

# LEAD BEFORE YOU'RE READY

---

*A Practical Guide for New Church Leaders —  
What Nobody Tells You in Your First Year of Leading*



PASTOR RICHMOND KOBE

# Lead Before You're Ready

*A Practical Guide for New Church Leaders*

*What Nobody Tells You in Your First Year of Leading*

**PASTOR RICHMOND KOBE**

Faithful Path Community  
faithfulpathcommunity.com

## Publication and use

Copyright © 2026 Richmond Kobe. All rights reserved.

This guide is licensed for personal use. Churches wishing to use it for group training should contact [info@faithfulpathcommunity.com](mailto:info@faithfulpathcommunity.com).

This guide includes chapter worksheets and a Practical Leadership Toolkit. Use a notebook or an accessible digital format whenever you need more writing space.

## A note on responsible leadership

This guide offers pastoral teaching and practical suggestions. Apply them within your church's governance, safeguarding procedures and the requirements of your location. A willingness to serve does not replace role-specific preparation or supervision.

Scripture is discussed through references and paraphrase. Read each passage in context in your own Bible. Practical applications are distinguished from what the passage itself states.

For concerns about harm or misconduct, use the appropriate reporting route. You do not have to confront the person concerned before seeking support. The toolkit includes a short guide to choosing the right next step.

# Contents

|                                                        |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction.....                                      | 5  |
| 1. Called, Not Qualified.....                          | 7  |
| 2. Leading Yourself First.....                         | 11 |
| 3. Knowing Your Role.....                              | 15 |
| 4. Building a Volunteer Team.....                      | 19 |
| 5. Keeping Your Team.....                              | 23 |
| 6. Running a Meeting People Want to Attend.....        | 28 |
| 7. The Conversation You're Avoiding.....               | 33 |
| 8. Criticism, Control, and Ongoing Pastoral Needs..... | 38 |
| 9. Burnout and Boundaries.....                         | 43 |
| 10. Growing the Next Leader.....                       | 48 |
| A Last Word.....                                       | 53 |
| Practical Leadership Toolkit.....                      | 54 |
| About the Author.....                                  | 62 |

# Toolkit contents

Use these pages alongside the chapter exercises. Keep personal reflections private and record sensitive information only in the appropriate secure system.

Ten-Week Practice Plan..... 54

Role and Decision Agreement..... 55

Volunteer Invitation and First Month..... 56

Meeting Agenda and Action Record..... 57

Conversation Preparation..... 58

Capacity and Support Plan..... 59

Developing a Leader and Handover..... 60

Concerns, Care and Reporting..... 61

# Introduction

## Why this book exists

Many people who begin leading in a church have never received practical training for the role.

You were faithful. You showed up. You were good with people, or good with details, or simply the person who noticed the gap and filled it. And then one day somebody said the words that changed your Sundays: would you take this on?

**What often gets missed is practical instruction.** There may be no handover document, no explanation of how to recruit a volunteer, handle a complaint or decide how much of your evening the role should take. You are expected to work it out, often by repeating avoidable mistakes other new leaders have already made.

That gap is what this book is for.

I have pastored for twenty years, in more than one country and more than one culture, and I have watched a great many good people step into leadership with real love for God and no idea how to run a meeting. Most of them survived. Some of them left, quietly and painfully, over problems that had straightforward solutions nobody had ever told them about.

You should not have to learn all of this the slow way.

## Who this is for

This guide is written for the person in their first year or two of leading something in a church: a small group, a worship team, a youth ministry, a welcome team, a Bible study, an outreach, a department.

It is also useful if you have been leading for longer and were never given the basics – and plenty of people have led for a decade in exactly that position.

If you pastor a small church and do everything yourself, most of this applies to you as well, though it is not written specifically to you. If you are training new leaders, you may find it a useful thing to put in their hands and work through together.

**I have not assumed any theological education.** Where I use a passage of Scripture, I explain where it comes from and what was happening at the time, because context is what makes a verse usable rather than decorative.

