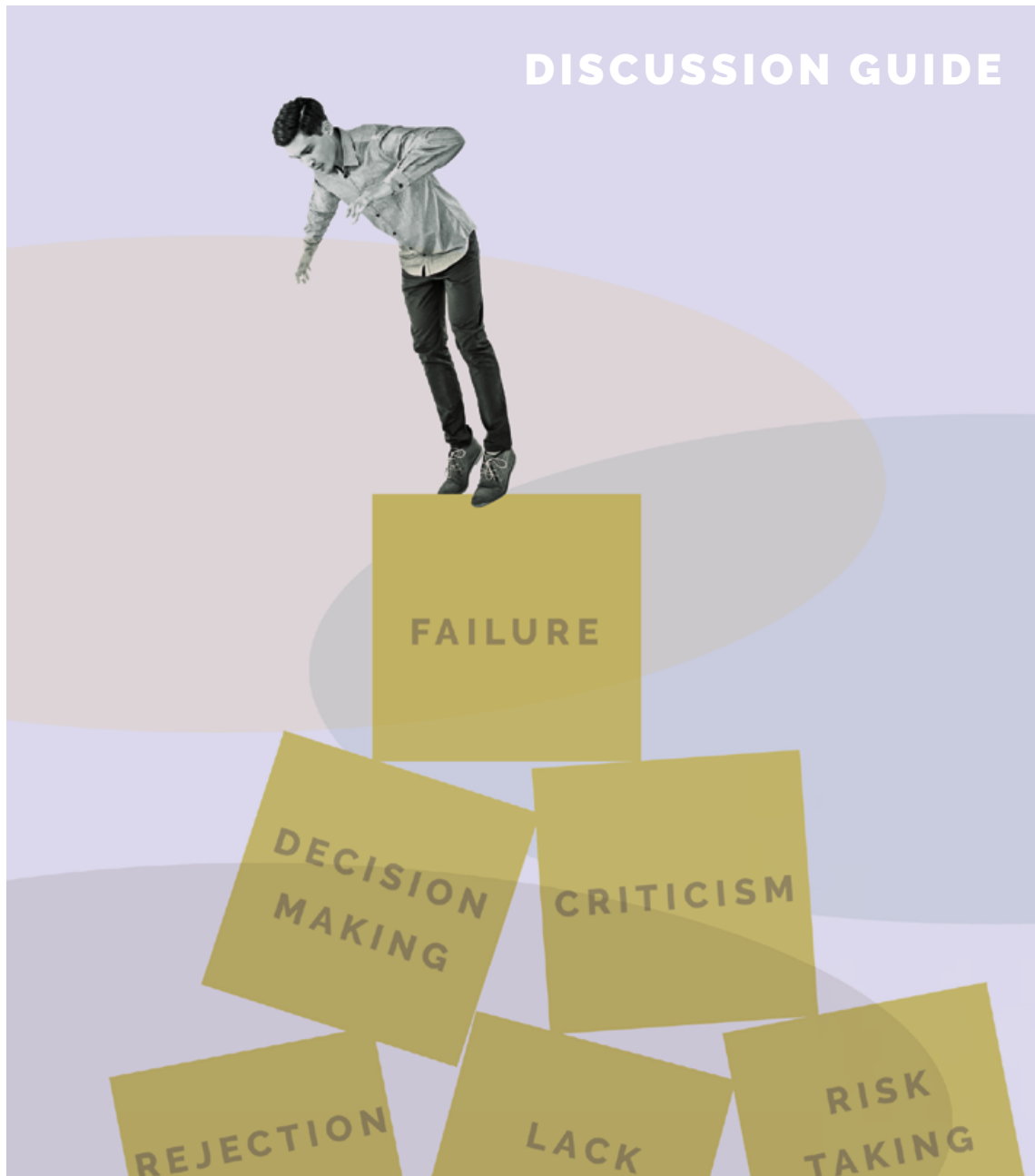


MAKE IT **COUNT**

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

# Overcoming Leadership Fears

By STEPHEN BLANDINO



MAKE IT COUNT

A 10-Week Study  
For Leadership  
Teams

### What Is Make It Count?

**M**ake 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](http://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.



## Overcoming Leadership Fears

By **STEPHEN BLANDINO**

**I**f there's one thing most news headlines have in common, it is the capacity to instill fear. Whether it's politics, the economy, COVID, loss of rights, crime — you name it — there is often an anxiety inducing overtone.

As ministers, we lead others through their fears. And sometimes we find ourselves facing the same kinds of worries.

