

THE ART OF 
PASTORAL SUCCESSION

with Carey Nieuwhof and Sean Morgan

APPLICATION
GUIDE

The Art of Pastoral Succession

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Introduction

Welcome to The Art of Pastoral Succession!

If you're working through this Application Guide alongside The Art of Pastoral Succession course, I imagine you're experiencing all different kinds of emotions.

Whether you're a new incoming pastor taking over the reins from the current pastor or you're the outgoing pastor passing the reins to an incoming pastor, it's natural to feel anxious, excited, and probably a little stressed during this period of transition.

But let's take a moment to pause and take a deep breath.

Be encouraged! Succession and leadership transitions are good for churches. According to a Barna report, churches are twice as likely to be healthy and growing after a successful leadership transition than before!

Over the next 9 sessions, we'll walk you through everything you need to know to plan and execute a successful succession and leadership transition. By the end of this course, you'll be an expert in succession planning.

But, first, who is this course for?

We designed this course for three primary audiences:

- New incoming pastors
- Outgoing lead pastors
- Church leaders present before, during, and after the transition (“Bridge leaders”)

To take full advantage of the course, we recommend involving all three parties in discussions related to the course content.

Remember: The Church will outlast all of us. We get to steward a season of leadership and influence but God's work will continue without us...and that's a beautiful thing.



Session 1

Session 1: Is a Transition Right For You?

In Session 1 of *The Art of Pastoral Succession*, we explore a very important question: “Are you (and your church) ready for a pastoral transition?” This is an extremely consequential question that must be repeatedly asked by all parties involved throughout the process.

To the Outgoing Pastor

How do you know it’s time to go?

Addressing pastors who are thinking about moving on to the next stage of their life or career, Carey encourages potentially-outgoing pastors to ask these questions of themselves:

- **How is the level of my energy and enthusiasm?** Of course, our energy level wanes over time (especially as we age), but compare/contrast your level of enthusiasm for your role with how you felt when you started ministry. Have you noticed a precipitous decline?
- **Have I solved the problems I created that would be a burden on my successor?** Get your ducks in a row so your successor can begin their tenure without having to clean up after you.
- **Has God given me a vision for “my next?”** You need to have an idea, vision, and plan for what comes next for you after you leave your current role.
- **Has God made it clear who my successor is?** This may not be entirely up to you, but you should participate in the search for your successor.

Not being honest with oneself regarding these questions can have long-lasting effects on the overall health of the church in the short- and long-run.

To the Incoming Pastor

How do you know you’re the right fit for the church? How do you know the church is a right fit for you?

In this section, we break down the motives and red flags you should be aware of and questions you should be asking yourself before agreeing to a lead pastor role.

Assessing Your Own Motives and Gifts

The weight of leading a local church is far too heavy for this to be about a job and decision. Your decision must be about an obedience to God's call.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself to discern whether you're ready for the role:

1. Are you running toward something or away from something?
2. If you left your current position right now, would you be welcomed back?
3. How have past experiences as a point leader gone for you?
4. Are you saying yes to God or trying to prove something to yourself/others?

Be brutally honest with yourself when answering the above questions.

Assessing the Church

It's not just about whether you're ready to become a church's lead pastor. You need to discern if the church is ready for you and if you're ready for specific challenges you'll be facing as the lead pastor.

A few basic things you need to consider, include:

- Theological alignment with the church's doctrinal statements
- Whether or not your excited live in the region
- The church's financial situation (Debt/Mortgage/Operation Expenses/Budgets)
- The structure/processes of the Elder/Deacon board

Of potentially bigger concern is the church's openness/resistance to change. Here's a helpful matrix to score the church's mission execution potential:

	No, almost never (1)	Sometimes (2)	Yes, almost always (3)
Spends 10% or more of their budget on new initiatives.			
Has a strategic plan that includes 1 or more new initiatives each year.			
Has a reputation in their community for doing ministry in innovative ways to reach new people.			
Have made noticeable changes to their weekend worship to be more relevant.			

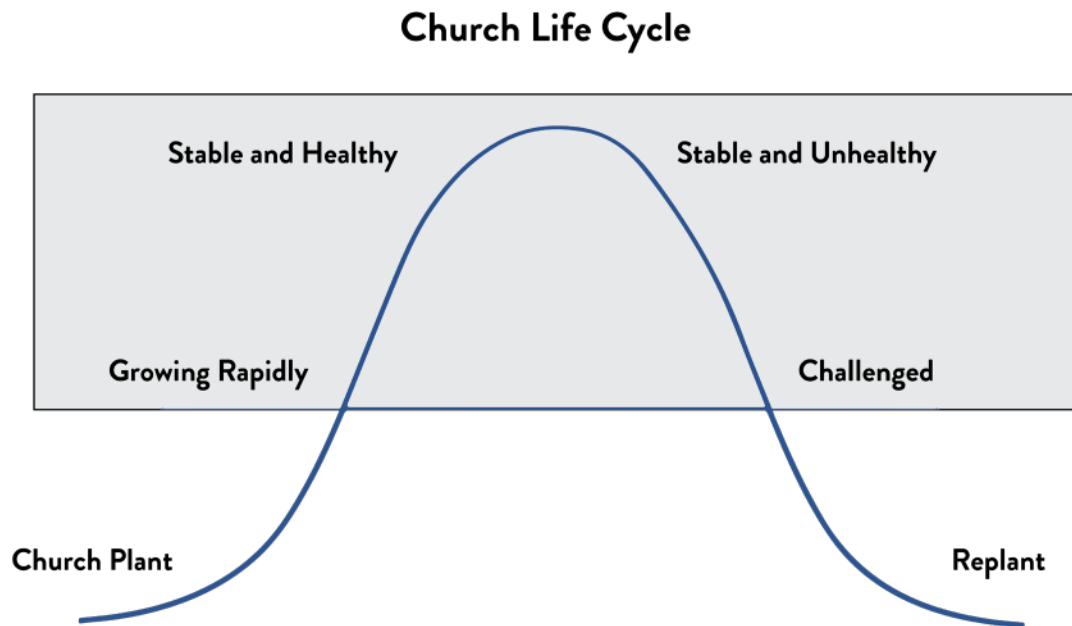
Here's how calculate the church's score:

4-6 Points (Low) - This church will have difficulty adjusting to change

7-9 Points (Moderate) - This church will adjust easier to change

10-12 Points (High) - This church intuitively accepts that they need to always be doing new things to reach

Additionally, you'll need to assess where the church sits on this Church Life Cycle graph:

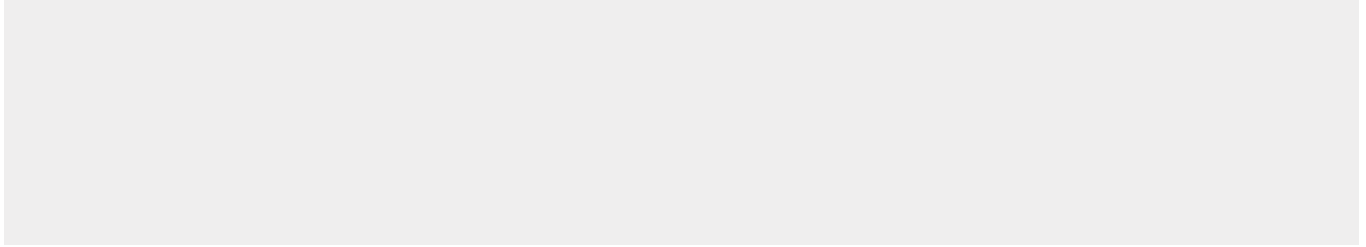


Finally, ask yourself some questions about whether or not the current lead pastor and their spouse are preparing themselves for the transition in a healthy way.

