

Significant Questions to Ask Before Becoming a Lead Pastor

As we all know by now, thousands of lead pastors leave full-time church ministry every year. Along those same lines, a high percentage of new church plants never make it past three years! One reason is that most potential lead pastors never honestly attempt to ask themselves the following questions:

1. Am I emotionally mature enough to take on myself the rigors of taking the lead role in a church?

Whether it is a new church plant or taking over the lead role from another pastor, a lead pastor has to be emotionally mature enough to deal with the incredible emotional challenges of the ministry.

Lead pastors must have thick skin. They cannot hold grudges against people. They have to learn how to forgive those who betray them or break covenant, and they must also learn to handle adversity and crisis. It is not enough to know how to preach well. Emotional maturity is perhaps even more important than having a good personality and giftedness in the pulpit!

2. Am I theologically competent?

Most new pastors, especially of the independent evangelical/Pentecostal ilk, have inadequate formal theological training. Before you venture into a lead pastorate, make sure you have enough theological depth to be able to feed the flock of God 52 weeks per year. Pastors cannot get by just on preaching evangelistic messages or their pet doctrinal passions. They have to learn how to expound on the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

In recent decades, there have been many successful pastors who have come out of a marketplace background. Unfortunately, most

of them lead the church more like the CEO of a secular corporation than as a shepherd of the flock of God. Having business acumen and administration is necessary, but administration without theological depth produces a church that has great marketing and impressive crowds and programs, but superficial disciples.

3. Am I organizationally competent?

Being theologically trained is not enough. I have found that most pastors have no clue in regard to formulating a church budget and administration. It doesn't matter how anointed you are or how good a preacher you are! Administration is needed to harness the anointing and create systems in the church for the proper implementation of church vision.

To illustrate this point, God created natural laws within complex systems and framed the physical world before He placed living creatures and humanity on the earth (Gen. 1). Hence, there was an organized, systemic foundation before there was human activity.

4. Is my spouse emotionally and spiritually prepared for such a task?

Many go into the pastorate without weighing the toll it will take on their spouses and children. I have found that the wife of a male lead pastor is one of the neediest people in the body of Christ. Many have never been adequately prepared for the high demands people will place on their lives and families. These spouses should expect that people in the congregation will want to visit their home, call whenever they are in need, and expect them to drop everything when they have an emergency. People in the congregation expect the wife of the lead pastor to function as the "mother" of the church and will get offended if the spouse does not give them adequate attention!

God calls a couple into the pastorate, not just one-half of

the marriage. (Also, I do not generally believe it is a good idea for single people to enter into the pastorate, since they will be faced with numerous sexual temptations, especially from other needy single people who want their counsel and oversight.)

5. How do I know that God is calling me into the pastorate?

Perhaps the most important question a potential lead pastor can ask himself or herself is this: "Did God really give me this assignment?" When the trials and stresses related to church ministry come their way, they will seriously consider abandoning the pastorate if they are unsure of their divine calling.

6. Do I have in place sufficient mentors who can walk with me and gauge my progress?

Every lead pastor should have several mentors in their life. Not only do they need other seasoned and successful lead pastors, but they will need mentors regarding their psychological health, finances, physical health and legal advice in setting up a proper board of elders, trustees, by-laws and ongoing minutes. These mentors should have a trusting relationship with the lead pastor and be allowed to speak honestly into their life, or else it will be a waste of time for both parties. (Paul's legacy letters to Titus and Timothy are examples of the incredible value of having a mentor guiding young leaders through the arduous task of doing the work of the ministry.)

7. Do I have a sufficient support system of peer relationships and friends?

Every leader learns quickly that it can get lonely at the top! Lead pastors desperately need a constellation of other godly peers in the ministry and a tight-knit social community they can relax with and pray with, who are not always talking about the challenges of the ministry. Lead pastors need a regular

mental break from the rigors of ministry, and they cannot do it alone.

8. Have I taken the time to meet with the other lead pastors in my region to get advice?

If I had to do it all over again, I would have met with and obtained advice from every cooperative lead pastor in my community before I planted our church. They would have been able to give me the lay of the land, share their experiences related to the specific challenges of that region and become potential friends and a part of my support system in the ministry!

(About eight years after our initial church plant, I started a monthly pastors' covenant support group with about 12 local area pastors, which became an incredible source of unity and strength for us all.)

9. Do I have a proper business plan for financial sustenance?

The old Pentecostal adage was to just obey the calling of God and trust God for the finances. Of course, that is the primary foundation. But, having a proper business plan for the church is absolutely necessary in this complicated world, one fraught with financial scandal, strict IRS regulations and enormous complexities regarding present economic realities.

10. Do I have a proper philosophy of ministry that matches my calling and personality?

Every lead pastor has a different personality, gift mix and method of ministry. Pastoring a church should never be done using a cookie-cutter approach that mimics other successful leaders. Lead pastors who attempt to lead just like one of their ministry heroes are usually headed for failure and/or great disappointment. There is only one you; every leader is unique and must flow properly in their gift mix in order to be effective!

Some helpful questions to start off with include these: What is my personality type? (Am I an introvert or extrovert?) What are my motivational gifts? (Rom. 12:4-8.) What manifestations of the Spirit usually accompany my ministry? (1 Cor. 12:4-8.) What fivefold ministry function do I operate in? (Eph. 4:11).

In closing, I wish someone had given me some advice like this in the late 1970s before I got married and entered full-time church ministry. It would have saved me a lot of unnecessary heartache and trauma! Forewarned, I would have been forearmed when it comes to avoiding some of the common mistakes pastors make, the subject of Chapter 3.

This article is chapter 2 from Poisonous Power, Bishop Mattera's latest book. For more like this, you can purchase your copy on Amazon [here](#).