

Doug Smith ([00:06](#)):

Hey, leader and welcome to episode number 349 of the L3 Leadership Podcast, where we are obsessed with helping you grow to your maximum potential and to maximize the impact of your leadership. My name is Doug Smith and I am your host, and today's episode is brought to you by my friends at Beratung Advisors. If you're new to the podcast, welcome. I'm so glad that you're here and I hope that you enjoy our content and become a subscriber. Know that you can also watch all of our episodes over on our YouTube channel, so make sure you're subscribed there as well. Just look up L3 leadership. And if you've been listening to the podcast for a while and it's impacted your life, it would mean the world to me if you would leave us a rating and review on Apple Podcast or Spotify, or whatever app you listen to podcast through that really does help us to grow our audience and reach more leaders.

Doug Smith ([00:45](#)):

So thank you in advance for that. Well, in today's episode, you're gonna hear a throwback, uh, because Laura and I, if we haven't had him already or anxiously awaiting our fourth child, and so December's gonna be a little busy. And we thought a great way to end the year would be to share some of our most popular conversations that we've had over the last few years. And my conversation with Wayne Cordeiro is definitely one of those. Uh, if you don't know Wayne, he wrote a, a extremely influential book that impacted my life deeply called Leading On Empty. And I got to interview him right when I was going through a really tough season. If, if you've been with me on the podcast for a while, I had a mental breakdown in the fall of 2020. And reading Wayne's book, leading On Empty and talking to Wayne about burnout and leading on empty was so, so helpful.

Doug Smith ([01:25](#)):

And, uh, when I have leaders come to me and tell me that they're struggling with burnout, uh, and they feel like they're leading on empty, I always point them to this conversation with Wayne and, uh, and recommend his book as well. So I think this is gonna add a ton of value to your life. But before we dive in, just a few announcements. This episode of the L three Leadership Podcast is sponsored by Beratung Advisors. The financial advisors at Beratung Advisors help educate and empower clients to make informed financial decisions. You can find out how Beratung Advisors can help you develop a customized financial plan for your financial future by visiting their website BeratungAdvisors.com. That's B E R A T U N G advisors.com. Securities and investment products and services offered through LPL Financial member FINRA SIPC Beratung Advisors, LPL Financial, and L3 leadership are separate entities.

Doug Smith ([02:11](#)):

I also wanna thank our sponsor, Henny Jewelers. They're a jeweler owned by my friend and mentor, John Henny. My wife Laura and I got our engagement and wedding rings through Henny Jewelers and had a wonderful experience. And not only do they have great jewelry, but they also invest in people. In fact, for every couple that comes in engaged to their store, they give them a book to help them prepare for marriage. And we just love that. So if you're in need of a good jeweler, check out henny jewelers.com. And with all that being said, here's my conversation with Wayne Cordero. Wayne, thank you so much for being willing to do this interview. And why don't we just start off with you just telling us a little bit about who you are and what you do?

Wayne Cordeiro ([02:45](#)):

Well, uh, I spent 36 years in Hawaii planting churches. So had the privilege of being part of starting 152 churches that spanned to, um, Japan, Australia, Myanmar. We have 16 and in Myanmar and, uh, in

Taiwan, uh, Okinawa and the Philippines, and then on the West Coast. So my heartbeat is to train up emerging leaders for the ministry to disciple them and, uh, cause I believe that, you know, tomorrow's church, the pr the biggest problem with tomorrow's church won't be a lack of leaders. It'll be an overabundance of underdeveloped leaders in places of leadership, and that's when the apostasy begins. So, uh, I really do wanna disciple up young men and women who know the word of God and are committed, uh, to see the kingdom of God advance in biblical ways.

Doug Smith ([03:35](#)):

Can you say a little bit more about that in that process, at least how it plays out in your life? I'm, I'm just curious, how do you view discipleship in, in mentoring the next generation?

Wayne Cordeiro ([03:43](#)):

Well, you know, I uh, noticed that one of the very first things Jesus did when he started his ministry was he chose 12, that they would be with him, he'd send them out and he'd cast out demons. And, uh, so I thought, hmm, same thing with Elijah, started the School of Prophets and uh, I take a look at Paul the Apostle, and he's always speaking about discipling and his, uh, proteges of Timothy and Silas and Barnabas and John Mark. Some ended up, well, some not so well, but he was, his assignment was permeated with discipleship. So some people see me as a church planter when an actuality church planting is a result of discipleship cuz you disciple up leaders and they need to go somewhere, they need to do something. So church planting is really a result of actually a different kind of, uh, desire and passion, and that's to build up leaders.

Doug Smith ([04:36](#)):

Oh, uh, we were talking before we, we dove into the interview and I was sharing how I've, I've been in the L three community knows I've been going through a difficult season with panic, burnout, um, et cetera. And, uh, you wrote two books that have significantly impacted me in this area. One is leading on empty, uh, and the other has sifted. And I want to kind of get into both today, but especially in the world we live in today with Covid and the year that we've just had, I think so many leaders are dealing with leading on empty. And can you just start off just telling us about your personal story on why you wrote this book and what your experience was?

