

# THE PASTOR'S COACH

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The Pastor's Coach  
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# Introduction



THIS book is about leadership—the gift of leadership. It is about my leadership and your leadership. When I refer to leadership, I am talking about the spiritual gift of leadership mentioned in Romans 12:8, which says if you are a leader, you are to lead well, to lead with diligence. The implication is if you are a leader, you are expected to develop that spiritual gift of leadership and to use it with diligence and excellence.

I don't know about you, but I have been in leadership roles all my life. As the eldest son, I was expected to be a leader to my siblings and younger family members. As a pastor's son, my father placed leadership expectations and responsibilities on me at an early age. In school, I was selected to lead and influence by my classmates and friends. When I graduated, I entered leadership roles immediately. I became a pastor, then was asked to serve pastors as a Conference leader. Later, I served as a Conference Executive Secretary, and a Conference President. And now, I lead as a pastor and an executive coach for pastors. I have spent years providing spiritual direction to individuals, groups, and organizations and this has forced me to grow.

This book, and the Pastor's Coach podcast, that birthed it, is about lessons I have learned along the way. Many of these lessons I have learned the hard way. I have also learned God has different ways of developing a leader. I have also discovered if you discern and apply those development lessons throughout your life, you will experience growth that will lead you to greater success. Beyond that, if you acknowledge God is developing you over a lifetime, you are more likely to learn well.

This book was written for pastors and Christian leaders, especially potential leaders who:

- Want to know what God intends for their lives.
- Who are beginning of their vocational journey and are looking for their place in ministry and leadership.
- Who want to develop the spiritual gifts God has given them.
- Who want to understand how to grow and want to grow others around them.

I've written this book to help you recognize, develop, and refine some of the key qualities and characteristics to be an effective pastor; the kind of pastor people want to listen to and follow. As you read this book, my hope is you will sense God's Spirit leading you and growing you. I want to encourage you to live with this book for a while. Read a chapter, then give it some time. Use it to reflect, review, and renew your mind. If the quality covered in that chapter is a weak area in your life, spend some time thinking on the topic, writing notes, or journaling, before moving on to the next chapter, and think about ways you can apply what you are reading right away. Most chapters are stand-alone, which means you can read them in any order. If you see a chapter that is speaking to you now, go to it first. Feel free to skip chapters. Give yourself permission to return to it (or not) later.

As you read ask yourself, how can I become a better pastor, a better leader for God? This is a question I ask myself regularly. I am constantly searching for new things to read, and learn, and grow. Think of this book as a development tool. It is not meant to be read through in one sitting. It is designed (like the podcast) to be consumed and digested in small bites. Put it somewhere you can find it and read it several days a week.

As I mentioned, I have served as a pastor and church administrator. A year and a half ago, I chose to go back to be a pastor at the local church, and to coach pastors. I have been in ministry over 35 years and coached pastors for over a decade, and I am still learning about pastoral

leadership and development. I have not arrived. This book is not the final answer or the only thoughts on the subject. I am still growing and learning, and I hope to keep growing until the day I die.

One other thing, I have not journeyed alone. A lot of people have contributed to my learning and growth. If you are on the journey alone, strongly consider who to invite to be part of your inner circle. It should be someone who will encourage you, to mentor you, or coach you, but also someone who will hold you accountable. Today is the perfect time to start. It is said a wise person learns from other's mistakes, but the wisest person learns from other's successes as well. Surround yourself with others who have experience success. Today, I stand on the wisdom, knowledge, support, and encouragement of others.

What I am sharing with you in this book is not a new revelation. It is not complicated and can be learned by nearly anyone. Plato once wrote that "The greater part of instruction is being reminded of things you already know." This book is an attempt to remind you of things that are worth being reminded of. Many of these reminders, or lessons, are ones I have learned the hard way. These days I shake my head at some of the mistakes I have made and am encouraged that I am wiser today than in years past. The only thing more painful than learning from experience is not learning from experience. I believe your ability to improve and grow depends on you and how you respond. Leadership development is a process and anything you can do to

reinforce it helps make it more permanent. Becoming a better leader will make you a better pastor, and it will pay dividends, not just vocationally but personally.

Leaders need a roadmap. Each journey is unique. Leadership is a lifetime of God's lessons. Your own journey will have mountain tops moments and valley moments. If you allow him, God will take you through different leadership stages on your way to a lifetime of service. I hope this book will give you insights for your journey. My desire is that the words will prompt your thinking and that you will convert that thinking into action and that this action will make a difference in your life and the lives of others. Turn the page and let's get started.





# Replenishing Your Ministry Bucket



I want to start with a couple of self-assessment questions: How depleted are you these days? Are you feeling burned out? Maybe discouraged?

Last year I read a study which discovered 42% of pastors have thought about quitting ministry. The number one reason? Stress. How are you doing today? If you find yourself in the 42%, what are you doing about it?

