

The
HEART
and
HANDS
of
LEADERSHIP

**THE TWELVE TIMELESS PRACTICES
OF EFFECTIVE LEADERS**

ADDENDUM FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS



DAN GAYNOR

"This book has inspired me to be a better leader and a better follower."

— JEFF McCAIG, TRIMAC TRANSPORTATION

“And David shepherd them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them.” (Psalm 78:72)

The book’s title and two part format was inspired by these, the most powerful fourteen words I believe I have ever read about leadership.

Introduction

While writing *The Heart and Hands of Leadership: The Twelve Timeless Practices of Effective Leaders* a question arose very early in the process: should I include scripture? I wrestled with it for many months and consulted some close friends. The response of one, a senior pastor, struck home when he said, “Dan, I don’t think the world needs another Christian leadership book for Christians, it needs a Christian leadership book for everyone.”

With this in mind, I decided to omit scripture (with exception to Psalm 78:72.) I believed that scripture throughout each chapter would close access to many of the readers I most wanted to reach. My hope is that the book will serve as a door opener to faith discussions with some readers, and help many more to become more effective, more caring, more skilled leaders. The decision left me with many biblical references I thought would be of particular interest to Christian readers. So with this addendum I’m providing a representative sample, if not all, of the scripture that has inspired this, my exposition of Christian leadership for a modern world.

There are many Christians who regularly demonstrate a more worldly approach to leadership. I believe most do not do this purposefully. I find myself thinking about 1 Corinthians 1:20, “Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world.” Today, as I’m sure has always been the case, there is much worldly leadership foolishness packaged as wisdom. Too many Christian leaders read the latest leadership book or listen to the most recent “new way” to lead without pausing to ask, what does the bible say?

In the final pages I share the story of how God broke into my life for those interested in the fuller journey that really led to the book.

May God bless you and keep you and make his face to shine upon you. May he be gracious and give your peace.

Dan

God's Servants

“Whoever wants to be first must be servant to all.” (Mark 10:44)

Can a human being ever reach the kind humility Jesus calls us to? I am convinced that in our own strength we cannot, and yet we cannot serve God without it. We can take hope though, “With God all things are possible.” (Matthew 19:26)

When the Spirit of God is at work we can do things we are simply not capable of on our own, this is why Christian organizational leaders must stay connected to God. If we lose this vital connection, we are as Jesus taught, branches disconnected from the vine, “Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.” (John 15:4) Whether we court money, attention, or other worldly prizes, we will turn our power toward our own selfish ends if we do not remain closely connected to Jesus.

Everything we try to achieve as leaders in this world rests on these verses. We must remain in the vine. Let us not forget: to have transformational impact our shepherd's hearts must be connected to God's own heart. Every word, every chapter of the book, must be imbued with this first and most important Christian leadership principle.

Chapter 1: Then, Now And What Could Be

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do men light a lamp and place it under a bowl. Instead they place it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)

Within a worldly culture that is breeding chaos and discontent, there is hope to be found when Christians become the counter-cultural leaders their teams need. God is calling you to build a healthy and high performing team by focusing on His timeless design - to create a “city on a hill” wherever you lead. Introducing these principles to a workplace is like pouring water on a thirsty plant, “The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me, ‘When one rules over men in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God, he is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning, like the rain that brings grass from the earth.’” (2 Samuel 23:3-4.) The imagery of this verse has always inspired me. When we honour God in the way we lead people and productivity spring back to life sometimes far faster than we might imagine. Leaders who honour God stand apart and draw others into relationships, that often present opportunities to share the good news of Jesus.

Chapter 2: The Newspaper Experience

“He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honoured.” (Proverbs 13:18)

“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and punishes everyone he accepts as a son.” (Hebrews 12:5)

Often good well meaning leaders err by avoiding discipline when it is in everyone’s best interest. Chapter two makes the assertion that this in part contributed to the unrest at the *Herald* that eventually led to a strike.

Chapter 3: Horse and Rider: The Leadership Relationship

“As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’” (1 Corinthians 12:20-21)”

Chapter three draws on the relationship between horse and rider as an illustration for leader follower relationships. We often think of leading and following as superior and inferior roles, but this is clearly not biblical, both are honourable and indispensable.