Wayne Cordeiro ([05:07](#)):

Yeah. Nobody, uh, wants to enter into a time of burnout and anxiety or depression. And no one plans on it. It's hard to train for it. And, uh, and it happens, uh, imperceptibly. Uh, when you are somewhat of an innovative person, Doug, you, you start something, you, you, cuz I'm a type A person, I wanna see fruit. And, uh, it's no different from the father in John 15:16, he says, you didn't choose me. I chose you and appointed you that you should go forth and bear fruit. He's a fruit inspector. He talks about that with the fig tree. So I wanna make sure that I'm bearing some fruit. And in doing so, you everything you start, you gotta run, you gotta manage. You're the president, you're the pastor, you're, you're the top dog on everything. You start. And, uh, if you're, you're innovative, uh, in somewhat of a prolific way, you can't pass off these things fast enough and you don't want to because you can hand it off to somebody that'll destroy it.

Wayne Cordeiro ([06:08](#)):

And I've had that happen three times as some with some of the ministries that, uh, we began and they no longer exist today cuz I've passed them off too quickly to people that weren't ready. They had

character flat spots and ineptitude in certain ways, but they're nice people. And I found out that nice people don't necessarily, uh, fit, uh, in every case. So, uh, I was just overwhelmed and, uh, not nefarious, not because I was malevolent or didn't do what Jesus wanted me to do. It wasn't due to sin, it was simply because, uh, we were innovating and, and, uh, doing ministry. And I remember, uh, Doug, I was taking a jog before a conference that I was to speak at in California, and lo and behold, I find myself sitting on the curb on the street crying and my hands were shaking and I looked at my hands and I said to myself, something's broken, but I have no idea what it is or how to fix it.

Wayne Cordeiro ([07:14](#)):

So when I finally went back to Hawaii, I met with a psychiatrist friend of mine who's a wonderful Christian, and, and he said, basically, Wayne, your serotonin level has been depleted. You were running in your passion on endorphins, on excitement, on joy. But then when too many things start to pile up, now you've gotta manage, you've gotta do hr, you've gotta do taxes, you've gotta do problem solving. Now you're moving from your passion to something that is not in your wheelhouse. Uh, and so, but you still have to do it. It's part and parcel of everything. Now, 80% of my energy was going to this area that was not my wheelhouse. And I had actually shifted. So now, instead of running on passion and excitement and my endorphins and serotonin because it was filling my tank, now I'm doing something that drains my tank. And I had no idea when that switched.

Wayne Cordeiro ([08:08](#)):

So now I'm running on adrenaline, I'm running on duty, I'm running on, I gotta get this done. So now I am leading on empty. You can't just say I'm done, I'm outta here for a year. Uh, you just can't do that. What would happen to the church, the people, you know, they'd go nuts. So you have to lead on empty. And lo and behold, Doug, it was a year and a half after that that I actually had a heart attack. And, uh, so I was flown to Stanford Medical and they put three stents in my heart. And so still today I've gotta take a, an injection self-administered injection every two weeks to keep my heart clear. So how old are

Doug Smith ([08:49](#)):

You outta curiosity?

Wayne Cordeiro ([08:51](#)):

Yeah. What is that? How

Doug Smith ([08:52](#)):

Old were you when all this happened? Just outta

Wayne Cordeiro ([08:54](#)):

Curiosity. I was 52. 52. Yeah. And so, uh, I realized that I'm frail and I, uh, I am not invincible and I really need Jesus every step of the way. So changing my schedule a bit, I still have that drive, but I've gotta throttle that back and keep myself healthy because if I, if I go down, a bunch of stuff goes down so it can't happen.

Doug Smith ([09:19](#)):

Yeah. You shared in the book when you met with that psychiatrist, he also recommended taking a year off, which, you know, when I read them like that, that seems extreme. And he said, if you can't do that,

you know, take off six months. Yeah. Um, what, what did you do and, and what would your encouragement to leaders be like if they're at that burnout point when it comes to taking time off? Cuz I think for, even in the season that I'm in, I actually took a week off of work. Um, there's a fear that, hey, if, if I took off several months from work, you know, I don't know if I'd ever go back. Like, I, I feel like there'd be such a void. I mean, can you just speak to that? I'd, I'd just be curious what you learned from that. Yeah.

Wayne Cordeiro ([09:51](#)):

Uh, I'd been in ministry for about 23 years at that time. And, and somewhere between 18 years and 25 years, people will go through that dip and, um, I don't know if it's just biological, but they're, they're gonna face that and you need to take off time as much as you can, uh, so that you just first heal. And the second is that you, um, stem any further damage to your psyche. So basically you've just gotta arrest that. And then even when you come back, you have to reverse that. So it'll be nice to take a year where you stem it and reverse it before you come back, but that's not always the case. But if you can recognize, realize it have, be in some counseling and, uh, in a advisory group so that they can watch you. Cause often I say it this way, you know, the eye cannot see the eye. Uh, if you need something's wrong with your eye, you gotta have someone look at it for you. So that's where, uh, a rescheduling, a rebalancing of your life comes in. Uh, but not a lessening of the passion. It can't be a lessening of your call. Some people just bail out on their call and go from an a plus a disciple to a C minus disciple, and they think that's what God wants. He does not, he wants you to stay as an a plus. And that includes balance. And that's what I have to find out.

Doug Smith ([11:17](#)):

Um, I, I am curious, you know, can you talk about, you obviously had to experience physical feelings to understand that something was wrong. Um, Carrie Newk has a great book called, didn't see it coming, and I know that was the case for me. It sounds like it was the case for you. Is there anything leaders can do, you know, to actually see warning signs that, hey, if I don't change something on the front end, I'm gonna experience what Wayne went through, what Doug's going through. Uh, you know, how do you tell the difference between, Hey, I'm just tired as a leader, versus, Hey, something's gonna end up not in a great place if you don't change something.

