

S U P P L E M E N T A L
C H A P T E R

Putting It All Together

If you want to know why your people are not performing well, step up to the mirror and take a peek.

—Ken Blanchard

In the course of *Spiritual Kaizen*, we have taken a look at many different concepts, theories, and practices of leadership. Ultimately, the reader must decide what is relevant to his or her present leadership and how to apply it in ministry. In this final chapter, I would like to suggest a process by which to organize all of this information and design a customized approach to your own personal leadership plan.

Hopefully, you have read the main body of this book and now stand ready to work on a game plan for your own spiritual leadership. My first suggestion is that you take some time away from the hustle and bustle of your ministry to do some honest reflection. If you can set aside one or two days in private retreat, away from cell phones and email interruptions, that would be preferable. Many judicatories provide the opportunity for its clergy to take personal retreats. In my United Methodist Church connection, many of our

Spiritual Kaizen

denominationally-owned camps provide a free one- or two-day room on site for clergy to retreat in private. Another way is for you to leave town for a few days and either camp out or stay one night at a hotel to do some contemplative reflecting.

Barring that, set aside some extended uninterrupted time: preferably five or six hours. Going to a clergy colleague's church and borrowing a classroom or library where you will not be bothered is a reasonable alternative.

In the appendix I have provided a step-by-step outline of the leadership retreat. You can copy those pages and add more space for your writing and reflections as you reflect on your leadership systematically.

Remember our organizing principle of kaizen in working through this: steady, continuous improvement and growth. You don't have to do this all at once, but continue to take small proactive and positive steps each day in your leadership.

Spiritual Well-Being

I suggest you start your private leadership retreat in prayer or worship. Reading and studying the Bible, singing, prayer, and contemplative silence are all helpful in setting the tone of your retreat. Whatever spiritual disciplines are helpful and meaningful to you are important to observe. Besides the ones that I have mentioned, I also derive a great deal of meaning in meditation and Holy Communion. My meditation practices are a combination of East and West, as I use some of my martial arts training in a hybrid meditation form. I realize that Holy Communion is a communal act, but there is great solace for me in observing the intricacies of the Eucharistic liturgy and partaking of the elements in solitude. Perhaps because clergy always lead the worshiping community in Holy Communion, they often don't have the luxury of stopping to savor its depth and meaning alone.

Another meaningful spiritual discipline for me is to use the Lord's Prayer as the basis for a deeper sense of communion with God. I break the Lord's Prayer down into individual parts and spend

Putting It All Together

time reflecting on the instructions inherent in the prayer itself. I have found no prayer more comprehensive and meaningful than the Lord's Prayer. Here is a breakdown of how I use it meditatively. Recite each phrase of the Lord's Prayer individually, and then reflect on and respond to the instructions in italics.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Express first your adoration of God.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Plan to live your day mirroring what the kingdom looks like, not earthly standards. In the evening, ask yourself if you have lived your day by the kingdom's standards.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Ask and thank God for your daily nourishment.

And forgive us our trespasses,

Seek forgiveness from those you have wronged. On a deeper level, confess to God how you have fallen short of the kingdom values and ways.

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Forgive those who have wronged you.

And lead us not into temptation,

Acknowledge your personal temptations; recommit to avoiding them. At the end of the day, ask if you have avoided temptations. If not, ask for forgiveness.

but deliver us from evil.

Consider the evils and sufferings of this world; ask for safety.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever.

Close the way you began: in complete adoration of God.

Amen.

It will be important to commune and be in the presence of the Triune God throughout your private leadership retreat.

