

MAKE IT **COUNT**

A 10-week study for leadership teams by *Influence* magazine

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Leading From the Second Chair

By **STEPHEN BLANDINO**



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A 10-Week Study
For Leadership
Teams

What Is Make It Count?

Make It Count is a leadership development resource for use individually or with staff, volunteers, or board members.

Each installment is also available online as a downloadable PDF, along with interactive pages for group member use. The underlined words and phrases in the following text correspond to fill-in-the-blank sections on team member pages. Access these free resources at influencemagazine.com/Downloads.

These lessons are written by **STEPHEN BLANDINO**, lead pastor of 7 City Church in Fort Worth, Texas, and the author of several books.



Leading From the Second Chair

By **STEPHEN BLANDINO**

I've filled a number of ministry roles, including youth pastor, executive pastor, and lead pastor. Each position was unique and provided a different perspective on church leadership.

As a lead pastor, I now realize some of the most important lessons came from leading when I wasn't in charge. This is sometimes referred to as second-chair leadership.



In *Leading from the Second Chair*, authors Mike Bonem and Roger Patterson define a second-chair leader as “a person in a subordinate role whose influence with others adds value throughout the organization.”

In church ministry, these individuals commonly fill staff pastor positions. They aren't in charge, but they're still influential.

So, how do you lead when you're not the person in charge? I believe leading from a subordinate posture requires four foundational commitments.

1. Partner with the pastor. Staff pastors may not be in charge of vision casting, communication, or fundraising, but they can certainly support and play a vital role in all of those functions.

These leaders partner with the pastor to help advance the church's mission. They serve on the same team and should champion what God has called the pastor and congregation to do.

2. Protect the heart. Staff pastors navigate the space between being in charge of the vision and being responsible for it.

Many struggle with this role because they want to be captain of the ship. Letting someone else steer bothers them. It's important to surrender such feelings to God and submit to His plan.

Without the right heart, a second-chair leader risks sabotaging the vision — and pastor — God has called him or her to serve. Therefore, the leader must guard against jealousy, discontentment, criticism, divisiveness, negativity, and pride.

3. Prioritize the vision. Second-chair leaders put the pastor's vision above their own ambitions and ideas. This doesn't mean letting go of personal hopes for the future. It simply means they maintain the right focus.

Some team members may impose pet projects, side hustles, and alternative visions onto the pastor or congregation. But taking the high road means choosing service over personal dreams and desires.

4. Pursue the skills. Finally, staff pastors develop an essential set of skills to serve effectively in their roles. They become proficient at leading others, building teams, managing systems, making decisions, communicating, and creating culture.

Without these skills, they may have a heart for ministry but lack the ability to steward it effectively.

Second-chair leaders should take the initiative to learn, grow, and improve. Personal and professional development is a life habit that will serve them well not only in their current positions, but also in wherever God leads them next.

1 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Christ-Centered Identity

Assess

How does identity affect second-chair leaders?

Insights and Ideas

Second-chair leaders play a vital ministry role. They lead teams, execute plans, and serve the church's vision. Their perspectives, skills, and buy-in create forward movement and healthy ministry environments.

But the foundational characteristic of a successful support leader is a growing relationship with Christ. Finding our identity in Him is the best antidote to selfish ambition.

Author Alicia Britt Chole observed, "Having fully captivated Jesus' and John's attention, of all the things Father God could have said, his first words were neither directional ('go here') nor instructional ('do this'). They were relational: 'This is my Son.'"

Those relational words keep our attention where it needs to be: on Jesus. This focus helps us overcome two common traps for second-chair leaders:

1. *The jealousy trap.* Jealousy is the enemy of unity. Being envious of others because of who they are, what they've done, or the acknowledgements they receive leads to undermining words and behavior.

Pastor Chris Sonksen says, "Our jealousy tears down what someone else has done to make us feel better about what we haven't done. Jealousy causes us to want what someone else has. If we haven't earned it or received it, then we criticize it."

That's what happened in Pisidian Antioch when crowds flocked to hear the apostle Paul's teaching. Acts 13:45 says, "When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him."

Grounding your identity in Christ is the best way to avoid the jealousy trap. Finding fulfillment in Him frees you to love and serve others without envy.

