

***Unlimited Partnership* by Bill Wellons and Lloyd Reeb**  
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Book summary by Kelly Givens ([www.vocationalstewardship.org](http://www.vocationalstewardship.org), 2011)

This flip book is meant to address both the pastor and businessman's individual challenges when it comes to connecting highly skilled workers to work that has lasting impact for the Kingdom. The pastor's side is written by Bill Wellons, founder and teaching pastor at a large church for more than thirty years. The business side is written by Lloyd Reeb, successful real estate developer and business leader. These two men long to connect the marketplace and parish in a forward focused way to advance the Kingdom of God.

**Pastor's Edition- Bill Wellons**

In Chapter One, *The New Social Movement*, Wellons unpacks Bob Buford's concept of "Halftimers"- men and women who are seasoned in their line of work, who have refined their skills and abilities, are leadership savvy, spiritually mature, and have time and financial resources. This group is at an age of retirement, but is nowhere near ready to stop doing what they love. They are an untapped resource in many churches, and they have the power to shape their community and culture. The power of this "social movement," as Wellons calls it, is in what pastor's make of their Halftimers. "The change-producing power of a multitude of Christ-followers motivated by God to invest their time, talent and treasure to benefit the world in which they live is beyond human comprehension," Wellons writes.

Wellons relates the story of his friend, Tom, who has undertaken a halftime journey. In the late 1990's Tom sensed a call to invest some of the energy he had for business into something "with eternity in my sights." Although Tom admits there was no "burning bush" where God "spoke audibly" to him as to what he should do, Tom was able to discern that he needed to rebalance his life. Through that rebalancing, he has been able to partner with Bill to help others in the same transitioning process, "helping lead our church to be prepared for the waves of baby boomers crashing headlong into these issues..."

In chapter two, *Understanding the Unique Stages of Halftime*, readers are introduced to the "stages of halftime." These stages mirror the life of Moses and how God called him in the latter half of his life into more meaningful ministry. The stages are as follows:

- Stage One: Foundation of Success. Moses spent the first forty years of his life in Pharaoh's court. Through this he became a leader, learned the politics and culture of Egypt and refined his people skills. Soon, he discovered the plight of the Israelites and his heart burned in righteous anger on their behalf. This was effectively Moses' halftime calling.
- Stage Two: Journey Inward. Moses fled to the dessert after killing the Egyptian. This time of fear and solitude was used by God to "detox" Moses of some of the baggage of the first half of life, so he could use him to make an impact. Moses

was humbled by his failure, and as a result his heart was more open to listen for God's plan. Like Moses, Halftimers need encouragement and guidance in this stage. It is hard work because it is heart work.

- Stage Three: Awakening Challenge. When God spoke to Moses via a burning bush, it was a wake-up call. Moses saw how his assignment fit into the gifts and passions God has given him. But it still required risk, faith and sacrifice. As with Moses, halftimers in this stage are intentionally identifying strengths and passions, talking with others, identifying places in ministry where they may fit. Then, they get to work in those areas.
- Stage Four: Reaching potential. We see that when Moses became willing to focus his life in obedience to God's calling, he was unstoppable. We see this clearly when he was empowered to part the Red Sea. Halftimers in this stage are becoming fully engaged in the unique role God has for them, they are seeking balance in their priorities and growing relationally with God.

In chapter three, Wellons discusses an informal survey he and Lloyd did of 100 pastors who were open to Halftime ministry...but even these church leaders expressed some concerns:

- Fear of losing control
- The challenge of overcoming existing church structures that would prevent this kind of entrepreneurship for God (p27)

Wellons admits he often had these concerns himself. This has led him to identify two kinds of ministry partnership through churches: limited and unlimited.

In business, a *limited* partnership is where a partner puts in a share of money, assumes minimal risk, and never really gets the opportunity to lead. Someone else is in charge. In the church, this looks like Sunday school teachers, ushers, small groups leaders, etc. They can be debilitating when high capacity volunteers are put into roles that don't capitalize on their skills, experiences, and desire to innovate (p28). An *unlimited* partnership is what seasoned Halftimers want -- freedom, authority, room to maneuver, big vision, and a desire for results.

Jesus' ministry is the "perfect example" of shared ministry. He placed people in ministry positions according to their God-given gifts and abilities. (p29)

Wellons goes on to explain what he calls "**The Shared Ministry Model.**" This is a six-step model, also called the Halftime Funnel, whereby halftimers and a pastor can develop a partnership.

