

The Seven Traits of a Healthy Church Leader

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I am encouraged.

I am really hopeful.

I see more signs of healthy church leaders today than I have seen at any point in my 30 years of ministry. This trend portends well for the future health of our congregations. Healthy church leaders will lead churches to greater health.

The seven traits presume foundational issues such as an affirmation of the truthfulness of the Bible, the exclusivity of the gospel, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Emanating from these foundational issues are key leadership traits. If a leader has all of the following seven traits, it is likely that leader will lead the congregation to greater health.

1. **They embrace change.** Healthy leaders do not fear change. To the contrary, they

embrace it. They understand the constant power and hope of the gospel only presents opportunities. They don't complain about change; they get excited about it.

2. **They have a healthy grasp of history.** Healthy church leaders are grateful for the past; but they do not dwell there. They take the lessons and the leaders of the past as steps to move forward in the future. Their attitude toward the past is not nostalgia. Rather, they respect the past without revering the past.
3. **They constantly evaluate methodologies.** These leaders are not program-driven, building-driven, or procedure-driven. They are constantly asking how they and their churches can do better. They don't do things the way they've always done them. They constantly and persistently evaluate everything.
4. **They intentionally interact with non-Christians.** They get out of their offices and into the community. They attend community functions and make friends with non-believers. They believe the Great Commission is a mandate for them personally.
5. **They accept responsibility.** These leaders don't play the blame game. They know God has called them to lead their churches, and they must accept the mantle of responsibility. It's not the members' fault. It's not the denomination's fault. It's not the fault of other staff. And it's not the community's fault.
6. **They see reality.** Healthy church leaders have a clear and firm grasp of reality. They know how their churches are doing, for better or worse. They don't try to rationalize away difficult news. Yet they readily celebrate good news. They want to know the unvarnished truth, because they know a clear vision of reality is critical to moving forward.
7. **They invest in one (and only one) major outwardly-focused effort at a time.** This trait is a characteristic we have been seeing for the past few years. It is one of focused simplicity. The leader is always doing one more thing to move the church and himself to a greater outward focus. But it only one thing at a time. This discovery has been a major insight we have gleaned specifically with revitalized churches. We will unpack this trait with more detail in the future.

I remain an obnoxious optimist about the future health of churches. And one key reason is that I am seeing more and more church leaders with these seven traits.

These are hopeful times and exciting times.

Let me hear from you.

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