

Purpose: To connect with those who have an active relationship with Church Doctor Ministries as peers in ministry, clients, and partners in prayer and support.

The Church Doctor® Report provides a quick read of strategic and influential information.

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Leadership Matters

New York Times best-selling author John Maxwell had a favorite phrase: “Everything rises and falls on leadership.” John began his career as a pastor. He was an avid student of leadership. He became a leadership expert and influenced a wide variety of those who lead in many different segments of life.

Years ago, John Maxwell offered to speak on a video produced by Church Doctor Ministries—to help us promote our consultation ministry for churches and other Christian entities. We filmed his message in his office, and then he took us to lunch. It was a special experience and a great example of leadership influence. I've greatly appreciated the many books that he has written and how we can apply those insights to local churches.

Everything?

There are many who might take issue with the statement: “*Everything* rises and falls on leadership.” Yet, without question, there are several elements of leadership in the Christian movement—and your local church, your denomination, and/or your network of churches. They reflect the value and importance of leadership.

Kent R. Hunter is the founder of Church Doctor Ministries. For the past 30 years, the Church Doctor



team has helped hundreds of churches increase their effectiveness to reach their communities for Christ. The Church Doctors are trained and equipped in biblical efforts that increase your congregation's effectiveness to reach lost people who matter to God. Kent Hunter and Tracee Swank are authors of the new daily Bible devotion book *An Apple a Day: A Daily Dose for Everyday Faith*.

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After consulting over 1,800 churches from 78 denominations as well as nondenominational and independent churches in the US, this has become clear to our Church Doctors: Good leadership can benefit God's Kingdom work. Likewise, poor leadership can have a negative impact.

To be clear, your church—your denomination—is the body of Christ, and Jesus is the Head of His body. Yet, from the neck on down, every Christian knows that good leaders can be used by God to achieve Kingdom results. Likewise, poor leadership can disrupt the will of God and the mission to reach the world and make disciples of Jesus.

I recently received an email from a pastor in Australia. We were classmates at a seminary I attended for one year in “the land down under.” This pastor wrote to thank me for a recent *Church Doctor Report*. In the email, he commented about the present state of that seminary. It has declined to just a handful of students, and the professors are now part-time.

Recently, I was talking with a young pastor in the US about the history of the church he has led for just over a year. This church had declined and aged over several decades. We discussed the leadership in previous years—pastors who had served the church long before his arrival. He shared secondhand stories from long-term members. It seemed clear: Pastoral leadership was not the best. Yet, with this new pastor, in the short span of a year, the church has experienced more growth than they have had for decades.

When we consult churches, one of our goals is to help leaders serve with impact. Most of them are eager to learn and grow in their leadership. The impact is a catalyst for lay leaders. Does every leader benefit from intervention and guidance? Only those who want to change and are willing to pay the price.

Transformation

Can you imagine what it was like for Jesus and His mission? Some Jews—and even some Gentiles—responded to Jesus' teaching like a breath of spiritual fresh air. However, many of the entrenched Jewish leaders became a roadblock to the Christian movement. Saul was a killer of “those rebellious Jews” and a promoter of “the way we've always done it.” Then on the road to Damascus, Paul was *transformed*. And, as we know, that experience transformed the Christian movement.

Fast-forward a few years, and we find Paul in the capital city of the pagan Roman Empire. In some ways, that chapter of history might be a parallel to contemporary societies—like the US, UK, Australia, and others—where Christian, spiritual principles are declining in influence.

Paul, in his letter to the Roman Christians, writes, “Do not be *conformed* to this world, but be *transformed* by the renewal of your mind...that you prove the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2). In 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses Christ-followers in a different pagan environment. He says, as Christians, “We have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16). God *transforms* the way people think. Proverbs 28:25 says, “He who trusts in the Lord will be enriched. He who trusts in his own mind is a fool.”

Two Kinds of Leadership

The word “leadership” can also be described as “influence.” If you are a parent, neighbor, in a work environment—if you talk to anyone—you are an influencer. If you influence anyone—in any way—you are practicing leadership. Everyone who lives and breathes is an influencer—whether they realize it or not!

You can also lead by what you don't say. The absence of input on any subject is negative or empty influence. Parents who never influence their children train them to be poor influencers. No direction is bad direction. You can't ignore it. You influence others all the time—by what you say, don't say, do, or refrain from doing. If you are breathing, you are influencing someone. In truth, more people than you likely imagine. That makes you a “leader,” whether you know it or not.

There are two kinds of leadership: *transactional* leadership and *transformational* leadership. Transactional leadership leans toward the status quo: “Don't rock the boat; keep things the same, the way we've always done it.” This is the opposite of the mission of Jesus. And we should not ignore it.

This is the irony: The more (over) organized the Christian movement becomes, the more transactional believers behave. As your church or denomination grows in bureaucracy, it adds rules, regulations: “the way we always do it.” It reflects the Jewish rabbis who missed Jesus—the Promised Messiah they longed for—when He was right in front of them. This chronic roadblock can occur in any church denomination or movement. It becomes a political structure, a tradition, a habit. We preach that Jesus is the Head of the church, but rules and regulations, traditions, and habits become another altar where we worship. It is so subtle we don't even realize it.

Hear the words of Scripture. Perhaps it's time for each of us, our churches, and our denominations to be “born again” (John 3:7). As a Pharisee, Nicodemus was part of the established religion, but he sensed the need for renewal, revival. He was looking for transformational leadership in the spiritual movement. What Jesus said was *personally transformational*: “You must be reborn, born anew. That's the way it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:1-8).

Is it time for you to be “reborn” again? Not that it didn't work the first time! However, to go back to your essential beginning, is it time for your church, your denomination, your structure to be re-transformed by the same Holy Spirit that touched you at baptism? If so, that becomes the power of transformation.

The other day, I was on the phone with a wonderful leader of a ministry that God blesses to reach new people for Jesus Christ. I have consulted this ministry regularly for decades. They are wonderful servants and, in many ways, cutting-edge leaders. God blesses their ministry. Yet, they have a “hidden” roadblock. Sadly, it is the denominational, political infrastructure that is saturated with transactional leaders, political entanglements, layers of bureaucracy, and traditional priorities that contribute to their ongoing decline. And that transactional influence continues to filter into this ministry that I consult.

Look: *You can be loyal to your roots, but become transformed by a renewal of your mind.* Become a transformational leader. It will liberate your life, your ministry, and your impact for the movement of Jesus. Put a spiritual stake in the ground. “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2 RSV).

Read Romans 12:2 from *The Message*: “Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out.”

And, from a Church Doctor, “Let go, let God....”