**1. Identifying** – figuring out who within the church is a Halftimer. You can do it by focusing on the age demographic (who are the Boomers in the church). This is the *Season of Life Approach*. Or ask for referrals of people at mid-life who are thinking about "more meaning" in work- the *Referral Approach*. Keep your antennae out – listen for "search for significance" type comments from people- *The Listening Approach*. Or, you can connect with them with the current leaders

in the church—find out if the serving role they’re in is the best fit; fueling their passion, etc.

Kris’ story is a great example of the identification journey. Kris is a plastic surgeon, who was struggling to have more significance. After going through the steps of the Shared Ministry Model, Kris started taking teams to Honduras- now he does this several times a year to repair physical deformities in children and adults that most Honduran doctors are not equipped to restore. The ministry also involves training Honduran doctors in a medical school to teach them more surgical skills (p39)

Chapter Four covers the second step of the Shared Ministry Model, *Investing in a Halftimer*. This occurs when a pastor contacts a Halftimer to learn more about their gifting and how they might want to serve.

First, the pastor should prepare for the meeting by gaining understanding about business leaders. Typically successful business leaders are fast-paced, work long hours, are used to competitive, performance-oriented environments; they may lack familiarity with the ways of the nonprofits world. They may suspect that the pastor only wants to build a relationship to get their money or to rope them into a volunteer service that may not fit their unique design (p43).

Second, the pastor should schedule a meeting and begin to get to know the Halftimer. Wellons suggests this outline of conversation FORMAT:

- F – Family- background, marriage, children, and so forth.
- O- Occupation- their occupational journey, highs, lows, strengths, interests
- R – Religious life, relationship with God (new or old Christian, prayer requests)
- M – Ministry - what ministry experience have they had in the past – was it inside or outside of church, what roles did they play? What skills did they use? Be listening for clues to their ‘design capabilities and areas of passion’ (45)
- A – Ask – ask them if they’re familiar with the Halftime phenomenon
- T – Tell them what you’ve been learning about Halftime and the exciting opportunities it entails

After this, follow up appointments will invariably lead to Step 3, **Discovering**. This step is all about helping the halftimer get a better handle on how God has wired them; discovering their strengths, and what energizes them. Wellons lays out three foundational concepts in this process:

- God is the creator of giftedness...most often our spiritual gifts enhance and enrich the natural gifts God created us with
- God is the author of all personal callings – Eph 2:10...our calling is likely to conform to our giftedness since God made us (workmanship) and prepared good works for us to do (48)
- God is the originator of purpose – the big purpose is glorifying Him

Wellons also mentions two discovery tools: the “StrengthFinders Profile” (from the book *Living Your Strengths* by Albert Winseman et al) and “Servants by Design Inventory”

(online tool at [www.youruniquedesign.com](http://www.youruniquedesign.com) (\$35) He also includes some good worksheets on p50ff

In chapter five, we receive the fourth step of the Shared Ministry Model., ***Matching Giftedness with Personal Calling***. This involves finding a best-fit ministry opportunity that connects to the Halftimer's Core (strengths, abilities, passions); Capacity (time availability for giving themselves for others); and Context (type of ministry, role, and best-fit environment). With this stage we are moving to implementation...putting the Halftimer to work.

In chapter six Wellons unpacks step five, *Coaching Your Halftime Partner*. Once the Halftimer is actively serving, the pastor's job isn't yet finished. It's important to cheerlead, encourage, monitor, provide counsel, and encourage spiritual growth through the new service. The pastor or his designee will need to help the Halftimer navigate his new role and the communications processes involved in it. He or she might also have to provide spiritual shepherding to help the Halftimer not go into workaholic mode in their new pursuit.

In chapter seven we learn about step six of the Shared Ministry Model: ***Celebrating What God Accomplishes***. Just as Joshua had an altar of stones set up at Gilgal, so pastors should mark and recount the milestones along the journey and the accomplishments therein, celebrating what God has done through the life of the Halftimer. There are several different venues for celebrating Halftimers. For example:

- in the worship service
- in a special event
- bringing them in to a church staff meeting
- bringing them into a board/elders meetings

Finally, **Debriefing** with the Halftimer is important.

### **Halftimer's edition -- Lloyd Reeb**

Reeb starts his side of the book by repeating the Halftime Journey, which Wellons also does at the beginning of his book. Then, he talks about the questions that Halftimers are typically asking:

- How has God wired me? What are my strengths and abilities?
- What cause or group of people am I most interested in helping?
- In what way can I make a real difference in the world?
- What is my spouse thinking about this next season of life?
- What arena should I serve in: the marketplace, my church, my community, or somewhere around the world?
- How do I prepare my family and myself for this transition?
- How can I make this choice work with my financial situation?
- What is my highest and best contribution? (p15)

Then, Reeb discusses the Halftimers' "heart journey:"

It will involve a change of heart in at least five areas: creating a new identity outside your career; learning a new way of measuring your performance; discovering the strength of interdependence; finding the confidence to long for intimacy with Christ and others; and seeing the hero in servanthood. (p18)

In chapter two, Reeb discusses the idea of being “free to dream.” He talks about how dreaming is important, but often people’s ‘first half of life’ dream crowds out their second half, as they look for more and more success instead of significance.