The Foundations of Your Life: Your Basic Philosophies

Leadership expert Kevin Cashman tells this wonderful story:

I once heard this story about a priest, who was confronted by a soldier while he was walking down a road in pre-revolutionary Russia. The soldier, aiming his rifle at the priest, commanded, “Who are you? Where are you going? Why are you going there?” Unfazed, the priest calmly replied, “How much do they pay?” Somewhat surprised, the soldier responded, “Twenty-five kopecks a month.” The priest paused, and in a deeply thoughtful manner said, “I have a proposal for you. I’ll pay you fifty kopecks each month if you stop me here every day and challenge me to respond to those *same three questions*.¹

Tweaking the three questions from the story provides the basic foundation of a personal philosophy. My suggestion for the three questions is:

- Who are you? (identity)
- What are you doing? (purpose/mission)
- Where are you going? (vision/direction)

The first question of identity provides the very essence of who we really are. It is an important question to ask spiritual leaders; too often we hide behind the masks of the various roles we play in ministry. I always find it interesting when people I associate with do not know what I do in my professional life. For example, I play a lot of sports, and sometimes I play pickup games with complete strangers. We can go years playing with the same general group of people and not necessarily share what we do for a living. In some ways it is easier for me not to share that I am a minister, because then they might treat me differently. Once a group of pickup basketball players whom I was playing with for a few months asked me what my

Putting It All Together

job was. When I honestly told them that I was a United Methodist Minister, they looked astonished. After it sunk in, they started joking about how different they would have to act on the court—no swearing, hard fouls, or arguing with “the minister.” Luckily that didn’t happen, and they played the same way as before. But stereotypes of ministers continue to exist.

This is exactly the point of getting in touch with who you really are. Our profession of ministry is just one aspect of our identity, and we play many other roles and have many other relationships. Going deeper into my core identity means leaving behind the more superficial parts. In this sense, if I begin with my basic relationship as a child of God, how does that relationship to God shape my core identity? Of course it should affect my spirituality, but what else does it affect? Take some time to explore who you are, and write some definitive statements about your core identity.

The second question, “What are you doing?” tackles the equally daunting existential question of your purpose and mission in life. I believe it is extremely important for everyone to have a purpose and mission statement. I don’t believe such a mission statement needs to be long and scholarly. Rather, it needs to be short and easy to remember—something you can recite on a daily basis. My current mission/purpose statement is: “I am committed to making a positive difference in the lives of people I meet and the organizations and communities that I serve.” It’s that simple. I can recite it daily if need be to remind me to live my life consistent with my purpose. The deepest anchor we have in life is our faith in the Triune God, but mission and purpose statements also anchor our lives by providing a central core by which we direct our actions. If I have a busy day scheduled with individual and group meetings, I can recite my mission/purpose statement and be reminded of how to act and relate to people and communities. It also serves in prioritizing my life: if I can make a strong and positive difference in someone’s life by taking an immediate action then it is worth dropping something in my schedule to attend to such a priority. We would do well to remember Jesus’ insistence that people drop everything they are doing to follow him (Matt. 8:18–22; Luke 9:57–62).

Spiritual Kaizen

I need to remind you that mission and purpose statements change over time. I did not have a mission/purpose statement when I graduated from college, but if I did, it would not be the same as it is today. Updating your mission/purpose statement needs to be done throughout the seasons of your life, and it would be helpful to document those changes over time. Take some concentrated time to think through and articulate your central purpose and mission in life.

One final thought: in my study of highly effective clergy, all of them had a personal mission that affected the mission and work of their ministry. In other words, having a specific personal mission positively impacted the ministry setting in which they served. These highly effective clergy did not impose their personal mission onto the organization's mission, but the fact that they were committed to a specific purpose in their own lives did have a positive impact on the life of the ministries they served.

Finally, we look toward the future with the question, "Where are we going?" (vision and direction). In the section that follows you will be doing some intentional work on the future direction of your ministry, so no further elaborations are necessary. However, it is helpful to point out the relationship between the questions from the Cashman story, from identity to purpose to vision. It is an important sequence to remember not only for us personally but for the ministries, communities, and institutions we serve.

Your Professional Well-Being

Remembering the Past: Your Call from God

After your personal spiritual time, my first suggestion is that you go back to your past and get in touch with the original reasons you went into the ministry. This can be done by examining two things: your conversion story and your call story. Keep in mind that these are two different narratives. I believe we can confuse our ministry if these two stories become intertwined, or as Dr. Pam Holiman from Garrett Evangelical Seminary contends, "Some candidates confuse their conversion story for their call story."² When this happens you end up

Putting It All Together

with a candidate who has a limited understanding of her or his own ministry, which could make for a theologically confused pastor.

