

**SECRETS TO BUILDING
PEOPLE AND TEAMS THAT
WIN CONSISTENTLY**

+ + +



THE
MENTOR
LEADER

TONY
DUNGY
WITH
NATHAN
WHITAKER



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The Mentor Leader: Secrets to Building People and Teams That Win Consistently

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FOREWORD

by Jim Caldwell

On Friday, November 17, 2006, two days before a big game against the Dallas Cowboys, head coach Tony Dungy received word through our security officers that a party was going to take place and that many of our players would be in attendance. As you can imagine, once this party was publicized, it would draw a crowd of great Colts fans who wanted to be in the midst of the action, but also others who may have had different motives.

The Indianapolis Colts have not had many players who have run afoul of the law—and there are distinct reasons why. Number one, under the leadership of owner Jim Irsay, president Bill Polian, and Tony, the team had a policy of placing character in the forefront of the player-selection process. It was a common organizational practice to eliminate players—even talented “difference-makers”—from consideration in the draft if they possessed questionable character flaws. Number two, the team is committed to purposeful, effective communication. Tony began most team meetings by reminding everyone to refrain from questionable behavior. To emphasize his point, he

used an overhead projector to display newspaper clippings involving other professional athletes who had been arrested or accused of illegal activity. He highlighted the circumstances surrounding the incidents and discussed ways to avoid a similar fate.

During our customary 9 a.m. team meeting that Friday, Tony warned the team about the party scheduled for that evening. He drove the point home clearly and succinctly: “We do not need any distractions.” We were undefeated, 9–0 to be exact, and we were traveling to Dallas the next day. As the saying goes, forewarned is forearmed, but not all our guys got the message.

At the party, an altercation occurred and one of our team members put himself in a position to be detained by the police. Though some of the details are still rather sketchy and remain unanswered, it involved a contentious exchange with a woman at the party.

As you can imagine, the incident did not sit well with Tony. The violation appeared to fly in the face of his warning, and he was not amused. Tony rarely displays a visible reaction to uncomfortable situations, but if you had been around him as long as I have, you would have sensed his displeasure.

On Saturday morning, before our flight to Dallas, Tony met with the young man, and he later made the team aware of the incident. He said he didn’t know exactly how he was going to respond, but there would be consequences. He later handled the situation privately with the individual involved.

After the 2005 season, I had a few NFL teams contact me about their head coaching positions. Those inquiries didn’t result in a job offer, but in order to prepare myself for future opportunities and the possibility of one day leading an NFL franchise, I asked Tony if he would mind if I came into his office periodically to ask him a question or two about the role of head coach. He was always so gracious, and he agreed enthusiastically to my request.

The Thursday after the Dallas game, when I went in to ask Tony

a few questions about managing the team, I also asked him whether he was inclined to demonstrate a show of force in response to the incident from the previous week. His simple five-word reply—“It is not about me”—resonated with my spirit, and it is one of the most profound lessons I learned from him.

A typical leader might have tried to maintain his posture of authority in front of the team by “saber-rattling” and creating a scene as a deterrent—pounding on the podium and making an example of the player, in response to the infraction. But Tony took an alternate approach. As long as the player got the message and learned from his mistake, Tony was more interested in what was most important for the team and the franchise.

By the way, he never had another issue with that young man. The two of them share a unique bond today, and they continue to stay in touch.

In his book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins identifies the characteristics of highly effective companies and companies that fail. While conducting his research, he found that chief executive officers of the effective companies had similar traits—which Collins calls Level 5 leadership traits. The description of the Level 5 leader sums up Tony’s leadership DNA perfectly:

Level 5 leaders . . .

embody a paradoxical mix of personal humility and professional will.

display a compelling modesty, are self-effacing and understated.

attribute success to factors other than themselves.

display a workmanlike diligence—more plow horse than show horse.

attribute success to factors other than themselves.

set up their successors for even greater success.*

I will say “amen” to that. Tony graciously empowered me and others

*Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2001), 39.

to reach our full potential and take ownership of the team's success. He was an active participant in our development, and he checked his ego at the door. He was more likely to ask questions than make decrees.

Subsequent to Tony's retirement, I have often been asked, "How will you fill those big shoes?" My response has been, "I don't have to do it alone." There is only one Tony Dungy, Joe Paterno, or Chuck Noll. The leadership style that Tony employed allowed for a sense of autonomy, development, growth, understanding, and ownership.

