1

LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Christ-Centered Identity

Second-chair leaders play a vital ministry role. They lead teams, execute plans, and serve the church's vision. Their perspectives, skills, and buy-in create forward movement and healthy ministry environments.

But the foundational characteristic of a successful support leader is a growing relationship with Christ. Finding our identity in Him is the best antidote to selfish ambition.

"Having fully captivated Jesus' and John's attention, of all the things Father God could have said, his first words were neither directional ('go here') nor instructional ('do this'). They were relational: 'This is my Son.'" — Alicia Britt Chole

Two common traps:

1. *The*_____ *trap.*

> "Our jealousy tears down what someone else has done to make us feel better about what we haven't done. Jealousy causes us to want what someone else has. If we haven't earned it or received it, then we criticize it." — Chris Sonksen

> "When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him" (Acts 13:45).

2. *The*_____ *trap.*

> "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (Philippians 4:12).

"One of the tragedies of our life is that we keep forgetting who we are." — Henri Nouwen

Apply

Identify truths from Scripture that describe who you are in Christ. Then create a statement that captures these biblical declarations, and begin reading it each morning to remind yourself of who God has called you to be.

2 LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Second-Chair Mindset

Four mindsets of second-chair leaders:

1. *The*_____ *mindset.*

   Second-chair leaders need to know the pastor's expectations, ministry priorities, leadership style, and frustrations.

   Expectations clarify performance baselines. Ministry priorities highlight values. Leadership style provides insights for working together. And frustrations point to areas where the pastor needs extra support. Such understanding bolsters effectiveness.

2. *The*_____ *mindset.*

   Trust grows when there is character, competence, and compassion. Character shows you are trustworthy. Competence and compassion elevate trust as you complete tasks with excellence and demonstrate that you value people.

3. *The*_____ *mindset.*

   Taking a longer view means avoiding petty arguments and territorial disputes. Instead, there is maturity to see and champion the overall vision.

4. *The*_____ *mindset.*

   "The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11–12).

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:2).

Apply

On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being the best), rate yourself on each of the four mindsets. Then identify one step you can take to improve your lowest score.

3 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Pure Heart

All leaders must protect their hearts against wrong attitudes and the deceptive tactics of the enemy.

Four deadly attitudes:

1. _____.

> “Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another” (James 4:11).
>
> “Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

2. _____.

> “I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

3. _____.

> To uproot the negative, practice gratitude and celebrate team wins. Personal gratitude will protect your heart as you focus each day on the goodness of God. And celebrating with your team keeps the focus on what God is doing in the church.

4. _____.

> “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble” (James 4:6).

Staying humble requires personal, relational, and organizational intentionality. Personally, submit your ego to God each day. Relationally, share credit for successes with others. And organizationally, acknowledge the collective efforts of the team.

Apply

Make a plan as a team to guard against these deadly attitudes. Commit to hold one another accountable whenever you spot such issues.

Clear Role

"Select capable men from all the people — men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain — and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you" (Exodus 18:21–22).

Five questions to discuss:

1. *What are the_____ responsibilities?*

   Clarity about other roles begins with understanding exactly what the pastor does. Without that clarity, people will have trouble staying in their lanes.

2. *What are the responsibilities of_____ leaders?*

   Those who report to the pastor have specific duties as well. Identify these in writing to ensure everyone is on the same page.

3. *What_____ does the pastor need from other leaders?*

   This calls for a candid conversation about how second-chair leaders can best support the pastor.

4. *What_____ do staff pastors need to operate within?*

   Again, this requires honest conversations.

5. *Who_____ to each staff pastor?*

   Establish a chain of authority to ensure accountability. Communicate this structure to everyone who is part of it, including staff members and volunteers.

Apply

To increase role clarity, schedule a meeting with the leader to whom you report. During the meeting, work through the five questions above.

5 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Excellence

"Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint" (Proverbs 29:18).

Five responsibilities of second-chair leaders:

1. _____ *the vision.*

   One of the first questions to ask the pastor is, "What's your vision?" To fulfill the vision, everyone needs to have a thorough understanding of it.

2. _____ *the vision.*

   Staff pastors must embrace and live out the vision. That's why it's important for them to fit the church's culture.

3. _____ *with the vision.*

   People and departments have a tendency to drift from the vision over time. Do the hard work of ensuring everything in your ministry area aligns with the church's vision.

4. _____ *the vision.*

   The pastor creates the vision, but second-chair leaders help cast it. They communicate the vision in their areas of influence — not replacing the pastor's message, but replicating it throughout the church.

5. _____ *the vision.*

   Staff pastors play a critical role in helping turn the vision into reality. They devote time, energy, planning, and resources in moving the vision from an idea to fulfillment.