SM

RISK  
TAKING

How do we overcome fears in leadership? What do we do when anxiety clouds our judgment, undermines our influence, and stands in the way of the vision God has given us?

This edition of *Make It Count* examines 10 common leadership fears and considers ways to overcome them. Those fears include the following:

1. **Failure.** Leaders can overcome this fear when they remember failure is a *what*, not a *whom*, and that it can be a place of restoration.
2. **Rejection.** Most of us want to be liked, but when leaders face rejection, they must maintain allegiance to Christ and learn to separate their identity from their ideas.

3. **Lack.** Many leaders live with a scarcity mindset, afraid they won't have enough to see their vision fulfilled. But the best leaders embrace an abundance mindset, recognizing they serve a God who is limitless.
4. **Criticism.** Every leader has critics. But we can silence the naysayers when we lead with clarity, courage, credibility, and confidence.
5. **Communicating.** Many people cite public speaking as their biggest fear, but leaders need this skill to preach, cast vision, and conduct meetings. The key is embracing prayer, preparation, practice, and God's power to cultivate our communication skills.
6. **Decision Making.** The toughest decisions always land on the leader's desk. That's why leaders need a decision-making filter that includes God, research, experience, perspective, timing, and influencers.
7. **Inadequacy.** Imposter syndrome involves the fear that people will discover we're not as good as many perceive us to be. We can overcome the fear of inadequacy when we remember God is with us, God sent us, and God has equipped us.
8. **Risk Taking.** Leaders take risks, but with risk comes the fear it won't work out. To overcome this fear, our internal measure of faith must exceed the external measure of fear.
9. **Standing Up.** There are times in leadership when you must take an unpopular stand to do what's right. In these moments, leaders commit to meet needs, solve problems, help people, and make disciples.
10. **Significance.** Every leader wants his or her life and leadership to count. We can overcome the fear of not mattering by cultivating the character, contribution, and connections that leave a meaningful legacy.

As you read and discuss each lesson with your team, let it challenge you to walk by faith, not by sight. Face your fears and lead with confidence and courage.

# 1 | OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

## Failure

### Assess

How does the fear of failure affect you?

### Insights and Ideas

No leader wants to fail. Failure is painful — personally and organizationally. That’s why it is among the most common fears leaders face.

Of course, everyone *will* experience times of failure. Consider some of the failures from Peter’s life:

- ***Faithlessness.*** During a violent storm, Peter took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink. Jesus said, “You of little faith” (Matthew 14:31).
- ***Speaking foolishly.*** When Jesus told His disciples He would suffer and die, Peter pulled Jesus aside and reprimanded Him. In turn, Jesus rebuked Peter (Matthew 16:22–23).
- ***Pride.*** Jesus told His disciples they would all desert Him, but Peter insisted he would never do such a thing. Jesus exposed this prideful response, revealing Peter would deny Him three times (Matthew 26:33–35).
- ***Asleep on the job.*** Jesus asked Peter, James and John to pray with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, but they fell asleep (Matthew 26:36–46).
- ***Overreaction.*** At Jesus’ arrest, Peter pulled out his sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest’s servant. Jesus, recognizing He must drink from the cup of suffering, told Peter to put away his sword (John 18:10–11).
- ***Disownment.*** After disowning Jesus three times, Peter heard the rooster crow and then wept bitterly (Matthew 26:75).

From these examples, we can glean two lessons to help us overcome the fear of failure:

1. ***Failure is a what, not a whom.*** Failure might define what you’ve done, but it does not define who you are. Failure may be a dot on the timeline of your life, but it doesn’t represent the whole story.

Failure can *define* or *develop* you. The choice is yours. Rather than letting failure define you, let it be a defining moment that serves as a catalyst to help you grow.

2. ***Failure is a place for restoration, not rejection.*** It’s easy to beat ourselves up when we fail, but that failure shouldn’t become our permanent residence.

When Peter failed, Jesus didn’t let him live the rest of his life in shame and regret. After His resurrection, Jesus told Peter, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17). Instead of rejecting Peter, Jesus restored him to his Kingdom calling.

You can overcome the fear of failure by leaning in to your true identity in Christ, and then leveraging the failure to grow and move forward.

### Reflect and Discuss

1. What is a failure you’ve had to wrestle with in your life or leadership?
2. How does the statement, “Failure is a what, not a whom” speak to you?
3. How does Peter’s life, and Jesus’ response to Peter, give you hope to overcome your own failures?

### Apply

What failure in your life or leadership has been your greatest struggle? Take some time to acknowledge that failure, give it to God, and recognize who you are in Christ.