Chapter 4: Powerful Hearts

“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45)

“As water reflects a face, so a man’s heart reflects the man.” Proverbs (27:19)

“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’” (1 Samuel 16:7)

Our hearts are reflected in the way we lead. Only leaders with a shepherd’s heart – a heart like King David’s – will succeed in earning the support and enthusiasm of those they lead. They will create healthy high-achieving teams. There is an important implication for senior leaders. Because people are who they are, senior leaders must hire and release for heart, putting the right people in leadership and removing the wrong ones. When the heart is wrong, nothing else matters much.

Chapter 5: Character: The Foundation of Great Leadership

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving let him serve; if it is teaching let him teach; if it is encouraging let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.” (Romans 12:6-8).

The world likes to believe that anyone can be a leader, just read the right book or take the right course. I believe this is another case of worldly thinking, one I encounter often and do my best to refute, even with Christian leaders. We are not all born to lead, “Paul did not write, “Anyone can be a leader, or a teacher, or a server or encourager.”

“Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.” (Joshua 1:6)

“Humble yourselves, therefor under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.” (1 Peter 5:6)

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:14)

“Speak and act as those who are going to be judged under the law that gives freedom, because judgement with out mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!” (James 1: 12-13)

“Search me, O God and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24)

King David’s heartfelt prayer came to mind as I considered the importance of self-awareness.

Above, I offer only a small sample of the scripture that speaks to leadership character. The story of the spies who entered Canaan informed much of my thinking on another leadership characteristic - equanimity. You’ll recall that 10 of the 12 crumbled with fear publicly. They spoke of giants. Fear and dread dripped from every word they spoke. Only Joshua and Caleb trusted God and spoke with confidence. Moses was unable to overcome the damage this group did and a generation perished in the desert as a result. A moment of panic or uncertainty at the wrong time from a leader, or leadership team, can spell disaster for everyone.

There are specific characteristics that underpin successful leaders - courage, humility, self-awareness and mercy are among them. Courage comes far more naturally for those closely oriented to God. When we know we are serving God’s kingdom we have nothing to fear, “The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1.)

Nehemiah – Portrait of a Leader

The story of Nehemiah offers a rich portrait of a leader. As cupbearer to King Artaxerxes Nehemiah led a very comfortable life in exile, yet upon hearing of the plight of the returning exiles he wept, mourned and fasted for days. From the early part of his story we learn that the King had great affection for him. He expressed genuine concern that his servant was downcast. Yet Nehemiah chose to leave this comfort to lead the returned remnant of Israel in the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

Just asking the king to leave required great courage, Nehemiah risked his life in making the request. That courage would be called upon many times as he faced opposition from the regional powers of the day. He sought letters from the king to the governors of Trans-Euphrates because he understood that even the journey would be very dangerous.

Nehemiah's heartfelt prayer poignantly displayed his passion for God, his people and his mission. But Nehemiah's mission was much more than just rebuilding a wall, he led the restoration of his people. He supplied the leadership needed to guide the returned remnant through an extraordinarily difficult period.

Nehemiah had a plan to carry out what God placed on his heart. He began by surveying the wall then he organized and assigned the work for its restoration. From the very onset and throughout the construction the project was threatened by hostile forces. Nehemiah didn't lose courage. Under threat and drawing his trust in God, he supplied the strength and courage God's people needed. He stood tall, so they did as well.

When he was personally threatened with assassination he refused to hide or run, "Should a man like me run away? Or should one like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go!" (Nehemiah 6:11) I love the exclamation point. What a blend of equanimity passion and courage in the face of a compelling personal threat. Nehemiah exemplified the heart of a leader.

After the physical restoration of the city we learn about the example he set by sharing his provisions with the poor, in stark contrast to his predecessors. He rebuked the nobles and officials around him for exploiting the same people and instructed them to return lands and stop charging usury. He realigned their values by first setting the example. Nehemiah exemplified integrity.

From the beginning of his mission to his return to Babylon, Nehemiah prayed. Not once did he place his interests above those of the mission. Not once did he forget that he was a leader serving God. I wonder how such a perspective would change the nature of leadership today. It is the perspective every leader Christian must embrace.

"For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:12.) Now a final thought about character development. The word "humbles" as it appears in this verse is presented as a verb. Humbling oneself is a conscious act. We practice humility to learn humility. We must work at character to develop character.

