Leaders on Leadership

12 Leaders on Essential Aspects of Christian Leadership

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I have a love/hate relationship with leadership.

First of all, I hate it because I’m not a natural born leader. I’ve never been able to step into leadership roles effortlessly. I meet people who just become leaders because of who they are. I have never been that person. I was a bookworm and a nerd. Leadership was not something I naturally inherited; it was a skill and a practice I had to learn. And learn I did.

Because of my experience, I think all of us can learn to be leaders. I don’t think leadership is simply something we are born with or not. We can learn skills, activities, and practices that help us in the area of leadership.

The difficulty is that leadership has fallen on hard times in evangelical churches. I think part of that is a backlash to what I call the Maxwellization of leadership in the last couple of decades, when John Maxwell’s books seemed to be required reading for church leaders.

Everything was leadership in the ‘80s and ‘90s, but now the pendulum has swung the other way. We’ve moved away from leadership, especially leadership based on business principles. We hear people say, “I don’t want to be a CEO leader. I don’t want to be dictatorial leaders and hold things over people.”

When Mike Dodson and I were researching and writing Comeback Churches we may have gotten caught up in that backlash. We wanted to find what factors led to church revitalization. We expected to find prayer, preaching, evangelism, etc. We researched and we studied more than 320 churches. We called them and did multiple interviews with dozens of them. Do you know what we found?

Everything rises and falls on leadership.
We were focused on prayer, preaching, structure, evangelism and ministry, but we found leaders led churches to engage in those areas. In his essay on Paul’s leadership development for the book Paul’s Missionary Methods, Chuck Lawless writes:

I have served as a church consultant for more than fifteen years. The work has been steady, as few churches on the North American continent (or around the world, for that matter) are fully healthy. The weaknesses in most churches are several, including a lack of evangelism, a failure to disciple, a focus turned inward and a myriad of other issues. At the core of most concerns, however, is a singular pressing issue: a failure in leadership.

And, by the way, though I was concerned about the Maxwellization of leadership, the number one author credited and cited by those who led church revitalizations was John Maxwell.

Scripture is unapologetic in holding up the value and the example of leadership. We need to be clear about the biblical teaching that leadership matters. Leadership matters to God. God chooses and uses leaders. Leadership matters to churches. God uses leaders within churches to lead people to that which he desires them to engage.

The lack of leadership development is, in my view, one of the primary reasons churches plateau. Too many pastors are incapable (or unwilling) to identify and cultivate leaders within the church. They struggle mightily just to recruit workers! But, until pastors are able and willing to train leaders and leaders of leaders, the church will always stop growing at the furthest reaches of the pastor’s own ability to work.

We know the names of great leaders of God’s people and why they matter. We know what they did. Leadership is not just a biblical concept in the church, but it’s a godly practice shown throughout Scripture. It is both prescribed (it’s a noble task, it needs to be done,
raise up leaders), and described (stories of how leaders have functioned well and poorly). Leadership is both a biblical practice and biblical principle.

Many of us need to get beyond the pendulum swing and to think more biblically and more discerningly about the issue of leadership. Obviously, there are extremes and reaching for a counter-extreme is not good. But we should carefully consider the widely quoted statement: “Everything rises and falls on leadership.” Everything is not about leadership, but we must recognize leadership impacts every other area.

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Eighteenth-century pioneer of missional theology, Nicolaus Zinzendorf, once quipped, “Preach the gospel, die and be forgotten.” Zinzendorf accurately describes the posture of the missional leader. We don’t need celebrities that dictate to us what our ministry should look like. We don’t need trends to which we conform our personality. Instead, our ministry must be formed around the principle of John the Baptist: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

We need to approach leadership with Christ-like humility and pursue the noble labor of gospel ministry. We need to preach faithfully the gospel and be forgotten as the church flourishes and magnifies her Savior and Head, Jesus Christ.

But gospel ministry is filled with temptations and pitfalls that divert our focus from God’s self-directed mission to personal amusement and self-gratification.

In order to keep God’s glory and calling central, the missional leader must intentionally cultivate biblically-shaped leadership and the gospel-structured mission. These two elements are not boxes to cross off on our missional checklist, but the integral structures that define and feed our mission.

These two foundational ideas must interplay off each other as they inform our core understanding of mission. The biblical shape of our leadership more clearly defines the scope of our mission. As our gospel mission is faithfully lived out, our leadership becomes more finely contoured to God’s calling. The result is a faithful ministry that develops a future generation forged by a passionate pursuit and commitment of mission.
The Shape of the Leader

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “But as for you, exercise self-control in everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Tim. 4:5).

Our shape as missional leaders must flow from the transforming power of the gospel. We neither promote our own agenda, nor look for praise in our apparent success. But we are zealous to make Christ known to all people in every context. We glory in the faithfulness of God as he fulfills his promises to redeem as many as call upon his name.

We must be committed to making disciples who are mobilized for missional engagement. This comes as we are pruned and shaped by the gospel and then in turn begin the process of shaping those in our charge. We must prepare ourselves by being deeply rooted in the Word of God and spreading truth, hope, and peace.

The result is training the next generation of biblically-shaped leaders so that the mission of the church advances and we can pass into obscurity having done the work of the good and faithful servant.

The Structure of the Mission

Mission is everything that the church is sent to be and do in the world. This definition assumes that God initiated the mission of the church and continues to direct it. As Jesus was sent by God, so Jesus sent the disciples who formed the church. The disciples in turn raised up, trained, and sent followers so that the message of the gospel would spread. As a result, the mission is expanding across the world to this day.

I recently read an article in Entrepreneur Magazine entitled “4 Essentials for Making Your Company Mission Thrive.” This article states:

“When faced with the day-to-day responsibilities of running a company, even the most experienced business leader can lose sight
of the company’s mission. Over time, a company can forget its core values and remain too focused on surviving in today’s competitive environment. Simply having a set of words on a plaque that hangs on the wall or used as a tagline on your website is meaningless unless they are brought to life and become part of the fabric of the company. And it all starts at the top.”[1]

The same principle applies to our churches. If we are going to keep the mission the main thing, then we need to have genuine missional imperatives that impact our leadership development, preaching, and community group curriculums and reinforce the God’s mission through the church.

Simply having core values on our webpage and in our support raising appeals does not mean we are keeping the mission as a core focus. Mission must be interwoven into the fabric of all the structures of the church. These structures must serve to instill Christ’s mission into the heart and soul of each member and leader until it becomes the very DNA of our culture.

Paul charges Titus, “The reason I left you in Crete was to set right what was left undone and, as I directed you, to appoint elders in every town” (Titus 1:5).

As leaders in the church, we must be careful to not move away from our missional function, where Christ is at the center as we engage the community. The danger is to slip into a performance-based drill where Christ is no longer the focus and we are left with performing daily self-centered rituals.

Dr. Manny Ortiz once wrote:

Because the planting of churches is both means and end, both goal and instrument, growth is to be measured in numbers and more. It is to be measured also by their participation in bringing about of a new order, in establishing a community of love, and struggling for justice and peace as an anticipation of the ultimate revelation of God’s kingdom.
When our mission is structured by our calling as disciples of Christ and servants of his people, we will be freed from the demands of worldly success as the glory of God is reflected through his work in us.

Do you see how these pieces begin to fit together? The shape of the leader is the structure of the mission and vice versa. As we grow in godliness, God’s mission becomes our mission. As we keep God’s mission as the ultimate goal, we are more and more conformed to the image of Christ.

**Forging Future Generations**

I have seen many church planters desire to teach the core value of keeping Christ’s mission central. However, these same churches eventually redirect from being missionally and intentionally aggressive to becoming passive and missionally complacent as they grow larger. They become disconnected from reaching the neighborhood and region in which they were sent.

Intentional and aggressive missional engagement must define the entire life of the church from planting to maturity. The leaders must seek to assure the mission is continually at the core of the church’s focus, even beyond their own time serving. This takes the vision beyond our immediate circumstances and invests in subsequent generations, including those not yet born.

This is not a top-down paradigm. All who are mature disciples of Jesus must take ownership of the comprehensive growth of the missional culture. This is challenging as it will cost the leader many long nights, countless hours, deep stress, frequent disappointments, and frustrating disagreements with congregants and other leaders. We must instill commitment to the biblical picture of missional living and not cave in when times get difficult, stressful, or challenging. Keeping the mission the focus causes us to continually reconsider our denominational affiliation, our financial supporters, and our networks. If these institutions don’t share our commitments to gospel
mission, then we must be willing to sever all ties for the sake of building and modeling commitment to God’s mission.