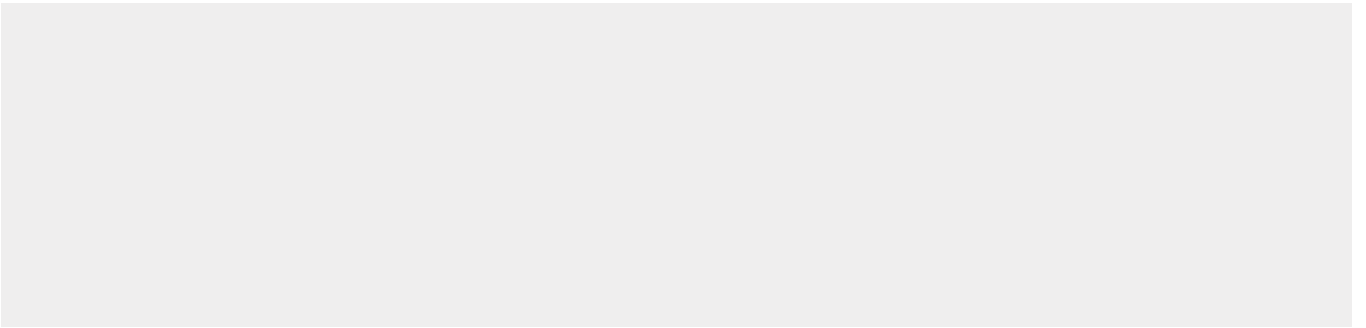
- What's next for them?
- Are they preparing for/getting comfortable with obscurity/taking a backseat?

Application Guide

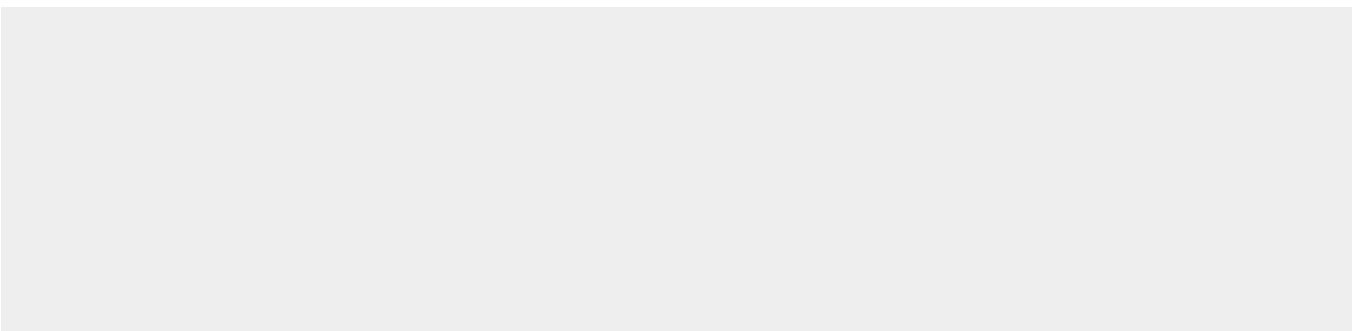
1. When you hear “Be Encouraged” about transitions, do you find that easy or hard to do? What might be the reason(s) for that response?



2. How are you getting ready for how much work a GREAT transition will take?



3. What do you think the previous answer reveals about you? What about your church?



Resources

[Mission Alignment - Percept Ministry Area Profile](#) (\$219)

[A Hero's Farewell](#) - Jerry Sonnenfeld



Session 2

Session 2: Negotiating Your Salary

In Session 2 of *The Art of Pastoral Succession*, we talk salary. Often an awkward topic for various reasons, negotiating an appropriate salary is a key aspect of sustaining a successful ministry over the long haul.

When to Talk About the Salary

The best time to address the salary of an incoming pastoral position is early and upfront. For the incoming candidate, the best time to negotiate your salary is after the church has made you an offer - as this means they believe you're the best candidate.

How to Talk About the Salary

The church should reveal the salary range early on in the interview process. They should also be the ones to make the first salary offer.

Note to the Incoming Candidate: Your current salary isn't relative to the discussion unless they are offering less than what you are making now.

How to Negotiate a Salary

Step 1: Bring the Facts

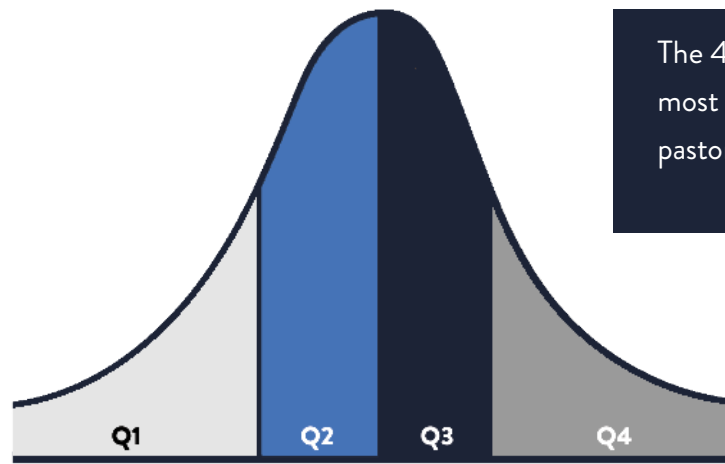
If you're going to negotiate a higher salary after the initial offer, you're going to have to do some research.

Don't rely on feelings here. Pay for a good salary report. You might want to incorporate some of this data into your pitch:

- Salary data for similar-sized/budgeted churches
- Recent macroeconomic developments (i.e. inflation)
- Average cost-of-living expenses for the region

Step 2: Remove Numbers From the Equation

Instead of fixating on dollars, focus on quartiles first. All of the salaries for equivalent positions fall into one of four quartiles on a bell curve graph.



The 4th Quartile represents the most senior and experienced pastors - thus the higher salaries.

Pastors in Q1 (Lowest 25%) get paid the least; Pastors in Q4 (Highest 25%) get paid the most.

If you've been made an offer, you know you're the top choice. Therefore, you have good reason to negotiate into the upper 2nd Quartile or even within the 3rd Quartile.

Once everyone agrees with your placement within a quartile, then add the numbers for your research. This will narrow the salary range from which you'll want to negotiate.

Remember: What your predecessor made is irrelevant to your salary negotiation.

Step 3: Bonuses

If you're unable to meet your desired salary upfront, a bonus (like at the holidays) could be one way to negotiate that number.

Step 4: Non-Monetary Benefits

You may be unable to reach your desired salary. However, there are other benefits that can easily "fill the gap" that you may find more valuable than money. Here are some benefits you should address and/or use during your salary negotiation:

- Time-Off Policy/Vacation Days
- Sabbaticals
- Health Insurance
- Leadership Development Resources (Book/Conference/Course Budes)

And, remember: The right staff will help you thrive more than a pay raise!

Application Guide

For the Incoming Pastor

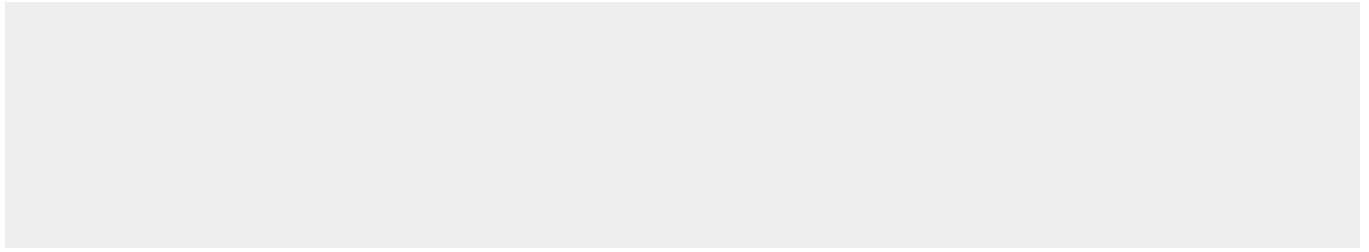
1. Do you actually believe you deserve fair and even generous compensation? Why or why not?

2. Do you believe Paul's words in 1 Timothy 5 that a pastor is worthy of double honor? How does the rubber meet the road when he further states the worker is worth their wages?

3. How well have you negotiated salary and benefits in the past?

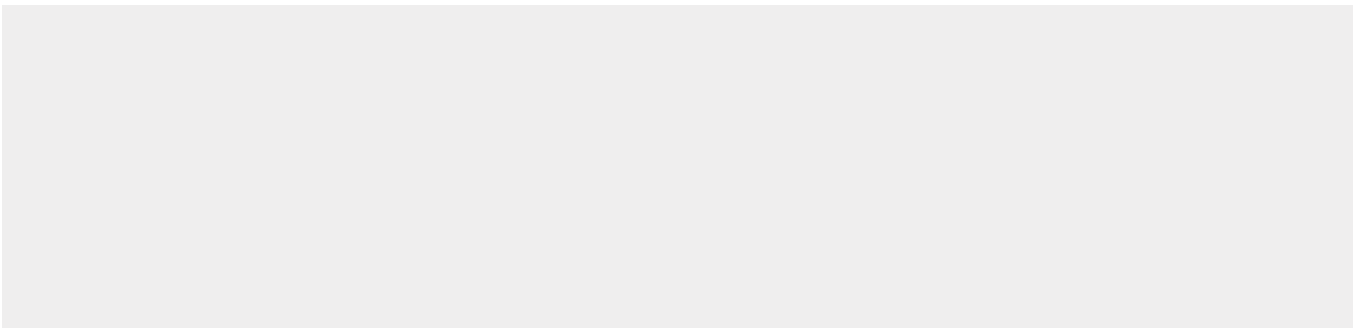
4. What part of this lesson do you anticipate will be easiest for you to master?