Chapter 6: Getting Close

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me - just as the Father knows me and I know the Father - and I lay down my life for the sheep." (John 9:14-15) God made us for relationships. The "Doctrine of Distance" I wrote about in this chapter is still common worldly leadership thinking, but it's not Christian thinking. Leadership is all about relationships.

Chapter 7: Instil Vision With Inspiration

“Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18) KJV

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)

Created in the image of God, we are all naturally creative beings. When you think about it, all the bible’s great leaders were advancing God’s vision and not one they had concocted. They were leading people in pursuit of change, of something better.

“I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.” (Exodus 3:7-8)

Think of the Exodus. God charged Moses with a vision for deliverance. People everywhere want to be led somewhere better, regardless of what they have today. This is the opportunity vision presents. What is the vision God is calling you to?

Chapter 8: Build A Leadership Network

But select capable men from all the people - men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain - and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.” (Exodus 18:21)

“In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, ‘It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.’” (Acts 6:1-4)

As I wrote about the way effective leaders build leadership networks I found myself thinking about these two stories.

“For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.” (1 Corinthians 14:33)

The nervous system illustration I used for the chapter is clearly a product of God’s perfect design. God values order. All of creation is ordered, according to God’s design. Contrary to the worldly thinking that tells us the a chain of command is no longer workable or right, good leadership networks are ordered. With order comes peace.

“Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.” (Matthew 12:25)

Unity is an essential characteristic of strong leadership networks. All members of the leadership team must support one another. They may debate options energetically behind closed doors as they present a unified position once a decision has been reached.

Chapter 9: Narrow The Focus To Build A Team

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ who who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” (Romans 12:4-5)

This is among several occasions when apostle Paul used our physical bodies as an illustration for the church. This body of writing inspired my own work on what I call the corporate body. I always introduce it as a new way to think about corporate life. I am always amazed at the way this “new way” of thinking corporately (now over 2,000 years old) resonates with listeners who are hearing it for the first time.

Chapter 10: Create a Culture that Brings Out the Best

“Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value a man who speaks the truth.” (Proverbs 16:3)

“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested.” (Genesis 2:2)

“There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.” (Proverbs 6:16-19)

Proverbs offers us a picture of the same values problems that plague so many modern organizations - that often plague the church. Some might even describe it as a picture of the modern workplace! Because this, and so many other verses throughout scripture, make it clear that values matter so much to God, Christian leaders must be the keepers and shapers of corporate values, encouraging the right ones and correcting the wrong ones.

Build your team on the foundation of God’s values. Spend time in Proverbs. Stamp out the things God despises and instil the qualities he values – qualities like achievement, friendship, co-operation, hard work, rest, and most of all love. As you draw ever closer to the culture God would have, everything else gets a lot easier. Your organization becomes a “city on a hill,” an example of a strong healthy organization that stands out for all the right reasons. The best Christian leaders are passionate about building a culture that honours God.

Chapter 11: Build Healthy Leader Follower Relationships

“When Jesus called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out demons and cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” (Luke 9:1-2)

“And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people.” (Mathew 14:5)

“If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” (1 Corinthians 13:2)

“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you.” (Psalm 89:14)

“Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched.” (Proverbs 6:28)

“Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.” (Luke 11:42)

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so their work will be joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.” (Hebrews 13:17) - This is one of my favourite leader follower verses. I often think leaders should pay more attention to the second sentence and less to the first!

“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving for the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favouritism with him.” (Ephesians 6: 7-9)

“The sluggard’s craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work.” (Proverbs 21:25)

The five conditions that mark healthy leader follower relationships, (leaders care, direct and protect; followers accept and give their best) are all biblical, as evidenced in the selection of verses above and many others I have not included.

I consider this to be among the most important and countercultural chapters in the book. A real example of the contrast between worldly and Christian leadership practices. We live in a worldly culture that has certainly confused our understanding of the way leaders and followers should relate, much to the detriment of all.

For the book, I named “Caring” as the first condition a leader must satisfy. For Christians the standard is higher, the first and most important condition is to love those we lead.

In this chapter, I challenged the thinking around buy-in, the most common word in leadership today. I cannot find even a faint reference to buy-in in the bible. I argued that buy-in is a product of a worldly culture in which we place extraordinary value of personal freedoms and don’t like to be told what to do, a culture in which we believe we should agree with what is being asked of us.

