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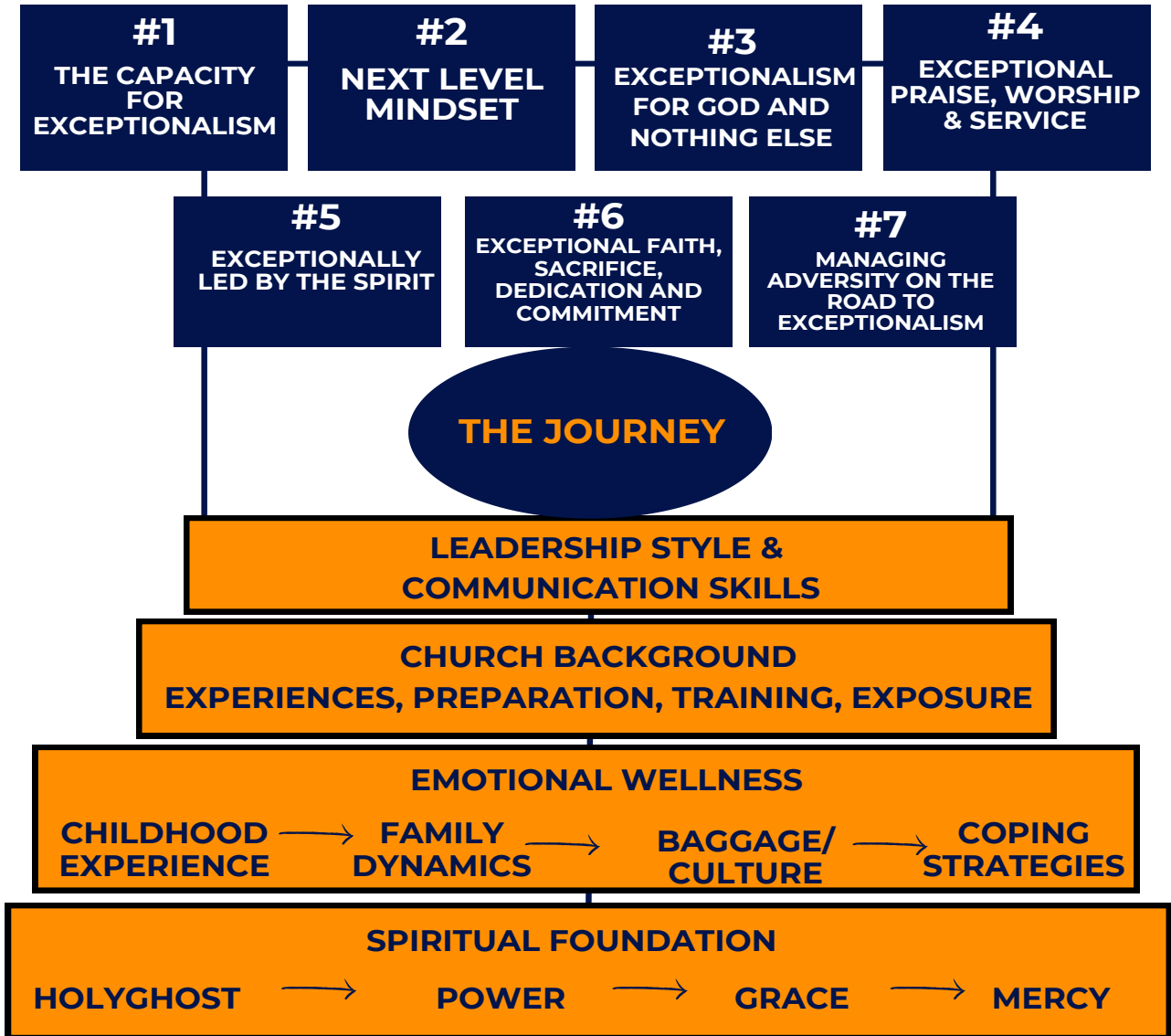
The book cover features a purple and orange geometric design at the top. In the center is a circular emblem with a cross and a figure. Below the emblem, the number '7' is written in a large, bold, black font, followed by the title 'FUNDAMENTAL QUALITIES OF EXCEPTIONAL LEADERSHIP' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the cover is a glowing lightbulb. A dark blue banner at the very bottom of the cover contains the author's name, 'DR. EUGENE SANDERS', in white capital letters.

