

LEADERS AND WORKERS

That the leaders led in Israel, that the people volunteered, bless the Lord! - *Judges 5:2*

Author Gene Edwards makes a fascinating case for the idea that the Apostle Paul did not select leaders for the churches he founded. He came to a city, preached the gospel, and gathered those who responded. Then he left town, often under duress. When he visited again a year or so later, he took note of those everyone else turned to for decisions, and named them leaders. In essence, he was just officially confirming what the people had already sorted out for themselves.^[i]

In any group of people, some will lead and some will follow. Leadership is one of the natural gifts God builds into certain people (Romans 12:8). As a pastor, one of your most important responsibilities is to **recognize the people God has prepared to lead your church and ministries. Then train and equip and support and encourage them** to be the best leaders they can be. And I wish I didn't have to say this, but it can be just as important to protect the church from self-appointed leaders who would take you in the wrong direction.

Some churches become large enough to hire paid staff for certain positions. This chapter was written with volunteers in mind, but much of it applies to paid staff as well. If your church is at the point where you are considering

hiring someone, praise the Lord! I encourage you to read some of the numerous good books that will help you with issues specific to that task.

Finding Leaders

Jesus said, *Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need* (Matthew 6:33).

In the context of the Sermon on the Mount, *everything you need* refers to food, clothing and shelter. But I don't think it is stretching things too far to say that if God will provide these necessities of life for individuals, he will provide the necessities of life for a church on the same basis. Good leaders are a basic necessity of life for every church. If you are sincerely seeking to advance God's kingdom through your church, God will provide the leaders to help you do it.

Becoming a leader

Some people would say you don't "become" a leader, you either are one or you aren't. They believe leaders are born, not made. To a large degree I think this is true. But in a church or other organization, even the most naturally gifted leader needs to be recognized, and granted authority to lead in a defined area.

There are four ways that usually happens in churches. Many churches use different ways for different positions.

The fastest and most direct way to officially identify leaders is for the pastor to appoint them. The downside of appointing leaders is that everyone knows exactly who made the decision. If it looks like you're playing favorites, or if it turns out to be a mistake, they know who to blame.

Some churches elect leaders at annual congregational business meetings. The advantage is that everyone has a chance to be involved in the decision. Depending on how your church makes other decisions, this may be the best way for you, at least for the most important positions. But let me raise a few cautions. In a small church, people may feel pressured to vote for their friends – "I didn't get to do that job because so and so voted against me." In

a big congregation, some members may not know some candidates. If you have a lot of new Christians in your church, they may not have the Christian maturity to make an informed decision. If you have more than one person running for one important position, there's a potential for division. And if you only have one slate of nominees for the congregation to vote on, the decision is not really being made by the congregation, but by whoever created the slate.

In some cases, new leaders are chosen by the existing leaders. This can be a middle ground between appointment and congregational election. Presumably, your leaders are mature Christians who know the Lord, know the people and know the needs of the church, so they should make a good choice. And for the pastor, if a new leader doesn't work out, it can be very helpful to have a group of leaders standing with you in the decision.

Finally, many people become leaders in the church simply by volunteering. People who volunteer for leadership positions can be a real blessing. Volunteering shows that they are interested, they are available, they feel qualified and they are motivated. For most positions in the church, that's pretty much all you need.

However, there are a few positions where hard experience has taught me to be wary of volunteers. In particular, if someone seems eager for a job that gives them access to the church's money, watch out. **If someone seeks a position that gives them any kind of control over you as pastor, through your pay or your living or working conditions or even whether you keep your job, be careful.** If someone seeks a position because they think it will make them a big shot in the church, look for someone else. Graciously suggest another area in the church where they can volunteer. If they genuinely want to serve God, they will be happy to consider it. If they get angry and threaten to leave the church, don't try too hard to stop them. Their reaction just proves that their motives were not good, and you and the church are better off without them.