I argued that the bible presents a much more powerful alternative using three words: acceptance, obedience and submission. These words may not be popular today but they are an essential part of God's design. They bring order peace and freedom.

Chapter 12: Make Authority a Creative Force

“For even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it.” (2 Corinthians 10:8)

“Do you not think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53)

There is no greater model than Jesus: The Son of God has all power and authority placed under him. He truly has ultimate power and yet only uses it to build up, to create. He heals, he washed his disciple's feet during the last supper and he willingly walked to the cross to redeem us when in an instant he could have stopped it all. Jesus taught us what the sacrificial use of power really looks like. All effective leaders use authority to promote the interests of the team and its mission, the poor ones use it to promote self-interest. Remember, correcting someone who needs it is a powerful act of love.

Chapter 13: Select the Right People the First time

“Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.” (Acts 1:21-22)

Following Judas' death Peter called for the appointment of a new Apostle. While God made the choice between the final two candidates, the Apostles had very specific criteria for the position. They understood how important the appointment was.

Let's go further back to the appointment of the first 12. It was history's most important team building exercise. I have no doubt each was selected for his character. They were simple men with the right hearts - fertile soil. Jesus cultivated the leadership skills they would need throughout his earthly ministry. He gave them the Holy Spirit to continue the work when he left to take his place at Father God's right hand.

“Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars.” (Luke 12:33) Remember, people will produce more of the fruit they have always produced. Understanding their past behaviour will give you the best predictor of future behaviour.

“Do all that you have in mind. Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul.” (1 Samuel 14:7) One of my favourite biblical figures is also one who gets only a few short verses - Jonathan's armour-bearer. His short story is one of my favourites. His character is exemplary. He stands as a

shining example of a good selection. As an armour bearer he was an apprentice. He was very short on skill but deep in character. This is the kind of man I want at my side!

Chapter 14: Communicate to Inform and Engage

“Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” (Proverbs 12:18)

“He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.” (Proverbs 21:23)

“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of their sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin.” (John 15:22)

“I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid a foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.” (Luke 6:47-48)

These are but a few biblical references to the indispensable role communication plays in the life of a leader. Whether in small groups or very large crowds, Jesus, during his earthly ministry, was a fulsome, open and honest communicator. The gospels, it could be suggested, are really a compilation of much of his most important communication.

Chapter 15: Use the Power of Urgency

“Do not say, Four months more and then the harvest? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.” (John 4:35) Jesus was confronting complacency and instilling a sense of urgency.

“As long as Moses held his hands up, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses’ hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up - one on one side, one on the other - so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.” (Exodus 17:11-13)

This remains one of my favourite battle stories. Put yourself on the hill with Moses, Aaron and Hur. Imagine the sense of urgency they must have felt as Moses tired, his arms dropped and they watched the Israelites fall. I doubt they took very long to come up with their solution. This is what urgency does, it creates action. People find new ways to support one another. They come up with more creative solutions. Urgency can bring a team together faster than almost any other force. Moses could not have done what he did without Aaron and Hur. It took all three working together to keep his arms aloft. The Israelites with Joshua leading them on the field succeeded in a great victory learning in a dramatic way their dependence on God. Urgency has a way of bringing out the best in people.

“After I looked things over I stood up on the walls and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, ‘Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.’” (Nehemiah 4:14) Now that’s urgency, that’s leadership under pressure! During times of pressure – when the situation seems overwhelming – we face a choice. Will we push harder and demand more, even when people are giving their best, as so many poor leaders do, or will we direct and inspire as Nehemiah did?

Chapter 16: Make Feedback the DNA of Team Development

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (Ephesians 4:29-30)

The Apostle Paul was a master with feedback, his letters stand as fabulous examples of both encouraging and corrective feedback:

“We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thessalonians 1:2-10.)

He concluded, “Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 4:1-2) Paul’s letter is clear and specific. He describes the situation, the outcomes and coaches his flock to continue on the path they are walking. 1 Thessalonians is a study in encouragement.

“Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly – mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?” (1 Corinthians 3:1-3) In Corinth Paul was dealing with a very different situation. The church was quarrelling and divided. Paul wrote to set them back on the right path. I love the passion in both his encouragement and correction.