If journaling is helpful for you, take the time to write out your answers and reflections to the following questions. If you don't like journaling, reflect on these questions and formulate answers in your own mind.

Reflections on My Faith and Call in the Past

- What salient events contributed to or made up your call to the ministry of Jesus Christ? Why were these so important?
- Take some time to remember your original call to the ministry. Why was this special for you?
- What were some of your hopes and dreams for your ministry in that original call? Have these hopes and dreams changed over time? Why?
- What hopes and dreams for your ministry need to be resurrected? Why?

Please don't attempt to rush through your answers and reflections. These are deep and important questions for you to ponder and reflect on. Take the time that they and you deserve. This is the very point of your spiritual leadership retreat, and why you need to set aside adequate time for depth and renewal.

Honoring the Present: Assessment of Your Current Ministry

Next, it is important for you to reflect on your present spiritual leadership. Reflect on your ministry and where you think the church presently is and needs to go in the near future. From that analysis, take into account your own spiritual leadership. Note how your leadership has helped your church in the present ministry and what type of leadership you will need to demonstrate in the future.

Spiritual Kaizen

Once again, journaling your reflective answers would be helpful, but go with what is comfortable and natural for you.

Present Leadership Reflection Questions

- What ministry accomplishments has the church had in the past year?
- How has your spiritual leadership contributed to these accomplishments? Why?
- What ministry goals and objectives do you see the church fulfilling in the next year? Why these?
- What type of spiritual leadership is necessary from you to accomplish such goals? Why?
- What type of spiritual leadership have you been giving to the church? Why?
- What type of spiritual leadership would you like to give the church in the near future? Why?

Be sure to remember to practice double-loop learning in these reflections. In other words, always ask the question “why” in your responses and reflections. Although it is important to avoid “downward spiral” thinking, it is also important to be completely honest with yourself. If you haven’t been providing the necessary spiritual leadership, you should note that, but ask the important question of why you haven’t. Don’t dwell on the negatives here, but be sure to be honest with yourself. After an honest assessment, you might find you need to step up and be a stronger spiritual leader.

Legacy for the Future: Projections for Your Ministry

The next suggested step is for you to do some projections about your future. Whereas a sense of reality is important while looking at your present ministry, the future affords us the chance to dream and

Putting It All Together

vision. Reflect on and do some journaling about your future. Here are some suggested questions:

- Where would you like to be in your ministry five years from now?
- Where would you like to be in your ministry ten years from now?
- What dreams and visions would make your ministry complete in the future?
- List at least one ministry BHAG (“big, hairy, audacious goal”) or BSHAG (“big, scary, hairy, audacious goal”).
- In narrative form, describe a typical day in your life as you would like it to be in the future.

Being a person whose time orientation in life is always tilted toward the future, I had a lot of fun with this last suggested question. Let me share my original reflection as a sample for you:

I have just returned from helping a nonprofit social service organization assess its organizational culture and understand what changes they need to make in their structure to be more effective. I am heading off to my next responsibility, which is to give a lecture on church structure and administration to eager seminary students. En route, I get a cell phone call from a young adult who I am mentoring. She feels good about the questions and positive feedback I am giving her. I also have the time to stop and help a woman with a flat tire who has never changed a tire before. I think about calling the auto club, but her spare is in good shape, and I have enough time to actually change her tire. She is extremely grateful, and I feel good about actually changing her tire rather than calling the auto club. I look forward to a run, weight training, and a short karate workout after teaching my class. I also look forward to a time of concentrated study on a new book

Spiritual Kaizen

that has some cutting-edge concepts on organizational culture. This evening, I will enjoy a great dinner with my spouse and some of the kids who happen to drop in. After dinner, my spouse and I head out for the Los Angeles Lakers game, where we have great season tickets. I close the evening with my spiritual disciplines that I have practiced on the traditional hours of the day. I end with a reflection on all that I am thankful for and how God has been the foundation of my day.

Notice my initial description of an “ideal” day. Life is never this idyllic or easy. However, this exercise is a fun, positive way for you reflect on what type of future you envision for yourself.