Our Lord Jesus modeled this on the cross while bleeding out and dying for our sins in Luke 23:35-43. Jesus endured mockery and rebuke from the soldiers, the onlooking crowd, and even the other criminals being crucified with him.

His commitment to the Father’s mission was to stay on the cross regardless of the mockery, shame, and pain. Jesus sought to live and die for the sake of the transforming gospel for every future generation.

Our calling will take us to crossroads where we will be required to make on-the-fly decisions that will reflect the very foundations of our shape and structure. Distractions like social media, branding, locations, politics, finances, and more will vie for your allegiance.

Are you prepared as a gospel-shaped leader to lose financial support for the sake of faithfulness to your missional call? Will you be surprised when you are booted from your building because you are unwilling to waver from God’s mission?

Missional leadership is a lofty task in the great commission. May God’s mission shape us as leaders so that we keep his mission as our ultimate goal.

[1] https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/242490, Bruce Cazenave • Guest Writer

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The Values-Driven Leader
A Mosaic of 3 Tiles
By Daniel Montgomery

• Coca-Cola’s disastrous attempt to sell “New Coke”
• Sony’s decision to diversify itself into relative obscurity
• The West Wing, Seasons 5-7

What do these things have in common?

Each is an example of an organization that lost its way. Somewhere along the line—whether on account of market pressure (Coke), diluted identity (Sony), or the departure of a visionary (West Wing)—each of these trains ran way off its respective track.

Unfortunately, churches and non-profits are every bit as prone to wander as their business counterparts. In their award-winning book Mission Drift, Peter Greer and Chris Horst describe this as the “unspoken crisis” facing faith-based organizations today.

How do powerhouse brands like the ones I mentioned above so famously lose touch with their raison d’être? What causes churches and non-profits to slip their moorings and drift out to sea? What can you do to keep your organization on mission?

Organizational Drift Starts at the Top

So often, leaders come into their positions with a certain image of what the ideal leader should look like. For some, it’s the deeply convicted stalwart. For others, it’s the creative luminary. Still others aspire to be the courageous hard-charger.

Each of these images are great. But, when leaders exaggerate one over the others, they can quickly drift off course… and take the entire organization with them.

In short: if your values get out of whack, so will theirs.
Assembling a Leadership Mosaic

For Christians, no monolithic model of leadership will do. We worship a God whose redemptive leadership takes shape in manifold ways throughout Scripture. He is our archetype—the one in whose image we’re made and the ultimate leader whose example we seek to follow (Ephesians 5:1).

God is one, but his work is as rich and variegated as the many shades of purple that fill the sunset sky. He doesn’t apply a one-size-fits-all approach over his creation in all its complexity. Instead, he works tenderly and seamlessly in and through the people and things he has made.

Similarly, we want to model a multi-faceted approach to leadership steeped in the richness of God’s manifold wisdom. In a word, we need a mosaic.

Here are what I consider to be 3 of the most important tiles in that mosaic:

**Lead with Conviction**

God is the triune King of his creation. The Father knows what he wants for his children, and he invincibly accomplishes his plan through the Son and Spirit.

Convictional leaders operate from a deep understanding that their story maps concretely onto God’s larger redemptive story. Grounded in those convictions, social or cultural pressures become unimportant because they take their marching orders from God in his revelation. Do you lead with conviction?

**Diagnostic Questions:**

- Have I considered how our story intersects God’s work in the world? Are my convictions deeply rooted, firm, and clear?
• Do my convictions as a leader help or hinder that project? Am I imposing convictions or preferences on projects?
• Do I help my people shape their convictions to serve God’s narrative framework?

**Lead with Creativity**

Conviction without creativity breeds tyranny.

God is the ultimate creative. The Father not only created the world, but chose to powerfully and beautifully speak the world into being (Gen. 1:3; Heb. 11:3), through the pre-eminent Son (John 1:3), and by the life-giving Spirit (Ps. 104:30).

This triune pattern of creation gives shape to our leadership:

• As God the Father speaks, so we communicate the vision he is instilled in us.
• As he acts through the Son, so we act through the creative agency of the talented people he’s put on our team.
• As God breathes his life-giving Spirit, so we inspire others to bring the full weight of their creative lives to bear on our common goals.

Do you lead with creativity?

**Diagnostic Questions:**

• How often do you reflect on God’s powerful, imaginative work in creation?
• Do you ever glory in the wonderful diversity of God’s world?
Do you foster a sense of creativity and ingenuity in your approach to the goals at hand?
• Are you awe-struck by the intricate ways God holds his world together? Do you empower others to do the same?
Lead with Courage

As I talk about in my book, Leadership Mosaic, courage is for the broken, vulnerable, and weak. It comes from the invulnerable God who made himself vulnerable for us.

Dan Allender describes courage as “the necessary paradox of leadership. Facing the extremity of our helplessness opens the door to the freedom to fight with a ‘strange carelessness’ and a ‘spirit of furious indifference.’”

In the foolishness of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18), we see that paradox in high relief. The Father so loved his people (Ephesians 1:3-6) that he sent his Son to redeem us by his blood (1:7-10) and gave his Spirit to seal the promise of our heavenly inheritance (1:11-14).

God has given us “a spirit not of fear but of power” (2 Timothy 1:7), so that we can model our lives and leadership after this radically courageous movement of the triune God.

Do you lead with courage?

Diagnostic Questions to Ask in Prayer:

- Father, what are you doing in the world? Am I eager to join you? Do you see the paradox of courageous leadership in your own life, owning your helplessness and opening the door to active leadership and stepping forward?
- Jesus, what are you doing in me? Where can I see more of you? What are areas of your life that you need to cultivate courage instead of fear?
- Spirit, where are you leading us? How can you strengthen me to stay the course? Are you encouraging a sense of deep courage amongst your team and goals?

How We Hold the Mosaic Together
For nearly 20 years, I’ve served the Church as both a pastor and a shepherd of fellow ministers. In the past year, I’ve added business leaders to that circle. What I’ve found—with pastors and CEOs alike—is that monolithic or unbalanced leadership inevitably roots itself in 3 primal issues: fear, shame, and guilt.

These leaders, first off, compromise their convictions in fear of public rejection, second, stunt their creative impulse to avoid the shame of failure, and last, allow their guilt to sap them of the courage to move forward confidently.

Living out our leadership values means facing our fears of failure and rejection. It requires us to lead, not from a place of relentless shame-avoidance, but radical vulnerability. It demands that we deal with the guilt we inevitably incur as leaders.

So, how do we do that? How do we hold the leadership mosaic together? How do we steer our organizations out of a deep sense of conviction, courage, and creativity?

We run to the cross.

There, we see the conviction of the Father whose love conquers all fear (1 John 4:18-19). We see the courage of the Son who despised his own shame so that we could despise our own (Hebrews 12:2; Philippians. 1:20). And we see the creativity of the Spirit who breathes new life into us, so that we can shed our guilt and start living as free people.

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Leadership is perhaps the most commonly written about subject on planet earth, and yet it is likely the least understood and most difficult skill to master. What’s more, the vast majority of leadership literature is framed in purely secular terms, which not only starves the soul, but also robs future leaders of the greatest example of leadership the world has ever known—Jesus Christ himself.

As Christians, Christ commands us to follow his example, but he also promises to send us an advocate, the Holy Spirit, to help us on our way. Therefore, visionary leaders must be both practical and prophetic.

In other words, they must be able to pragmatically work within the realm of reality, maximizing the resources and personnel at hand, but they must also be able to see beyond present circumstances, to a place and destination that others often cannot.

In this way, visionary leaders are both horizontal and vertical. They are able to build up the people and platforms around them (horizontal)—often making them even better than themselves—while demonstrating the attributes of Christ and building the Kingdom of God (vertical) at the same time.

If Christ is our perfect example of visionary leadership, we must turn to Scripture in order to discover the attributes of his leadership.

1. Visionary leaders are authentic.

   When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)
If you are going to lead and influence others in powerful, healthy, and
life-giving ways, you must be full of light, not walking in darkness. In
other words, you must live your life authentically.
The way you are in public must be a true representation and
outflowing of how you behave in private. Do you tell others to do one
thing, but are secretly doing that very thing behind their backs? “Do
as I say and not as I do” is not only the worst parental advice in
human history, it’s also the mark of a bad leader.

Authenticity is something that others can see on and in you.
Authenticity is one of life’s most distinct aromas. Try as they may to
hide it, the poser and the fraud are eventually found out and the truth
is almost always revealed. The first and most important step in
visionary leadership is cultivating an authentic self, because
authenticity inspires respect and belief from those who follow you.

