

DETAILS



Attentive Church Leadership

Listening and Leading in a World We've Never Known

April 2, 2024 | \$25, 256 pages, hardcover | 978-1-5140-0664-1

"Full of real-life pastoral experiences and proven insights, this one book can serve as a reliable guide for both the ministry leader and the church to faithfully make a difference and thrive as a community in this rapidly changing world. It should be read by every pastor and elder."

-**MaryKate Morse**, author, leadership mentor, and professor at Portland Seminary

The World Has Changed.

The changes around us present daunting challenges to the church, and we minister in places we have never been before. But there are no one-size-fits-all solutions, because every church needs to attend to its specific situation and calling. We need to listen for not only what to do, but also what not to do. In a world screaming for our focus in a thousand directions, it's essential for us to become attentive to God, to our congregation, and to our community.

Kevin Ford and Jim Singleton call for attentive churches with attentive leaders who can discern cultural and organizational change and pivot accordingly. Healthy transformation starts with a posture of attention. We need to see what God is already doing in our midst: in our own soul, in our people, and in the communities and culture around us. Chapters explore key questions that attentive leaders ask and case studies of attentive churches that have navigated the issues and transitions facing them.

Part One: Becoming an Attentive Leader

1. How Did We Get to a World We've Never Known?
2. How Do I Become an Attentive Person?
3. How Do I Manage Anxiety?
4. How Do I Increase My Trust Quotient?

Part Two: Leading an Attentive Church

5. Is the Tail Wagging the Dog?
6. How Do We Create Community in a Narcissistic World?
7. What Is Our Ethos?
8. Are We Entitled or Engaged?
9. How Do We Facilitate Real Transformation?
10. How Do We Pass the Torch?

As we practice habits of attention, God leads us through the highs and lows of change into the exciting adventure of being on mission with him.

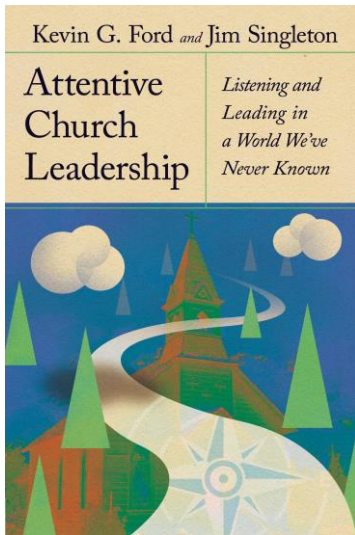


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EXCERPT 

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A World We've Never Known

This book is not primarily about change. It's about the attentiveness needed to respond effectively to the unending change around us. As we've journeyed with church leaders for decades, the challenge of a changing world is hardly a new thing. But the COVID-19 pandemic brought to a head what many church leaders have been experiencing for years: a world we've never known.

American entertainer and humorist Will Rogers said, "Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there." A major shift began in the early 1990s from a broadcast culture to a digital one. It started slowly, with people talking about the World Wide Web and America Online (AOL)'s infamous "you've got mail." Email was fun, and by the mid-1990s the internet was an intriguing place to explore trivia, chat with people we'd never seen face-to-face in chat rooms, and find basic information while listening to the rotary dial-up modem. Yet, we still sent snail mail more than we relied on electronic means. In 2001, the United States Postal Services (USPS) had its highest ever volume of first-class mail at 103,656,000 parcels.

In the next twenty years, however, the digital world completely altered communication and commerce. With the advent of more sophisticated connectivity, online possibilities, and a plethora of related developments like texting, smart phones, and Zoom meetings, we became linked in new ways. Car purchases, mortgages, and concert tickets no longer required paper. All could be done instantly from a laptop or phone. By 2020, the volume of mail sent through the USPS dropped by almost half to 52,624,000.

This is a world we've never known! The advances of the digital age, however, are a mixed bag of blessings and curses. Today, if you live in New Jersey, you can see pictures of your high school friend's new baby just minutes after she gives birth in New Mexico. You can make hotel reservations across the world, send flowers to your great-aunt, and donate to your favorite charity without leaving your apartment or picking up the phone—all in your pajamas. On the other hand, marriage counselors report that a main cause of affairs today are old flames who reconnect on social media. What's more, psychologists warn that our brain's activity patterns are being negatively rewired, society has become more impatient, rude, and lacking common respect, and children and teenagers are exposed to pornography, violence, and potential harmful relationships while they sit across the den from their parents glued to their phones. With every cutting-edge invention creating widespread change, we can't just sit there and stare at it—as Rogers says, we may get run over.