5. What part of this lesson will be most difficult for you to master?

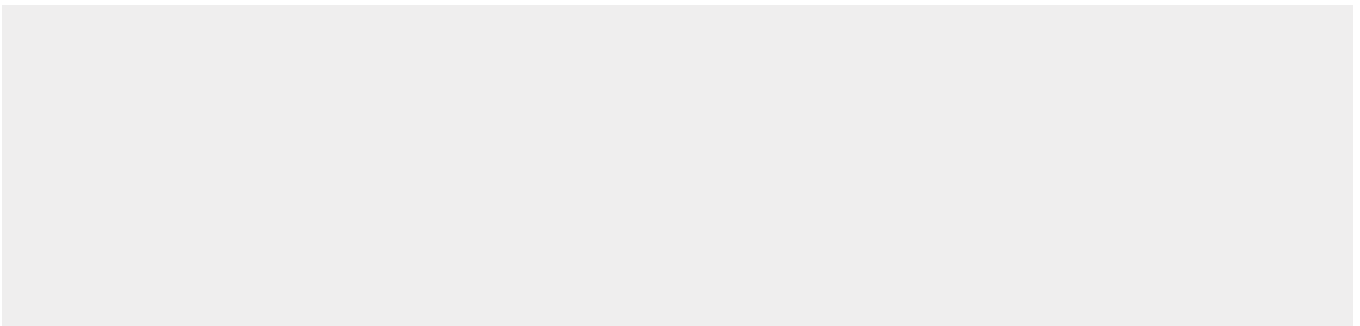


For the Outgoing Pastor

1. Have you equipped the board to handle this conversation with your successor?

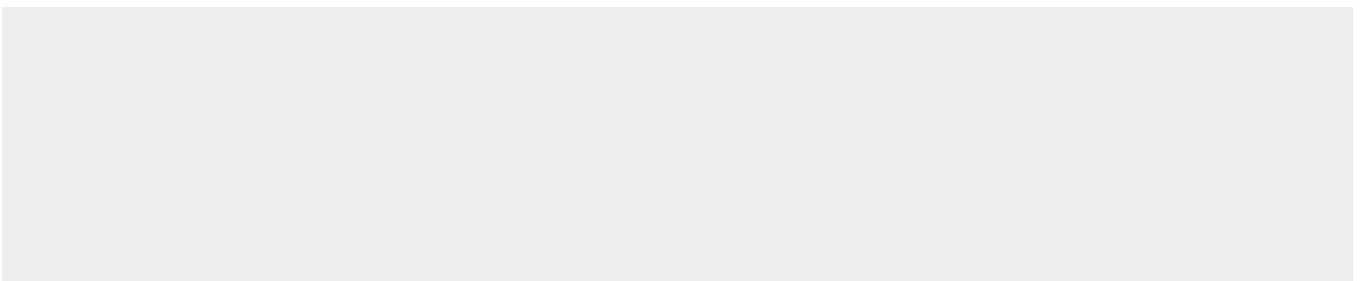


2. What else might they need to do a fantastic job?

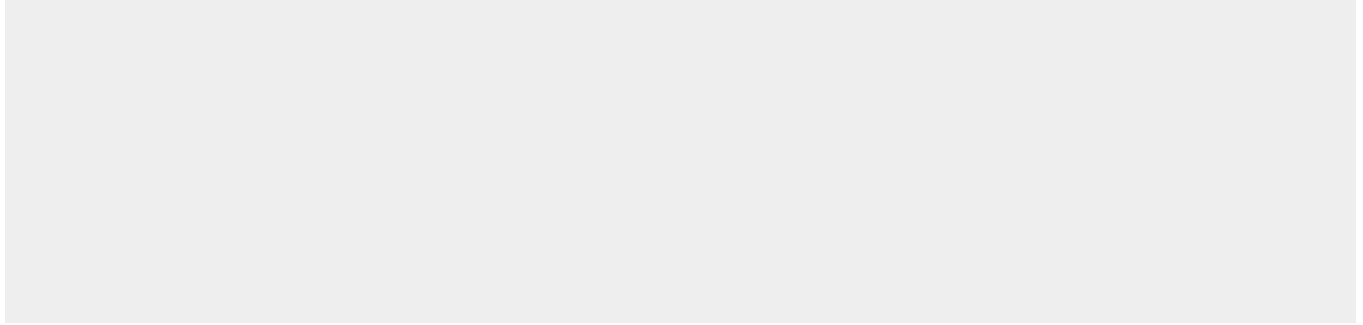


For the Bridge Leaders

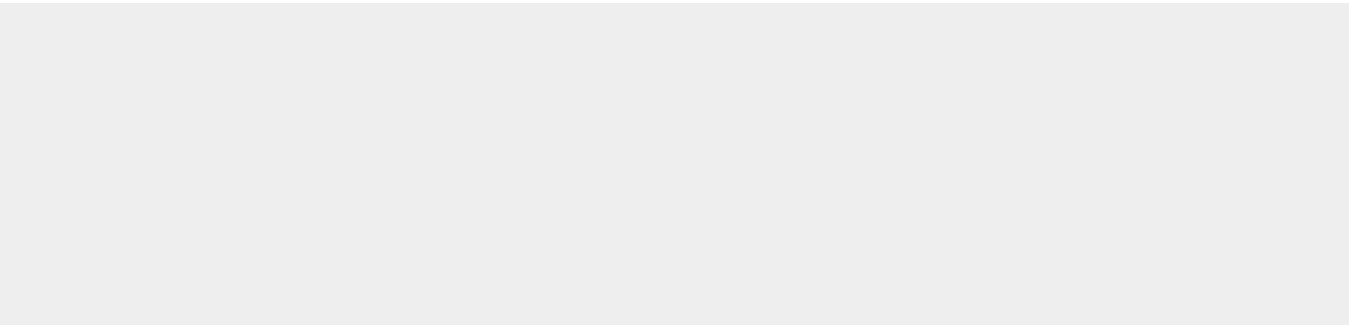
1. Are you confident you have actual facts to ensure your staff compensation is where it needs to be?



2. How do we ensure times of high inflation don't take an unreasonable toll on our staff?



3. How would we make budget adjustments to protect our staff or at least the most critical people on our staff?



Resources

[The Ultimate Guide to Asking for a Raise and Negotiating Salary](#) - Ramit Sethi

[ChurchSalary.com](#) - Great resource for generating localized salary reports



Session 3

Session 3: Preparing Yourself For The Transition

Successions invoke seasons of change. For your congregation, for your elder board - but also for you. In Session 3 of The Art of Pastoral Succession, we explore the ways in which the outgoing and incoming pastor can mentally and spiritually prepare themselves for a season of change.

To the Outgoing Pastor

It's not uncommon for outgoing pastors to fall into one (or more) of the following five "traps" during a pastoral succession:

- The Identity Trap ("What I Do Is Conflated With Who I Am")
- Being Uncomfortable with Obscurity (Your primary relationships are sustained through your position of authority)
- Not Dealing with Your Issues (The pace of leadership can mask emotional wholeness issues that aren't revealed until you've left the position)
- You Don't Have the Money You Need (Get outside financial advice on your personal financial readiness)
- Not Having a "Next" (You don't have a "next" step to invest your passion and time)

Prior to handing over the reins of your position, commit to investing fully in the deep work of emotional and heart preparedness. Start seeing a counselor/therapist now (if you aren't already).

To the Incoming Pastor

According to the Harvard Business Review, leaders agree that transition seasons are the most challenging seasons of leadership they experienced in their careers. There are two major things incoming pastors can work on prior to the succession.

