

# WHAT GOD DOES WHEN MEN LEAD



**The Power and  
Potential of  
Regular Guys**

**BILL PEEL**



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*What God Does When Men Lead: The Power and Potential of Regular Guys*

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This is a timely and important book for Christian men (and the women who know them). Bill intersperses a biblical perspective of leadership—in the workplace, the family, the church, and the community—with practical examples from real life to demonstrate how to put those principles into action. In a day when some are questioning the “feminization of the Church,” this book shows men how to be “real men” and godly leaders.

**Chuck Colson**, Founder, Prison Fellowship

Are you looking for satisfaction and significance? Or, have you ever desired to make a name, maybe even an eternal name, in a nameless world? Have you longed to be a leader in your community, your workplace, or your church? Have you been wondering what it would take to be a better man, a better husband, and a better father? Is your heart calling out to you to become a man, a real man? Then my dear friend, Bill Peel, has written the guidebook and handbook for which you’ve been searching. Marinate your soul in this book’s teachings and principles. Chew and digest it slowly and carefully. Apply it, one principle and one day at a time, and watch with amazement the transformation your Creator will accomplish in and through you.

**Walt Larimore, MD**, Coauthor, *His Brain, Her Brain: How Divinely Designed Differences Can Strengthen Your Marriage*

Inspiring! Practical! Comprehensive! I have read a boatload of leadership books but this is by far the best. It’s helped me to be a better father, husband, and leader in every sphere of my life. Every man should read it.

**David Stevens, MD**, Chief Executive Officer, Christian Medical & Dental Associations

Churches today are filled with what the world needs most—leaders. Rather than offering them meaningful opportunities to be involved in Kingdom work, many pastors inadvertently give men the message that there is not a role for them. The disturbing result is diminished Kingdom impact. Bill Peel gives men keen insight into the myriad of Kingdom opportunities waiting for them, not only in the church, but at home, on the job, and in their communities. If you are waiting to “get into the game” but find yourself on the sidelines, this is a must read.

**Tom Wilson**, President and CEO, Leadership Network

To

**John, Joel, and James Peel,**

*who are discovering for themselves  
what God does when men lead*

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## Acknowledgments

The voices of many teachers, mentors, and leaders echo throughout the pages of this book. If you've read C. S. Lewis, Dorothy Sayers, or George MacDonald, you'll recognize familiar thoughts. If you attend Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan or download Tim Keller's sermons, there's a place or two where you may hear his voice with a Texas accent.

I am grateful to John Van Deist and Jan Long Harris for providing the encouragement and opportunity to capture in words what I've learned (mostly the hard way) about living as a man attempting to follow Jesus. Sincere thanks also go to my editor, Kim Miller, who patiently translated my Texican into proper English, as well as Nancy Clausen, Sarah Atkinson, Sharon Leavitt, Yolanda Sidney, Maggie Rowe, Bonne Steffen, and the entire Tyndale team.

As the father of three sons, biblical manhood was never an academic exercise or just about me. John, Joel, and James Peel needed me to get this as right as I could. Now it's their job to discover what God does when men lead. When John and Joel became husbands and leaders of their own homes last year, I was reminded again of God's wonderful wisdom in making mankind both male and female. I love watching Genevieve and Christin love my boys and help them become the men God created them to be.

According to George MacDonald, the chief duty of a husband and wife is to help each other do the will of God. After thirty-six years of marriage, Kathy still takes that responsibility seriously. She has given me the opportunity to learn to be a man and encourages me to accept nothing less than becoming the man God intended me to be. I am forever grateful for this woman God sent into my life.

I also want to thank Chuck Hamilton, Steve Blankenship, Pretlow Riddick, and Tracy Taylor, who work together with me to help bring Kingdom reality to the workplace in Dallas.

### **Where Have All the Leaders Gone?**

A lot of guys I know are La-Z-Boy leaders. From our recliner-and-command post, armed with our remote, we can see precisely what the president and the coach of our favorite NFL team are doing wrong. “Where are the Abraham Lincolns . . . the John Kennedys . . . and the Tom Landrys when we need them?” we rant. “We need some guys with vision and integrity to get things back on track!”