Wayne Cordeiro ([11:47](#)):

Yeah, you, everyone gets tired, but a lot of times, you know, with a night or two of good rest, you, you're, you're bouncing back now when you're going through burnout, a night or two of rest doesn't bounce you back. Uh, you go through anxiety, um, problems, you get short of breath, you can't clear your lungs, uh, you think you're going through a heart attack and you can't, uh, your brain doesn't work quite as well. And you start moving into the slippery slope of depression. And so I went into a, a clinical depression. I had to have medication to get me back out. It was a pretty bad slide in, into a deep valley for me and found myself, you know, cringing on the floor of my office in a fetal position, crying. And, uh, it was just too, too painful. But, uh, Doug, you have to remember that even though it's a tough season, do not be afraid of it.

Wayne Cordeiro ([12:38](#)):

If I could give you a pill or every pass or a pill or lit a pill to avoid that, I wouldn't do it. Because you see, your plate might be this big and you're operating here and you gotta be able to find the edge of your plate or your potential, uh, your capacity. So what is it? And if we're so afraid of the edge, then you may

live your whole life way beneath the potential that you really have, and you'll never find what your potential or capacity is. And the only way to stretch your muscles is stretching, is bring it to a fatigue. So if you're a weight lifter, you know that there's a thing called, uh, you lift and do reps onto fatigue, muscle fatigue, then that's when the smaller cells break down. Bigger ones are built, stronger muscles result. So there's a plate that you have as if I can do that, uh, share that. And you gotta get to the edge of your plate now when you feel the pain of it, that's when you need to make some adjustments, not before. So don't be afraid of the pain. Do you have children, Doug?

Doug Smith ([13:46](#)):

I do. I do. We, I have a one week old boy and I have, uh, two, two girls. So three kids.

Wayne Cordeiro ([13:51](#)):

Wonderful. And you know, when your children start growing, um, when do you buy new shoes? A year in advance? Uh, when they're half fitting and they're getting three fourths of the way to the end of their shoe, no, you buy 'em new shoes when they say, dad, my feet hurt. And then, you know, it's time to get 'em new shoes. Uh, life and growth in life is like that. You're gonna come to points or the edge of pain and you, if you sustain it and let it go, that's when you get blisters. But you have to allow pain to be that, uh, point of communication by God or your psyche telling you you need to readjust, get a bigger fit, um, reschedule, do something different. So I would say do not be afraid of pain. Uh, when it does speak though, you need to start listening. And so tiredness will be, uh, resolvable and rectifiable with rest. Burnout is rectifiable by healing and rescheduling and balancing.

Doug Smith ([14:55](#)):

I love that differentiation. And I also want you to talk about, uh, again, I mentioned two books that you wrote. Uh, one you wrote on your own, one you wrote with Francis Chan and Larry Osborne called Sifted. Yes. Uh, do you see a difference between leading on empty and burnout, uh, versus seasons of being sifted? Do you view them as the same? I'm just curious how you would view

Wayne Cordeiro ([15:13](#)):

That. Yeah. One is an attack on your psyche and your health. The other is could be an attack on your ministry and to refine you. So one is for refinement and the other is you is for rescue <laugh>. And, uh, so they're different. And, uh, the Lord spoke to Simon Peter and said, I'm, I'm gonna pray that your faith not failed when you're being sifted. And he doesn't say, when you're burning out, I'll just pray that your faith not fail. You know? No, you, you make adjustments and, and bring in balance. So there's a big difference between sifting and burning out.

Doug Smith ([15:49](#)):

Uh, I wanna hear you talk a little bit more about your recovery process. And you talked about, you know, needing to delegate, needing to reprioritize. Um, you, you are extremely practical in the book, and if you haven't read it and you're listening to this, please go and buy leading on empty. Uh, you give an entire game plan for it. But, uh, you know, you mentioned a personal retreat day, um, implementing a Sabbath. Can you just talk about some of the, the rhythms of rest? I believe you go away every summer for a month or two. Uh, now what are some of those rhythms of rest you've implemented that have made a a difference in in this season of leadership?

Wayne Cordeiro ([16:20](#)):

Yeah. One is I keep my disciplines, you know, you've, you've gotta be a master at the basics. And when I started burning out Doug, I started to lose the basics. Uh, like Vince Lombardi, you know, when they lost the game, when they were playing, the legendary coach called to practice the next morning and, and they should have won, but they, they lost it and they lost it on the basics. So the next morning he called his team players together and held up a football and said, we're gonna start all over again. <laugh>, this is a football. And, uh, sometimes we as Christians get involved with complexity and complicated ministry and strategy analysis, et cetera. Uh, but really we need to be professionals at the basics. And when you are, God really starts to bring in the rest for you. You don't do it. A lot of times we put our energy in doing what God should be doing and we slack on what we should be.

Wayne Cordeiro ([17:18](#)):

So one of the things I ne knew I needed to do was get back to just daily devotions to make sure we do a thing called soap, where scripture, observation, application, prayer, and, and we use a life journal every morning. I had to get back to that. The second is to take Sabbaths during the week. Um, so now I take Monday and Fridays off, so I'm doing this from home and um, cuz it's a on a day, that's my day off. But, uh, I used to work, work five days a week and then preach on the weekends and keep right on going. And I can't do that. It's just too much. So I have to understand that I'm human and frail. I also now schedule, uh, breaks. Just in fact, I was talking to my wife Anna, I said, honey, we're gonna get away five times a year.