2. *The discontentment trap.* Like everyone else, staff pastors have hopes and dreams for the future. However, following where God leads is what brings lasting joy and contentment.

Paul said, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (Philippians 4:12). The key phrase to notice here is "in any and every situation."

Christian contentment should not depend on circumstances. Even when we're not the one in charge, we can be content in Christ.

Author and theologian Henri Nouwen observed, "One of the tragedies of our life is that we keep forgetting who we are."

Effective church leadership begins with remembering who you are and whose you are. Seek to develop a Christ-centered identity.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How does it feel to be in a subordinate position?
2. When have you seen jealousy and discontentment undermine ministry teams?
3. Why should leaders at all levels look to Christ for their identity?

Apply

Identify truths from Scripture that describe who you are in Christ. Then create a statement that captures these biblical declarations, and begin reading it each morning to remind yourself of who God has called you to be.

1 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Christ-Centered Identity

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But the foundational characteristic of a successful support leader is a growing relationship with Christ. Finding our identity in Him is the best antidote to selfish ambition.

“Having fully captivated Jesus’ and John’s attention, of all the things Father God could have said, his first words were neither directional (‘go here’) nor instructional (‘do this’). They were relational: ‘This is my Son.’” — Alicia Britt Chole

Two common traps:

1. *The _____ trap.*

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“When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him” (Acts 13:45).

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“I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want” (Philippians 4:12).

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Apply

Identify truths from Scripture that describe who you are in Christ. Then create a statement that captures these biblical declarations, and begin reading it each morning to remind yourself of who God has called you to be.

2 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Second-Chair Mindset

Team Review

What have you discovered from Scripture about your identity in Christ, and how does this help you lead from a healthier place?

Assess

What kind of mindset should second-chair leaders have?

Insights and Ideas

Mindset matters at every level of church leadership. The right mindset creates health, while the wrong mindset undermines relationships and performance.

Four mindsets are particularly important for second-chair leaders:

1. *The relational mindset.* Second-chair leaders don't just operate from a list of tasks and responsibilities. Their relationship with the pastor informs how they lead.

Second-chair leaders need to know the pastor's expectations, ministry priorities, leadership style, and frustrations.

Expectations clarify performance baselines. Ministry priorities highlight values. Leadership style provides insights for working together. And frustrations point to areas where the pastor needs extra support. Such understanding bolsters effectiveness.

2. *The trust mindset.* Trust is the key to any effective and healthy relationship. Therefore, staff pastors should lead and serve in such a way that trust compounds over time.

Trust grows when there is character, competence, and compassion. Character shows you are trustworthy. Competence and compassion elevate trust as you complete tasks with excellence and demonstrate that you value people. All of these are essential for ministering effectively and developing healthy working relationships.

3. *The big-picture mindset.* One key to effective second-chair leadership is the ability to see the big picture. Taking a longer view means avoiding petty arguments and territorial disputes. Instead, there is maturity to see and champion the overall vision.

Leaders with a big-picture mindset make wise decisions, take ownership, and gain trust. This often opens doors for more responsibility and new opportunities.

4. *The serving mindset.* Jesus said, "The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11–12).

That's the attitude of servant leaders. They're not jockeying for position or looking for ways to exalt themselves. They serve with a heart of humility.

In all these areas, second-chair leaders should seek to have a mindset that reflects the transforming power of Christ. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Reflect and Discuss

1. Which of the four mindsets above is hardest for staff pastors to maintain?
2. Which mindset most challenges you?
3. How does a leader's mindset affect those around him or her?

Apply

On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being the best), rate yourself on each of the four mindsets. Then identify one step you can take to improve your lowest score.

2 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Second-Chair Mindset

Four mindsets of second-chair leaders:

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Trust grows when there is character, competence, and compassion. Character shows you are trustworthy. Competence and compassion elevate trust as you complete tasks with excellence and demonstrate that you value people.

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"The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11–12).

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:2).

Apply

On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being the best), rate yourself on each of the four mindsets. Then identify one step you can take to improve your lowest score.

3 LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Pure Heart

Team Review

What steps have you taken to cultivate a second-chair mindset?

Assess

What attitudes do staff pastors need to guard against?

Insights and Ideas

The first lesson addressed the traps of jealousy and discontentment. However, these aren't the only issues that sideline leaders.

