

TONY MORGAN



4 ROLES



A SENIOR PASTOR



CAN'T DELEGATE



THE UNSTUCK GROUP[®]
WE HELP PASTORS LEAD UNSTUCK CHURCHES

4 Roles a Senior Pastor Can't Delegate

Copyright © 2020 by The Unstuck Group. All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Contents

- 4 *Introduction*
- 6 *How to Use This Study*

8 Part One: Vision-Caster

16 Part Two: Spiritual Leader and Teacher

23 Part Three: Leader of Leaders

30 Part Four: Culture Champion

37 In Closing

38 About the Author

Introduction

Great leadership requires great delegation. That's the conventional wisdom, right? Great leaders don't try to do everything themselves. They understand their own strengths and weaknesses, and recognize the value—to their organizations, the people they lead, and themselves—of leveraging the strengths of others.

Pastor and leadership expert John Maxwell put it this way:

"If you want to do a few small things right, do them yourself. If you want to do great things and make a great impact, learn to delegate."

If you're a senior pastor, you want to do great things and have a great impact. You want to contribute to what God is doing in your community and throughout the world. If you didn't, you would have chosen a different career path. But you can't reach your potential and your church can't reach its potential if you try to do everything yourself. The cold, hard truth is too many senior pastors are too hands-on with the daily operation of their churches.

On the surface, being hands-on may seem like the easiest, safest, most productive path. As the saying goes, if you want something done right, do it yourself. But when you try to do too many things on your own, you can't do *any of them* as effectively as they need to be done. And over time, trying to do too many things on your own will limit your success and your church's potential.

If you want to do great things and make a great impact, then John Maxwell is right: you're going to have to learn to delegate.

Your first step is a little counterintuitive: To delegate well, you need to find clarity around what *not* to delegate. Once you understand the duties and responsibilities that must always remain in your hands, you can begin the process of handing *everything* else off to members of your team.

This has two benefits:

1. It helps maximize the strengths and talents of your team, which will only benefit your church (in time, you'll even learn many of the things you hand off are better handled by the people to whom you entrust them).
2. You'll be able to focus on the things only you can do, which means you'll do them better than you've been able to in the past.

4 Roles a Senior Pastor Can't Delegate helps you clearly define the essential duties that stand apart from other responsibilities which keep your church running smoothly. Because your growth as a leader will strengthen your church's culture and set the stage for dynamic organizational growth, clear, practical next steps are an essential part of this study.

So, let's get started

How to Use This Study

We know you're busy and there's a lot on your plate, so we've designed *4 Roles a Senior Pastor Can't Delegate* to be as practical and simple to use as possible. You really only need to do three things:

1

Read

Each of the four roles discussed in this resource has a short reading to introduce the topic and help you understand its core characteristics. These roles are complex, so these readings aren't comprehensive. We've designed them to help you get your feet wet.

What you'll discover as you read is that you're doing really well in some areas of a role, while other areas offer opportunities for growth. Once you know where you currently stand, you can take a deeper dive into the specific areas of the topics where you need to grow. There are plenty of resources out there—books, sermons, podcasts, blog posts, videos—that cover these topics.

2

Reflect

After you read, take time to reflect on what you've learned. Think about how the content relates to you and your church. These four roles are universal to all pastors, but how they play out can vary significantly depending on the pastor and church.

To help you reflect, we've provided some questions at the end of each part. Think about them. Jot down notes if that helps you work out what you're thinking. But keep in mind this exercise is for *you*. It's not necessary to share your thoughts or notes with others. In fact, the most important thing is that you feel freedom to be honest with yourself—even brutally honest—about the areas where you have room to grow and improve.

3

Apply

Reading and reflecting on *4 Roles a Senior Pastor Can't Delegate* won't change you or your church. But applying what you learn will. With that in mind, we've included some simple exercises to help you take the first steps of application.

Simple is the key word here. These exercises aren't going to solve some of the complex challenges you'll discover in this resource. But they'll get you moving in the right direction.

Depending on where you currently are in these four roles, you may find some of the exercises valuable and others not so much. If you find an exercise irrelevant, it's probably because you're already doing well in that area of your leadership. That's a good thing.

These exercises are designed *for you*. But if you find a particular exercise helpful, you may want to walk your leadership team through it so they can benefit as well. We want you to use *4 Roles a Senior Pastor Can't Delegate* in whatever way most benefits you, your leadership team, and your church.



Part One: Vision-Caster

The first role you can't delegate to anyone on your team is primary ownership of helping people buy-in to the vision.

What's Your Vision?

Before we can talk about vision *casting*, we need to talk about vision *clarity*. When it comes to vision casting, the key question you need to answer for people is, “Where do you sense God is taking your church in the future?”

Finding clarity on the answer to that question takes some work. You have to develop a vision before you can cast it. And when it comes to developing vision, you can't do it alone. You need a team of leaders. But it's impossible to develop a clear vision if your team is too large. A lot of churches attempt to craft a vision with 50 to 100 different voices speaking into the process. It doesn't work. The process becomes too noisy, messy, and divergent. It produces a vision too muddy to capture people's imaginations and encourage them to engage in the life of the church.

