



THE LEADER'S DASHBOARD

What do your gauges read?

Dr. Steve Brown

Has this ever happened to you? You are already several minutes late as you head to your car. You quickly get settled into the driver's seat, turn the key to start the engine and then shift gears to begin backing up. It's then, from the corner of your eye that you notice. The low fuel light is on. You now have the choice of heeding it's silent warning and stopping for gas and falling further behind or temporarily ignoring it and testing the limits of your gas tank's capacity.

Though nobody likes to see a warning light appear, your car's dashboard is a tremendously helpful tool. A brief glance at the gauges can give you a fairly detailed overview of the engine's operating condition and inner health. Then, whatever your mechanical aptitude, you can have a more objective level of confidence or concern as you drive. If a yellow or red warning light comes on the dashboard, you can choose to cover it over with duct tape and ignore it or investigate the potential problem.

The simple concept and benefits of a car dashboard can also be applied to the lives of Christian leaders. By identifying some key indicators of a leader's health, a dashboard of gauges can be created to provide a simple and fairly objective system of feedback. While not scientific, for leaders who are often operating at high speeds with limited time for reflection or for leaders who rarely receive helpful feedback, a dashboard can be simple way to keep on track and to keep watch for emerging problems.

As you read on, you will find descriptions of four gauges for Christian leaders that emerge as repeated themes from the life of Jesus and throughout Scripture. As you read each description, take a few moments to reflect on your own life and leadership by giving each gauge one of three readings: green for healthy, yellow as an early warning sign or red for an imminent problem.



The Spiritual Gauge

The story of Jesus' baptism in Mark 1:9-11 gives illustration to the precious intimacy that Jesus shared with his heavenly Father. Before Jesus had even begun his public ministry, he heard the words from heaven, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." (Mark 1:11)

Beyond just this one snapshot, the gospels demonstrate that Jesus sought out and pursued a dynamic and intimate spiritual relationship with the Father throughout his earthly life.

Since we too are created for an intimate spiritual relationship with God, the spiritual gauge can help you to assess how you are doing in this critical and central area of your life and leadership. For this gauge, ask yourself questions like, "Am I seeking to intentionally nurture my relationship with God? Do I see myself first and foremost as His child? Am I soaking in His love and truth? Do I listen to Him? Is our relationship based on more than my role as a leader?"

is just one of many times Jesus experienced temptation. As Hebrews 4:15 states, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin."

The character gauge measures areas in your character, emotional stability, energy level and physical self-care. With this gauge you can ask yourself questions like, "Am I growing in integrity, purity and humility? Are the fruit of the Spirit evident in my life? How is my energy level? Am I taking care of myself physically?"

If you find yourself moving out of the 'green' or healthy zone, you become more vulnerable. For instance, if you are sleeping less or more fatigued more often, you may experience more negative thinking, fearfulness or even anger. If you neglect exercise and nutrition, you will find yourself more tired and in the long-term dealing with physical health problems. The temptation toward temporary "escape" through unhealthy indulgences and even immoral behavior also becomes more common and intense.



Take a few moments to reflect on your own life and leadership by giving each gauge one of three readings: green for healthy, yellow for early warning sign or red for imminent problem.

The Character Gauge

Immediately following Jesus' baptism, Jesus is sent to the desert where he is tempted by Satan for forty days. Again, this one snapshot

The Relational Gauge

Soon after Jesus' desert experience, he begins calling disciples to form a community around him (Mark 1:16-20). This is one snapshot that illustrates the on-going theme of relationships and community in Jesus' life. Jesus lived, loved, served and suffered in the context of close relationships and community.

The relational gauge measures the quality and impact of your relationships. Depending on life circumstances, this includes relationships with your spouse, children, extended family, close friends, neighbors, church connections and community.

Key questions include, "Are my key relationships healthy? Have I been resolving conflict redemptively? Have I connected recently with some good friends? Do I have wise mentors speaking into my life?"

One key warning sign for this gauge is what Lewis Grant calls "sunset fatigue". In his book, [The Life You've Always Wanted](#), John Ortberg describes sunset fatigue as "when we come home at the end of the day's work, those who need our love the most, those to whom we are most committed, end up getting the leftovers. Sunset fatigue is when we are just too tired, or too drained, or too preoccupied, to love the people to whom we have made the deepest promises."



The Service/ Leadership Gauge

By calling disciples to “Come follow me” in community, Jesus had a clear purpose in mind – “and I will make you fishers of men.” (Mark 1:17) It was for the purpose of service and leadership that Jesus trained and invested a great majority of his time in his disciples.

As “God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10), each of us, regardless of profession or life stage, has a significant contribution to make.

The service/leadership gauge measures your external activity and leadership competencies through your contributions at work, church, home, community, the world, etc.

Self-questions for this gauge include, “Do others see me as a servant-leader or simply a leader? Am I investing my time for the highest and best use?, What percentage of my time do I spend serving from my strengths?, Do I have the skills to excel in this role? Are others being equipped and mobilized for service and leadership? Is the cause of the Gospel being furthered as a result of my leadership?”

Some Practical Steps to Using Your Dashboard

1. Review Your Dashboard Regularly

Set aside regular time to review, reflect and read your dashboard. You can incorporate this exercise into your regular Sabbath routine each week or a scheduled personal retreat or simply take a trip to the coffee shop for some reflection time.

Bring a journal and work through each of the four gauges by giving yourself a reading of green for healthy, yellow for early warning signs and red for imminent problem. Your journal will help not only in focusing your reflection but by recording your status and progress. This can be very helpful in identifying recurring themes that you can celebrate or address. You may also notice specific patterns that recur over time.

2. Look Big Picture

These four gauges are also inter-related and part of a holistic organic system. Each gauge connects to and impacts each of the others. This means that you need to look beyond reading individual gauges to see the bigger picture. Ask yourself how the individual gauges are influencing and impacting the others.

For instance, you might find that your spiritual gauge is yellow or red while your service/leadership gauge is green. This could mean that you are pouring yourself into the ‘doing’ of service/leadership at the expense of ‘being’ and intimacy with God.

3. Special Focus in Specific Seasons

Though God’s desire for us is to be ‘green’ on all four gauges, there may be temporary seasons of life or leadership where we need to give added priority to one or more gauges. This means that there may be moments where one gauge is reading a little lower than ideal. Just pay careful attention to ensure that this is a short-term situation and doesn’t become permanent.

May the discipline of regularly taking a few moments to reflect on these four gauges bring you perspective, feedback, cause for celebration and an early warning system for potential problems!

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About Arrow Leadership

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