



LEADERSHIP ESSENTIALS

By Pastor Jack Cunningham

The content of this booklet was
compiled for the great leaders I am
privileged to work with at Bible World
Church in Chesapeake, Virginia.

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The Work of God is the Most Important Work On Earth!

There is no other work as vital; no other work as transforming, and no other work with equal eternal consequences.

A man or woman who is the CEO of a billion dollar company does not hold as important of a position as the man or woman in ministry working for God. Billions of dollars and huge corporate accomplishments have no impact whatsoever on eternity. The work you do as a leader in the Kingdom of God impacts eternity every single day.

EXCELLENCE

No matter the position you fill your work is critical to the success of your local church. Pastor or usher, Worship leader or Parking Attendant, soul winner or Greeter; the role every leader plays is vital to the growth of their church. The purpose of this booklet is to help you understand that if you fill your leadership role with excellence, conviction, and commitment—you will be successful.

“Excellence” according to the American Heritage Dictionary is, “[The quality of being outstanding or extremely good.](#)” You are most valuable to the local church when you do your job with excellence. Everything we do, great or small, should be done with excellence, or it should not

be done at all. Someone aptly said, “Good enough is the number one enemy of excellence.” A Godly leader will never allow himself to be content fulfilling the responsibilities of his position halfheartedly. Leaders who do their job less than excellent are cheating their church, their fellow leaders, and self.

The Walt Disney Company’s motto is “Success Starts At The Top!” Walt Disney effectively demonstrated that the actions of one leader, multiplied by the actions of many, can re-shape a culture and an organization.

Every EXCELLENT venture rises and falls on EXCELLENT leadership.

SUCCESS

If success starts at the top, and I believe it does, then local church leaders must take responsibility for the success or failure of their church. We seldom use the word “failure” when talking about a church. We’ve even conditioned ourselves to believe that any church, of any size, with limited or no growth, not impacting their community in any measurable way, is still a success. Sorry, but only the church world could get away with such a ludicrous idea. If your church is moving forward—take responsibility. If your church is stagnant, not growing spiritually, financially, or numerically—take responsibility.

“Effective leadership is not about making speeches or being liked; leadership is defined by results not attributes.” — Peter Drucker

In the church that I am privileged to pastor, I teach our ministry and department leaders to take responsibility for the success of their ministry or department! Leaders will perform better if they know that they are going to be held accountable. Responsibility without accountability is futility.

LEADERSHIP

John Maxwell said it well, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.”

Erskine Bowles wrote, “Leadership is the key to 99 percent of all successful efforts.”

If you have been in leadership any length of time you know firsthand the validity of the above two quotes. It is a fact of church life—As goes a leader, so goes the church.

The following statement appears in every Job Description for every position in the church I pastor: “In achieving our goals, nothing should be done that does not bring glory to God. Three words will characterize the execution of the responsibilities of this position: First, we will be innovative. Second, we will be excellent — our work must either be of lasting value and the highest quality or it should not be done at all. Third, we will demonstrate integrity in our work, in our public relations, and in our internal and external communications. There will be an abiding commitment to Truth. Integrity must characterize all of our dealings with others.”

SELF-EDUCATION

I am a believer in self-improvement, which includes self-education. Over the years I have read numbers of great books about leadership. I’ve attended hundreds of leadership and church growth seminars. I have listened to untold numbers of tapes (shows how old I am), CD’s and DVD’s.

Because of the exposure I’ve had to seminars, books, and sessions, I have compiled hundreds-and-hundreds of pages of handwritten and typed notes on the subject of leadership. The following pages contain

eight Leadership Essentials (an overview of what I personally consider to be the essential traits of great leadership).

Obviously, there are more eight, and other writers might create a different list than the eight essentials I am offering. These are the essential traits of leadership—according to me.

Read all eight several times. Make your own notes. Research each topic for yourself.

I have attempted to apply these principles to my own life and ministry. In some areas I am actually doing “alright” while in other areas I am constantly trying to improve. I pray these simple chapters are a blessing to you!

