



The Marks of a Thriving Pastor: A Lifelong Learner

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Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man. His disciples continuously discovered the full meaning of discipleship. The early church apostles wrestled with concepts about living the abundant, Spirit-filled life. Ever since then, men and women of God have been sorting, sifting, discerning, and pursuing a pathway of faithfulness.

The life of a disciple, particularly a pastor of disciples, is one of nonstop growth, discovery and transformation. We are not called into a static experience or a one size fits all lifestyle. Instead, as pastors who desire to thrive in the 21st Century, we need to openly embrace the invitational and intentional posture of a life-long learner.

Spiritual, relational, physical, material and missional growth implies that we are discovering something new or applying something old. Learning is what we internalize as important, and thriving is the fruit of our intentionality. Embracing these concepts as pastors expresses to God and others that we too are desirous of the transformation we're inviting others to consider.

So what are you learning today, pastor? How are you inviting the Spirit of God to inform your mind, conform your will, transform your heart, and reform your ways? As you lead others in their faith journey, are they too growing and becoming more like Christ as teachable disciples?

Consider the following ways of life-long learning:

Preview: The first responsibility of a leader is to assess and define reality. Take a look around and within you and outline the areas that need your greatest attention. Be honest with yourself and your congregation, willing to listen and address any issue that pops up and requires further consideration. Preview the landscape of your soul, your marriage and family, your team, your ministries, your impact in the community and the wider world.

Review: Take a look at resources (what shall we read?), and experiences (how shall we pursue a deeper experiential knowledge of God?) which will enhance your life and service to others. Review the plethora of options available today and then discern which one(s) apply best to your personal life and particular ministry setting ... don't forget: one size doesn't fit all.

Renew: Remember the past, give thanks for today, and look forward to the future. Renewal comes in a variety of forms and seasons. Prayerfully invite God's Spirit to renew you from the inside out and watch what the Lord does in your midst. Pastors who choose to honor the old and invite the new will be renewed for the journey ahead, even when change is required.

Choose life, dear pastor. Listen, learn, grow, change, and become all that God intends.