

7 Misconceptions That Cause Ministry Leaders to Derail

It's difficult to escape common leadership misconceptions fully.

They are a result of our training, culture and the way we think. Even our personal wiring and insecurities contribute to leadership misconceptions.

If not corrected, these mistaken leadership beliefs become practices and end up as harmful habits that decrease our influence.

We could list many, but here are seven of the most common misconceptions.

1. Your place on the organizational chart grants you influence. John Maxwell deals with this misconception, calling it Level One Leadership. This is where someone leads because it's their "right" to lead. When a person believes their title or place on the organizational chart grants them the credibility, authority and ability to lead, that's a huge misconception. Being granted a position does give you responsibility and an opportunity to lead, but that's it. From there, it's important to develop positive relationships, produce results and invest in people. Real influence comes from making a difference in people's lives, not your place on the org chart.

2. Seasoned and mature leaders don't need encouragement. Everybody needs encouragement. Your best volunteer leaders and top staff need consistent encouragement. I've never met someone who told me they were encouraged too much. It's an easy mistake to think, *Well, they are the top leaders, and they carry the weight of responsibility, so they don't need encouragement. After all, that's what they get paid for,*

right? It's their job to encourage us. That's a big misconception. It's true that your best leaders don't need a babysitter to hold their hands, but they do need to know they are appreciated and what they do matters.

3. Being fair is a good idea. As a young leader, being fair was one of my misconceptions. It came from a good place (I wanted to treat people well), but it was nonetheless a misconception. It probably also came from an insecurity that made me want to make everyone happy. We all know that doesn't work. Thinking about those who most often object to the lack of fairness—kids—gives us insight. When one sibling gets something more or better than another, like a bigger piece of cake, they cry out, "That's not fair!" Right?

But Jesus didn't treat His disciples fairly. Peter, James and John got privileges the others didn't. You pay some staff more than others, and for good reasons. Some leaders are trusted with more information than others, also for good reasons. Fair is easy, but not wise. Discerning leaders understand the nuances of leadership and make decisions accordingly, but not based on fairness.

4. No news is good news. It's dangerous to fall asleep at the wheel when driving a car, and just as dangerous for leaders to fall asleep at the wheel of their organization. It's more common than you might imagine to get lulled into a comfortable ride, think all is well, stop paying attention and then BOOM. You never saw it coming.

This isn't a statement promoting worry, suspicion or fear. The point is to pay attention. No news is never good news to a leader making progress. A leader thrives on staying current, being in touch with reality and knowing what's going on. If you don't have a sense for hallway chatter, then find your channels and get tuned in.

5. If I just preach and pray it will all work out. I wish

ministry were simple, but it's not. It just doesn't work that way. Many pastors attempt to lean into the spiritual side of ministry over the practical, and that's great as our first and primary foundation. Yet field-level leadership is not only unavoidable but also essential.

This is more common in smaller and mid-sized churches where the pastor gives the leadership to the board, or the board just takes it. We all want prayer and the Word as the foundation, but we must translate them into strategy, problem-solving, innovation and lots of time with people.

6. When you are the leader, things go your way. A common misconception is that the higher you go as a leader, the more freedom you have. That couldn't be farther than the truth. The larger the organization and the higher you rise in levels of responsibility, the less freedom you have. Your time is spoken for, your options are few and your margins are thin. This isn't a bad thing; it's just a reality. It's part of the price of leadership and serving the people well. You cast the vision and lead the way, but that doesn't mean things go your way. Great leaders sacrifice their preferences for the good of the people and the success of the organization.

7. Leaders don't have to mess with management. I can recall a season in ministry not so long ago when management was cast as somehow inferior to leadership. In this era, we often heard, "You're either a leader or a manager, but not both." That's a crazy misconception. It's true that not all managers are leaders, but all good leaders are also good managers. There is simply no escaping some level of follow-up, tracking the progress on strategy, coaching, decision-making, delegation and getting things done. True, these functions should not crowd out the significance of vision, direction, culture, leadership development, etc., but they are essential functions of every leader's role.

I trust this helps you avoid one or more of these leadership

misconceptions. {eoa}

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