Having said our piece, we switch channels and learn that the stock market—and thus our retirement fund—has taken a hit, which brings out our inner Warren Buffet. “If those sorry CEOs would focus on business instead of lining their pockets, we’d all be in better shape,” we blurt out between generous bites of ice cream. “Where’d they find these so-called leaders anyway—under a rock? They’re all snakes! Are there any real leaders left in the world?”

Those are fair questions that deserve some thought because the problem is obviously not a shortage of leadership candidates. Universities graduate thousands, groomed for greatness, every year. There’s an overabundance of organizational climbers, young and old, ready to do whatever it takes to grasp that next rung on the leadership ladder.

If you are concerned about the quality of leadership in our country, you’re not alone. Two-thirds of Americans believe we are experiencing a leadership crisis. Three-quarters of us worry about what will become of our nation if we don’t find better leaders soon.<sup>1</sup>

Eight out of ten Americans believe that corporate executives are less concerned with running their companies than they are with lining their own pockets.<sup>2</sup> You don't need an accounting degree to see that the numbers don't add up when you compare the growth of CEO compensation with the growth rate of your investments.

The problem is not a shortage of leaders but of *worthy* leaders—men who want to serve rather than be served. Men who are not driven by making a name for themselves, but who want to help others succeed. Men who are willing to sacrifice personal interests for the interests of others. Men who ask where they can make the most significant contribution rather than where they can make the most money.

There is a second element to the problem as well. Although most men desire roles of greater leadership at work, many become noticeably passive when it comes to spiritual, cultural, and familial issues—causing serious and far-reaching harm. Yet male passivity is not a new problem. The Bible recounts the stories of many men—Moses, Abraham, Eli, David, Peter, and others—who chose passivity when they needed to take action. Dr. Larry Crabb pinpoints the core problem:

Since Adam, every man has had a natural inclination to remain silent when he should speak. A man is most comfortable in situations in which he knows exactly what to do. When things get confusing and scary, his insides tighten and he backs away. When life frustrates him with its maddening unpredictability, he feels the anger rise within him. And then, filled with terror and rage, he forgets God's truth and looks out for himself. From then on, everything goes wrong. Committed only to himself, he scrambles to make his own life work. The result is what we see every day: sexual passions out of control, uninvolved husbands and fathers, angry men who love to be in the driver's seat. And it all began when Adam refused to speak.<sup>3</sup>



### Note to Male Readers

If you bought this book for yourself, I commend you for taking the initiative. If your wife, girlfriend, or mother gave you this book, or if a church leader decided this would be a good topic for your small group to study, you may be wondering why they selected it for you. No matter how the book came into your possession, by reading it you are taking an important step of self-leadership, which is where we all must begin to become the leaders God wants us to be.

I think you will discover that *What God Does When Men Lead* is different from the leadership books that occupy significant shelf space in bookstores today. For example, numerous books on leadership focus on one

area, such as organizational or community leadership, but this book covers every area of a man's life. Many other books tell you how to be leaderlike—how to dress, run a meeting, and exude an aura of confidence. There are even books that coach you on how to shake hands, answer the phone, and order from a menu like a leader. You won't find those topics in this book—not that these things are necessarily bad. It's just that they don't have much to do with leadership—at least from God's point of view.

According to God, leadership is more about who you are and the choices you make. It's about believing that what He says about you is more important than what press clippings or your résumé says about you. It's about understanding that putting on the armor of God is infinitely more empowering than putting on an expensive suit and power tie. It's about what drives you—not what you drive.

It is our substance, not style, that qualifies us for leadership. And our substance—the stuff at the core of our being—is formed from the choices we make day by day, hour by hour, at the private, intimate levels of life. Who we are up close and personal is the proving ground of true leadership.

At the end of each chapter you will find a section called “Living as a Faithful Steward” with questions for personal reflection and small

***The price of greatness is responsibility.***

WINSTON CHURCHILL

group discussion. I encourage you to ponder and personalize the principles that hit home with you in each chapter. Take time to write down your thoughts and make them your own. Discussing them in a group will help you even more.