Get Informed

The transition period will be a season of intensive learning unlike anything you've probably experienced. We recommend diving into a few courses in The Art of Leadership Academy (even if you feel as if you have a handle on the topic). Specifically, for this season of life we recommend:

1. At Your Best
2. The Art of Leading Change
3. The Art of Team Leadership

“Research shows that a critical element to the success of a leader is engaging with peers on a regular basis” - Warren Bird. In the spirit of that quote, here a couple of ways to do that:

- [Leaders in Living Rooms podcast](#) with Sean Morgan
- Join a leadership cohort - you need a community of peers ([The Art of Leadership Academy community](#) is a good place to start)

Get Rested and Recharged

Don't go from your current job into the lead pastor role without a 30-day (minimum) church-funded Sabbatical.

Remember: Adrenaline will not sustain you for the next season's challenges.

Follow the REST method

- R** - Relax. Get 4 -7 days of true family vacation time
- E** - rEcharge. Extra sleep, healthy eating, working out, time outdoors
- S** - Solitude. Plan for enough stillness that you can hear God speak
- T** - Together. Ensure your spouse is a part of each of these steps

Application Guide

For the Outgoing Pastor

1. Who can I seek counsel from about the emotional heart journey I will need to go on in order to leave well? Do I have peers of other IC transitions leaders who get me and can put wind in my sails?

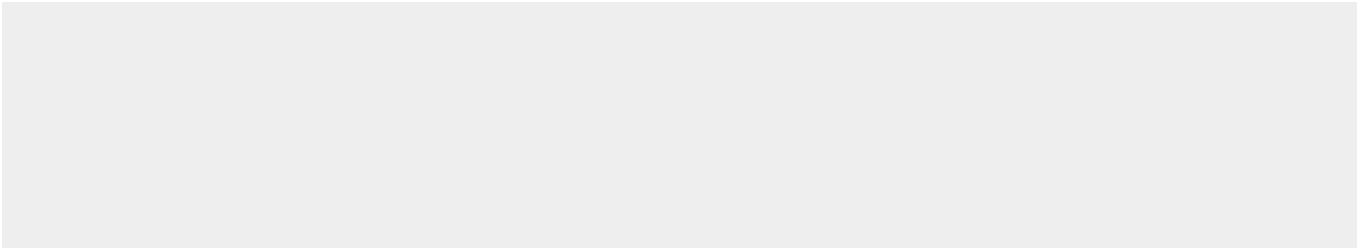
2. Does my passion for continued ministry match my financial readiness? If I'm brutally honest with myself, how financially prepared do I feel?

For the Incoming Pastor

1. What transitions leadership stories that I've heard on the Leaders In Living Rooms podcast resonate most with me? Why?

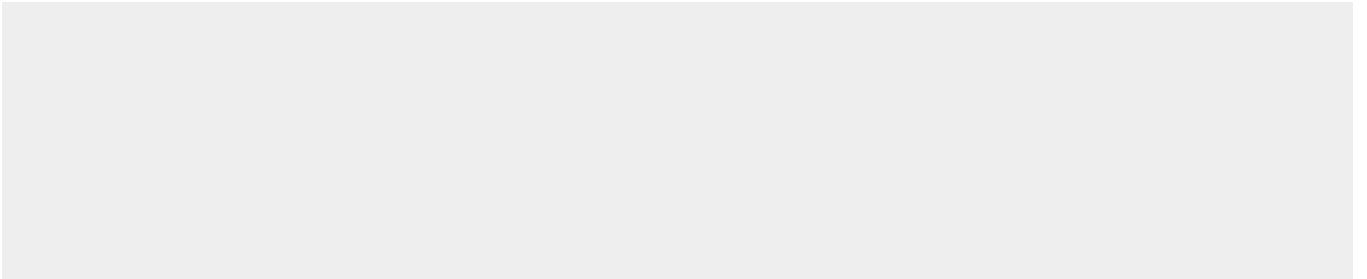
2. Do I have a plan for REST before my next role?

3. If you're already in your next role, how rested were you when you arrived? What do you need to do to stay ahead of the power curve?

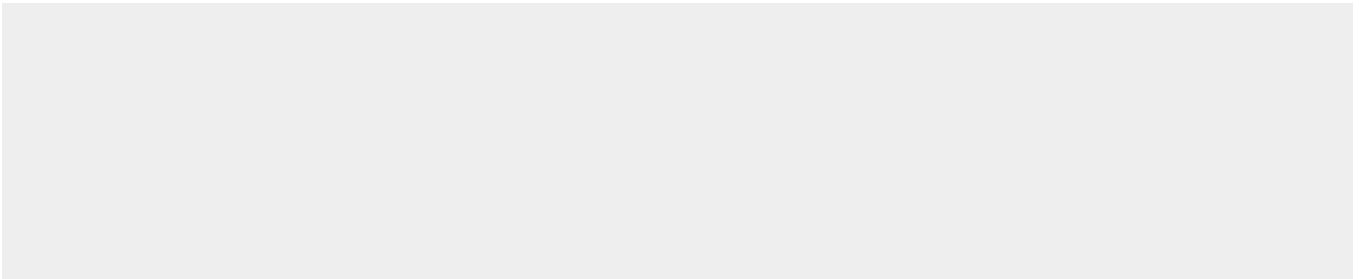


For the Bridge Leaders

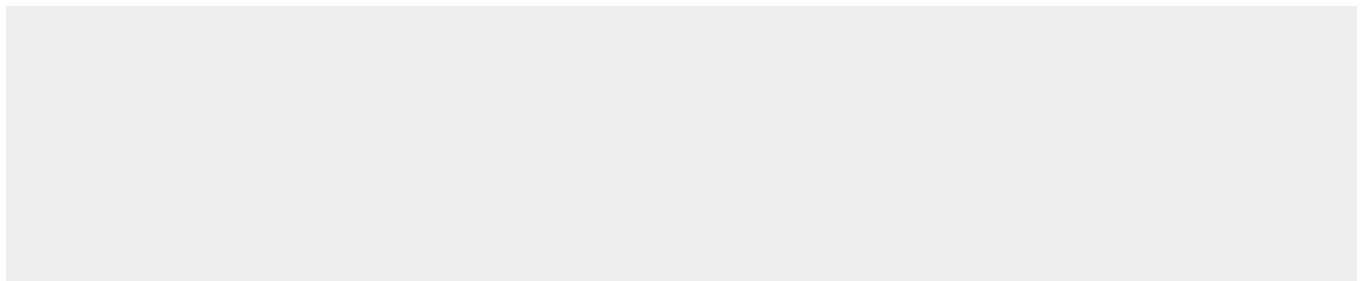
1. What is my level of peace about playing this bridge leader role or being “in between” the two leaders and two seasons of ministry?



2. What can I do to make that better?



3. Who can I talk to for help with perspective and counsel?





Session 4

Session 4: Preparing the Church

In Session 4 of The Art of Pastoral Succession, we look at preparing the church for the transition. Pastoral successions are incredibly emotional seasons for congregations. Many members will feel as if the church they've grown to know and love is irrevocably changing. This session is particularly important for the outgoing pastor and bridge leaders.

Communication

As you're thinking about transitioning out of the lead pastor role, a simple way to prepare your congregation for a new leadership voice is to bring on a variety of guest speakers to preach during your corporate worship gathering. This helps the congregation adjust to the idea of learning from different voices.

Leadership

In order to prepare your leadership team for your exit, you'll probably need to employ a strategy that takes the "training wheels" off in stages so the church can function without you.

A few ways to do this include:

- Increased time away
- Increased delegation
- Raising up and empowering other leaders

Additionally, you may need to revisit or introduce elder term limits for your leadership board. While having a few elders carry over may be good for operational continuity, the incoming pastor deserves an elder board aligned with their vision for the church.

Some other "house cleaning" tasks include ensuring your staff is getting paid a livable wage. You also need to end anything that needs to end. This especially includes any project or program that you had a hand in creating that's no longer thriving. You don't need to leave your successor with a mess you created.

Church Financial Health

While a church doesn't necessarily have to be out of debt prior to a succession (that option may simply not be possible), it is important to ask yourself (and your leadership team), "Does our budget reflect our values?"

Facilities

While you shouldn't take on any major projects (like constructing a new building) prior to your exit, you should address any outstanding maintenance issues. At the same time, make sure there's ample money in the "rainy day" repair fund in the event of an emergency after your departure.

Application Guide

For the Outgoing Pastor

1. Have I prepared my congregation to listen to and learn from voices that are not mine? Different age groups and different demographics?

