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*The One-Life Solution Workbook*  
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## Getting the Most from This Workbook

Welcome to *The One-Life Solution Workbook*, based chapter by chapter on my book of the same name. You may have read all or portions of the book, or may be discovering this workbook on its own. Either way, you are about to begin a very exciting and fruitful journey of discovery.

I wrote *The One-Life Solution* because everyone, even very high performers, can find themselves at times losing control of the two most vital resources they have to accomplish the things that are important to them: their time and energy. As a result, the visions they have for their lives, or even for a particular year, month, or day, can elude them.

This workbook experience will help you discover for the first time, or get back in touch with, the vision for your life, and the things that are truly important to you. But you will also discover reasons why your vision has eluded you, and how to finally bring it to fruition. By working through the questions, you also will learn to overcome the obstacles—those repetitive patterns of behavior—that rob you of performance and fulfillment and have gotten in the way of your living the life that God has designed for you. You may even be surprised at how a workbook on reclaiming vision, achieving goals, and recapturing your time and energy (in partnership with God and other people) is at its core a spiritual exercise, and that will be part of the fun.

The workbook can be enjoyed by both individuals and groups. Because the topic of boundaries in the workplace is one most of us deal with on a regular basis, it's a natural for discussing in a small group environment among like-minded friends or colleagues who are interested in finding balance in their lives. Just read a chapter ahead of time, then come together to “compare notes.” Also, because the workbook deals with much about our personal lives as well, it lends itself to great small group discussions in circles of friends, or churches. I have seen this material used successfully both among friends and in some of the largest corporations in the world. So find the right context for you and go for it.

As you take this journey, you may find yourself becoming more aware of your own needs and the needs of others. My prayer is that your workplace situation will improve, and your personal life will be more fulfilling as a result of taking a little time, either by yourself or with others, to discover the “One-Life Solution” that God has for you.

God bless,  
Henry Cloud, PhD  
Los Angeles, California, 2009

Part One



# FOUNDATIONS

# Identifying the Problem— and the Solution

This book is primarily about work, but it is also about you and your well-being as a person. It is about developing a strong, integrated core from which you can live the one life that only you can live.

Sometimes, as the old saying goes, we can't see the forest for the trees. We get so caught up in the problem right in front of us that we can't see what may be causing it—the bigger issue that holds the real solution. Even situations that seem to have very little in common might have the same underlying cause, if only we could see it. Consider the following situations, for example:

- Maria is a CEO who needs to fire a member of her team, but she just can't seem to pull the trigger.
- David is a manager whose bullying boss affects his entire life.
- Ryan is an MBA whose time is always filled and who feels like he never has time for the things that really matter, in both work and his personal life.
- Sophie is a talented creative director who is too unfocused to deliver the results she is capable of delivering.
- Sarah is an executive assistant who feels trapped by her boss's inappropriate behavior, yet she cannot bring herself to speak up or escape the situation.
- Kevin is a salesperson who is stuck at a plateau and cannot break through to the next level of sales.

It would be easy, and make total sense, to jump right in and find a solution to each of these problems: get it over with and fire him, call HR, ignore your boss's comments, take a time management seminar, clarify your priorities, take assertiveness training, or make more cold calls. You can just hear those pieces of advice being offered by trusted friends. But while the advice makes sense, it also misses the point.

All of these problems seem very different on the surface, but in reality, each of these individuals has a common personal issue: *they each have lost control of themselves*. Pressures from other people, the amount of work they have to do, and their own performance challenges leave them unable to do what they truly

need or want to do. If that core issue of personal control is not addressed by each person, they will just find themselves in the same or similar situations again. But if they resolve the real cause, they will find freedom in not only their present circumstances but in many other areas of life as well.

Notice the way that each person described above has lost control of themselves:

- Maria is controlled by how the employee is going to feel or react.
- David's emotional life is controlled by his boss's insensitivity.
- Ryan's purpose is thwarted by a lack of control of his time.
- Sophie's goals are out of her reach because she has lost control of her ability to stay on task.
- Sarah is controlled and in prison to a lecherous boss.
- Kevin cannot break past a plateau because he has lost control of some of his talents and abilities.

These people all feel stuck by circumstances and forces out of their control. They have lost control of themselves. But if they could look beyond their present situations, they would also see that this is not the first time they have felt that way. They have experienced feeling controlled, or stuck, before.

1. With which of the six people above do you most closely identify? Why?

2. Name a situation where you knew what you wanted or needed to do but, for some reason—perhaps pressures from the outside or the inside—were not able to do it.

Chances are, you can name several such situations. Make a list of them so that you can see how much the loss of control has affected your life.

## THE ONE SOLUTION

If the one underlying issue in these scenarios and in our personal lives is losing control of ourselves, then what is the solution? The one solution, the one answer, is called “boundaries.” In each one of the scenarios, the common issue is that no matter what their positions—from CEO all the way to assistant—these people all lacked an internal core or “boundaries” from which they were able to define themselves and express that “defined self” in a way that made life work. The issue of boundaries is one of the biggest issues that each of us will face in business and in life.