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BUILDING BLOCKS OF EXCEPTIONAL LEADERSHIP

SEVEN FUNDAMENTAL QUALITIES OF EXCEPTIONAL LEADERSHIP



Conceptual framework of the Building Blocks of Exceptional Leadership developed by Dr. Eugene Sanders and Paulette Sanders on February 7, 2024. Copyright. Do not copy without permission of the authors.

The Seven Fundamental Qualities of Exceptional Leadership

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Introduction

Leaders from all spectrums of the globe are constantly searching to identify the qualities and characteristics that will elevate their leadership and take them to the heights that they believe align with their vision from God. Each day, we work to figure out what's next on our to-do list to bring us in concert with our vision. This manuscript is designed to provide a framework for understanding the qualities and characteristics of what it means to be an exceptional leader.

A Conceptual Framework for the Building Blocks of Exceptional Leadership

In February 2024, my wife and I were riding along in the car and talking about what it really takes to become exceptional in our practice and in our lives. We acknowledge that everyone wants to be exceptional, but few seem to acquire that next level of activity that inspires us to the greatness that we imagine in our hearts and minds each night we go to sleep and wake up in the morning. As we continued to talk about what it takes to be exceptional, we quickly realized that one of the benefits of being exceptional in our leadership and service to the Lord, was that there was a residual effect, meaning that the qualities and characteristics of being exceptional to God, meant we would also experience exceptionalism in other aspects of our lives. We started talking about this notion of the building blocks to becoming exceptional, which quickly led to a conversation about a few qualities that frame and shape who we are, even before we call ourselves a leader in any capacity.

It was clear that establishing a framework for the building blocks to become an exceptional leader was based on several complex and integrated perspectives. These perspectives literally go back to our childhood and impact of our approach to the work at our current age. My wife and I felt if we could frame this discussion in a way in which our church friends and colleagues could understand, interpret, and demonstrate actions and behaviors that impact their knowledge on being exceptional, it would be a good thing for us to share with our local church, Emmanuel Temple Pentecostal Church in Sandusky, Ohio. We could also share throughout religious organizations around the world. As the Lord continued to bless our thoughts, we began to write down the ideas, and quantify and modify our vision for this concept into a diagram that outlines the initial phase on the building blocks to exceptional leadership.

The Foundational Building Block: A Spiritual Foundation Built on the Holy Ghost, Power, Grace, and Mercy.

The foundational building block of becoming an exceptional leader is based on our spiritual

foundation. Whatever grand plans we may have about where we want the Lord to take us, and use us for the upbuilding of His kingdom; it is all contingent on developing and maintaining a spiritual foundation: There are fundamental truths to being able to elevate our vision to exceptional status, and that truth is rooted and grounded in the word of God, and more specifically, focused on a foundation in which all aspects of your life is secured and maintained. Leaders seeking to be exceptional must first acknowledge that God is the foundation and that the Holy Ghost is here to lead and guide us into our truths. Our Lord and Savior Jesus is the rock upon which we should build our foundation.

“He is like a man which built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock, and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded upon a rock.” (St. Luke 6:48).

Our core foundation is built on the utilization of the holy ghost in our lives. It allows us to experience the true power of the Lord. The foundation is not only built on power, but also accompanied by grace and mercy. A lot of leaders focus on receiving power from God, and that is a good. Securing power from God allows us to have the confidence and strength to advance in our vision from God. But it is also critical to bring some grace and mercy along with you to balance out your spiritual foundation. Grace allows us to have a balanced view on the road to exceptionalism. Jesus said, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Grace from God will allow us to

temper that power that will be evident on our spiritual journey. It helps us to remember that by grace, we are saved through faith, and that it is not your own doing, but rather it is a gift from God. We all experience the favor of God, and sometimes it does not seem fair. God’s grace offers healing and salvation, and it also offers the leader an opportunity to know, and to remember, that it is God that is working in you.

We also cannot forget about the mercy from God that is needed to balance out the foundational building block that will lead us to become exceptional leaders. The journey to become an exceptional leader is a long and challenging process. It is important that the core foundation of who you are as a leader is built on understanding God’s mercy, for the leader to show mercy towards others. Matthew 5:7 reads *“blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”* One thing for sure, and two, for certain, the road to exceptionalism is paved with lot of hurdles, challenges, disappointments, despair, heartbreak, and drama; it is important that we not only build our foundational block on the power of God, but also on the mercy of God.

