way demeans your professionalism and looks like false humility.

### **IMPOSTER SYNDROME AND CHRISTIANS**

I was a corporate leader for decades and now mentor women leaders through my foundation, Sacred Work. Based on my experience and what I hear from others, Christian women are more prone to imposter syndrome. Not only are we going against broad cultural norms by filling positions formerly held by men, but we may also be going against norms established in our faith communities. A prevalent evangelical movement in the 1980s and early 1990s framed a woman's place as being in the home.<sup>6</sup> Many Christian women were raised in legalistic homes or within a gender stereotype that didn't

include being assertive, leading people, or pursuing a career. These pressure points come together and cause women to face imposter syndrome in two realms: as Christians and as leaders. Comparison then becomes a frequent guest.

In her book *Unconditioned Love*, Staci Diffendaffer describes the experience like this: “I tried to transform into who I thought these women were because they seemed like *the right kind* of Christian

women. And while I admired them for being *the right kind* of Christian women, a small resentment started to form. If I am different from them, that must mean that I am not *the right kind* of Christian woman. I reasoned that I wouldn’t be accepted if I was just . . . me.”<sup>7</sup>

**The absence of other women leaders in my world created a question mark. I couldn’t find firm footing in business or faith circles.**

At times we question if being a female leader in a secular workplace is a godly pursuit. Maybe we misunderstood God’s direction in our lives, and we shouldn’t be working outside the home at all. Or we’re ambivalent because we’re not limiting our leadership to church roles. We crack open Christian leadership books for women and find that most are about women who lead ministries, which seems to affirm we’re in the wrong place. People in the Christian community may have said silly things to us, like:

“Leadership isn’t a calling. It’s a vocation.”

“Leadership can’t be a calling because you get paid to do it.”

“Leadership is a job, not a purpose.”

In church circles, I saw myself as the odd person out. I was a single mom when I started my career and often felt less-than because I was the sole provider and worked outside the home. I enjoyed my

work and loved leading people, which led to guilt and angst. When other women asked me about my job, I felt like I had to apologize because I enjoyed it and was grateful for it.

I also didn't have access to women leaders as mentors. Women who led or managed in the workplace were scarce, and I couldn't even find a leadership book in Barnes and Noble written by a woman! The absence of other women leaders in my world created a question mark. I couldn't find firm footing in business *or* faith circles. Leadership in the corporate world wasn't laying out welcome mats for women, and the Christian world wasn't offering examples or affirmations that women in workplace leadership should have a seat at the table. Thankfully, cultural and societal norms are changing and continuing to evolve.

What about you? Do you ever find yourself in work situations where you struggle to fit into the role of "Christian" versus "leader," and then you wonder if you're qualified for either? You may feel torn between your identity as a Christian woman and your identity as a leader. It may even seem like you have to choose one over the other, and that tension chips away at your confidence. Despite your education, your work history, and all your best efforts—your doubts pile up, and you toss them into a big box at the back of your mind labeled "I don't belong here."

*Maybe I'm a fake leader. Maybe I'm a fake Christian.*

*Why do I feel undone, unworthy, and unqualified?*

*Why do I resist being recognized for my leadership or acknowledged for my faith?*

*I don't think I'm cut out to be a leader.*

*If I were a stronger Christian, I wouldn't have this struggle.*

*How do I overcome the fear that I'll fail in both places?*

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As a corporate leader, I experienced the same questions and uncertainty. There's a reason for that. Satan isn't creative: he's predictable and repetitive. The ruler of this world always wants less for us than the Ruler of our hearts. Satan uses voices from the past and present to create shadows around our light, and these distractions bog us down. We begin to doubt where God has placed us and the leadership talent He's given us.

From Scripture, we know the enemy stirs up confusion to immobilize us. If we thrive as Christian women and leaders, Satan has plenty to lose, so he peddles the lie that we're double agents with no standing in either space. But you're here, which means your eyes are open to the struggle behind your smile and successes. Hopefully, you now understand more about what imposter syndrome is and why it exists.

In her book *Killing Comparison*, Nona Jones says, "Knowing what your insecure foundations are is important because once you know what they are, you can do something about them."<sup>8</sup>

Let's take that next step!