Essentially, boundaries keep us from being controlled by forces outside of ourselves. Boundaries are a large part of our ability to have what the Bible calls “self-control,” a fruit of the Spirit. A person who has good boundaries is in control of him- or herself and is not controlled by forces on the outside. Boundaries affect the ways we experience work and life, the ways we relate to others in work and life, and the degree to which we are successful in our pursuits. When we lack good boundaries, we suffer in three significant ways:

- In our emotions
- In our relationships
- In our performance

3. With which *emotional* effects of feeling out of control or “stuck” can you identify? (i.e., anxiety, loss of passion, burnout or loss of energy, depression, loss of health, feeling bad or inferior, resentment)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. With which *relational* effects can you identify? (i.e., your boss or co-worker is difficult; your work is affecting significant relationships in your life at home or otherwise; a co-worker is not doing their job and it is affecting you; you are overwhelmed by someone; you’re getting hurt at work; you are afraid to confront someone; a relationship is so bad that you are thinking of leaving a good job to get away)

5. With which *effects on performance* can you identify? (i.e., your workload is getting more and more out of control; you cannot stay focused on the real mission; you feel chaotic, procrastinate or are disorganized; you can't close the deal, have trouble delegating, etc.)

6. In light of how you have responded above, rank on a scale of 1 – 10 how you are doing emotionally, relationally, and in your performance.

- Emotional rank \_\_\_\_\_
- Relational rank \_\_\_\_\_
- Performance rank \_\_\_\_\_

### YOU ARE DESIGNED TO HAVE A STRUCTURED CHARACTER

Just as children are designed to begin walking at a certain age, developmental research shows us that we were designed to have a structured, defined character that is free, motivated, powerful, autonomous, aggressive, and initiating. But sometimes we face obstacles that keep us from getting there. When that happens, it is not unusual to become discouraged and think that we cannot change.

The good news is, God designed us to have a structured character and good boundaries. “We are,” as Ephesians 2:10 says, “God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Not only that, God has promised to help you get there: “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).

But, all of this points to making a shift in our thinking from just solving “problems” to growing as a person and resolving the real issues that cause our problems. The real need is for our own personal growth. We must get to the things that are eroding our personal power, motivation, drive, autonomy, freedom, good aggression, and initiative. If *we* change, then the problems will get better.

7. What is your level of hope that you can change in these areas?

8. What are your thoughts on God's view of and support of your efforts to regain control of your life, work, and relationships?

Jesus pointed out that if we are healthy as people, we will escape a lot of these kinds of problems. Even in the midst of difficulties, we will prevail if we are mature. But, if we avoid our personal growth, we will be unable to produce the fruitfulness we desire: "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit" (Luke 6:43). In other words, the healthier we (the tree) are, the better our results. And to the extent we are not facing our issues, good fruit will evade us.

9. Where have you seen an organization, a person, or yourself address a problem with someone, only to find that they did not deal with the real issue (i.e., that the person needed to grow in some way)? What was the result?

The call of the One-Life Solution is for us to grow as people and regain what the Bible refers to as "self-control." If we do that, through growing in our boundaries, we will see results in the following areas:

- Our personal power
- Our drive
- Our good aggressiveness
- Our motivation
- Our autonomy and freedom
- Our healthy initiative

10. In which of these areas would you like to improve?

## THE CHALLENGE OF REGAINING CONTROL IN A "STRUCTURELESS" CULTURE

If you are feeling overwhelmed and out of control, there is a good reason! Life today has become so fragmented that it is increasingly difficult to "bring it all together." Life used to be structured by the simple reality that we used to go "to" work and be "at" work for a certain time. When we were not "at work," we were not working; we were "off." There was an implicit balance in the way that we worked and had a personal life.

But, with the Internet, e-mail, PDAs, and cell phones, work can find us anywhere, anytime. We can go home and do e-mail instead of connecting with those close to us. We can answer e-mail on our PDA while attending a child's sporting event. We can be on a date night and be interrupted by an e-mail or call on our cell phone. Work has spilled over into life big-time. If we do not have the internal boundaries to protect us from this, technology will overtake us. All it takes is a boss who hits "send."

11. In which ways has technology increased your workload?

12. In what ways does your cell phone, PDA, or e-mail intrude into your personal life?

What problems does that cause you?

What makes it difficult for you to keep this from happening?



As you move forward in this workbook, begin with the realization that God did not design you to be overstressed and overwhelmed, out-of-control and fragmented. He designed you for a life of fruitfulness in your emotions, relationships, and your work. As Jesus said, his yoke is easy and his burden is light. Often, we do not realize that it is our own issues that are making it so difficult. The goal of this study is personal spiritual growth that affects your performance and well-being. With that hope, we move on, to realizing exactly what that vision can be.

### PRAYER

*God, thank you that you have given life to me and that you have a plan for me. I accept the fact that no matter what circumstances I face, resolving them is going to involve my getting better in some way. Help me to see where I need to grow so that I might fulfill your plan for me and also be fulfilled in these key areas of life. Give me the wisdom, power, and help that I need to make all of this come to fruition. Help me to find the ultimate use of my time and my energy to fulfill your purposes for me. Amen.*