All leaders must protect their hearts against wrong attitudes and the deceptive tactics of the enemy. But second-chair leaders must pay special attention to these four deadly attitudes:

1. **Criticism.** The apostle James said, "Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another" (James 4:11). And Paul said, "Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Staff pastors must guard against a critical spirit and foster a culture of encouragement.

2. **Divisiveness.** Disunity is deadly. When leaders sow — or even entertain — seeds of division, they oppose the Holy Spirit's work of bringing together the body of Christ. And disunity has a way of spreading like wildfire.

Leaders must protect church unity, and that work begins in our own hearts.

First Corinthians 1:10 says, "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought."

If you feel tempted to engage in divisive talk or behavior, ask the Lord to give you His heart for unity. When divisiveness emerges within the team, address the problem quickly before it multiplies.

3. **Negativity.** Your attitude sets the temperature and tone for the teams you lead. Choosing positivity over negativity helps create a life-giving, hope-filled environment.

To uproot the negative, practice gratitude and celebrate team wins. Personal gratitude will protect your heart as you focus each day on the goodness of God. And celebrating with your team keeps the focus on what God is doing in the church.

4. **Pride.** God hates pride, so guarding against this attitude is essential. James 4:6 says, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

Staying humble requires personal, relational, and organizational intentionality. Personally, submit your ego to God each day. Relationally, share credit for successes with others. And organizationally, acknowledge the collective efforts of the team.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How have you seen criticism, divisiveness, negativity, or pride undermine a leader?
2. What can leaders do to spot these destructive attitudes early, before they take root?
3. Can you think of a time when one of these attitudes hurt you and your team? What lesson did you learn from this?

Apply

Make a plan as a team to guard against these deadly attitudes. Commit to hold one another accountable whenever you spot such issues.

3 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Pure Heart

All leaders must protect their hearts against wrong attitudes and the deceptive tactics of the enemy.

Four deadly attitudes:

1. _____.

“Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another” (James 4:11).

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Apply

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4 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Clear Role

Team Review

What have you done to guard against the attitudes of criticism, divisiveness, negativity, and pride?

Assess

What do you feel is the role of a second-chair leader?

Insights and Ideas

Every ministry position comes with a unique set of dynamics and expectations. Understanding those nuances helps everyone avoid confusion and frustration.

Leaders need people who can help carry the load. Moses was no exception.

In Exodus 18:21–22, Moses' father-in-law Jethro advised him, "Select capable men from all the people — men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain — and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you."

Notice that this leadership plan included a reporting structure ("appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens") and clear responsibilities ("have them serve as judges for the people").

Your ministry context requires the same ingredients. To gain clarity, leaders need to work together to answer five questions:

1. *What are the pastor's responsibilities?* Clarity about other roles begins with understanding exactly what the pastor does. Without that clarity, people will have trouble staying in their lanes. The pastor should articulate three to five responsibilities that squarely fall on his or her shoulders.
2. *What are the responsibilities of second-chair leaders?* Those who report to the pastor have specific duties as well. Identify these in writing to ensure everyone is on the same page. Give staff pastors the tools and authority to carry out their responsibilities.
3. *What help does the pastor need from other leaders?* This calls for a candid conversation about how second-chair leaders can best support the pastor. This list should be specific, practical, and achievable.
4. *What boundaries do staff pastors need to operate within?* Again, this requires honest conversations. Consider specific scenarios where boundaries are undefined or nuanced, and identify clear guidelines.
5. *Who reports to each staff pastor?* Establish a chain of authority to ensure accountability. Communicate this structure to everyone who is part of it, including staff members and volunteers. These five questions will bring clarity to leaders regarding the roles they play on the team.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What are the pastor's top three to five responsibilities?
2. What clarity do staff pastors need to better understand their roles?
3. What boundaries should second-chair leaders function within to ensure a healthy work environment?

Apply

To increase role clarity, schedule a meeting with the leader to whom you report. During the meeting, work through the five questions above.

4 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Clear Role

“Select capable men from all the people — men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain — and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you” (Exodus 18:21–22).

Five questions to discuss:

1. *What are the _____ responsibilities?*

Clarity about other roles begins with understanding exactly what the pastor does. Without that clarity, people will have trouble staying in their lanes.