Furthermore, with the Colts, we have an excellent owner who knows the business inside and out. We have an elite personnel department that is experienced and knowledgeable and always two steps ahead of the curve. We have a great coaching staff of outstanding teachers. We have a group of players who listen to every word we say, and they believe in our formula for winning. We have veteran leadership that has taken ownership of the team, setting a businesslike tone with unparalleled work habits.

Because of Tony's leadership style, he allowed those around him to function in an atmosphere where autonomy was the rule and not the exception. He nurtured and cultivated both players and coaches, molding without pressing, nudging without pushing, and leading without dragging.

Having worked with Tony and learned from him made my job a lot easier in the first year after his retirement. All I had to do was tweak a few things to match my own personality and then manage from the middle, as I had seen Tony do, and not be fearful of empowering those around me. Observing Tony during the eight years we worked together was truly a blessing. Now you have an opportunity to see why success was so prevalent under his reign, and to witness the impact his leadership style had on everyone around him. I dare say that, after you've read this book, you will be impacted profoundly as well.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Once again, Tony and I recognize that we could not have done it alone. And once again, Tony is reluctant to single out individuals because of his concern—borne out by the feedback we’ve received from our prior books’ acknowledgments—that we will overlook someone. However, I will try once again, fueled by the knowledge that, though Tony could have pulled this off by himself, once I was involved—as those who know me well will recognize—there must have been a village behind our efforts to save it and make it a decent read.

Our gratitude extends beyond the names listed below, to those who have supported our endeavor in so many ways. Those who went beyond the call of duty include:

Donald Miller, who graciously gave of his time to share his passion for mentoring.

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Scott Whitaker, whose leadership insights helped me develop initial concepts, and whose wordsmithery—both in the drafting and editing stages—helped bring this book into being.

And, once again, to our wives, Lauren and Amy, and our children, Tiara, Eric, Hannah, Jordan, Jade, Ellie Kate, Justin, and Jason, for your patience and for filling our homes with such joyful, delightful distractions as we worked.

INTRODUCTION

*If all you're about is winning, it's not really worth it.
I'm after things that last.*

KELI MCGREGOR

It was still raining steadily, but my thoughts were far away from the weather. While still captured by the euphoria of the moment, I turned philosophical, thinking, “How did I get here?” Of all the people who could have been headed up the steps to the podium to accept the Lombardi trophy for winning Super Bowl XLI, it was *me*. As soon as I thought it, though, I knew it wasn’t only me. Instead, it was a combination of my mom and dad, Lauren, Allen Truman, Dave Driscoll, Leroy Rockquemore, Cal Stoll, Donnie Shell, John Stallworth, Chuck Noll, Richard Farmer, Denny Green, Rich McKay, Bill Polian, and so many others who had, for whatever reason, built into my life.

I had been mentored by so many. They had all added value to my life. And my leadership style had been influenced by them. I had thought about the idea of leading in such a way that it created value for others, but in that moment, thinking of so many people who had made a difference in my life and had so much to do with my being on that podium in that steady drizzle, the idea of mentoring crystallized for me. It isn't a structured program that necessarily makes the difference; rather, the difference is made moment by moment by leaders who care—for others.

As I hoisted that trophy above my head, I realized the responsibility we all have to become mentor leaders in the lives of others.

Most people, at one time or another in their lives, will take on the role of a leader—whether formally or informally, at work, at home, or at church. And most people, if they're honest about it, would say they feel a little inadequate in that role—whether as a parent or a boss or a team leader. Actually, some self-doubt is a healthy attribute in a leader.

Leadership is necessary in any human society; thus, a leadership void will not exist for very long before someone steps up to lead, either by popular acclaim, selection, or self-appointment. The question is, what type of leader will that person be?

This question is more than academic, however, for the leadership style can dictate how effective that person will be, and how significant an impact the person's leadership will create.

In my life and career, I have seen all kinds of leaders, but the ones who have had the greatest positive impact on my life are the select few who have been not only leaders but also mentors. In fact, it is largely because of the influence of mentors in my life that I was drawn to write this book.

I believe that certain principles of successful leadership are timeless. In other words, they're not just the latest fad or fashion, and they're not dependent on or dictated by our circumstances. Furthermore,

I have come to realize that these principles can be taught, learned, absorbed, and then passed on to others, especially to those whom we ourselves have the privilege to lead.

