Gavin Zahner

Dr. Hall

Honors 113:1 Communicating Effectively

December 1, 2025

Strategy to Sanctuary:
Characteristics of Secular and Pastoral Leaders

Leadership is a universal experience, whether it be a political leader or an organizational leader. Most often, pastoral leadership is associated with spiritual care and moral guidance, and secular leadership is linked to organizational success and strategic decision-making. Yet, both share essential skills. Both types of leaders often inspire, guide, and serve others. Secular leaders are driven by innovation, efficiency, and success in their leadership sphere. Steve Jobs and Martin Luther King Jr. were both successful leaders who influenced many. Leadership can simply be defined as "the process of influencing others in a manner that enhances their contribution to the realization of group goals" (Platow). The skills of a pastoral leader complement the skills of a secular leader. The skills needed to be a pastoral leader complete those of secular leaders.

While both secular and pastoral leaders operate in different fields, both include overlapping qualities. To begin, leaders are agents of influence; they shape values and the culture of the communities they serve. Leaders are not just Chief Executives but reside in all forms of organizations. Leadership is not defined by material success, yet it is defined by the impact of the leader: "It is important to emphasize that leadership is not a process of compliance, power, or ruling tyrannically over obedient followers. Instead, leadership is a process of social influence, whereby leaders motivate followers to internalize goals that are important to the group" (Hogg, 164). Leadership requires professional and academic development, which allows for a leader to

change as they gain more experience. People are not born leaders; leaders are developed through learned skills Due to this, leaders are essential to all groups. In his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,* Stephen Covey, lists six paradigms for human interactions: Win/Win, Win/Lose, Lose/Win, Lose/Lose, Win, Win/Win or No Deal (Covey 159). This strategy can be effective in how leaders deal with conflict within their organization. Moreover, learning how to adapt these paradigms in our own contexts allows people to develop in our leadership abilities.

Most secular leaders consider such habits such as trust and risk-taking in their leadership sphere. These characteristics contrast how pastoral leaders operate. As they continue to direct others, they often form habits for their leadership styles. Habits are "[the] intersection of knowledge, skill, and desire" (Covey, 59). A skill that leaders form is interdependence, which is two people relying on each other. Executives need to rely on their financial departments, salespeople, and other employees within the organization. Interdependence allows for mutual accountability between people. And with that, trust is required in human relationships. It is difficult to lead without trust, and when a leader cannot effectively lead, they do not share the groups values. Trust creates a situation where people can count on each other, "a leader needs to develop cooperative goals and roles, support norms of reciprocity, structure projects to promote joint efforts, and encourage face-to-face interactions" (Kouzes 237). With remote work on the rise, making sure that face-to-face interactions is important to make sure that employees and workers are still interacting with each other.

Leaders who experiment and take risks acquire confidence in their abilities to see and make changes. Systems that have always existed do not "always" work. Challenging old and outdated systems like only hiring males for roles, requires courage. Progress can mean not knowing the path, but if a leader is not willing to progress and innovate, they will not last in their

roles. Whether launching a new idea, changing an organization, or advocating for change, secular leaders embrace risks to achieve results. These risks allow for creativity, resilience, and transformation individually and organizationally. In his Stanford commencement, Steve Jobs made a profound statement: "Believing that the dots will connect down the road will give you the confidence to follow your heart, even when it leads you off the well-worn path, and that will make all the difference" (Jobs). Steve Jobs got fired from his position at Apple and was prepared to give up, yet he did not. He founded Pixar, a popular animation studio. Jobs is a testament to a leader who took risks. Most people because of Jobs work and risk are still benefiting from his success today. Believing in innovation and embracing the risk to achieve results will make a difference within organizations.