Yours for Apostolic Leadership,
Pastor Jack Cunningham



Leadership Essential #1

PRIORITIZE DO WHAT MATTERS MOST!

“Effective leadership is putting first things first. Effective management is discipline, carrying it out.” — Stephen Covey

We choose our priorities and in-turn our priorities choose how and where we invest our time. If I can take a quick look at your calendar and your checkbook I can easily figure out what are your priorities. Where we spend our money and time are tale-tell signs of what matters most to an individual.

No matter what leaders say, they do in fact choose their own priorities. A leader who purchases and plays video games for hours; or the leader who spends a lot of time and money on social media; or the leader who pays for and watches hours-and-hours of television—each have chosen their priority by the investment of their time and money.

On the other hand, I am most impressed with leaders who invest their money and time into building and leading people. When I meet a leader who spends his time and money in the Kingdom of God, I also know what is priority to them.

The goals we set and the actions we take toward those goals determine what we accomplish. Growth and revival in any local church is not “good fortune” or “lucky breaks.” As my grand baby would say, “No way!” Men and women who submit their lives, their talent, ability, and time to God build great churches. Men and women who are not afraid of old fashioned WORK. I have known a lot of men and women who said they want to be in the work of the Lord until they find out that it really is the **W O R K** of the Lord.

You set priorities by determining where you are going; how you are going to get there, and why you must go. Your tomorrow will be no better than today unless you can focus on what’s going to be important tomorrow. Set your “today” priorities according to where you want to be “tomorrow.” The Apostle Paul said, “[I press toward the mark.](#)”

Leaders learn, usually through the process of time, to be willing to step away from what is least important and step up to what is most important. True leaders know that there is always something to do, something to take your time, someone to meet with, some situation to solve. They also know that they cannot afford to get bogged down doing the lower priority items and allowing the greater priority items go. It is my practice to assign these lessor priority items to people in my staff or ministry team; that allows me to give my attention to the higher priority items that only I can do. It is not easy for a leader to set priorities but you have to if you will be effective.

The motto of leaders who fail at leading is, “[Don’t do anything today that can be put off till tomorrow.](#)” I still work from a “Things To Do” list everyday. I keep my “Things To Do” list on my iPhone, and I keep my iPhone with me 24/7. I used to keep the list in a Day Timers (again,

showing my age). I very much believe in making a daily “To Do” list—then prioritizing the list. Its not enough that I am making a list of things I need to accomplish; I need to make sure that the most important things (highest priorities) are being done first. I would rather complete one high priority item then to complete a dozen unimportant, unnecessary items.

If you are not working from a daily “Things To Do” list, then that’s where you start—**MAKE A LIST RIGHT NOW** before reading further.



Leadership Essential #2

INTEGRITY

NEVER COMPROMISE YOUR INTEGRITY!

“A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader, but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent.” — Douglas MacArthur

It's not my intention to write a negative chapter here, but I think I need to state my opinion right up front — There seems to be a huge vacuum of integrity in the leadership of this generation. Nearly everyday we hear of leadership scandals, fraud, dishonesty, cover-ups, and more. To say that modern leadership is often void of integrity is certainly an understatement.

In no uncertain terms let me warn the reader that a lack of integrity will destroy your influence faster than any other mistake made by leaders. Once you have lost your influence with the people you lead and work

with, your leadership is finished; your desire to minister will never fully blossom, people will stop following you.

Forgive the simplicity of my thinking, but in my opinion—if your word is good you are good. If your word is not good you are not good.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower said, “The supreme quality of leadership is integrity.”

In the realm of the Spirit I have found that honor (integrity) attracts the anointing of the Holy Ghost. God is deeply pleased when His children live, say, and act in a righteous way. If being anointed means anything to you, always remember these three things: (1) honor attracts the anointing, (2) humility sustains the anointing, and (3) holiness protects the anointing.