### HOW TO OVERCOME IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Imposter syndrome has deep roots growing from seeds planted deep down and cultivated without our knowledge. They may have started in childhood or along our career paths, and they were watered every time we were overlooked, underrepresented, or marginalized. Gradually, massive weeds of insecurity crowded out our confidence. But regardless of why or how imposter syndrome affects you, you can take steps to weed it out:

- Take control of your thoughts, so they don't take control of you. Psychology experts estimate that the average person

has over 6,000 thoughts in one day.<sup>9</sup> We have the power to choose what we think about, so make sure your thoughts are serving you well. Be mindful of thoughts that suggest you're in any way undeserving or not the "real deal." When you recognize negative thought patterns, take action against them. There are lots of suggestions below!

- Write a list of Bible verses affirming who God says you are and keep it where you can see it daily. One of my favorites is Romans 8:37, "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." It reminds me I'm loved and victorious!
- Keep a file of your professional achievements including awards, promotion letters, complimentary emails, and accomplishments from performance reviews. When you sense doubts about your competence creeping in, read through the file.
- Write a positive reminder and keep it in a private place that's quickly accessible, like under a keyboard. Choose words that stifle the negative self-talk that gets stirred up when imposter syndrome is triggered. For example, mine is, "I worked hard to get here. I belong here. God created me to do this work in this place."
- Talk to a trusted friend. Women who know you and care for you are priceless resources. It's freeing to share your thoughts with another person who will listen and respond with your best interest in mind. Friends can speak the truth against doubts you have about your abilities.
- Journal your thoughts when you feel anxious or doubtful about your strengths and accomplishments. Use these questions to get started: What event happened immediately before the negative spiral? What feelings did you experience? When was the last time you felt this way in your career? What do the

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two instances have in common? Answering these questions helps you pinpoint triggers and uncover root causes. Journal entries are also helpful when talking about your experiences with friends, mentors, or therapists.

- Work with a mentor or therapist to discover how imposter syndrome may have developed, what your specific triggers are, and how to further overcome them.

Take courage! Ask the Holy Spirit to increase your awareness, so you know when imposter syndrome is happening. He is our guide and advocate, and He will help you overcome. Start with small steps and keep going!

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An often-quoted verse in Esther reads, “And who knows if perhaps you were made queen for just such a time as this?” (Est. 4:14b NLT). God’s presence is all over Esther’s story, even though His name is never mentioned once. Esther is in the minority as a Jew and a woman in a Persian palace where their ways are not her ways, her commitment to her beliefs is tested, and she has to overcome many challenges.

She struggles with her confidence as a Jewish woman and her power as a queen. We can almost imagine her thoughts:

“Am I more than just another pretty face?”

“Will my uncle and the Jewish people doubt my beliefs and convictions?”

“How can I live out my faith in this environment?”

“Am I really qualified to plead a case when lives are on the line?”

## Recognizing and Overcoming Imposter Syndrome

God takes an inexperienced orphan girl, whose identity and background make her the perfect candidate to become the queen of Persia, and He uses her to save His people. This story holds unique encouragement for us as Christian women in the workplace. Like us, Esther probably experienced doubts about her qualifications and her identity as a woman of God. But just as she was perfectly qualified for the job at hand, you are too. You are exactly who and where God intended you to be.

When you feel conflicted or inadequate, remember this: who we are as followers of Christ informs who we are as leaders of people. Faith and leadership work together; they are not at odds with each other. Our identity and calling are secure in Him, and we can lean into that truth when imposter syndrome threatens an appearance. God created you to follow Him, and He created you to lead.

**My prayer for you:** Thank You, Father, for the woman who is reading this. Thank You that she bravely carries Your banner into all areas of her life, including the workplace. Help her remember that her identity in You is true and secure. Heal her from past situations that weaken her confidence, and give her strength and courage as she fights against self-doubt.

# Making Difficult Decisions

Wherever you see a successful business,  
someone once made a courageous decision.<sup>1</sup>

PETER DRUCKER, AUTHOR AND FOUNDER OF THE DRUCKER INSTITUTE

**M**y first corporate job was in the early 1990s, before Wi-Fi and smartphones were part of the everyday business world. Not long after I was hired, my boss, Steve, went on a work trip and I fielded a call in his absence. His assistant knew all the ins and outs of the business, but she was at home sick. The caller was from the exhibit hall for our industry trade show and explained that “today” was our “last chance” to confirm our booth space before the price increased by \$5,000. An extra \$5,000 was a lot of money, and when I heard “last chance,” I panicked. I took the caller’s info and promised to call her back by the end of the day.

I shuffled through Steve’s desk again, checked his (paper) calendar, and tried once more to reach him by phone. No answer. When I asked around the company, I was met with a lot of shrugged shoulders. He was also my first business mentor, and I didn’t want to disappoint him.