Individual Leadership Development Plan

My next suggestion is for you to assess your leadership strength and work on an Individual Leadership Development Plan. Here is a suggested form of how that might look:

My Leadership Development Plan

My present leadership strengths are (the Gallup StrengthsFinder “five signature strengths” are a good starting point):

My present leadership gaps are:

Goals to Strengthen My Spiritual Leadership

List specific goal: E.g., “Work to empower the church’s laity.”

Why is this goal important for you and the church? E.g., “I need to work on my transformational leadership of collaboration.”

How specifically will you accomplish this? E.g., “Work on behavioral change—instead of doing it myself, delegate and empower the laity more.”

Where did this goal come from? E.g., “My personnel committee suggested it.”

Putting It All Together

List three to five specific and concrete ways you will carry out this objective. For example:

- “I will ask the finance committee to either create a new committee or run the stewardship campaign for the coming year.”
- “I will ask specific lay members to give testimonies or prayers in the weekly worship service.”
- “I will train and ask laity to make visitations with me and on my behalf.”

What specific date will you start this? E.g., “Immediately.”

You may come up with as many goals like this as you realistically believe you can work on in the next six months. My suggestion is to pick three or four major leadership goals.

The question of how you will be accountable to these goals is always important. Sharing them openly with your staff-parish relations committee or personnel committee would be the logical step once they have been drafted. Another logical person would be your judicatory supervisor, who may require different and denomination-specific assessments from you. These development goals can augment your denominational assessments, and it is always impressive to go beyond what is required of you by establishing additional goals to work on.

Another helpful resource would be mentors or coaches that you currently work with. In fact, working directly with a mentor or coach in establishing your development goals would be the most advantageous. Most mentors and coaches are well versed in advice and counsel on such matters and would serve as natural partners in your growth process.

Finally, other ministry partners—colleagues, associates, lay leaders, family, and friends—might be helpful in understanding your ministry and providing accountability and feedback at various times.

Additional Leadership Reflections

The next set of questions and issues might be a part of your Individual Development Plan, or they could stand alone as issues that you might want to consider and work on.

- What leadership research and areas interest you and provoke you to learn more?
- What leadership books will you commit to read in the next couple of months?
- What leadership workshops, training, or classes would you like to investigate and take in the next year?
- What special leadership skill sets would you like to improve on and update in the coming year?
- What type of leadership assessments or tests would you like to take in order to learn more about yourself?
- What coach or mentor would you like to enlist in order to reflect with you on your current ministry?

It is important that you be very specific as to what you are going to work on and also note the specific start date and possible deadline for your plan.

Holistic Life Plans

My final set of reflections revolves around all the areas of your life that augment your leadership. In this sense, leadership represents a holistic integration of your entire life. All of these issues can impact your leadership either positively or negatively, and to be in touch with them is part of your overall leadership assessment.

Your Spiritual Well-Being

First and foremost, how is your relationship with the Triune God? Are you spending quality time with and giving attention to your spiritual communion with God? Here are some reflection questions:

Putting It All Together

- How much time are you spending in prayer, contemplation, and the spiritual disciplines with God? Is there enough, too much, too little? Why?
- How much time do you need to spend with God in the future? Make some projections and plans for this time in your daily schedule.
- What spiritual disciplines are you currently practicing? Do you need to continue or change these? What new spiritual practices would you like to undertake?
- Do you have a spiritual director or mentor? Do you need one? If so, what specific plans can you commit to in acquiring one?

Your Relational/Emotional Well-Being

Second, how are the most important relationships in your life? Here are some key questions to reflect on:

- How are my primary family relationships? Am I spending enough quality time with and giving enough attention to my family and loved ones? Where can I improve on the quality of my family relationships?
- How are my extended relationships—friends, associates, and parishioners? Where do I need to make improvements on these relationships?
- What specific relationships do I need to work on and why? What specific relationships do I need to change and perhaps end, and why?
- Are you in touch with your emotions and able to talk freely about your feelings with others? If not, why not?