### **Note to Female Readers**

If you are a woman, I realize that this book may cause angst. Understandably, it is painful to recall hard-fought battles that opened new vistas for you. It hurts to remember the abuse many of you have endured under domineering males. And it's frustrating to consider the lost contributions of women kept "under control" by culturally imposed roles and expectations. Even now, if you are shouldering responsibilities that should be shared with men, you may be thinking, *I'm sick and tired of doing all the work while they sit around.*

Please understand that when I talk about male leadership, I don't mean it in a "men lead, women don't" sense or a zero-sum-game dominance contest. In no way do I question that women are leaders, nor do I want to deprive them of any leadership role God intends for them. To do so would be patently unbiblical and would discount the tremendous contributions of many female leaders, not to mention raise the ire of my thirty-six-year partner in marriage, who has unquestionable leadership abilities. But even more important, to stop women from exercising any God-given gift would anger the One who distributed that gift in the first place.

This book is meant to guide and encourage men to become the leaders God intends us to be, living in such a way that women (and other men, for that matter) want to follow us. I'll be first in line to confess that we men have not been careful to honor the gifts and dignity of the people we lead—especially the women in our lives.

### **You Are Called to Be a Leader**

In various places and seasons of life, every one of us is called to lead—in our families, at the workplace, at church, and in the community—no matter how many people are following (or not following). In different ways and means, God commands us to step up and take

## WHERE HAVE ALL THE LEADERS GONE?

responsibility, influence those around us for good, and transform the corner of planet earth where we live and work for His glory.<sup>4</sup>

The premise of this book is simple: God made men to lead—and we're not. Men are not assuming the responsible leadership roles God wants us to take. As a result, our faith remains underdeveloped, and we fail to impact our sphere of influence as God intended. However, when we do step up to the plate, take our God-given leadership assignment seriously, and lead in God's way, seriously good things can happen—in every area of our lives and the world at large.

What might God do if you embrace your leadership mandate? For starters, He could restore intimacy with your wife and repair relationships with your children. He could use you to transform your workplace. He could make you a seen or unseen force that changes your church for God's glory. He could use you to bring justice, fairness, and morality back to your community. He could cause your influence to discourage environmental abuse. He could use you to change the world.

And what might happen if you don't take the call to leadership seriously? Well, just watch the evening news and you'll get the picture.

You will find that the biblical leadership to which we men are called is not difficult or complicated. We don't need an exceptional education or a Pattonesque personality to be a leader. There are just two basic things God calls us to do: First, He calls us to take responsibility for ourselves. Second, He calls us to nurture and develop the resources and people He has entrusted to our care. These are things any man can do, and every man has been called to do. In the chapters that follow you will learn sensible, practical, and biblical ways to do this in every area of your life.

It is our choice either to sit back and passively respond to the happenings of each day or take seriously God's command to be His follower and a leader of those He has entrusted to our care.

May we choose well. A lot is at stake.

BILL PEEL

## PART ONE

# PERSPECTIVE

A man who becomes conscious of the responsibility he bears toward a human being who affectionately waits for him, or to an unfinished work, will never be able to throw away his life. He knows the “why” for his existence, and will be able to bear almost any “how.”

VICTOR FRANKL

If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

*Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

MARK 10:43-45

## **Wanted: A New Kind of Leader**

The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant and a debtor.   MAX DE PREE

Do you think of yourself as a leader? If an image of George Patton or Jack Welch pops into your mind when you hear the word *leader*, you—like most other guys—would have to say no. But at some place, every man is a leader. That includes you. Whether you think of yourself as a leader or not, if you want to please God, it is crucial for you to understand what God wants of leaders. Sadly, there is a lot of confusion about leadership.

The last half of the twentieth century marked a shift in the way people think about leadership. Prior to the 1980s, we talked about managers and managing—people who were trained and could get things done. Leadership was considered more of a personality trait than a professional skill. But in the 1980s, the idea of leadership—the ability to cast a vision for the future, to transform what *is* into what *could be*—captured our imaginations. Americans have always liked the idea of a White Knight who could ride in and deliver us from our problems. Ronald Reagan delivered us from the Evil Empire. Lee Iacocca delivered Chrysler, its shareholders, and thousands of workers from economic disaster. FedEx founder Fred Smith delivered us from waiting days for mail and late packages. Rudy Giuliani saved New York City from a soaring crime rate. We like people who give us hope. And better still, we like people who can provide what we hope for.