To effectively develop a clear vision takes two things:

1. A Small Team (8 to 10 people is ideal).
2. A Facilitator—it generally doesn't work when a senior pastor tries to facilitate the process of defining a vision while also participating in the process. A dedicated facilitator who isn't on the team and can manage the *process* of defining vision without speaking into the vision itself will help you make better decisions faster.

As you walk through the process of defining vision, you have one goal:

Crystalize in a single statement the preferred future for the church.

Crafting a Vision Statement

The vision statement should be bold, but realistic. You're walking a fine line here. On the one hand, if you set the bar so low you don't really need God to accomplish the goals, your vision won't compel people. On the other hand, if your vision is too lofty, people will become demotivated because they won't believe it's achievable.

Your vision statement should be specific, but not *too* specific. The right amount of detail provides clarity. It helps people say, *"I get it! I understand where we sense God is taking us!"* But too many specifics can be overwhelming as people get lost in the weeds.

Example: Defining a Clear Vision

The senior pastor and leadership team of one church decided their vision was to reach more people. They wanted to double the number of people in their church. But they didn't want to give the impression that the vision was only about numbers. They wanted people in their church to understand this was *personal*. The numbers represented people's lives they would reach and change for the better with the Gospel message.

Their vision was to grow their church from 4,000 people to 8,001 people. Why 8,001? Because it was a memorable way to encourage everyone in the church to have one person in mind they were praying for, engaging in life with, and serving so one day they could invite that person to church.

That church's vision is bold but realistic. It's specific, but not *too* specific. If you're in the process of defining your vision or about to begin the process, this balance should be your goal.

And don't miss this: In the case study, success is clearly defined and measurable. When they reach the end of their vision time—whether it's a three-year vision or five-year vision—they'll be able to easily assess whether they accomplished their goal.

PRO TIP: A vision statement and a mission statement are not the same thing.

A mission statement expresses why the church exists. A vision statement paints a clear and compelling picture of the church's sense of where God is leading them in the future.

Clarifying Strategy

Once you've defined your vision, it's time to communicate it to the church. After all, these are the people who will bring the vision to life. Their passion, talent, and behavior will determine whether the church successfully pursues the vision. They need to understand, in strategic terms, the church's future destination and the journey you'll take together to get there.

The best way to define strategy is to answer journalistic questions including:

- *Where* are we going?
- *How* are we going to get there?
- *When* will we arrive?
- *What* are some key milestones we can expect along the journey?

This kind of clarity will help people feel they're part of the process. It creates buy-in. That's part of what vision casting is all about. You want to engage people. That's why explaining the strategy for accomplishing the vision is so essential.

Two Crucial Whys for Vision-Casting

But when casting vision, it isn't enough to explain *where*, *how*, *when*, and *what*. You'll need to answer two crucial *why* questions if you want to fully engage the people in your church:

1. Why is this vision important for *the church*?
2. Why is this vision important for *me*?

The first question is fairly obvious. If you're explaining your team's sense of where God is leading the church, it's absolutely necessary to explain why vision for the future matters. You need to paint a picture of how your church, and maybe even your community, will be different (and better) if you achieve the goals you're setting.

The second question is less obvious, but the vision has to be personal for everyone in the church. This is where storytelling is imperative to good vision casting. Stories help move people from information to inspiration. Information moves the mind. Inspiration moves the heart. Effective vision casting must move both because when people are engaged at both the mind and heart levels, they take action.

The more you can personalize the vision, the easier it will be to engage your church. The bigger the ask, the more personal the task needs to be. If you're inviting people to make significant investments of their prayer, time, and financial resources, the invitation must be personal. And if you're asking someone to lead the way in generosity, you may need to have a one-on-one conversation. That's how important it is to make the vision personal.

The success of the vision is at stake. If you can engage the minds and hearts of the people in your church, you'll have a group of people who are ready and willing to follow God toward a new future. And a group of people like that can do almost unimaginably great things.

Vision-Caster: Questions for Reflection

Use the following questions to reflect on what you learned in the reading and consider how it applies to your leadership and your church. Jot down thoughts, notes, or answers if that helps you to begin applying what you're learning.



Keep in Mind

These questions are for you. They aren't meant to be shared with others, even those on your leadership team. So, feel free to be completely honest with yourself. It will help you clarify where you're already strong and where you have opportunity for growth.

1. Does your church currently have a vision statement?
 - **If not**, what benefits do you think there may be in taking the time to create a vision statement? How do you think it might influence the effectiveness of your ministry?
 - **If so**, how well aligned are your church's behaviors with the vision?
2. Off the top of your head, what do you think may be the preferred future toward which God wants to lead your church? (Your answer doesn't have to be detailed or even accurate. This is just a chance for you to begin to think about vision.)
3. Strategic leadership involves looking into the future and seeing how individual ministry decisions fit into the bigger picture of moving the church's vision forward. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you currently rate yourself as a strategic leader?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

If you gave yourself a low rating, don't worry. Strategic leadership isn't a static capacity we either have or lack. It's a skill that can be learned and developed with practice.