Too often our generation determines the direction they will take by testing the direction the wind is blowing. A mature leader understands that the majority is not automatically right. In fact, very often the majority is wrong. We hear it said, “The whole world can’t be wrong and one man right.” I do not agree. When Israel made a golden calf ... Moses was right, all of Israel was wrong. When Jesus reached for sinners and the outcast ... Jesus was right, the Pharisees (who were in the majority) were wrong.

Thomas Jefferson said, “In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock.”

“Methods are many principles are few. Methods always change but principles never do.” – Unknown

Great leaders know that they cannot please everyone. They know that character and integrity often requires a leader to take an unpopular stand. Godly leaders find out what God want—and they do it; popular

or not. First lady of the United States, Eleanor Roosevelt, said, “Do what you feel in your heart to be right—for you’ll be criticized anyway.”

Integrity is that quality that makes you the kind of leader that people will follow voluntarily, even if you have no title or position.



Leadership Essential #3

PERCEPTION HOW'S YOUR VISION?

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.” — Proverbs 29:18

This verse, like so many in the Bible, holds a dual application. First, and most obvious, “If the leader has no vision, the people he leads will perish.” The second application, not often considered but just as powerful is, “If the leader has no vision, the leader himself will perish.” I would not want to follow a leader, man or woman, who is without a fresh vision. And, I have found that men who do not have a vision are very unhappy and more prone to giving up.

Vision drives a leader.

Vision keeps leadership alive and vibrant.

Vision makes us relevant.

Vision propels the leader and the church into the future.

Vision gives us a mark to shoot for.

Without vision we all perish.

Great leaders have the ability to dream big dreams, communicate those dreams to their follows, and lead their followers into accomplishing the dream. Warren Bennis said, “Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.” I would present to you that every great accomplishment, in any arena of life and leadership, started with a vision. In other words, before any goal is reached, someone dreamed about reaching it.

“The very essence of leadership is that you have to have a vision. It’s got to be a vision you articulate clearly and forcefully on every occasion. You can’t blow an uncertain trumpet.” — Reverend Theodore Hesburgh

Everything we accomplish in life is a result of what we think to be true. Someone said, “If you think you can, or if you think you can’t – you are right!” I believe God called me to preach the Gospel and to build a great church. Because I believe that, I think about it often. Because I think about it often, I make decisions about ministry and church based on the way I think. Because I make decisions that move me toward what I believe God called me to do, I very often reach my goals. There is a powerful Biblical concept found in Proverbs 23:7 that underscores the importance of thinking right, “As a man thinketh in his hear, so is he.”

A Word of Caution

Never surrender your vision to the people who have lost their own. People who have lost their vision to build a church or to lead the church

into revival will often “rain on the parade” of the one who believes God for great things. If God has spoken to you, and you have a clear vision for what He wants you to accomplish for the Kingdom, don’t be detoured by people who tell you it can’t be done.

Stop listening to losers when you are trying to win!



Leadership Essential #4

YOU ARE NOT TRULY LEADING UNLESS YOU ARE DEVELOPING LEADERS!

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.” — John Quincy Adams

Everyone knows the names Microsoft and Bill Gates. These two names represent an unprecedented modern day business success story! A company started by college boys that today have a net worth estimated at \$230 Billion. I guess one would be safe in assuming that Mr. Gates knows a thing-or-two about leadership. Gates said, *“As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others.”* The day of the one-man-band is passed. Great leaders today use the team ministry concept for leading. They are investing their time and effort into ministerial and leadership training. These are the growth tools used by the New Testament church.

In the church that I am privileged to pastor I have an on-going ministry training program. Our church has a membership role of about 680. I am working with 59 men and women in my Ministers Training Program; just a little less than ten percent of the total membership of our church is training for ministry. I pour myself into this group on a regular basis. I send the group leadership tips on an almost daily basis. I share leadership articles with the group. I have developed a web site for the group that contains audio and video sermons, articles, books, etc. all for the purpose of training future ministers and church leaders. I consider the growth and development of our people to be the highest calling of my leadership.

