

STEVES ARTICLE SEPTEMBER 2011 FIVE MUSTS FOR LASTING IN MINISTRY

This month is pretty special for me. I started the journey in fulltime ministry 29 years ago in the month of September. In some ways, that seems as if it was a lifetime ago. In other ways, it seems like just yesterday. Many times I sit back and say, "If I only knew then what I know today". Although I can't go back and rewind the tapes and do some things over, I can share with others and pray they don't make similar mistakes or take careless risks. So, if we were to sit down and chat with another ministry leader, here are my top five pieces of advice for lasting in ministry.

1. **Know your "call" and document the steps.** Ministry is hard. That's no surprise, because the enemy doesn't want us around. Pastoring is an awesome privilege and your "call" should not be taken lightly. Of all of the occupations in the world, none has greater potential to change the destiny of lives than that of a pastor. With all that happens in fulltime ministry, discouragement is a strong tool the enemy uses on us. One of the things that keeps me going and helps to defeat discouraging times is remembering my "call" and the God stories that set (and kept) me on the path of steadfast ministry. Is your "calling" documented? Are the stories where the supernatural God intercepts your life recorded? I would encourage you to document these encounters for two reasons. The first is for you. When the enemy tries to discourage, you can look back at how God has been there for you. You see this all through the Old Testament. The second is for your family. Telling these stories of God's intervention to your family, kids, and grandkids is a legacy of faith.
2. **Adjust to your leader.** Working under the guidance of five senior pastors doesn't make me an expert on how to deal with your leader, but I have learned a lot from the men I have supported and served. I knew from the start I wouldn't be a Senior Pastor. I knew I would always serve one. If you are like me and you are going to serve a Lead or Senior Pastor, learning to adjust to your Senior Pastor is critical. If they aren't doing anything illegal, unethical or unbiblical; then you need to figure out how you can come alongside of him and support him. God uses many different styles to win people to Christ through his church. Rick does things in ways I never would, which is why God choose him to be the Senior Pastor and not me! ☺ I am not suggesting that you follow blindly. Your job is not to take orders without question. Your job is to inform your Senior Pastor when you feel it is needed. After you have informed; then you act on unconditionally on his leading from God. You talk it out in private, but are unified in public. Even though Rick does things the way I don't; that is not the issue. If I don't like something, I pray. If God wants it changed, He will change it.
3. **Test your faith in God.** I know this seems like a goofy point, but part of what helps your ministry to grow stronger is wrestling with God. Of course you will always lose, but your faith becomes stronger as you go through the process. Three areas that must be wrestled through are Sabbath, Tithing, and spiritual disciplines. Do you believe God can do more with your 6 days than you can do with 7 days? Tithing is a matter of the same question. Does your faith truly believe God can do more with your 90% than you can do with 100%? When it comes to spiritual disciplines, do you let God have more and more of you so that your ministry remains a passion and never becomes just a job?
4. **Make John 3:30 a daily reminder.** He must increase and I must decrease. Humility is the name of the game. It always wins over pride. I love John the Baptist's approach in this passage. He knew his part, knew when to let go, and didn't let peer pressure from his disciples deflect him. He just stayed the course. Who can you help build up in another ministry? In a peer to peer ministry? In your church? In another church? When we are Kingdom focused, we "get it."
5. **Don't surrender leading.** So often in trying to empower others, we forfeit the leadership gift God gave us. It doesn't mean you don't listen, it just means democracy isn't always the Godly way. I am all about being a collaborative learner, but sometimes in ministry the majority isn't right. Many times through scripture the majority didn't like getting out of the comfort zones and taking a risk for God. The hardest place I have been in ministry was when I was with Godly people and it was me and their opinion.

Sometimes God wants you to submit; sometimes He is calling on you to lead boldly. Never surrender that! When I have stepped out with God, everybody wins.

As I look toward another year, I pray these points will help you find satisfaction, fulfillment, and legacy in your ministry.

Steve Gladen is the Pastor of Small Group Community at Saddleback Church. His latest bestselling book, *Small Groups With Purpose: How to Create Healthy Communities* is now available.