
GROWTH POINTS

With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

Best Practices to Lead Yourself

Pastors lead themselves well by employing some of the following best practices. However, it begins with an internal look to discover your true self. To begin, wrestle a bit with the following questions.

- How much do I understand about what's happening in my church and the world in which we exist?
- How prepared am I to deal with the complex issues that confront my church and ministry?
- Where is my church headed in the next decade?
- What do I need to learn in order to lead my church for the next ten years?
- Where do I need to grow and develop in order to lead my church for another decade?

Answering these questions, and more to come, honestly, will get you started.

The following ideas are some best practices that growing pastors have employed.

Five Best Practices

Number 1: Determine your life purpose.

Close your eyes and imagine you're at your funeral. Now, this is not a morbid exercise— just allow yourself to think about what you hope people will say about you at your funeral. Then in twenty-five words or less, summarize what you hope you'd hear into an overall life purpose or mission statement. As an example, this is my personal life purpose: My purpose in life is to love God, love my wife, and love my children. Obviously, this is just a summary with a lot of emotions, hopes, and dreams packed into it.

Now, write down your life purpose in a book or on your computer. Read it out loud. It sounds like growth, right? Where do you need to grow? In what ways do you need to develop? How must you improve in your skills and relationships to fulfill your life purpose?

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Number 2: List ten most important things.

Make a list of the ten things in life that are most important to you right now. It may help to divide up the important things into categories like spiritual/devotional, spouse/family, health/exercise, wealth/retirement, career/ministry, plus a general one. Then, next to each item, write down two or three ways that you can advance or enhance each one. These become self-improvement goals. As you work on them, you are leading yourself.

Number 3: Get to know yourself.

What are your unique strengths? Your unique weaknesses? What makes you angry, sad, or worried? How do you define success?

Once you've determined the answer to these questions, you'll be tempted to work on improving your weaknesses. While that is not a bad decision, it's not the wisest one. We are unlikely to make our weaknesses a strength. Wisdom from successful leaders points out it's best to work on growing your strengths, while staffing people around you to care for your weaknesses. What are your top two or three strengths? How can you begin to design a growth program to enhance those strengths?

Number 4: Build yourself broadly.

Fruitful pastors of the future must be well-rounded people. You might put it this way: Knowledge enriches knowledge, and the more the variety, the greater the enrichment. In particular, a lead pastor must be a specialist plus; that is, he must be a specialist with a wider body of knowledge.

Ask, Do I have time for random soul searching? Do I have time for self-renewal not directly related to my ministry? Do I have time for outside activities (art, sports, reading, music, etc.) that will enlarge my personhood? In the end, do you have a plan to strengthen your cultural enrichment and renewal that broadens your entire personhood as well as your skills?

Number 5: Manage your time and energy.

How well do you manage your use of time? How well do you manage your energy (health, fitness, and rest)? How well do you manage your relational time (family, friends, vacations, days off, etc.)?

Here's the truth: Time management is just self-management. No one can honestly manage time. Everyone has the same amount—168 hours a week! Here's a tip. Make space on your calendar for personal development.

So . . . , get started today!

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