

Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

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Run Through the Finish Line

My son has recently developed an interest in running marathons. To support him my wife and I joined his wife and children to cheer him on at a recent event in Southern California. Thousands of people gathered along the course to encourage their favorite runners, and large crowds congregated at both the start and the end of the race.

After such a long distance, many runners were so tired they limped across the end line.

I want to run through the finish line of life and ministry. I want to finish well. How about you?

Others, surprisingly, increased their speed and ran through the finish line with great excitement. While watching hundreds of runners complete their journey, the thought came to me that I want to run through the finish line of life and ministry. I want to finish well. How about you?

A number of years ago I heard leadership expert Robert Clinton describe what finishing well means. He remarked that Christian leaders finish well when at the end of their lives they (1) have a close relationship with God, (2) are still learning and growing, and (3) leave behind a legacy of positive contributions.

How can we finish well? Hebrews 13:7 gives us the primary clue. "Remember your leaders," the write commands, "those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith" (ESV). The key to finishing well is obvious from this passage. We learn how to finish well by observing others and imitating their faith.

After a lifetime of studying faithful leaders, Robert Clinton found seven habits that effective church leaders practice. Leaders who finish well . . .

1. Maintain a learning posture throughout their life.

One of the challenges of life is to resist plateauing in ministry. The antidote is continuous learning. Leaders who finish well learn from (1) the Bible, (2) life experience, (3) stories of successful people, and (4) mentors who are ahead of them in life's journey.

2. Value spiritual authority as a primary power base.

Spiritual authority is a by-product of a life spent in

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There is no success without a successor.

The best leaders finish well.

following God. It is the right to exert influence on others, which is conferred upon a leader by others because of their perception of spirituality in that leader. Thus, a leader's power for spiritual authority is intimately tied to his/her experience with God.

3. Recognize leadership selection and development as a priority function.

Effective leaders pour their lives, experience, and knowledge into future leaders. Like Jesus, they are regularly watching for potential disciples so that they can be with them on the journey of life and ministry. They believe and practice the principle that there is no success without a successor.

4. Function from a dynamic philosophy of ministry.

A philosophy of ministry is the ideas, values, and principles, whether implicit or explicit, which a leader uses as a guideline for decision making, for exercising influence, and for evaluating his/her ministry. A growing philosophy of ministry evolves overtime from the interplay of (1) biblical dynamics, (2) personal giftedness, (3) situational dynamics, (4) individual values, and (5) personal passions.

5. Manifest a growing awareness of their sense of destiny.

A sense of destiny is an inner conviction arising from an experience or a series of experiences that God has His hand on a leader in a special way for special purposes. It carries leaders through the tough times. Leaders who finish well have it.

6. Perceive their ministry from a lifetime perspective.

Effective leaders understand that ministry develops over time through three major ways. Processing: God uses multiple processes to shape leaders, i.e., family, life experience, education, etc. Time: God's processing takes place over time, i.e., it takes years to go through the various processes. Patterns: God uses predictable sequences or experiences, i.e., failure and success, praise and criticism, etc.

7. Empower others to serve.

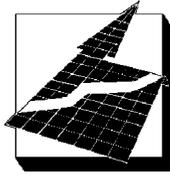
Leaders who finish well know that life is comprised of a series of relationships. Thus, they focus on relational empowerment in their own and in their follower's lives. They empower others through several mentor/protégé relationships, and empower others to lead by sharing God's resources.

How does your life and ministry measure up to these seven habits of leaders who finish well?



Gary L. McIntosh is editor of *Growth Points* and speaks at several leadership events each year.

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How to Develop a Pastoral Compensation Plan

This manual is intended to serve as an interactive planner for church leaders who want to develop a pastoral compensation plan.

The concepts and exercises work equally well for a church that already has a plan and simply wishes to evaluate it, as for a church that has no plan and is just beginning to deal with the issue.

While there are significant differences between churches, this workbook will help any church that is interested in providing the most complete salary package possible for its pastors.

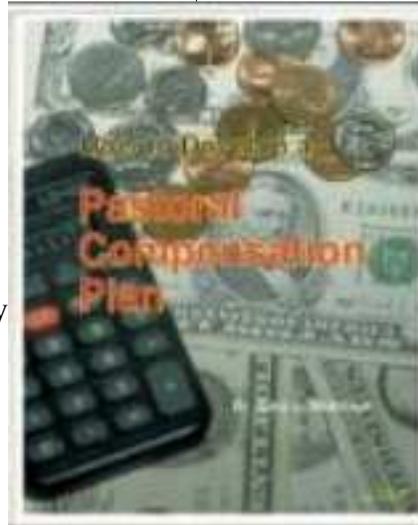
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