# 1 | OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

## Failure

No leader wants to fail. Failure is painful — personally and organizationally. That’s why it is among the most common fears leaders face.

Of course, everyone *will* experience times of failure. Consider some of the failures from Peter’s life:

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- \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 26:75).

Overcoming the fear of failure:

1. Failure is a \_\_\_\_\_, not a \_\_\_\_\_.

Failure may be a dot on the timeline of your life, but it doesn’t represent the whole story.

Failure can *define* or *develop* you. The choice is yours. Rather than letting failure define you, let it be a defining moment that serves as a catalyst to help you grow.

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When Peter failed, Jesus didn’t let him live the rest of his life in shame and regret. After His resurrection, Jesus told Peter, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:17). Instead of rejecting Peter, Jesus restored him to his Kingdom calling.

### Apply

What failure in your life or leadership has been your greatest struggle? Take some time to acknowledge that failure, give it to God, and recognize who you are in Christ.

## 2 | OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

# Rejection

### Team Review

How has your view of failure changed over the past week?

### Assess

How does rejection impact your leadership?

### Insights and Ideas

Most of us want to be liked. After all, it's more fun to make friends than enemies. But good leaders understand the importance of making difficult decisions and changes. An unwillingness to do so turns us into people-pleasing puppets.

We read about the dangers of people pleasing in the Gospel of John: "Many even among the leaders believed in [Jesus]. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved human praise more than praise from God" (John 12:42–43).

People pleasing produced two debilitating weaknesses in the lives of these leaders: pride and paralysis. Pride is evident in their love of human praise more than praise from God. And paralysis is evident in their unwillingness to follow Jesus, even though they desired to do so.

These leaders rejected Christ to win human approval. Jesus said, "There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day" (John 12:48).

So, how do we deal with the fear of rejection, especially when people begin to turn their backs on us? Consider three essentials:

1. *Be faithful in your allegiance to Christ.* People pleasing is a real struggle in leadership, but God didn't call you to do only what makes you popular. He called you to serve Him faithfully.
2. *Separate your identity from your ideas.* When we let our ideas become our identity, we tend to interpret rejection of those ideas as a rejection of us.

Mature leaders understand ideas and identity are two different things. If you don't learn to separate them, you'll carry wounds of rejection for the rest of your life. Just because people don't like your idea doesn't mean they don't like you.

3. *Keep your heart soft toward people.* It's easy to let rejection make our hearts cold and jaded toward others. Be careful not to let rejection *from* others turn into rejection *of* others.

Just because they don't like you doesn't mean you should harbor animosity toward them. Keep your heart soft toward people.

### Reflect and Discuss

1. On a scale from 1 to 10, how much do you struggle with people pleasing?
2. How do you typically respond to rejection from others?
3. How hard is it for you to separate your identity from your ideas?

### Apply

One key to dealing with rejection in leadership is learning how to receive feedback and value the ideas of others. Reflect on how you generally respond to negative feedback, and then think of two ways you can welcome feedback and improve your response in upcoming meetings with others.

## 2 | OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

# Rejection

“Many even among the leaders believed in [Jesus]. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved human praise more than praise from God” (John 12:42–43).

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“There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day” (John 12:48).

Overcoming the fear of rejection:

1. *Be faithful in your \_\_\_\_\_ to Christ.*

God didn't call you to do only what makes you popular. He called you to serve Him faithfully.

2. *Separate your \_\_\_\_\_ from your \_\_\_\_\_.*

When we let our ideas become our identity, we tend to interpret rejection of those ideas as a rejection of us. Mature leaders understand ideas and identity are two different things.

3. *Keep your heart \_\_\_\_\_ toward people.*

Be careful not to let rejection *from* others turn into rejection *of* others.

### Apply

One key to dealing with rejection in leadership is learning how to receive feedback and value the ideas of others. Reflect on how you generally respond to negative feedback, and then think of two ways you can welcome feedback and improve your response in upcoming meetings with others.

## 3 | OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

### Lack

#### Team Review

What ideas did you come up with for processing feedback in healthy ways, especially when the feedback is negative?

#### Assess

How would you define a scarcity mindset?

#### Insights and Ideas

Church leaders are called to point people toward a better future, one in which they can flourish as God intends. However, too often leaders let a lack of resources define their vision rather than letting their vision embolden them to trust in God's provision. As a result, a scarcity mindset limits what they accomplish for God.

We see the difference in these mentalities through the story of the 12 spies Moses sent to explore the land of Canaan. Joshua and Caleb returned with an abundance mindset. After describing Canaan as a land of plenty, they said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it" (Numbers 13:30).