As your church grows, at some point it will be a good idea to create some kind of personnel committee. This is one of the support ministries we mentioned earlier. Their job is to:

- Pray for wisdom
- Know the leadership needs of the church
- Know the people of the church
- In confidential discussions, prayerfully match potential leaders to leadership needs
- Make their recommendations to whomever makes the final appointment or election
- Pray for the leaders

In some churches this committee is also responsible for training, equipping, resourcing, supporting and evaluating leaders once they are in place.

Three quick bits of advice regarding your personnel team: First, don't publicly nominate someone without asking them first. If they decline the nomination after it's been announced, you'll look disorganized, and everyone will be embarrassed. Second, don't assume people will do a job forever. Ask them once a year if they are willing to continue. Third, don't let individuals on your personnel team offer a position to someone until the whole team has agreed. If the offer has to be rescinded because of confidential information, or because someone else offered it to another person first, or you found a better candidate, again you look disorganized and everyone is embarrassed.

Biblical qualifications

The Bible has a fair amount to say about what the kind of person God wants leading his people. Paul advises Pastor Timothy, *Never be in a hurry about appointing a church leader* (1 Timothy 5:22). Once they've been put in place, it's almost impossible to remove them without causing hard feelings and dissension in the church.

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, advised him to appoint leaders to serve as judges under him to settle minor disputes among the people. Jethro suggested he look for *capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes* (Exodus 18:21). The apostles had similar criteria for those they put in charge of the food ministry: people who are *well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom*

(Acts 6:3). Paul expands on this in 1 Timothy 3:1-12.

Essentially, all these passages agree that character is the most important qualification. Jesus said of false prophets, *You can identify them by their fruit* (Matthew 7:16). That's equally true in the positive; you will know good character by its fruits: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* (Galatians 5:22-23).

In addition to asking people to do certain ministry tasks, some churches officially recognize those who have achieved a certain level of Christian maturity. They may give them a title, such as "elder," so everyone will know who they are. Sometimes this recognition carries with it certain duties. Other times it's a way of honoring and recognizing a small group of key people in the church who can be called on as needed, especially for prayerful advice and spiritual support. If your church honors people in this way, pay special attention to the Biblical qualifications.

Ability

Obviously you don't want to give a person a job they are unable to do. That's not fair to the church or to them. So it seems natural to choose someone whose job or education parallels the responsibilities of the church position you're trying to fill.

In many cases that makes sense. A professional musician might be an obvious choice to lead your church music program. A retired teacher might be perfect to head up your children's ministry.

On the other hand, **a person's secular employment may not indicate the best place for them in the church.** Somebody who spends five days a week working with small children may really want to be around adults at church, instead of automatically being stuck in the nursery. And sometimes the difference in outlook between the world and the church is significant. For instance, an accountant's job may require a zero-sum mentality that is just the opposite of the faith-filled, God-will-provide outlook you want for your church finances.

Remember what happened to Samuel when God sent him to Jesse's house

to find the next king of Israel.

When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, “Surely this is the LORD’s anointed!” But the LORD said to Samuel, “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” - 1 Samuel 16:6-7

If secular training and skills aren’t necessarily indicators of the right person for a job, what about spiritual gifts? After all, 1 Peter 4:10 says, *God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.*

Some churches put a lot of store in “ministry according to gifts.” They may use spiritual gift questionnaires. The hope is to find the place of service where each one *can do the good things he planned for us long ago* (Ephesians 2:10).

I’m a big believer in spiritual gifts. I’m not such a big believer in indiscriminately using spiritual gift tests, for two reasons. First, many of the tests differ in how they define the different gifts, or even how many there are. Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:7-10, and Ephesians 4:11 are the three lists usually cited, but passages such as 1 Peter 4:11 and Exodus 31:1-6 could also be considered.

Second, some people, even some pastors, take the results to mean that they should not try to do things in areas where they didn’t get a high score: “I scored low on ‘evangelist,’ so I don’t have to share my faith.”