Reproducing yourself in others is one of the most important tasks of leadership. Building more leaders. Building great leaders. Building capable leaders. Building tomorrow's leaders. These are the tasks that make up the Job Description of today's church leader.

"I start with the premise that the function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers." — Ralph Nader

Mr. Jack Welch, a leadership speaker and expert, wrote, **"Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others."** The work of the church is no different; we are most successful when we are producing leaders. Every pastor should be training his successor. Every department head should be training his replacement. As church leaders, our success is measured in part by how effective we are at identifying, training, and placing leaders into the work of God. Greatness must be recognized and developed so that greatness can be given and received.

I have heard it said, **"The only way to grow leaders is to let them lead!"** A number of years ago someone (perhaps John Maxwell) created a simple matrix for developing leaders in six steps:

Step #1: I Lead
Step #2: I Lead, You Watch
Step #3: I Lead, You Help
Step #4: You Lead, I Help
Step #5: You Lead, I watch
Step #6: You Lead

“No man will make a great leader who wants to do it all himself, or to get all the credit for doing it.” — Andrew Carnegie

The best definition of delegation I have heard is, “Never do anything that someone else can and will do.” Many leaders misunderstand delegation. A leader does not delegate to get out of work. A leader delegates every task that someone else can do so that he has the time to do what only he can do.

“The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it.” — Theodore Roosevelt



Leadership Essential #5

INFLUENCE

WHO'S INFLUENCING YOUR THINKING?

“Leadership is influence.” — John C. Maxwell

Billy Cole often said, **“Faith is contagious, but so is doubt.”** If you have been around the church any length of time then you understand that we as believers can transmit our faith. What many leaders do not seem to comprehend is that we can also transmit our doubt. In other words, we can influence followers to believe God or doubt God. Leaders have good days and bad ones. They experience things that pick them up and things that pull them down. No matter what a leader is going through he must understand the importance of speaking faith, living faith, and

projecting faith to those who follow him. Use your influence to positively impact those who are following you.

Because both faith and doubt can be projected and received, that is why it is so important that a leader surrounds himself with people who fuel their faith not their doubts. Rubbing shoulders with and listening to a positive person will make you look at things in a more positive light. When you are around people who have great faith in God, their faith builds your faith. When you are around people who see the good and speak positive it makes you want to do the same.

Sadly, I have worked with some young men and women (in local churches, districts, and nationally) who have nearly been spoiled by a negative influencer in their life. Their vision is blurred. Their hope is shattered. Their faith is spoiled. Their will is broken. There is nothing more dangerous to a young leader's future than to be attached to a negative and critical influencer.

If you are a follower, seek out faith-filled influencers. For you to achieve anything great you must align your life with people who believe in God and who will believe in your future.

If you are a leader, and especially if you are a pastor, I would encourage you to speak words of faith and hope and power and Truth to the precious men and women you are influencing. They have placed their future, their calling, and their destiny in your hands. Treat it with the care and concern it deserves. When people think about the time they spend with you as their number one influencer, you want them to know that their association with you has made them a better person, a better leader, a better minister.

“The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority.” — Kenneth Blanchard

YOUR PASTOR

Before I finish this chapter, I want to take the time to strengthen the position of a Godly pastor in the life of an aspiring leader or minister. Other than your momma, there is probably not a person on the earth who wants you to succeed more than your pastor. I admonish any young man or woman who desires to be in leadership or ministry to stay close to their pastor, listen intently to his instruction, follow his Godly example, and allow him the liberty to speak freely into your life.



Leadership Essential #6

DEALING WITH DIFFICULTIES

“Anyone can hold the helm when the sea is calm.” — Publilius Syrus

Often, as district superintendent, I will be asked the question, “Why are things going so wrong, we are trying to do the will of God?” Many pastors and leaders are of the mistaken opinion that if they are in the will of God, attempting to do something significant for God, then everything should be going great. Not so. Not ever. Sorry.