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At the end of the day, I was out of time. I paced around and finally called the exhibit hall, saying I couldn't confirm our booth space.

The next morning Steve called, and when I told him what happened, he said we were indeed supposed to have a booth at the trade show; it was the most important show of the year. I gulped. Here I was, two months on the job at a small company, and I'd just cost him \$5,000. His car phone was about to lose service, so he said we'd talk about what happened later, and he ended with this, "Don't worry. I'd rather you move forward with a wrong decision than wait around for me to tell you the right one."

Once back in the office, Steve helped me understand the details about the trade show. Technically, we had a contract giving us until the end of the month to secure our booth space. I hadn't cost the company \$5,000 after all! He showed me where the contracts were and taught me how to review them. I learned that the urgent call was merely a ploy to push for a commitment, so the exhibit hall

could find out early how many empty spaces they needed to fill. Most of all, I learned that making a decision is more important than making a mistake.

As my leadership responsibilities increased throughout my career, I came to realize that stakes grow along with responsibilities. You may have experienced this realization yourself. There's no room for uncertain leaders who waffle in their choices. We're criticized if we take too long to decide or if we decide in haste, and the

consequences of either can be far-reaching. The burden of good judgment is heavy to bear, but it's a quality both employers and employees expect leaders to have. An article by *Forbes* describes

**The pressure is clearly on leaders to decide what's best for their companies and to be right much of the time. There are many tools to help with the process.**

decision-making as “the one leadership quality that you need.”<sup>2</sup>

Just how quantifiable is this quality? McKinsey & Company uses numbers to put this into perspective: “Ineffective decision making has significant implications for company productivity. On average, respondents spend 37 percent of their time making decisions, and more than half of this time was thought to be spent ineffectively. For managers at an average Fortune 500 company, this could translate into more than 530,000 days of lost working time and roughly \$250 million of wasted labor costs per year.”<sup>3</sup>

The pressure is clearly on leaders to decide what’s best for their companies and to be right much of the time. There are many tools to help with the process, including a leader’s core values. For example, my first business mentor valued humility and empowerment. Because of this, he took responsibility for what I decided in his absence. He didn’t criticize what I had done and instead used the situation to teach and empower me. His values guided his choices.

I recently caught up with my friend Amy Lively, and she shared her own story about leadership values and decision-making.

### **VALUES AND DECISION-MAKING**

Amy co-owns The Lively Merchant with her husband, David, and their employees work remotely across the United States. Amy explained why their company established a remote work environment from its inception. David’s long-term vision was to access the best talent while providing employees with rewarding careers and flexible schedules. He wanted to build a business focused on the value of serving employees and their clients, so that’s exactly what they did.

Even though this successful husband-and-wife team has had remote workers in place since 2007, their decision-making skills came under pressure when COVID-19 hit. Amy and I chatted about

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the choices they faced because I was curious about their decision-making strategies during the pandemic.

The Lively Merchant develops e-commerce websites for customers who also have brick-and-mortar stores. In March 2020, the company went from thriving in a robust economy to fielding numerous customer cancellations a day. During their initial meetings, Amy, David, and their leadership team discussed laying people off or reducing positions to part-time.

After spending several days in prayer and conversation with trusted mentors, they decided to push forward instead of shrinking back. They stopped talking about layoffs and instead brainstormed ways to involve all their employees in helping customers, and the company, survive. This option was the opposite of what many other businesses chose, but Amy and David were at peace with it because it was in alignment with their values—to serve their employees and clients.

The leadership team created a plan and engaged every person in the company to make it happen. Regardless of department or position, employees reached out to customers. They didn't pretend they had all the answers but instead said something like this: "We haven't been through this before, but here are some effective actions businesses are taking. We want to offer them to you and see how we can serve you." Then they helped clients customize their websites so brick-and-mortar shoppers would know how businesses were handling COVID-19.

Instead of losing customers, existing customers started adding services. In addition, potential clients who had been undecided about having websites moved forward. The company grew, employees thrived, and so did the customers they served. Amy and David didn't set out to grow their company when COVID-19 surfaced. They were more concerned with living out their foundational value of serving.

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This value informed their preference to expand efforts during a time when cutting back was the norm, and exponential growth was simply an unexpected (and welcome) outcome.

