

7 Observations of Outstanding Leaders

They are the two most common causes of forced termination of pastors.

1. Weak leadership skills.
2. Poor relational skills.

Much has been written in the past decade on leadership skills. The body of literature on the topic is massive and growing. I certainly have little to add in a brief blog post.

It is for that reason I focus specifically on the relational skills of great church leaders. Admittedly, my approach is both anecdotal and subjective. But I have been in the ministry of working with church leaders for thirty years. I think my cursory overview would be supported by more thorough research.

Most pastors and church leaders have never received formal training in relational skills. Perhaps these seven observations of outstanding leaders will prove helpful to many of you.

1. **They have a vibrant prayer life.** The more we are in conversation with God, the more we realize His mercy and grace. That realization leads to a greater humility, which is a key attribute of those with great relational skills.
2. **They ask about others.** Listen to people with whom you have regular conversations. How many of them focus the conversation on you and others? A key sign of relational health is a desire to direct the conversation to concern and questions about others.
3. **They rarely speak about themselves.** This trait is the corollary to the previous characteristic. Have you ever known someone who seems always to talk about himself or herself? They are usually boring or irritating. They are definitely self-absorbed.
4. **They are intentional about relationships.** They don't wait for others to take the initiative. They are so focused on others that they naturally seek to develop relationships.
5. **They have a healthy sense of humor.** This trait is natural because the leaders are not thinking obsessively about themselves. Indeed, they are prone to laugh at themselves and their own perceived inadequacies.
6. **They are not usually defensive.** Pastors and other church leaders deal with critics regularly. Sometimes a defense is right and necessary. Most of the time, the leaders with great relational skills will not take the criticism too personally.
7. **They constantly seek input.** Their egos are not so tender that they are unwilling to receive constructive criticism. To the contrary, many of these leaders seek such input on a regular basis.

I speculate that over one-half of forced terminations have at their foundation poor leadership and/or relational skills of the leader. I hope this brief checklist will help you look in the mirror with greater clarity.

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