
A Personal Leadership Development Plan

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*"And David shepherded them with integrity of heart;
with skillful hands he led them."*

Psalm 78:72 (NIV)

Introduction

Many pastors are well trained in exegesis, theology, congregational care, and other important pastoral disciplines, but have less training in leadership principles and practices. Yet pastors spend significant time and energy on the leadership of the church. D.A. Carson has written the following about pastoral leadership:

*"As important and central as is the ministry of the Word of God, the thoughtful pastor/elder/overseer will devote time and energy to casting a vision, figuring out the steps for getting there, building the teams and structures needed for discharging ministry and training others, building others up, thinking through the various ways in which the gospel can be taught at multiple levels to multiple groups within the church, how to extend faithful evangelism and church planting, how to engage the surrounding world as faithful believers, and much more. Just because a person is an able preacher does not necessarily make him an able pastor/elder/overseer. Indeed, if he shows no propensity for godly oversight, then no matter how good a teacher he may be, he is not qualified to be a pastor/teacher/overseer."*¹

~D.A. Carson

It is a basic principle of leadership that leaders are learners. A pastor, a shepherd of God's people, is by definition a leader, and needs to be a learner. This document proposes a Leadership Development plan for pastors.

Outline of Teaching

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- Church Ministries
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- Spiritual Life
- Theology and Doctrine

2. Leadership Development Tools (p4)

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- Audio Books
- Coaching Networks
- Apprenticing
- Visits to other Churches
- Seminars, Workshops and Conferences
- Formal Leadership Courses and Programs

3. Sample Leadership Development Plan (p6)

¹ D. A. Carson, "Some Reflections on Pastoral Leadership," *Themelios* 40, no. 2 (2015): 197, accessed May 10, 2016, <http://themelios.thegospelcoalition.org/article/some-reflections-on-pastoral-leadership>.

1. Leadership Development Topics

1. General Leadership

There are basic leadership skills that every pastor should learn and practice.

- Developing and Casting Vision
- Conflict Management
- Developing Leaders
- Communications
- Leading Change
- Strategic Planning
- Managing Staff and Volunteers
- Delegation
- Building and Leading Teams
- Leading Meetings

2. Church Ministries & Systems

Most churches have a number of ministries and systems that need to be run effectively. Some of these will come under the direct leadership of the pastor, while others will be overseen by staff and volunteers. Pastors need general knowledge in all of these areas and specialized training in some of them.

- Preaching
- Worship
- Sunday Service Planning
- Evangelism and Outreach
- Small Groups
- Leadership Development
- Discipleship Plan
- Children's Ministries
- Youth Ministries
- Volunteer Recruitment
- Hospitality - Welcome and Assimilation
- Facilities Oversight
- Online Presence & Social Media
- Stewardship and Fundraising

3. Personal Leadership

For a pastor to lead the church successfully, he must lead himself, under the Lordship of Christ.

- Annual Goals
- Personal Productivity
- Time Management
- Sabbath, Sleep, Food, and Energy Management

- Working in your Spiritual Gifts
- Understanding your Personality
- Working in your Strengths
- Leading your family while leading the church

4. Spiritual Leadership

A pastor must be a spiritual man who leads people to be Spirit-led and word-centred. This leadership starts with his own walk with God, and moves to leading the church to be a spiritual church that prays and trusts the Lord in everything.

- Effective Prayer
- Being a Word-Centred and Spirit-led Leader
- Strengthening your Faith
- Growing your love for God
- Growing your love for others

5. Theology and Doctrine

A pastor is a “Guardian of the Good Deposit,” (2 Tim 1:14) the deposit being the deep truths of the gospel. Pastors must be rooted in orthodoxy and alert to false teachings that are promoted in our day. Many pastors are better trained in theology and doctrine than other areas of leadership, but it is important to keep learning.

- In-depth study of a Contemporary Theological Issue
ie. Complementarian/Egalitarian debate, Biblical Sexuality, etc...
- In-depth study of a Theological Topic
ie. The Atonement, The Trinity, Inerrancy, Eschatology, Kingdom, Money, Leadership, Discipleship, etc...
- In-depth Study of a Book of the Bible
- Review of Systematic Theology

2. Leadership Development Tools

There are a number of ways to grow as a leader, and the key to a good leadership development plan is picking the right mix of resources.