At the end of our conversation, I asked Amy to summarize how she viewed a leader's role in decision-making. She used this analogy:

Leaders who shy away from decision-making are like thermometers. They look at circumstances and note that temperatures are dropping or rising, but they don't respond to what they see. Proactive leaders are more like thermostats; they note the drops and rises and *respond* by making choices. Acknowledging the reality of what's going on isn't enough; leaders have to go beyond this step. Biblical, godly principles like praying and seeking wise counsel help leaders use good judgment and make wise choices.<sup>4</sup>

**Reflection:** Before you're faced with the next tough choice at work, I invite you to take a few minutes and think about these questions: What are your values? How can you use them to guide your decision-making? What would it look like for your preferences to honor your values?

### WOMEN AND DECISION-MAKING

Did you know that as a woman, your role as a decider is an important part of why you're a strong corporate leader? Your ability to make hard choices gives your company a competitive advantage. It's your superpower!

Neuroscientists agree women are equipped to decide in ways men aren't. In normal day-to-day situations, men and women process choices in similar ways. But under duress, men and women

decide differently because their brains operate differently.<sup>5</sup> In the business world, stress is commonplace for leaders, and evidence suggests that women are well-equipped to swim in these deep waters.

**Women tend to look for creative alternatives and are curious about other people's ideas.**

**Women operate well under pressure.**

There's a perception that women's feelings interfere with logical decision-making, but multiple studies contradict this perception.<sup>6</sup> Neuroscientists have found that when men are in high-pressure situations, they take bigger risks.<sup>7</sup> They are less able to assess risk levels and potential losses because they become focused on the biggest gains.<sup>8</sup> Women's brains, however, process stress differently, so they make less risky decisions in demanding circumstances.<sup>9</sup> They're able to think through potential outcomes more clearly and logically.<sup>10</sup>

**Women are more likely to include and consider others.** Another perception is that because women often choose a cooperative approach, they lack confidence or are indecisive. Research explains the true reasoning behind this approach:

The *Harvard Business Review* interviewed eighteen organizations to evaluate how women decide differently from men. Research found that men tend to approach decision-making competitively and lean toward what's in the best interest of just one party.<sup>11</sup> They're also more prone to decide based on cultural norms within the company, such as how things have always been done.<sup>12</sup> This same study showed women are more likely to consider and balance conflicting interests. They look for creative alternatives and are curious about other people's ideas.<sup>13</sup>

According to the study, women want to understand how an option will impact other people or departments. They embrace consensus building and value fairness and collaboration over authority.<sup>14</sup>

Scientific studies represent generalizations, but they help us understand how men and women approach choices differently. It's empowering to note that research supports women as effective deciders—this is a fact you can return to when you doubt yourself. Remember, too, that God created men and women as equal but unique beings. Both genders bring different strengths to the decision-making table.

### **THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

The more significant the outcome, the more difficult it is to make the best choice. Leaders may become overwhelmed by demands to make the right choice at the right time. Pressure builds and can lead to delays and indecision. But every choice comes down to two scenarios:

1. You can be decisive and control the outcome.
2. You can be indecisive and react to the outcome.

You may not realize this, but doing nothing is a decision. Making tough calls is a non-negotiable part of the job. Here are nine practical steps to help you get started.

#### ***The Nine-Step Process***

A reliable process helps you make wise choices. When you're faced with tough decisions, processes provide guardrails. They help you organize information, identify alternatives, and maintain focus. Processes also save time because they act like the GPS in your car, telling you where to go next. You'll gain clarity and confidence as you move through each step.

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1. **Clarify the decision that needs to be made.** Use these questions to gain a clearer understanding: What do you hope or need to accomplish? What's the goal or purpose? What problem do you want to solve?
2. **Use your core values, and those of your company, as a lens.** Highlight options that are strongly aligned with these values and eliminate options that don't align.
3. **Assess your personal toolbox.** What wisdom, experience, and industry knowledge can help you? Are you lacking in any of these areas? How can you supplement what's missing with external resources?
4. **Consult external resources.** Leveraging knowledge outside your company will help expand your thinking. What evidence and data can inform your selection? What research and facts can you gather? How many experts outside your organization can you talk to?
5. **Collect all the options.** This means thinking outside the limitations of your own bias and perspective. Don't seek feedback only from people you're confident will agree with you. Listen to viewpoints and ideas that differ from yours. The most insightful revelations come out of healthy discord.
6. **Involve other people.** Spend time with people who understand the significance of different options better than you do. Talk through the pros and cons with employees who will be impacted by your decision.
7. **Weigh the evidence.** Document and organize the options, along with opinions, data points, arguments, and probable outcomes. Assess each alternative against the need, goal, or purpose you identified in Step 1. Talk through and reflect on which has the highest potential for success and which aligns the most closely with the company's core values—and yours.