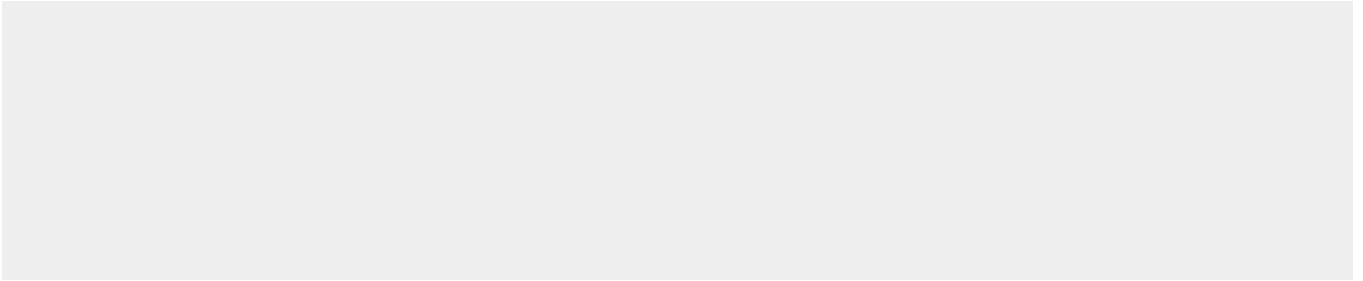
2. Is my staff (paid or unpaid) prepared to lead in my absence? If not, how can I begin to develop them in that way?

3. Have I spent a minimum of 6 hours thinking through problems that I need to solve BEFORE I pass the baton?

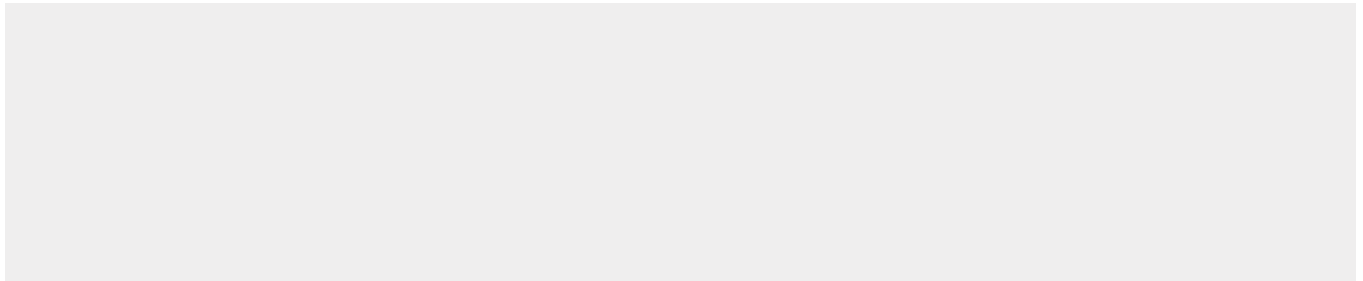
For the Bridge Leaders

1. Are bridge leaders at the church beginning to “rise to the occasion” as more will be required from them?

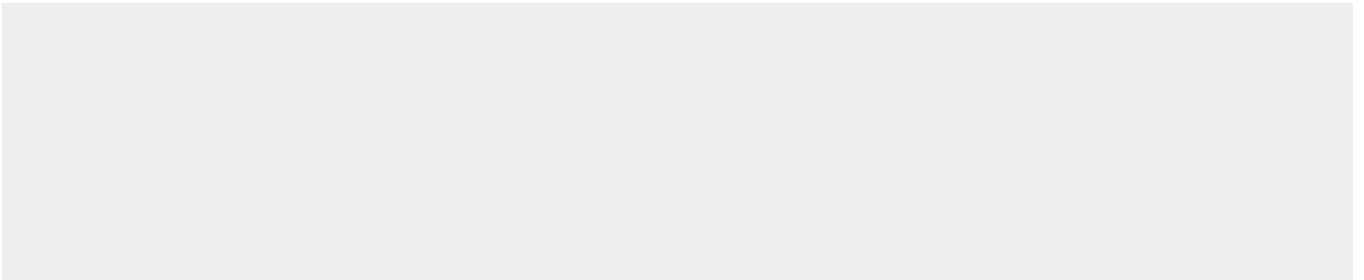
2. Where do I see this happening well?



3. Where do I have concern?



4. Who else needs to see what I'm seeing?





Session 5

Session 5: Embracing Best Practices and Avoiding Pot Holes

In Session 5 of *The Art of Pastoral Succession*, we explore some best practices that should be embraced by outgoing and incoming pastors. Along the way, we also look at some potential pitfalls you'll definitely want to avoid.

For the Outgoing Pastor

Run Toward Something, Not From Something

If you don't have something you're running toward, you'll start viewing your current position as something you need to escape from. Framing your exit in this way helps ensure that your final responsibilities as the lead pastor won't be marred by cynicism and frustration.

Time Away

Your successor needs space to spread their wings. After the succession is finalized, it might be a good idea to take some time away from attending the church (if you're planning on staying in the area). This action reveals two things:

1. It shows your staff that you trust the new leader
2. It shows your congregation that you trust the new leader

Rules If You Decide to Come Back

If you are staying in the area and decide to attend church as a member, here are a few rules you should follow to help not make things difficult and/or awkward for your successor:

- Remember that ALL decisions are made by the incoming leader
- Honor each other publicly and privately. No exceptions.
- Never EVER criticize a decision your successor has made or talk about how you would've done it differently
- Only give your successor your opinion/advice if they explicitly ask.

If you think it's going to be hard for you to follow these four rules, then you should probably find a new church home.

For the Incoming Pastor

Go Slow

“Slow is smooth and smooth is slow” goes the classic adage. As it should be with you, as well. You may have the title of “lead pastor,” but it’ll take years to win over the hearts of your new congregation. So, how do you do that?

Lens #1: Diagnostic Focus

In the early days of your tenure as lead pastor, you’ll need to spend a lot of time “learning” about the church. Now, this may appear obvious, but taking the time to understand the dynamics and cultural forces at play within a church takes years to accomplish - and you’ll still be surprised at times.

A couple of ways to do this is to learn the history of the church (both the good and the bad), and participate and “show up” in events, meetings, small groups, and ministries you may not be expected to.

Lens #2: Relationship Focus

Building relational credibility should be your next major focus. Now, you won’t be able to know everyone at your church (unless you’re pastoring a small church or church plant), but get to know the current leaders, board members, elders, and “legacy members” of your church.

As the lead pastor, people will defer to you out of respect, but you need to push beyond that and show them that you’re worthy of shepherding their spiritual journeys.

Lens #3: Preaching Focus

In the swirl of learning how to manage, lead, and build your new church, you may be tempted to neglect one of the key elements of your role: Preaching. However, preaching is the primary way through which you will build a trusting relationship with your congregation and board members.

Take this course: [The Art of Preaching Course](#)

The Value of Margin

What got you on the team won’t help you lead the team. In other words, leading a team is different from being a good team player. Therefore, you’re going to need to make some changes with your lifestyle, and one is

perhaps more important than creating margin.

Margin is more than free time. It's space in your schedule to reflect, contemplate, and seek clarity. As the lead pastor, you're going to need to pencil in margin into your calendar because it will erode away. Without margin, you will inevitably become a reactive leader (as opposed to a "pro-active" leader). A lead pastor needs about 20% of margin built into their calendar each day. If you don't set up this expectation soon, it will be incredibly difficult to implement later.

Take this course: [At Your Best](#)

Allow the Church to Grieve

Pastoral successions are emotionally fraught periods - especially for congregation members who have formed a bond with the outgoing pastors. To them, it can feel as if the center of their spiritual world is being completely upended. You need to acknowledge these feelings and be patient when the speed of their acceptance of you isn't as fast as you'd like.

Be an Adaptive Leader

Successful leaders in transition adapt well to their next context. Leadership transitions are naturally fluid situations and not every rule (even the ones shared in this course) may apply or work for your church. Anticipate unexpected scenarios and prepare to adapt. As Michael Watkins said, "Leaders in transition rely on the skills and strategies that worked for them in the past. That's a mistake."

Make the Most of the Honeymoon Phase

The honeymoon phase is the margin of time afforded to you as the "new" leader. Traditionally, everyone will be excited and a bit nervous about the prospect of a new lead pastor. However, what they're really excited about is their own idea about how you'll lead.