As more and more Americans found their investment portfolios growing in the 1980s and 90s, we inflated the value of those individuals who had the ability (or so we thought) to turn companies around and increase the return on our investments. We elevated them, along with their compensation packages, to the level of superstars. To be sure, some leaders have earned their status, performing sacrificially and with excellence to the benefit of others. Some leaders have turned around crumbling companies and saved the jobs of thousands. Others have risked their last dime and endured ridicule to build multibillion-dollar companies that make our lives better in many ways. In no way am I suggesting that these individuals deserve blame or shame.

What I am suggesting is that when we look to a single person in power to change a company, government, community, church, or even a family, we do ourselves—and those individuals—a great disservice. When we place our complete trust in those at the top to “fix things,” we fall into the trap of expecting someone else to fix our lives. As a result, we become frustrated and blame others when life doesn’t turn out as we expected. Ken Lay wasn’t the only person responsible for Enron’s shady dealings and demise. Michael Brown was not solely to blame for FEMA’s sluggish response to the Katrina disaster.

When we credit one person for an outcome that required the work of many people, we also set up that person for personal defeat. The temptation to believe that an organization’s success was his doing alone has ruined many a man. “[We have] a wrongheaded notion of what exactly a leader is. This misguided notion of leadership often results in the wrong people attaining critical leadership roles. Search committees and voters alike fall into the trap of choosing leaders for their style rather than their substance, for their image instead of their integrity. Given this way of doing business, why should we be surprised when our leaders come up short?” writes business journalist Bill George.<sup>1</sup>

Media outlets can be counted on to showcase the failures of today’s leaders, giving special attention to those leaders who do not

hold their particular “unbiased” bias. Yet cable TV and Internet blogs were not the first to document the problems of those at the top. The Bible also records the shortfalls and outright failures of many leaders, providing powerful lessons we can apply today. Take Moses, a guy I consider to be recorded history’s first world-class leader.

If ever a leader qualified for pedestal placement, it was Moses. Miraculously saved from drowning, he was raised as the darling child of Egyptian aristocracy. Moses probably knew from a young age that he was a man of destiny and purpose. But when his purpose to deliver his fellow Jews from cruel bondage became clear, he made the mistake of trusting in his own power and prowess to bring about his destiny. Without stopping to consider God’s timing, Moses murdered an Egyptian middle-manager, then tried to cover up his crime by burying the victim in the sand—all in pursuit of his God-given vision and calling (see Acts 7:23-25).

Like many modern leaders, Moses had a problem with pride and self-sufficiency. He ran ahead of God, believing that the end justified the means. Moses needed to learn something that many of us need to learn: God wants us to fulfill the purpose for which He created us—but He wants us to fulfill it in His way and according to His timing.

Not only was God less than pleased with Moses’ impetuous pursuit of his purpose, when Pharaoh found out, he set out to end Moses’ leadership career—permanently. Running for his life, Moses ended up in Midian, about a 150-mile hike across the desert. It was here in the wilderness that God put him through a forty-year rehab program to teach him humility. Moses was still a deliverer, but now he was delivering sheep from predators. This was a big change from his former royal life, but God was preparing him to do things *His* way.

By the time God summoned Moses to Mount Sinai to call him back into active service, Moses had gone from pride to humility to humiliation. During his burning-bush encounter, Moses used every possible excuse to remind God that he was not capable, not equipped, and not equal to the job of deliverer in any way, shape, or form. “Send someone else to do it” was his response.

When God wants us to do something—and He's let us know what that something is—He doesn't look too kindly on complacency. Maybe it was when "God burned with anger" that Moses realized he wasn't going to wiggle out of his assignment.

Well, you know the story. God used Moses to make Pharaoh and his kingdom so utterly miserable that his royal highness finally relented and told the Israelites to pack up, get out, and take whatever they wanted with them. But it didn't take Pharaoh long to regret his decision and call for his army and six hundred chariots to pursue the Israelites, which they did—all the way into the Red Sea.

It's amazing what performing a Red Sea miracle will do for a leader's self-esteem. I imagine Moses was once again feeling pretty good about himself after he and his two-million-plus nomadic community<sup>2</sup> celebrated their victory over Pharaoh's army with songs of praise to God. But his sweet taste of success was short-lived. Three days later the people began to grumble because they were thirsty. And, once again, God used Moses—this time to provide them with water. Then they grumbled because they were hungry, selectively remembering and reminding Moses of their tasty diet back in Egypt. God instructed Moses on how to take care of this problem, too—for forty years.