“But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and cried out, ‘Lord, save me.’ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “‘You of little faith,’ he said, ‘why did you doubt.’” (Matthew. 14:30-31) Finally, Jesus used feedback to teach Peter an important lesson in faith. Just imagine what was going through Peter’s mind as he began to sink in a dark and raging sea – it must have been sheer terror. Oh the relief he must have felt at Jesus’ touch. Jesus’ immediate feedback connected the act and the outcome – Peter sank because he doubted. Had Jesus waited a month to talk about it the lesson would not have been as effective. Good leaders are almost reflexive in the way they provide feedback.

Many times I see Christian leaders who are reluctant to provide honest corrective feedback with passion – Paul wasn’t. He knew the stakes and didn’t avoid important feedback. He knew it was

the best way to encourage the right behaviour and correct the wrong behaviour in the people he was leading. I encourage you to read the full set of letters carefully – they are a study in effective feedback.

Chapter 17: Coach for Skills and Relationships

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.” (Psalm 32:8)

“You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘Lord’ and rightly so, for that is what I am.” (John 13:13)

“Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth....” (Matthew 5:1-5)

“‘How can a man be born when he is old?’ Nicodemus asked. ‘Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!’” Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, You must be born again.’” (John 3:1-7)

Jesus was often referred to as Rabbi, the Jewish word for teacher. From the private exchange with Nicodemus to the sermon on the mount, teaching was central to Jesus’ leadership, just as it must be for today’s Christian leaders.

Chapter 18: Make Every Performance Count

“Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure he is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.” (Titus 3:10-11)

“Can a man scoop fire into his lap, without his clothes being burned?” (Proverbs 6:27)

“Those I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.” (Rev 3:19)

“For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrong-doer” (Romans 13: 3-4)

Strong words from a strong leader who clearly understood his role in making performance count. Too many Christian leaders, when confronted with poor performance, omit half of the bible. They focus almost exclusively on love, grace and forgiveness. While these are indeed keys to

successful Christian life they are not a complete toolbox. Complete Christian leaders must also include justice, authority, correction, and the sword.

Too many Christian leaders see “Shepherd Leadership” and “Servant Leadership” in ways that avoid all conflict and pain. They separate acts like loving and rebuking. Revelation 3:19 is one of many verses that make clear that biblically godly rebuke is an act of love. However we wish to label it, all Christian leadership comes with two sides: strength and love, commendation and punishment. This is the essence of good performance management and it presents some of the biggest challenges and biggest opportunities for Christian leaders. When there are wolves in the flock (people who have a corrosive effect and won’t heed correction), shepherd leaders draw the sword in strength.

“And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift on finger to help them.” (Luke 11:46) This verse in part supported the thinking that preparing people for the performance we expect of them is an essential part of the performance cycle.

“This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says, ‘I anointed you King over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all that were too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.’” (2 Samuel 12:7-10) This incredible exchange between Father God and King David, illustrates well the importance of attaching consequences to actions. I am struck by the tenderness and disappointment of God’s words in verses 7 & 8 and the strength in verses 9&10.

God sent Nathan to tell David that he would bring calamity upon him out of his own household. The son born to Bathsheba would die. His death was agonizing for David. He lost Jerusalem and his kingdom for a time to his son Absalom. A great battle ensued and 20,000 men lost their lives – Absalom among them. When David heard the news he was heart-broken. His rule was restored but not before he bore the consequences of his action. We can sense God’s deep disappointment and love for David in the rebuke, “And if all that were too little, I would have given you even more.” The Lord loved David dearly and yet still held him responsible for what he had done, he did not relieve him of the consequences.

Remember the standard Paul set for Titus. This advice is just as valuable today. Your responsibility is to correct and warn – or advise of consequences if you will – but these tactics have their limitations. Two warnings should be enough. If someone chooses not to heed two corrections they have made a choice, they are self-condemned, remove them. Applying this “three strikes” standard consistently would go a long way to establishing a healthy culture of accountability and responsiveness.

My story

To write about leadership I must include my walk with God, the two are inseparable. I trace the beginning of that walk to the death of my father on April 6, 1966. My father was a great dad. He was the son of a United Church minister but for reasons I never learned he did not attend church. He taught me a lot about integrity passion and values but he did not talk about God. As his first child we enjoyed a very close relationship. My dad was a leader. He was a newspaper executive. Somehow I always knew, even at a very young age, that I would follow his footsteps.