The honeymoon phase ends when people begin to realize that their expectations of how you'll lead the church don't align with their idea of how you should lead the church. Prior to that occurring, though, don't feel guilty about enjoying the honeymoon phase. But also leverage the honeymoon season by stewarding the goodwill you're initially afforded.

During your initial days as lead pastor, you'll have a lot of "formal authority" but little to no "informal authority." Informal authority is something you'll cultivate over time as the perception of you transitions from a manager/leader to a shepherd/pastor.

People will also be looking to you for workplace culture/moral guidelines. A major factor in this is to never talk poorly about your predecessor or engage in gossip about "how things were before." And, remember, as a lead pastor, "what you permit is what you promote" because you carry more formal authority in the eyes of your staff and congregation.

Application Guide

For the Outgoing Pastor

1. If I remain a part of this church after the baton pass, what hedges will I intentionally ensure are guarded?

For the Incoming Pastor

1. How do I create margin that allows me to reflect in ways no one else on my team can?

2. What ways will I create margin to reflect and lead?

3. How will I INVEST the honeymoon goodwill that I have toward the health and growth of the church and its long term future?

For the Bridge Leaders

1. Am I prepared to set many of my own wants aside in order to bless the incoming leader?

2. Are there other bridge leaders I know who have done this before and could advise me on ways I can better serve the team and the church?

3. Where do I already know I will need to adapt my thinking/style, etc to serve the IC leader better?

Resources

[Transitions](#) - William Bridges

[The Second Mountain](#) - David Brooks

[From Strength to Strength](#) - Arthur C. Brooks



Session 6

Session 6: Leading A Staff You Didn't Hire

In Session 6 of *The Art of Pastoral Succession*, we tackle the complicated topic of leading a staff you didn't hire. As you navigate what is essentially a new workplace, you'll need to - like anyone stepping into a new role - learn who is who and what they do. This can be a potentially tension-filled aspect of the early days of being the new lead pastor (for you and them), but it doesn't have to be.

Prerequisites to Understanding People

When you inherit a team, you're going to find yourself asking a lot of questions (and not just, "What's your name again?"). You can discern a person's role on the team by evaluating their contributions in three broad areas: Character, Competence, and Chemistry and Culture.

Character

Obviously, you want to surround yourself (and work) with people of upstanding character. A "bad apple" on your team can not only spoil the operational efficiency of the ministry but also the reputation of the church.

Questions to ask yourself:

1. Can I trust this person?
2. Does this person live a life of character?
3. Does this person's lifestyle align with the values of the church?

Competence

Additionally, you want to ensure that the people in place are a good fit for their roles. Churches and nonprofit organizations are notorious for holding onto people who are simply bad at their jobs out of "niceness" and "grace." While you should most certainly be gracious, incompetence (or the inability/unwillingness to learn how to do a job well) can put significant strain on you and the team as a whole.

Questions to ask yourself:

1. Is this person good at their job?
2. Could this person better serve the church in a different position?
3. Does this person display a willingness to learn and improve?

Chemistry and Culture

Chemistry and Culture is a more intuitive value-add than Character and Competency. Evaluating someone's "cultural fit" can only be done after you have a good handle on the overall culture of the church - its strengths and weaknesses. People with good Chemistry and Culture tend to be good moral boosters and are oft-described as the "glue that holds the team together."

Questions to ask yourself:

1. What does this person contribute to the chemistry of the team?
2. Does this person complain more than they help out?
3. If this person left the team, would the dynamics change for better or worse?

Cultivating Team Alignment

At first, your team will view you as their employer or boss before they view you as their pastor. This is natural, and it will take time to cultivate that type of relationship. Remember, the people who work or volunteer at a church tend to be the people most invested in the life of the church - so the transition will be more difficult for them than the average churchgoer.

During this time period, you have a lot of opportunities to set clear cultural expectations. One way to do this is by revisiting and/or revising an agreed-upon set of staff values that guide behavior. More than anything, you need to clear and leave no room for confusion or ambiguity when it comes to workplace protocols.

Building Your Team

Don't feel handcuffed to the team you've inherited. You will probably need to make some changes. In fact, a lot of leaders say that the staff doesn't "feel like theirs" until they've both removed someone and added someone.

4 Ways to Build Your Team

1. Promoting - You see talent/potential that others have overlooked
2. Demoting - You notice people have been promoted beyond their ability
3. Firing - You find people are checked out and even toxic
4. Hiring - Prioritize hiring people within the church over hiring outsiders

Note: It's wise to take time to understand and build relationships with team members before making any dramatic changes - especially firing and demoting. You'll need a clear understanding of the pre-existing team dynamics and be prepared for the consequences.

Application Guide

For the Incoming Pastor

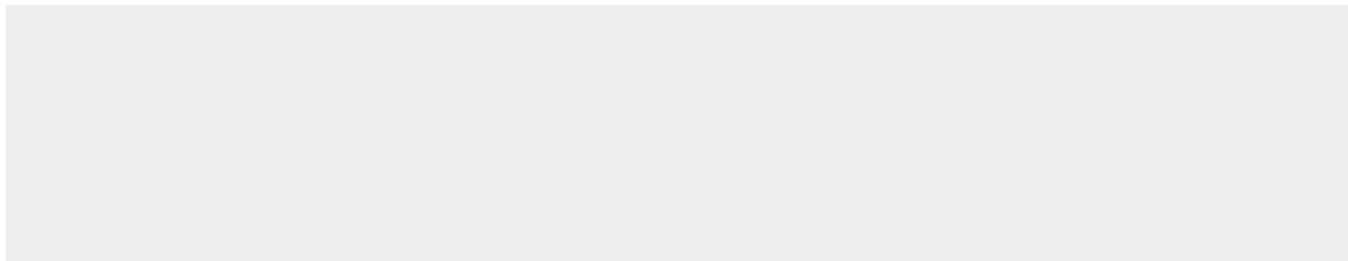
1. Without over-analysis, how do you intuitively feel the makeup of your team is today? Are they on point 100%? Off the mark slightly? Or, you definitely know deep changes are in order?

2. How have you performed when it comes to setting (and maintaining) clear expectations for your team to achieve?

3. What steps can you take in the next 90 days to help your team develop relational cohesiveness and deeper trust?

For the Bridge Leaders

1. Am I prepared to use my influence to help the incoming leader be more effective, even if I don't agree with 100% of their conclusions?



Resources

Take the Course: [The Art of Team Leadership](#)

[Crucial Conversations](#) - Joseph Grenny, Kerry Patterson, Ron McMillan, Al Switzer, & Emily Gregory

[The Five Dysfunctions of a Team](#) - Patrick Lencioni

[Radical Candor](#) - Kim Scott



Session 7

Session 7: Leading the Elder Board

In Session 7 of *The Art of Pastoral Succession*, we dive into the topic of how to lead alongside an elder board at your church. Like the previous section, this session will undoubtedly generate some difficult questions and conversations - but they are vital for your long-lasting success as a lead pastor.

Define the Roles

Most incoming pastors are new lead pastors - which means they've never led an elder board at a church. An elder board is the senior leadership of the church, so it's absolutely critical this relationship is fruitful, healthy, and clearly defined.

In short, an elder board's job is to **“Protect the pastor from the church, and protect the church from the pastor.”** Most church scandals can be traced to an elder board failing to perform one (or both) of these duties.

Board of Elder Management

When leading an elder board, simplicity and clarity should be key.

One way to establish this precedent is by ensuring the existence of clear processes for the addition and removal of elder board members. Term limits should also be discussed and enforced. The makeup of your elder board should reflect the congregational makeup of the church today and the people you wish to reach tomorrow.

Another key to improving “elder health” (the overall health of your elder board) is to affirm the precedent that elder board business is **ONLY** discussed in elder board meetings. Gossiping and revealing confidential information discussed in elder board meetings should be grounds for removal from the board.

The Role of the Lead Pastor

The Lead Pastor should be granted full eldership with full voting rights. At the same time, we recommend the chairman of the elder board be a lay person who is not the lead pastor.

Having a chairman who is not the lead pastor helps foster a team-based approach to leadership, co-ownership of leadership initiatives, and helps act as a buffer between the lead pastor and the congregation.

