Personal Leadership Project

Rachel Hae Jin Baik

CD713: Missional Leadership

Summer 2020

Introduction

My leadership journey in vocational ministry first began six years ago, immediately after graduating college. I began my first position as a youth pastor of a small church without formal ministry training, taking with me only the experience I had growing up in the church. Faced with the demands of leading a team, discerning a vision and purpose for the ministry, and working under the leadership of my head pastor, I quickly realized that leadership was more than the fulfillment of administrative tasks. However, adjusting to this newfound realization proved a difficult task; I lacked the hard skills required to translate theory into reality. Much of my leadership derived from following the traditions and the models of those around me. Despite being helpful, I continued to lack the development of my own leadership identity.

Through the course readings and materials allotted in this class, I've been able to specify the components of leadership that I previously was unaware of as well as learn practical skills in order to function within these areas. I've narrowed down four specific areas of leadership that I will focus on developing: leading from the second chair position, coordinating a volunteer team, constructing a ministry vision, and leading as a woman. This paper will examine the specific teachings gleaned from the course material, examine the potential challenges that may arise in my specific leadership context, and create leadership development plan for future growth.

Current Ministry Context

In Ken Blanchard's Leading at a Higher Level, Blanchard describes the components of what makes an organization or business a high-performing organization (HPO). This he measures on a standard outlined in the acronym S.C.O.R.E.S.: shared information and open communication, compelling vision, ongoing learning, relentless focus on customer results,

energizing systems and structures, and shared power and high involvement.[1] Using this metric to evaluate Arumdaun Presbyterian Church (APC), the following conclusions can be drawn: the predominant issues of the church stem from an extremely low level of shared information and communication amongst pastors of different ministries and the differently-aged members of the church, a lack of identifiable vision behind church decisions and participation, and a lack of training for both hired and volunteer staff of the church.

Currently, I work in a Korean diaspora church as a high school pastor. The ministry is comprised of 180 students on roster, with an average Sunday attendance having dropped to 90 per week due to the pandemic. The high school team of 21 volunteer is reducing down to 11 volunteer teachers for the upcoming school year. As a larger church, we have been functioning without a lead pastor for the past two years and recently lost the Director for the Education Department (K-12th grade).

Apart from the Covid pandemic, Arumdaun Presbyterian Church's high school ministry has been experiencing a sharp decline in student participation despite having (until recently) sustained the weekly Sunday attendance average. Being youth, much of this attendance reflects the desire of their parents to attend church rather than the initiative of the students themselves. This lack of engagement is visible through the quick retreat of the students at the end of service, the lack of fellowship that exists within the ministry, and the disproportionately low attendance for extracurricular ministry activities. When surveyed, the overwhelming response to explain this lack of engagement is simple: they do not see the relevance of the gospel to their lives.

---

[1] Ken Blanchard, *Leading at a Higher Level*, (New Jersey: Financial Times Press, 2010), 15.

Moreover, the turnover rate for teachers has been high within this same time period. Recruiting volunteers is difficult due to the cultural gap between many of the Korean-speaking adult volunteers and English-speaking youth, and those that do volunteer usually stay for no longer than 2 years due to burn out. Both staff and student morale is low and the church as a whole struggles to function out of vision. Especially noticeable with the forced change brought on by the pandemic, many congregants feel that a continued lack of strong leadership and purpose will force the church to close its doors within the next few decades.

<div align="center">**Leading From a Second Chair Position**</div>

Due to the cultural gap and physical distance of the Education Department and main Korean ministry functioning in separate buildings, I often found myself frustrated and apathetic towards cooperating with the Korean ministry pastors. However, being one church, I have always been aware that for the high school ministry to be healthy, it must work in partnership with the rest of the church body.