But the other 10 spies had a different report. They said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are" (verse 31). These 10 even described themselves as "grasshoppers" compared to the people of Canaan. And they spread a bad report among the Israelites.

Failing to trust God has consequences. For the Israelites, the consequence was 40 years in the wilderness.

Leaders with a scarcity mentality will always live in the land of lack, but leaders with an abundance mentality will look beyond their circumstances and see that God is with them. To differentiate between a scarcity mindset and an abundance mindset, consider these insights:

- A scarcity mindset focuses on lack, while an abundance mindset focuses on God.
- A scarcity mindset complains about what it doesn't have, while an abundance mindset gives thanks for what it does have.
- A scarcity mindset settles for its current reality, while an abundance mindset sees future possibility.
- A scarcity mindset resents the success of others, while an abundance mindset believes there is plenty of success to go around.
- A scarcity mindset resists change, while an abundance mindset believes new possibilities require change.
- A scarcity mindset is driven by fear, while an abundance mindset is driven by faith.

Which mindset best describes you? If you find yourself leaning in the direction of a scarcity mindset, change is possible. You can overcome the fear of lack, but you must first release those fears to God.

#### Reflect and Discuss

1. Read Numbers 13:25–33. What most speaks to you about the difference in mentality between Joshua and Caleb and the other 10 spies?
2. What are some examples of how a scarcity mindset limits leaders today?
3. Which characteristic of a scarcity mindset versus an abundance mindset most challenges you?

#### Apply

Reflect on the differences between a scarcity mindset and an abundance mindset. What changes do you need to make to develop more of an abundance mindset? Share your observations with a friend, asking that person to pray for you and hold you accountable for the next 30 days.



## 3 | OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

### Lack

Too often leaders let a lack of resources define their vision rather than letting their vision embolden them to trust in God's provision. As a result, a scarcity mindset limits what they accomplish for God.

"We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it" (Numbers 13:30).

"We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are" (Numbers 13:31).

Leaders with a scarcity mentality will always live in the land of lack, but leaders with an abundance mentality will look beyond their circumstances and see that God is with them.

Scarcity mindset versus abundance mindset:

- A scarcity mindset focuses on \_\_\_\_\_, while an abundance mindset focuses on \_\_\_\_\_.
- A scarcity mindset \_\_\_\_\_ about what it doesn't have, while an abundance mindset gives \_\_\_\_\_ for what it does have.
- A scarcity mindset \_\_\_\_\_ for its current reality, while an abundance mindset \_\_\_\_\_ future possibility.
- A scarcity mindset \_\_\_\_\_ the success of others, while an abundance mindset believes there is \_\_\_\_\_ of success to go around.
- A scarcity mindset resists \_\_\_\_\_, while an abundance mindset believes new possibilities require \_\_\_\_\_.
- A scarcity mindset is driven by \_\_\_\_\_, while an abundance mindset is driven by \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Apply

Reflect on the differences between a scarcity mindset and an abundance mindset. What changes do you need to make to develop more of an abundance mindset? Share your observations with a friend, asking that person to pray for you and hold you accountable for the next 30 days.

## 4 | OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

# Criticism

### Team Review

What steps have you taken to cultivate an abundance mindset?

### Assess

How good are you at handling criticism?

### Insights and Ideas

One of the most celebrated stories in the Bible is that of David and Goliath. When Goliath challenged the Israelites to send a man to fight him, Saul and his army were dismayed and terrified. Goliath had been harassing the Israelites twice a day for 40 days.

Then David heard Goliath's taunt and discovered the man who could defeat the Philistine giant would receive wealth, a wife, and exemption from paying taxes (1 Samuel 17:25).

David became emboldened by the challenge until his brother Eliab asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle" (verse 28).

Eliab criticized David's *position* as a shepherd and the *posture* of his heart. But rather than returning home, David silenced his critics. From David's life, we discover four keys to overcoming the fear of criticism.

1. **Clarity.** After hearing Eliab's criticism, David "turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before" (verse 30). Again David clarified what would be done for the man who killed Goliath.

When you lack clarity of vision, you are more likely to back off the vision when somebody criticizes your efforts.

2. **Courage.** David went to King Saul, saying, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him" (verse 32). David had the courage to do what no other Israelite had done during the previous 40 days. Naysayers are the loudest when the verdict is still out. Courage delivers the verdict.

3. **Credibility.** Even Saul challenged David's ability to take on Goliath, but David responded, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it" (verses 34–35).