2. Visionary leaders are accountable.

“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”
Peter answered, “You are the Messiah.” (Mark 8:29)

Leadership certainly can be a lonely place, but it should never be
isolated. True visionary leadership requires accountability to others.
This may mean that you are forced to sift through voices and opinions
that are both productive and destructive, but you must listen with an
open heart to change when necessary.

Dictators and autocrats have been much maligned throughout history,
and rightly so. Unadulterated power corrupts even those with the
best of intentions. The same is true in the church, at the office, and in
the home.

Christ said that the greatest among you will be the servant to all
(Matt. 23:11). How can you serve others if you are unaccountable to
what they have to say about your leadership? When you are
accountable to others, our true friends and allies are empowered to
call out the highest and noblest truths about who and what we are.
3. Visionary leaders are anointed.

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.” (Luke 4:18)

Visionary leadership is always the result of an anointing from God. This can be the greatest question many leaders will ever ask themselves—since we all want to believe that we are anointed for the task we feel called to—but in times of struggle, it’s easy to question if we truly are.

This is why the second part of this verse is so important. Scripture tells us that you will know them by their fruits (Matt. 7:16). Visionary leaders must observe the products of their actions and measure them against the goals set out for us by Jesus.

Are we proclaiming the good news in whatever sphere of influence we find ourselves? And in whatever way is appropriate in that setting? Are we setting people free from what is holding them back? I have seen many corporate executives who are legally prohibited from overtly preaching the gospel in their place of work, but constantly find ways to set their employees and direct reports ‘free,’ both personally and professionally. If this is you, it’s evidence that God’s anointing is on your leadership.

If, after reading this, you’ve become convinced you’re in the wrong place, be encouraged, God has prepared good works for us all to do. Gather the confidence to take a step back and ask God where he wants you. It could be the beginning of an amazing, God-anointed adventure. If you’re convinced that you’re in the right place, ask God for even more anointing.
4. Visionary leaders are affirming.

“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” (John 14:12)

Remember that visionary leaders live horizontally. They are obsessed with helping those around them achieve their best. It’s been said that the best leaders are those who work themselves out of a job. Visionary leaders do not give into the insecurities common to so many, worrying others might take their place or surpass them in some way.

Instead, they benefit from the fully empowered talents and abilities of those they lead. Jesus’ mission wasn’t limited to only his own life, death, and resurrection; he wanted also to build a movement of people that could spread his message and make disciples of all nations. He saw that Peter could become the leader of the Church. He saw that Mary Magdalene would leave her old life and inspire others to do the same.

Visionary leaders see beyond current job titles and skill levels and see what that person can become. By doing so, they might just grow into larger and more consequential roles themselves, and create opportunities for those around them along the way. This process always begins with affirming the gifts God has given to those you lead so that when the time comes, they are ready to take the next step—and so are you.

5. Visionary leaders are accredited.

“For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.” (John 6:38)

Visionary leaders must resist the temptation to rely on their own abilities, making it all about them, their goals, causes, and ego. They must be about their Father’s business, for his glory and because it is his will.
For church planters, that might mean that a reputable church planting organization or leader has ‘sent you out’ after much prayer and planning. For the entrepreneur, that might mean that someone who has ‘been there and done that’ has invested in you and your business and believes they will receive a positive return. In the organizational setting, it might mean that you receive a promotion or mandate from leaders who are above you on the org chart.

This can take a thousand different forms and shapes, but it’s important that someone else has accredited your mission, vouching for and endorsing your pursuit. When troubles comes—and they surely will if you’re doing something worthwhile—this covering and support can make all the difference in the world.

If someone has told you to “keep your head out of the clouds,” forget that advice. Visionary leaders should always look heavenward to see prophetically ahead and around the next bend in the road. The key is to also keep your feet planted on solid ground, dealing practically with the realities of the world and people around you.

If you’re authentic, accountable, anointed, affirming, and accredited, you are the embodiment of visionary leadership and God will help guide you across the finish line.

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Can Leadership Be Learned?
By Ed Stetzer

Is leadership something we’re born with, or is it something we learn?

Yes. Both-and.

Some people seem to be born with leadership skills. These people may be more charismatic, sometimes more extraverted, more affirming. Maybe he or she was president of their class and captain of their teams in high school. Their voice holds the room’s attention, and their ideas catch on throughout an organization.

You Have to Learn Leadership

But, in my experience, natural leaders often rely on instincts. Instincts work for a while, but eventually they fail. They do not scale up to tackling new or more complex leadership challenges—to creating plans for strategic leadership or for effecting system-wide change. That takes processes, strategies, and tools that don’t always come with instinct or experience.

Other people are dropped into leadership positions without natural leadership gifting. Maybe it’s the wise, compassionate woman who is asked to lead her Bible study. Maybe it’s the pastor who loves theology or Biblical counseling but who feels overwhelmed when faced with leading a congregation.

Leadership Journey

That’s the situation I was in during my second year of a church plant years ago. We’d successfully launched the church, counting 234 people in attendance for the first Sunday. But then we moved past the frenetic energy of the launch, saw our numbers settle around a hundred, and slid towards rhythms of regular church life. And I realized I did not know what to do next. I was stuck, and leadership was the lever I needed to get through.
I am not a natural leader. I am a nerd, thank you very much. While some of my good friends were leading student government in school, I was reading the encyclopedia for fun.

This love of learning became a powerful tool when I got stuck after our church’s launch. I was in the middle of a DMin program during the launch, and I focused my dissertation on leadership and influence. Through that process, I learned tools of leadership. I learned how to ethically apply principles of persuasion to lead our church to where God wanted us to be.

You Can Learn

Let me repeat that: I learned leadership. Studying leadership principles provided the tools I needed to get unstuck and lead my church well.

That experience showed me that we can learn leadership skills. If you are placed in a position of leadership and you don’t have a natural gift for leadership, you may need to express leadership that’s not in your natural gift set. You will need to fall back on tools and processes to do that—tools and processes that can be learned.

You do not have to be a natural-born leader to become a strong leader. You can learn how to lead, to move towards strategic goals, and to change your church for God.

Furthermore, leadership is different depending on who you are. Some of the best leaders I know are introverted. I’ve seen great leaders who are men and I’ve seen great leaders who are women. I’ve seen them young and old. But, they all know, you have to find the way of leadership that works for you.

Leaders are Learners

There is an old phrase, “Leaders are learners.” I think that is true, but would add you can learn your way into leadership.
Most pastors I know have had the same experience over and over. They’ve not learning, but just repeating the experience of the last year or years.

So, get some books. Do some reading. Get a mentor.

Leadership can be learned if we will be learners.
Early in my ministry, I was discipling a new Christian who had come out of a fairly rough background. He had a dramatic conversion to Christ and was growing well and addressing a lot of the issues he had in his life.

One day, he came to me and said, “Bob, I need to sell my boat.” “Okay,” I responded, to which he responded with energy, “No, Bob, you don’t understand. I used to go out on that boat and get drunk and do all kinds of things that I’m now ashamed of. That boat is an idol to me.”

At his request, I prayed with him that God would sell his boat without any advertising or word-of-mouth. To my amazement, God did so within the next two weeks. I was stunned. I celebrated with him, but I was so theologically devastated that I had to cancel all the rest of my appointments that afternoon to process the experience.

I thought about it for a long time and I realized one important truth: I could have discipled that guy until Jesus comes back again and I would never have addressed the number one lordship issue in his life. I realized right then that I was not smart enough to be the Holy Spirit. The best I can do is to help people listen to what God is doing in their life and then to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to see God’s agenda become a reality.

That was a life-changing, paradigm-shifting moment for me: recognizing the role of the Spirit in our lives. It has profound implications for how we listen to God and others, how we trust God and others, and how we see our own role. The best leaders in ministry today don’t lead from a place of self, but by listening to the voice and direction of God.

The world sees as leaders those who are full of confidence in themselves, who know the right answers, who always know what to do in every situation. Jesus’ view—and the example he sets—of
leadership is much different. He models a leadership that relies heavily on God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

We see him praying for his disciples, discerning who to invest in, and figuring out where to go next. “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does” (John 5:19). It’s a posture of humility.

Our being in cooperation with what God is doing in the lives of other people is what can truly make our leadership powerful—not our own skills or insights. As Henry Blackaby has written, “Find out where God is working and join him there.”

We can take this approach even in our strategic planning: staying connected to Jesus, listening for the voice of the Spirit, discerning our next step, then looking around and listening again. We might be able to see clearly the end goal where we need to go, but we often need to hear from God step by step how to get there. We can do this together with others on our team, listening to God together.

