

REAL MINISTRY IN A COMPLEX WORLD

Leadership JOURNAL

Help & Info: Writer's Guidelines

Who Is Leadership Journal's Audience?

Leadership Journal's audience represents a broad spectrum of experience, education, background, and theological distinctive. Pastors, parachurch ministers, church staff members, and lay leaders read *Leadership Journal*.

How Do I Submit a Query?

Leadership Journal is written by our readers, so we welcome your ideas. Most of our writing is requested, but we do regularly publish unsolicited manuscripts. Please send us a brief query describing your idea and how you plan to develop it. We'll respond to your query as quickly as possible.

We plan issues six months in advance of publication. If your query is accepted we will give you editorial support and guidelines as you write the full article.

To send your query to us, [click here](#).

Be sure to tell us about yourself. Include your full name, address, and phone number, plus your church name, address and phone number, and your position. If you blog, please include a link to recent posts so that we can scan your writing style.

Core Qualities of a Leadership Journal Article

We're looking for pieces that deal with doing "real ministry in a complex world." A published article describes real experiences, painting vivid scenes that leaders can identify with. Tell the story of what happened and what you learned. Readers can see what went wrong and what went right—learning from the experience of one who's been there. Show that you understand the complexities, joys, and pain of local-church ministry. Offer insight on the practical issues: the conflicts, temptations, mistakes, and successes.

What Kinds of Articles Is Leadership Journal Looking For?

We're looking for crisp, practical writing about subjects that matter to ministers. There are several types of writing we consistently need:

1. **Theme articles.** Half of each issue focuses on a single theme. Queries we receive that align with an upcoming theme will be given priority.
2. **Non-theme articles.** Each issue has several non-theme articles. We look for pieces on preaching, soul care and discipleship, pastoral theology, innovation, neighborhood involvement, and more. All based on true stories from pastoral experience.
3. **Toolkit articles and reviews.** The Toolkit section offers how-to's on:
 - Preaching and Worship
 - Spiritual Formation
 - Outreach
 - Pastoral Care
 - Administration
4. **Blog posts.** Writing for *Leadership Journal's* blog, *Out of Ur*, is a great way to introduce new ideas and interact with other church leaders. Posts on *Out of Ur* focus on current events and cultural trends that relate to church ministry. A good blog post has three elements: it's timely, it's provocative, and it sparks conversation and response. Lurking on OutOfUr.com may be the best way to understand the blog's culture before submitting a query.

Article Ideas

- **You had to be there:** The story you wouldn't believe if it hadn't happened to you. What happened? Tell it drama-style, and let the scenes tell us what you learned along the way.
- **Homelife:** Stories from the fishbowl. Tell the ministry episode that affected your family life and how you grew from it. Or, perhaps how your family life is affecting your ministry.
- **The Definition of You:** The moment that changed your ministry. The moment a relationship changed, an antagonist became a friend, the church grasped your vision, the momentum shifted, you learned something that changed the way you do ministry. What was it?
- **Learning to Lead:** How are you growing as a leader of Christ's church? Tell us the transferable principles from your experience that other pastors can use.
- **Managing conflict.** A church member blew up at you. She said she's just being honest. You said she's rude and out of control. Suddenly, everybody was taking sides. So what did you do?
- **Mentoring and development:** Training leaders and future leaders. How are you training deacons or team members or new staff members? What are you teaching them and in what setting? Tell us how you foster disciples who make disciples.
- **Heartbeat.** Is something waking up in your heart? Give us fresh insight into your work, something new you've discovered about life and ministry. What are your horizons? Your challenges?

What Is the Culture of Leadership Journal?

Seasoned, timely, and (we hope) fun. We're looking for writing that is crisp, enjoyable, relevant, and biblically faithful. Given the varied background of our readers, articles should be inclusive rather than targeted at a narrow audience.

Every piece in *Leadership Journal* must speak to the realities of church leadership. Our articles are not essays expounding a topic, editorials arguing a position, or homilies explaining biblical principles. Instead they bridge the gap between ministry theory and practice. Always, our goal is to assist leaders with the problems and opportunities encountered in local church ministry.

As always, our concern is the impact of pastoral theology on the life and experience of the local church. Tell us your story, with freshness and honesty. Describe struggles as well as triumphs. Tell us what you've learned, not what we need to do.

How Do I Write a "How-To" Article?

Since *Leadership Journal* articles help church leaders with pressing problems, they often take a how-to format. To write such a piece effectively:

1. Select one problem that you and many church leaders have—and you've made progress in dealing with. You'll know you've gotten a topic defined when you can express it as "How to ...". For example, "How to respond when a church elder refuses to give financially to the church" or "How to preach the uniqueness of Christ in a pluralistic culture."
2. Identify 1-5 principles, practices, and/or understandings that have helped you address this situation.
3. For each principle, tell a story, from your experience or someone else's, which shows the principle at work.

Does Leadership Journal Prefer a Particular Style?

Yes. Content makes an article worthwhile; style makes it readable. We are dedicated to sharp, readable prose with a conversational tone.

We recommend *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White as a guide for style. A few important principles include:

- Use action verbs. Forms of the verb "to be"—is, was, were, etc.—make for dull writing. In every possible case, choose the active voice.
- Tell stories. Illustrate your points with colorfully crafted narrative. By basing principles in specific experiences, you'll show how to minister effectively amid the complexity and ambiguity of real life.
- If in doubt, choose the short sentence. Variety of length, of course, contributes to good style, but writers err more often with too many long sentences than too many short ones.
- Pick the right word. This will usually be the simplest word that carries the meaning you want. Some critics claim scholars and professionals purposely write to obfuscate meaning, to cover fuzzy thinking, or to sound intellectual. Elegant prose uses everyday language well.
- Assume your reader bores easily. Remember, if he flips the page from lack of interest, you've lost! Keep asking yourself, "What grabs my attention? An illustration? A fresh insight? A well-turned phrase?" Keep the reader with you by introducing a constant stream of interesting material.

After putting your first draft on paper, go through it and see how many action verbs you have as part of your revision process. Mark each noun you can taste, hear, see, smell, or feel. You can see hubcaps, brick walls, coffee mugs, and lightning bugs. Good writers fill their prose with visual objects. Be as specific as possible. For instance, "Toyota" is better than "car" for conjuring up an image. "Prius" is even better. Write in your own voice; styles do differ. But we are looking for a readable, conversational, and confident style.

How Should I Submit a Manuscript?

After we've accepted your query, write the article. We prefer electronic submissions. Be sure to include your full name, address, and phone number, plus church name, address and phone number, and your position.

Thanks for your interest in writing for *Leadership Journal*. Send us a [query](#), and let's get started.