Conventional wisdom says that leaders are born, but I don't believe that's true. From what I've seen, positive, life-changing leadership is an acquired trait, learned from interaction with others who know how to lead and lead well. Leadership is not an innate, mystical gift; rather, it is a learned ability to influence the attitudes and behavior of others. As such, we can all learn—and then teach others—how to understand and apply the principles of successful leadership.

I spoke with the head of a Fortune 300 company who noted that he had recently experienced an awakening in how he interacted with his employees. He said, “I had long known that I could influence whether or not my employees had a good day; it was fairly obvious that I held sway over that, for better or worse. But one day, as I drove home, trying to fight off a dark cloud from a tough day's work and trying not to let it affect my family when I walked through the front door, I realized that many, if not all, of my direct reports were experiencing the same thing. If they weren't able to compartmentalize their frustration, anger, and irritation, then they were going to take those toxic feelings into their homes. I don't simply have an impact on my direct reports—there is an exponential effect on those around them as well, based in no small part on their interactions with me.”

Understanding the profound effect of our leadership is often the first step toward adopting a style of leadership that has proved itself effective over many generations—a style I'm calling *mentor leadership*. It isn't so much the creation of a new kind of leadership as it is a recognition and exploration of a model I've learned—and tried to practice—throughout my life.

Much of what I've learned I owe to two men in particular: my father, Wilbur Dungy, who provided a consistent model for me through his teaching, coaching, and parenting; and Chuck Noll,

my head coach when I was a player and an assistant coach with the Pittsburgh Steelers.

They, in turn, were shaped by others—my father by my grandfather, Herbert Dungy, who modeled for my dad what he in turn modeled for my siblings and me; and Coach Noll by Paul Brown and Don Shula, coaches under whom he coached and played.

As their title suggests, mentor leaders seek to have a direct, intentional, and positive impact on those they lead. At its core, mentoring is about building character into the lives of others, modeling and teaching attitudes and behaviors, and creating a constructive legacy to be passed along to future generations of leaders. I don't think it's possible to be an accidental mentor.

While leading in such an intentional manner, mentor leaders cannot help but also have a positive impact on others—whether as role models or through the lives of the people they have mentored. The primary focus of mentor leadership, however, is to shape the lives of the people right in front of them, as they lead, guide, inspire, and encourage those people.

We often mirror what we see. Coaches will model the behavior of successful coaches they know or observe, sometimes with detrimental results. Similarly, business leaders model other business leaders—or when necessary, try to do the opposite, whatever that might be.

Too often, though, we choose people to mirror or model, and leadership books to read, solely for the purpose of figuring out how to win more games or increase our financial bottom line. In the process of looking for leadership models to emulate, we choose people who have won a lot of games or who have made a lot of money for themselves or their organizations, with little thought given to how they have affected the lives of the people around them. If along the way lives are made better, we too often view it as a wonderful by-product rather than as a primary purpose of leadership.

I don't have all the answers, but my hope is that you'll find enough

here that will help you become a positive mentor leader in whatever setting you find yourself.

Before we get into the heart of our discussion, here are some essential traits of a mentor leader to keep in mind:

- Becoming a mentor leader is not rocket science. If it were, *I* wouldn't be writing a book about leadership. As we'll see, leadership consists of principles and skills that are accessible to anyone and everyone. They aren't necessarily intuitive, but they aren't terribly difficult, either.
- Mentor leadership can be taught and learned; but in order to be absorbed, it must be practiced. The best way to evaluate leadership philosophies and find your own style is by testing them in action. You can't stay in the ivory tower reading books and discussing theories. Eventually you have to wade into the fray.
- Mentor leadership focuses on developing the strengths of individuals. It might be in a fairly narrow way, such as building a specific skill, or more broadly focused, such as teaching employees to be proactive about meeting others' needs so they can better support the organization. Successful mentor leaders make the people they lead better players, workers, students, or family members—and ultimately, better people.
- Mentor leadership works best when the ones being mentored are aware that the mentor leader has a genuine concern for their development and success. Those we lead will be more receptive if they believe we genuinely want them to succeed.

Though true mentor leadership is intentional, we need to understand that people are watching us and learning from us whether we're aware of it or not. The leadership we model can lead to positive or

negative results. We've all seen cases where leaders have unintentionally fostered destructive, dysfunctional, or damaging behaviors. Parents who have heard their children echo harsh words to a pet, doll, or sibling will know what I mean.

