

Even Mentors Have Regrets—So Be a Lifelong Student of Management and Godly Living

There are mentors and there are management mentors. Olan Hendrix, who received the Award in 2000 (CMA's highest honor), has mentored hundreds of emerging young managers for more than 50 years. He's one of my management heroes.

In 1971, while a young Christian camp director, I was attending a Christian Camping International conference, when my wife, Joanne, yanked me out of a workshop. It was an emergency, she said.

"John," she began kindly but forcefully, "I've been attending Olan Hendrix's day-long management workshop—and, well, you need to be in it!"

I faithfully followed her into what became one of the most significant training days of my life. I had the college and seminary degrees, but had yet to read a management book or take a management course. Hendrix literally changed the direction

of my life—and my wife gets the credit she deserves!

I've enjoyed Olan's insightful management wisdom (he reads a book a day) ever since, through his books, articles, website and workshops. When Olan speaks, I have pen and paper ready. You'll appreciate his quote in the CMA Long Beach 2005 program, "Leaders must learn to manage, and managers must learn to lead."

Olan has given himself unselfishly to helping ministries steward their people and resources for kingdom advantage. I pray that CMA members will aspire to be great managers who have a mentoring and humble heart like Olan Hendrix—and who aspire to be life-long learners.

—John Pearson, president/CEO, Christian Management Association

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Management Rule of Thumb #5

Effective managers seek the counsel of mentors who will challenge their assumptions, point them in new directions and continually raise the bar on God-honoring management so life will have fewer regrets and greater fruitfulness.

So, do I have any regrets? You would expect me to say I wished I had prayed more, devoted myself more to the Word and been more diligent in spiritual exercises. I suspect that would be a given for any Christian. It surely is for me.

Regrets? Not about my career, my wife, my faith or any of the monumental issues that can make or break a life. The word "regrets" might be too strong, but there are changes I'd make if I could.

■ **I'd study theology more intensely.** There's no more noble pursuit. I started too late and have performed too poorly. I should have read more of the church fathers. Every perplexing question and every elevating truth have been considered by great and godly minds of the past.

■ **I'd become a better student sooner.** I'd have studied history, especially church history. Nothing gives a perspective on the present like an understanding of the past. I should have taken my Greek and Hebrew more seriously, and mastered apologetics. If I'd known how much time I'd spend in front of people, I'd have learned to be a better speaker.

■ **I'd use my time more wisely.** It should have been more important to me earlier in my ministry. My enemy hasn't been so much the bad, as it has been the good that opposed the best. I haven't been selective enough in what to leave undone.

■ **I'd keep in touch with more of the people I met along the way.** Many were outstanding. They contributed to my

Living Without Regrets

By Olan Hendrix

life, but in the press of duties I let them get away.

■ **I'd cherish more the fleeting hours spent with our children.** Nothing pays greater dividends than love and companionship lavished on our children, especially in their formative years. Our oldest son, soon to turn 50, says

one of his most treasured memories is the two of us hunting deer in the woods of northern Michigan. He doesn't even mention my drilling him with *The Westminster Shorter Catechism!*

The only antidote I've found for the symptoms of regret is to live well today. I can't undo the past. I can control how I live today. Discipline in the use of my time and choice of activities is amazingly remedial. It doesn't change the past but makes it less intrusive in the present.

Of course, the title of this short essay is wrong. No thinking person lives without regrets. The secret is to live well in spite of them. And we need not be burdened with regrets, because Jesus Christ has said he'll never leave us or forsake us. He gives us power to overcome the mistakes of the past: it's called grace.

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