Rather than caving to the criticism, David reminded Saul he had prepared for this day. Preparation gives leaders credibility in the face of critics.

4. **Confidence.** David concluded his remarks to Saul: "The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine" (verse 37). David's confidence was in the Lord.

Similarly, leaders today must cultivate an unwavering trust in God that gives them confidence in the face of critics.

### Reflect and Discuss

1. What is the most difficult kind of criticism for you to deal with?
2. How does David's response to criticism inspire and challenge you?
3. Which of the four responses above do you most need to develop?

### Apply

Read and reflect on the story of David and Goliath. Invite the Holy Spirit to use this text to infuse courage and wisdom in your soul and help you overcome the fear of criticism.

## 4 | OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

# Criticism

“Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle” (1 Samuel 17:28).

Overcoming the fear of criticism:

1. \_\_\_\_\_.

David “turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before” (1 Samuel 17:30).

2. \_\_\_\_\_.

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### Apply

Read and reflect on the story of David and Goliath. Invite the Holy Spirit to use this text to infuse courage and wisdom in your soul and help you overcome the fear of criticism.

## 5 | OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

# Communicating

### Team Review

What insights have you gleaned from the story of David and Goliath to help you overcome the fear of criticism?

### Assess

What fears do you have when it comes to communication?

### Insights and Ideas

Many people say public speaking is their biggest fear, but communication skills help ministry leaders more effectively cast vision, deliver sermons, and conduct meetings.

Throughout Scripture, we see instances of difficult communication and powerful communication. For example, in his burning bush encounter with God, Moses said, “Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue” (Exodus 4:10). Moses was willing to use his inability to speak as an excuse to disobey God.

However, on the Day of Pentecost, “Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say’” (Acts 2:14). After Peter preached, 3,000 people accepted Christ.

So, how do we overcome fears associated with communication? Below are four places to start.

1. **Prayer.** Prayer prepares your heart to hear from God. When you know you have a word from God, prayer gives you greater confidence to communicate it. Seeking God in prayer gives you ears to hear what the Spirit wants you to say.
2. **Preparation.** Paul told Timothy, “Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2). Preparation is spiritual. In fact, preparation helps you say something worth listening to. I create a manuscript for every sermon I preach because it helps me cut out the fluff, focus the message, dissect Scripture, increase clarity, maximize illustrations, improve transitions, and start and end strong.
3. **Practice.** There is nothing spiritual about boring your audience. To become a better communicator, practice in front of three or four people, inviting their honest feedback. Then make necessary adjustments to improve your delivery.
4. **Power.** Paul knew communicating the gospel effectively wasn’t just a matter of human effort. He told the church in Corinth, “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power” (1 Corinthians 2:4–5).

You can pray, prepare, and practice, but you must return to prayer and ask God to work through the message as only He can do. A sermon’s power is not about the volume of the preacher’s voice; it’s about the presence of the Holy Spirit.

### Reflect and Discuss

1. What makes communication most impactful to you?
2. Which of the four keys to communication most challenges you?
3. What other ideas or tips have helped you become a better communicator?

### Apply

Take time to prepare for your next speaking event. It might be a sermon, a vision-casting talk, or even a presentation during a meeting. Put the four tips above into practice, and then evaluate how you’ve improved.

## 5 | OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

# Communicating

Many people say public speaking is their biggest fear, but communication skills help ministry leaders more effectively cast vision, deliver sermons, and conduct meetings.

“Pardon your servant, LORD. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue” (Exodus 4:10).

“Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say’” (Acts 2:14).

Overcoming fears associated with communication:

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Prayer prepares your heart to hear from God. When you know you have a word from God, prayer gives you greater confidence to communicate it.

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4. \_\_\_\_\_.

“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power” (1 Corinthians 2:4–5).

### Apply

Take time to prepare for your next speaking event. It might be a sermon, a vision-casting talk, or even a presentation during a meeting. Put the four tips above into practice, and then evaluate how you’ve improved.

## 6 | OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

# Decision Making

### Team Review

How have the ideas from the last lesson helped you improve your communication?

### Assess

What helps you make good decisions in leadership?

### Insights and Ideas

The toughest decisions always land on the leader's desk. And when the stakes are high, it's easy to second-guess what to do. But good leaders develop a filter for decision making so they can overcome the fear of making the wrong choice. That decision-making filter should take into account six ingredients.

1. **God.** Many things can help with good decision making, but none of them can replace seeking God. James reminds us, "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" (James 1:5).
2. **Research.** The best decision making usually happens when we have the most information. However, *most* doesn't mean *all*. You'll never have all the information, but you should still do appropriate research.
 