In Luke 10, Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet, and her sister, Martha, is in the kitchen, and Martha is mad. You might know the story. Do you remember what Jesus said to Martha? To paraphrase, he told her that her only hope was to pull up a chair, unplug from all the busyness, and join the conversation with the only One who could restore her frenetic heart, settle her rushed spirit, and give her peace and joy.

Over the years, I have heard many pastors talk about how exhausted, depleted, discouraged, stressed, overscheduled, and overwhelmed they feel... and that's on

Mondays. How do you deal with such feelings? How do you function when you find yourself in that place?

There is an old saying that you can't give what you don't have, which leads to the question, how can you effectively minister to others when you are running on empty? How do you meet the expectations of your congregation? How can you be fully present with your family, especially when you are struggling to just get out of bed?

You may have heard the illustration from leadership experts that your life or ministry is like a bucket. If your ministry bucket is empty, you'll have nothing more to give. If this sounds familiar, here is what they (and I) have discovered: The longer you feel empty, the more you'll find yourself in a bad place; a place where you make bad decisions about how to try to fill that empty bucket. We all have friends or know of pastors who have found themselves in that place. Maybe you find yourself there right now.

Two questions: One, what do you do when your bucket is empty? And two, whose responsibility is it to fill that bucket?

To answer these questions, you must start with more questions: What does it feel like when your bucket is full? How does it feel when you are connected to Jesus; when things in your family are going well; when your schedule is sane, and you are eating right, sleeping right, and exercising?

I have found that when I am filled up—when my bucket is full—I am more attentive, I hear the voice of God better, I listen to my spouse and can truly hear her. This is how I know I am listening well. In those moments, I make better decisions about my schedule, food choices, and temptations on how to use my time. I react better in difficult conversations, I am more patient with others (especially my family), I respond to challenges with calmness and peace. I live with a non-anxious presence.

On the other hand, when you are empty, what does that feel like? Let's do a little symptom check: What are some responses of a depleted person? Easily irritated? Frustrated? Impatient? Depressed? Anxious? Some withdraw from people. Some overeat overmedicate in some way, which leads to addiction. Some work harder, driving themselves and others harder. Some get angry and lash out at those they love the most. Some escape into movies, magazines, or other distracting pastimes. No one is at their best when they are depleted.

What do you need to do to replenish and refill your bucket? There are a lot of suggestions out there, but I will give you my prescription, my replenishment strategy—the things which have worked for me, helping me feel at my best. I pray my best prayers, make my best decisions, love my family well, and hear the promptings of God when I am replenished.

First, determine your bucket level with a regular self-assessment. Where are you right now? Be honest! Don't exaggerate one way or the other. How full is your bucket today? If you are not sure, ask someone who knows you well, but note that not knowing your own bucket level could be a sign you need replenishment.

Second, come up with a plan to replenish yourself. This may take some trial and error. Personally, I talk to or hang out with life-giving people. These are joyful, positive, encouragers and listeners who won't judge or criticize. I am fortunate to have great relationships I have cultivated with life-giving people, and it's possible you are, too.

I also engage in life-giving activities—things which will fill me up. For me, this usually looks like kayaking, golf, or reading. Because I am an introvert, which means I regain energy by being alone, I build alone time into my day. I find a quiet place where I won't be interrupted and a comfortable chair, and do some reading. This is life-giving for me. What works for you? If you don't know, you might have to try a few things before settling on what's best for you.

Third, focus on family. This is precisely why our family moved recently—to be with family. See, family is not a burden to me. It is life-giving. Over the years, I have been accused of spending a lot of time with my kids, and being close to them. Guilty! For some, this is a chore, but I love to stay connected with my daughters and sons-in-law. They fill me up. I try to build into them, and I know when I am older, they will build into me. Psalm 127:3 says, “Children are a heritage from the Lord and a reward from him.” This is absolutely true for me.

Fourth, spend time with friends who build you up. I am blessed with wonderful friendships, some going back 30-35 years. Those relationships are precious and build me up. Our conversations and our time together are life-giving and energizing. But these relationships need to be cultivated. They don't just happen.

Are you investing in developing life-giving relationships? If not, maybe start with choosing one person to build a life-giving friendship with. Or maybe you need to restore some relationships. Maybe you had energizing, life-giving friendships which are no longer active. Is there someone you need to apologize to or reconnect with so that relationship will not deplete but replenish both you and them?

The fifth and final strategy I have for you here is regular exercise. I go to the gym three days a week. I walk with my wife three or four evenings a week. I have found regular exercise goes a long way in making me feel whole,

replenished, and ready to go on. How are you doing in this area?

How are you doing today? Are you feeling exhausted, depleted, discouraged, over-scheduled, or overwhelmed? If you answered “yes” to any of these, I urge you to create a replenishment strategy. You won't regret it.