Consider my experience above and ask yourself: Do you really believe that the Holy Spirit can speak to people? To you? To others? Regardless of our different theologies, we can all agree that the Spirit communicates with everyone, although we may differ on how exactly he does that. All believers have the capacity to hear from God. If that’s true, it changes everything.

We need to listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit in all aspects of life: how he wants you to grow next, who he wants you to invest in, where he wants you to focus your energy.

And we trust that God is working in others, too. Help them learn to listen to the direction of the Holy Spirit. This mutual leaning on the Spirit should be the default posture for our leadership, our discipling relationships, the way we are helping others develop, and our own personal life.
If it is not, we become the branch that is no longer connected to the vine, believing we can lead with no nutrients and no energy source. As Jesus said, “No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me” (John 15:4).

Dr. Robert E. Logan has over 40 years of ministry experience, including church planting, pastoring, consulting, coaching, and speaking. Having seen a great deal, Bob remains on the cutting edge of ministry through hands-on missional involvement. Bob earned his DMin from Fuller Theological Seminary. He counts it a privilege to walk alongside ministry leaders and help catalyze their ministries toward fulfilling the call God has placed on them, and he thrives in developing holistic and transformative resources that can be easily implemented in any context. Bob enjoys cycling and volunteering in a recovery community. His website is: LoganLeadership.com. You can also check out a copy of his latest book there, The Leadership Difference.
The Multiplying Leader
By Tony Morgan

I’ve always believed healthy leadership in the church is less about the leader and more about those being led. The real leadership development ‘win’ happens when all of God’s people are fully equipped to do his work. That means we should be intentional about identifying leaders and helping them discover the unique gift mix God has designed for their lives.

In the work my team and I do helping churches get unstuck at The Unstuck Group, leadership development consistently arises as a core issue churches say they are facing. The pastors we serve know it is important, and they know there is a strategy problem, but they feel stuck. The things they have tried aren’t working. If you can relate, here are two questions to ask yourself:

1. Are you programming instead of personalizing?

Churches that fail to develop leaders often try to program leadership development, instead of taking a more personal approach. Another class or teaching most likely won’t create the culture you’re after. You must invest quality time and resources into key staff and lay leaders—and by that I don’t mean send team members to a conference and buy them a couple of leadership books each year. Real leaders see potential in people and proactively invest in them personally.

Create opportunities for them to implement the skills they are learning. Include lay leaders in your efforts. Doing so will help you find future staff who already have the DNA of your church. The results of proactively investing in leaders cannot be measured. People who have experienced this tend to keep the cycle going, and it builds a culture of leadership development.

2. Are you ignoring the leadership development pathway principle?
All leaders need mentorship to discover their capacity and grow to new levels.

People who start out leading 10s may have the capacity to become leaders of 50s. People who lead 100s well may be great leading 1000s but, then again, they may not. It takes leaders who have walked this pathway investing in their teams to help them find out. There are different competencies required to lead at each of these levels. As a pastor, it’s important to understand them and invest in people with the aim of helping them develop those competencies.

Here are some examples of the competencies required at each level of leadership.

**Leader of 10s: Leads by Example**

Core Competencies:
- Developing your personal mission and goals
- Leading from your strengths
- Practicing personal disciplines
- Modeling a bias for action
- Managing your time, including work-life balance

**Leader of 50s: Leads Other People**

Core Competencies:
- Setting clear expectations
- Managing conflict
- Communicating effectively with your team
- Building teams of volunteers
- Discipling other people

**Leader of 100s: Leads Other Leaders**

Core Competencies:
- Measuring and evaluating for results
• Developing and mentoring leaders
• Dealing with underperformers and dysfunction
• Stewarding people, time and money
• Planning for the future

Leader of 1000s: Leads Through Vision

Core Competencies:
• Casting vision
• Developing a senior leadership team
• Renewing vision and strategy
• Leading change
• Shaping culture

You can see how this principle builds a cycle of leadership development as people grow to new levels.

As a senior leader, you must start with yourself. What competencies do you need to learn to lead at the next level?

Then, help the leaders under your care get the mentoring, training, and coaching they need to learn the competencies for their next level. Keep in mind that not all leaders have the capacity to walk the full path. Some people will find they aren’t suited for the next level, and having that realization may be a good thing. Leadership is important at every level for the good of the kingdom.

One final thought: Churches notoriously appoint leaders before they are ready—and it’s been happening for a long time. Paul even wrote to Timothy advising against it: “Never be in a hurry about appointing a church leader” (1 Tim. 5:22).

Very few people who have been given a position before they were ready are able to tread water long enough to learn what they need to know. In most cases, they will fail at what you’ve asked them to do and will take on the pain and frustration that comes with failing at something to which they felt called. It won’t necessarily have been their fault.
After all, they weren’t ready, and their leaders should have recognized that. Building a strong culture of development is the preventative measure that ensures you become a true multiplying leader—one who sets others up to succeed, rather than to fail.

**Tony Morgan** is founder and chief strategic officer of The Unstuck Group, a company that helps churches get unstuck through consulting and coaching experiences designed to focus vision, strategy, and action. For 14 years, Tony served on the senior leadership teams at West Ridge Church in Dallas, Georgia; NewSpring Church in South Carolina, and Granger Community Church in Indiana. He’s written several books, as well as articles that have been featured with the Willow Creek Association, Catalyst, and Pastors.com. He writes about leadership regularly at TonyMorganLive.com. His latest book, *The Unstuck Church*, is available from Thomas Nelson.
Leadership is often very humbling, and leadership is most dangerous when it ceases to be. Here is what I mean: Leadership is humbling because it is extremely challenging. Being a leader can be deeply sanctifying because humbling opportunities abound. The messiness of life gets in the way of the vision leaders articulate. Plans rarely go exactly as they are outlined. And the daily burden of responsibility for caring for others is enormous. When one signs up, or is drafted, to be a leader, the person engages in a very humbling endeavor.

Leadership is most dangerous when it ceases to be humbling, when success comes to the leader. When a leader starts to thrive, when the Lord grants success, when things go better than planned, the leader can easily drift toward pride. And pride always precedes a downfall.

David, Israel’s second king and the man after God’s own heart, walked humbly with the Lord. As David led with a pure heart and skillful hands, the Lord granted him success. But like the king before him (Saul) and the kings after him (Uzziah), pride corrupted David’s heart.

When David asked who the beautiful woman was, the woman who lived in the house he was able to see from his roof, the woman he wanted more than he wanted his own integrity, he discovered she was married. One of his servants sheepishly asked, “Isn’t this the wife of Uriah?” David’s response was to send for her anyway. After all, David was king, and the king got whatever he wanted (2 Samuel 11).

Earlier in his life, David humbly asked God to keep him in the shadow of His wings, as he was grateful for the Lord’s provision of a cave for his residence (Psalm 57). But on the roof of the palace, David trusted himself instead of his God. When David was weak before God, he was actually strong. But when he felt strong, he was very weak. He did not seek refuge in the arms of God but in the arms of a woman.
When he abandoned his weakness before God and walked in pride, he walked toward his own demise.

While we all struggle with pride, perhaps it can plague leaders the most. Leaders have the authority to make decisions, the position to influence others, and the opportunity to ask others for time and commitment. C.S. Lewis called pride the great sin, a sin we easily see in others but can fail to recognize in ourselves. Yet we know and we have seen the damaging impact of pride on a leader. When a leader fails to walk in humility, the leader makes absolutely foolish decisions, pushes people away, and sets himself/herself in opposition to the Lord.

So how can leaders recognize our drift from humility to pride?

Look for entitlement. Entitlement always rises as pride rises. It is impossible to be filled with humility and a sense of entitlement at the same time. Whenever we feel we are owed something, it is because we have forgotten that God is the One who gives all good things. Leaders, especially in seasons of success, can develop a sense of entitlement. Perhaps David felt entitled to the palace and entitled to bring a married woman to his room because he had served the people of Israel extremely well, defeated their enemies, energized the capital city, and given a sense of national pride to the people. He felt he deserved whatever he wanted, deserved more than he currently had. David forgot that all his victories and all the blessings he enjoyed were only because God had graciously given them.

David’s belief that he was entitled to Bathsheba revealed that in that moment he was not filled with gratitude for God and His blessings. God was the One who took David from watching sheep to leading all of Israel, from sleeping in fields and caves to sleeping in a palace, from being one whose family considered him an unlikely candidate for king to the king everyone respected and revered. Tragically, all of that was not enough for David on the night he gave the order for servants to bring Bathsheba to him. He was ungrateful for God’s provision and blessing, and instead of using the throne to serve others, he used the throne to serve himself.
Humble leaders realize the only thing we are entitled to is death and destruction because of our sin. Yet God in His mercy has given us Himself, taken away our sin, and offered us everlasting life. In the same way, everything we steward, every opportunity we have, every season we are able to lead and serve others is only because of His grace. To remind us of this truth, the apostle Paul rhetorically asked, “For who makes you so superior? What do you have that you didn’t receive?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). Humble leaders remind themselves of this truth over and over again.

