

Helpful Tools for Honest Self-Assessment

You can't see what you can't see. I drive a Toyota Avalon and it's a nice car. It has lots of "bells and whistles," plenty of power, and the new body design is sharp. But no matter how nice any car might be, it has a blind spot. The blind spot is that small area down the driver's side looking back, that you just can't see anything in it. That blind spot can be ever so costly if you change lanes and don't see the car next to you!

We all have blind spots about ourselves. That's one of the things that makes you the most difficult person for you to assess. The saying is true. You just can't see what you can't see. It sounds simple, but the complexity comes from the fact that you are truly blind to that "elusive thing," and unless you have some help, that blind spot can cause you great difficulty as a leader.

When you are driving, the way you mitigate your blind spot is a quick turn of your head to the left and back, plus rightly using your mirrors. That can literally save your life. **So how do you find your blind spots as a leader?** And what should you look for?

Start here to find your blind spots:

- **Self-awareness**

When I was starting out as a pastor I noticed that many of the successful pastors of large churches, who were conference speakers, seemed to be choleric and sanguine in temperament. So I thought, that's what I want to be! For a long time I tried to be someone other than who I am. "Success" eluded me. When I became more self-aware and discovered that I'm choleric and melancholy, and gave myself permission to be me, God's favor on me as a leader seemed to become immediately evident. It was then that I began to blossom as a leader!

- **Honest Friends**

Friends are a powerful force and priceless gift in your life. In fact, your friends shape who you are so choose your friends wisely. The friends who love and care about you the most will tell you the truth, even if it's tough to hear. When my friends shoot straight with me I'm very grateful. When they help me see my blind spots, the things about me that I can't see, it helps me become a better person!

- **Credible assessment tools**

Self-assessment tools are always fun to take. Everyone likes to "read the press" about themselves. The key is to find good tools. There are several good ones, but a couple of my favorites have been the Myers/Briggs and StrengthsFinder. [The John Maxwell Company](#) has produced a [new assessment tool](#). I checked it out and it's great! It's based on John's book, [The Five Levels of Leadership](#). This assessment allows you to invite your boss, your peers, and your direct reports to anonymously assess your leadership. All too often leaders simply evaluate

themselves and move on.

However, according to [The Five Levels of Leadership](#) "one of us is not as smart as all of us," and therefore, inviting others to assist you in evaluating your leadership is one of the smartest moves you can make. Check out the assessment [HERE](#).

What to look for:

How can you see what you can't see? I mentioned three things in general. Again, they are a growing sense of self-awareness, friends who will tell you the truth and good assessment tools. It also helps if you can have an idea of the things (you can't see) that can hurt you and the things that can help you, so you can begin to look for them.

Things that can hurt you:

1. Habits

I recently coached a young leader about the importance of looking people in the eyes when talking to them. He honestly had no idea that he often looked at the floor and up toward the ceiling. I used to constantly fidget with my glasses while teaching until someone let me know. These are relatively innocent examples, but they matter, and catching the simple things will help you practice watching for more significant habits that can hurt your leadership.

2. Attitudes

There is so much negative in current culture, from crime to politics, and a lot of people consider those two subjects as one topic. Our country has serious problems and we need leaders who can solve the problems, but complaining and being negative won't change anything. It won't change anything in your church either. Even if what you are saying is true. Move toward action that brings solutions! Keep your attitude positive.

3. Perceptions

The Bible warns us about false teachers, being swayed by false doctrines and seeing now "but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face." As leaders we all struggle to see things clearly. People have passionate opinions and often package them in spiritual wrappers. You and I may be tempted to do the same. It's important for all of us to discern clearly and seek wisdom so we have the truest and clearest perception of reality possible.

4. Relationships

Relationships can obviously be helpful as well as hurtful. I trust that like me, most of your relationships are positive and healthy. It's the one you didn't see coming that can take you out. I've heard three stories in the last ninety days about church boards having secret meetings to get rid of the pastor. Not only did the pastors have no idea, but each pastor thought everything was great! I'm not suggesting that you become a paranoid leader, but that you pay attention to

your friends and even closer attention to the leaders you aren't sure about.

Things that can help you:

1. Skills

Your personality, education, and general family background play a big role in who you are as a leader. But at some point, your leadership skills take a front seat as the determiner of how effective your leadership can become. That is good news! By determining what you are good at and where you need to improve, you can radically strengthen your leadership. The key is to be very specific and intentional about what skill you want to develop. A generic approach won't help you much. What one skill, right now, do you need to work on?

2. New friends

Friendships are complicated for leaders. The tension is that you must always be making new friends and simultaneously caring for the friends you have. Eventually, most leaders feel they have run out of time. Keeping up with all these relationships is a skill. Don't give up; you can learn to give your full heart in less time. You can care deeply and don't always need to spend two hours over coffee. You can make a genuine connection in much less time. It goes against the grain, but it is sometimes necessary. Giving up and not establishing new relationships will hurt your leadership. Establishing new relationships will help your leadership!

3. Opportunities

At times this has been a weakness of mine. I'm so focused in what I'm doing that I can miss great opportunities right in front of me, opportunities that are truly helpful to the church and to me personally. I need to regularly "lift my head up" and look around, sniff the wind, know which way it's blowing and see what God is up to! How about you? Are you catching the great opportunities that are before you?

4. Faith

All good leaders have great faith. You may experience a season where your faith is shaken, that's normal. But in general, it is important that your faith is strong. This is one of the greatest assets to a spiritual leader. If you believe God for big things, if you pray for big things and even trust God for miracles, you are much more likely to experience what God wants to do for you. God is not a puppet to be manipulated, but He is a good, kind and loving Father. Your church is His church! God cares what happens in your ministry! How's your faith? What do you believe?

My intent in this article is to be helpful in the process of your self-assessment. The better you do this, the greater your potential for growth

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