





Deadly Viper Character Assassins:

***THE ASSASSIN OF THE
HEADLESS SPRINTING CHICKEN***

By Mike Foster and Jud Wilhite

OUR KIDS LOVE DR. SEUSS, ESPECIALLY THE STORY OF THE CAT IN THE HAT. IN IT, THE CAT IN THE HAT TRIES TO DO IT ALL. HE SAYS:

*LOOK AT ME NOW! IT IS FUN TO HAVE FUN / BUT YOU HAVE TO KNOW HOW.
I CAN HOLD UP THE CUP AND THE MILK AND THE CAKE! I CAN HOLD UP
THESE BOOKS! AND THE FISH ON A RAKE! I CAN HOLD THE TOY SHIP AND A
LITTLE TOY MAN! AND LOOK! WITH MY TAIL I CAN HOLD A RED FAN! I CAN
FAN WITH THE FAN AS I HOP ON THE BALL! BUT THAT IS NOT ALL. OH, NO.
THAT IS NOT ALL ... THAT IS WHAT THE CAT SAID ... THEN HE FELL ON HIS
HEAD. HE CAME DOWN WITH A BUMP FROM UP THERE ON THE BALL. AND
SALLY AND I, WE SAW ALL THE THINGS FALL.!*

Perhaps the deadliest assassin of them all is the Assassin of the Headless Sprinting Chicken. This assassin wants you to keep performing, running to the next thing, and burning so hot in your schedule that you eventually burn out.

Sounds a lot like life and ministry, doesn't it? We try to take on more and more and more. We have the cup and the milk and the cake and the books and the red fan and we hop on the ball. Or we have the job and the boss and the e-mails and the phone calls to return and the business deals to close and the products to sell and the inventory to take and the accounts to reconcile and the never-ending pile of things to do. Some are in school, so add to their jobs and other responsibilities the classes, books, and tests and more classes, books, and tests along with the papers and activities and friends and hobbies. Then of course we have the home issues with the kid raising, dishes, laundry, vacuuming, picking up, baseball practice, carpooling, shower cleaning, lawn mowing, and a million other items you just do. And then suddenly we sound a lot like someone else. We have become the Cat in the Hat!

There are always crafty leader-enemies that are ready to undermine our long-term success. Enemies like sex, money, emotional baggage, out-of-control ego, and the lack of transparency and honesty will sneak up on you if you are not prepared. We call these leader-enemies the

seven killer assassins. Perhaps the deadliest assassin of them all is the Assassin of the Headless Sprinting Chicken. This assassin wants you to keep performing, running to the next thing, and burning so hot in your schedule that you eventually burn out. The Headless Sprinting Chicken is a killer looking for his next victim.

It seems like we are always hearing about the leader who has their marriage compromised or rips off their kids because of an insane schedule and a desire to be all things to all people. You know what we're talking about. How often have you been overwhelmed with tasks? How often have you felt like the demands on your life are simply unsustainable? Do you find yourself caught up in some destructive patterns of escapism and fantasy just to get a break from the madness that is your life? If so, you just might have booked yourself an appointment with the Assassin of the Headless Sprinting Chicken. The good news is: You are not too busy to be healthy.

Let's look at how we can defend ourselves against busyness and find greater spiritual and physical health in our lives.

1. Manage life in seasons.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, "For everything there is a season ..." The problem with the Cat in the Hat is he tried to balance too much. Most of us try to balance too much as well. But we're not sure the answer is in finding a perfectly balanced life, if that is even possible. When we try to be balanced we try to achieve all of our goals at once: career goals, family goals, fitness goals, spiritual goals. We keep all the plates spinning for a while, but eventually they come crashing down.

It is an incredibly exhausting experience to try and keep every area of your life firing on all eight cylinders, all the time. It might help to stand back and ask, "What is the purpose of this season of life I'm in? What is the end date to this season? What are my plans to replenish once I get through this season?" There is nothing godly about sitting on your rear end so you can have a "balanced life." Work hard but also rest hard, and know your limits. Most leaders who are doing anything truly impactful are going to go through seasons where the afterburners are on full force. Don't feel guilty for working hard and having unbalanced

seasons. The importance is in managing the seasons to avoid flaming out.

2. Stop trying to prove yourself.

Too often we let our work and accomplishments define our worth and value. If a leader is about to be slain by the Assassin of the Headless Sprinting Chicken, it is often because he or she has something to prove. We can all relate: we pull the late nights, crank harder and harder, and work ourselves to death all because we find our identity and personal value in the things we do. Failure is not an option and so we lead out of-control lives making sure we never feel embarrassed, weak, or diminished in others' eyes.

Some of us are still trying to prove our parents wrong when they said we would never amount to anything. Others are motivated by the harsh critics who never believed in us. The "I'll show them" mentality is toxic and is a tactic of that nasty Chicken.

Let's be brutally honest for a moment. Too many times in Christian leadership we hear statements like these: "I'm doing it all for God and his glory," or "I've got to be faithful to God's calling and commission," or "Jesus called me and I've got to do it! This can't fail." Often this is simply our religious justification for having out-of-control schedules and lives. Just remember, Jesus never asked you to be a workaholic to prove your value; He loves you just as you are.

3. Plan according to your energy.

Everybody talks about time management, but we find it helpful to think in terms of energy management. Are you a morning

person? Are you a night owl? This makes a huge difference. Jud is a total morning person. Mike won't even consider doing anything before 9 AM. Jud's best work gets done before noon while Mike thrives in the evening.

So we try to organize our lives around the energy God has given us. When do you do your best work? How much sleep do you need? How much rest do you need? There are no right or wrong answers here because everyone is different, but we would encourage you to really think through whether you're giving your best self to the best thing at the best time of day. Think about what fills you up emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Are you saying no to some good things so that you can stay charged up as a human being?

4. Take technology breaks.

We are both huge fans of technology. We both love our iPhones and champion the power and influence of technology. Mike Twitters and Jud is a Mac lover. But we also understand the implications of living in our wired world. We have several friends who we think should just have their cell phone surgically attached to their hand. It would just make their life easier because they are always on it. They constantly check e-mail, text message, and talk on the phone.

If you truly want to defeat the Assassin of the Headless Sprinting Chicken make sure to take technology breaks. We're living in a culture that encourages us to become slaves to our Blackberries and cell phones. And if you don't think you have a problem in this area, then try turning your technology off for 48 hours. We dare you. **C**

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