Jesus said, "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish'" (Luke 14:28–30).
3. **Experience.** Job 12:12 asks, "Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?" Experience can be a good informer of future choices. Life experience offers tested insight, and that wisdom should inform your decision-making process.
4. **Perspective.** Proverbs 13:20 says, "Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm." Your associations shape your decisions. By seeking counsel, you broaden your perspective on the decisions you need to make. Proverbs 19:20 says, "Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise."
5. **Timing.** The right decision at the wrong time is a lost opportunity. But when your timing is right — for you, your team, and the church — the level of buy-in for the decision naturally increases. When the timing is wrong, even good decisions can produce poor outcomes.
6. **Influencers.** John Maxwell said, "People buy in to the leader before they buy in to the vision." You need buy-in to create forward movement with the decisions you make. If your leaders and influencers don't buy in, you won't get far.

### Reflect and Discuss

1. What kinds of decisions make you most anxious?
2. Which decision-making ingredient is your greatest strength, and which is your greatest weakness?
3. What is a decision you're facing now, and to which of the six ingredients do you need to give more attention?

### Apply

Use the filter above to work through a decision you're considering. Keep this process in mind when approaching future decisions.

## 6

## OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

## Decision Making

Good leaders develop a filter for decision making so they can overcome the fear of making the wrong choice.

A decision-making filter:

1. \_\_\_\_\_.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you” (James 1:5).

2. \_\_\_\_\_.

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish’” (Luke 14:28–30).

3. \_\_\_\_\_.

“Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?” (Job 12:12).

4. \_\_\_\_\_.

“Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm” (Proverbs 13:20)

“Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise” (Proverbs 19:20).

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When your timing is right — for you, your team, and the church — the level of buy-in for the decision naturally increases.

6. \_\_\_\_\_.

“People buy in to the leader before they buy in to the vision.” — John Maxwell

### Apply

Use the filter above to work through a decision you’re considering. Keep this process in mind when approaching future decisions.

# 7 | OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

## Inadequacy

### Team Review

How did you work through your decision?

### Assess

When are you most likely to feel inadequate in your calling?

### Insights and Ideas

Imposter syndrome is the fear that people will discover we're not as good as many perceive us to be.

For example, if you're known for speaking on a certain topic, you may feel you don't live up to the expertise you exude. Or if people often say you are a great parent, you may feel inadequate when your kids are acting up. We can begin to feel like imposters, hoping nobody finds out we're not *that* good.

Similarly, ministers can have a reputation as great leaders even while feeling inadequate for the job.

A biblical example of imposter syndrome is Moses. When God called Moses to lead the Israelites, Moses said, "Who am I ...," "Suppose I go ...," "What if they ...," "I have never been ...," and, "Please send someone else" (Exodus 3:11,13; 4:1,10,13). Simply put, Moses was saying, "I'm not good enough."

How do we overcome the fear of inadequacy that leads to imposter syndrome? We can remind ourselves of three important truths from the story of Moses.

1. *God is with you.* Moses asked, "Who am I ...?" (Exodus 3:11). The Lord responded by moving Moses' focus to God's faithfulness: "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain" (verse 12).

With God, nothing is impossible. We may feel inadequate, but He isn't.

2. *God sent you.* God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Exodus 3:14).

We must remind ourselves that if the assignment is from God, He will see it through. Even when we feel inadequate, God believes in us enough to send us. That reality should fill us with confidence and dependence on God.

3. *God equipped you.* When Moses doubted, God asked him, "What is that in your hand?" Moses replied that it was a staff, and the Lord said, "Throw it on the ground." (Exodus 4:2–3). The staff turned into a snake, and then back into a staff. This assured Moses that God's power would go with him.

God has likewise equipped you with His gifts and power to carry out His work. When you feel like an imposter, remind yourself, *God has gifted me. God has empowered me. I have what I need to do what He has called me to do.*

### Reflect and Discuss

1. How do feelings of inadequacy keep us from maximizing God's call on our lives?
2. Which message from God do you most need to hear when you feel inadequate for your calling: God is with me, God has sent me, or God has equipped me?
3. How can we encourage one another when we experience imposter syndrome?

### Apply

If you're experiencing imposter syndrome, read Moses' story in Exodus 3–4. Then rest in the knowledge that God is with you, He has sent you, and He has equipped you.



## 7 | OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

# Inadequacy

Imposter syndrome is the fear that people will discover we're not as good as many perceive us to be.