## What this is not

It is not a theology of leadership. There are excellent books on that and this is not one of them. This is closer to a manual.

It is not a set of guaranteed techniques. Ministry is people, and people do not behave predictably. Everything here is what has generally worked, offered honestly, not a formula.

It is not a replacement for local guidance. Several chapters encourage you to consult your pastor or ministry head. A book cannot know your church. Where concerns involve that leader, use an appropriate independent reporting or support route.

And it is not a book about how to grow your ministry. It is about how to lead it without damaging yourself, your family, or the people who serve with you. Those turn out to be the same thing more often than you would expect.

### How to use it

**Ten chapters, in a deliberate order.** The first three are about you – your calling, your own spiritual life, and where your role begins and ends. The middle four are the practical craft: recruiting, keeping people, running meetings, and handling conflict. The last three deal with what tests you over time: difficult people, burnout, and raising the person who will do this after you.

You can read it straight through in an evening. I would rather you didn't.

Each chapter ends with reflection questions and a practical action for the week. Write, type or dictate your answers in a private format that works for you. Specific answers help you notice what needs to change. Share only what is appropriate with a mentor or training group.

Each weekly action has one main focus, sometimes with a short follow-up. Start with that rather than trying to change everything at once. Consistent practice gives new habits time to develop.

So a chapter a week for ten weeks is the way I would use it. If you can work through it with a friend who also leads, or with the person who put you in the role, better still.

### One thing before you start

Somewhere in the next few chapters you will read something that makes you wince – a question that lands on a situation you have been avoiding, or a description of a leader you recognise as yourself.

**Do not skip past it.** That reaction is the most valuable thing this book can give you, and it is worth more than everything you will agree with.

You are not required to be ready. You are required to be willing, teachable, and honest about what you do not know.

Let's begin.

# Chapter 1 – Called, Not Qualified

## The feeling you're having is normal

**Someone asked you to lead.** Maybe it was the pastor, maybe a ministry head, maybe nobody asked at all and the need was simply sitting there until you picked it up. Either way, you said yes, and somewhere between saying yes and this moment, a quiet thought arrived:

**They've made a mistake.** I'm not the right person for this.

**I want to tell you something before we go one step further.** Feeling inadequate does not, by itself, mean you were wrongly chosen. Several leaders in Scripture voiced serious doubts when God called them. Their stories invite us to bring our doubts to God and seek help, rather than treating confidence as the test of a calling.

## Moses argued for a full chapter and a half

In Exodus 3, Moses is eighty years old and keeping sheep in Midian. He is not a rising leader. He is a man who tried to help his people forty years earlier, killed an Egyptian, panicked, and ran. He has been in the desert ever since, working for his father-in-law.

God speaks to him from a burning bush and tells him to go to Pharaoh and bring Israel out of Egypt. Moses answers in Exodus 3:11 by asking who he is that he should go to Pharaoh. That is objection number one, and he is only getting started. He goes on to ask what he should say if they want to know God's name (3:13), to insist that they will not believe him (4:1), to protest that he is not a good speaker and never has been (4:10), and finally to simply ask God to send somebody else (4:13).

**Five objections.** God answers four of them patiently and gets angry at the fifth – not because Moses felt inadequate, but because Moses used his inadequacy as a reason to refuse.

**Notice what God never does.** He never tells Moses he is wrong about himself. He never says, "Actually, you're an excellent speaker." He answers a completely different question. In Exodus 3:12 he says simply that he will be with him. The issue was never Moses' capacity. It was God's presence.

## Jeremiah felt too young, and God answered him

The same pattern appears in Jeremiah 1:6. Jeremiah objects that he cannot speak because he is young; the passage does not give his exact age. He was called to prophesy in Judah in the decades before Jerusalem fell to Babylon, an assignment that would bring rejection, imprisonment and danger.

God's reply in verses 7 and 8 is not encouragement about Jeremiah's hidden potential. It is a redirection: don't say you're too young, go where I send you, say what I tell you, don't be afraid of their faces, because I am with you.

Again – presence, not capacity.

