



1

LEADERSHIP IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

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When we began our research on leadership over twenty years ago, we were troubled by the prevailing assumption that leadership is associated with the actions of people at the top. We were troubled by the belief that leadership is something only a few people can learn and that the rest of us are doomed to leadership incompetence. We were troubled by the focus on superstar executives as *the* role models for leadership behavior.

It's not that we thought people at the top weren't supposed to be exemplary leaders. It's just that there are so few of them. The obsession with the pinnacle of power and fame left out a whole lot of people. There were certainly more exemplary leaders than the few hundred at the very apex of corporate success. We wanted to know what people from all walks of life and at all levels in the organization did to get extraordinary things done. We thought their actions were worthy of attention.

We began studying leadership one person at a time. We asked people to tell us about a time in their lives when they had been at their personal best as leaders. We asked people just like you and the people in your neighborhood. We asked men and women of all ages, races, and religions. We asked people across industries, functions, disciplines, and levels. We asked people from different geographic regions and from all over the globe. And you know what? Everyone had a story to tell, and that's still true today.

We've found exemplary leadership in churches and faith-based organizations, for-profit firms and not-for-profits, manufacturing

and service organizations, governmental agencies, schools, the armed forces, health care, entertainment, and community services. Leaders reside in every city and country, in every position and place. They're employees and volunteers, young and old, rich and poor, male and female. Leadership knows no racial or religious bounds, no ethnic or cultural borders. We find exemplary leadership everywhere we look.

From our examination of these cases, as well as through the analyses of empirical data from tens of thousands of our Leadership Practices Inventories,¹ we've discovered that regardless of level, place, discipline, style, race, age, gender, religion, or personality, leaders exhibit similar behaviors when they guide others along pioneering journeys. Although each case has been unique in its expression, we've been able to detect a similar pattern to leaders' actions—a pattern we call The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership®.² We've found that when performing at their best, leaders

1. Model the Way
2. Inspire a Shared Vision
3. Challenge the Process
4. Enable Others to Act
5. Encourage the Heart

The Five Practices are not the private property of the people we studied or the personal domain of a few select, shining stars. Our research challenges the myth that leadership is something inherent in the DNA or is found only at the highest levels of the organization, whether it's the executive suite or the pulpit. The theory that there are only a *few* men and women who can lead us to greatness is just plain wrong. Leadership is a process ordinary people use when they are bringing forth the best from themselves and others. *Leadership is everyone's business.* This book is about how Christian leaders apply The Five Practices to the work of mobilizing others to get extraordinary things done.

CHRISTIAN REFLECTIONS

The genesis of *Christian Reflections on The Leadership Challenge* was a request from John Maxwell to use The Five Practices as the organizing framework for the annual Catalyst Leadership Conference, sponsored by INJOY. John thought that The Five Practices provided a useful model for presenting the message of leadership to a group of energetic young Christian leaders. John also invited one of us to present at the conference. Jim Kouzes shared our framework, and his presentation received a spontaneous, enthusiastic, and joyful reception. The participants in that event could readily see that The Five Practices were as applicable to their leadership endeavors as they were to the people we'd studied in other settings.

Following Jim on the platform were six Christian leaders—Ken Blanchard, Bill Bright, John Maxwell, Kevin Myers, Nancy Ortberg, and Andy Stanley—representing legendary leadership in congregations, faith-based organizations, and secular corporations. Each shared personal stories and offered practical lessons on one of the practices. It became clear that John was right; this was a leadership framework that spoke powerfully to those in attendance.

Fueled by the enthusiastic response at the Catalyst Conference and with John's encouragement, we offered to compile a book that would make The Five Practices leadership framework speak more directly to Christian leaders, weaving together faith and leadership. Our publishers at Jossey-Bass agreed, and this book was born.

To better relate the key messages from *The Leadership Challenge* to Christian settings, we wanted to interview people from a variety of denominations who were involved in both faith-based and secular organizations. With the help of our publisher, INJOY, and our own network of colleagues, we were able to identify many exemplary leaders who'd brought Christian teachings to life and whose stories illustrated The Five Practices. We interviewed these exemplars using the same questions we had asked other leaders to find out about their personal best leadership experiences. We share their inspirational

stories in Chapter Two, reviewing as we go how these leaders mobilize others to *want* to get extraordinary things done.