The Great Commission doesn’t say, “Make disciples of all nations, but only if you scored high on ‘evangelist.’”

If you can find a test that accurately reflects your own understanding of spiritual gifts, go ahead and use it. Just make sure you know what the test is measuring and what the results mean. And make sure your people understand that while they might be better at some things than others, they aren’t excused from living a well-rounded Christian life.

“Ministry according to gifts” has a complementary philosophy: “Whom

God calls, God equips.” Few pastors are accomplished writers, speakers, counselors, worship designers, intercessors and administrators when God calls them. I know I wasn’t. But all these and more are essential skills to be a successful pastor. As I offered myself to God for pastoral education and training, he equipped me for the job to which he called me. He’ll do the same for you, and the people he has called to be your leaders.

Secular training, ministry interests and spiritual gifts can all be indicators of who God is calling to lead and work in your church. Where specific skills are lacking, God will supply them – if the person is willing to pray and work toward that, and if you as pastor are willing to resource and encourage them.

Cultural considerations

Some cultures have values or traditions that must be taken into account in who you choose to put in positions of leadership. Note that when I say “cultures” I don’t just mean countries or ethnicities. In America, rural Pentecostal churches have a very different culture from urban mainstream churches, and in both those examples the white church culture is different from the African-American or Hispanic or Asian church culture. Most people are so immersed in their culture that they have to make a conscious effort to even be aware of it.

Different ethnic and church cultures may have very different views of who is acceptable in what positions of leadership, totally apart from how they interpret Bible verses that touch on the same thing. Ask yourself: in my culture, who would be acceptable in this job? A single person? A divorced person? Is a certain minimum age expected? A certain gender? Is there anything else I should consider?

And now the big question: do I feel called by God to violate these cultural expectations in the name of Jesus? Sometimes God does that. If this is one of those times, go for it! But be aware of the cultural expectations you are breaking, so you can prepare for the reactions.

In short, look for people who

- Love God
- Love your church
- Habitually put time and energy into learning and growing in the Lord
- Support your vision for the church
- Have a passion for a given area
- Are teachable
- Have time to do the job

Term limits

Some churches make a policy that people can only serve in a given position for a certain amount of time. Then they have to step aside, possibly moving to a new position, possibly just taking time for a rest. Sometimes this is a blanket policy that applies to every position in the church, sometimes it only applies to specified positions.

Those who favor term limits argue that they make room for new people with fresh ideas and energy. They give those who have done a job for a while a chance to rest, or move on to other areas of ministry. Term limits can help keep people from getting entrenched with too much power over a given area of ministry. And new people may be more willing to take on a task if they know it's not a lifetime commitment.

On the other hand, there's no substitute for experience. If a person has a passion for a certain ministry, or if they have unique skills, forcing them out may make them feel no longer wanted, and it may leave the church in a difficult situation. Once again, there is no right answer for every church, but God has the right answer for yours.

Working with Leaders and Workers

You've discerned who God has prepared to lead your church and work in the ministries. Now, as pastor, how do you most effectively work with them?

Some pastors are micro-managers and control freaks. I tended to the opposite extreme, what I called "delegation to the point of abdication." Neither of these are good. Go too far in the first direction and your leaders will never learn to think for themselves, and you won't have time for your other work. Go too far in the other direction (I speak from experience) and your leaders will feel abandoned, and you won't know if they're doing what you want them to.

Each of us pastors have our own natural leadership style. Each of your leaders and workers have a style of leadership they respond best to. Your natural style and theirs may not always match. On top of that, some situations demand different leadership styles than other situations.

To most effectively work with your leaders and ministry workers, you have to **adjust your natural style to the needs of the situation and the person.** That's a skill well worth learning, but way too much for me to try to address here. So I'll just share a few lessons about working with leaders and workers that apply pretty much across the board.

