



THE PRACTICES OF A HEALTHY LEADER

Episode Four: The Over-Functioning Leader

EPISODE SUMMARY

Good leaders want to help. They see needs, take responsibility, and step into gaps. But that instinct can quietly become over-functioning when leaders begin carrying ownership for people and outcomes that were never theirs to carry. In this episode, Brad and Rick explore the "Messiah Complex" that develops when being needed becomes connected to our sense of value. Over-functioning doesn't just exhaust leaders; it can also prevent the people around them from growing because the leader keeps doing work that belongs to someone else. Healthy leadership isn't about doing less or becoming less responsible. It's about becoming right-sized: faithfully carrying what God has entrusted to us while surrendering the people, outcomes, and responsibilities that belong to God or to others.

REFLECTION

Which of these questions exposes something about your leadership right now?

- Do I feel guilty when I rest?
- Do I privately believe the organization needs me more than it actually does?
- Do I confuse being needed with being valuable?
- Do I step in because others truly can't, or because I'm uncomfortable watching them struggle or do something differently than I would?
- Do I believe, "If I don't carry this, everything will fall apart"?

What might your answer reveal about what is driving you?

Think about something you're currently carrying that feels difficult to put down.

What do you believe would happen if you stopped carrying it? What are you afraid might happen to the organization, to other people, or to your sense of yourself?

Rick's coach once challenged his over-functioning by asking, "What part of you thinks this is working?" Over-functioning obviously costs you something, but what does it give you? Where might being busy, indispensable, or needed be meeting a deeper need in you?

Where might your over-functioning actually be contributing to someone else's under-functioning? Is there something you're doing because you can do it better or faster than someone else needs the opportunity to learn to carry?



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THE CARRY LIST

Over-functioning leaders slowly begin carrying outcomes instead of stewardship. The goal of this exercise isn't to lower your ownership or commitment. It's to help you carry the right weight.

Take ten minutes this week and divide a page into two columns.

I Am Responsible TO... (Begin by listing the things that have actually been entrusted to you.)

For example:

- *Be present.*
- *Prepare well.*
- *Tell the truth.*
- *Make decisions.*
- *Equip and coach people.*
- *Communicate clearly.*
- *Love people faithfully.*
- *Steward what's in front of me.*

These are responsibilities you can actually own.

Now list the things you regularly find yourself trying to carry or control: *For example:*

- *Everyone liking my decisions.*
- *My staff staying motivated.*
- *Volunteers stepping up.*
- *Attendance or organizational growth.*
- *Preventing disappointment.*
- *Keeping everyone happy.*
- *Making the ministry successful.*
- *Managing everyone's emotional experience.*

Be especially honest about the things on this side of the page that create anxiety, urgency, or the feeling that "I have to do something."



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PRACTICE THE REFRAME

For the next 30 days, return to your Carry List whenever you notice yourself over-functioning and ask:

What am I trying to be responsible FOR that God has only asked me to be responsible TO?

Then rewrite the responsibility.

Instead of: "I'm responsible for my team being motivated." Try:

"I'm responsible to encourage, clarify, and develop my team."

Instead of: "I'm responsible for my church growing." Try:

"I'm responsible to lead faithfully and make room for God to work."

Instead of immediately stepping in, fixing, carrying, or rescuing, ask yourself:

Whose weight is this? Mine? Someone else's? Or God's?

Remember: You are not more faithful because you are exhausted. Sometimes the most loving thing a leader can do is refuse to be the hero, carry only what has actually been entrusted to them, and trust God and others to carry what belongs to them.