In Mike Bonem's <u>Thriving in the 2nd Chair</u>, the author underlines how second tier leadership is not only relevant, but can be a place of effective leadership and growth for the larger organization. In order for this to be a reality, partnership between first and second chair leadership is crucial. This partnership can be instigated from the second chair leader through their commitment to share in the overall leadership direction of the first chair. This commitment is built upon the development of communication, common vision, appreciation of one another's gifts, and the cultivation of a high level of trust over time.[2] In addition, Bonem also describes a phenomena he phrases as "living with the lid". This concept basically describes the willingness

---

[2] Mike Bonem, *Thriving in the 2nd Chair* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 72.

of second chair leadership to support the first chair while in full recognition of their leader's weaknesses and shortcomings.

Bonem's notion cooperation between first and second chair leaders in his book hinges upon the existence personal relationships. Currently, not only are these personal relationships between such parties nonexistent to the working culture of the church, but the modus operandi of church staff is not conducive to fostering such relationships. Meetings are conducted primarily on a reporting basis with communications in group chats following the same culture. Opinions are rarely expressed in these meetings and often, employees keep their heads down and glued to their phones as coworkers report.

As a second chair leader and the youngest on my staff, I can do little in shaping the formal protocol of operations. However, more than the procedure of these meetings, it is the overall workplace culture that is most in need of change. Although I cannot dictate what that culture will look like, as a second chair I can contribute to the cultural change by first establishing personal relationships. These personal relationships can take place in less formal settings, i.e. eating lunch together during our weekday office hours. Without first establishing these relationships outside of the setting of meetings, the meetings themselves will do little to change. Perhaps in these less formal settings, the vision of the first chair leadership can be shared.

In addition, I can begin to change my manner of reporting. Rather than communicating only tasks or upcoming events, I can begin by asking first chair leadership for help in the places where I struggle. I've come to realize that I am a contributing factor in this impersonal culture, at the most basic level by failing to communicate my opinions on the high school ministry. As other

report, I also have the opportunity to respond by asking follow-up questions to the reporting (both during in-person meetings and in phone group chat settings) as well as encourage my coworkers and verbally appreciating their efforts.

A potential setback to this plan is that at the onset, it may be received with little to no response. Due to this, it'll be easy for me to grow discouraged or awkward by initiating the types of communication outlined above. However, because this lack of participation is largely due to the work culture environment, the most important aspect of this change that I must realize is that it will take time. As Bonem explains in his book, trust is built over a duration of time. In the same way, such a cultural change must be foreseen in the long run and fostered with patient persistence.

Creating a Vision for the Ministry

Much of the students' perceived lack of gospel relevance to their lives — and the corresponding drop in student participation in the ministry — can be traced back to the the heart behind how the ministry as a whole operates. Upon examination of the different components that comprises the high school group, it quickly becomes clear that tradition, rather than intentional vision, propels many of the decisions for what the ministry does and how it regularly operates.

In his TedTalk, Simon Sinek explains "The Golden Circle", his theory on what types of companies and organizations inspire loyalty and buy-in beyond the product itself. The basic premise of this theory centers around the idea that people are motivated by purpose rather than sheer outcome. Therefore, it is of vital importance for an organization to comprise a vision statement that centers on the "why": why does this organization exist? Vision is therefore built upon belief systems rather than tasks.

In order to create a vision statement for the ministry, I first need to answer and re-examine some fundamental questions. For example, why does this ministry exist? Why do high schoolers need their own ministry separate from middle school, children, and adults? What makes this age group unique and how would the fulfillment of the Great Commission look like for this particular age group? In addition to questions centric to this particular age, how this vision falls in line under the overall vision of the church at large and in tandem with other age-oriented ministries is vital for this vision to be realistic.

Furthermore, once such a vision statement is created, it's crucial that not only I nor leadership are aware of the vision, but that the congregants and surrounding communities we serve are aware of it as well. Blanchard explains that a HPO's vision is not only clear, but shared amongst all parties of the organization.[3] The sharing of this vision can be achieved through regular communication on the pulpit, clear communication across social media platforms, repetition of the vision amongst staff, and by using it as a standard for all decisions made by the ministry.