4. Is there anything you need to do to ensure your staff and congregation know *where* you're headed as a church, *why* that destination is important, and *how* they can help the church make progress?



Exercise: Craft a Vision Statement

If you don't have a vision statement or if you need to revisit and possibly rewrite your vision statement, this exercise is designed to get you started.

Note: Crafting a vision statement isn't easy, but it's worth the time and effort. Remember an effective vision statement will set the strategy for your ministry and act as inspiration for your staff and congregation. It will even reduce wasted energy by getting everyone on the same page and moving in the same direction.



Recruit Your Team

In the space below, write down the names of 8–10 people who could help you craft a vision statement. Consider staff members, elders, and maybe even key volunteers in your congregation. These people should be passionate about the church and spiritually mature leaders.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10



Find a Facilitator

As we mentioned in the reading, it's important to find someone who can facilitate the discussions during which you'll craft the vision statement. You don't want to facilitate the discussions yourself because it's essential you're able to contribute to work without getting lost in the weeds of managing the process and personalities.

In the least, a good facilitator should have a background in business or ministry with deep experience leading teams and projects. It would be even better to find someone with experience writing vision and mission statements.

Don't skip this step. Writing a great vision statement is difficult, and the process is usually messy. But a lot rides on it. Without a great vision statement, you won't be able to cast a compelling vision for the future of your church.

If you have a person or people in mind, write their names in the spaces below.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

The Unstuck Group specializes in helping pastors grow healthy churches, guiding them through experiences that focus vision, strategy, team and action.

Learn about our process and what it's like to work with a facilitator from our team at theunstuckgroup.com.



Clarify Your Thoughts

While you should work with a team to craft your vision statement, you should also do your homework. Spend some time thinking through these questions to crystalize your gut instincts about the vision statement:

1. Where do you sense God is taking your church in the future?
2. How will your church get from where you are to where God is taking you?
3. When do you think you'll arrive?
4. What are some key milestones you'll need to achieve along the way?



Exercise: Are We Still on Course?

If your church already has a vision statement, perform a health check by working through these questions with your leadership team:

1. How old is your vision statement? Is it still fresh and relevant to the focus of your ministry?
2. Does your congregation know your vision? Does it inspire them? Do they need to be reminded of where God is taking the church?
3. In what areas is the vision successfully providing strategic guidance and focus for your ministry?
4. Are there any areas currently out of alignment with the vision statement? If so, what actions would refocus that ministry area on the vision?



Part Two: Spiritual Leader and Teacher

Because spiritual leadership can't be delegated by the senior pastor, you must delegate what gets in the way of great teaching.

The Unique Teaching Role of the Senior Pastor

What distinguishes senior pastor leadership from senior leadership of every other organization, marketplace, or nonprofit is the senior pastor's responsibility for spiritual life and teaching. Because this role is at the heart of what a church does and provides for those engaged in the life of your church, it absolutely cannot be delegated. You carry all of the responsibility leaders of other large, healthy organizations carry, but a significant portion of your time also has to be invested in the message. It's a unique challenge.

I hate to add to your pressure, but your teaching has to be great. You can't wait until Friday and expect to develop, write, and rehearse a great message. You need to devote time throughout the week to preparing for Sunday.

And, your teaching has to be great *consistently*. Sometimes, you only have one shot with a new guest.

Data shows the first time people connect with your church in-person, they are most likely walking through the front doors on a Sunday morning. Yes, it's important they're greeted with a smiling face at the door. It's important you pay attention to every detail of the environment—from highly visible signage to easily accessible seating—in order to make a great first impression. But your message is *the* essential part of that first impression. You can make up for guest services not quite hitting the mark, but guest services can't make up for poor teaching.

This may sound harsh, but if you want to know first-hand how important the teaching is, invite somebody new to your church. When you have a personal investment in the newcomer, you'll see the entire service experience—including the teaching—in a whole new light. In fact, this is so true that inviting people to church should remain a priority even though you're the senior pastor. It will help you look at your teaching from an entirely different perspective. And it will teach you not to squander the opportunity you've been given.

Each week, you have the privilege of teaching God's truth to hundreds or thousands of people. And if you're going to be a great teacher, you can't wing it.

Making Your Teaching Great . . . Every Time

It's critical everybody knows and respects the fact that the senior pastor needs time and energy set aside for the teaching process—time to study, write, rehearse, and deliver. But, let's be clear: Just because senior pastors can't delegate teaching, that doesn't mean they can't use a teaching team. It means they *lead* the team and take ownership over ensuring consistency and excellence of teaching at the church.

In my opinion, the *only* way senior pastors can deliver consistently great teaching is by recruiting a teaching team. If attendees are going to invite their friends and family to church, you need to have a culture of reliably excellent messages regardless of who's teaching. That means you not only need to invest time and energy into making your own messages great, you also have to develop a team of teachers and help them make their messages great.