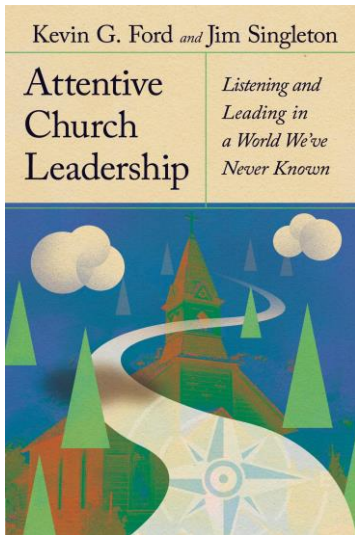
When I (Kevin) was young, our family used to stay at a friend's home in Highlands, North Carolina. Beautiful waterfalls, rivers, and lakes painted the landscape, offering picturesque views of the splendor of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Temperatures stayed in the seventies there while Charlotte, our hometown, was scorching. We always enjoyed a fabulous time.



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One of our favorite activities was an annual trip to the nearby Cullasaja River. Passersby enjoy fantastic views en route to the Waterfall Byway, driving between the towns of Highlands and Franklin. Along a sixty-one-mile road meandering through the Nantahala National Forest, the river includes three waterfalls. We would go “rock hopping,” traversing the river by jumping from one rock to the next—probably not the safest activity for a young child. But boy, it was fun! My dad and I were always in search of the perfect swimming hole, a quiet spot on the river where we could see the bottom.

After spending a few minutes in the frigid water, we would get out and skip rocks across the quiet waters of the swimming hole. I was always fascinated by the ripples that emerged each time the rock hit the water and the progression of the rock until it found its final resting spot. Have you ever stood next to a quiet lake on a still summer day and gazed across the water? Even if there’s no breeze cooling your face, you will likely still see movement in the water. From massive ocean waves to roaring rivers, ripples can be powerful. But even the quietest pond has ripples caused by the slightest whisper of wind. Like God reaching down into human history, ripples are a divine intersection.

This book is about those divine intersections. This is not a book about step-by-step formulas, but there is a sequence. Rocks skip across the water, creating patches of movement. The ripples are organic, starting at the center and expanding outward in ever-increasing circles. That’s how we want you to read this book. Our combined decades of experience supporting healthy leaders and thriving ministries, along with the incredible number of challenges facing church leaders, led us to write *Attentive Church Leadership* together to help Christian leaders in this new day. These three ripples—attentive, church, and leadership—come together to form an intersection.

We’ve seen churches lose their way because they were inattentive to the most important things. We’ve seen unhealthy and narcissistic leaders more concerned with their own names than with their church. And we’ve seen attentive, godly pastors who failed to lead. In this book, we marry these three concepts. A world we’ve never known requires attentive church leadership.

-adapted from the introduction, “What Does It Take to Thrive in a World We’ve Never Known?”

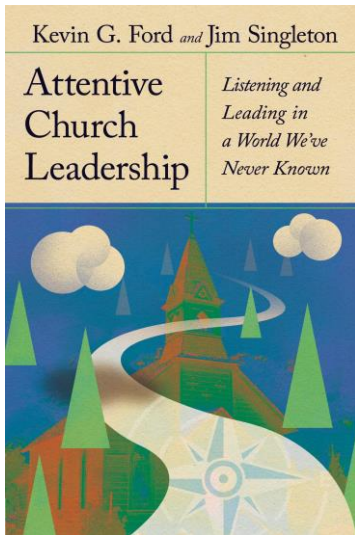


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Kevin Ford and Jim Singleton, Coauthors of *Attentive Church Leadership*

"Kevin Ford and Jim Singleton are faithful, experienced leaders in Christ's church who bring unique, insightful understanding into the rapidly changing nature of today's cultural landscape. For the overwhelmed pastor with little time for grasping a wider view of the world, this book provides a wonderful grid for asking the right questions and responding biblically to the churches they lead."

-David D. Swanson, senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Orlando

KEVIN G. FORD (M.Div., Regent College) is the chief catalyst of Leighton Ford Ministries. He was the cofounder of TAG Consulting, which he and his partners sold in 2019. His books include *Transforming Church*, *The Leadership Triangle*, and *The Secret Sauce*.

Kevin's areas of expertise include leadership, organizational culture, and strategy. He has facilitated the development of over five hundred strategic plans throughout North America. His clients included Fortune 500s, small businesses, and government agencies. But his passion has always been for the church. He has spoken publicly to thousands of people around the world and is in constant demand as a facilitator and speaker.

Kevin and his wife, Caroline, live in Charlotte, North Carolina, and have two daughters.

JIM SINGLETON (Th.D., Boston University School of Theology) is a coach and discipler at Leighton Ford Ministries. He has been both a longtime Presbyterian pastor (San Antonio, Austin, Spokane, and Colorado Springs), and professor of pastoral leadership and evangelism at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Jim is one of the founders of ECO: A Covenant Order of Presbyterians, which sponsors the Flourish Institute of Theology, where Jim also teaches.

He lives with his wife, Sara, a pastor and spiritual director, in Spokane, Washington.



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