I admit that by this point in the story I'm feeling sorry for Moses. After a guy has parted large bodies of water by holding out a home-made staff and acted as God's miracle broker, daily feeding a population larger than Manhattan for a really long time, it's hard for me to fault him for giving in to the temptation of thinking he could handle most anything by himself. A few weeks into their journey, Moses did just that. He was once again tempted to assume more responsibility than God intended. But this time Moses' father-in-law and wilderness mentor helped him see the danger of letting his leadership gifts run away with him.

From morning to night Jethro had watched his son-in-law take his seat as the sole judge, trying to solve everyone's problems and disputes. Thinking that one judge could preside over more than two



million people may seem odd. But remember, Moses felt responsible. He was their God-appointed leader. What's more, the Israelites looked up to him as their deliverer. In their mind, he alone could lead them into a better future.

This volume of responsibility, authority, and notoriety may stroke a guy's ego, but it's dangerous for everyone involved—including the leader himself. No matter how altruistic a leader's motives may be in the beginning, the magnetism of such power can easily draw him into thinking that it is he, not God, who is master of the universe. It's embarrassing to think about how many times I've let this attitude slip in the back door of my thinking—and it wasn't pretty. I wish I'd had a Jethro in my life to knock some sense into my hard head. Here's what happened in Moses' case.

When Jethro asked Moses why he took on this gargantuan responsibility, note Moses' answer: "Because the people come to me . . ." Can't you just see Jethro shaking his head as he responded with this sage advice? "Moses' father-in-law replied, 'What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone'" (Exodus 18:15, 17-18).

What was true then is just as true today. When we elevate leadership to the dizzying heights we did at the end of the twentieth century and rely on leaders to solve all our problems, we can also count on negative outcomes. Here are a few to consider.

**1. We fail to give credit where credit is due**, discounting the contribution of others. When we give recognition only to leaders for accomplishments that required a team or community of people to achieve, those who are really responsible for the success are deprived of the rewards and encouragement they deserve. In Moses' case, it's easy to elevate him to superhero status. After all, he had personally talked to God and done some pretty amazing things. But in focusing on Moses, we forget that Aaron, Miriam, and the tribal elders and family leaders assumed responsibility for overseeing the welfare of more than two

million relatives on a long-term camping trip. Bags had to be packed, money raised, bread baked, livestock and provisions gathered. These thousands of responsible men and women were essential to getting all those people out of Egypt and on the road to the Promised Land.

Fifteen hundred years later, the apostle Paul confronted the church at Corinth for their similar tendency to elevate certain people with out-front gifts.

*Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. 1 Corinthians 12:14-20*

No one is expendable in the body of Christ. Everyone is essential. Moving a family, community, church, or business toward legitimate achievement of any sort always involves a team of people who take on responsibility. Leaders of every variety must recognize the important part they play, while at the same time giving other responsible people the authority, resources, and affirmation they need and deserve. In other words, a good leader encourages leadership at all levels.

As we move toward the close of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the definition of effective leadership is already morphing from an overemphasis on decisive individual leaders to an approach that is more inclusive of a multitude of gifts.<sup>3</sup> People around the world are realizing that one leader, no matter how gifted, can't possibly have all the skills needed to effectively lead an organization today. In fact, one leader has never had all the skills needed.

Heads of companies make a big mistake when they don't honor and recognize the people who did the work to make their company successful. Recently a guy told me how he and a number of other high-performing individuals had added millions of dollars to their company's bottom line. The president of the company couldn't bring himself to acknowledge their contribution in any significant way. The top-notch sales team who had worked their tails off grew weary of the president taking all the credit for the company's growth when interviewed by the press. And they really got tired of him raising their sales goals without raising their compensation. They finally decided that enough was enough and left en masse to work for another competitor. Today the original company is struggling to survive.

*The bravest things we do in our lives are usually known only to ourselves. No one throws ticker tape on the man who chooses to be faithful to his wife or the lawyer who didn't take the drug money.*

PEGGY NOONAN

History makes a pretty good case that if there is any expendable group in God's Kingdom work, it may be the standout leaders. Think about it: When the early church was persecuted, church leaders were forced into hiding in Jerusalem while the other believers scattered, so that the power of the gospel roared across the Mediterranean world like a giant tsunami (see Acts 8:1-2). The message of Christ had to be carried forth by ordinary followers of Jesus. A similar phenomenon happened in twentieth-century China. In the late 1940s, when missionaries were run out of the country and church leaders were forced underground, the Chinese church exploded numerically.