Wayne Cordeiro ([18:06](#)):

I don't care if we just go to a state park down the road and put up a tent, but we've just got to get away. So we were planning that just the other night. And so we gotta schedule our away times, uh, before I have to because there's a big difference between isolation and solitude. And let me give you the definition of that. Isolation is, let's say this is a plus 10 and this is zero on your energy scale, and this is a minus 10. A lot of times our energy goes down to a minus 10, and then we just gotta get away from everybody. Just gotta get away. I don't wanna see people. So I isolate myself and I go from a negative 10 to a zero, and then I think, whew, I can get back in the ministry now. But you're going in at a zero <laugh>, on the other hand, solitude is plus 12 and you're down to about an eight and you need to fill up.

Wayne Cordeiro ([19:06](#)):

And so you get away, read some books and joy, you know what fills your tank. And you then come back at a 12. So that's called solitude. It's a plan to getaway. And Jesus did that. It says, an early, um, a long while before day, Jesus would go to the garden, spend time with his father. He wasn't at a minus 10, he just scheduled that in and he had a time of solitude to make him even stronger. Most of the time, Doug, we don't do solitude very well. We do isolation. Uh, I was, I paddled carbon fiber canoes in the oceans. I do ocean, uh, sports. And uh, we were doing a race from the island called Molokai to Oahu. And it's over a big, uh, pretty rough channel. And it this time was in a six man canoe. It's a fiberglass canoe. And six of us are paddling.

Wayne Cordeiro ([20:04](#)):

We're racing with a hundred other boats and we carry what we call a camelback. Uh, it's a backpack with water in it and has a tube that comes over here. And the coach said to me, Wayne, every 15 minutes take a drink. And I said, but what if I'm not thirsty? He said, no, no. Every 15 minutes you are paddling hard, you take a drink. I said, but what if I'm not thirsty? I can keep going and, uh, because I

have to grab the tube, put it in my mouth, take a drink and then keep paddling. I'm gonna lose two strokes, three strokes. And he said, every 15 minutes. And I said, why don't I just wait till I'm thirsty? And he said something I'll never forget, he said, Wayne, if you wait until you're thirsty before your drink, it's too late. Your body has already gone into dehydration and a drink will not redeem or restore that, it will start to deplete your system and you'll have lactic acid build up and you'll be done in an hour. Never forgotten that. And the same is true with isolation or solitude. If you're just waiting for isolation all the time, uh, it's too late, you're already going into spiritual dehydration. So learn the difference between solitude and isolation and get up there into this portion here and do what Jesus did. It'll keep us healthier.

Doug Smith ([21:25](#)):

Uh, in the book, you mentioned your personal retreat day and I thought this was extremely helpful. Can you share everyone what a personal retreat day is and what you do on it?

Wayne Cordeiro ([21:33](#)):

Yeah, sometimes I'll, I'll do different things cuz you know, um, always remember that consistency and variety are the secret to balance consistency and a variety. Uh, you wanna do certain things consistently, but you have to make sure it stays various and, and colorful. So sometimes on my retreat day, I'll just take a book and, uh, just maybe read the whole book and take time to underline and think. So when I'm done, I will have filled up a little bit. Sometimes I just go and get ahead, like with my sermon planning, I'll throw it out another two months and think through and, and instead of just putting down titles and making it sound like it's, you know, interesting to people, I really pray over each of them. I just take more time. And when it's done, my heart is so much fuller because I did that. And those retreat days are, well, I tell you, they're worth, they're weighting gold.

Doug Smith ([22:32](#)):

Thanks for sharing. Um, I wanna talk a little bit about the book Sifted. Um, <laugh>, it seems like, uh, you shared a story in the book that a young man was, I think it might have been, been your son was ready for ministry and just came outta bible school all fired up. And uh, he said, I'm ready. I think it was it your son? Yes, I'm ready, I'm ready. And you said, no, you're not ready. Uh, you haven't suffered enough <laugh>. And uh, that's the thing of the whole book is basically we have to go through seasons of suffering in order to be influential and to be who God calls us to be. Do we really have to suffer? Especially yeah, no, about this whole principle.

Wayne Cordeiro ([23:05](#)):

Yeah, I wish, I wish we didn't have to. Uh, but you know, uh, in the midst of suffering is when we start to grow. If you never suffer, you never grow. It's just like learning. Um, the only time you learn is when you lose. You know, if you're in a competition and you win, you learn squat. But if you lose, you say, you know, I gotta do this, I gotta change this, I gotta do this, I gotta practice more. So he only, uh, learn at the valley floor, never at the mountain top. So, uh, Peter says it in this way, he says, and let those who suffer according to the will of God, keep entrusting their souls to a faithful creator and doing what is right. In other words, he's saying, let those who suffer according to the will of God. If he says there's a way to suffer that's according to the will of God, he's probably inferring that there is a way to suffer that's not according to the will of God.