The Building Block of Emotional Wellness

If you have been in church leadership for a while, and especially in the Apostolic Pentecostal church experience, many of us can remember a time when consideration for external emotional support to balance the cares and issues of life, was perceived to be against the will of God. So, let’s be clear from the beginning, we serve an omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient God. We know that God is all-knowing and all-powerful and in Him is life, and without Him, there was nothing that was made. We understand the power of God is limitless and His judgement is righteous. We also understand God’s dominion, strength, and His ability to perform miracles at any time and any place.

We also believe that God has given us insight, wisdom, and the ability to follow a path that is under His guidance. It is apparent that in the church of the 21st century, there are certain individuals that attend our churches that need clinical help that is often beyond the scope of the training of the pastor. As a result, it is imperative that we provide prayer, guidance, and follow through that allow individuals to stay under the power of prayer but to also seek out clinical and professional help to advance their overall quality of life and experience growth in the spirit simultaneously.

From a leadership and growth perspective, the impact of emotional wellness is an important and critical perspective that is a building block on the road to exceptionalism. True and authentic leadership is a function of the individual and the totality of their experiences. In essence, leaders would benefit from having clarity of the role that emotional variables have played in their lives, and the degree to which the variables impact their current decision making and behavior. A key building block for becoming an exceptional leader deal with understanding the concept of emotional wellness. The classic definition of emotional wellness focuses on psychological, social well-being, and factors that influence our cognition, perception, and behavior. In essence, this basically means how do we handle life's circumstances based on how we have adapted to change and difficult situations we may have experienced.

The Building Block of Church Background

During my time as an evolving leader in the church, many pastors are successful today

because they were good testimony service leaders, good choir directors, excellent prayer warriors, good young people, and auxiliary leaders, worked around the church cleaning, driving the church van, and teaching Sunday School. Many early leaders drove the pastor to church meetings, ran errands for the church leaders, and were faithful in every aspect of the work of the church. Many of our pastors today are pastors because it was essentially "next on the list of what a preacher should do."

"I can recall a conversation with a youth leader from back in the early 1990s, and their term as youth leader was coming to an end. The individual was in their mid-30s and shared, now that I am too old to run for office anymore, I guess I will see if I can become a pastor somewhere."

Trying to become a pastor "somewhere" is not the framework on which a pastor should be seeking an assignment from God. In some of these cases, the focus is not on becoming an exceptional leader for the Lord, but rather, what is next on my checklist to do in the church. It is critical that we understand how significant it is to serve God, and to be responsible for disseminating the Word of God.

Leadership in the church is not a casual assignment or a checklist of what to do next. It is divinely appointed by God, and our understanding of becoming a leader is not based upon an assignment from a friend or mentor, but from the power and anointing of God.

Suffragan Bishop Dr. Eugene T. W. Sanders

and experiences we have that help to mold and shape the kind of leader we are, and to some degree, impact our capacity to expand and grow. The leadership experience in the church is largely contingent upon the executive leader (Pastor) and their philosophy of leadership engagement. The church experience for exceptional leaders focuses on the scope and nature of the leadership training at the local level, the degree of preparation and training that the leader experience, as well as the level of exposure leaders in training receive as they evolve through the process. This third building block is significant to understanding your assignment from God.

The Building Block of Leadership Styles and Communication Skills

Most leaders are defined by their leadership style and the ability to communicate. Also, being a good singer is not a bad leadership quality in the church as well. Back when I was becoming a leader at the state and national level with the youth department of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc., your leadership style, and communication was supplemented by your dress, style, and the quality of briefcase you brought to night service.

I smile as I reflect on those experiences, and remember the days with a lot of fondness, laughter, and good times. I am not sure how much I really knew about leadership at the time, but I did understand that after the youth leadership was completed, many of my colleagues and friends were not quite sure what to do at the next level. I have come to realize that true leadership is a person's capacity to be of service to the Lord, even when they are not up in front or behind the pulpit. I have also learned to

The church experience is complex. It involves not only our spiritual relationship with God, but also the protocols, procedures, interactions, appreciate the scripture my mother would share with me, when things may not have gone my way; referencing "your gift will make room for you."

It is important that everyone that is a leader, is leading on behalf of the Lord. A title is not necessary to lead. To be a leader for the Lord, one does not need a title, position, status, recognition, or specific seat in the church to commit to be an exceptional leader for the Lord. God knows all, and He knows the desires of your heart.