Spend time with them

Getting the ministry done is the second-most important reason for choosing leaders. The most important reason is to help them grow as Christian disciples and develop their leadership skills for the future. That takes spending time with more mature Christians, and especially with you as pastor. Christian faith is more than knowing the Bible or giving mental assent to a list of doctrinal statements. It's a lifestyle. As the saying goes, Christianity is more caught than taught. Your people learn facts from your sermons and classes, but they learn life from watching you. That takes time together.

You need to know your leaders and workers will do their job. You also

need to trust that they won't head off in some direction of their own, but will be loyal to you and the church. And they need to trust that you will listen to them and support them. The only way to build that trust and loyalty is to build your relationships. Spend time praying together for each other and the church. Spend time in Bible study. Spend time working together. And don't forget to spend time having fun together. Aside from praying together, fun may be the best relationship builder of all.

Encourage them

Let them know you believe in them, appreciate them and will be there for them when they need you. Learn what kind of encouragement means the most to each person.

Train them

People are often more willing to take on a responsibility if they know training is available. Training gives both you and them confidence that they can do the job, and do it the way you want it done.

Every position in your church should have a written job description. You should also keep records of what was done in the past, how it was done, and where to find needed materials or information.

Make sure you provide on the job training, either from the person they are replacing or from you as pastor. This is usually a simple four-step process:

1. I do it, you watch me
2. I do it, you help me
3. You do it, I help you
4. You do it, I watch you

After that you leave the person to do the job. You just check on them occasionally, or when they ask for help. For some common ministries you may be able to find books, online training or even classes, for those who like

to learn that way. Use your judgment for each person.

Resource them

There are few things more frustrating than being asked to do a job and not being given the tools or materials or information to do it. Know what your people need – ask them every now and then – and make sure they have it. This may mean making the case for them to whoever decides your spending priorities. Of course, your church may not have the money to provide everything for every ministry. As pastor you have the big picture. You know all the needs of all the ministries, and all the resources available. Your leaders will look to you to prioritize them, and to encourage those leaders you can't fully resource.

Protect them

As a pastor, you are on the front lines of spiritual warfare. Your leaders and workers are joining you there. Your first line of defense, of course, is prayer. But there are also practical steps you can take to protect yourself and your people from temptations and accusations. Here are a few of the most basic ways to protect from accusations of misconduct, and potential lawsuits:

- Be sure you and your leaders are aware of local laws, and follow them
- Always require at least two adults, or one adult and one teenager, wherever children are present
- A man should never counsel a woman alone; if confidentiality requires privacy, someone else should be close enough to hear a call for help
- A man should never visit an unrelated woman alone in her home
- Where laws or insurance call for it, require signed consent forms from parents for their children to participate in activities, drive with adults other than their parents, or have their pictures published or posted on the internet; be sure your forms have the proper wording and keep copies in a safe place

- Be sure group leaders, especially of children, are aware of any special dietary needs or medical conditions
- Consider clergy malpractice insurance
- If you own or lease a building and allow other groups to meet there, require them to follow the above guidelines, especially if children are involved
- Find out what other precautions your laws require or your insurance company recommends

Give feedback

Your leaders won't know how they are doing unless you tell them. Point out what they are doing well. Be specific. Give constructive criticism where necessary; good leaders will appreciate it. Solomon, who knew a thing or two about leading people, wrote, *Correct the wise and they will love you* (Proverbs 9:8). Most people want reassurance that they are doing what they were asked to do.

Celebrate them

Good leaders and workers don't do it for the glory, they do it to serve God and the church. Still, they deserve to be publicly recognized for their service. You might consider an annual dinner in honor of church volunteers, perhaps coupled with a "worker of the year" award. Public recognition can be especially important for someone who has served a long time and is retiring due to age or illness. A plaque or certificate or some kind of memento they can display can mean a lot. If you own or lease a building, you might consider some kind of memorial, listing the names of people who have given extraordinary service.