2. *What are the responsibilities of _____ leaders?*

Those who report to the pastor have specific duties as well. Identify these in writing to ensure everyone is on the same page.

3. *What _____ does the pastor need from other leaders?*

This calls for a candid conversation about how second-chair leaders can best support the pastor.

4. *What _____ do staff pastors need to operate within?*

Again, this requires honest conversations.

5. *Who _____ to each staff pastor?*

Establish a chain of authority to ensure accountability. Communicate this structure to everyone who is part of it, including staff members and volunteers.

Apply

To increase role clarity, schedule a meeting with the leader to whom you report. During the meeting, work through the five questions above.

5 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR Excellence

Team Review

What clarity have you gained concerning your role?

Assess

What does it mean to serve the church's vision with excellence?

Insights and Ideas

Vision is an essential part of effective ministry. When vision is unclear, leaders unintentionally create division. And when there are multiple visions, people don't know whom to follow or what direction to go.

As Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint."

While second-chair leaders don't create the vision, they do play an important role in its fulfillment. These leaders have five responsibilities when it comes to the vision:

1. **Know the vision.** One of the first questions to ask the pastor is, "What's your vision?" To fulfill the vision, everyone needs to have a thorough understanding of it.
2. **Embody the vision.** Staff pastors must embrace and live out the vision. That's why it's important for them to fit the church's culture. If there's a cultural mismatch, the main vision will take a back seat to personal preferences, pet projects, and alternative visions.
3. **Align with the vision.** People and departments have a tendency to drift from the vision over time. Do the hard work of ensuring everything in your ministry area aligns with the church's vision. If there is any misalignment, make immediate adjustments.
4. **Share the vision.** The pastor creates the vision, but second-chair leaders help cast it. They communicate the vision in their areas of influence — not replacing the pastor's message, but replicating it throughout the church.
5. **Implement the vision.** Staff pastors play a critical role in helping turn the vision into reality. They devote time, energy, planning, and resources in moving the vision from an idea to fulfillment.

Advance the vision with excellence by asking these questions: What plan do we need to create? What resources do we need to secure? What people do we need to deploy?

Vision may begin with one person, but it's always bigger than any individual. When the pastor and team members work together toward a shared vision, they complement the value each person brings to the process.

Ultimately, Christ is the One we are serving. Therefore, it's important to do everything with excellence.

Colossians 3:23–24 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

Reflect and Discuss

1. What is our church's vision?
2. What does it look like to embody that vision?
3. What steps can each team member take to share and implement the vision?

Apply

If you lack clarity about the vision and your place in it, schedule a time to meet with your pastor to ensure understanding and consistency. Then ask about specific ways you can help advance the vision.

5 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR Excellence

“Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint” (Proverbs 29:18).

Five responsibilities of second-chair leaders:

1. _____ *the vision.*

One of the first questions to ask the pastor is, “What’s your vision?” To fulfill the vision, everyone needs to have a thorough understanding of it.

2. _____ *the vision.*

Staff pastors must embrace and live out the vision. That’s why it’s important for them to fit the church’s culture.

3. _____ *with the vision.*

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Staff pastors play a critical role in helping turn the vision into reality. They devote time, energy, planning, and resources in moving the vision from an idea to fulfillment.

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Colossians 3:23–24).

Apply

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6 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Team Building

Team Review

What steps have you taken to know, embody, align, share, and implement the vision in your areas of responsibility?

Assess

Why is team building an essential part of ministry?

Insights and Ideas

Pastors entrust second-chair leaders with a great deal of responsibility — often too much for one person to handle.

For staff pastors to sustain their level of responsibility while maintaining a healthy rhythm, they must build teams.

This should be no surprise. Consider the words of the apostle Paul: “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11–13).

