

# 5 Ways to Discern a Leader's Dilemma: “Good Enough or Your Very Best?”

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Most leaders I know are running at full speed – sometimes tired and nearly always in a hurry. For those who have mastered their priorities, calendar and saying no, better than most will still say their days are incredibly full, and the weight of responsibility is heavy.

Margin is thin these days for most leaders. Under a heavy schedule, you might be tempted to cut corners, but that's never a good idea. So, when it comes to effort and energy, what is enough, what's good enough? How do you know?

Is “*good enough*” an acceptable leadership or stewardship idea? Or should you ALWAYS do the ultimate and “*very best*”? Personally, I'm not a big fan of the phrase “good enough,” but if we are honest, we are forced to make that decision daily.

Let's take the idea of *good enough* and consider two perspectives:

- For some, *good enough* is a smart leadership idea, in fact, good stewardship.
- For others, *good enough* is just short of offensive, and only your “very best” will do.

Here's a common example, the quality of audio on Sunday morning for your worship service. Church leaders across the country stress over this issue.

Some leaders see the wisdom in making it good enough. Get it 90% sounding good, and that is good enough because most people in the worship auditorium can't hear or appreciate the difference anyway. So why put unnecessary pressure and stress on the musicians, and those running sound, etc.?

There is another group that as they read those words, the very core of their being is about to explode. Why would anyone ever settle for “good enough?” Only your VERY BEST will do! Give it everything you've got. Every note counts! The mix matters to the nth degree!

Now let's connect this back to you and most leaders running at full speed. As a leader, you mostly have three cherished, invaluable, and *finite* resources.

1. Time
2. Finances
3. People

(Yes, God is the author of infinite, but I've yet to meet a real every-day church leader who says they have too much time, too much money, and too many people.)

In our Sunday morning example, you could get the sound nearly perfect every Sunday if you invest *enough* time, money, and people. But at what point is it *good enough*?

Want to make this interesting? Match up a supervisor and staff member who view the good enough / very best dilemma from different perspectives! But rather than start a rumble, let me offer some practical thoughts, but first one more example.

Consider the next talk you give. How much time should you spend on it? It might be your Sunday morning message or a leadership lesson you will teach in a week. Is there a point where you say it's *good enough* to accomplish the goal, and because you have other things to do, including considerable time with people?

Or, do you say, it must have my very best even if it might put other responsibilities at risk? It's that important!

Think about your three resources. Time. Finances. People. You could spend 40 hours on it, hire people to research and write, and attempt to perfect every word. Some leaders would say, "that's not good stewardship," others would say, "Absolutely, it deserves your very best."

What do you think? You and I make decisions about what must be good enough, even though we always want to give our very best.

## 5 principles to help you discern the dilemma:

### **1) Your outcomes should always equal or be better than your investment.**

The first and big picture principle of discernment is to be able to measure the outcome. Dilemmas are often subjective, but once you decide what is important to you, they become much clearer and measurable.

We have all led ministries where the input was greater than the results. Meaning, lots of work, little fruit. Or put it this way, lots of effort, but nothing changed. That happens, but it should never be intentionally allowed to continue.

The result or impact must be noticeable and equal to or greater than your investment. Don't spin your wheels chasing things that don't matter.

### **2) *Good enough* should never be an excuse for being lazy.**

This is where the dilemma gets tricky. "*Good enough*" is a principle that has nothing to do with lacking in quality. It's about allotting realistic amounts of time according to the level of priority and for the return on your investment. Great passion, precision, and care must always go into every ministry effort. The people you serve are worth it.

The best way to approach the question is what amount of effort and energy is required to produce the results you desire. There are factors such as your level of experience and gifting that impact your time, but that sliding variable is true for everyone, and you can take that into account.

### **3) *Very best* should never be an excuse for unproductive perfectionism.**

I appreciate excellence, detail, and noticeable high quality. It speaks loudly of the leader, the organization, and what they care about. However, it is possible to get lost in unnecessary precision. This point has nothing to do with your level of experience or talent.

I recently finished a writing project and a couple of times while searching for the appropriate sources to cite in the endnotes, I caught myself searching beyond any reasonable need. My passion for integrity and quality is good, but not when it goes beyond any practical expectation.

“*Very best*” is a principle that has nothing to do with justifying pet projects or perfectionism. It’s about leveraging the gifts and talents God has given you in alignment with a reasonable amount of effort and energy to achieve an appropriate return on your time.

### **4) How you handle your time options is of critical importance.**

I’m only addressing one of the three resources here, time, but you can easily include the other two. If you choose the “*good enough*” principle, it is then essential to use the time you saved intentionally. Don’t let those saved hours get lost in busyness, use them to work on top priorities. Pre-choose what you will invest that time in.

If you choose the “*only your very best*” option, then be honest with yourself and your team about why it is so important, and you are willing to let other things go. Give some thought to who might cover what you can’t get to, or are there things you can eliminate?

### **5) The discernment between the two should never be done in a vacuum.**

One of the best safeguards to discerning these leadership dilemmas well is never to do it alone. (If it’s big enough to be considered a dilemma, it’s big enough to ask for wisdom from others.)

Even if you have only one person to bounce these subjective issues off, that will work. A team is best, but considering this article, don’t spend too long debating!

You won’t get it right every time. That’s OK. Especially if you are trying something new. But with some practice with each thing you consider, it will become clearer, and again, measuring your pre-determined or desired outcomes is essential.