There are three classic leadership styles that is most often cited in leadership research. Back in 1939, a psychologist named Kurt Lewin provided the framework for three classic leadership styles: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. A fourth leadership style that was added to the three classic descriptions is transformational. The brief definition for each is defined here:

- **Autocratic:** Often associated with authoritarian and referred to as "do as you are told." Direction comes from the top and is filtered down to the team. This style typically involves power and little feedback. decision making is made exclusively by the leader.
- **Democratic Leadership:** This style is often associated with participatory leadership; it involves gathering data and input from team members and in theory, everyone has a chance to participate in decision making. The focus is on creativity among team members and the contributions that come from all segments of the team.

- **Laissez-faire Leadership:** This style can be summed up in two words, “hands off.” This approach empowers the team or staff but leaves key decisions up in the air. In theory, the leader stays away from the dialogue of decision making and is available for feedback when necessary. This is an environment of complete freedom, and the leader is essentially a non-participant.
- **Transformational Leadership:** Transformational leaders often have a complex vision and inspire the team to engage in the vision through “buy in” and engagement. The focus is on teamwork, alignment, and heavily focused on a single idea or vision. This approach also is highly dependent on the willingness of the team to commit to the vision through effort, energy, determination, and understands the need for change. There is also significant emphasis on intellect, stimulating ideas, loyalty, integrity, and heavy emphasis on workplace harmony.

It is very important that church leaders must utilize their leadership style with a powerful communications approach. Influential leaders who are on the road to exceptionalism understand the importance of developing goals and working with a team to get things done. Your leadership approach is critical to your efforts to becoming exceptional in the leadership role.

**Understanding that
Exceptionalism is a Journey**

I am sure you have heard the phrase that Rome was not built in a day. The same

general connotation could be made for the journey to become an exceptional leader. To become an exceptional leader, it will take a considerable amount of time, dedication, commitment, sacrifice, and amazing focus on the work and vision you have for your ministry. In a general sense, Malcolm Gladwell described it best when he proposed the 10,000-hour rule. Essentially, Gladwell’s position is that an individual could become an “expert” in practically any field by dedicating a minimum of 10,000 hours to the study and practice of the activity. While there is debate about the Gladwell perspective, it does make one thing very clear, which is that it will take a considerable amount of focus and dedication to your vision to become exceptional. Focus, dedication, and consistency in your leadership practice is often what separates the exceptional leader and the good leader. Now, just to be clear, when we discuss any element of leadership requiring time, it is important to note that God is in control, and as an old song of the church says, “when the Lord gets ready, you have to move.” God is the ultimate decision-maker on your commitment to exceptionalism. But remember, “faith without works is dead.” (James 2:17).

So, remember that you are on a journey to become the leader you want to be and that it will take some time to advance to that position. The journey to exceptionalism requires spiritual maturity, patience, and commitment to your vision. If God has promised it to you, your job is to position yourself for the blessing that is yet to come. God did not bring you this far to leave you, but there will be some work that has to be done. The key question for your “mirror experience” is am I an exceptional leader? How do I define exceptionalism in my field of work? And are there any measurable outcomes to my vision? If you don’t have the immediate answers to these questions, no need to worry, we can take our first steps by developing a mindset of exceptionalism.

Developing a Mindset of Exceptionalism

The first step to becoming an exceptional leader is to develop the mental framework to position yourself for the work ahead. All leaders know that are going to experience some adversity, and the key to becoming adversity. The Apostle Paul shared with us in Philippians 4:6-7.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Developing a strong mindset to become exceptional as a leader will require strong spiritual self-esteem. We will have to develop a level of “thick skin” as leaders, which will require us to always be able to put things in perspective. We should not become anxious, stressed, or overwhelmed. Remember, we have the secret ingredient, God is on our side. Exceptional leaders will need to develop a mindset that enhances our attitude and belief system, which guides and helps us make our daily decisions. Our spiritual mindset will involve (a) developing strong leadership habits, (b) utilizing education and training to create a solid foundation for the experiences you want to have; (c) management of new experiences, (d) development of our world view, and (e) the capacity to modify your mindset for growth and development.

Perhaps the greatest example from the Bible about developing and modifying a leader’s mindset is likely the case of Paul and the Damascus Road experience. During this experience, Paul spent considerable time persecuting the children of God.

And because Paul was dedicated to his task, he specialized and mastered the art of punishment, criticism, and hatred for the children of Israel. Once the “light came on” during his Damascus Road experience, Paul was changed forever. In the words of one of the greatest gospel singers, Tramaine Hawkins, “a change, a wonderful change has come over me; He changed my life, and now I’m free. He washed away all my sins and made me whole again.”

