



Words of Advice for young Church Leaders

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Last week, a friend asked me what general advice I would give to young church leaders. I'm sure this list is not complete, but here's a start.

1. **Always be a learner.** Degrees don't signal an end to learning. The world keeps changing, and none of us knows everything. An unwillingness to learn is intellectual arrogance.
2. **Learn the stories of your people.** Everybody has a story, including that church member who frustrates you. Learn to ask about those stories. Listen well. Show genuine interest in the people God has placed in your care.
3. **Love the grandparents in your church.** Sure, maybe they don't like change – but you probably won't either when you reach their age. You need their life wisdom today.
4. **Love the children in your church.** From their early preschool years, children will choose their heroes. Be one of them.
5. **Be patient.** Follow Jesus' lead as He made disciples – teach, listen, re-direct as needed, teach again . . . and trust the Father to change your congregation. Impatient church leadership is usually discouraged leadership.
6. **Laugh.** A lot. Today, the situation you face may seem unbearable. I assure you, though, that some of today's events will be comical in the future. Learn to laugh today with godly joy.
7. **Invest in at least three people.** Lead your whole congregation, but pour yourself into at least three people – a non-believer you're trying to reach, a new believer you're equipping, and an older believer you're encouraging.
8. **As much as possible, don't do ministry alone.** Train somebody as you counsel, visit, and evangelize. Involving somebody else takes more time, but your congregation will be stronger in the long run.

9. **Be willing to apologize.** You are not always right. None of us is. You *will* make mistakes. You will hurt people, even unintentionally. Learn to say with integrity: “I’m sorry. Please forgive me.”
10. **Don’t forget your spouse and children.** Your spouse should not learn from others important information about church events. Your children should not wonder why you’re always away from home. Make your family part of your team.
11. **Adore the church.** The apostle Paul thanked God for the Corinthians and expressed his deep love for them (1 Cor. 1:4, 16:24) – all the while saying to them, “You’re an absolute mess.” That mess is still God’s church. Love them.
12. **Don’t be afraid of numbers.** You can evaluate numbers without idolizing them. If your church is seeing no one turn to Christ and few believers growing in their faith, those numbers ought to challenge and motivate you.
13. **Be accountable to somebody.** Seek an older leader to pour into your life – and don’t give up until you find that person. Give permission to ask about your Bible study, your prayer life, your godliness, and your evangelism.
14. **Beware of “lostness apathy.”** When your heart no longer breaks over non-believers, it’s time to repent. A lack of concern over the lost is sin.
15. **Keep up with the news.** You need to know what’s going on in the world. Your commitment to the Great Commission demands it.
16. **Work hard.** Frankly, we need no more lazy church leaders. Work every day as if you will answer to God for the way you care for the souls of people . . . because you will.
17. **Seek financial guidance.** Taxation on ministry salary can be confusing. Your contributions toward retirement income should begin now. Get some input from someone who knows this world.
18. **Keep records.** Years from now, you will wish you had records of the baptisms, weddings, and funerals you performed. I know, because my mentor told me to do the same – and I didn’t listen.
19. **Plan now to end your ministry well.** Nobody ends ministry well by accident. In fact, the decisions you make today will affect whether you end well in the decades to come. Don’t be stupid.
20. **Thank God.** I have NO idea why God allows me to be a leader in His church. He does, though, and I get to do something that affects eternity. So do you. Be grateful.

What advice would you add?