- 2. Potential for God's Kingdom work is lost.** When we idolize leaders and place too much stock in their leadership, we begin believing that anything of value must come down from above, according to the chain of command. As for Moses, he came precariously close to taking God's place in the people's eyes. The

Israelites acted as if everything depended upon their leader, and they refused initially to go to their tribal leaders instead of Moses to solve their problems—a problem in and of itself.

Overdependence on one person at the top stifles leadership initiative and resourcefulness at all levels. People become selfishly apathetic and think, *Why should I put myself out, take a risk, or exercise initiative? That's the leader's job.* Surrendering freedom can seem harmless and even attractive when security, a powerful opiate, is offered in its place. And like a narcotic, dependence on leadership is poisonous and addictive to an organization.

Initiative, responsibility, and ownership by all employees are needed for any organization to reach its potential. Yet when a company depends too much on its leader, these essentials are replaced by control, dependence, and an environment in which everyone is looking out for his or her own interests. Valuable talents that God placed within each individual are held in check by the belief that leadership at the top is what makes for success, not the contribution of those lower on the organizational chart.

It's rather disturbing to think that we die for freedom and democracy and celebrate the fall of communism, yet when it comes to our businesses, churches, and communities, we willingly grant leadership power that demands compliance. Looking for leaders who will tell us what to do, give us direction, and set standards for obedience, we often mirror a totalitarian state more than a democracy.

It is unrealistic to think that people will flourish in an organization run in this manner any more than they will flourish in the drab, hopeless mediocrity produced by communist cultures. Leadership goals in command-and-control settings rarely rise above the self-interests of those in charge, and rank-and-file citizens become pawns for achieving them.

Jesus turned this concept of leadership on its head when He responded to James and John's request for positions of leadership and authority in His kingdom.

## WANTED: A NEW KIND OF LEADER

*Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* Mark 10:42-45

Please note that Jesus didn’t rebuke James and John for their *desire* for positions of leadership; He confronted their *concept* of leadership. He wanted them (and us) to understand that leadership is not about getting others to serve us or our purposes—no matter how noble, right, and good they are. Leadership is about abandoning self-interest to serve those we lead. It’s about helping everyone achieve God’s purpose.

While not stating this directly, this passage in Mark implies that those being led are not children who need everything done for them. They are people with gifts, abilities, and resources who need to be developed so they can do what God designed them to do, not be exploited by controlling leaders seeking to advance their own interests.

Not too long ago I talked with a pastor who was irate because a member of his church had the audacity to give his time, money, and energy to a non-church-sponsored ministry. In an unguarded moment, the pastor unzipped his heart and revealed his priorities. He wanted his congregation’s 100 percent buy-in on *his* agenda, *his* purposes, and *his* vision. It never entered the pastor’s mind to help this congregation member pursue the vision and purpose to which God had called him. The pastor’s agenda was the only one that mattered.

***Liberty means responsibility. That’s why most men dread it.***

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

- 3. Leaders get grandiose ideas of their own importance.** When leaders become impressed with their own job description or title and believe that success is the result of their hard work and talent, lower-level leaders and others in the organization become

expendable. This certainly happened to Moses when he first attempted to deliver God's people. Filled with self-importance, the young Moses compulsively struck and killed an Egyptian taskmaster who got in his way.

Feeling indispensable is a modern plague with ancient roots, and every leader is susceptible. Years later, when Jethro realized that the Israelites' overdependence on Moses could tempt him to turn and walk down that familiar path of self-importance once again, he stepped in.

We probably can all name leaders we've known who were so fixated on their God-given vision that they wouldn't let anything or anyone get in the way—even if it meant walking over people, stretching the truth, and abandoning their family like excess baggage. Men like this are vision-focused, not God-focused. This is pretty embarrassing to admit, but I know what it's like to be so caught up in a great cause that you lose touch with reality. I didn't go so far as to physically abandon my family, but at the time I sure thought what I was doing was more important than meeting their needs. Let's call it like it is. That's emotional abandonment.

