



Developing a Great Relationship with Your Senior Pastor

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How to Use This Tool

This *Conference Classics* process tool is designed to accompany an audio recording of a Willow Creek Association conference session. You can refer to the tool while listening to the session and use it afterward to dig deeper into the content, or you can use the tool to get the highlights without even listening to the session.

This tool consists of three parts:

- The **PREVIEW** section lists the problem that the session addresses and the recommendation that the speaker makes.
- The **KEY CONCEPTS** section breaks the session down into the core ideas most important for you to understand.
- The **REFLECT** section includes questions to help you practice, apply, and implement what you've learned. Although the questions are geared primarily to individuals, groups can use them as a discussion guide.

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Preview

- Problem:** Many children's ministry leaders lack a professional and positive relationship with their senior pastors.
- Recommendation:** Lead up well so that you and your senior pastor can work together in harmony to support the vision of the church.

Key Concepts

The Importance of a Great Relationship with Your Senior Pastor

- Whether as paid staff or volunteers, children's ministry leaders have the opportunity to influence the senior leaders of the church and help them have a vision for children's ministry.
- When senior leaders and children's ministry leaders are working in harmony and supporting one another's vision, they can be an amazing force for the Kingdom.
- Realize that it is your responsibility to, "as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18, NIV).
- When you aren't in harmony with your senior pastor, it's hard for God's work to be accomplished.
- It's your responsibility to be patient and humble and create levels of understanding with your senior leaders (Ephesians 4:1-3).
- It's your responsibility to build a great relationship with your senior pastor — you can't expect him or her to do it without any effort on your part.
- Although Trisha has a great relationship with her senior pastor, she only meets with him one-on-one a few times a year.
- It's not necessary to be buddies with your senior pastor — the goal is a professional and positive relationship.

Be a 360 Degree Leader

- The book *The 360 Degree Leader* by John Maxwell talks about the influence you have wherever you are in an organization.
- Children's ministry leaders are often in the middle, and it's easy to feel like you don't have a lot of control.
- You can be a leader who influences your supervisors, your subordinates, and your peers.
- To be a 360 degree leader, you need to lead up to your senior pastor.

Take a Walk in Their Shoes

- Think about the things that are on your senior pastor's mind on a weekly basis.
- Then, think about the things that are on your mind as a children's ministry leader.
- The things that preoccupy the senior pastor and that preoccupy you are all important, but the lists don't really coincide.
- That can create a tension, but it's also why you're playing different roles on the same team.

Align Yourself with the Vision and Values of the Church

- Each church has a different culture and values, and you need to be sold out to your

Tell Stories of Life Change

- Senior pastors often see just a glimpse of what's happening in the children's ministry, while you get to hear all the great stories of what happens every week.
- Make sure you pass on those stories.
- On Sundays, ask your team what God stories they have.
- The senior leaders want to know the stories because they inspire and motivate them.

Be Honest about Challenges

- Be honest with your supervisor about the challenges you face so you can develop a sense of trust together.
- You do want to make sure it's a safe place to share, but it's good to let your pastor see the vulnerable side of you.
- Your senior pastor needs to know where you're at so he or she can adequately supervise and shepherd you through that process.

Pray for Your Pastor

- Don't forget to pray for your senior pastor.
- When Mariners needed a new sanctuary and a new children's building, the children's ministry was told that their building might not happen.
- The team told the senior pastor that they would support whatever decision he made, because that's his role as senior pastor, but they also said that they would keep praying.
- As a result of that conversation and their prayers, the senior pastor became an advocate for building the children's building first.
- Remember that God is capable of doing more than you can ask or imagine.

Reflect

1. What one or two key insights from this session stuck out to you as most relevant to your relationship with your senior pastor? Write your thoughts below.