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5 Things Leaders Need to Give Up
By Ed Stetzer

There’s a great saying that good leaders don’t see people as impediments—they seek to make people partners. But to implement this approach to leadership in daily life, we need to realize that partnering with people means sacrificing for them. Drawing from Brad Waggoner, author and executive vice president at LifeWay, here are five things leaders need to be ready to give up for the people they’re leading.

1. Leaders need to be willing to yield recognition.

How do I get so much done? Through the team with whom I serve. If I don’t acknowledge my team, this idea develops that I have some remarkably high capacity. I do work hard, but my capacity does not just reflect my work. It reflects the work of wonderful people that I have brought around me, people who are doing good work to accomplish good things.

To be a good leader, I need to acknowledge my team’s work and share the credit with them. I need to recognize that they are a significant part of the things we accomplish.

2. Leaders need to be willing to yield comfort.

As a leader, you don’t get to be comfortable in everything you do. If you lead, you are going to make some people unhappy. I tell pastors that if they don’t have 10% of the church mad at them, they are probably not doing much. Of course, if 70% of your congregation is mad at you, you probably need to reconsider what you’re doing. But if everyone is comfortable, it’s time to assess whether you are really leading towards strategic change.

Leadership might take you out of your comfort zone. Some of us are only comfortable when everyone likes us, but leaders don’t always have everyone happy with them. There is always some resistance to
leadership. Your question is how you are going to get through that discomfort.

In his book Leadership Pain, Sam Chand makes the argument that leaders grow by pursuing their vision through pain. At one point, he writes, “If you’re not hurting, you’re not leading. Your vision for the future has to be big enough to propel you to face the heartaches and struggles you’ll find along the way.”

3. Leaders need to be willing to yield convenience.

As the leader, you have to work harder. I don’t know many lazy people who are effective leaders. Assessing your organization, planning and communicating new directions, motivating your team—leadership takes initiative.

Author and former Overseas Missionary Fellowship director Oswald Sanders summed it up this way: “The young man of leadership caliber will work while others waste time, study while others snooze, pray while others daydream.”

Are you prepared for this kind of work?

4. Leaders need to be willing to yield liberties.

I get that you might like to share funny or smart-aleck comments. You might like to say outrageous things to start a conversation or poke fun at things. However, the more leadership you’re exercising, the less freedom you have for those comments.

I do not mean that you no longer have freedom of speech. Sure, you should be allowed to say what you want. But that is the behavior of a wandering ecstatic prophet. It’s not the behavior of a leader who is working to motivate and encourage and organize a team or congregation.

You have to learn how to temper your words if you’re going to be a leader.
5. Leaders need to be willing to yield reputation.

Movies, books, and television are full of leaders who take charge for their own glory or honor—Scar from Lion King, Frank Underwood from House of Cards, Macbeth. And those leaders are usually pretty horrible leaders.

As a leader, you have to be willing to give up making yourself look good so that you can serve your team. When things go well, you need to share the credit with your team. On the other hand, when something goes wrong, a leader needs to take responsibility for the failure.

Leadership is not about building up your reputation. It is about motivating and encouraging and organizing your team to reach new goals. That requires partnering with people, earning their trust, and looking out for their good. In the full biblical sense of the word, it requires loving people.
The Effective Leader
Five Essential Habits
By Jenni Catron

Have you ever been a part of a winning team? Maybe it was a sports team in high school. Maybe it was a work team that launched a new product. Perhaps it was a ministry that organized an effective outreach program.

The joy of accomplishing great and meaningful work is a tremendous experience. I’m easily moved by the stories of people who are exceptional at what they do. These stories stand out because they defy the gravitational pull of the ordinary and mundane. Extraordinary moments of accomplishment inspire us and challenge us to do more, to be better, to make an impact.

As leaders, we long for these outcomes. We are full of ideas and initiatives. We see potential and opportunity all around. We can almost taste the outcome, but oftentimes we get bogged down by how we’ll get from here to there. How can we be effective in the chaos of the everyday?

In today’s culture, the rate of change and growth is dizzying and the expectation to keep pace with it all can be debilitating. We watch the success stories of others and wonder how we could possibly lead our team through the chaos of our world to experience the joy of accomplishing great work.

Effective leaders are the “how to” people within your organization. Effective leaders put feet to the vision and, by doing so, mobilize action. What I’ve discovered in studying effective leaders is that they demonstrate consistent disciplines or habits that build the foundation for their success.

Before we jump into what these disciplines are, I want to spend a moment on the word “discipline.” Truth is, you probably cringed a little bit when you read it. By our nature, leaders are forward-thinkers
and fast-movers. The idea of discipline doesn’t seem all that appealing, yet studies show that discipline is exactly what differentiates effective leaders.

So what do effective leaders do?

1. **They build a plan.** Ideas without a plan are just pipe dreams. Effective leaders know this and won’t be content until next steps have been clarified. He or she is the person in the meeting asking, “Who is doing what by when?” They know that without clearly defined expectations and defined next steps, new ideas won’t get executed.

2. **They stay focused.** Effective leaders recognize that a myriad of things will compete for their time and attention, so they set their priorities and remain focused on them. They manage their calendar so that their top priorities are scheduled first. They begin their day with a decision to focus on their most important tasks.

3. **They keep their eye on the big picture.** While they manage the details and are attentive to what it takes to bring a plan to fruition, they keep the big picture in front of themselves and those they lead. They don’t lose sight of the goal.

4. **They are patient and persistent.** Effective leaders know that accomplishing big goals doesn’t happen overnight. There will be setbacks. They will face discouragement. Sometimes it will take longer than you planned or expected. Effective leaders recognize the value of being patient with the process and the people, and yet persistent to stay after the goal.

5. **They lead themselves well.** Effective leaders seek to be self-aware and to understand where they need to grow and change. They recognize their influence on others and seek to be a leader others value and respect. They know that ultimately they can lead to extraordinary outcomes but if they lose the respect of those they lead, they really have not been effective in the end.
The effective leader is a great gift to their organization. They bring clarity with their plans, project confidence with their focus, provide direction with their ability to see the big picture, inspire confidence with their patience and persistence, and their self-leadership is a source of strength to those they influence.

**Jenni Catron** is a leadership coach, author, and speaker. Her passion is to lead well and to inspire, equip, and encourage others to do the same. She speaks at conferences and churches nationwide, seeking to help others develop their leadership gifts and lead confidently in the different spheres of influence God has granted them. As founder and CEO of The 4Sight Group, she consults organizations on leadership, team culture, and organizational health. Jenni is the author of several books including *Clout: Discover and Unleash Your God-Given Influence* and *The 4 Dimensions of Extraordinary Leadership*. She loves a fabulous cup of tea, great books, learning the game of tennis, and hiking with her husband. Jenni can be found on social media at @jennicatron and at www.get4sight.com.
The Wise Leader
Navigating Ethical Storms
By David Iglesias

As a young man, I had modest dreams. I wanted to go to law school and then practice law in a medium to large law firm in my beautiful home state of New Mexico. I had no inkling of what was to come. I had no political aspirations and had never considered military service. Rather, I was tempted by the siren’s song of 1980s materialism and was more interested in consumerism and social status.

The Lord had other plans for me.

Indeed, these divine plans were “…exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think…” (Eph. 3:20). Before my thirty-year legal career transitioned to higher education, I had been the Republican nominee for state Attorney General, been selected for a White House Fellowship, received a Presidential appointment to become the United States Attorney for New Mexico, and served a total of 30 years of active and reserve duty as a U.S. Navy JAG officer.

If that wasn’t enough, at the end of my Presidential appointment I became embroiled in a national controversy that is considered by some to be the most serious leadership crisis at the U.S. Justice Department since Watergate. Twelve top officials, including the Attorney General, resigned as a result of the scandal.

In 2007, six of us fired United States Attorneys testified before the Senate and House about our inappropriate dismissals. Our independence as prosecutors was wrongly challenged and we were improperly punished for not making criminal charging decisions based on political considerations. Meddling with the federal prosecutor’s independence was anathema to the U.S. Justice Department. Seven different investigations were launched based on our testimony.