Wayne Cordeiro ([23:58](#)):

It makes you harder, more contrary, little bit more bitter, maybe prideful, and you don't learn anything from it. It just makes you a little crustier. But I've gotta learn how to suffer according to the will of God and keep entrusting my soul to a faithful creator in doing what is right. So yeah, when you suffer, you grow a lot. And we hate it. We hate it, we hate it. I wish God's goal for my life was convenience and comfort, but it isn't, it's likeness. And so suffering is sort of like when God is chiseling something out of your life. Like if you're a sculpture. And um, when Michelangelo was sculpturing Peter, uh, he sculptured Peter out of this big, huge piece of granite. And when someone said, how did you know Peter was in that rock? Uh, or rather, David was in, sorry, David was in that rock, Michelangelo said, uh, I kind of didn't, I just started chipping away everything that wasn't David. And sometimes God's gonna chip away stuff that's not Doug and it's not in the image of Christ and it bleeds. But we've given God permission to do that. So however it comes, the chisel might be in the hand of a wife, a pastor, uh, a coworker, an accident, and even a stupid mistake we make. But it's amazing who God puts that chisel in the hands of. And we have to make sure that we are looking at the chisel that God is guiding, not the messenger that's wielding it.

Doug Smith ([25:32](#)):

So, so talk to someone in a season of sifting right now, whether it was, you know, God chiseling them through a spouse and just working on their character or even a mistake that they made, um, seasons of sifting can be extremely difficult and can cause people to want to just throw in the towel to say this isn't worth it. What would your encouragement be to those people listening right now?

Wayne Cordeiro ([25:50](#)):

Yeah, that's why Jesus said, Peter, I pray that your faith not fail. And once you have turned, strengthen your brethren. There's something about coming through a season of suffering that ratifies your ministry. Once you have come through it, strengthen your brethren. In other words, you gotta go through suffering to certify that you're going to be someone that I can use to teach others. If you don't, you ain't. And so, one is to help the person to see the other side of the sifting, to see what's on the other side. Cuz often failure comes right before success. <laugh>, you know, the darkest moment is right before the, the leaf breaks the ground and becomes a shoot or a plant. And sometimes we think we're done when we're just about to begin. And the devil Doug would love to get you to drop out right before victory is won that gives him the greatest taste of his cunning and his strategy.

Wayne Cordeiro ([26:44](#)):

And uh, right when is the darkest get ready? Cuz God's about to break through in a wonderful new way in your life. One is to help them to see the overall picture, and the other is find a coach that can handhold them through it. If they're not a veteran, if they're a acolyte or an apprentice, uh, boy, I tell you, the greatest friend you would have during this time, Doug, would be to have someone kind of hand hold you through it as to how you feeling, what's going on. Here's what you do and, and why. So your faith not fail. I can't do it for you, but you can do it and I'm gonna encourage you all the way. And when you find a brother like that, uh, you found gold.

Doug Smith ([27:27](#)):

Wow. Thank you for, for sharing that. Uh, a question that I'm starting to ask all the leaders that I interview, um, that are seasoned in, in life and leadership is, can you just speak into each decade of life something that you'd speak about leadership? So specifically twenties, thirties, forties, fifties and beyond. Um, if you just had one word for each decade, what would you tell those leaders?

Wayne Cordeiro ([27:48](#)):

Yeah, the first stage, Doug, in the twenties, I'd say gain life experience. Uh, don't worry about pay, salary, benefits. You gotta have life experiences. You've gotta do everything from counseling to, to preaching, to cutting wood, to setting up chairs, to sweeping the floor, cleaning toilets, get life experiences. Because really now at I'm 68, uh, right now, I basically, uh, teach out of my life experiences cuz I just have hundreds and hundreds of them to draw from at 20 years old, you have theories, you have concepts, you have ideologies. And we hear they're dime a dozen out there. And we don't need to hear another one that's in the name of Jesus to give more certification authority to your voice. Now just, just gain, just serve. The fastest way to leadership for a 20, 35 year older is go through the servant sentence. Be a servant serve.

Wayne Cordeiro ([28:49](#)):

Uh, Elijah did that with Elijah. We have people that I'm interning that are 20 early thirties. They think they've gained everything they, they need to know about ministry. And uh, you don't need to tell me because uh, you know, this is my area of expertise. And it's like, get real now. You don't have a clue. And so what happens is God takes them through a sifting, a sifting of themselves. Ha they gotta get that out of there and stay as a servant. Be be grateful. And the second stage is start to, um, experiment with, uh, uh, what God has given to you. Uh, let's say you can do 10 things. You can, you can do this, you can do youth ministry, you can play a guitar, you can sing, you can do this. But write, put those 10 things on a whiteboard and then ask yourself, what of these 10 things that I can do is God calling me to do with my whole life?

Wayne Cordeiro ([29:47](#)):

Where's my bass camp? Where's my home bass? Is it playing the guitar? Does he want me to be a singer and a worship leader like Chris Tomlin for the rest of my life? Uh, or is that just part and parcel of my ministry but not the home base of it? It's not my camp. That's not where I camp. Okay, so what about this? What is a missionary? I could do it be a missionary, can be a TV person. I could do this. Well, when I wrote all of those things down, I said, you know, where I land is being a shepherd, a pastor, I can do all of these other things, but this is where I'm gonna be. And this is about 30 to 40 years old. You start to really zero in what God's calling is. So then when it comes to pastoring anything with pastoring, preaching, counseling, uh, et cetera, critical thinking, be bold in that area.