When necessary, replace them

Sometimes, even when you've followed all the steps outlined above, you'll discover that one of your leaders or workers is just not getting the job done. It could be that you missed God's guidance in selecting them. More often, it's because circumstances changed in their lives – they have a new baby, their job is requiring longer hours, they are having health issues, or maybe they're just getting too old.

Before you do anything else (except pray), **talk to them**. It could be they're not even aware that they aren't performing up to expectations. If that's the case, a little constructive feedback, sandwiched between words of encouragement and appreciation, may be all they need.

If it's more than that, try to find out what the issue is. Often people are aware that they aren't doing as well as they had been, and they feel bad about it, so be sure you sound caring and supportive, not critical. If it's a short-term life situation that will be over soon, it's probably best to just wait it out. If it's more than that, they may well be glad for the opportunity to be relieved of responsibility. Figure out together whether they need to be replaced immediately or whether they can continue until you find a replacement.

The situations I find hardest are when a person has become ineffective but doesn't know it, or doesn't want to step down. For the sake of the church I have to find someone else to do the job, but for the sake of the person I don't want to hurt their feelings. Praise the Lord, this hasn't happened often. I have only two bits of advice for this situation: pray for wisdom, and try to preserve the person's dignity.

The exception to this is when the person is hanging onto a position in order to exert influence, often against the pastor. **Before you run into such a situation, create a policy** about how people can be removed from positions. And if possible, have your leadership team take the actual step of removing the person. Otherwise, it might just look like a personality conflict with you.

Be aware ahead of time that if you have to take this step, you are likely to lose not only that person, but their friends as well. Be sure you are hearing God clearly. But if it has to be done, it has to be done. **Never let one person**

or clique hold the church hostage.

Communication

One of the biggest sources of problems in leadership teams is poor communication. It's also one of the easiest ones to correct. The effort you put into establishing good communication policies, and developing them into habits in your leaders, will more than repay itself in smooth operations and lack of conflicts. Don't forget to include these policies in your orientation for new leaders and workers.

No blindsiding

“Blindsiding” is a term from American football. It refers to unexpectedly being knocked down by something you can't see coming.

As pastor, people expect you to be aware of everything that's going on in your church. You can look really bad if someone asks you about something and that's the first you heard of it, or if you fail to provide a pastoral response in a time of need because nobody told you about it.

Often, you won't know those things unless one of your leaders says something to you. Make sure they know how important that is. Don't let them assume someone else will tell you. I always say I'd rather be told something three times than not be told at all. In the same way, if you become aware of something one of your leaders needs to know, be sure they know it. Nobody likes to be blindsided.

Centralize scheduling

You can't be in two places at one time. Two groups using the same space at the same time is chaos. Two groups using the same resource at the same time is a tug of war.

None of these is a good thing. All of them can be avoided by centralizing your scheduling. Make sure your church keeps one centralized calendar

of activities, and designate one person to be responsible for putting things on that calendar. Stress that no event, room or a resource is considered scheduled without going through that one person.

Be clear, complete and concise

Sermons, stories and chatty letters are great in their place. Their place is not messages intended to convey information and coordinate activities. When you are communicating with your leaders about your expectations, their responsibilities, or upcoming events, be clear, complete and concise. If your communication is written, via print, email, texting or social media, reread it before you publish or send it. If you'll be talking in person or on the phone, plan it out ahead of time. **Ask yourself if there is any way it could be misunderstood** – generally if something can possibly be read the wrong way, somebody will. Ask yourself if you included all the necessary information. Don't assume somebody knows something just because you already told them; it's much safer to have all the information in one place, even if it means repeating something. Take out unnecessary words and irrelevant remarks that can muddy the waters. And train your leaders to follow these rules when communicating with you and each other.