Your Physical Well-Being

Third, how are you doing physically? Are you taking care of your body? Are you getting exercise? Are you paying attention to your physical appearance? Are you eating a healthy diet? Are you getting enough rest, sleep, and renewal physically? Here are some thoughts and important questions broken down in terms of categories.

Exercise

In my mind there are three key forms of exercise you should consider:

1. Cardiovascular exercise that increases your overall aerobic functioning, making your lungs and heart stronger.
2. Weight training, or strength training, that aims to increase the size and capacity of the skeletal muscles.
3. Stretching exercises that develop the elasticity and pliability of the skeletal muscles.

In terms of cardiovascular exercise, the rule of thumb is for you to elevate your heart rate from 65–80 percent of your maximum heart rate for a sustained period of thirty minutes or longer at least three to four days a week. To calculate your maximum heart rate, start with 220 minus your age, and then multiply that number by 65–80 percent to give you a target range to shoot for. It is easy to calculate your heart rate during your cardiovascular exercise of choice by taking your pulse at the wrist or neck. I usually count my heart-beat for a time of ten seconds, and then multiply that number by six. The high-tech way to keep track of your heart rate is to buy a heart-rate monitor watch with a chest strap, or one where you must impress your fingers on the watch sensors, which will automatically give you an estimate of your current heart rate. I have found that the heart-rate monitors with the external chest straps work better than the ones without a strap. The variations of cardiovascular exercise are endless: running, walking, cycling, dance, basketball, and so on. However, it is important to keep in mind that the exercise should have a sustained heart rate elevation; if you are not in motion most

Putting It All Together

of the time, the cardiovascular benefits are minimized. (E.g., playing baseball is fine when you are running, jumping, or fielding, but not when you are sitting in the dugout!)

Weight training has many different forms, from free weights (isotonic) to machines (both isotonic and isometric) to simple resistance against an anchored object (isometric). The simplest way to begin a safe weight-training program is to take an adult education class or join a reputable gym. Personal trainers are fine, but they are expensive. Be sure to get someone who has qualifications or certification.

Finally, stretching is probably the most inexpensive and easy form of exercise to do. However, stretching technique is extremely important, so taking an adult education class or joining a gym to get started is suggested. Once you learn the basic stretching exercises for each muscle group and proper technique, stretching can be done anywhere, anytime. I find all of these activities to be very meditative, but especially stretching. In the martial arts, *kata*, which is literally translated “form,” is a series of choreographed movements or techniques that are performed in sequence. Once they are mastered, one does not have to think about what the next movement is but rather gets lost in the meditative movements themselves. Kata reminds me a lot of the practice of stretching.

Personally, exercise for me forms the core of my identity, and it is a daily discipline that I cannot do without. I run, stretch, and lift weights on a daily basis. I practice martial arts on a fairly regular basis. I love all forms of sports, but with my schedule, I am not able to participate in them on a regular basis. So, I find ways to incorporate sports in my schedule. For example, playing in church basketball, volleyball, or baseball team leagues is an easy and accessible way to be involved in team sports. I find exercise to be the solace I need to get away from the pressures and demands of work. Exercise grants me the time to have a “flow” moment of focused attention, where time stops and I am able to be in the “existential now.”

One of the easiest and most accessible forms of exercise is simply walking. Research has shown that brisk walking is almost as good as

Spiritual Kaizen

slow jogging in terms of cardiovascular exercise. It is also a great stress reducer—a way to clear your mind and get away from the pressures of work. Finally, if you walk with a family member or friend, it is a great way for you to catch up and work directly on your personal relationships.

The basic point is for you to do something physically that is personally fun and enjoyable. The upsides of exercise are so important that you must incorporate it in some form in your life. Here are some key questions to reflect on:

- Are you engaged in regular exercise? Are you engaging in a balanced exercise program (cardiovascular, strength training, stretching, and hand-eye coordination exercises)?
- Good exercise forms a discipline that enables you to look forward to it and not want to miss it. What do you need to do to make exercise a discipline? What sports and physical activities do you enjoy, or could you enjoy, on a regular basis?