Wayne Cordeiro ([30:39](#)):

These other things here, don't be so bolded. You know, uh, be a little bit more pensive. That stuff is optional, but what God's calling you to do, do it with all your heart and soul because that's what God is going to be watching you in. That's where he is gonna gift you, provide for you not in these other things. Over here. The devil will throw money out over here to get you distracted. And how many young men and young leaders are, uh, distracted and uh, you know, we say it this way, Doug. What's worse, what would be worse than doing what God's called you to do somewhat poorly is doing what God has not called you to do excellently. Wow. So if it's not what God's called you to do, but you are a stinking good guitar player and singer, but he is really calling you to be a preacher, you better make sure that you do this one well, even if you do this other one poorly and never mix him up.

Wayne Cordeiro ([31:44](#)):

So that would be in the thirties and then the forties, I would say to them to start settling into, uh, doing their leadership very, very well. Uh, because by this time you're gonna need some refinement, some

optimization. You got the basics down, wonderful. Don't lose the basics. But now you need to refine. You need to advance. And then by the time you're 50, start looking for disciples. And even if in the forties you can do that, start discipling discipling. Because really if you think about it, David's ministry, when he, uh, had Solomon, David's greatest ministry would be in the next generation, not in his, he was to be now a veteran teacher, just like Moses on the hill with Aaron and her on one side, Joshua was in the valley fighting the Amalekites. It was like at about age 50, we need to make sure that we've got our hands lifted more than we are swinging a sword. And so at that point I would say start discipling like crazy. Pour your life into young disciples and past that baton. I think when that happens, you'll have a full orbled leadership career that I think God would smile at.

Doug Smith ([32:59](#)):

Yeah. And you mentioned passing the baton, uh, earlier in the interview you talked about you had a few handoffs that didn't go well, right? Um, I'm just curious, any advice there? I know a lot of leaders, uh, that are thinking about succession. Uh, any advice there for leaders in that season of life? How and how to pass the baton? Well and so it doesn't end up how those three ended up?

Wayne Cordeiro ([33:18](#)):

Yeah. You know, uh, it's a kind of a double edged thing. On one hand, uh, I did have some drops on the baton, but if I had to do it over again, I would still believe in those people. I'd still believe in them. Uh, and cuz I don't ever wanna get crusty and say it didn't work with those, you know, whatever generation it might be, I'm not working with them anymore. I, I, I would still believe in people. Cause if you think about it, you know, in Matthew 13 and the parable of the sewer and the seed, there was four different types of soil. Only one soil produced 30, 60, a hundred fold. So if you look at it, it was a 25% success rate. Three out of four didn't make it. And yet he has a parable. But that's good. It's okay. But that one that made it for fruit, 30, 60, a hundred fold. So I'm gonna keep throwing seed out. And even if I make mistakes or uh, uh, baton pass doesn't work, I'm gonna keep refining it and keep optimizing it. Just don't ever stop believing in people. Believe the best out of them. And whether or not they succeed, it's not your responsibility. Yours is to believe, disciple and send.

Doug Smith ([34:38](#)):

So good. Uh, in a minute I want dive into what I call the lightning round. Just a bunch of fun questions for leaders. But, um, I mentioned already, if you haven't gotten the books leading on empty and sifted, I'd highly recommend those. And those are just two out of a dozen plus books that Wayne has written. So I'd encourage you to buy them all. But Wayne, is there anything else that you would leave leaders with today on these two subjects of leading on empty and being sifted before we dive into the lightning round?

Wayne Cordeiro ([35:00](#)):

You know, one of the things I would say is make sure that, uh, you have, uh, ongoing conversation. Cause if you look at the internet now and all of the amazing resources that are available, uh, content is plentiful, conversation is rare. And what's happening is we're starting to exchange content for conversation. We're starting to, uh, take resources over relationships. And that is a dangerous transition. It will unbalance the ship, it will make it very, very vulnerable to the waves that bash against your side cuz you're almost tipping at that point. Uh, so keep relationships open. Don't burn bridges. Find a group of, uh, people that, and it could be only two or 3, 4, 5, but that you can have open, serious,

ferocious conversation with, and they, with you. It keeps you balanced, keeps you human, keeps your feet on the earth even though we are citizens of heaven.

Doug Smith ([36:08](#)):

Thank you. Uh, let's dive into the lightning round. And, uh, the first question is, what is the best advice you'd ever received and who gave it to you?

Wayne Cordeiro ([36:16](#)):

Wow. I, I, I need to say my wife cuz she might be listening. <laugh> uh, you know, uh, one of the, uh, pastors of many, many years ago, uh, saw that I had different gifts in this area, in that area. And he said something really neat. He said, Wayne, I believe in you and God's gonna use you in a great way. And they said, but, uh, I want you to make sure that you keep your humility strong and your pride death do, uh, uh, in death. You know, just kill it. And so then God can take you a long way. Uh, the other one was not really a piece of advice, but it was really a, an inspiration moment that kept me going for years. Uh, I remember in Bible college, I went into a classroom and, uh, the professor said, now I'm three, three months old in the Lord.

Wayne Cordeiro ([37:14](#)):

And all I knew was the New Testament and I'm in Bible college. And everyone was like, saints and Cher Andshe in the class except me. And so the professor says, let's all turn to Jeremiah. I guess it was a devotional time. Let's all turn to Jeremiah. And I remember turning around thinking, who's Jeremiah? And so the kids started laughing at me. One of the kids said, in your bible, stupid in your Bible. And so I thought, man, I don't belong here. I'm not good enough for this college. And well, the next class was taught by a wonderful lady. And she started off by saying, what's your dreams? And one kid would say, worship leader, a pastor, a counselor. And then she would say, do you think Cindy could be a counselor? And we'd go, yes, Cindy, uh, you go get him, girl. And, uh, Billy, you think he can be a good youth pastor?