Application Guide

For the Outgoing Pastor

1. After going through this lesson what grade would you give your elders?

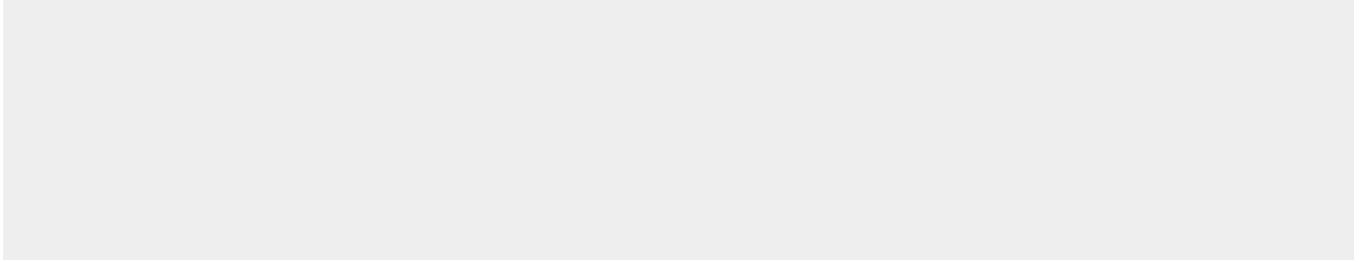
2. What recommendation from Sean would be the most important step to take to increase elder health for my successor?

For the Incoming Pastor

1. Before this lesson, how well equipped did you feel to lead the elders at your church?

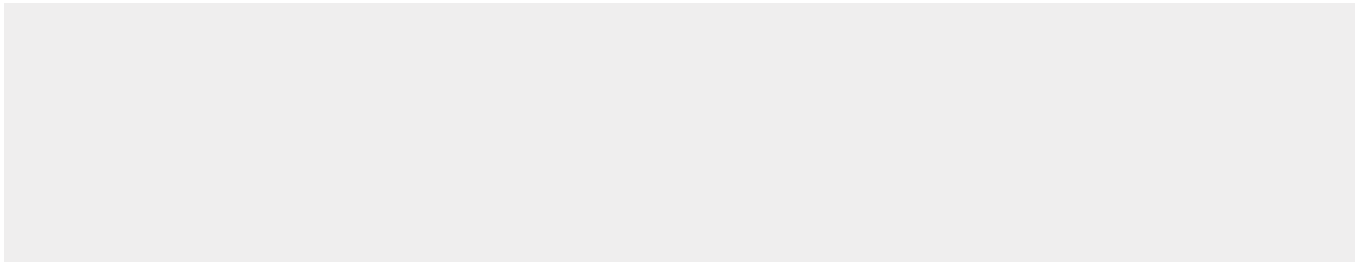
2. What seemed like the most important step for my elders to work on to increase our overall health?

3. Can we tackle these issues internally or might we need some outside counsel?

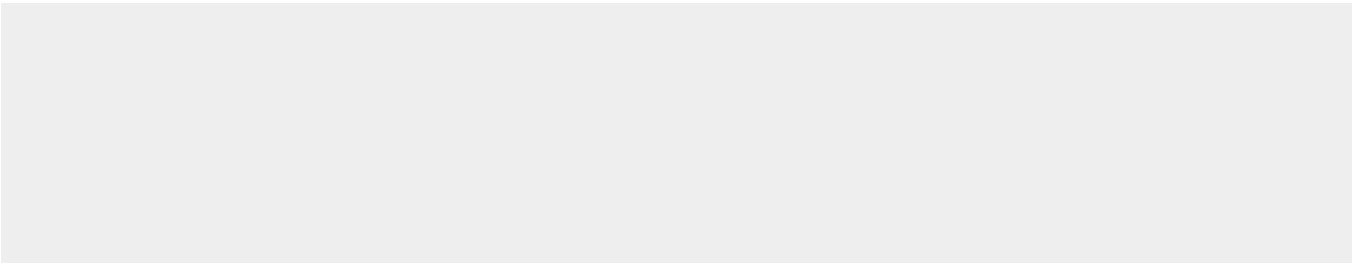


For the Bridge Leaders

1. After going through this lesson what grade would you give your elder board?



2. What recommendation from Sean would be the most important step to take to increase elder health for the incoming pastor?





Session 8

Session 8: Leading Change (The Do's and Don'ts)

In Session 8 of *The Art of Pastoral Succession*, we confront the complex of how to lead change in your church with wisdom and grace. Successions often serve as a “crash course” in change management for pastors, and the lessons you will learn during this period are invaluable.

The End of the Honeymoon

In Session 5, we introduced the idea of the “honeymoon phase,” or the period of time in which people in your church grant you a significant amount of goodwill and grace because your presence signifies a positive change insomuch as it aligns with their vision of the church’s direction.

The honeymoon phase ends when larger changes remove the church from the trajectory of its past and put them on a trajectory that indicates a different future. When this inevitably occurs, there are a few things you should and shouldn’t do in response to the criticism you’ll undoubtedly receive.

DO

1. In order to put people’s anxieties to rest, your first order of business should be to affirm what will not be changing. You should lead any conversation on the topic of change by clarifying what will remain the same - this strategy will naturally put people more at ease.
2. The first changes you’re going to want to make will involve rooting out toxicity and dysfunction. Matters of preference and convenience can be delayed in the change process, but changes involving the health and safety of your staff and congregation should be paramount.
3. Create some small projects that lead to small wins. Not only will this help you earn the trust of your team, it’ll also give you a taste of the type of resistance you’re likely to experience when you introduce larger changes.
4. Finally, begin introducing larger strategic changes. You shouldn’t launch these initiatives as the sole owner of the project. Bring aboard other leaders and delegate tasks within the project to generate larger buy-in from your leadership team and staff.

DON'T

1. Don't forget or ignore the natural pace of your church. If you attempt to do too much too quickly, people will be reluctant to follow you. Remember: Early on, you don't set the pace of change at your church, you adapt to your church's natural pace. Factors affecting the pace of change include:
 - b. Urgency
 - c. Opportunity
 - d. Consensus/Agreement
 - e. Size of Change (Scale)
 - f. Payoff Timeline (Long-term vs Short-term)
2. Don't introduce any change to the congregation without doing the groundwork with your elder board and senior staff. Failing to do so will result in a loss of trust between you and your elder board.
3. Don't forget to celebrate wins - even small ones. It's up to you - the lead pastor - to cultivate a culture of celebration. Find out what that looks like for your team and church, and commit to celebrating successes.

Application Guide

For the Incoming Pastor

1. How has this lesson altered your thinking in a good way about leading change? Particularly the pace of change?

2. Are there strategic changes you need to make that can wait? Do you feel comfortable waiting for a better time?

3. Who are the bridge leaders and other influencers that you need to ensure are on board with future changes?

For the Bridge Leaders

1. Who is one person that might be a ‘naysayer’ that you have influence over? Could you help them catch fresh vision for the future and be willing to champion change?

Resources

[Leading Change](#) - John Kotter

Take the Course: [The Art of Leading Change](#)



Session 9

Session 9: Combating Unhealthy Resistance to Change

In the final session of *The Art of Pastoral Succession*, we look at the challenges inherent in introducing change into change-resistant communities and individuals. It's rare that initiating change results in little to no criticism or pushback. Therefore, you need to know how to respond to criticism and resistance in a way that's wise, healthy, and constructive.

Prepare Yourself

Before we really dive into the topic of combating unhealthy resistance to change, here's something to keep in mind: Not all resistance is unhealthy. In fact, sometimes it's necessary.

If you view all resistance as unhealthy, you'll not only become more combative, but you'll also make excuses to not engage the points being raised - no matter how valid. Also, people are naturally change-averse, so don't take any and all resistance too personally. Negative responses to change stem from personal fears of being left behind combined with feelings of insignificance. People need to be pastored well before they're comfortable being led.

At the same time, expect to encounter shallow responses from shallow people. That's just part of the job.

In the event of shallow and harsh resistance, keep these things in mind:

As a Pastor

- If they decide to leave as a result of the change, love them as they leave.
- Always take the high road. Never stoop to gossip, sarcasm, or jokes.
- Remember: You're playing the long game.

As a Leader

- Be fully confident in your calling. This doesn't mean you ignore or dismiss criticism or pushback, but it does mean you don't bend to the will of every person who might have an issue.