Nutrition and Diet

Nutrition and diet are key essentials in your health and vitality, and watching what you eat is an easy way to complement your overall health. Eating a balanced diet, watching your weight, and not overeating are all important factors. Diet has such personal and cultural dynamics that it is hard to prescribe, but overall, reducing saturated fats, consuming at least three helpings of fruits and vegetables daily, and increasing whole grains and fiber are the standards of a good diet. The following questions provide some reflection points on your nutrition:

- How would you assess your present diet? Do you eat regular meals with medium proportions that are neither too much nor too little? How balanced is your diet? Do you consume from all the major food groups but limit your intake of certain foods (prepackaged foods, harmful fats, etc.)?

Putting It All Together

- How can you improve the nutrition of your present diet? What can you eat more of, eat less of, and moderate?
- Develop some dietary goals and objectives. List these goals with daily reminders to eat a more healthy diet.

Positive and Proactive Health Care

It is important to undergo regular and proactive health care through regular medical, dental, vision, and other health screenings. Early detection will prevent major health problems in the future, and a regular assessment of your overall health by professional health care practitioners is a must. The following questions will help you assess how you are doing in this area:

- Do you observe the recommended health care assessments for your age?
- Do you have a personal medical physician, dentist, eye specialist, and any other health specialists that address your personal health care needs?
- If you do not have personal health care practitioners and do not go on regular checkups, why not? Are you addressing the reasons that you do not?

Physical Appearance and Grooming

The secular world of work puts a great deal of emphasis on the importance of proper dress, grooming, and professional appearance. For the church, this may at times seem superficial, but research in this area has shown that physical appearance has a great deal to do with source credibility and acceptance.

In my secular business education, the important phrase was “hair, nails, and shoes,” meaning that people pay attention to these and other elements of our physical appearance. The church does not have to adopt all of the secular business world’s values here, but it is important to realize that people pay attention to these matters. If we wish to be credible to the secular world, we must take into

Spiritual Kaizen

consideration professional attire and grooming. As an example, in the secular world, even at a company that is fairly casual, one would not show up at an executive board meeting wearing shorts and flip-flops. If employees are to be taken seriously in a professional sense, they must present themselves in the proper context and situation. I once was on a public policy immersion experience in Washington, DC, and our professors mandated that we wear professional attire. We met with some high-powered public officials, and everyone was in suits except for one student, who was rebelling against the stated norm. He stood out like a sore thumb, and I believe he was not taken very seriously because of how he looked. I'm sure he wanted to make a statement by being different, but he paid the price in not being taken seriously. I also think he was graded down because of violating the class rules!

Here are some important questions to ponder:

- Are you aware of your physical appearance and satisfied with it? Why or why not?
- Do you pay attention to proper grooming, professional attire, and physical appearance? Why or why not?
- Do you dress appropriately for the professional situation you are involved in?
- How would you like to improve on your physical appearance, grooming, or attire? Why?
- What plans do you have to improve your physical appearance?

Rest and Sleep

Our bodies were made for the balance between activity, rest, and sleep. How do you match up when it comes to these critical physical needs? We can only function at our best when the balance between these factors is in place. In the ministry, there is always too much to do. The tasks of ministry are never done, so we have to pay special attention to our self-care. Since it is so easy to be consumed by the

Putting It All Together

tasks of ministry, we can easily become overworked. Self-monitoring how much we do is of key importance; only we know our proper limits and checks.

Prescriptions as to what is appropriate, too much, or too little are impossible to estimate. Culture, values, and personal interests always bind such prescriptions. Only you can decide how much you need to work, play, rest, and sleep. Here are some questions to ponder:

- How much do you work? Can you quantify it in time? Do you think it is too much, too little, or appropriate? Do your family and friends think it is too much, too little, or appropriate? What changes would you like to make in how much work you do? What plans can you make to enact such changes? How will you be accountable to these plans?
- How much personal or play time do you have? Can you quantify it in time? Do you think it is too much, too little, or appropriate? Do your family and friends think it is too much, too little, or appropriate? What changes would you like to make in how much work you do? What plans can you make to enact such changes? How will you be accountable to these plans?
- Do you get adequate rest for your activity level? Do you need more, less, or do you have enough rest? What changes would you like to make in your rest time? What plans can you make to enact such changes? How will you be accountable to these plans?
- Are you getting adequate sleep? Do you need more, less, or do you get enough sleep? What changes would you like to make in your sleep habits? What plans can you make to enact such changes? How will you be accountable to these plans?
- How are you handling stresses in your life? What are the ways you deal with stress? Is your stress management

Spiritual Kaizen

healthy or unhealthy? What positive changes can you make to de-stress your life more?