Ministers can have a reputation as great leaders even while feeling inadequate for the job. A biblical example of imposter syndrome is Moses. When God called Moses to lead the Israelites, Moses said, "Who am I ...," "Suppose I go ...," "What if they ...," "I have never been ...," and, "Please send someone else" (Exodus 3:11,13; 4:1,10,13). Simply put, Moses was saying, "I'm not good enough."

Overcoming imposter syndrome:

1. *God is* \_\_\_\_\_ *you.*

"I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain" (Exodus 3:12).

2. *God* \_\_\_\_\_ *you.*

"I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Exodus 3:14).

3. *God* \_\_\_\_\_ *you.*

"What is that in your hand?" (Exodus 4:2).

### Apply

If you're experiencing imposter syndrome, read Moses' story in Exodus 3–4. Then rest in the knowledge that God is with you, He has sent you, and He has equipped you.



## Risk Taking

### Team Review

How has God encouraged you over the past week when you felt inadequate?

### Assess

What scares you most about taking risks?

### Insights and Ideas

When venturing into new territory, it can feel risky, and with every risk comes the fear it won't work out. We worry we'll look foolish, feel embarrassed, or experience utter failure.

But God isn't a "safe" God. Yes, God is a Strong Tower to whom we can run for comfort and security, but He doesn't call us to live safe, predictable, faithless lives. Instead, God calls us to step out of our comfort zones and do things that require trusting Him.

As the saying goes, "The point of life isn't to arrive safely at death." The apostle Paul said, "We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). Faith can feel risky, but faith is the currency of heaven. Hebrews 11:1 describes faith as "confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

The *not seeing* is the hard part. It's the part that feels risky. It's the part that whispers, *What if it doesn't work?* But faith is where God moves. Faith is where leaders see the greatest breakthroughs and the biggest victories.

Until our internal measure of faith exceeds the external measure of fear, we'll never experience all God has for us. Here are 10 practical ways to increase your faith:

1. Engage God's *Word* every day.
2. Keep a *gratitude* journal.
3. Surround yourself with *positive, faith-filled* people.
4. Disconnect from sources that perpetuate *fear* and *anxiety*.
5. Read *biographies* of leaders who believed God for big things.
6. Pray with people who actually *believe* what they're praying.
7. Set *bold goals* that require more than you to reach them.
8. Immerse yourself in creative and innovative *environments*.
9. Faithfully and consistently *pray* and *believe* for something greater.
10. Take a step of *faith* today.

These steps aren't rocket science, but it's amazing how often we fail to take them. In fact, we often do the opposite. We neglect our time in God's Word. We complain about what we don't have. We listen to negative people and consume large doses of anxiety-inducing media. We read social media posts rather than books that bolster our faith. We pray with faithless people and set easy, comfortable goals. We don't venture outside of our routine environments. And we've stopped praying and believing for something greater.

Simply put, we have a tendency to live by sight, not by faith.

### Reflect and Discuss

1. What bolsters your faith in God and moves you to take more risks?
2. Which of the 10 faith-building steps most challenges you?
3. For what things do you need to start praying and trusting more?

### Apply

Review the list of 10 ways to increase your faith. Pick two you aren't currently doing and make them daily habits over the next 30 days. Journal the difference it makes, and then reflect on your next steps after 30 days.

## 8

## OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

## Risk Taking

“We live by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1).

Ten ways to increase your faith:

1. Engage God’s \_\_\_\_\_ every day.
2. Keep a \_\_\_\_\_ journal.
3. Surround yourself with \_\_\_\_\_, faith-filled people.
4. Disconnect from sources that perpetuate \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Read \_\_\_\_\_ of leaders who believed God for big things.
6. Pray with people who actually \_\_\_\_\_ what they’re praying.
7. Set bold \_\_\_\_\_ that require more than you to reach them.
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We often do the opposite. We neglect our time in God’s Word. We complain about what we don’t have. We listen to negative people and consume large doses of anxiety-inducing media. We read social media posts rather than books that bolster our faith. We pray with faithless people and set easy, comfortable goals. We don’t venture outside of our routine environments. And we’ve stopped praying and believing for something greater.

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### Apply

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## Standing Up

### Team Review

Which two faith-building steps did you start?

### Assess

When did you regret not standing up for someone or something that mattered?

### Insights and Ideas

Everyone experiences regrets. In his extensive research on the topic, author Daniel Pink collected more than 16,000 regrets from people in 105 countries. One of the four major categories Pink identified was “moral regrets” — remorse over doing the wrong thing.