My dad coached every hockey and baseball team I played on until the morning he lost his life in a whitewater kayaking accident. My world came crashing down. I remember being out on the patio and working with him on the boat that very morning – it was warm and sunny. Our family doctor delivered the news. His death was the first time I can recall thinking about God. He was 34 years old, I was 11. I concluded that there was no God. I was not angry with God; I was convinced he did not exist. I spent my teen years and my early adulthood believing that God was a myth for the weak. I was an atheist, the king of self-reliance.

I followed my father's path into the newspaper business at a small town newspaper, as an advertising salesperson. I was 19 years old. I worked for a very good leader, a man who inspired me to want to do my best work. My education in leadership was underway.

Two and a half years later I was discouraged. I wasn't making much money, debt was piling up and I was about to get married. My soon to be father-in-law arranged for me to meet with an executive placement firm. If I was going to marry his daughter, he was going to do all he could to make sure we didn't starve. I got the first job I interviewed for with a pharmaceutical firm, it entailed a cross country move.

Just weeks before I was to leave for the new job I locked myself out of my basement apartment on a cold winter evening. To find a warm bed, I decided to drive to my mom's place 90 minutes away. It was after midnight and well before dawn when I fell asleep at the wheel. At the very last moment I awoke. I looked up and saw a truck immediately in front of me. With no time to brake I jerked the wheel hard to the left and ducked. The 1978 Malibu I was driving passed under the box of the truck shearing the hardtop off. I pulled over to the left hand shoulder and turned the engine off. I was unharmed but for a small cut on the top of my scalp. I remember thinking "someone was looking out after me" but it was just a superficial comment, not a revelation. God had broken through to save my life on that highway - there could be no other explanation - although I wouldn't know it for years.

I moved to Edmonton, Alberta with my wife Sarah. The pharmaceutical job ended when I was fired by the worst boss I have ever met. I was young and had lots to learn. He taught me more about how not to lead than anyone I've ever known.

I moved through a series of sales jobs and was unhappy at work when Sarah convinced me to try the newspaper industry again. I applied to the Edmonton Journal, a large daily. Weeks passed with no response from the newspaper when I was just ending a day of sales calls. I felt drawn into an old building – not the type that would normally attract my attention. I rode the elevator to

the top floor and made some sales calls that came to nothing. It was the end of a long day and I pressed the button to call the elevator. As I waited a friend I hadn't seen in years burst from an adjoining office calling my name. She asked about my work. I told her about my frustration with the current job and my application at the newspaper. She looked at me with surprise and excitement and told me that her best friend ran the human resources department at that newspaper.

In that moment my life turned. I knew in one heartbeat and beyond any doubt that there is a God and that he had arranged that meeting. It wasn't an exercise in reasoning, I knew it deeply. I knew beyond doubt. God had broken through. It turned out that the newspaper had lost my application. That encounter launched a 19-year career that culminated in my appointment as president and publisher at one of Canada's premier newspapers - The Calgary Herald.

More significantly, my walk with God was underway. God put me on the path he had planned for me. I was overwhelmed with God's love. The question, "Why me?" remains a mystery. I have since marvelled many times that while I may have denied God for years, he was watching over me.

Standing in front of that elevator, I became convinced that there is a God, a very loving very personal God, and that he seemed to want to help me. I concluded that I should learn to listen. I did listen and from time to time I heard God's unmistakable voice – always at just the right time. I was discovering the close and personal relationship God wants with us.

The little experience I had with church to that point had been unpleasant, it always seemed to be about rules and punishment and it didn't seem consistent with the Father God I had discovered. I tried to make sense of it all from a New Age perspective. As Jethro Tull once wrote "My God was not the type I had to wind up on Sundays."

Nine years passed before my walk with God led me to Jesus. In the book of John, Christ said "It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God. Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.'" (John 6:45). This verse has come to mean a lot to me because it captures my own walk – God found me and led me to his Son.

I believe God orchestrated my newspaper leadership career as an apprenticeship for the work I do today. The blending of a modern market-driven experience with my walk with God has formed my perspective. I'm convinced that no matter what the age or circumstance, people everywhere respond well to leaders who lead by God's design. God's way leads to more dedicated hard working teams.