This is an opportunity for senior pastors to go to the next level—thinking beyond their own teaching skills to raising up other leaders and helping them excel.

What Makes a Good Teaching Team?

There's strength in the teaching at churches when the senior pastor identifies a few key teachers who teach on a regular basis. That's what a true team looks like. A teaching team is not the senior pastor teaching 50 times a year, and then two weeks out of the year—the weekend after Thanksgiving, Memorial Day weekend, or Fourth of July weekend—a student pastor teaches. A teaching team is a group of people developing their spiritual leadership who have the capacity to bring truth from Scripture and teach effectively in their own unique ways. These are people who can connect Scripture truth and life application.

The Benefits of Teaching as a Team

There are some benefits when you approach teaching as a team. First of all, it adds diversity to the teaching, which makes your church more relatable to a broader segment of people in your congregation. It also communicates the truth that more than one person can hear the voice of God. It also gives each teacher more time to prepare their message.

Ideally, you'd have a teaching team of three or four people, depending on the size of your church. Your team has to be small enough that you can be intentional both about the time and frequency it takes to develop solid teachers. There ought to be enough opportunities to teach that every member of the team can build a relationship with the congregation. In any area of leadership, if people don't have the opportunity to practice, they get rusty and are not as effective.

Your team also has to be small enough that you can be intentional about development. You need to have enough time to invest personally in each member of the team, providing them with opportunities to learn what it takes to prepare, study, create, rehearse, and deliver an effective message, as well as to coach them on receiving feedback.

So, how often should you be teaching? The closer a senior pastor gets to transitioning senior leadership, the fewer times that senior pastor should be teaching. But a good healthy number for non-transitioning senior pastors is 35 to 40 weekends each year. That creates plenty of opportunities to develop two or three other teachers on the team.

PRO TIP: Jeff Henderson, lead pastor of Gwinnett Church in Atlanta, has said a good senior pastor can deliver, at most, 20 phenomenal messages in a single year.

No senior pastor is going to be consistently phenomenal, but if you often teach more than 40 weekends a year, the overall quality of all your messages will suffer.

Make Time for Message Prep

At this point, you may be saying to yourself, "I'd love to have more time to prepare my messages, but I have a lot of responsibility and there are only 24 hours in a day." No one's saying you aren't busy—really busy—but preparing for the weekend message is one of your key responsibilities. If you shortchange it, the entire church suffers.

So, here are three things you can do to make time for message preparation:

1. Make it *the* priority focus.

Message prep should be the first thing that goes on your calendar each week . . . and only you can solve your calendar issues. The senior pastor's schedule and rhythm need to drive the rest of the church's schedule and rhythm. The senior pastor's schedule shouldn't be driven by the management schedules of the rest of the team; the rest of the team should adapt to what the senior pastor needs to do in order to teach well.

2. Work with your leaders to figure out how other things on your plate can be moved to someone else's plate.

Whether through delegation or empowering someone to take responsibilities you currently hold, you need to start letting go of what isn't essential. That doesn't mean these responsibilities aren't essential for the church; it just means it's not essential you do them. You need to give leadership responsibility away so you can focus on what is most important to the overall health of your church, including teaching responsibility.

3. Create a small team to help you work through the development of messages.

People in your congregation may think you have the entire week off, show up on Sunday morning, and deliver a message to the church. But you know that's not true. A great message requires research, study, brainstorming, storytelling, and creativity. It requires a lot of thought about how you engage your audience in the truth found in Scripture. How does God's Word apply to the lives of the people in your church? How do you help them see how it applies?

One person isn't going to be gifted in all aspects of what it takes to deliver a great message. For example, some great senior pastors are natural storytellers but need others to help with study and research. Other senior pastors are sharp academics, but they need creative input from others in order to connect with the audience. Still other pastors can create a message but aren't as skilled with delivery. They need others to help them rehearse so their delivery is clear and compelling.

It's vital you have a clear grasp of the message prep process, as well as your own strengths and weaknesses. That information will guide you as you build a team who can help you highlight your strengths and ensure your weaknesses don't get in the way of crafting and delivering great messages each and every week.

Spiritual Leader and Teacher: Questions for Reflection

Use the following questions to reflect on what you learned in the reading and consider how it applies to your leadership and church. Jot down thoughts, notes, or answers if that helps you begin applying what you're learning.



Keep in Mind

These questions are for you. They aren't meant to be shared with others, even those on your leadership team. So, feel free to be completely honest with yourself. It will help you clarify where you're already strong and where you have opportunity for growth.

1. Think about an average work week. Do you currently have adequate time and energy devoted to preparing your message for Sunday? If not, what sort of responsibilities and tasks tend to take time away from your message prep? Be as specific as possible.
2. Do you currently have a teaching team? Why or why not?
3. How many messages do you currently deliver each year? Based on the information in the reading (the observation by Jeff Henderson), are you delivering too many? If so, how is it affecting the quality of your communication?
4. Is there a person or persons on your staff who show promise as a communicator? What can you do to invest in them more and help them grow as communicators and teachers?