However, the composition of this vision statement will come with its own set of hurdles. First off, there is no discernible vision statement over the church in general. The church's overarching vision must first be comprised in order to create a vision statement for the high school that exists in line with it. Second, because of the lack of a head pastor, church leadership and congregants are hesitant to make any definitive decisions or statements, this including the construction of a vision statement. I am still not exactly sure how to address these specific

---

[3] Blanchard, 20.

concerns. My best assumption to operate a general vision statement for the meantime and actively build personal relationships with the Korean pastors as expressed earlier on in this paper.

Perhaps the best decision to be made at this juncture in time is to evaluate the different components of the high school ministry and determine what is currently operating out of intentionality and what is operating out of duty. For example, we hold a yearly revival service for the youth, however, in recent years this revival event has garnered little over 20 attendees. Not only this, but the event that is meant to be run by the students sees very few student volunteers. The best choice in this season for the ministry is to pare down on such events and focus on building up the community within the high school ministry.

Team Leading

Perhaps the single-most difficult aspect of working at APC for the past two years has been in leading the volunteer staff. Beyond just delegating tasks, inspiring and motivating the leaders have proven difficult. Due to the overturn of pastors, trust in the pastoral staff and leadership within the church overall has dropped significantly. Moreover, there isn't a culture of teamwork, creativity, or cooperation in place.

According to Robert Goffee and Gareth Jones' article, "Why Should Anyone be Led by You?" in the HBR text, there are four shared traits amongst effective leaders: selectively showing weaknesses, relying on and building intuition to gauge timing and appropriate actions, exhibiting tough empathy with employees, and revealing their differences.[4] These 4 traits serve not only to engender trust in one's leadership, but to also create a strong team dynamic. Often times, due to my young age and the older age dynamic of the volunteers (aged between 45-60 years), I have

---

[4] *HBR The Ten Must Reads On Leadership*, (Massachusetts: Harvard Business Review, 2011), Kindle, 106.

been adverse to sharing any weaknesses with the staff. This, I believed, would help to prove the legitimacy of my position. However, Goffee and Jones argues that this in fact inhibits members' trust in team leaders. The selective reveal of one's weaknesses allows not just the humanity of the leader to be displayed, but to allow the team members to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility over the shared work. The need to project an image of capability not only created a relational barrier between myself and the volunteer staff, but also kept me from delegating and sharing ownership of the ministry with them.

Tough empathy is also something that I was hesitant to display with my team. Goffee and Jones explain that when a leader displays genuine passion and concern for the *work* and not just the individual, it inspires members to also be passionate towards the work at hand. The overall morale of congregants are at a low due to the state of the church; however, as a leader to display passion and belief in the work would inspire and encourage congregants that the work is not only worthwhile, but that God is still moving in this time of hardship.

To their last point, Goffee and Jones' emphasis on the revelation of a leader's differences was also informative. The general idea is that leaders who are able to highlight certain differences can increase motivation and respect amongst team members and in effect, create higher standards for their teams. Due to the obvious differences between myself and my staff (age, appearance, being a female leader), most of my relational effort has been towards bridging a gap and appealing to them on the level of a peer. Yet, there are advantages to my unique differences that are strengths in my particular leadership role. My younger age allows me to be more relatable to the students; being a rare female leader allows me to have compassion towards other overlooked groups; my background in a liberal college allows me to think creatively and

with innovation. When these strengths birthed from a place of difference are embraced, it allows for creativity to flourish.

Sinek's model of the Golden Circle also points out that building organizations (and in this case, a ministry) upon a belief system creates a passionate loyalty amongst a team. If driven by outcomes, a ministry team can easily burn out. So far, the high school ministry has been largely task-oriented; however, when dealing with people, "outcomes" are not guaranteed. This can easily lead to the volunteer staff growing discouraged, feeling irrelevant, and dropping out, one potential explanation for the high turnover rate of high school ministry volunteers.

At this point in time, I believe the best way to boost team morale would be to have a separate retreat with the leadership team. This retreat would aim to build personal relationships, communicate and encourage buy-in to the ministry vision, encourage the personal faith of the teachers, and provide training in the cultural gap that exists between staff and students.