Every minister’s job is mobilizing people to serve, and that entails team building. To be an effective team builder, second-chair leaders need to adopt six practices:

1. **Engage.** Leaders must engage others in the church’s mission. This involves recruiting people to roles and responsibilities that will leverage their God-given gifts for a greater purpose.
2. **Equip.** Once people are engaged, they need the tools, resources, training, and coaching to effectively serve in their roles. This equipping process should be strategic, well-designed, and effectively managed.
3. **Entrust.** After equipping people to serve, the leader must entrust them with clear responsibilities. Delegating tasks communicates trust.
4. **Empower.** This isn’t just a matter of giving people goals to work toward. Empowerment involves responsibility. Team members should have some level of decision-making authority to function in their roles.
5. **Encourage.** Ministry isn’t easy. That’s why every team member needs words of life, encouragement, and support. Team-building leaders release tasks, but they also remember the *people* doing the work. They listen, love, celebrate, and encourage them along the way.
6. **Elevate.** Finally, maximizing the capacity of team members means elevating them to new levels of responsibility and opportunity. Effective leaders draw out the potential in others and mobilize them to make their greatest impact.

These six steps are the behaviors that set apart great team builders. When team members succeed, so do their leaders.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How have you seen the six team-building skills make a difference in your area of ministry?
2. Which team-building skill is your greatest strength? In which area do you most need to improve?
3. How can you take your team-building skills to the next level?

Apply

Write down each team-building skill on a sheet of paper. Under each one, list at least two things you could do to grow in that area. Take steps this week to implement some of those ideas.

6

LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Team Building

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11–13).

Six team-building practices:

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This involves recruiting people to roles and responsibilities that will leverage their God-given gifts for a greater purpose.

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People need the tools, resources, training, and coaching to effectively serve in their roles.

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Delegating tasks communicates trust.

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Team members should have some level of decision-making authority to function in their roles.

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Team-building leaders release tasks, but they also remember the *people* doing the work. They listen, love, celebrate, and encourage them along the way.

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Apply

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7 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Healthy Communication

Team Review

What difference have the six team-building skills made in your leadership and ministry?

Assess

What are the biggest communication gaps you experience in leadership?

Insights and Ideas

The relationship between pastors and those who report to them is extremely important. One of the essential ingredients to a thriving relationship is great communication.

Author and productivity expert Michael Hyatt observed, “When leaders don’t communicate, it’s like pouring sand in the gears of progress.”

To elevate your communication to the highest level, consider the five C’s of communication:

1. **Clarity.** Communication must be clear and concise. Rambling speech that’s hard to follow leaves people feeling confused and exasperated. Without clarity, team members won’t know how to act on the message.
2. **Curiosity.** When you meet with your pastor, come prepared to ask questions that will make a meaningful difference.

Those who lack curiosity view meetings as nothing more than boring updates and generic informational exchanges. But questions mine the gold your pastor is willing to share if only you’ll ask.

What do you need to know? What do you want to learn? What ideas would you like to explore? Curiosity makes learning and growth possible.

3. **Consistency.** Author Jim Collins observed, “The signature of mediocrity is chronic inconsistency.” That has never been truer than in communication. To make communication consistent, you must put it on the calendar.

I meet weekly with my direct reports. That consistency improves communication, eliminates unnecessary surprises, and keeps everyone on the same page.

4. **Candor.** Author Joseph Grenny once said, “The lag time for change is the same as the lag time for candor.” Speaking candidly improves understanding and dispels false notions.

When trust exists in a relationship, you can be candid about what’s working, what’s not, and what needs to change. Withholding such information creates a façade of unity that eventually crumbles. Candid communication allows you to acknowledge problems and seek solutions together.

5. **Care.** Candor should take place within a caring environment. When people feel criticized and unappreciated, relationships suffer. Let those you minister alongside know you care about them as individuals and value what they bring to the team.

Each of these five communication skills will make a dramatic difference in the quality, depth, frequency, and effectiveness of your communication. Put them to work for you, your team, and your relationships.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Which of the five aspects of communication creates the most frustration for you? Why?
2. In which of the five communication skills does our team most need to improve?
3. What can we do to improve team communication?

Apply

Ask a teammate to assess you on a scale from 1 to 10 in each of the five communication skills. Then do the same for that person. Finally, discuss how each of you can improve and the next steps you will take.

7

LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Healthy Communication

“When leaders don’t communicate, it’s like pouring sand in the gears of progress.”
— Michael Hyatt

The five C’s of communication:

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What do you need to know? What do you want to learn? What ideas would you like to explore?

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“The signature of mediocrity is chronic inconsistency.” — Jim Collins

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Withholding information creates a façade of unity that eventually crumbles.

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Apply

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8

LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Decision Making

Team Review

What steps have you taken to improve your communication with the pastor and team members?