A hard question for leaders to ask and find the answer to is: what are do we want to be known for? This is because you also need to answer the question: what are we currently known for? The answer to these questions will define a leader's purpose and identity. Jeff Henderson, an author, builds from this core foundation for leadership: growth happens when people know you are FOR them (customers, team, and community). Leaders should tailor their culture to both support employees and customers. When you are supporting employees, you are answering the question. People over profit is a philosophy that employers should live by. When using this approach, you are planning for not only the longevity of the organization, but also employees. This value-driven approach is "for" people, which leads to long-term profiting.

From his beginnings in a garage to an symbol of innovation, Steve Jobs has shown how creativity can change the world. Jobs, founder of Apple, Inc. was an influential leader, who has inspired many other leaders. He focused on excellence, simplicity, and user experience: the forefront of his leadership style. His famous quote, "We're here to put a dent in the universe"

(Jobs), shows not only the person he is, but who he is as a leader. Jobs was a visionary, when he had a vision, he saw it through. He broke the wall between technology and humanities. Currently, because of Steve Jobs efforts and labor, Apple is still innovating.

Pastoral leaders on the other hand, focus on guiding and serving others spiritually. Values like humility, integrity, and Christlike behavior are at the forefront of their ministry. This allows for unity and growth within their local churches. The church is composed of congregants that trust their pastor's leadership. When looking for pastoral leaders, most of the time, churches will use the Bible for its framework to hire new leaders. The qualifications for pastoral leadership based on the Bible are,

It is a trustworthy statement: if any [one] aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work [they] desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the [spouse] of one [partner], temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching, not overindulging in wine, not a bully, but gentle, not contentious, free from the love of money. [They] must be one who manages [their] own household well, keeping [their] children under control with all dignity. (New American Standard Bible 1 Tim. 3:1-5)

These qualifications are what churches use when they are hiring and calling upon new leaders. Pastors lead with the Bible as their guide for leadership decisions.

Their leadership is rooted in their calling to vocational ministry: "A calling represents the strongest and most intimate connection a person can have with a role or vocation" (Newland, 75). A vocation is simply a calling to something. In a survey conducted by Samuel Newland, 98 pastors were surveyed about their pastoral position attributed their role to a sense of calling from God. This calling has allowed pastors to find their destiny and provided them with a sense of purpose. In another survey, conducted by Lifeway Research, 85% of pastors went to seminary

(Baptist Press). Most Protestant pastors value their seminary education, and it has shaped how they lead and serve others (Baptist Press). Pastoral leaders are always growing in their knowledge to lead, but also on their knowledge of Scripture. Scriptural literacy is important for pastoral leaders. Furthermore, pastoral leaders should follow the Great Commission as lined out in Scripture, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you" (New American Standard Bible Matthew 28:19).

In a sermon, Pastor Terry Crist spoken on accountability within church governance. In his situation, secular leaders were treating their employees better than his denomination was handling problems. His words were valuable for other pastors; he wanted to build his church with a culture of pastoral leadership not corporate leadership. He believed pastoral leadership should be set apart from secular leadership. He believes that pastors are held to a higher standard because they should care for their congregation; this is something that he believed most corporations were not known for.

Martin Luther King Jr. was an influential leader within the church and inspired many others to advocate for change and stand up for oppression. Not only did he lead his church congregation, but he also led the nation. Humility, integrity, and Christlike behavior were not only the forefront of his ministry, but the forefront of his life. His moral convictions to speak out shows true pastoral leadership, "We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people" (King). King was bold in his actions and call people to repentance and faith in Jesus. Furthermore, he had them reflect on injustice shown towards African Americans. His faith and trust in God allowed him to remain calm in a tumultuous world. His memory endures not only

for civil rights, but as a model of how pastoral leaders can influence society by speaking truth to power and showing God's call to love the oppressed.

In the Bible, there is a parable, which is a simple story, where a king lists acts of kindness for his followers. The king explains that in caring for the least of his people, they were ministering to him directly: For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me…Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of Mine, you did it for Me (New American Standard Bible Matt. 25:35,40). Martin Luther King exemplifies these qualities that Jesus calls his disciples to. King demonstrated a profound commitment to serving "the least of these" – the people denied the basic dignity God intends for all people. The people that society scorned and forsaken.

