

The caveman and the pastor

By [Dennis Sanders](#)

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Sometimes it seems like an oxymoron to be a leader and autistic.

Why? Well, for one thing we tend to be more focused on ourselves than on others. We also tend to be focused on things rather than people. Of course you can be a leader and also have Asperger's, but it's a challenge. I have to constantly learn that some things have to be done by others, that I just can't do some things. It's also a challenge to figure out how to get people to do what you would like them to do. So much of leadership is relational, learning people's strong suits and weak points, things I don't see at all. (It's interesting to see the similarities between leadership and romantic relationships, but that's for another blog post.)

About a year and a half ago, I was asked to head the new church team for the Upper Midwest Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). I don't think it's been a failure, but it has been challenge. I can get jazzed about the theory of church planting, but so much of this work is about relational things like casting a vision, relating to the church planter and persuading a skeptical public of the value of planting new churches. My brain is wired to see this and all challenges as problems that can be solved rationally. But it's taken me 40 years to discover that people are far from rational.

But while I suck at being inspirational, I am a doer. In my prior position as an associate pastor, I threw myself into getting mission opportunities set up and creating graphics for the church website. As Temple Grandin puts it, I was the caveman who was busy [making spears or the wheel or whatever while everyone else was chatting](#).

The thing is, being a doer and not a leader (at least not a natural one) is difficult for a pastor, because we are supposed to be relational and inspirational leaders. Yes, we can talk till the cows come home about how pastors are servants, and they are. But they also have to be leaders, and to be a good leader you have to connect with the people around you.

As I continue my journey as a pastor, it will be interesting to see how I am able to learn to be a leader. Life will be interesting.

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