On the extreme dark side of this tendency, a leader becomes so thoroughly self-absorbed that he bends God's standards for his own indulgence, as if moral standards apply to everyone but him. It becomes easy for anyone in this frame of mind to rationalize that he deserves a reward or a little pleasure because he gives so much to God. King David fell victim to this attitude when he lusted after and slept with the wife of one of his loyal soldiers. Then, in a desperate attempt to cover his sin and her pregnancy, he contrived a plan to have Uriah the Hittite killed in battle.

Jesus had some good advice for leaders who think too highly of their own importance. He told His disciples, "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'" (Luke 17:10). This is a far cry from modern ego-driven leaders who

demand outlandish salaries, which is especially de-motivating to the people who actually have to do the work that creates the leader's success.

### **An Ancient Solution for a Modern Problem**

So how does a leader avoid elevating his own importance and minimizing the contribution of others? Jethro gave Moses some excellent advice about how to escape these leadership traps.

*Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. 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. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.* Exodus 18:19-23

Rather than putting all the power in the hands of one leader, Jethro proposed that Moses lead by giving away responsibility and authority. He believed that God can use a lot of people to make good choices. It worked in the desert for Moses. It worked for Jesus when He gave away authority to His followers. It worked in the early church when the apostles gave power away to faithful followers. It works today when leaders release decision-making power and put it into the hands of people actually doing the work.

Booker T. Washington summed it well: "Few things help an individual more than to place responsibility upon him, and to let him know that you trust him." It might be surprising, but that's exactly what God has done for you. Listen to what Paul says in Ephesians 3:20: "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work *within us* . . ." (emphasis mine).

God has invested gifts, abilities, and talents in every man along with the dreams and imagination to use them. He has entrusted every one of us with His work and the power to get it done—not a privileged few. And as you'll discover in the chapters ahead, that involves a lot more than what goes on at church. God's work involves the meeting of legitimate human needs in the workplace, community, home, and church. Wherever we've been given responsibility—great or small—there is a leadership role to play.

### **Living as a Faithful Steward**

It's time for you and me to stop looking for leaders to solve our problems and start leading right where we are. We need to address life's issues as the leaders God called us to be, taking responsibility and initiative in the decisions set before us. When enough men in any organization—be it a family, church, or company—begin to lead in this way, great things can happen.

Max De Pree, chairman of Herman Miller, Inc., gives us a self-test to assess whether we are doing this. "The signs of outstanding leadership appear primarily among the followers. Are the followers reaching their potential? Are they learning? Serving? Do they achieve the required results? Do they change with grace? Manage conflict?" In other words, *are they leading themselves?*

1. How has this chapter changed your perception of leadership?
2. What areas of responsibility has God entrusted to your care? In other words, where does He expect you to be a leader?
3. Have you ever blamed another leader for something that you should have taken responsibility for? If so, briefly explain.
4. Have you ever been the victim of an egotistical leader? How did it feel? How did you respond?
5. What barriers get in the way of you becoming the leader God intends you to be?



## Introduction

1. David Gergen, “America’s Best Leaders,” posted 10/22/06, <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/061022/30opener.htm>; accessed 4/13/07. This story appears in the October 30, 2006, print edition of *U.S. News and World Report*.
2. Ibid.
3. Larry Crabb, *The Silence of Adam* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 12.
4. For a few biblical instructions on leadership, see Jeremiah 29:7; Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 3:19, 21; 4:5-6; and 1 Timothy 2:8; 3:4.

## Chapter 1: Wanted: A New Kind of Leader

1. Bill George, “Truly Authentic Leadership,” posted 9/22/06; [http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/061022/30authentic\\_2.htm](http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/061022/30authentic_2.htm); accessed 4/13/07. This story appears in the October 30, 2006, print edition of *U.S. News and World Report*.
2. Exodus 12:37 tells us that there were 600,000 adult males in the Exodus, about the size of Napoleon’s Russian invasion army. This number does not include women and children, however. Scholars estimate the number of people in the Exodus between two and three million.
3. A study conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership found that 85 percent of respondents believed the definition of effective leadership has changed in the last five years. André Martin, “The Changing Nature of Leadership,” (Center for Creative Leadership, 2006); available at <http://www.ccl.org/leadership/research/projects.aspx>.

## Chapter 2: Everyday Leaders

1. Peter Block, *Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1993), xx.
2. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 126–127.
3. Michael Novak, *Business as a Calling* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 18, 38.