Failing to stand up for what’s right often leads to such regrets. For example, maybe you turned a blind eye when someone was being bullied. Perhaps an organization you worked for did something unethical and you ignored it. Maybe you gave yourself a pass on subtle compromises in character.

Such situations are opportunities to take a stand and do the right thing, but fear can hold us back. We worry about how someone will respond. We fear what others might say. We dread the potential fallout.

Scripture is filled with stories of leaders who stood up and spoke up, and of others who sat down and did nothing. Esther knew standing up could cost her everything. But Mordecai sent her a letter with a dire warning: “Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:13–14).

Our priorities in ministry should be the glory of God and the good of others. Therefore, if we want opportunities to stand up and do what’s right, we should continually ask ourselves four questions:

1. What *need* can I meet?
2. What *problem* can I solve?
3. What *person* can I help?
4. What *disciple* can I make?

Our answers to these questions will show us how to stand up and make our leadership count. This process can help us overcome the fear of not standing up for what matters most. When we’re too scared to answer these questions, it’s an indicator we’ve lost our courage to lead.

### Reflect and Discuss

1. What are the most common excuses you’ve encountered for not standing up for what is right?
2. What lessons from Esther’s life speak to you about having courage in the face of pressure and difficulty?
3. How do the four questions above challenge you to stand up and make your leadership count?

### Apply

Take some time to answer four questions: What need can I meet? What problem can I solve? What person can I help? What disciple can I make? Then have the courage to stand up and make a difference in these areas.



## Standing Up

In his extensive research on the topic, author Daniel Pink collected more than 16,000 regrets from people in 105 countries. One of the four major categories Pink identified was “moral regrets” — remorse over doing the wrong thing.

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Four questions to help you stand up:

1. *What* \_\_\_\_\_ *can I meet?*

2. *What* \_\_\_\_\_ *can I solve?*

3. *What* \_\_\_\_\_ *can I help?*

4. *What* \_\_\_\_\_ *can I make?*

### Apply

Take some time to answer four questions: What need can I meet? What problem can I solve? What person can I help? What disciple can I make? Then have the courage to stand up and make a difference in these areas.

**Team Review**

What did you do this past week to stand up for what is right?

**Assess**

What does living a life of significance mean to you?

**Insights and Ideas**

Living a life that doesn't matter is a major fear for many people. Significance is not a matter of notoriety or fame. In fact, most people live and die in relative obscurity. But that doesn't mean their lives are insignificant.

The question is, are we making each day count? How we invest our days determines what kind of legacy we leave. You can't decide *when* you finish, but you can determine *how* you finish.

Legacy doesn't happen in a single day; it happens every day. It doesn't start when you take your last breath. It starts when you make your first choice.

Your daily decisions form the runway of your legacy. You choose your legacy every day. Death is simply the stamp that delivers it — for good or bad — to future generations. If you want to *leave* a legacy worth remembering when you die, you have to *write* a legacy worth recording while you're alive.

Psalm 90:12 says, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." Instead of worrying, we can maximize our days in three areas:

1. **Character.** Who you are matters more than what you accomplish. Your character is extraordinarily important. Perhaps more than anything else, character is what people remember. Is your life marked by integrity? Do you exhibit the fruit of the Spirit? Are you loving, generous, humble, forgiving and honest?
2. **Contribution.** Most people make a contribution of some kind. That contribution is usually connected to their gifts, abilities, skills and resources. How are you leveraging your God-given gifts and resources to make the world a better place and point people to Jesus? How do you maximize your giftedness for the good of others?
3. **Connection.** Forming connections is all about the people in whom you invest. Pastor Andy Stanley said, "Your greatest contribution to the kingdom of God may not be something you do, but someone you raise." The investments you make in people — whether family members, friends, mentees, employees, church members, or the needy — are part of your legacy.

**Reflect and Discuss**

1. What person did you know who left a remarkable legacy you hope to emulate?
2. For what do you most want your life to be remembered?
3. What do the three areas of significance and legacy — character, contribution and character — mean to you?

**Apply**

Think about what a significant life looks like. What changes do you need to make now to invest your days well and leave a legacy?

# 10 | OVERCOMING LEADERSHIP FEARS

## Significance

How we invest our days determines what kind of legacy we leave. You can't decide \_\_\_\_\_ you finish, but you can determine \_\_\_\_\_ you finish.

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“Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).

Three keys to significance:

1. \_\_\_\_\_.

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2. \_\_\_\_\_.

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### Apply

Think about what a significant life looks like. What changes do you need to make now to invest your days well and leave a legacy?