

10 Ideas for Personal Leadership Development

The work of the minister, pastor, elder, and/or church leader is to equip the church as a whole and believers individually for God's work in the world. But how do the equippers get equipped?

On a recent vacation from my full-time work as a pastor, I spent the time in three specific ways:

- Unhurried time with my wife Angie
- Reading seven books on a few topics (pictured here)
- Prayerfully discussing and dreaming about the future

A church leader expends great effort and energy in developing other disciples. We do so on a micro level of individual discipling and training. We do it on a macro level of developing a church wide system for moving people from unbelief to globally-engaged disciples. So how is a church leader to engage in personal development? Here are a few suggestions.

- 1. Ask your church to make it a priority.** Ministers fail to engage in personal development because they are fearful it's perceived incorrectly. Discuss this issue with the leaders of your church whether they be an elder board, personnel committee, or church council.
- 2. Schedule time for personal development.** If you do not block it off on your calendar, the tyranny of the urgent will undermine your effort. Plus, what is on your calendar is a declaration of your priorities.
- 3. Budget financial resources for it.** A great deal of personal development does not cost any money. But books, online courses, the occasional conference, or a trip to the counselor requires payment. Ask your church to make a commitment and then do the same from your own resources. Like a calendar, our budget is a declaration of your priorities.
- 4. Vary your spiritual content that you consume.** I generally consume material from people who I agree with first and second order issues. However, it is beneficial to consume material from those who think differently from me on second and third order issues. Reading those that the church at large deems as heretics (for instance, someone who denies the divinity of Jesus) is of little value to me. But it is helpful for me to read books by thoughtful leaders that are outside of my denominational or methodological "tribe."
- 5. Read books on strategic leadership by church and business leaders.** Some pastors love to read the books by Malphurs, Mancini, Rainer, and Hirsch. Other pastors loathe the idea as too sterile and unspiritual. Some pastors, like me, read a wide array of leadership books from the church, business, and non-profit realms. Obviously, I suggest that you consume more rather than less. Choose books that will stretch your thinking about how people process the concepts of change, growth, decline, and success.
- 6. Biblically filter everything.** As with all material, filter it through your best understanding of the Scriptures. I write this article with the assumption that you are regularly digging into the

Word and allowing the Word to dig into you. In your development plan/process/retreat/vacation, bring the Word to the center of it all and to test it all.

7. Recognize the limitation of a conference. I'm a fan of conferences. I go to them and sometimes speak at them. But they are a place to receive group encouragement and generalized information. For your personal development, seek out specific help for your specific needs.

8. Stop reading a book if it's not helping you. The same principle is for any podcast, article, lecture, or any other piece of content. (Except my blog. Grin.) Your time is too important to waste on unhelpful items. Quit what is not working.

9. Call on leaders for help that you don't expect to answer. Why? You'll be surprised as to how many "busy leaders of influential churches/ministries" would love to encourage you. I press the guys on my staff to limit their time at conferences and replace it with connecting with other leaders who are ahead of us in maturity, skill, and experience.

10. Build a local coalition. Our city is blessed to have a group of pastors that like one another and gather periodically for prayer. I frequently call on a few guys for encouragement and insight. They periodically call on me for the same. You'll be amazed at how refreshed you'll feel as a leader when you have a regular rhythm of interaction with other leaders dedicated to each other.

> [Read more from Philip.](#)