Say who, what, when, where, why and how

In journalism these are the basic elements of reporting, and they are equally important in planning activities or assigning responsibilities. Who is responsible? Who is invited? What will happen? What is needed? When is the event – date, time, duration? When do things need to be done? Where will it happen? Where should people be? Why is this worth your leaders' and workers' time and energy? How should it be done? How will it look when it's finished? All of these questions may not apply to every communication, but you'd be surprised how many of them will.

Acknowledge communications

I get frustrated when I send someone an email or text or leave a phone message, and I get no response. Is the person gathering information for a reply? Should I assume they will comply with my request? Did my message get lost in cyberspace? Are they sick? Are they mad at me for some reason, and giving me the silent treatment? There's no way of knowing.

Don't do that to your people. Give some kind of response, even if it's just "Thanks for the information" or "I'll look into it" or "I put it on my calendar." And insist your people do the same.

Reinforce the vision

Use your communications to remind your leaders of what your church is all about. Most email providers allow you to automatically include a line or two at the end of each message. This could be a key Bible verse, or your church's mission statement. If you print a church newsletter or bulletin, include your vision statement in the masthead. You could start sermons with, "In keeping with our church's vision, . . ." Keeping your vision before your leaders and your people reminds them why they do what they do. It builds unity, and helps new people catch on.

Over-communicate

Have you ever had a conversation like this? Member: "Why wasn't I told this was going to happen?" Me: "Well, I'm sorry, but we announced it in church three weeks in a row, printed it in the newsletter and the bulletin, and put it on the church Facebook page." Member: "Yes, but why wasn't I told?"

Just because you put out a communication doesn't mean the other person received it. The more important a message is, the more you need to be sure it was received, understood, and won't be forgotten.

Be careful about confidential information

In our modern world, it's becoming more and more apparent that email and social media may not always be secure. Paper messages can be left where others can see them. Spoken conversations, in person or on the phone, can be overheard. When you are discussing confidential information, be careful. When someone feels that you have betrayed a confidence, it can be very hard to regain their trust.

When Leaders Do Wrong

We'd like to believe that the people we prayerfully choose to work with us in leading God's church are all mature, committed Christians who will never do anything wrong. The sad fact is, that's not always the case. Don't feel bad if it happens to you; even Jesus had two of his chosen twelve leaders fail. Peter was ultimately restored, but Judas was lost forever. If it happened to Jesus, it can certainly happen to you.

So what do you do when a leader does wrong? First, **don't go off half-cocked**. As best you can, make sure they actually did the wrong they are accused of. Paul advised Pastor Timothy, *Do not listen to an accusation against an elder unless it is confirmed by two or three witnesses* (1 Timothy 5:19).

What if the wrongdoing is confirmed?

Several years ago a young pastor I know asked me for advice on how to handle a situation where a church leader was found guilty of a serious moral failure. I'll share with you an edited version of my answer to this pastor. You can adapt and apply these principles to any kind of moral lapse.

Hi Pastor,

The situation you describe is a very difficult one.

I can't give a specific response, because I don't have all the details, and sometimes even in two seemingly identical situations God will lead in different ways. But there are some basic principles that should always apply. The best thing is if a church develops a policy for how to handle a situation like this while it is still hypothetical,

so your response won't be colored by personalities and relationships.

The ultimate goal is that the fallen member will be restored to the Lord and, if possible, people who were harmed, and that the church and all involved will all be stronger for the experience. It is important to keep in mind that restoration is the goal, not punishment or making an example, though there may be some value in that as well.

If the person has not been removed from all positions of leadership, this should be done immediately. It doesn't have to be done publicly, or the reason made public - that is a matter for discernment - but it does need to be done. If a different reason is needed for public consumption, a variety of things can be said that are true, such as the person is coming under a lot of stress lately and needs a break, or they feel they need to take time to focus on their family.

If the sinner is repentant, that is a major first step. If not, then Matthew 18:15-17 and, if necessary, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 come into play. This must be done very carefully and prayerfully, to be sure all the facts are known and that everyone's motives are pure. The goal is always to show God's love, even when discipline is necessary.

