

In partnership with



YOUNIQUE

# THE LEADER'S MAGIC HOUR

CAPTURING THE TIME YOU NEED

ONE  
OF  
7

A LEADERSHIP SERIES BY  
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# WELCOME

## PURPOSE

The 3-Hour Retreat is a series of reflection tools designed to help leaders maximize and multiply their personal effectiveness. Each retreat is built on three foundational concepts:



### LEARN

Each 3 Hour Retreat develops an essential leadership lesson. This truth is delivered as a principle or axiom. These principles are more than just good ideas. They are time-tested and cross-cultural. That's why you will see each principle explored biblically, theoretically, and historically.



### LEVERAGE

Conferences, podcasts, books, and blogs are all great, but apart from intentional reflection, application, and accountability their impact will be minimal. That's why each 3-Hour Retreat provides time and space for reflection and application. You need to work out the principle and work it into your life to experience long-term growth. Each 3-Hour Retreat will help you develop a strategy for implementation.



### LEAD

Self-leadership is essential leadership. The 3-Hour Retreat is a manageable dose of insight and application designed to help leaders maximize and multiply their one and only life in order to live and serve at their leadership best.

# HOW DO I DETERMINE MY MAGIC HOURS?

Here are four questions to help you determine your magic hours.

## QUESTION ONE:

### What do you do well?

God says, “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment” (Romans 12:3 NIV). Sober thinking is honestly assessing your strengths and weaknesses, gifts and talents to arrive at an understanding of what you do well. Like all assessments, it is only as good as you are honest. The question is not, “What do you want to do well?” but “What do you do well?”

When you think soberly you avoid two extremes: (1) Ain’t I something! and (2) I ain’t nothing! Both lines of thinking are dangerous. The former robs God of his glory, the latter devalues his work in your life.

As I assess my life, I do three things fairly well: I teach well, write well, and lead well. I have plenty of room for improvement, but I know God has gifted me in these areas. Consequently, I must focus on these areas with the time God has entrusted to me. Think soberly for a moment. Name three things that you do well.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## QUESTION TWO:

### What can you and only you do, that if done well, will make a significant difference for your organization?

A.G. Lafley wrote an article for Harvard Business Review entitled, “What Only The CEO Can Do.” His point? As a leader, there are things only you can do. Make sure you are focused on these pursuits. Give the rest to someone else. Brian Tracy, the author of *Eat That Frog*, calls those things only you can do your key result areas:

*Your job can be broken down into about five to seven key result areas, seldom more. These represent the results that you absolutely, positively have to get to fulfill your responsibilities and make your maximum contribution to your organization.*

*A key result area is defined as something for which you are completely responsible. If you don’t do it, it doesn’t get done. A key result area is an activity under your control. It produces an output that becomes an input or a contributing factor to the work of others.<sup>13</sup>*

## INSIGHT

As I assess my role as a pastor, there are certain things I must do that cannot be delegated to someone else. For example, I must be the primary preacher/teacher for our church family. I must set the vision for our church. I must establish the leadership development culture in our church.

Your role will look different than mine. If you are in sales, you are responsible for establishing your client base. If you are a team leader, you must navigate the tension between the task that must be accomplished and building the relationships that make the task possible.

Take a moment to assess your key result areas. What are the things that only you can do? Write them below. Understanding your key result areas will help you determine the magic hours you need to best facilitate them.

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## QUESTION THREE:

**What essential blocks of time— “Magic Hours”— do you need to be at your best?**

Magic hours are foundational blocks of time that you need to excel in life and work. Paul needed a study hour. Jesus — in his human nature — needed that hour of prayer. Isaac needed time to meditate. Asimov illustrates the importance of both identifying and being devoted to one of his magic hours: writing. What essential blocks of time do you need?

## INSIGHT

In my life, I need five magic hours:

- 1. Time With God Hour:** I need an hour to be with God in his Word and in prayer.
- 2. Exercise Hour:** I need an hour to exercise. I take long walks and devote some of my exercise time for push-ups and sit-ups.
- 3. Reading Hour:** Leaders are readers. Reading broadens my understanding and provides a tremendous amount of background material for speaking and writing. It is the paint for my canvas.
- 4. Thinking Hour:** I need time to look ahead, anticipate problems, brainstorm resources, assess relationships, examine finances, consider possibilities, and dream about what success can mean.
- 5. Writing Hour:** Writing provides an opportunity for me to connect with our church — outside of the Sunday sermon. It enables me to encourage and build into others using the voice of my pen (keyboard). I must have time to write.

