



STUFF YOU CAN USE

Hi saoumyaa!

If ministry has ever made you feel like you can't catch your breath, you're not alone. **Ministry is relentless.** The work is meaningful and life-giving, but it's also urgent and never fully finished.

When there is so much to do, your attention is going to naturally drift toward whatever is loudest, closest, or most immediate. And while that pressure might help you pay attention to *the urgent* things... you'll probably fail to pay attention to *the most important* things.

So when *everything* feels urgent and important, how do you decide what's most deserving of your attention?

Today I want to share with you 4 practices that will help you regain your focus during chaotic ministry moments—and help you learn to pay attention to the things that matter most. I'm looking forward to talking about ideas like this in [the workshop I'm leading](#) in a few weeks! But for now, here's what I hope you hang onto...

When ministry gets overwhelming, it's easy to feel unfocused. But when that lack of focus prevents us from paying attention to what matters most, here's the tension we eventually run into—

Paying attention costs your time—but *not* paying attention costs much more.

Leadership research backs this up. The issue isn't that attentive leadership requires *extra* time. It's that it requires different use of time—and different leadership habits.

Let's talk about what the research actually suggests, and what that means practically for leaders who already feel maxed out.

Why Attentive Leadership Feels So Time-Consuming

Cognitive and organizational research shows that under sustained pressure, leaders experience attention fragmentation. Decision load increases. Interruptions multiply. Reflection disappears.

As a result leaders spend...

- More time reacting
- Less time anticipating problems

- Less time noticing patterns in themselves or others

Ironically, this creates more work—more conflict, more misalignment, more cleanup.

Leaders don't lack time.

They lack space to think.

And space doesn't appear accidentally.

What the Research Actually Suggests

Studies in leadership effectiveness, emotional intelligence, and executive performance consistently point to a few counterintuitive findings:

- Short, regular pauses improve judgment more than occasional long retreats
- Leaders who build reflection into their existing rhythms make better decisions under pressure
- Attention improves not by doing more, but by reducing cognitive clutter

In other words, attentiveness isn't about adding hours. It's about changing patterns.

Here are several research-supported ways leaders actually create time to pay attention—without overhauling their schedules.

Practice #1: Treat Attention as a Leadership Discipline, Not a Luxury

Highly effective leaders don't wait until they "have time" to reflect. They decide that reflection is part of their job.

Research shows that leaders who schedule even 10–15 minutes of intentional reflection multiple times a week experience:

- Increased emotional regulation
- Better relational awareness
- Fewer reactive decisions

The key isn't the length of time. It's consistency.

Attention practiced in small, repeatable ways reshapes leadership over time.

Practice #2: Attach Reflection to Existing Meetings and Moments

One of the most effective strategies leaders use is habit stacking. This looks like linking attentiveness to something that's already happening.

For example:

- Taking five minutes after a meeting to ask, *What actually happened here?*
- Ending a workday with one reflective question instead of immediately moving on
- Beginning staff meetings with a moment of shared noticing instead of immediate logistics

Research shows that reflection tied to real-time experience sticks far better than abstract planning.

Leaders don't need new meetings.

They need better endings and beginnings.

Practice #3: Reduce Decision Load to Recover Attention

Decision fatigue is one of the fastest ways leaders lose attentiveness.

Studies consistently show that leaders recover cognitive energy for higher-level awareness when they simplify:

- Repetitive decisions
- Clarity of roles
- Authority boundaries

Practically, this looks like:

- Clarifying who owns which decisions
- Standardizing routine choices
- Letting teams make more decisions without escalation

Attention improves when leaders stop carrying decisions they were never meant to hold alone.

Practice #4: Make Attention a Shared Leadership Value

Attentive leadership is difficult to sustain on your own.

Research on team health and psychological safety shows that leaders who normalize curiosity, reflection, and shared noticing create cultures that self-correct faster and burn out less often.

This includes:

- Inviting feedback before problems escalate
- Naming emotional or relational dynamics early
- Modeling asking questions instead of only giving answers

When leaders make attention visible, teams help carry it.

The Real Shift Leaders Have to Make

Most leaders don't resist attentiveness because they don't value it.

They resist it because it feels inefficient.

But leadership research consistently shows that the most costly leadership mistakes happen when leaders are moving too fast to notice what's forming beneath the surface.

Attentiveness doesn't slow leadership down. It prevents unnecessary damage.

Go Deeper in Leadership Labs!

Leadership Labs was designed with this exact tension in mind.

Not to demand more time from already overextended leaders—but to help leaders:

- Build attentiveness into real leadership rhythms
- Practice awareness without adding pressure

- Strengthen formation, relationships, teams, and change over time

Attentive leadership is learned, not assumed.

👉 [Sign up for our next Leadership Labs live workshop here!](#) These workshops are designed to help you **learn, experiment, and grow your leadership skills**. With Leadership Labs, you'll get...

- Live 60-minute Leadership Labs with me (Yulee!) and some special guests
- Live group discussion
- Note sheets for each session
- A practical leadership "experiment" to help you apply what you've learned in your ministry

And it's only \$9.97 for each workshop! Sound like something you could use? Then [sign up here](#) and let's grow our leadership skills together!

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