a) The Bible - As a pastor, you should be reading the Bible often, and it is important to read using your “leadership lens.” The Bible is filled with stories of God’s leaders and how they led. Every book tells the stories and teachings of leaders writing under the inspiration of the Spirit of God. When you read the Bible, ask yourself what leadership principles are being taught in the passage, either directly or implicitly. How did Jesus lead? How did Paul lead through his activities in Acts and through his epistles? How did the heroes of the Old Testament lead? It is amazing what you can learn about leadership from the stories that were given to us in the Scriptures, “for our instruction.” (Rom. 15:4)

b) Physical Books - As a pastor, you should be a reader. Books are one of the best ways to increase your leadership knowledge. Physical books allow you to mark up the text and highlight key nuggets

b) E-books - While e-books contain the same content as physical books, reading them is a different experience. It is easy to flip a digital page, but it is not as easy to write on it or flip to something you've read earlier. However it is easier to search for keywords and books are much more portable due to the number that can be stored on a device or in the cloud. When you are thinking about leadership development, always consider what medium will be most effective for you - written, electronic, audio, video etc...

c) Audio Books, Podcasts, etc... - Audio books and other recordings are widely available through such systems as Audible, Podcasts, and other services. You can sign up for a monthly subscription with Audible or other services that could be part of your leadership development budget.

Audio books have the downside that you can't underline and mark up sections and make notes like you can in a physical book, but the upsides are significant. First, you can listen to them in the car, while you are exercising, and really any time when your hands are busy but your mind is free.² Second, many pastors are audio learners, and will remember key points that are made in an audio book. Finally, you can listen to audiobooks more than once and often will cement your learning on the second or third time through.

d) Seminars, Workshops and Conferences - There are many good leadership training events for pastors. Pick one with quality speakers and where you can network and interact with like-minded pastors.

e) Coaching Networks - Leaders such as Tom Rainer and Nelson Searcy offer coaching networks to help pastors grow in church leadership principles. While there is a cost to these networks, it is often less than formal studies, and can provide excellent leadership development for a season.

f) Visits to other Churches - One of the downsides of being a pastor is that because you have to be at the same church almost every week, you don't have a chance to learn from others. I encourage you to negotiate a few Sundays a year where you are not on holiday but are free to visit other churches to learn from them. Take an elder, a deacon or a staff member with you and make it a team learning day!

g) Formal Leadership Courses and Programs - Many pastors have been blessed by formal leadership training programs. Here are a few options:

- Arrow Leadership - an 18 month(?) program to develop your leadership skills
- CREST Leadership - a 2 year(?) program to develop your leadership skills
- Immerse - An MDiv program with a strong leadership development emphasis
- DMin programs - many DMin programs focus on leadership principles that are not part of most MDiv programs

h) Coaching and Apprenticing - You can learn a lot from pastors who are strong leaders. You may be surprised that many of them will be willing to meet with you over a period of time and share their best leadership practices with you.

² I first heard Nelson Searcy make a statement to this effect in one of his audio teachings.

I) Reflection and Retreat - You often grow when you pause and reflect on who you are and what you have been doing. If you never reflect, you probably will keep doing the same things, even if they aren't working. Often when things aren't working for you, it is because you are doing things that do not flow out of who you are and how God made you.

Romans 12:3 tells us that we need to think of ourselves with sober thinking, and then verses 4-8 teach that if you have a spiritual gift you should use it. You need to know yourself and what your gifts are.

One of the best ways to know yourself is to go on a spiritual retreat and review who you are - your personality, your spiritual gifts, your strengths, your weaknesses.

Then compare who you are with what you are doing. Ideally you want to be spending most of your time doing things you are gifted to do. The challenge comes when you realize that the church needs things you are not gifted to do.

3. A Sample Leadership Development Plan

You should create and a plan annually and review it two to three times during the year. An effective Leadership Development Plan consists of:

- Topics to Study
- Tools to Utilize for Learning
- Times (Schedule) for Learning

Below is a Sample Leadership Development Plan:

1. General Leadership Topic: Developing and Casting Vision

Action: Buy and read a book about Leadership and Vision
Meet with a strong leader to learn more about leadership and vision

When: Buy it now and read over next few months.
Schedule a meeting with a leader by the end of April

2. Ministry Systems: Small Groups

Action: Read a book about small groups
Spend time with a small groups pastor and learn

When: Buy it now and read over next few months.
Schedule a meeting with a small groups pastor by the end of May

3. Personal Leadership Topic: Personal Leadership Assessment

Action: Review my spiritual gifts (use Lifeway online tool)
Do a personality test (such as DISC)
Do the StrengthsFinder assessment (Buy *Strengthsfinder* book from Amazon)

When: Personal Retreat in April

4. Spiritual Leadership: Being a Spirit-Led Leader

Action: Read a book that stirs my heart spiritually
 Listen to sermons that stir my heart spiritually

When: Buy the audio book and/or download the sermons and listen over the
 next few months.

5. Theology and Doctrine Topic: Inerrancy

Action: Buy and read a book about Inerrancy
 Re-read a section of a Systematic Theology book about inerrancy
 Review the history of the inerrancy debate through online study

When: Weekly on Monday mornings