Leading Change Management Well

Here are a few additional Do's and Don'ts of leading change in your church:

1. Prepare your people ahead of time to be on mission to reach and serve others. Remind your congregation and staff that the church is at its best when we are sacrificing our wants, needs, and finances to help reach and disciple others.
2. Prepare yourself for the fact that some people will leave when change is introduced that they don't like. People tend to fight to preserve the method, not the mission.
3. Listen to people - even when they're wrong. You need to show that you care and develop the ability to listen without agreeing.
4. Invest in getting influencers (even influential naysayers) on-board with your mission.
5. Ensure your staff knows that they are expected to remain aligned with the church's mission and be an encouragement to others. When someone comes to them with criticism, they should be your front line of defense.

Here are some things we shouldn't do:

1. Don't fight with "ghosts." As concerns and criticisms arise, you need to seek out the source.
2. Don't allow disunity to fester.
3. Don't let your heart get hard or become cynical.
4. Don't be alone. If you suspect you need some help, it's better to seek help out of an abundance of caution than to ignore those feelings.

Application Guide

For the Outgoing Pastor

1. How can I affirm the leadership changes my successor is making privately? Who are the specific influencers I can talk to?

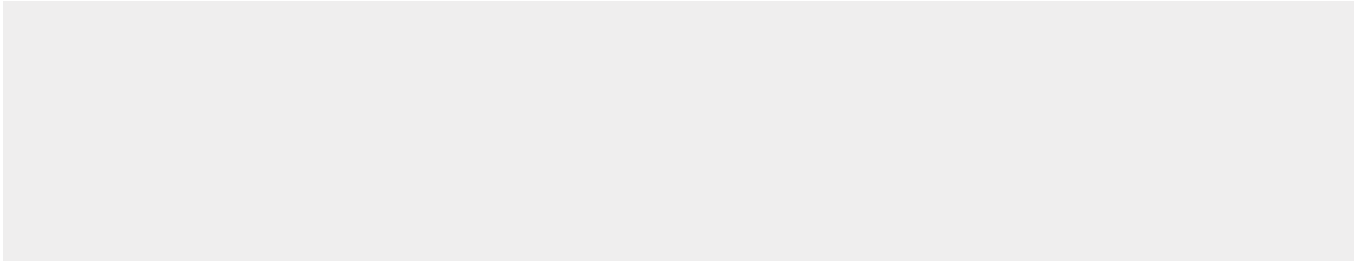
2. How can I affirm the leadership and changes my successor is making publicly?

3. Is my heart torn over being fully supportive? If so, what do I need to release to God in order to be 100% supportive.

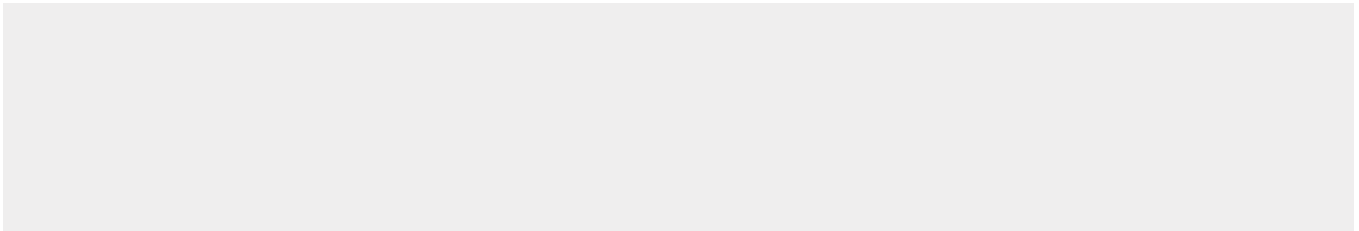
For the Incoming Pastor

1. Are there “Bob Jordan” type influencers in the church you can leverage to bring health to changes the church is being led through? Who are they?

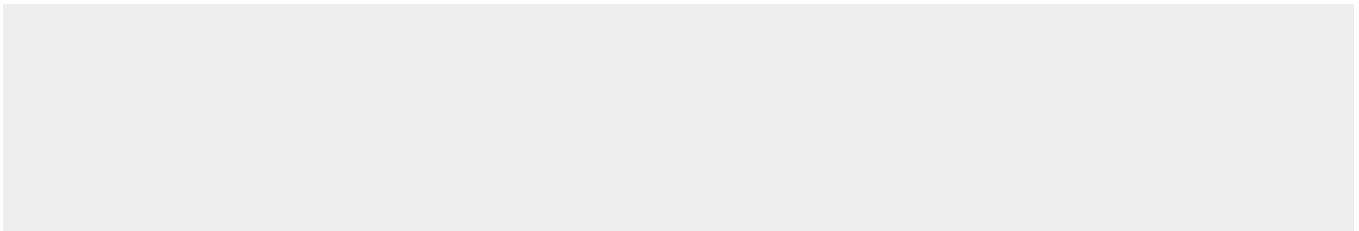
2. If you're completely honest with yourself, how do you score the church on their ability to get behind the changes you know you need to make?



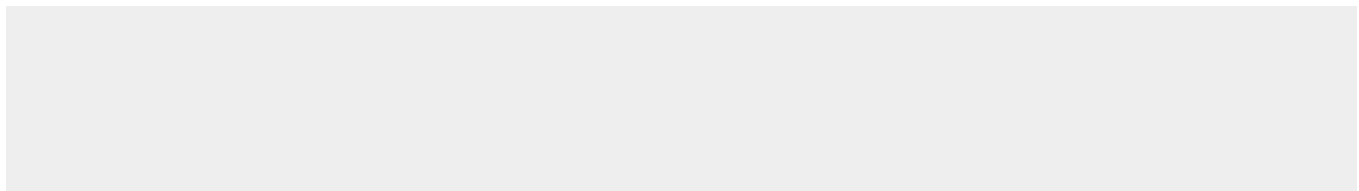
3. Are you prepared to go through a tough season of people responding poorly to change?



4. Who is helping you inside the church?

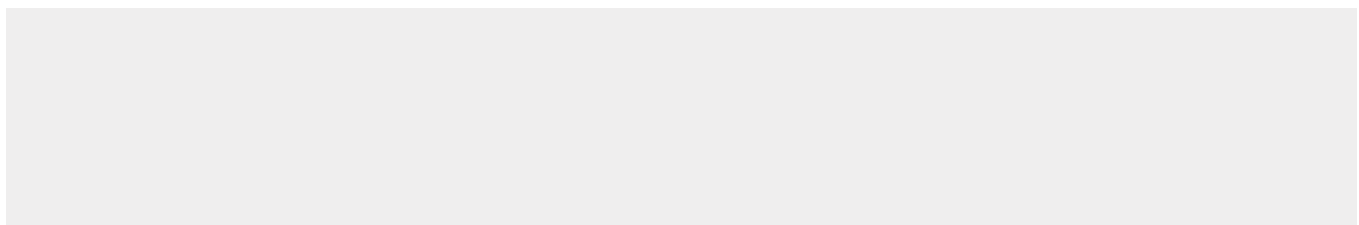


5. Who is helping you from outside the church?

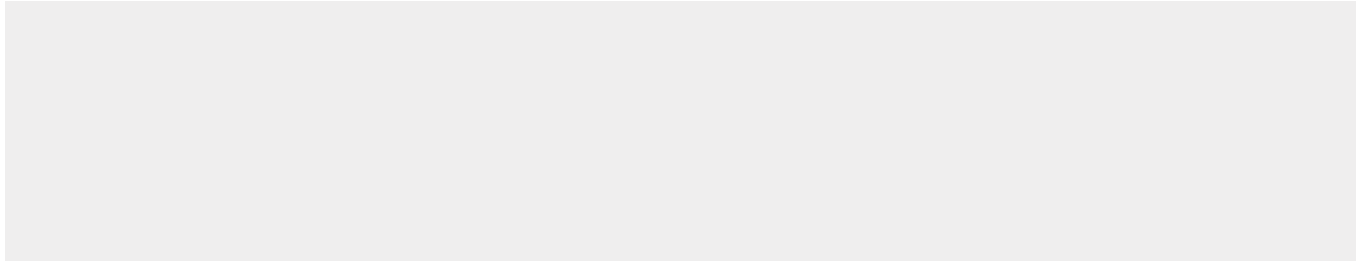


For the Bridge Leaders

1. Are you perhaps a “Bob Jordan” who can champion change?



2. How can you put wind in the sails of your IC lead pastor as they begin to lead through change?



Resources

[Leadership Pain](#) - Samuel Chand