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 2:5)

We should always encourage our brothers and sisters to help each other because life can certainly be challenging at times, and to be exceptional in our leadership roles, it will require a strong mindset toward our work. God can save anybody and do anything. He can turn things around just when you need Him most. My grandmother would say, “He may not come when you want him, but He’s always right on time.” It’s important for all leaders to remember that our “past” does not define our “future.” Through the leader’s humility and the desire to learn to be content, the mindset needed to become exceptional is within the scope of our vision.

The Seven Fundamental Qualities of Exceptional Leadership

The Lord has provided a vision to me about the power of exceptionalism. Church leadership in a post-pandemic world requires a new and innovative approach to the work. While Pentecostalism is the fastest growing denomination in the world, people that are being attracted to these ministries are attending with a new framework of what church is and how the church functions. According to the Pulitzer Center, the

Pentecostal faith membership is expected to rise to over 1 billion by 2050 and is the fastest growing Christian movement in the world. There is documentation that 35,000 people per day are converting to Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism is now referred to as a global phenomenon. So, the obvious question for church leaders is, how does this growth perspective impact my church and ministry? What leadership skills do I need to implement to see this growth at the local level? What should leaders in the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc., be doing to engage with this growth movement. I propose that our leaders need to be exceptional. We, as Pentecostals, are in a unique position, but it will require competence, character, and professional growth to advance to a new framework of leadership described in this document as the exceptional leader. The exceptional leadership framework will require a paradigm shift in our focus on our structure, engagement, and the need to appreciate and value the power of exceptionalism.

When it comes to being an exceptional leader, this leader embraces a higher level of expectant outcomes from their leadership. An exceptional leader is engaging, collaborative, embraces change, consistent with their commitment, and able to achieve beyond the normal standards of success. Exceptional leaders have an “extra gear” in the sense that they have a strong conviction for the work and have a deep range of emotional intelligence. The exceptional church leader who embraces a transformational philosophy are extraordinarily committed to the word of God, but also have insight to interpret, expand, and engage all members of the team. The exceptional leader has strong communication skills but has the courage and the passion to make others around them better. They are competent, capable, outcomes of the group. Exceptional leaders are creative, adaptable, always approaches

complexity from the mindset of growth, advancement, and success.

The Seven Fundamental Qualities of an Exceptional Leader Are:

1. **Each of us has the capacity for exceptionalism** because we were uniquely created and designed by God. God has provided us with a special gift given specifically to us. The key question here, is what will we do with the special gift that God has given us? If we are part of a chosen generation and a royal priesthood, and a peculiar people, then we should show some signs. Claim your vision and gift from God and start down the road to exceptionalism.
2. **Exceptionalism requires a “next level” degree of commitment;** a commitment that goes beyond the “status quo” or minimal accomplishments, mediocre engagement, or a laissez-faire approach. God is not looking for a hands-off approach to His vision. Exceptional leaders avoid a “middle of the road mindset.
3. **Strive for exceptional leadership for the benefit of God and no one else.** The foundation of your desire to be exceptional must be placed on pleasing God and contributing to the Kingdom of God. We should strive for exceptionalism in our work and focus just out of being thankful to God for what the Lord has already done. God has brought up from a might long way. We are striving for an exceptional relationship with God, not for any other person or material object.
4. Our primary goal is to become exceptional in (a) praise, (b) worship,

4. and (c) service. We benefit from a **residual component of exceptionalism** by experiencing benefits in our (e) church, and (f) community.
5. **To become exceptional means being led by the Spirit of God.** Exceptional leaders seize the opportunity to be consistent in their desire to reflect on their vision, purpose, and daily activities necessary to realize their exceptional gift from God. Remember, faith without works is dead. Let's be about the works.
6. **Exceptional leaders understand the power of faith, sacrifice, dedication, and commitment to the work of the Lord.** Exceptional leaders are dedicated to the tasks they are assigned. They are prepared and will cheer on their brother or sister in their ministry and service. And exceptional leaders will study to show themselves approved and understand their gift will make room for them.
7. **Exceptional leaders understand the need to manage adversity on the road to their destination.** Not only are exceptional leaders dedicated to their tasks and assignments, but they also support others on their journey. To be used by God as an exceptional leader means that adversity and challenges are inherent in the work. Exceptional leaders understand their vision from God and accept the fact that dark days and significant bumps in the road will occur, but they revert back to the foundation on which the premise of their vision has been built. The Building Blocks of Exceptional Leadership will assist

leaders in understanding their role and persevering to see it become reality.

