

Voices: My George Strait philosophy of pastoral leadership

September 4, 2018

If you like country music and you live in Texas, chances are your favorite country singer is George Strait. I know it is for me. In fact, I am of the opinion if George Strait is not one of your favorite country singers, then you probably should not live in Texas.

All kidding aside, why do people like George Strait so much? I have heard many reasons why people like him, but at the heart of why people like him is this: he sings songs people like. Other than singing songs people like, he does not really impact peoples' lives in substantial ways.

Leadership is different than singing songs people like.

Leadership is about much more than giving people what they like. In fact, sometimes leadership is about challenging people to move beyond simple likes and preferences in order to move them to something much better.

This means leadership can impact peoples' lives in many ways. It can impact peoples' livelihoods, their routines and their ways of thinking, among other things.

Because leadership is multifaceted and has the potential to impact peoples' lives, leaders often will face harsh, unfair criticisms and rejection.

Criticism of pastoral leadership weighs heavy

Experiencing this kind of criticism and rejection can be hard on all leaders, but it is especially hard for pastors.

Most pastors I know do not enter pastoral ministry to see how many people they can make angry. Pastors prefer to be liked. In fact, many pastors struggle with the concept of being “people pleasers.” Therefore, pastors need to be challenged in leadership.

If pastors want to be liked by most people, they should become more like George Strait: give people what they like, nothing more and nothing less.

If they want to be the leaders God has called them to be and to steward their calling well, then they need to lead the church in such a way that there will be times of change and stretching.

These times of change and stretching will result in many harsh, unfair criticisms and possible rejection. I wish it was not this way.

Nevertheless, it is helpful to remember: during these times, be encouraged that pastors are not called to be George Strait.

Ross Shelton is senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Brenham.