We also asked five recognized Christian leaders to *reflect* on The Five Practices. We asked them, “How do these practices speak to your experiences?” “What lessons do you draw from the practices that are especially applicable to Christian leadership?” “How does your faith inform your leadership?” “How can the practices help others become better leaders and better Christians?” “Based on our research and your experiences, what questions should Christian leaders ask themselves?” Their responses to these questions comprise the majority of *Christian Reflections on The Leadership Challenge*. As you’ll see, these leaders speak the truth born out of firsthand experience, and they talk straight from the heart.

A FIELD GUIDE FOR LEADERS

The fundamental purpose of this book is to assist people in strengthening their abilities to lead and to make a positive difference in the world—no small aspiration to be sure, but God’s work gets done most effectively when people believe they can have a positive impact. Whether you’re in the role of congregant, minister, employee, manager, volunteer, parent, or student, you can apply these lessons in any setting. Whether the application is in a faith-based organization, a corporation, a governmental agency, a not-for-profit, your neighborhood, your community, or your family, this book can help you improve your capacity to guide others to places they have never been before.

We believe you are capable of developing yourself as a leader far more than tradition has ever assumed possible. It’s just pure myth that only a lucky few can ever understand the intricacies of leadership. The truth is that leadership is an observable set of skills and abilities that are useful no matter where you are. And leadership, like any other skill, can be strengthened, honed, and enhanced, given the motivation and desire, the practice and feedback, and the proper role

models and coaching. This book is not about being in a position (as if leadership were a place) but about having the courage and spirit to make a significant difference.

In Chapter Two, we describe The Five Practices. We provide case examples of real people who demonstrate each practice and discuss the principles underlying their actions. Through personal story and academic research, we show what leaders do when they Model, Inspire, Challenge, Enable, and Encourage.

In each of the subsequent five chapters, you find a personal reflection by a Christian leader on one of The Five Practices. In Chapter Three, John Maxwell, the impetus behind this book, reflects on Model the Way. John is founder of INJOY and Equip, as well as the author of more than twenty books, including the best-selling *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*.³ John tells us to “work on ourselves before we work on others” and says that “leaders’ lives are mirrors, reflecting precepts they want those they lead to follow.” He reminds us to be the example in the world that we want others to emulate.

David McAllister-Wilson reflects on Inspire a Shared Vision in Chapter Four. David is the president of Wesley Theological Seminary. He tells us that “Vision isn’t everything, but it’s the beginning of everything.” David speaks to us about embracing our struggles and transforming them into an ideal future possibility.

Patrick Lencioni, in Chapter Five, reflects on Challenge the Process. Pat is president of The Table Group and the author of *The Five Temptations of a CEO*⁴ and other books on leadership and teams. “Before setting out on a quest to challenge the process and change the world,” he says, “Christian leaders should probably ask themselves two questions: Who am I really serving? And am I ready to suffer?” He then addresses important issues of perseverance, humility, and risk.

In Chapter Six, Nancy Ortberg reflects on Enable Others to Act. Nancy directs the Axis ministry at Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago. She tells us that “Jesus embodies the ultimate example of someone who fostered collaboration and strengthened individuals.” Nancy provides very moving evidence of how giving power away is a

lot more effective—and grounded in Christian principles—than grabbing and holding on to power.

Ken Blanchard reflects on *Encourage the Heart* in Chapter Seven. Ken's book (with Spencer Johnson), *The One Minute Manager*,⁵ set in motion an entire genre of management books, and his *The One Minute Manager* library has sold more than nine million copies. Ken is also the cofounder of The Ken Blanchard Companies and now spends the majority of his time helping people learn to lead like Jesus. Caring more about others than about one's self is at the crux, explains Ken, of allowing God to work miracles through you. Ken says it's all about being a servant leader.

We think you'll appreciate the very personal nature of these chapters, as they reveal each individual's stories, struggles, and challenges. The insights from their experiences and their faith will inspire you and guide you to improving your own leadership capabilities.

As you read each of these chapters, you'll quickly realize how interdependent The Five Practices are. Although we can identify the distinctive behaviors of each practice, we also know that exemplary leadership is impossible by relying on your strength in only one. It's like expecting to be able to do the work of your entire hand by relying on only one finger. We'll pick this idea up again later.

In the closing chapter, we point out some of the common themes that weave themselves through the tapestry of these Christian reflections. We touch on the role that faith plays in the leadership process and add another observation from our research about the foundation on which all leadership practice is built. We also discuss why the first place to look for leadership is within yourself. Finally, we offer guidance about how you can continue your own growth and development.

When all is said and done, meeting the leadership challenge is a personal—and a daily—challenge. At the end of our days, the legacy we leave is the life we lead. The question that we now need to ask ourselves is, How am I going to fully use myself to make a difference in the world?