Exercise: What's in Your Way?

If you're not currently devoting the time and energy necessary to prepare consistently great messages, it's time to re-prioritize and delegate.

In the space below, write down any tasks that take away time and energy you could use each week to prepare for Sunday. These should be tasks and responsibilities you can delegate, so don't include anything related to casting vision, leading your leadership team, or championing your church culture.

Now, next to each task or responsibility you listed, write down the name of a staff member who is probably best suited to take that burden. Just make a best guess. As you have conversations, you'll probably find you have to adjust some assignments. That's okay. The purpose of this exercise is to help you take a first step in the right direction.

Once you have your list, put some meetings on your calendar. The faster you begin to delegate, the sooner you'll have time to devote to message preparation.



Exercise: Leverage Your Teaching Team

Few pastors are great at all aspects of preparing and delivering a message. That's one of the reasons it's important to have a support team. Using the table below, think about which tasks energize you and which drain you, and then rate yourself from 1–10 for each.

Task	Rating
Research / Study	
Writing	
Rehearsal	
Delivery	
Creativity	
Connecting with the Audience	

Now consider tasks you aren't as good at or that tend to drain you. Is there someone on your teaching team you can lean into for support, so those tasks don't negatively affect the quality or consistency of your messages?

Schedule a time to speak with that person.

Note: If your teaching team is actively preparing and delivering messages on a regular basis, it may be helpful to have them work through this exercise as well. It can provide a lot of clarity around where they need your help and support.



Part Three: Leader of Leaders

No matter the size of your church or staff team, you cannot neglect your leadership role.

The Primary Leader of Leaders

Senior pastors have to be the primary leaders in the organization. It's a role they can't delegate to others. And in order to drive leadership development in your church, you have to be actively engaged in your own growth as a leader. No matter how much you know and have experienced in leadership, *you aren't there yet*.

Leadership is an opportunity for continuous growth. No one ever figures it out completely. It requires evolution. The leader you were one year ago probably shouldn't be the leader you are today. Your leadership development and how you live out your leadership role is critical to the health of your ministry.

Leadership and Influence

The word *leadership* means different things to different people. So, what exactly are we talking about when we say senior pastors have to be leaders of leaders in their churches?

Most senior pastors need to broaden their views of leadership to include *influence*. Sharing influence is a key component of great church leadership—especially as the church grows. When churches are young and small, senior pastors use their influence to accomplish tasks that make the church run. But as a church grows, it requires a shift in leadership focus. Senior pastors must begin to use their influence to fulfill the mission and vision of the church.

This shift requires a senior pastor to evolve their leadership to a different level. In other words, the leader you are today may not necessarily be the leader you need to be in the future for where your church is going.

As your church grows and you lead your staff and congregation toward fulfilling a mission and vision, your leadership must be built around two functions:

1. Leading up.

The senior pastor must provide leadership for the board, elders, and anyone else empowered with some authority over the senior pastor.

2. Leading around.

The senior pastor must provide leadership for the staff leaders who report to the senior pastor. One person can't carry the entire leadership load, so the senior pastor has to be intentional about building a team of capable staff leaders and helping individuals on that team grow in their leadership.

The Leadership Pathway

There are four steps in the leadership pathway, but you can also think of them as the four stages of influence.

1. Leading by example.

This is leading by modeling for others how the church does things. These leaders get their hands dirty and show others how it's done.

2. Leading other people through delegation.

Eventually, great senior pastors learn to give responsibility to other people in order to broaden the amount of ministry they can accomplish.

3. Leading other people through empowerment.

This third stage is similar to the second stage except that you're not only handing responsibility to other people, you're giving them decision-making authority. These leaders now have the responsibility to shape who they are, who their teams are, and the broad direction of their ministries.

4. Leading through vision.

Moving into this final stage of leadership/influence requires you to become the catalyst for a movement. While the leaders below you make tactical and even some strategic ministry decisions, you motivate staff and congregants by clearly articulating where you think God is leading your church into the future.

Moses Learned to Delegate

If you want an example of a leader growing through some of these stages, look no further than Exodus 18:13–27. At the beginning of this passage, Moses leads by example. He’s listening to everyone’s problems, adjudicating conflicts, and offering solutions. But the scope of that role begins to overwhelm him. It’s too much to handle on his own. So, Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, advises him to expand his span of care by delegating this work to qualified leaders.

In order to do more and to be more effective, Moses had to entrust some of his responsibilities to others. It was a natural part of his evolution as a leader.

Stuck? Here’s How to Move Forward

At this point, you may feel like you’re not where you’re supposed to be on the leadership pathway. You may even feel stuck. That’s okay. In fact, it’s pretty common. The good news is, we can get you unstuck. Where senior pastors get stuck in their leadership often aligns with the size of their churches.

Small Churches

Pastors of small churches tend to get stuck because they only lead by example. In other words, they’re trying to do all of the ministry by themselves. Unfortunately, the culture of small churches often expects and encourages this behavior. If that’s you, it’s time to start giving away ministry tasks and responsibilities to qualified leaders. You’re probably going to feel some anxiety as you make that leap, but if you commit to adding delegation to your leadership, it will pay off . . . for you, for the leaders you delegate to, and for your church as a whole.