Assess

What is the hardest part of making big decisions?

Insights and Ideas

Leaders often deal with decision fatigue when the number and complexity of decisions increase exponentially. It's no wonder many feel overwhelmed in ministry.

To avoid burnout, you need other decision makers to help you carry the load. Proverbs 15:22 says, "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed."

Second-chair leaders are among those trusted advisers. These leaders help free the pastor to focus on what only he or she can do.

To offload the weight of decisions, staff pastors must do three things:

1. *Understand how your pastor thinks.* As mentioned in a previous lesson, it's important to know the pastor. This includes learning to think like him or her.

I'm not suggesting you become a clone who no longer thinks for yourself. But you do need to know your pastor's heart, values, and priorities. When you understand how the pastor thinks, you'll be in a better position to make decisions that reflect his or her leadership.

2. *Identify your pastor's decision-making framework.* This builds on the previous point but takes it one step further.

Most leaders operate within a decision-making framework. For example, several factors play a role in my decisions. I consider the church's DNA, research, timing, intuition, outside perspective, the quality of the idea, and leader buy-in. Above all, of course, I seek the Holy Spirit's direction.

If I want staff pastors to make decisions that are consistent with my approach, it's my responsibility to share this decision-making framework with them.

3. *Make decisions without burdening the pastor.* Second-chair leaders should be able to make decisions without weighing down the pastor with unnecessary questions or endless meetings. If the pastor has to do all the thinking, you're probably not fulfilling your leadership duties.

Once you learn how your pastor thinks and understand his or her decision-making framework, you have the tools you need to make decisions. Help carry the pastor's load by taking the initiative. This will free your pastor to focus on areas requiring his or her immediate attention.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What would you like to know about how your pastor makes decisions?
2. What is the pastor's decision-making framework, and who needs to learn about it?
3. What decisions do you need to make that would lift a weight off your pastor's shoulders?

Apply

Clarify your pastor's decision-making framework. Ask the pastor what's important to him or her when making decisions. Put this in writing, and share it with those you lead.

8

LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Decision Making

Leaders often deal with decision fatigue when the number and complexity of decisions increase exponentially. It's no wonder many feel overwhelmed in ministry.

"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22).

Three decision-making keys:

1. *Understand how your pastor* _____.

When you know your pastor's heart, values, and priorities, you'll be in a better position to make decisions that reflect his or her leadership.

2. *Identify your pastor's decision-making* _____.

For example, several factors play a role in my decisions. I consider the church's DNA, research, timing, intuition, outside perspective, the quality of the idea, and leader buy-in. Above all, of course, I seek the Holy Spirit's direction.

3. *Make decisions without* _____ *the pastor.*

Second-chair leaders should be able to make decisions without weighing down the pastor with unnecessary questions or endless meetings. If the pastor has to do all the thinking, you're probably not fulfilling your leadership duties.

Apply

Clarify your pastor's decision-making framework. Ask the pastor what's important to him or her when making decisions. Put this in writing, and share it with those you lead.

9 LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Encouragement

Team Review

What progress did you make toward identifying a decision-making framework?

Assess

What's the most encouraging word you've received recently?

Insights and Ideas

Leadership is hard. The demands are heavy, the questions relentless, the decisions consequential, the stress real, the problems complex, and the pressure high. But as Tom Hanks said in the film *A League of Their Own*, "If it wasn't hard, everyone would do it. The hard is what makes it great."

Especially in ministry, every leader needs encouragement. When it's missing, people struggle to stay motivated.

The best leaders are encouragers. I wish I had learned this lesson sooner.

Take three steps to encourage those around you:

1. *Speak deliberate words of encouragement.* The apostle Paul said, "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Ephesians 4:29).

Deliberate (not random or half-hearted) words of encouragement will build up your pastor and the people you serve. Your encouragement can help sustain them during ministry's hardest moments.

2. *Offer specific prayers during times of need.* Paul said, "Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people" (Ephesians 6:18). Paul then added, "Pray also for me" (verse 19).

Make it a habit to pray for your pastor — and your team. Then let them know you're praying. Further, offer to pray immediately when someone is struggling.

3. *Write sincere notes of appreciation.* In my office, I have a file of cards, letters, and notes I have received through my years of ministry. Each one is an encouragement to me. They're a reminder that when ministry is tough, the sacrifices are worth it.