How did this happen, and how did I deal with it?
First, during my third year of law school I toured the USS New Orleans (LPH-11), a huge amphibious warship. I was smitten by the ship and decided to apply for a Navy Officer’s Commission upon graduation. I had become enchanted with the Navy’s recruiting slogan of “It’s not just a job, it’s an adventure.” This appealed to my missionary kid upbringing in Panama, where I lived on a tiny coral island off the Caribbean coast and later in the rain forest.

I became immersed in the gung-ho military culture. I thrived in the structure, mission, and esprit de corps of the Reagan-era Navy. My marriage to my wife, Cynthia, at the end of my first active duty period led to 20 years of reserve status and a return to my beloved New Mexico. It was during this period that I became politically active. This period came to a crashing halt when I was asked to resign on Pearl Harbor Day of 2006. Being fired was bad enough, but the extremely public nature of it was unsettling. My life turned upside down as the unemployed father of four children.

For the first time in my life, I was out of work—for seven months. Despite the attendant stresses, God showed his tender mercies. I wrote a book, did a book tour, and spoke to countless media outlets (including “Meet the Press” and Jon Stewart’s “Daily Show”) of the need to keep federal prosecutors insulated from partisan politics. I also wrote op-eds for the NY Times and L.A. Times.

Handling the dark vocational void ahead was difficult.

As I ran the foothills of the nearby mountains in Albuquerque, I prayed for guidance, justice, and protection, and pleaded with God to know what to do next. I knew my conscience was clean and that I had been terminated for doing the right thing.

I was fortunate to have five other colleagues whom I knew and respected in the fight. I believed that the Lord put us in our positions “for such a time as this” (Esth. 4:14). My fired colleagues and I were given platforms to remind Americans that our criminal justice system
was a national treasure not to be trifled with. I knew to the marrow of my being that the Lord would protect me.

My prayers for protection have rarely been so fervent.

A couple of years after our Congressional testimony and after the investigations were concluded, I received an enormously gratifying letter of apology from the Attorney General of the United States. Despite dire circumstances, I was protected. After the storm subsided, I was blessed to be mobilized back into the U.S. Navy, where I prosecuted war crimes cases in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Upon retirement in 2014, I began teaching law and politics at my alma mater, Wheaton College.

Takeaways?

1. Conflict is normal and unavoidable.

2. Resolving conflict is more difficult and requires much more prayer.

3. Patience is crucial in waiting for the Lord’s justice.

David C. Iglesias (Captain, JAGC, U.S. Navy [ret.]) is Associate Professor of Politics and Law at Wheaton College.
Network Leaders & Hero Makers  
By Dave Ferguson

The ‘Shalane Effect’

For the first time in 40 years, an American woman won the 2017 New York City Marathon! Shalane Flanagan crossed the finish line of the 26.2-mile race in a blistering time of 2 hours 26 minutes. Running experts are now calling her, “The greatest American distance runner.” But the New York Times explains that Flanagan has an achievement that’s even greater than winning the New York City Marathon:

“...perhaps Flanagan’s bigger accomplishment lies in nurturing and promoting the rising talent around her, a rare quality in the cutthroat world of elite sports. Every single one of her training partners — 11 women in total — has made it to the Olympics while training with her, an extraordinary feat. Call it the ‘Shalane Effect’: You serve as a rocket booster for the careers of the women who work alongside you, while catapulting forward yourself. Shalane has pioneered a new brand of ‘team mom’ to these young up-and-comers, with the confidence not to tear others down to protect her place in the hierarchy.”

Shalane is not just a great runner; she is a great runner that makes other runners around her great! In a similar fashion, a network leader is a unique leader amongst all kinds of leaders. A network leader is not just a great leader, but also a great leader that makes other leaders around them great.

The ‘Network Effect’

Network leaders are a new and important kind of leader in the church today. They lead their local church to grow and multiply, but they also lead other church leaders across a region or affinity to grow also and multiply. Jon Ferguson is perfect example of a network leader.
Over the years, Jon has proven himself to be a very capable leader by successfully starting and leading small groups, new church sites, new churches and a church planting network. Because of his proven track record as a leader, other church leaders gravitate to him seeking his help and input.

In the last year Jon has brought together a racially diverse group of leaders from a variety of denominations that have committed to plant hundreds of new churches together all across Chicagoland. Jon is not just a great leader, but the kind of leader who looks to make other leaders around him better and better—a network leader.

Jon is not alone; there are network leaders emerging all over the globe. Dave Dummit, who leads the fast-growing 242 Church in Brighton, Michigan, is also leading multiple networks of church planters across North America for NewThing. Oystein Gjerme leads Salt Church in Bergen Norway, but he is also leading a multi-denominational network to plant new churches all over Norway. Muriithi Wanjau leads the amazing Mavuno Church in Nairobi, Kenya, while also leading the Fearless Network that brings churches together to engage every sector of society with the gospel.

Almost on a weekly basis, I meet and talk to young leaders all over the world who are trying to figure out how to lead a local church and also a network of other local church leaders who desire their influence.

**Network Leaders Are Hero Makers**

With the decline of denominational influence and the increasing number of multiplying churches, the network leader is fast becoming one the most important forms of church leadership. A network leader is a leader whose greatest focus is to make other leaders around them even better leaders.

Network leaders are hero make. They leave behind their ambition to be a hero and focus all their efforts on making heroes of others. Their
mantra is “My fruit grows on other people’s trees.” They are leaders who create platforms and let other step into the spotlight. Like Shalane Flanagan, they “nurture and promote the rising talent around” them.

These hero makers are leaders with an apostolic gift who have attracted other leaders around a common dream, vision or goal. They lead these networks with relational influence and not positional authority. The networks they lead that can be as small enough to sit around a table or large enough to fill an auditorium.

Network leaders are distinct from other leaders in regards to their motive, methods, and how they measure success:

**Motive of a Network Leader: God’s Kingdom, Not My Kingdom**

A network leaders motives are all about “seeking first the Kingdom of God.” They play for the team name on the front of the jersey and not their own name on the back of the jersey. These hero makers are generous and open handed with their leadership and they cheer the victory of every leader and every church in their network as if it were their own. The primary motivation of a network leader is the expansion of God’s Kingdom and not their own kingdom.

**Method of a Network Leader: Multiplication, Not Addition**

The methodology of a network leader is always multiplication. They believe that apprenticeship and disciple-multiplying is at the core of every movement and insist that it happen at every level and hold the leaders in their network accountable to it. They see everything they do through the lens of movement-making, because movement is how you accomplish the Kingdom mission of Jesus.
Measure of Success for a Network Leader: *Success Is Sending, Not Creating a Crowd*

The scoreboard of a network leader is not about who is showing up to my thing, but counting whom are we sending out to do God’s thing! Commissioning small groups, missional communities, new sites, new churches and brand new networks are how these hero makers measure success. They are not enticed by the roar of the crowd for they have fallen in love with the battle cry of an army going into battle.

We Need More Network Leaders

The India Gospel League under the leadership of Sam Stephens has now planted more than 90,000 churches (no typo!) and has them organized in thousands of networks. He told me, “The network is the backbone to our movement!” I believe this form of leadership is so important that I am dedicating much of my own influence to identifying, encouraging, and equipping emerging network leaders.

Through NewThing, we are coming alongside potential network leaders and offering a process called Catalyst Community. We have done Catalyst Communities in major cities in the United States and around the world. Each time it has resulted in successful strategies to plant hundreds of new churches in that region. NewThing is also offering a yearlong cohort called Leading A Reproducing Network.

More than 30 large multi-site churches have gone through this cohort resulting in hundreds of new sites and churches being started. The church needs more hero making leaders and the mission of Jesus needs more network leaders. In his book *The Forgotten Ways*, my good friend Alan Hirsh reminds us of the priority of network leadership when he says:

“I can find no situation where the church has significantly extended the mission of God, let alone when the church achieved rapid metabolic growth, where apostolic (network)
leadership cannot be found in some form or another. In fact, the more significant the mission impact, the easier it is to discern this mode of (network) leadership.”

Dave Ferguson is author of *Hero Maker: 5 Essential Practices for Leaders to Multiply Leaders.*
Leadership is Not About You
By Ed Stetzer

Leadership is not about you.

Don’t get me wrong. I’m not saying that leadership is not for you—leadership is something you can learn and excel at. But no matter how many theories you study or how many clubs you led in high school, if your leadership is about you, you will not be an effective leader.

Leadership Means Hard Work

Taking the lead is not easy or glamorous. It’s not something we do for our own comfort. Author and former Overseas Missionary Fellowship director Oswald Sanders summed it up this way (and it applies to men and women):

The young man of leadership caliber will work while others waste time, study while others snooze, pray while others daydream.