Midsize Churches

Pastors of midsize churches tend to be good at delegating but haven’t made the leap to empowering other leaders. They’ve learned how to tell other people what to do, but they haven’t really given away ownership of ministry to other leaders. Delegation helps you accomplish more, but the people you delegate tasks to complete those tasks and then come back to you for the next task. *You* become the bottleneck for accomplishing ministry tasks in your church. If that’s you, it’s time to move beyond delegation to empowerment.

Large Churches

Pastors of large churches have usually made the leap to empowerment, but they fail to develop a team of leaders around them who can also empower others. Their senior leadership teams only know how to tell other people what to do, so the SLT becomes the ministry bottleneck. When the ministry gets bottlenecked, these senior pastors find they don't have the margin to assume the important role of vision caster. Dropping other responsibilities only a senior pastor can do will limit the ministry effectiveness and growth potential of your church.

PRO TIP: The four steps in the leadership pathway are cumulative. That means, as you expand from leading by example to leading through delegation, you don't stop leading by example.

In some situations, you may need to step back and lead in a different way. Your influence is situation-dependent. But if you are trying to grow your church and you continue to lead only by example, you'll undermine your church's potential. Your church will get stuck because your leadership is stuck.

3 Common Leadership Mistakes Senior Pastors Make

Before we wrap up this part, let's take a look at three common mistakes senior pastors make as they lead their churches:

1. They try to lead too many people.

Delegating tasks and responsibilities so you can focus on the four things a senior pastor can't delegate isn't easy. In an effort to quickly off-load leadership responsibilities, senior pastors often add too many leaders to their team. Soon, the senior pastor is trying to lead 10 or 12 people. If you lead that many people, you won't have time to focus on your essential responsibilities.

To avoid this pitfall, you have to reduce your span of care, which means reducing the number of leaders directly connected to your leadership.

2. **They sacrifice great teaching.**

Most senior pastors are problem-solvers. They love to dive into the weeds of problems, engage them, and work until the problems are solved. And it's tempting to fall into this pattern because problems are often the most *urgent* thing in front of you even though they aren't the most *important*. But allowing your time to be diverted from your teaching responsibilities in order to solve problems doesn't serve your leadership or your church.

Remember what you learned in the last chapter: You have to make message preparation *the* priority focus.

3. **They resist collaborative leadership.**

Authority issues tend to be a bigger challenge for Baby Boomer leaders and senior pastors. If that's you, you were probably taught a top-down or authoritative approach to leadership in which the leader was expected to have all of the answers, vision, direction, and responsibility. That approach to leadership worked a couple of decades ago. It doesn't work today. Be open to a collaborative style of leadership. Build your church's leadership culture around mutual honor and mutual respect for who God created us to be. In that kind of culture, leaders throughout the church have a voice in the process of developing ministry strategy, which helps the church thrive.

You've Got This

Your leadership development and how you live out your leadership role is critical to the overall health of your ministry. Don't neglect it. Embrace change. If your church is growing, you can't lead like you used to lead when your church was smaller. If you want your church to grow, start taking steps on the leadership pathway to create an environment of church growth.

The worst thing you can do to yourself and your church is neglect leadership development.

Leader of Leaders: Questions for Reflection

Use the following questions to reflect on what you learned in the reading and consider how it applies to your leadership and church. Jot down thoughts, notes, or answers if that helps you begin applying what you're learning.



Keep in Mind

These questions are for you. They aren't meant to be shared with others, even those on your leadership team. So, feel free to be completely honest with yourself. It will help you clarify where you're already strong and where you have opportunity for growth.

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you currently rate yourself as a delegator?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Jot down three things you can do to improve how you delegate (even if you are already good at it).

2. Which step are you currently on in the leadership pathway? Do you think you're where you need to be or is time to move forward?
3. How intentional are you about "leading up?"
4. How much time and energy do you currently invest in your own leadership growth and development?



Exercise: Get Unstuck

Circle your current stage of leadership:

Lead by example

Lead by delegating

Lead through empowerment

Lead through vision

- Is your current stage of leadership appropriate to the size and maturity of your ministry?
- What steps are you taking to move into the next stage of leadership?

If you think your church is stuck, review the *Stuck? Here's How to Move Forward* section of the reading, focusing on recommendations for churches the size of yours. Schedule some meetings with your leadership team so you can begin to make a plan for getting unstuck by growing your leadership culture.



Exercise: Address Your Mistakes

Take a look at the list of common mistakes made by senior pastors. Put a check mark next to any of the mistakes you think you're currently making.

Leading too many people	☐
Sacrificing great teaching	☐
Resisting collaborative leadership	☐

Take a moment to think about what your mistakes may be costing you and your church. Write down some ideas in the space below.