People in ministry need such reminders. Take a moment to jot a handwritten card expressing appreciation for your pastor, your team members, and the people you serve.

Note the adjectives in the three points above: deliberate, specific, and sincere. These are important. Your deliberate, specific, and sincere acts are what people will most remember.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Take a moment to encourage one another in a deliberate, specific, and sincere way.
2. Pause to pray for one another. Share personal needs, and then pray together for those concerns.
3. Discuss ways to foster a deeper culture of encouragement within your team.

Apply

If you're not a natural encourager, create a reminder in your calendar to encourage, pray for, and offer words of appreciation and thanks to your pastor and team members. Adding encouragement to your calendar might seem strange, but culture doesn't change until behavior does.

9

LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Encouragement

Leadership is hard. The demands are heavy, the questions relentless, the decisions consequential, the stress real, the problems complex, and the pressure high.

Three ways to be an encourager:

1. *Speak deliberate _____ of encouragement.*

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Ephesians 4:29).

2. *Offer specific _____ during times of need.*

“Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. Pray also for me. (Ephesians 6:18–19).

Make it a habit to pray for your pastor — and your team. Then let them know you’re praying. Further, offer to pray with people immediately when someone is struggling.

3. *Write sincere _____ of appreciation.*

Note the adjectives in the three points above: deliberate, specific, and sincere. These are important. Your deliberate, specific, and sincere acts are what people will most remember.

Apply

If you’re not a natural encourager, create a reminder in your calendar to encourage, pray for, and offer words of appreciation and thanks to your pastor and team members. Adding encouragement to your calendar might seem strange, but culture doesn’t change until behavior does.

10

LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Transition Planning

Team Review

What steps have you taken to create a culture of encouragement?

Assess

What are your dreams for the future?

Insights and Ideas

Few ministers spend their entire careers in the same position. Most eventually transition to a new role, location, or season of ministry.

Transition isn't easy, but it can and should happen in a healthy, God-honoring way. Here are four guidelines for second-chair leaders:

1. *Keep your pastor informed.* When you sense the Holy Spirit stirring your heart to make a transition, your pastor should be the first (outside of your family) to know. Hearing it from someone else will only damage your relationship.

Your pastor can be a valuable source of wisdom, support, and prayer as you work through your next steps.

2. *Show honor in the transition.* When God is leading you to something new, navigate that transition in a spirit of honor. Speak well of your pastor and team members, the board, and the congregation. Demonstrate a genuine posture of servanthood and gratitude. Romans 12:10 says, "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."

3. *Protect the church's unity.* When a staff member siphons people from the congregation without the pastor's blessing, it damages unity.

Preserving unity should be a priority because it matters to God. The apostle Paul said, "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

You cannot expect God to bless the new work to which He has called you if you're careless and destructive in your current position.

4. *Commit to finish well.* This means working hard to the end, setting up your replacement for success, keeping your leader in the loop regarding important issues, and ensuring fellow team members have the tools they need to pick up where you left off.

Ask yourself, *What can I do to make the job easier and the transition smoother for the person who follows me? What does my leader need from me to make this transition more successful?*

Reflect and Discuss

1. What's the best transition you've ever seen, and what made it so successful?
2. Which of the four points above is easiest to overlook? Why?
3. How can the pastor and second-chair leaders honor one another during the transition process?

Apply

Commit to follow the transition process above when the time comes for you to move on. As you look toward the future, be intentional about honoring God and others today.

10 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Transition Planning

Few ministers spend their entire careers in the same position. Most eventually transition to a new role, location, or season of ministry.

Guidelines for second-chair leader transitions:

1. *Keep your pastor* _____.

When you sense the Holy Spirit stirring your heart to make a transition, your pastor should be the first (outside of your family) to know. Hearing it from someone else will only damage your relationship.

2. *Show* _____ *in the transition.*

“Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves” (Romans 12:10).

3. *Protect the church’s* _____.

“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

4. *Commit to* _____ *well.*

Ask yourself, *What can I do to make the job easier and the transition smoother for the person who follows me? What does my leader need from me to make this transition more successful?*

Apply

Commit to follow the transition process above when the times comes for you to move on. As you look toward the future, be intentional about honoring God and others today.