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Colossians 3:23–24).

Apply

If you lack clarity about the vision and your place in it, schedule a time to meet with your pastor to ensure understanding and consistency. Then ask about specific ways you can help advance the vision.

Team Building

"So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attain- ing to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11–13).

Six team-building practices:

1. _____.

   This involves recruiting people to roles and responsibilities that will leverage their God-given gifts for a greater purpose.

2. _____.

   People need the tools, resources, training, and coaching to effectively serve in their roles.

3. _____.

   Delegating tasks communicates trust.

4. _____.

   Team members should have some level of decision-making authority to function in their roles.

5. _____.

   Team-building leaders release tasks, but they also remember the *people* doing the work. They listen, love, celebrate, and encourage them along the way.

6. _____.

   Effective leaders draw out the potential in others and mobilize them to make their greatest impact.

Apply

Write down each team-building skill on a sheet of paper. Under each one, list at least two things you could do to grow in that area. Take steps this week to implement some of those ideas.

7 LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Healthy Communication

“When leaders don’t communicate, it’s like pouring sand in the gears of progress.” — Michael Hyatt

The five C’s of communication:

1._____.

Communication must be clear and concise. Rambling speech that’s hard to follow leaves people feeling confused and exasperated.

2._____.

What do you need to know? What do you want to learn? What ideas would you like to explore?

3._____.

“The signature of mediocrity is chronic inconsistency.” — Jim Collins

4._____.

“The lag time for change is the same as the lag time for candor.” — Joseph Grenny

Withholding information creates a façade of unity that eventually crumbles.

5._____.

When people feel criticized and unappreciated, relationships suffer.

Each of these five communication skills will make a dramatic difference in the quality, depth, frequency, and effectiveness of your communication. Put them to work for you, your team, and your relationships.

Apply

Ask a teammate to assess you on a scale from 1 to 10 in each of the five communication skills. Then do the same for that person. Finally, discuss how each of you can improve and the next steps you will take.

8 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Decision Making

Leaders often deal with decision fatigue when the number and complexity of decisions increase exponentially. It's no wonder many feel overwhelmed in ministry.

"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22).

Three decision-making keys:

1. *Understand how your pastor* _____

   When you know your pastor's heart, values, and priorities, you'll be in a better position to make decisions that reflect his or her leadership.

2 . *Identify your pastor's decision-making* _____

   For example, several factors play a role in my decisions. I consider the church's DNA, research, timing, intuition, outside perspective, the quality of the idea, and leader buy-in. Above all, of course, I seek the Holy Spirit's direction.

3 . *Make decisions without* _____

   Second-chair leaders should be able to make decisions without weighing down the pastor with unnecessary questions or endless meetings. If the pastor has to do all the thinking, you're probably not fulfilling your leadership duties.

the pastor.

Apply

Clarify your pastor's decision-making framework. Ask the pastor what's important to him or her when making decisions. Put this in writing, and share it with those you lead.

Encouragement

Leadership is hard. The demands are heavy, the questions relentless, the decisions consequential, the stress real, the problems complex, and the pressure high.

Three ways to be an encourager:

1. *Speak deliberate_____ of encouragement.*

> "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Ephesians 4:29).

2. *Offer specific_____ during times of need.*

> "Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me". (Ephesians 6:18–19).

> Make it a habit to pray for your pastor — and your team. Then let them know you're praying. Further, offer to pray with people immediately when someone is struggling.

3. *Write sincere_____ of appreciation.*

> Note the adjectives in the three points above: deliberate, specific, and sincere. These are important. Your deliberate, specific, and sincere acts are what people will most remember.

Apply

If you're not a natural encourager, create a reminder in your calendar to encourage, pray for, and offer words of appreciation and thanks to your pastor and team members. Adding encouragement to your calendar might seem strange, but culture doesn't change until behavior does.

10 | LEADING FROM THE SECOND CHAIR

Transition Planning

Few ministers spend their entire careers in the same position. Most eventually transition to a new role, location, or season of ministry.

Guidelines for second-chair leader transitions:

1. *Keep your pastor*_____.

   When you sense the Holy Spirit stirring your heart to make a transition, your pastor should be the first (outside of your family) to know. Hearing it from someone else will only damage your relationship.

2. *Show*_____ *in the transition.*

   "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves" (Romans 12:10).

3. *Protect the church's*_____.

   "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

4. *Commit to*_____ *well.*

   Ask yourself, *What can I do to make the job easier and the transition smoother for the person who follows me? What does my leader need from me to make this transition more successful?*

Apply

Commit to follow the transition process above when the times comes for you to move on. As you look toward the future, be intentional about honoring God and others today.