## **The disciples were “unschooled, ordinary men”**

Acts 4:13 describes the moment the Sanhedrin – the trained religious elite of Jerusalem – watch Peter and John speak with confidence and realise these are uneducated, ordinary men. The Greek word behind “unschooled” refers to someone without formal rabbinic training. These were fishermen standing in front of the theological faculty of their nation.

The verse ends with the detail that matters: the council recognised that they had been with Jesus.

**Their time with Jesus mattered.** They had learned from him, and their courage was not dependent on elite credentials. That does not make training unnecessary; it reminds us that formal status is not the whole measure of a leader.

## **So what does God actually ask of a leader?**

**Here is where new leaders can get the emphasis wrong.** We may look first for impressive ability, while Paul’s instructions give sustained attention to character, maturity and the ability to teach and care for others.

**Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7 slowly.** Paul is addressing the qualifications of overseers. He describes a person of sound character: faithful, self-controlled, hospitable, gentle, free from greed and respected beyond the church. He also requires teaching ability, maturity and responsible care of the household. These are substantial responsibilities, not a call to appoint anyone who is willing.

**Character is central, but capability is not absent.** These requirements address overseers specifically; churches should also define the character, training and competence needed for each volunteer role.

**Then look at 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.** Paul is writing to a church in a wealthy, status-obsessed port city, and he reminds them to look at themselves – not many of them were wise by human standards, not many were influential, not many were of noble birth. God chose what the world considers foolish and weak, Paul says, precisely so that no one could stand in front of him and boast.

**Your uncertainty can keep you teachable.** It should also help you identify the preparation and support you need.

## **The one thing you cannot borrow**

There is a line in 2 Corinthians 3:5-6 that I would encourage you to memorise this week. Paul says that he is not competent in himself to claim anything as coming from him; his competence comes from God, who has made him a minister of a new covenant.

Paul, trained under Gamaliel and deeply familiar with the Scriptures, still recognises that his ministry depends on God.

If that is true of Paul, the pressure you are feeling to be enough is a pressure God never put on you. You cannot borrow someone else’s gifting, and you do not need to. What you need is a real, daily,

ongoing connection to the One who called you. That is the subject of the next chapter, and it is not an accident that it comes second.

### What “called” does and does not mean

Two cautions before we close.

**First, calling is not the same as feeling certain.** Many new leaders wait for a supernatural confirmation before they will commit. That is not the usual pattern. More often the call arrives as a need you can see, a nudge you cannot shake, and the confirmation of people who know you. If your pastor and your church see something in you, take that seriously – God frequently speaks through the body before he speaks in your emotions.

**Second, calling is not permission to stay as you are.** God did not require Moses to be qualified, but he did require him to go. Character is what God asks for, and character grows. You will need to learn things you do not know yet. This guide exists because leadership has real skills attached to it – running a meeting, recruiting a volunteer, handling a critic – and being called does not download those skills into you.

You are not required to be ready. You are required to be willing, teachable, and honest about what you do not know.

That is a sound place to begin learning. It is not permission to bypass the training, supervision or safeguarding requirements of the role.

## Chapter 1: Reflect and Act

Answer privately. Keep your responses specific; use a notebook if you need more space.

Take time to answer specifically, in a private format you can use comfortably.

**1. Finish this sentence without softening it: The main reason I feel unqualified to lead is...**

---

**2. Look back at the list in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Which one or two items on that list are genuine weak points for you right now? Not the ones you're worried others will notice – the ones you know about.**

---

**3. Who first suggested you might lead? What do you think they saw?**

---

**4. Moses' final objection was "send someone else." Is there a part of the role you have quietly hoped someone else would take? Name it.**

---

**5. Read Acts 4:13 again. The council's conclusion was that these men had been with Jesus. If someone watched you lead for a month, what would they conclude you had been spending your time with?**

---

### This week's action

Write down three things you do not know how to do in this role. Take that list to the person who put you in the position, and ask them to help you with one of the three. Do it this week.

Asking for help in your first month sets a pattern that will protect you for years. Waiting until you are drowning sets a very different one.