Wayne Cordeiro ([38:05](#)):

Oh man, yeah, we're cheering each other on. And, and then she, she, uh, asked me and we had conversation. And then she said, just write your dreams on a piece of paper. So we all did. And the next day, uh, after handing it in, we got it back. And it didn't have a grade on it, but it had in read a note from her. And this is what the note said, Wayne, I can see that the hand of God is on your life and God is gonna use you in great ways. She said, keep speaking, keep preaching, keep wanting to help people, keep believing in them. And then she ended it with this duck. She said, the kingdom of God has been waiting for you. I must have read that phrase 12 times before I went to bed that night. And, uh, it's stuck in my soul. You know, it just, every time I wanted to quit, uh, her words rang back to me and, uh, she said, Wayne, the kingdom of God has been waiting for you. And that has been probably one of the greatest inspirational and defining moments that God used this lady to give me as a gift that would sustain me through the valleys of life.

Doug Smith ([39:20](#)):

Wow. Do you still have that outta curiosity, the piece of paper?

Wayne Cordeiro ([39:24](#)):

No, I, I don't know where it is. I wish I had it.

Doug Smith (39:28):

Yeah. That's an incredible story. Thank you for sharing. Um, if you could put a quote on a billboard for everyone to read, what would it say?

Wayne Cordeiro (39:35):

Wow. Uh, stick with your wife, <laugh>. You know, Doug, I see so many young ministers now falling and be being terminated because of immorality. I mean, giants in the faith, you know who I'm talking about. They're, they're all over. And I'm thinking, oh no, the kingdom needed people like you. And somehow we got too full of ourself or too busy in ministry and someone else looked better. Uh, and in fact, that's not an original thing. I was a Bible college student and his name was Pastor Dick Cook. He pastored three churches in eastern Oregon, Christmas Valley, someplace else, and someplace else, I can't remember. So we went to one church at eight o'clock and then we, he drove me to another church at noon after lunch, we drove to a third church and had an evening service. And he was what they call a circuit preacher.

Wayne Cordeiro (40:29):

And they still have him today in areas that are very remote and on the way home after, um, being with him all day, and he'd been a pastor for 40 or 50 years, I said, brother Cook. I said, uh, what's one thing you could tell me as a young leader? One thing, if you could sum your whole life up, what would it be? And I was waiting for this grand divine kind of injunction that would come and transform me into some saint or apostle. And, uh, so he tapped the steering wheel and he said, one thing, can I had a Texas accent. And I said, one thing. He turned to me and he said, you're young. I said, yes, I am, sir. And he said, you are energetic. I said, yes, I am. Well, here it is. Stick with your wife. And that was probably 40 years ago. Never forgotten that.

Doug Smith (41:28):

That's powerful. Uh, best purchase you've made in the last year for a hundred dollars or less?

Wayne Cordeiro (41:33):

<laugh>? Oh man, I don't know. Uh, I think I, uh, uh, I but a coffee grinder, <laugh>, so I could make, really, see, I'm a coffee addict. If I could take coffee intravenously, I would. But, uh, I love good coffee. And so I was buying, you know, beans and I made coffee and I thought, no, I'm gonna go one step further. I'm gonna buy some really good beans and grind in my own coffee and, and, uh, drink that. So that was the good, good. In fact, this, I have it right here,

Doug Smith (42:12):

<laugh>. Um, when, uh, do you have a book or two? I'm sure you could list a thousand, but do you have a book or two that you always recommend to people that have impacted you the most?

Wayne Cordeiro (42:21):

You know, so many, Doug, they're just great authors out there, and so many insights, uh, and some of the older books are still fabulous. I, I like to recommend missionary biographies of Hudson Taylor, Jonathan Goforth, David Livingstone, um, Jim Elliot, uh, Amy Carmichael, mother Teresa. So many of these are mentors that I call historical mentors. A lot of times contemporary mentors, uh, the, uh, end of their story hasn't been written yet. And so if you lean on them too much and then something

happens, it dashes your hopes. On the other hand, people like Billy Graham or Mother Teresa or some of those, uh, from the past John Wesley, all of those, their stories have been written and, you know, the end of their story. And so then you can say, that's kind of like, I'd like to example or model my life after. So the books that I read would be those kinds of books. And then of late, um, well not of late, but, uh, read, um, a book on a Abraham Lincoln, uh, called Team of Rivals. And, uh, I've enjoyed that. Uh, so there's so many, but those are the ones that I would say, yeah, take a look at those that are more ancient books that, uh, talk about missionaries whose, whose faith did not fail when they were sifted.

Doug Smith (43:39):

Um, what's your biggest leadership, pet peeve?

Wayne Cordeiro (43:43):

Pet peeve?

Doug Smith (43:43):

Yeah.

