

4 Daily Practices to Strengthen Your Leadership

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When you work your muscles using weights and intentional lifts, you become physically stronger. When you intentionally engage and work at specific skills and leadership practices, you strengthen your leadership. The opposite is also true. Over time muscles that are not used or strengthened become weaker and will eventually begin to atrophy.

The same idea is true about your leadership. The skill and influence you have today as a leader will slowly decrease if you do not continually practice leading what you have not yet led (more weight) and intentionally grow your leadership ability.

There are several ways to strengthen your leadership such as receive coaching, read good books, listen to helpful podcasts, and participate in roundtables etc. But you need targeted and specific skills (muscles) to work on if you want to be able to measure the progress of your growth as a leader.

And that requires practice. Coaching, books, conferences etc., are all needed and helpful, but you must put what you learn about leadership into practice if you want to measurably improve.

Before we get to the practices, it's important to acknowledge what is often assumed but not always stated. That is, these practices must be built upon a foundation that makes them sustainable.

That foundation includes:

- A close and consistent walk with God and growing prayer life.
- Personal integrity that people can count on and trust.
- Personal freedom that allows you to be authentic, secure, and self-aware.

You could name a couple more I'm sure, but we have at least stated something important before moving to the focus of this blog post.

The following four daily practices, in many ways are the irreducible essentials to becoming a more effective leader.

4 Daily Practices:

1) Help people

The solid foundation of God's love as expressed through Jesus' life demonstrates His deep and genuine care for us, and models how we are to love and shepherd others.

Take a minute to reflect on God as our helper.

1. *Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me.*
Psalm 54:4
2. *I lift up my eyes to the mountains — where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.*
Psalm 121:1-2
3. *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*
Isaiah 41:10
4. *So, we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”*
Hebrews 13:6

As Christian leaders we help people by pointing them to God, but we also help them with their practical needs. This can include almost anything such as coaching a staff member, helping a couple navigate a difficult marriage, or sharing wisdom with someone who is struggling with their finances. The list is nearly endless. We help people.

Leadership always starts at a heart level, if you don't care, you can't lead with God's love.

DAILY QUESTION: Who am I helping and in what way?

2) Solve problems

Much of your time as a leader is spent solving problems. The art is in knowing the right problems to give your time to and which ones to selectively ignore. Problem solving is an art, but it's also personal.

We all have pet projects, little things we care a lot about, and occasionally personal passion for things we need to ignore, they might be important to you, but they are not a high priority.

You can't solve all the problems, so focus on the ones that must be solved and you are the right person to solve it. Otherwise, exercise the leadership discipline to delegate it, or literally let it go. Don't get sucked into solving problems that someone loud and persistent expects you to solve.

Here's a simple decision-making grid to help you focus on the right problems:

- Is the problem mission critical? (Can prevent progress of the overall vision)
- Does the problem involve a key relationship only you can handle?
- Can the problem be solved by someone else?

- Does your lead team agree that you need solve the problem?
- Have you prayed and asked God for His direction in the matter?

If it's the right problem and you are the right person, then ask:

- What resources do I need?
- What is the required timeline?
- What is the overall strategy?
- What are the anticipated results?

Your ability and willingness to solve the right problems, including the hard problems, will elevate your value as a leader.

DAILY QUESTION: What problem am I working on today?

3) Make progress

We all have days, sometimes even an extended season, when we feel like we are spinning our wheels — working hard, but going nowhere. This is one of the most frustrating things a leader can experience.

Especially because we know that as leaders, we are not only designed to make progress we are responsible for progress. The people are counting on us, not to do it alone, but to lead the way.

Leading the way begins with clearly identifying direction and a course of action.

Progress requires:

- A clearly identified direction
- A team capable of leading in the right direction
- A strategy that unifies the team (staff and volunteers) to make progress together
- A set of clearly identifiable and measurable metrics and outcomes
- The flexibility to adapt and the discipline to keep going

Understand that setbacks will happen, that's why resilience is such an important part of a leader's character. Please know that no matter how big the setback or how overwhelming the pressure, there is a way forward.

One tool to get started is to right-size the problem. Right-sizing the problem is to give it crystal clear definition and have *in writing* what it will take to solve it, then break it into bite-sized pieces.

Here's an approach that works: Go back to the five bullets titled "Progress requires" (above)

Address each point starting with the first one, “A clearly identified direction” and work through the list by breaking down each component that needs attention into daily-sized items to work on.

You don’t have to solve the problem in one day, but it’s important to do *something* every day toward the solution.

DAILY QUESTION: How am I making progress today?

4) Develop leaders

Let’s state the obvious, without more and better leaders you will never realize the vision God has given you. Who are you developing?

The weekly pressure of work demands will crowd out the need for leadership development unless you make it a priority in your calendar rhythms. The secret to success in developing leaders is found in two concepts, simplicity, and consistency.

If you allow leadership development to become complicated, you’ll quit because you will run out of time to prepare adequately. Your methodology isn’t as important as your consistency. You can develop leaders using a pipeline model, groups model, classroom setting, and of course one to one.