Furthermore, he once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'" His life was a living testimony of leadership based in Scripture and lived out. When someone is calling out injustice when no one else is, they are standing up to take charge. Because they are pioneering change. Leaders are not above others, in fact, leaders are called to serve others. King's whole life was based around serving others, even when it cost his life. Authentic relationships are the best way to see real-life change. When people feel seen, valued, and understood, they become more open to growth, accountability, and new perspectives.

There is not one guidebook to "successful" leadership. But skills developed over the course of our lives. Secular and pastoral leaders share essential skills; they go beyond industries. Both leaders often inspire, guide, and serve others. Yet, pastoral leader's skills complement the skills of a secular leader. As a leader, I am ever learning these essential skills to be a successful

leader. I sense a calling to ministry in my own life and while I may not be a pastor, the skills a

ministry leader need are the same as a pastoral leader. To that end, I want to live by the

guidelines for leadership as laid out in Scripture. Martin Luther King Jr and Steve Jobs are

inspirations to me as I am developing my leadership style. I can learn from their mistakes as

leaders and my own to cultivate strong leadership skills that will carry me through all my

leadership positions. As humans we will never be "perfect" leaders, but leaders who are

passionate about their roles and positions.

Partial Bibliography

Crist, Terry. - *YouTube*. 27 Mar. 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xHRNvwxF5lY.

Covey, Stephen R. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal*

    Change. Simon and Schuster, 2004.

"Dictionary.Com." *Dictionary.Com*, https://www.dictionary.com/browse/vocation. Accessed 11

    Nov. 2025.

Henderson, Jeff. *Know What You're FOR: A Growth Strategy for Work, An Even Better Strategy*

    for Life. Zondervan, 2019.

The Holy Bible: New American Standard Version, 2020. The Lockman Foundation, 2020.

Jobs, Steve. "Do What You Love" in Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum ed. by

    Laurence Behrens and Leonard Rosen 13th edition. Pearsons Publishers, Boston. p 461.

Jobs, Steve. "We're Here to Put a Dent in the Universe. Otherwise Why Else Even Be Here?"

    Macworld, Macworld, https://www.macworld.com/article/214642/steve-jobs-making-a-

    dent-in-the-universe.html.

Kennard, David. "What Following Jesus Looks Like." *Essential Leadership Apps*,

    https://www.essentialleadershipapps.com/what-following-jesus-looks-like.html.

    Accessed 29 Oct. 2025.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. *Letter from Birmingham Jail*. Penguin Classics, 2018.

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The leadership challenge: how to make extraordinary*

    things happen in organizations. John Wiley & Sons.

Staff "Survey: Pastors Value Seminary Education." *Baptist Press*, 8 Apr. 2010,

    https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/survey-pastors-value-seminary-

    education/.

Newland, Samuel Jay, II. *Learning and Leading: A Qualitative Case Study of New Pentecostal Lead Pastors*. Grand Canyon University, 4 Jun. 2025.

Platow, Michael J., S. Alexander Haslam, and Stephen D. Reicher, "The Social Psychology of Leadership", in Stephen G. Harkins, Kipling D. Williams, and Jerry Burger (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Social Influence*, Oxford Library of Psychology (2017; online edn, Oxford Academic, 3 Nov. 2014), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199859870.013.14, accessed 8 Nov. 2025.

Prislin, Radmila. *Research Handbook on Social Influence*. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2025.

Seminary, Calvin. "What Effective Pastoral Leadership Looks Like." *Calvin Theological Seminary*, 15 Dec. 2022, https://calvinseminary.edu/resources/what-effective-pastoral-leadership-looks-like/.

Tripp, Paul David. *Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church*. 2020.