- How are you doing on time management in your life? Are you always rushing, or do you slow down enough to enjoy a proper pace of life? How can you improve your time management? What proactive ways will you work on in order to do better in time management?
- Do you have regular hobbies or interests? Do you spend adequate time pursuing hobbies or interests? If not, what will you do to incorporate these in the future? What new hobbies or interests would you like to pursue? Make a list for the future.

Intellectual Well-Being

There is a tremendous amount of research being conducted on the human brain and the marvelous ways our brains work. It seems our brains are hardwired to grow and be stimulated. It starts as soon as we are born—babies have an innate curiosity that propels them to explore the world around them.

Brain researcher John Medina puts it this way:

Babies seem preoccupied by the physical properties of objects. Babies younger than a year old will systematically analyze an object with every sensory weapon at their disposal. They will feel it, kick it, try to tear it apart, stick it in their ear, stick it in their mouth, give it to you so you can stick it in your mouth. They appear to be intensely gathering information about the properties of the object. Babies methodically do experiments on the objects to see what else they will do. In our household, this usually meant breaking stuff.³

Highly effective clergy have a love of lifelong learning and are constantly seeking new information to enhance their lives and work.

Putting It All Together

They read widely, attend lectures and workshops, and constantly experiment in their ministry in order to learn.

Personally, I view life itself as a continuous learning journey, and the day I stop learning is the day I die—probably both figuratively and literally. So I see every day as an opportunity to learn something new. This means that I must read every day, study and reflect upon relevant issues, and see every experience as an opportunity to grow and learn.

However, I believe it is important to have a plan for learning. This means you need to have a list of books to read, lectures to take in and listen to, workshops to attend, and learning events to schedule.

As to reading, I think it is important to choose as wide and deep a book list as possible. Of course, you will want to read from your specialty or passion, but it is also important to diversify your reading and study. Personally, I try to keep up with all the latest on leadership and organizational development, but I am also keenly interested in theology, ethics, and biblical studies. I like to keep up with the latest in church growth and vitality. Cross-disciplinary subjects fascinate me, and we have much to learn from science, the social sciences, humanities, and education. To vary my reading, the latest and best in fiction is also important, and I have a special fondness for Harlen Coben and Dean Koontz.

Since I am on the road on a regular basis, books on tape, downloaded podcasts, and lectures are a wonderful way to make use of driving and flying time. You can get almost any of the latest writing in audio format, and often the public library has many of the current titles available for free.

Finally, remember to diversify your intellectual well-being with poetry, live lectures, art, music, and film. Stimulation of all the senses is a form of well-being, and many of the mediums mentioned contribute to our intellectual well-being. Cross-medium experiences are a wonderful way to grow and learn.

I recently took in a Pablo Picasso exhibit of some of his major art pieces, and it was a rich visual experience as I soaked in the complex-

Spiritual Kaizen

ity of his art. There was also a live lecture that I took in as we followed a docent-teacher who spoke of his life in relationship to each painting. It was utterly fascinating to hear about his life experiences in relationship to his art. It was also a bit of shock to realize how different his value system and lifestyle was from my own!

As adult learners we all have different preferences as to the best way to learn, and it is important to explore different teaching mediums to best experience what works for you. However, even if you have a preference, it is important to experience different ways to learn, as it rounds out your overall experience.

I once tutored a young student who struggled in the classroom and did not read or write well. However, he was a marvelous athlete and had an uncanny sense of the basketball court. So in our tutoring sessions I moved him onto a basketball court and had him work on math and science problems while shooting and dribbling a basketball. I tried to think of basketball situations that could be applied to math and science problems, and for the first time, he could relate to these problems in a relevant way. It opened up new doorways for him but also for me as I realized that he was an active and experiential learner, and that his individual success depended on the learning medium.