Revisit the reading (and previous parts of this resource, if necessary) to create an action plan for addressing each mistake you're currently making. Be specific about your goal in each area. Be clear about your next step. And take action!



Part Four: Culture Champion

You can't leave culture up to chance, hoping team members will figure it out on their own.

Define the Culture

Culture is a set of behaviors that define what the team does, how it behaves, and what it values.

The senior pastor *must* be the primary champion of culture in a church. Culture starts at the top of an organization. If the senior leadership team is preaching and teaching values and practices the senior pastor does not exhibit, there will be a disconnect, and tension will arise on the team. It's the senior pastor's responsibility to set the tone for the team and lead the church by example.

When done well, senior pastors not only shape the culture of the team, they shape the culture of the entire church.

It's In the Air

Often, when guests walk into a church and meet the leadership team, they feel a vibe of the church's culture. It can be radically different from another team at another church. This sense of culture defines the church, even to the extent that certain people would or would not fit in that culture.

So, it's really important a senior pastor is intentional about defining and championing the culture.

Case Study: Eastridge Community Church

When it comes to talking about church culture, the more specific we can be, the more helpful the conversation. So, let's take a look at a specific, real-world church culture The Unstuck Group has worked with in the past. Let's take a look at Eastridge Community Church in Covington, Georgia.

Eastridge's four-member executive leadership team has established an amazing culture. They have an ambitious vision but, because of their great culture, their vision isn't unrealistic. When you hear about their five cultural behaviors, you'll know why. Here they are:

1. *"We have real relationships with one another that are honest and sincere."*

Authenticity is an important behavior at Eastridge. The entire staff understands this concept because it's modeled by the leadership team. They are honest with one another and expect the same of everyone on staff.

2. *"We're never satisfied with the status quo."*

Good isn't good enough for the people of Eastridge. They are hungry to make things better. They're comfortable with a healthy challenge to established ministry approaches.

3. *"A team win is more important than individual success."*

Eastridge's DNA includes the concept that if an individual leader or staff member wins but the team doesn't win, it's not a win. Teamwork matters, and the senior pastor is a champion at modeling this behavior. He doesn't see himself as more important than the staff team or church as a whole.

4. *"We're humble enough to know we don't know it all and secure enough to ask for the wisdom and help of others."*

Eastridge demonstrates this as they consistently lean into one another, trying to make great decisions through the planning process.

5. *"We choose to be joyful and have fun in our journey together."*

This characteristic is really about valuing laughter. At the time we met with them, Eastridge had some big challenges to overcome, but they faced those challenges with smiles and laughter. They chose to be joyful in the journey together.

As you look at your staff's behaviors—as you look at the behaviors you model for them—what would you say are the defining characteristics of your culture? Those behaviors—positive or negative—are your culture. They define *how* you do ministry work, and they'll determine, in large part, whether you succeed.

Model the Culture

If you've gone through the process of defining your culture the way Eastridge Community Church has, you're probably wondering about your next step. It's one thing to define the culture you want to have on your team. It's a completely different thing to live that culture out within the context of real ministry in the real world.

Once you define your culture, *you* have to model it. It's impossible to overemphasize how important it is for the senior pastor to model cultural behaviors. Because of your influence as senior pastor, when you model culture, you shape culture. You must also ensure key leaders reflect those behaviors because if they don't, the rest of the team won't either. And if the rest of the team doesn't reflect those behaviors, the church will not adapt the culture.

PRO TIP: Being a culture champion means modeling behaviors you want to define your church.

Teach the Culture

When you've defined culture and actively engaged in modeling it so it's become sticky with your staff and congregants, it's time to teach it. Teaching goes back to vision. You need to keep cultural behaviors in front of the team by talking about them.

As the senior pastor, you need to talk about, preach about, and regularly share culture with the team. Monthly staff meetings are a great way to do this. In fact, bringing culture and vision-casting back to staff meetings is one of the most important ways to remind yourselves of who you are.

PRO TIP: Craig Groeschel, the senior pastor of Life.Church, has said that your values should be memorable and portable.

Can your people remember them? If they can, then they're portable—your team can take them anywhere.

If you want your culture to be memorable and portable, you can't have a list of a dozen behaviors. No one will be able to remember them all. Identify key behaviors and communicate them in simple language.

Coach the Culture

Next, you have to coach behaviors. Knowing cultural behaviors isn't the same as living them out within the context of ministry in the real world.

One of the best ways to coach your culture is to celebrate people living out your cultural values. There's an old management principle: *What gets noticed, gets repeated*. When you acknowledge and celebrate someone living out your cultural values, it communicates to everyone the alignment between what you *say* you value and what you *actually* value. That encourages everyone to embrace those values.

When people drift from your cultural values (maybe they agree honesty and sincerity are good but aren't always honest and sincere), you have a coaching opportunity. You must take action because if you don't, you won't have an authentic culture.

In our work consulting churches, we've noticed a disturbing trend. Churches do a great job holding people accountable for performance. They're good at confronting integrity issues. They hold people accountable for immoral behavior. But churches tend to be too accommodating when it comes to living out cultural behaviors. If it's not sin, leaders often let it slide. But that's dangerous. You cannot tolerate behavior outside of the culture you're working to create.