Are you prepared for this kind of work?

We see this in how the Bible talks about leadership. Look at Romans 12:6-8:

According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one’s faith; if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness. (emphasis added)

“Leading, with diligence.” This is the essential attitude that Paul assigns to leadership—it is as essential to leadership as generosity is to giving or faith is to prophecy.
Leadership Means Service

Ministry leadership is servant leadership. The Bible tells us this again and again. God demonstrates it in His own love for us—in Jesus Christ entering this messy world, washing his disciples’ feet, and dying for unrepentant sinners.

This attitude of powerful love and painful sacrifice is the attitude we are to adopt, according to Philippians 2:5. And look at the verses that set the stage of that command:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4, CSB)

What would it look like to lead like this? How should this shape how you plan, how you motivate, or how you delegate?

Unsurprisingly, secular leadership scholars are discovering that the Christian mentality of servant leadership is more effective than the traditional models of leadership that focus on the leader’s own good. Servant leaders lead better, especially in the long run.
The Suffering Leader
By Kathy Litton

The suffering leader sounds like an un-American idea. In our paradigm, leaders flourish, whether on Wall Street or in the house church. Even in the spiritual realm, we are susceptible to expectations that flourishing leaders have flourishing lives—yet we know better. And as we read our Bibles, nowhere do we find that promise or that narrative.

Suffering eventually touches all of us. A simple but wise woman once offered these folksy words to describe suffering:

I always say that there are three things that can happen to you in life:

Things you bring upon yourself

Things that others do to you

And the meteorites that hit you from afar

She sums it up well.

My meteorite was a terrible car accident that took the life of my husband Rick Ferguson, who was a pastor and catalytic church-planting leader. At age 45, I became a widow. That meteorite nearly took me under.

Yet very quickly, God clearly showed me that I would be responsible for the stewardship of my pain. That, just like every other resource or experience God thrust into my life, I would be accountable for my suffering and for the purpose God intended for it.

Perhaps it is in the crucible of our crushed lives that we actually demonstrate the greatest leadership of all as we embrace our suffering for the glory of God and for the good of the Kingdom of
God. When we understand like Paul that we are comforted for the sake of others’ consolation and salvation, our leadership DNA should kick in.

Yes, I know very well the feeling of wanting to curl up and die. I do. And yet God gets no glory in my hopeless despair and no one will be comforted by the comfort I have received in Christ unless I actually find my comfort in him.

Aside from the supernatural work of the gospel, nothing has brought more transformation to my soul than loss, grief, and despair in the light of the gospel. That transformation has made me a better person and better leader. I learned more in sorrow than I ever did in laughter (Ecc. 7:3-5).

I found new treasures in the field of suffering.

**Newfound Hope**

Oddly, it was despair that taught me about hope. Charles Spurgeon said, “Hope itself is like a star—not to be seen in the sunshine of prosperity, and only to be discovered in the night of adversity.” Spurgeon was so right. Until Rick’s death, I had never dabbled in that kind of hope because the sunshine in my life was so very bright. I only found that hope when death robbed me of my soulmate. Now the hope of heaven, and the healing from despair and despondency, and the strength to go on were all that I hoped and prayed for.

We hope for things that are not yet or are veiled in darkness. And hope is trusting and believing while you are waiting that God will do as he has promised.

When we dangerously dangle over a chasm of hopelessness and find Jesus as our hope, we can help others who do the same.
Newfound Sensitivities

Pain softens our hearts and critically humbles us. Ease, success, and undisturbed lives lulls us toward indifference or even callousness. I saw this in myself. There are just things you can’t see through dry eyes.

I was on public transportation while commuting to my new job in downtown Denver shortly after being widowed, and I noticed a homeless person at the bus station. He was clearly drunk. It was a moment when I longed to numb my own pain. Suddenly, I wondered, “What pain is he medicating?” Empathy and compassion instead of judgment filled my heart. God was at work in me.

Newfound sensitivities will transform our hearts and correspondingly develop us as thoughtful leaders. When see we taste and see pain and destruction up close, God teaches us to move forward with more grace and compassion.

Newfound Authority

Suffering has another precious fruit for people of faith. We find it in 1 Peter, “…You have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire…” The fruit of spiritual authority can be borne by our various trials.

When our hope, faith, and entire belief system is tested by fire and we are not consumed, we can speak with richer, refined spiritual authority. The eyes of many are on people of faith who suffer. They wait to see if a genuine faith will emerge from the fire. And if it does, that faith will be more precious for us and more compelling to others. The capacity of our faith changes as well as our ability to testify to it. I worked in a secular work space immediately after my husband died. During an exit interview with my supervisor, he told me that he found me to be a “believable person of faith.” His words caught me off guard. I had been a pastor’s wife for 26 years and I never considered
that people would think I was not a believable person of faith. But this
man showed me what comes from the furnace of suffering.

To the glory of God, we must leverage our believability for the sake of
his gospel in whatever platform he gives us.

Have you suffered deeply? Don’t despair. Find your hope in Jesus. He
will build you into a suffering leader who is hopeful, compassionate,
and give you a platform of believability that your hope is a real hope.

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Death is not the final chapter of our life, is it? A key understanding of faith for a believer is that life lasts an eternity.

When we die, we leave stuff behind. We leave behind the possessions we acquire here. We leave behind any unfinished business. We leave behind our memories—the painful and the pleasant memories. The word for all we leave behind might be called our legacy.

This may be a morbid way to start a leadership message. The truth is, if we as leaders don’t understand the principle of the legacy we leave behind, we may leave a mess for others to clean up after us! Leaving a healthy legacy may be one of the most important things a leader can do.

I came into ministry in my late thirties, after many years in the business world. Our first church had fallen on hard times. I tried to provide good leadership to help the church grow again. I cast vision, got people excited, celebrated along the way, and sent the people of the church back into the community to spread the good news and invite people to church.

Those are some pretty basic church growth techniques. And, it worked. The people went to work, God moved, and the church saw fairly impressive growth numbers—more than doubling in size from when we arrived.

We were pumped.

I had only committed a year to the church, because it was a long drive from our home and we never felt led to move to the city. Upon my exit, the church struggled with some of the same issues they had before I arrived. There were internal power struggles and questions of how things would be done and who was in charge. Within the first
couple years, the church had suffered a split and was back to the size it was when I first arrived.

I can easily place on my resume the ‘success’ we had during the year I was pastor, but when the whole story is written, I must be honest. I’m not pleased with my legacy in that church.

It did teach me this principle of legacy, however, and changed the way I lead.

When I came to my current position, I had been working in ministry for over a decade. I approached the position completely different. I led with the end—my end—in mind. My legacy.

We were a church that was over 100 years old and had experienced a season of decline. The church was struggling with attendance, retention, and giving. I didn’t lead, however, thinking of how we would reverse the decline and grow again. We certainly wanted to do that. However, I felt led to lead with the end in mind.

I led the church thinking how we could position it to be alive and prosperous for the Kingdom of God for another 100 years—long after I was the its pastor.

Do you see the difference in my approach between the two churches?

It may seem subtle, but it was huge.

I won’t be at this church 100 years from now, but I hope that if Christ has not returned, it is still a vibrant, growing, healthy witness of the gospel.

To do this, we addressed some of our antiquated structure, which had kept us from growing. We attempted to move from a program-based church to an outward-focus mentality and we cast a vision to plant this deep into its DNA.
We addressed the need to develop younger leaders and reposition our staff to meet the church’s changing needs. We did a lot of teaching and developed givers who would understand their role as kingdom investors through the local church.

We weren’t leading for growth per se, but for who the church would be many years from now. I can’t imagine a better legacy to leave this local church.

The only way I know to end well in a leadership position is to keep the end in mind as we journey through the seasons of leading. Let me offer a few questions to think through, which may help better shape your legacy:

• What is the legacy I want to leave as a leader? How do I want people to remember my leadership?
• What do I value most as a leader, and would the people I lead agree?
• What in our church right now would I not want to inherit as a new leader?
• If a new leader came into our church tomorrow, who would likely not be a good fit for the next season of ministry?
• What are the organization or leadership structural changes which need to be made in order for us to grow in the years to come?

All of us as leaders will leave behind our legacy someday. We have to be conscious of the reality that what we do and say as leaders matters beyond today. Let your answers to those questions help determine the decisions you make and the legacy you leave.

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3 Keys to Protecting Your Leadership Credibility
By Ed Stetzer

If you are reading Outreach magazine, then you likely have a leadership position of some kind, either as a senior leader or as a lay leader. And those under you likely have leadership responsibilities; and if they don’t yet, they may in the future.