Using poetry, art, music, and film are all ways we can reach and teach people in new and experiential ways. The sky is the limit in terms of the creativity we might use to incorporate different forms and mediums in our teaching and preaching.

Here are some questions for you to consider regarding your intellectual well-being:

- What type of reading do you primarily engage in? Why? What type of reading do you enjoy? How diverse is your current reading? What type of reading would you like to explore or do more of?
- Is there a more formal educational program or system you would like to study in? Is there an advanced degree that interests you? Is there a certification program that

Putting It All Together

you would like to go through? What adult education or continuing education classes or workshops would you like to attend?

- What training or development workshops would you like to take? What workshops would increase your professional skill sets? What workshops would enhance your personal interests? Why?
- What new experiences would you like to learn from? Are these professionally or personally related? Why is it important to have a balance of both in your intellectual well-being? How will you balance your learning experiences in a holistic way?
- What new learning mediums would you like to explore and experiment with? List them.

Remember the leadership retreat template in the appendix outlines the entire process step by step.



A P P E N D I X A

A Template for Your Leadership Reflection Retreat

1. Spiritual Centering

Practice and engage in your favorite spiritual disciplines.

2. The Foundations of Your Life: Your Basic Philosophies

Who are you? (identity):



Spiritual Kaizen

What are you doing? (purpose/mission):

Where are you going? (vision/direction):

**3. Remembering the Past:
Your Call from God**

Articulate on your original call and reflect upon it:

Reflect on the questions suggested in this section.

**4. Honoring the Present: Assessment of
Your Current Ministry**

Honestly assess how things are going in your present ministry.





Putting It All Together

Assess your own spiritual leadership at this time:

Reflect on the questions suggested in this section.

**5. Legacy for the Future:
Projections for Your Ministry**

Dream about your future ministry.

Write a narrative of a perfect day in your ministry in the future.

Reflect on the questions suggested in this section.





6. Individual Leadership Development Plan

My present leadership strengths are:

My present leadership gaps are:

Goals to strengthen my spiritual leadership

List specific goal:

Why is this goal important for you and the church?

How will you accomplish this?

From (source):

List three to five specific and concrete ways you will carry out this objective:





Putting It All Together

What specific date will you start this?

7. Other Leadership Issues

What leadership research areas interest and provoke you to learn and understand more?

What leadership books will you commit to reading in the next couple of months?

What leadership workshops, training, or classes would you like to investigate and take in the next year?

What special leadership skill sets would you like to improve on and update in the coming year?

What type of leadership assessments or tests would you like to take in order to learn more about yourself?





Spiritual Kaizen

Who would you like to enlist as a coach or a mentor in order to reflect with you on your current ministry?

8. Holistic Areas of Leadership Development

Spiritual growth, renewal, and development goals:

Personal relationships goals:

Care of your body

Exercise goals

Nutrition and dietary goals





Putting It All Together

Health care goals

Physical appearance goals

Rest and sleep goals

Intellectual growth and stimulation

Books to read (in addition to the leadership list you completed earlier):

Seminars and workshops you plan to attend (in addition to the leadership list you completed earlier):

Formal or informal education you plan to pursue (degrees or certificates you would like to pursue):





Spiritual Kaizen

Personal or professional experiences you would like to pursue:

Different forms or mediums you would like to explore (e.g., poetry, art, music, film, etc.):

9. Spiritual Centering in Closure

Close your personal leadership retreat the way you began: in spiritual depth and thanksgiving.





Putting It All Together

A Daily Kaizen Template for Steady and Continuous Improvement

A specific study I will do today:

A specific behavior I will work on today:

A specific leadership skill I will work on today:

What I have learned today:

Specific ways I have improved today:

Where I have grown today:





Notes

1. Kevin Cashman, *Leadership from the Inside Out* (Minneapolis: GCLG, 1998), 31.
2. Pam Holman, personal communication, November 18, 2009.
3. John Medina, *Brain Rules* (Seattle: Pear Press, 2008), 265.

