
How To Become An Authentic Church Leader (And Why It's Important)

Relationships are crucial to leading your church well.

It can be easy to get caught up in using your administrative skills while leading your church.

From possessing an ability to teach, to organize worship services, and to manage your money, there's a lot you need to take care of to make sure everything functions.

But your church is more than a task to complete.

Your church is a group of people you must shepherd.

To lead your church well, you have to do more than preach a killer sermon and organize a breathtaking worship experience. You have to build relationships with the people you lead. To do this, you have to know and be known by the people you serve.

Building relationships with your church members can be challenging. Not only is it difficult as a church leader to create a personal community, but the way you build relationships will have a ripple effect throughout your church. Think about it.

If you regularly come across as cold and emotionally detached, then this will influence the way your staff, volunteers, and church members will interact with each other.

This is just one example, but I think you get the point.

So, how do you build healthy relationships with your church?

How do you influence the community you serve to live and love like Jesus?

The key to creating life-giving relationships in your church is authentic leadership.

Authentic leadership is more than a contemporary business trend.

Authentic leadership is at the heart of church leadership.

In this post, I'm going to share with you three ways you can be an authentic church leader.

#1 – Be a humble church leader

The first mark of authentic leadership is humility.

Specifically, I'm talking about knowing who you are in light of who God created you to be. For instance, God didn't create you—or anyone else for that matter—to be completely self-sufficient. If that were the case, then no one would need to place his or her faith in Jesus Christ or depend upon God's strength to live the life he's called us to live.

As an authentic church leader, there are three marks of humility:

- Live and love like Jesus
- Practice self-awareness
- Make room for struggle

As a Christian, your goal is to **live and love like Jesus**.

Many verses highlight this reality, including:

- Romans 8:29
- 1 Corinthians 11:1
- Ephesians 5:1–2
- 1 Peter 2:21
- 1 John 2:6

Practically speaking, when it comes to leadership, every book you read, principle you learn, and conference you attend must be filtered through your goal as a follower of Jesus.

In other words, your goal isn't to live an authentic life per se. Your goal is to live an authentic life to be more like Jesus. Basically, authenticity is a way to be more like Christ.

To live your life for Jesus and to lead your church well, you have to possess a high level of **self-awareness**. According to Daniel Goleman, author of Emotional Intelligence, self-awareness is "... knowing one's internal states, preference, resources and intuitions."

For you, this means being aware of who you are in Christ. In particular, to be an authentic leader, you need to know that you—like your church members—face an internal battle between the "flesh" and the "Spirit" (Gal 5:17). While the Holy Spirit leads you to live your life for Jesus, your "flesh" will tempt you to pursue sin instead.

What is more, self-awareness also means you understand that you too will face challenges in life. Whether you experience a natural disaster, suffer a financial setback, or endure a significant illness, you will have trouble in life (John 16:33).

What does self-awareness have to do with authentic leadership?

Well, a lot.

As you strive to live your life for Jesus, you are aware of the internal and external problems you face, which should lead you to **make room for struggles** in your life.

A big part of authenticity for *anyone* is being able to relate to someone else.

As a church leader, living a humble life dependent upon God's strength will help you and the members of your church to empathize with one another, which leads me to my next point.

#2 - Walk in the light

The best definition of honesty is found in 1 John 1:7:

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleaned us from all sin.”

Honesty is about being able to walk in the light.

As a church leader, this has two big implications.

First, you're not hiding something sinful in your life.

I'm not talking about the one time you told a “white lie” or had an angry thought toward someone else. What I'm talking about are ongoing sinful patterns.

If you're not able to walk in the light, then I encourage you to seek advice from a friend or counselor on how best to move forward.

Second, walking in the light also means that you're able to talk about your struggles.

Talking about your struggles is one way you can shed light into the darkness of someone else's life. Being honest about your life can be a tremendous blessing for someone else.

When it comes to being honest, this doesn't mean you have to share everything with everyone. Whether you share something from the pulpit or with someone one-on-one, ask yourself these two questions:

1. "Will this help them live and love like Jesus?"
2. "Can they relate to what I'm going to share?"

In answering these questions, you'll be able to gauge if you should or should not share something from your life.

There's one caveat I'd like to include:

As a church leader, you may not be able to share everything with your church. But it's a good idea to have someone in your life you can be honest with—someone who can help you work through your problems or overcome your struggles with sin.

#3 – Share hope

There's one last key component to being an authentic leader:

Embracing the hope found in Christ.

It's easy to get caught up in navel-gazing as we talk about living a humble and honest life by sharing your struggles. But here's the deal:

God is at work in your life.

Despite the challenges and problems you're facing, God is at work.

He gives you strength.

He empowers you to overcome sin and Satan.

He will fulfill his promise to give you eternal life.

The hope you have as a Christian is the same hope you need to share with your church. As an authentic church leader, living a humble and honest life, don't forget to share the hope that is in Christ.

Becoming an authentic church leader

The life of authentic leadership is ongoing.

It's not a class you can take, a book you can read, or a destination you'll reach.

As a church leader and follower of Christ, by the grace of God, you'll always have to stay humble, walk in the light, and share hope with the church you serve.