Wayne Cordeiro (43:46):

Uh, I think the, um, I'm so excited about the younger leaders coming up, those that are 30 and 40 years old and 20 somethings, uh, amazing. But, um, my pet peeve is when they start to get too trendy and try to look more like the world than, uh, than than heaven. And you can't tell them apart from the young celebrities. And they almost revel in the fact that they are. And I thought, you know, we need to make sure that we're resembling people whose, whose greatest treasures are within. And it's the purity of spirit. And even as Peter said to the young women, let it not be in the breeding of care and the outer clothing, but let it be a gentle and quiet spirit in the heart. Uh, in fact, when Doug, when people say, Wayne, what do you look for when you hire people? Uh, character competence, coolness, trend, um, are they good looking, uh, athletic? No, none of those. Uh, what do you look for? I look for the way they think. Uh, I watch the, how they think, how they solve problems, how they look at the world, how they interpret things that are going on in, uh, current events, what's happening at the White House. And I just like to listen to how people, uh, conjecture about it because it tells me how they think, not only in things of the world, but the things of God.

Doug Smith (45:08):

You've, you've gotten to spend time with some of the world's greatest leaders. And I'm just curious, when you get to spend time or have lunch or coffee with a great leader, do you have a go-to question that you always ask no matter what?

Wayne Cordeiro (45:17):

I don't. I, I just wanna absorb from them. I'm a sponge and, uh, you know, I know Bill Hybels kind of went sideways a little bit, but, uh, I would spend three days with them. I'd fly out to Chicago and we just kick around and I, I like his forcefulness. One of the times I was, we were driving in his car and he said, what do you think about? And I gave an answer and he paused for a second and he looked at me and he said, that's not a very good answer for a leader to give <laugh>. I said, okay, let me reword that <laugh>. But, uh, and then I've been with, you know, people like Tony Campolo or James McDonald or you know, some of those, we are in the elephant room with, uh, TD Jakes and, and, uh, Steve Feick. And I'd like to just watch them and their human side.

Wayne Cordeiro ([46:06](#)):

You have to be okay with their human side, otherwise, um, you have a wrong concept of reality. Now everybody has a human side and it's flat. Even Elijah said, you know, I poured water on the hands of Elijah, uh, cont uh, uh, those that are commentators say that means after he goes to the bathroom behind the bushes, Elijah washes Elijah's hands. Wow. And yet he respected him, yet he loved them, yet he served them. And, uh, to me that is one of the greatest assets of any up and coming leaders, that when you see the flat spots of a veteran leader, does it make you disrespect them more like them less? Or do you say, we all have a human side and I wanna see everything without condemning, without deprecating. I need to see it all. And didn't Paul say that, that I might know him in Philipians and the power of his resurrection? And it's almost like he stopped and paused and the fellowship of his sufferings being conformed to his death in order that I might attain to the resurrection of life. I thought that's how we need to see leaders from the bottom to the top and respect them still.

Doug Smith ([47:25](#)):

Amen. Now, this one, you, you live in Hawaii, which is a bucket list item for most

Wayne Cordeiro ([47:31](#)):

People,

Doug Smith ([47:31](#)):

<laugh>. But is there anything you've crossed off your bucket list that you would say, if you've never done this in life, you have to do this?

Wayne Cordeiro ([47:39](#)):

So what, what I would say they would have to do, yeah, you gotta go to Hawaii, Doug. You know, it's, I need to, it's on the way to heaven. I mean, it's, it's great. Um, no, I would say to each pastor or each leader, um, develop an avocation. And it's not a bucket list to any location, but it's an avocation where you, you spend time doing something other than ministry or leadership that whether it's woodworking or something. And what it does is it actually clears your head so that you're better here. Don't get a avocation that distracts you from ministry. Get one that inspires you from ministry. I ride horses and I, believe it or not, I shoot 45 calibers. I have, uh, it's uh, uh, called mounted shooting. And so we run our horses as fast as they'll run and we shoot 10 targets or 10 balloons and we have five shells in each gun.

Wayne Cordeiro ([48:38](#)):

And it's just black powder, so there's no projectile. But when I'm riding my horse that fast and he is running 35 miles an hour and I'm trying to shoot things on both sides and running him through a pattern, you can't think of your sermon. You can't think of <laugh> a sad person that is bugging you, you better not cuz you would be one with the dirt. Uh, and I've flown off my horse several times, broken both legs. So, uh, it helps me to get my mind off of leadership and ministry to clear it, to give it rest. And then when I'm back in ministry, I'm ready to go again. So get, uh, an avocation that you really, really enjoy and don't, don't go home to heaven till you do it.

Doug Smith ([49:24](#)):

Wayne, this has been a rich conversation. Thank you so much for your time today, leaders. Thank you. Anything else you wanna leave us

Wayne Cordeiro ([49:31](#)):

With? No, just an honor to be with you, Doug, and, uh, I'm glad for what you're doing, keep doing it because as I said, content is plentiful today. Conversation is rare. We need people like you having face-to-face conversations, even if it's over zoom. Let's keep

Doug Smith ([49:45](#)):

Doing it. Well, leader, thank you so much for listening to my conversation with Wayne. I hope that you enjoyed it as much as I did. You can find ways to connect with him and links to everything that we discussed in the show notes [I3leadership.org/349](https://www.leadership.org/349). And as always, leader, I'd like to end every episode with a quote and I'll quote Dave Ramsey today who said this, he said, it's worth the trouble to become the person that God made you to be. I love, love, love that quote. Well, hey Lauren, I love you. We believe in you and we say it every episode, but don't quit. Keep leading the world desperately needs your leadership. We'll talk to you next episode.