The fact of the matter is this: If you are attempting anything for God you are going to be a target of the enemy. He is going to attack you, your work, your thinking, your family, or whatever other avenue he can in order to get you to give up your vision, calling, and work.

Several years ago I called a mentor in my own life, T. F. Tenney, to complain about how hard things were at that time. He allowed me to cry on his shoulder about ten minutes and then he said something to me that I will never forget. He said, *“Brother Jack, I can tell you how to*

never have trouble in life. Don't ever try to do anything. Don't ever say anything worth repeating. Don't ever try to be anything." Anytime that you attempt something important for the Kingdom of God you are going to stir up the enemy. He will do all he can to make life difficult. Great leaders don't give up when things get tough, they deal with the difficulties.

THE GAP

Leaders deal with the gap between vision and execution. If you have been in leadership even a short time you have probably already experienced this; we have a great idea that becomes a vision, then we try to implement the vision. There is a HUGE gap between getting a vision and the accomplishment of that vision. When God gives us a new and fresh vision it is so exciting. Equally as exciting is the accomplishment or completion of the vision. However, during the "gap time" (between the vision and the accomplishment) is where we encounter the difficulties.

In my office I have a large framed picture of Thomas Edison holding a light bulb. Edison tried 10,000 different materials before finding one that was suitable to serve as a light bulb filament. Printed on the Edison picture in my office are his own words about the difficulties he had encountered as a scientist and inventor; he said "Many of life's failures are men who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up." He knew firsthand the joy of staying the course, overcoming the obstacles and difficulties, and finally succeeding.

The details of a dream will always present difficulties. But determination downplays the distraction and reveals direction. Brian Tracy said, "Leaders think and talk about the solutions. Followers think and talk about the problems."

After thirty-five years of full time ministry, I have found that the most successful people are those with a singular passion. They are driven to accomplish what God has called them to accomplish. They do not allow any person or any difficulty to detour them. They are not destroyed by distraction.

EMERGENCIES

“One of the tests of leadership is the ability to recognize a problem before it becomes an emergency.” – Arnold H. Glasow

Many times I have told my staff, “Don’t wait until a problem becomes an emergency before you bring it to me.” Once a problem has reached the “emergency” level it is nearly impossible, if not fully impossible, to fix.

Effective leaders do not necessarily spend their days looking for problems; however, they do seem to have the ability to spot situations that could become problems. When you spot a problem; deal with it and move on. Stay focused on the goal.



Leadership Essential #7

PERSISTENCE KEEP ON KEEPIN ON!

“A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.” — John Maxwell

The definition of the word “persist” (*pə-r-sĭst', -zĭst'*) 1. To be obstinately repetitious, insistent, or tenacious. 2. To hold firmly and steadfastly to a purpose, state, or undertaking despite obstacles, warnings, or setbacks. 3. To continue in existence; last.

Persistence is keeping on doing what you know to do even when doing what you know to do doesn't seem to be getting any results. People who kept trying when there seemed to be no hope at all have accomplished most of the important things in the world. The Apostle

Paul wrote to the church in Galatia, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” (Galatians 6:9)

Could anyone talk about persistence and not quote Winston Churchill? He said, “Never, never, never, never give up.” The greatest weakness a leader can have is giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to stay focused on your goals and try just one more time.

While we can all recite quotes about how persistence is the key to success—“If at first you don't succeed...” “Nothing good comes easy”—they are easier said than acted upon when we feel instead like we are “banging our head against a wall” or “beating a dead horse.”

The fact is that many leaders struggle with persistence. It can be hard to keep going when your efforts seem fruitless despite months of hard work.

Caroline Ceniza-Levine, co-founder of **Six Figure Start**, says “Persistence does pay off, so long as we remember one thing: There is a difference between smart persistence and blind persistence.”

