

FOUR KEY AREAS OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

What should a pastor invest his time and energy in to be most effective?

The role of the pastor in a local church is both a privilege and a daunting task. It's a privilege because God calls His leaders and appoints them to places of ministry. To be called of God to shepherd His people is a great honor! It is also a great responsibility because we will be held accountable by God for how we lead. To be an effective pastor we need to develop skills and competencies in several key areas:

- Personal development
- Interpersonal development
- Team building
- Strategic thinking and planning

First, there's the personal aspect of pastoral ministry. The leader needs to be healthy spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically and relationally. This includes his personal devotional life, his study habits, his ability to deal with criticism, his physical health and his relationship with his family. If the pastor neglects his personal life it will eventually sabotage all other aspects of his ministry. It's been said that "being" precedes "doing." Who are you? How is your relationship with God right now? Are you reading and are you stretching your mind? Are you in good physical shape? Do your wife and children feel loved or lonely? Ephesians 5:15-16.

The second area of development is in interpersonal relationships. As pastor/leaders, we deal with people; all kinds of people! People with all kinds of baggage and past experiences. Some are easy to love and some are as mean as rattlesnakes. But sheep need a shepherd. The only people you have are the people you have. You need to become skillful in dealing with all kinds of people; they are the way they are for a reason. The Spirit of God

and a wise and loving pastor can help people grow through their struggles. The inability to get along with people is probably the greatest reason pastors fail. Charlie Brown once said "I love the world, it's people I can't stand."

Some pastors complain about their members and think, "If I can get rid of So-and-So, life would be easy." The problem is that there are a lot of people just like So-and-So, and learning how to deal with and minister to that person will help you with all the other So-and-So's you will meet. Pastors need to develop skills in peace-making and conflict resolution. Leadership often involves change, and change affects people emotionally and relationally. A wise, skilled pastor can lead his people toward God's preferred future. How are your people skills? Do you understand personality traits and how they influence people's behavior? Have you developed skills in peace making and conflict resolution? Do you want all the people God has given you? Do you love them? Are you a hireling or a shepherd?

The third area of development is in working with and through people. Ephesians 4:12 states that the pastor's job is to "equip the saints for the work of ministry." Pastors need to develop and work through groups of people whether they are called committees or teams. There is a temptation for pastors and churches to expect the pastor to do all the work of the ministry. "That's what we pay him for," is the attitude of many church members. But, I have found that many pastors are "lone rangers" in the ministry and want to do the work alone. For some it's a quality issue: "No one can do it as well as I can." For some it's an ego issue because that's where many pastors get their sense of self-worth: "The people need me."



Healthy Church Solutions

Jesus had a team He invested in and sent out to do ministry. He chose them and spent significant time with them. They continued to do the work of ministry even after He had gone. The Apostle Paul had a team that ministered with him. Teams of people can accomplish more than individuals. There is

synergy and group intelligence when gifted people work together. Pastors need to learn how to work with groups of people. Who is on your team? Did you choose them? What have you done to invest in them? Are you willing to give yourself and your ministry away? Who will carry on after you're gone?

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