Over the years, I have found that it is both a tremendous opportunity and responsibility to be a leader of leaders. It is a gift to be given the chance to influence a generation of leaders who will come up behind us and do great things for the kingdom.

But one of the responsibilities associated with this calling is to manage our own influence. To say it clearly, wisdom is needed to both manage and extend influence. Whether you are a bishop, a district superintendent, or a pastor, when you lead other leaders, it is only wise to consider how you are stewarding your own gift of leadership.

I think of this in terms of capacity. When we are talking about stewarding influence, leaders have a credibility tank. We can spend that credibility on a lot of different things, and we must choose wisely how we expend our credibility tank. Here are some ways you can be a better steward of the influence God has given you.

Pick Your Own Fights

You don’t have to show up for every fight to which you are invited. Let me be honest: People want you in a fight. Even as I go to speak at various events, people will come up to me and say, “I’ve got a guy who has this problem. What do you think I should do?” And of course they tell me just enough that I would agree with them so that they can then go back and say, “I talked to Ed Stetzer and he said you’re wrong.” I then get an email from this person I’ve never met who is wondering why I took the other side.
Know that there are those in your care who want you to agree with them after they have given you a limited amount of information. By engaging in these kinds of “fights,” you spend your influence on something you shouldn’t be spending your influence on. When we weigh in on matters, we must do so judiciously and carefully, because there are times when we will need to spend our influence on important, big picture issues, instead of petty disagreements.

**Pick Your Own Response Time**

What I have found is that most (not all) crises resolve themselves within 24 hours without my involvement. Sometimes, allowing people to work matters out themselves is the best thing we can do. And often, if they do sit down and try to work it out, they will. So sometimes, stewarding our influence means waiting to respond.

The caveat is that there are situations in which you need to respond immediately. This is called good pastoral care. But it is critical to remember that people will want your influence before they need your influence, and if you give them that influence, then you may wind up losing influence.

**Your Reputation Follows Your Influence**

Your influence is given by God. If you are not careful to manage it as you should for God’s purposes, others will misuse it for their own agendas. Some people don’t have the influence you do, but they want it. Some people will hijack your influence and leave your reputation damaged.

We want to be like E. F. Hutton, a financial advisor featured in commercials years ago. The commercial would show many people carrying on conversations throughout a room; however, at one point everyone stopped to hear one private conversation. Everyone leaned in to hear what words of wisdom one man would drop. The tagline read: “When E. F. Hutton speaks, people listen.”
We should be this person of whom others say, “When _____ talks, we’re going to listen. This only happens when we steward our influence well. We’ve saved it for things that matter most. A leader who has wasted his or her influence is a leader who is putting out fires instead of starting fires under people.

Don’t spend your time on things that keep you from the things you are called to do. Make your influence count in the kingdom. Responding well is better than reacting often. Influence is burned through reaction. It is built through a correct response.
Leadership Priorities
Five Thoughts on How We Can Lead Better
By Ed Stetzer

Being a leader is tiring. When I was pastoring in Buffalo in the early 90s, I was responsible for EVERYTHING. You name it, I did it:

Make the bulletins. Check.

Visit the hospitals and sick. Check.

Preach the message. Check.

Lead worship. Check. (I am still apologizing to Jack Hayford for my rendition of Majesty.)

Looking back, I am reminded that effective leadership is not in all the responsibilities or tasks we have, but rather in how well we develop the processes needed to accomplish them with excellence. We often lose sight of the fact that leadership, at its most basic level, involves the leading of people.

This means that we need to develop priorities in our leadership aimed at being efficient and effective with our time and energy.

I want to outline five ways that pastors, ministry leaders, and Christians as a whole can start to think through their leadership priorities.

**1. Assemble a high quality team and empower them to excel.**

Quality seeks quality.

The first step in leadership priorities is making sure that you have a quality team and that they know that you believe in them. Too often, leaders let their insecurity push them to surround themselves with less talent, concerned only that their star is the brightest. Leadership
priorities begin with constructing a team that is talented, skilled, creative, and that buys into the vision of the organization.

As Sydney Finkelstein notes in his new book Superbosses, “If you look around the room and you’re the smartest person in the room, you’re in the wrong room.”

2. Delegation is critical to success and healthy for your team.

Having talented and capable people on your team means that you can then trust delegating responsibility and authority. At its core, delegation is the act of giving someone under your charge responsibility and authority in your place, freeing you to focus on higher priority objectives.

A guiding principle that I adopt in terms of delegation is: I only do what I can do. In other words, if there is something that others on my team are capable of handling, I delegate that responsibility to them and empower them with the authority to pursue it with excellence. Methodically going through and cutting out those things I am doing but that others can do eventually leaves you with a focused list of core responsibilities that are central to your effective leadership. While I can do the research I assign to my intern (and probably quicker), it’s better to invest that time into other responsibilities that she could not do. Delegation is not a question of worth before God, but rather stewardship of our resources in service to the kingdom. For example, only I can parent my children. Delegating this responsibility is a mistake likely to do untold damage and provoke hundreds of hours of therapy. So while I delegate the responsibility of driving people around to those on my team, I make a point of driving my daughters around because it is an opportunity to be present.

At the same time, delegation is an important tool in training your staff to grow in their own leadership and other gifts. The micromanaging pastor who has a ‘do-it-myself’ mentality doesn’t realize that he is depriving his team and church of opportunities. Every time he takes over he is implicitly suggesting that others can’t succeed. Deprived of these opportunities, over time this emaciates his team so that when
they need to be relied upon they lack the knowledge or skills necessary to carry the burden.

3. Pastors and ministry leaders need to pursue efficiency.

Even with the proper people in place and a spirit of delegation, organizations need to have the correct systems in place in order to be effective. Systems allow each member of the team to know what is expected of them, when it is expected, and how their work fits into the broader objective of the team. As a leader, I spend considerable time constructing and refining our systems – managing the people and processes of work rather than the work itself.

Poor systems result from being either too restrictive or loose. Leaders need to think critically and be flexible to refine their systems over time if they do not prove effective.

4. Pastors and ministry leaders need to pursue efficiency, or they will burn out.

I understand and empathize with those who see this drive to efficiency in ministry as counter to the gospel. Establishing this hierarchy to pursue efficiency seems corporate, whereas the gospel calls us to serve. After all, didn’t Jesus wash the disciples’ feet? Aren’t we called to do likewise as pastors?

Yes and no. Where non-Christian organizations pursue efficiency in response to sales, revenue, and ultimately profits, churches need to pursue profits in order to protect their pastors. One of the major problems churches and denominations are concerned about right now is the rate of pastoral burnout. This is not to suggest, as some wrongfully have, that pastors are miserable and hate their jobs. Far from it, studies show that pastors overwhelmingly feel privileged to be in ministry (93% strongly agree).

At the same time, pastors suffer from higher rates of obesity, hypertension, and depression than the average American. Beyond
this, over half say they are often concerned about their family’s financial security (an indictment of churches who should pay a decent wage but do not in a misguided theology of money) and close to half feel the demands of ministry are more than they can handle.

This paints a picture of an American pastorate that loves their flock and their calling but needs encouragement, help, and wisdom to avoid hurting themselves and, in turn, their churches. Why? Because pastors want to minister to people. But as leaders we need to view our time as a finite resource that God calls upon us to steward. Every time we spend our time, we must view it as an investment in the kingdom. As we think through priorities, we need to begin thinking exponentially.

5. Pastoral opportunities are incorporated necessities.

As a counterbalance, I will end by recommending that pastors and ministry leaders must still engage in the ground-level ministry work in some capacity. Whether it is hospital visits or leading a Bible study for a season, this is crucial for two reasons.

First, it is a way leaders can remain humble as their organization and responsibilities grow. The tendency for isolation and success to influence our habits and attitude for the worse is real. There are unfortunately many more examples of high-level leaders acting arrogantly than in humility. The willingness to serving occasionally is a reminder of Jesus’ own servant-leadership model.

Second, it feeds that initial impulse that pulled you into ministry in the first place. Most pastors and ministry leaders began out of a call to minister and, through a combination of their leadership skills and God’s blessing, their responsibilities have overtaken that original calling. These opportunities are an important outlet.

For me, I love to spend time encouraging and praying with those in ministry. I unfortunately have to turn down many meeting requests, but if I am stuck in the car for a long time, I will tweet out and ask if anyone wants me to pray for or talk with them. I often find myself on
a phone call with someone I don’t know, but it’s an opportunity to serve them in prayer and encouragement.