However, it is important also to protect the church. One of the most destructive things that happened in my ministry at one church was in a similar situation when the other members of the leadership team sided with the person who had the moral lapse, protesting that I was treating the person wrongly because I made the person give up their position of leadership. Then they told others in the congregation, to the point that much of the church was taking sides over the issue. So you need to be sure before choosing the people for Matthew 18 action that they agree with you on both the morality and the process, and that they will publicly support you in conversations with other church members. This can be especially important if it is a situation where the congregation doesn't know the real reason. I have been in situations where a lot of misinformation was being told about me by the person being disciplined, but because of confidentiality I was not at liberty to tell my side of the story. So it is important that the other members of the leadership team are on board with you as much as possible before taking action.

If the sinner is repentant, a confession is important, at least to all those who already know about it or should know about it. If it is not known to the church as a

whole, it is a matter for serious prayerful discernment as to whether it should be made public. The answer may be different in different cases.

In all this, especially where it is not known to the church at large, you need to prayerfully weigh the value of working to rehabilitate the person quietly, versus the value of giving the church an example of discipline. And of course you need to weigh how likely it is that something like this can in fact remain not widely known.

Of course, the sinful actions must be completely stopped, as a precondition for anything else. If the person is not willing to do that, they are not repentant, by definition.

All the above can happen fairly quickly, but it just sets the stage for the real work, which is restoration to the Lord and the church, and where necessary and possible, reconciliation with others who may have been harmed. I say "if possible" because reconciliation is a two-way street.

It is probably good at the outset to set a certain minimum amount of time for the process, sufficient to see whether it seems like the repentance and restoration will be lasting. Certain requirements should also be laid out that the person must meet before being restored to any position of responsibility in the church.

One requirement should be to meet with you and/or another church leader regularly, perhaps once a week. The agenda should include Bible study, accountability and prayer. The Bible studies should start with passages particular to the specific sin, and spread outward to dealing with temptation, holiness of heart and life, and discipleship in general.

Accountability questions should be decided on within the first few meetings, and asked and answered every time. Prayer can spread outward in generality to go along with the Bible study, while always including prayers for strength to overcome particular temptations.

It may well be that this particular sin was all that happened, but it also may be that there are other problems that made it harder to resist this temptation. If so, these also have to be prayed about and dealt with.

The decision to restore the person to responsibility should never belong to you as pastor alone. It should only be on the advice of a group of mature Christians within the church, whose objectivity is above question. This is for two reasons. First, you may be swayed by friendship for the fallen member, or an over-active mercy gift, or

even by the church's needs for the person's skills. Second, in case things go wrong again, if it was a group decision, it will not be as easy to blame you. The other side of it is that if a group is involved, any friends of the sinner who may be pressuring for an earlier restoration will have to persuade the whole leadership team rather than just you.

Restoration to responsibility should be done gradually, beginning with less important or influential positions, and on a trial basis.

Again, this entire process must be a demonstration of Christian love. There should be a specific ending point, so it doesn't feel like it will go on forever. When that point is reached, it is important to celebrate the restoration of the fallen member, as publicly as is appropriate given how widely the situation is known (see 2 Corinthians 2:5-8).

I hope this is helpful. I realize it got to sounding kind of academic. I was trying to make it as general as I could, not knowing any details. Please let me know if it helps.

Blessings,

David

Points to Remember

- One of your most important responsibilities is to identify, train, equip, support and encourage leaders.
- Make public, at least within your church, who your leaders are and the area and extent of their authority.
- Leaders should love God, your church, and you, and be growing, passionate, teachable and available.
- Spend time with your leaders, support them, communicate with them, and hold them accountable.
- Before it becomes necessary, adopt a church policy detailing what to do if a leader does wrong.

[i] Gene Edwards, Beyond Radical. 1999, n.p.