Being a Woman in Leadership

Leading as a woman has always been a difficulty for me, in part due to my own wrestling with whether women in leadership is actually biblical as well as the lack of representation of women in leadership. This has resulted in two main habits: first, to compare myself to men in leadership and attempt to replicate their style, often times styles that aren't natural to my personality. Second, I tend to cap myself and be more apologetic in my leadership. According to Sandberg's TedTalk of women in higher leadership, the greatest obstacle to women holding roles in these high positions is simply because of the lack of female examples in such roles. There

were three main points she made: sit at the table, make your partner a real partner, and don't

leave before you leave.[5]

Because of this lack of representation, I have often doubted the legitimacy of the position

I hold. I hadn't realized how important representation was more recently in my leadership

journey. Along the same lines of the Goffee and Jones' point on the strength of differences, I was

unaware how my difference as a woman itself held certain advantages. Sandberg's point that

more women are needed in these leadership positions inspired me that the lack thereof did not

delegitimize my role, but further legitimize it. If the will of God is carried out by the Body of

Christ, then the females too cannot be ignored.

My proclivity to imitate only men in leadership has also resulted in my attempt to appear

stronger than I am, or more abrasive and less emotional in fear that I am not taken as seriously. I

am also more hesitant to "stick out" or volunteer for roles I want, rather, taking the position of

filling in the gaps where need is expressed. This has resulted in me serving in ways that I am not

best suited for, affecting the overall quality of work as well as discouraging and burning me out.

I realize that I need to take more intentional steps in seeking out female mentorship.

Participation in women's conferences is something that I believe I need to include in my regular

development and learning as a leader. Also, I need to take advantage of the women's resources

available to me, such as the Empower program held at Alliance Theological Seminary

specifically for women in leadership roles. Widening my network to connect more intentionally

---

[5] Sheryl Sandberg, "Why We Have Too Few Female Leaders," TedTalk by Sheryl Sandberg, *TedTalk*, December 2010, https://www.ted.com/talks/sheryl_sandberg_why_we_have_too_few_women_leaders?language=en.

with women in leader's positions help me not only to glean insight from these female examples, but to better understood who I am as a leader.

Conclusion

Further Leadership Development

In addition to the hard skills learned through this course, I've come to realize how important it is to regularly incorporate a rhythm of continued learning. First off, this can take place in widening my reading repertoire to include not just theological book, but practical leadership books. Being in the Church Development track at ATS, I believe this will be more accessible to me due to the nature of the program. Beyond that, however, I also plan on creating a goal of reading 2 different leadership books per month.

Second, I realized that I need to place myself in a long-term position of continued growth. I am still evaluating how much I can actually develop in my current context; the lack of mentorship and oversight does pose a problem because I am still a young leader. However, whether I stay or whether I move on to another church, I believe that the goal for the next season would be to invest long term in one place to fully develop with a consistent oversight, community, staff, and type of ministry.

Finally, I plan on placing myself in positions where I can be regularly in access to mentorship. This mentorship can take shape in long-term prospects (such as a boss or my relationships with my professors) as well as short-term mentors like at conferences or seasonal internships. For the upcoming fall semester, I will be completing my Field Education requirement. Part of that requirement is to find a mentor who works closely with me in my development as a vocational minister. I'm luck to have this be required of me, but this also

shapes my perspective to understand the presence of a mentorship voice is vital to my growth. Not just in reading or listening materials, but the personal touch of having someone know me and speak specifically into my life is powerful. I only got a small glimpse of that in the Sandberg TedTalk. In the larger picture, the readings helped me to pinpoint specific areas of growth and take my leadership development one step at a time.

Overall, I've come to see how wide the scope of leadership is. In addition to this, leadership isn't a state of being we reach, but rather a calling that we continuously develop over the span of our lives. This leadership definitely holds similarities across different ministries and roles, however, we each exhibit our "brand" of leadership. Across the materials that we had to read for this course, there were definite similarities. However beyond this, I was surprised and blessed to know that leadership could take so many forms. As I understand more deeply who God is, I come to understand myself. And in knowing myself, I am able to intentionally invest in my personal growth as a leader.