It is here that Reeb addresses how to “get off the treadmill,’ find a new dream and reinvent ourselves. This involves:

- Understanding the very real risks of staying on the treadmill
- Scheduling a pause in the near future to reflect on how God has created you and what he may have in store for you.
- Link up with your pastor—begin to pray about talking to your pastor regarding your second half.

In chapter three, Reeb discusses what it looks like to find your best-fit. Some Halftimers will need to get off the treadmill they’re on; dream a new dream about things that are bigger than themselves. They need to pause and take inventory and slow down to engage in a discovery process to find their niche. Finding your niche involves three primary elements:

- Core —“understanding who you are, your strengths, your passions, the role you play best in an organization, and crafting a mission statement that reflect that core
- Capacity—“creating excess capacity (or margin) so that you have time, energy, and perhaps money to begin to give away to serve others
- Context—“develop the context in which you can make your biggest contribution—including the work environment, amount of time, team make-up” (p32)

Reeb then talks about a large PCUSA church in Houston pastored by Dave Peterson. Peterson, a Harvard grad and really focused on the importance of vocation, held a “collaborative day” – where he could gather seasoned marketplace professionals from the church and share his biggest dreams with them, and in return get best thinking and have them as sounding boards. He also encouraged them to consider how they could use their unique skills to make “an eternal impact” (p35). The pastor actually recruited a halftimer to organize the details of the event.

In chapter four, Reeb delves into what it looks like to build deeper relationships between the Halftimer and pastor. Reeb talks about the importance of understanding your pastor’s perspective as a starting place for building this relationship. Halftimers need to bear in mind what motivates pastors to partner with marketplace leaders and what challenges they face (for example, some pastors don’t feel like their vision is “big enough” for the marketplace men and women of a certain caliber). These pastors may desire partnership with such talented lay people but may also be intimidated by them and by the cultural differences between the for-profit and church worlds.

In chapter five, readers learn about “sharing learning experiences.” There are three kinds of learning experience, according to Reeb. These are:

- Hands-on experiences. 40 or so hours of time, at maximum, and no longer than a month.
- Educational experiences. Going to a seminar or workshop together that touches on topics relevant to the halftimer’s interests.
- Interactive experiences- work through the *Success to Significance* small group curriculum and DVD series together.

In chapter six, Reeb returns to the concept of “best-fit” serving roles, and how to find them. Reeb identifies three important aspects to finding a ministry that matches the Halftimer:

1. Based on your interests, what overall *ministry* should you work in?
2. Based on your skills, what *role* should you play on that team?
3. Based on your life circumstances, what should the *scope of your assignment* be?

Reeb creates a handy fill-in-the-blank tool to help halftimer’s discover their best fit.

In chapter seven, Reeb unpacks what it takes to get things done in the ministry world. One of the most important things to recognize, Reeb asserts, is the difference between how the business world operates and how ministry operates. There are three categorical differences:

1. Supernatural Differences- Just because a Halftimer has had success in business, doesn’t mean he/she will have success in ministry. Success in first half of life can lead to over-inflation of one’s own abilities and a lack of a pattern of strong God-dependence and prayer. We have to be trained to listen to the Spirit and rely on His aid or our work in our natural ability will not produce fruit.
2. Organizational Differences- ministry is set up and run very differently from business. Be sure to define the scope of your work, have a job description and factor in budgeting and accounting.
3. Cultural differences- Every organization has a unique culture. Tradition and an unwillingness to change can suffocate a Halftimer. Pastors will need to lift people’s sight about the minutia to catch a vision for the big picture by sharing a compelling vision of the impact of your ministry.

Reeb then returns again to the heart journey themes with an emphasis on the Halftimer’s growth in intimacy with Christ. “We run the risk of missing much of the growth and blessing at midlife if we rush off only to more accomplishments, even though they may be eternally significant accomplishments.” (p88) “[A]s we pursue significance by living out God’s call on our lives, we realize that the deepest satisfaction comes not so much from accomplishing big things for God (as wonderful as that it) but from surrendering our hearts and agenda to God and living each day in community with him.” (p89).