That may sound harsh, but the cost of inaction can be the death of your culture. When leadership and staff aren't aligned on cultural behaviors, those behaviors become inauthentic—you may talk about them, but they aren't consistently modeled by leadership and staff. The culture becomes an *aspirational* culture. And the problem with aspirational cultures is no one trusts a church that doesn't live by the values it espouses.

The Payoffs

When each person on your team embraces and lives out the shared set of essential behaviors you've defined, modeled, taught, and coached, the team begins to reflect those behaviors. This shapes the culture of your *entire ministry*.

Here are two payoffs you'll see from this kind of authentic culture:

1. **Everyone pulls in the same direction.**

When your staff has a clear shared identity, things get done. Increased unity leads to increased productivity.

2. Increased clarity about who fits on the team and who doesn't.

When hiring, it's not enough to look at a candidate's competency. It's vital that everyone on staff is a good fit, both in terms of chemistry and culture. Having a clearly defined culture helps you read someone's fit. But what helps even more is when your entire team has embraced and lives out those cultural behaviors. When your culture is alive, people can tell whether a candidate is a good fit for the church. And finding a good fit is absolutely essential if you want to maintain or grow organizational momentum.

Evaluate the Culture

Culture isn't static. You can't just set it and forget it. One of your crucial responsibilities as your church's culture champion is to periodically evaluate the state of your culture.

When you see something in your culture you don't like, you must be willing to look in the mirror. Remember: you set the tone for the church.

Whatever it is you don't like about your church's culture is probably coming from how you operate.

If this happens, take some time away. Put together a collaborative team if you need to and start talking openly and honestly about where you're seeing misalignment in your culture. Make a plan for needed course correction and execute the plan.

Don't let cultural issues slide. There's too much at stake.

Your church's culture influences your effectiveness as a leader, the quality and efficiency of the ministry work performed by your staff, and the effectiveness and growth potential of your church.

Culture Champion: Questions for Reflection

Use the following questions to reflect on what you learned in the reading and consider how it applies to your leadership and church. Jot down thoughts, notes, or answers if that helps you begin applying what you're learning.



Keep in Mind

These questions are for you. They aren't meant to be shared with others, even those on your leadership team. So, feel free to be completely honest with yourself. It will help you clarify where you're already strong and where you have opportunity for growth.

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you say you currently fulfill your role as culture champion?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. When was the last time you taught or coached your church's culture?
3. How long has it been since you evaluated your church's culture?
4. What are some tasks or responsibilities that can cause you to "let culture slide?" What can you do to prevent those things from getting in the way of your role as your church's culture champion?



Exercise: Assess Your Culture

Take a moment and create a list of behaviors you'd like to see authentically demonstrated by your staff and congregation.

- As you think about the behaviors you listed, how well do you currently model them?
- What is one thing you can do to better model each behavior?
- What can you do to better teach and coach those behaviors?

In Closing

Great leaders own the roles only they can play. Only once you understand the duties and responsibilities that must always remain in your hands, you can begin the process of handing *everything* else off to members of your team.

Your growth as a leader will strengthen your church and set the stage for dynamic organizational growth. As you consider your next steps, let me leave you with some resource recommendations for further study:

4 Roles a Senior Pastor Can't Delegate - Podcast Series

- [*Episode 93 - Vision Caster*](#)
- [*Episode 94 - Spiritual Leader/Teacher*](#)
- [*Episode 95 - Leader of Leaders*](#)
- [*Episode 96 - Culture Champion*](#)

Online Courses

- [*Leading an Unstuck Church Course*](#)
- [*Multisite Unstuck Course*](#)

We're adding new courses to equip pastors all the time:
Stay up-to-date at theunstuckgroup.com/courses

Consulting and Coaching

My team and I at The Unstuck Group help leaders grow healthy churches by guiding them through experiences that focus vision, strategy, team and action. Our core services include ministry health assessments, strategic planning, staffing and structure reviews, multisite and merger planning.

Learn how it works by visiting theunstuckgroup.com.

About the Author



Tony was founder and lead strategist of [The Unstuck Group](#), a company that helps leaders grow healthy churches by guiding them through experiences that focus vision, strategy and action. For 14 years, Tony served on the senior leadership teams at West Ridge Church in Dallas, Georgia, NewSpring Church in South Carolina, and Granger Community Church in Indiana. He wrote several books, as well as articles that have been featured with the Willow Creek Association, Catalyst and [Pastors.com](#). He wrote about leadership at [tonymorganlive.com](#). His last book, [The Unstuck Church: Equipping Churches to Experience Sustained Health](#), is available from Thomas Nelson. He also hosted a weekly podcast called [The Unstuck Church Podcast](#).

Tony passed away in 2024, leaving behind a legacy of thought leadership, innovation, and a deep commitment to helping churches thrive.

THE UNSTUCK GROUP®
WE HELP PASTORS LEAD UNSTUCK CHURCHES