8. **Act.** Choose the best option and act on it. Communicate what you've decided, develop an implementation plan, and then execute it.
9. **Reflect on the decision.** After a reasonable amount of time, invite employees to weigh in on how the decision is affecting them. Ask yourself if you solved the problem, answered the question, or met the goal. Be accountable for the consequences, even if it means reworking some steps or trying a different option.

### *Strategies That Will Help*

Besides the nine-step process, these strategies will help you make hard decisions too:

**Trust your intuition.** Don't dismiss gut feelings. Your intuition is a powerful tool because it's composed of data that includes memories, lessons learned, the company's needs, and your individual preferences.<sup>15</sup> All this information coincides with your ability to analyze and weigh options, becoming one more tool that helps you make important choices.

**Acknowledge your personal biases.** Leaders try to be objective, but every person brings some type of bias to the table. Recognizing biases will help you better understand how they could sway your selections. Then you can take measures to outsmart yourself!

For example, I've historically been protective of the people I lead. This is a strength, but it can also get in the way. Since I know this about myself, I take measures to defuse defensiveness, which otherwise might skew my choices. When I need to make a decision that affects my team, I know my tendency is to defend. So I force myself to have an open mind and a closed mouth when I'm listening to views that differ from mine. I also filter different perspectives through people I trust.

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**Lean toward moderate over extreme.** Pressure can push leaders into making quick, extreme choices. To be objective, take yourself out of the red zone. If a decision is urgent, your short-term impulses may become problematic and interfere with your ability to choose wisely. Unless it's an emergency, press pause and step away. Come back to the process after your brain and emotions have rested.

In pressing situations, create distance by imagining how you'll feel about your choice an hour after you've made it. Then imagine how you'll feel tomorrow, next month, and next year. This exercise helps you rebalance your emotions, so you're aware of their presence but not being led by them.

**Maintain humility.** Don't assume you know all the outcomes without input from other people or sources. Pride leads you to make a selection without exploring all the potential consequences. It also influences you to rely too heavily on past successes, even though yesterday's solutions aren't always the answer to today's problems. Being humble means welcoming other people into the process and being curious about their ideas. You recognize that choosing wisely is your responsibility, but you also know that you're wiser together than alone.

**Make yourself accountable from the beginning.** The more difficult the decision, the more likely it is to drag out. Leaders don't want to upset employees or disrupt the work environment, and they definitely don't want to fail. So they procrastinate. To avoid delays, give yourself a deadline by which you'll have done certain steps in the process or by which you'll have a conclusion. Share this information with someone else: human resources, your boss, a peer, or an employee.

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In Jesus' time, rabbis used a specific way of teaching called *remez*, a Hebrew term meaning "hint."<sup>16</sup> Jesus and other rabbis quoted Scripture to their students, who tried to remember where else they had heard similar themes or concepts. They asked questions like these: Have we heard this before? Where else has this shown up in Scripture?<sup>17</sup>

Through discussions, listeners connected the teaching to a broader meaning. *Remez* would take them on a trip back in time to Scriptures and lessons where themes had occurred before—connecting points. For example, *remez* helped me see a biblical theme of the greater coming to the lesser: God sending prophets and, ultimately, Jesus to help and save us. And then Jesus seeking out His disciples and telling parables about the good shepherd seeking out one lost sheep.

This way of interpreting Scripture relied on people pausing to ask questions and search for connections,<sup>18</sup> and an important part of the pause was in the looking back. The next time you need to make an important decision, pause and consider past situations that required you to make challenging choices. Difficult personal choices might include deciding which degree to pursue, choosing a city to live in, or buying your first home. Maybe you pivoted careers or switched companies or industries. As a leader, you've likely decided when to fire someone or how flexible your team's schedule will be.

Brainstorm as many prior decisions as you can and write them out. Then circle the ones with positive results. Take a minute to look at the circles on the page. These circles show that you're building a track record of good choices. You aren't being asked to do something completely new to you. You're a decider, and you've had success with it!

## SACRED WORK

Now time yourself for five minutes. Next to each circled decision, reflect and record how you chose the best option. When the time is up, note any patterns and connections in the way you make decisions. This exercise of looking back is eye-opening because it can show you what you're already doing right. What an encouragement to see how God has guided you from stepping stone to stepping stone. You can count on His presence through every decision you make, and you can make choices with confidence because He equips you:

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you” (James 1:5).

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