My career spanned the country, included several newspapers, and challenges, including integrations, labor disputes and turnarounds. The final chapter, the four years I spent as president and publisher at the Calgary Herald, were the realization of a dream.

Calgary changed everything. I arrived seven months after a new union had been certified and six months before the strike started. I felt God had placed me where he wanted me to be, doing what he wanted me to do. He had placed that work in my hands. Calgary would be the most

challenging and most satisfying period of my newspaper career. I led the newspaper through an eight month labour dispute and into the rebuilding on the other side.

In Calgary God completed my apprenticeship and orchestrated three big events that led me to Jesus.

The first happened shortly after my arrival. I met Pastor Ray Matheson from First Alliance Church during the strike. At the time, I was being pressured by two other senior clergy to end the strike, but Ray's approach was different. He didn't judge or advise he just told me he was there if I ever needed to talk. I know he would have been saying the same thing with those across the picket lines. I was struck by the difference in his approach. Today Ray is a good friend. I now know he was just doing what he always does, loving me as Jesus would.

I learned a lot about leadership through that very challenging time. I saw Ray from time to time but our relationship didn't progress – we were casual friends who crossed paths every now and then.

Then Conrad Black announced he was selling the Herald. I gave the new ownership a good try but it soon became clear that after almost 20 years with the company, I didn't see eye to eye with my new bosses. I went into a very painful period of about a year-and-a-half, thinking, consulting a few trusted friends and praying. I was in a full-blown career crisis. How could a career that held so much promise be unravelling as it was? Just before Christmas of 2002 my prayers were answered. God told me that my newspaper career was over as it was supposed to be. It was an apprenticeship for something he had planned for me. I got the deep sense of peace I have come to associate with a word from God and I began thinking about when and how I would leave.

The third event – the catalyst – took place on February the 1st 2003. On the same day the space shuttle Discovery exploded high above the earth seven students from a local private school lost their lives in a cataclysmic avalanche in the Canadian Rockies. Marissa Staddon was among them. She was the tipping point that led me to Christ. Marissa and our daughter Paige skated together. She was among the first people Paige met when we arrived from St. Catharines. They shared the same birth date, (June 13, 1987). I spent a lot of time at the rink watching Paige and Marissa skate but I didn't know she was a devoted Christian. I went to Marissa's celebration of life at First Alliance Church with my family. It was the first time I had been in a church in many years.

Paige was struggling hard with the death of her friend. My wife Sarah and I were not sure how to help her. As Paige sat on my left side in the sanctuary I didn't know what to say. I asked her what her favorite memory of Marissa was. Without hesitation she replied, "Birthday cakes at the rink." In that instant the two big screens filled with a photograph of Paige and Marissa at the rink with their 13th birthday cake. I was struck with an overwhelming feeling of God's presence and love. I was struck by the whole experience at First Alliance Church. Rather than rules and threats, I found people celebrating a joyful relationship with a loving God. I thought, this is the God I know. I bought my first bible and began reading it daily. I started attending that church every week.

We went downstairs after the celebration and who do you think was there? You guessed it... Ray Matheson, the man God had introduced me to many months earlier. That bible brought me face to face with what I now believe is the most important question for each of us - Who is Jesus? I came to the inescapable conclusion that he is just who he said he is, The Son of God. I committed my life to follow Christ a few months later. I was baptized a few years later with Marissa's younger sister, Brittany.

The bible also fed my passion for leadership. I discovered that what I had learned during my newspaper apprenticeship was described throughout its pages. I read Psalm 78:72 for the first time that winter of 2003: "And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them." These remain for me the most powerful 14 words I have ever read about leadership.

I felt called to write what I had learned about leadership. That was the beginning of this book. Now eleven years after accepting Christ I have not lost my love of God's word. This book arises out of the blending of my own direct leadership experience, my 11 years now teaching and consulting, and my daily walk with God.

I am convinced that when we apply God's leadership practices we can create workplaces and teams where both people and results thrive. While I will not claim to have an exclusive or even complete understanding of God's way to lead, I have written about the way my relationship with God has informed my approach to leadership in a way that I hope will help other leaders get better at what they do.

If you are leading today or you aspire to one day lead others, I pray that God will guide your footsteps, that he will illuminate your leadership with his wisdom. I pray that this book might be a small but worthwhile part of the journey.