These are my hours. I cite them as an example of what I must have. Your hours will look different.

Perhaps you are thinking, “Five hours? There’s no way!” While it does seem excessive, I remember the words of Dee Hock, the founder and former CEO of Visa: “It is management of self that should occupy 50% of our time and the best of our ability.”<sup>14</sup>

We must also remember that these “hours” are blocks of time, not necessarily 60-minute segments. Let them serve you. You don’t serve them. That said, these blocks of time are so important that I keep track of my magic hours in my daily journal. As you develop a rhythm for your magic hours, they will become the admonition of a persistent friend and not become the relentless hounding of a cruel taskmaster.

Why not take a few moments and identify your essential blocks of time? Consider starting with three (two personal and one related to your vocation).

**My essential blocks of time:**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

**QUESTION FOUR:**

**What must you stop doing to capture your “Magic Hour”?**

Finding room for your magic hours in the midst of a crowded schedule will not be easy. You will have to say “No” to some good things to get the better things the magic hours will bring. Remember this: The secret to saying, “No” is to live with a bigger “Yes.”

Jonathan Edwards illustrates that kind of resolve. Edwards, fully aware of his extraordinary mental capacities, had to make some tough choices with respect to his time. Biographer George Marsden notes:

*Edwards decided early on that he should serve God first with his best gifts. Accordingly, except in cases of sickness and emergencies, he declined to make pastoral calls on his parishioners as was usually expected of New England clergy . . . Normally, however, he believed he could best exercise his extraordinary intellectual gifts as well as best serve his parishioners by staying in his study during the day.”<sup>15</sup>*

Edwards did not stop there. He ruthlessly evaluated his study habits and concluded: “My time is so short, that I have not time to perfect myself in all studies: wherefore resolved, to omit and put off, all but the most important and needful studies.”<sup>16</sup>

What is your bigger “Yes”? What do you need to say “No” to in order to achieve it? Write down two things (perhaps good, but not the best) that get in the way of your bigger “Yes.”

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

## CHOICES...CONSEQUENCES



For a moment think about choices and consequences. What negative consequences might you experience if you DO NOT capture your magic hours?

## OAK TREES DON'T GROW OVERNIGHT

Change takes time. The problem with some efforts for effective time use is they fail to take into consideration four important factors:

**1 Reading Is Not Changing:** One can read a boatload of books on “time management” and not change. The reason is that reading is not the same as comprehension, evaluation, and personal application. The latter is the deep work of learning. Most people are simply not willing to do that kind of hard work to establish new rhythms in life.

**2 Change Takes Time:** In his article, “How Long Does It Actually Take To Form A New Habit,” James Clear traced the recent history of habit formation. Since 1960, many self-help professionals have perpetuated a myth that habit formation takes, on average, about 21 days. Recent research published in the *European Journal of Social Psychology* proposes that 66 days is a more accurate time predictor for changes to take root. Clear writes, “if you want to set your expectations appropriately, the truth is that it will probably take you anywhere from two months to eight months to build a new behavior into your life — not 21 days.”<sup>17</sup>

**3 Change Takes Disciplined Action:** Implementing your magic hours will sharpen your focus, improve the use of your time, and enable you to do what’s important. The benefits will be amazing, but not automatic. It is going to take some careful calendar work on your part to develop these new rhythms. Start this week. What would it take for you to have “success” for three days? Use the calendaring tool below to name your Magic Hours. Next, identify the day/time you will devote to it for the next four weeks (see “Reading Hour” example). Transfer this plan to your digital or paper planner. Once you have successfully maximized your magic hours for three days for a month, shoot for four, and then five days. Your goal is to develop a sustainable rhythm that will help you maximize and multiply your life.