So if at first you don't succeed, try, try again. We need to set up a system where risk is rewarded. One where we recognize that failure helps us to increase our creativity. Nothing risked is nothing gained.

“Continuous effort, not strength or intelligence, is the key to unlocking our potential.” – Winston Churchill



Leadership Essential #8

EXCELLENCE

ARE YOU GIVING YOUR PERSONAL BEST?

There's an African-American proverb that says, "God makes three requests of his children: Do the best you can, where you are, with what you have, now"

Your personal EXCELLENCE will make everything you are involved in better! Doing your best in the present moment puts you in the best place for the next moment or level in your life. Harriet Martineau said, "You better live your best and act your best and think your best today, for today is the sure preparation for tomorrow and all the other tomorrows that follow."

One of my favorite characters of modern history is Martin Luther King, Jr. He said, "If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as a Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all

the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, ‘Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.’”

Hunter Thompson said, “Anything worth doing, is worth doing right.” I don’t know if my mother knew Mr. Thompson or not, but I can tell you she quoted him often. She drilled it into her children to take the time to do your best; and, if you do it right the first time, you won’t have to do it over.

John Wooden, basketball coach and member of the Basketball Hall of Fame, asked his staff and players, “If you don’t have time to do it right, when will you have time to do it over?”

When it comes to the work of God, never give less than your best. We should make sure that we are always giving God our very best. Not our leftovers. Not a second-best effort. Not a half-hearted attempt. We should give God our very best effort, every time.

One of my very favorite presidents of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, said, “I do the very best I know how, the very best I can, and I mean to keep on doing so until the end.”

The number one enemy of excellent is good enough. Never settle for good enough. Always, everyday, in every situation, push yourself to give your best effort.

“We are at our very best, and we are happiest, when we are fully engaged in work we enjoy on the journey toward the goal we’ve established for ourselves. It gives meaning to our time off and comfort to our sleep. It makes everything else in life so wonderful, so worthwhile.” – Earl Nightingale

“Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, to all the souls you can, in every place you can, at all the times you can, with all the zeal

you can, as long as ever you can.” – John Wesley

“As simple as it sounds, we all must try to be the best person we can; by making the best choices, by making the most of the talents we've been given.” – Mary Lou Retton



General H. Norman Schwarzkopf

Retired four-star General Norman Schwarzkopf, the New Jersey-born soldier whose celebrated military career culminated in his command of the international coalition that repelled Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1991, is often quoted by leaders both in and out of the military. He was a graduate from West Point and rose through the ranks of the US Army eventually becoming a four-star General. The media nicknamed him "Stormin' Norman."

General Schwarzkopf is an American hero. He was a hero to me. I watched his leadership carefully. His book, *It Doesn't Take A Hero: The Autobiography of General H. Norman Schwarzkopf*, is a great read and I highly recommend it to leaders.

General Schwarzkopf died Thursday, December 27, 2012 in Tampa, Florida, where he had lived since retiring from the Army in 1992. He was 78.

Below are ten quotes from General Schwarzkopf that encapsulate some of his views on leadership and war. The first the quote, my favorite, I have used often.

- 1) “Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without strategy.”
- 2) “Any soldier worth his salt should be antiwar; and still there are things worth fighting for.”
- 3) “The more you sweat in peace, the less you bleed in battle.”
- 4) “When placed in command, take charge.”
- 5) “It doesn’t take a hero to order men into battle. It takes a hero to be one of those men who goes into battle.”
- 6) “True courage is being afraid, and going ahead and doing your job anyhow, that’s what courage is.”
- 7) “The truth of the matter is that you always know the right thing to do. The hard part is doing it.”
- 8) “War is a profane thing.”
- 9) “You learn far more from negative leadership than positive leadership. Because you learn how not to do it.”
- 10) “Do what is right, not what you think the high headquarters wants or what you think will make you look good.”

THANK YOU for reading
Leadership Essentials. My
prayer is that something
here has helped you to get a
better handle on leadership.

For more materials by
Pastor Jack Cunningham
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