

7 Helpful Skills for Pastors Who Want to Grow Churches

I came close to titling these “essential” skills, but I knew that was unfair. God grows churches, and He works through all different types of people.

I have heard great pastors say—“I know how to teach and care for the people, but I’m not always sure how to lead.” They recognize the value in and the need for leadership but were never trained to do it well.

In my experience, there are helpful skills for those who want to lead a church to care for and disciple people, but also grow and be healthy. A church can have momentum, unity and excitement around the vision of the Great Commission. That usually takes leadership.

Here are seven helpful skills I’ve observed:

Following: Ultimately, it’s all about Christ, and church growth will be a matter of prayer and the work of God’s Spirit. I can’t lead people closer to Christ unless I’m personally growing closer to Christ.

But following also involves allowing others to speak into my life. It means I have mentors, people who hold me accountable and healthy family relationships. Self-leadership—and following others who are healthy—keeps a leader in it for the duration.

Networking: This is the ability to bring the right people to the table to accomplish the mission—inside and outside the church. This is likely obvious inside the church.

Churches need the right people in the right seats of leadership. I often found those leaders through

networking—learning who was in the church and what skills they have to offer.

One place where good relationships always proved helpful outside the church was within the local school system. Churches can make significant missional differences in their community through school relationships. Those relationships are usually formed through networking. And the possibilities here are endless.

Connecting: The best leaders bring people together. When a new person comes into the church, it's important that they be able to connect quickly to others. The pastor meeting them isn't enough to really make people feel connected to a church. Good leaders ensure systems are created that connect people to people within the church. This skill values creating healthy, life-changing relationships in the church and seeing that it is an intentional part of the church's overall mission.

Vision-casting: Good leaders are able to cast a picture beyond today worthy of taking a risk to seek. They may not always have all the ideas of what's next, but they can rally people behind a vision. I like to tell pastors that a good vision message (often given at a business meeting) is sometimes the most important sermon you will write.

Pioneering: To lead a church by faith, a pastor has to be willing to lead into an unknown and often take the first step in that direction. People won't follow until they know the leader is willing to go first. Momentum and change almost always starts with new—doing things differently—creating new groups, new opportunities—trying things you've not tried before. Pioneering leaders watch to see where God may be stirring hearts and are willing to boldly lead into the unknown.

Delegating: No one person can or should attempt to do it all. It's not healthy, nor is it biblical. This may, however, be

the No. 1 reason I see for pastoral burnout, frustration and lack of church growth. Good leaders learn to raise up armies of people who believe in the mission and are willing to take ownership and provide leadership to completing a specific aspect of attaining the overall vision.

Confronting: If you lead anything, you will face opposition. Period. Leadership involves change, and any change in a church involves a change in people. Most people have some opposition to change. After a pastor is certain of God's leadership, has sought input from others, cast a vision and organized people around a plan, there will be opposition. Perhaps even organized opposition. Good leaders learn to confront in love.

That's my list. And I believe that although you may not be naturally inclined toward each of them, most, if not all of these, can be developed with intentionality.

Ron Edmondson is a pastor and church leader passionate about planting churches, helping established churches thrive, and assisting pastors and those in ministry think through leadership, strategy and life. Ron has over 20 years business experience, mostly as a self-employed business owner, and he's been helping churches grow vocationally for over 10 years. This article originally appeared at .