# GOAL

WEEK 1 ( / / ) TO ( / / )

## PRIORITIZE YOUR MAGIC HOURS 3 DAYS

MAGIC HOUR	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Example: Reading Hour	2pm - 3pm		6am - 7am		6am - 7am		

WEEK 2 ( / / ) TO ( / / )

## PRIORITIZE YOUR MAGIC HOURS 3 DAYS

MAGIC HOURS	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY

WEEK 3 ( / / ) TO ( / / )

## PRIORITIZE YOUR MAGIC HOURS 3 DAYS

MAGIC HOURS	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY

**4 Change Takes Help:** While you can tackle the concept of magic hours on your own, don't do that. Ask God and a good friend to help you implement your magic hours. The Holy Spirit is called "The Helper" for good reason. And God has people around you who can cheer you on and help hold you accountable to take action. A simple weekly check-in will suffice. **Who is that person who could help you?**

**My accountability partner:** \_\_\_\_\_

If you don't have an accountability partner, who could you reach out to this week to help you?

## IT'S HARD, BUT IT'S WORTH IT

Saying "Yes" to the magic hours pays big dividends in the long run but in the short run seems counterintuitive. Just try it. Take time for a thinking hour. Within minutes the internal voices or the chattering email ping will be screaming, "You must get busy!" Ignore that voice. Remember instead the wisdom of this story:

An old logger was out in the forest working feverishly to saw down a tree. A passerby who saw him noticed the logger was covered in sweat and breathing heavily.

*"What are you doing?" the passerby asked.*

*"Can't you tell," the workman answered impatiently, "I'm sawing down this tree."*

*"You look beat," the observer commented. "How long have you been working?"*

*"Five hours," came the reply between heavy breaths. "I'm beat! This is hard work."*

*"Well, why don't you take a little break to sharpen your saw? It sure would make your work go faster."*

*"I can't do that," the man answered gruffly. "I'm too busy sawing!"<sup>18</sup>*

Can you identify with the logger? Are you too busy to slow down? Devoting time to the magic hours is devoting time to sharpening your saw for God.

Paul knew the importance of this. He did not want his mental edge to go dull. So even when chained up in a Roman prison, he took time to sharpen his mind with a reading hour:



# RETREAT REFLECTIONS

# TROUBLESHOOTING

## **What should I do when I miss my Magic Hours?**

I once went five months without capturing my magic hours on a daily basis. I would hit two of the five hours or even go four for five, but going five-for-five seemed as illusive as hitting five-for-five against Clayton Kershaw. I was striking out day after day. Here is what I've learned:

- I'll never bat 1000. This is not a cop-out. This is reality. A child's sleepless night becomes your sleepless night. Sickness, injuries, depression, overtime, disrupt best-laid plans.
- My magic hours serve me. I don't serve them. No one is awarding gold stars on the magic hours scoreboard. This is a tool, not your identity. The means (magic hours) are important, but they are not all-important.
- Don't try to make-up hours missed. If you set a goal for a reading hour and missed it for a week, don't try to catch up. Just start over with fresh intentions today.
- Isolate the reason for missing and deal with it. Sickness is one thing, making excuses because the discipline is hard is another. If, for example, you are allowing appointments to cut into or steal your magic hour, own that. You may not control all your hours, but you control most. Set boundaries to guard that hour.

## **Do Magic Hours change?**

Absolutely. Devoting a reading hour to complete a course or degree is different from devoting a reading hour to sharpen one's leadership. Different seasons may call for a change in your magic hours.

## **One hour always comes easily while another hour is hard to capture? What should I do?**

Two thoughts may help:

- Start your day with your most difficult hour. If you easily launch into your Exercise Hour every morning but struggle to claim your daily Thinking Hour, then rotate your hours. Begin your day with your most difficult hour. Refuse any other magic hour until you complete the more difficult hour.
- Rotate Hours. If you have three magic hours and attempt to accomplish them in succession, rotate the hours: 1, 2, 3 then 2, 3, 1 and then 3, 1, 2. This will help you prioritize the difficult hour and reap benefits from it.

## **This is feeling too forced. Shouldn't it be more organic?**

I love the words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight; but they while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night." I'd much rather be sleeping in the night than toiling in the night, but disciplined steps at uncomfortable dark hours lead to beautiful vistas when the sun rises. Spurgeon said, "By perseverance the snail reached the ark." Keep persevering.