Strategies to Address the Challenges on the Road to Exceptionalism

The bottom line is that a church leader in a 21st century environment is busy. And, add to this hectic schedule some semblance of maintaining a personal life with a spouse, children with school functions, and extended family commitments, simply makes a leader question even if they have time for being exceptional. Let's face it, leaders have a lot of "irons in the fire." Most leaders desire to be exceptional and the essential question is what the key factors are to consider on the road to exceptionalism. The following Four Rs of Exceptional Leadership provides the framework for church leader to consider on their journey to exceptionalism.

Reflection

A key element to become an exceptional church leader is to have the capacity to be reflective. The basic concept of being a reflective leader centers on the notion that being reflective helps the leader have greater appreciation of who they are and examine the kind of leader he or she want to become. Becoming a reflective leader ultimately leads to better decision-making and outcomes for your team and stakeholders. As you might imagine, an active pastor taking time to be reflective may not always be the easiest thing to do. This is especially true for pastors and leaders who work multiple jobs to keep the household moving forward. Reflection is the key step in the foundation of exceptional leadership because our capacity to achieve our goals is rooted in the development of our mental framework and conditioning. Being reflective is an excellent practice. In some leadership perspectives, reflection allows the leader to

examine their emotional, psychological, intellectual, cultural, and family experiences, which shapes the foundation of their belief system.

Restoration

Leaders need to find a place for restoration in their work. Restoration works in at least two perspectives. The first is the need to restore ourselves by ensuring that any baggage of our past does not hinder our mission and focus. The work that church leaders do is demanding on everyone around them. One of the jobs of the enemy is to convince leaders that somehow or somehow, they are not worthy to do a work for the Lord. The devil's job is to convince you that you have too much "baggage" to be used of God. This element of restoration suggest that you can forgive yourself and forgive others who have caused you harm. Carrying around leadership baggage leaves little time to become an exceptional leader. The second perspective about restoration is the leader's ability to interact with others who need to be forgiven and restored. True exceptional leaders have the capacity to not only look internal at their strengths and challenges, but to also seek to help others who need help and support.

Revelation

The church leader's strongest asset is the ability to read, interpret, and apply the word of God. The authentic exceptional leader in the ministry requires divine guidance and inspiration from God. We are living in an environment where wars are occurring all around the world, and it seems as though each day the world is on the brink of destruction. Clearly, there is difficulty at

every hand and church leader needs to be able to reveal the word in a powerful manner, so people are enlightened and encouraged to seek truth. There is a clear need to ensure the revelation of God's word through education, training, and professional development. For the Pentecostal church to meet the demands of a changing 21st century, leaders will need to adjust the tradition way we have managed our work. The framework for the exceptional leader will be critical to the success of our vision.

Reformation

Exceptional leaders need the capacity to reform, change, evolve, transform, and transitions to a position of servant leadership to understand the power to reform both on an individual basis and on a corporate basis. To be exceptional in your leadership practice, one needs to lead from a position of helping and advancing others. The notion of reformation suggest that exceptional leaders can lead from a stewardship perspective and use their influence to change both themselves and their stakeholders. While the people will suffer from not having a vision, a reformed church leader consistently seeks ways to evolve, change, and contribute to the good of the order. A reformed leader is authentic and engages with integrity, commitment, and works collaboratively for a healthy church and organization.

Summary

This manuscript has been designed to provide a framework for becoming exceptional leaders in the service of the Lord. The building blocks of exceptional leadership includes starting with a spiritual foundation, followed by managing the components of educational wellness, church background, and leadership styles. It is important to understand the road to

exceptionalism is a journey and requires a mindset to address the challenges and pitfalls along the way. The seven fundamental qualities of exceptional leadership provides a comprehensive overview of what it takes to put action behind your vision. We conclude by sharing a four-element design to manage the challenges that come on the road to exceptionalism, which include a focus on reflection, restoration, revelation, and reformation.

He is married to First Lady Paulette Sanders, who holds a master’s degree in social work from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. They have two sons and four grandchildren. His mission is to serve God, his family, the church, and the body of Christ.

About the Author

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He earned a Bachelor’s degree, two Master’s degrees, and a Ph.D. in Leadership and Educational Administration from Bowling Green State University in Ohio.

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**Suffragan Bishop Dr. Eugene T. W. Sanders
and
First Lady Paulette Sanders, MSW**