Success for a mentor leader is measured by different standards than those commonly accepted in our society. Mentor leadership is all about shaping, nurturing, empowering, and growing. It's all about relationships, integrity, and perpetual learning. Success is measured in changed lives, strong character, and eternal values rather than in material gain, temporal achievement, or status. Ultimately, mentor leadership is just as successful in achieving the standards of accomplishment in our society. But unlike other types of leadership, it is primarily concerned with building and adding value to the lives of people in the process.

It's about changing lives.

A Mentor Leader.

CHAPTER 1

THE MANDATE OF A MENTOR LEADER: FOCUS ON SIGNIFICANCE

You've got to do your own growing, no matter how tall your grandfather was.

OLD IRISH PROVERB

On January 24, 2010, as I sat in the stands at Lucas Oil Stadium, watching the Indianapolis Colts celebrate their victory over the New York Jets in the AFC Championship Game, I couldn't help but reflect on my relationships with the five men who now stood on the podium at midfield, handing the championship trophy from one man to the next—owner Jim Irsay, general manager Bill Polian, head coach Jim Caldwell, and team captains Peyton Manning and Gary Brackett.

I felt a measure of satisfaction that day, knowing that each of these leaders—along with the rest of the team—had committed to a common vision and a common goal at the beginning of the season. The goal, of course, was to win a championship, but along with that, everyone was concerned with raising the performance of all

the others, with helping them become better players, better coaches, and better men. Each man had a different role and responsibility in accomplishing that goal, but they had all been united in purpose and in their pursuit of excellence. And now they were able to celebrate their success together.

Not only were these men leaders in a positional sense within the organization—and thus were enjoying the team’s success—but they had also embraced the principles of mentor leadership and were leaders in a relational sense as well. If they hadn’t established the types of relationships they had with each other and with the other coaches and team members, but had only counted wins and losses, they would not have had the same level of positive influence on each other, and the season would not have been as successful. But I knew these men were good, grounded people, whose desire in everything they did was to make each other better—which, in my view, is a more accurate measure of success than wins and losses. It is also a defining characteristic of a mentor leader.

Unity of purpose and a desire to make other people better must start at the top if these goals are going to ripple through an entire organization. But, unfortunately, the opposite is equally true. I think

+ Unity of purpose and a desire to make other people better must start at the top if these goals are going to ripple through an entire organization. we’ve all seen examples of the head coach who sits down at the table in the media room after the game, still basking in the afterglow of the big win. Behind him is the backdrop with the team logo and the corporate sponsor of the day, and as the coach answers the reporters’ questions, he uses words such as *we*, *us*, and *our*, but what he really means is *I*, *me*, and *my*. And everyone on his team knows it—from the assistant coaches, who are often pushed aside or belittled in practice; to the players, who incur the coach’s wrath if they do not perform

exactly as expected; to the members of the support staff, who are treated as less than human; to the families, who are not allowed anywhere near the workplace for fear they'll cause a loss of focus—or worse, that their presence might reorient the team's priorities away from winning games. After a while, people see through the talk when it doesn't line up with the walk.

When a team wins or a business is successful, the families of the players or the workers may be excited for the moment; but when they count the cost, I wonder how many would say that the temporary accomplishment outweighs all the memories missed or the bonds not formed. Or, worse yet, maybe they have been programmed over time to believe that the all-encompassing sacrifice of family, community, time—or anything other than what it takes to win games, close sales, or build a business—is an accepted part of life, simply what is required to achieve the number one priority: *winning*.

Sadly, such “accomplishment” without significance will ultimately prove to be meaningless and without lasting value. Mentor leaders insist on more and define success in a much more robust and well-rounded way.

MENTOR LEADERS PUT PEOPLE FIRST

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

ROMANS 12:2

Shortsighted leadership focuses primarily on the bottom line. In football, it's wins and losses and playoff berths. In business, it's quarterly profits, shareholder equity, and sales targets. Not that these things aren't important—they are. But when they become the primary focus of a business or a team, they inevitably result in an organization

that is out of balance. Leaders whose definition of success depends on such a short-term focus—and by *short-term* I mean temporal, noneternal—will one day wake up to discover they’ve missed out on what is truly important in life, namely, meaningful relationships.

When life in the workplace is all about results and outcomes, it’s easy to adopt the same mind-set in other venues as well. Thus, we have parents who scream at the umpire at Little League games, or browbeat their kids into getting straight A’s, or harp on the players they coach in Pee Wee football about being “mentally tough.” At

+ **Shortsighted leadership focuses primarily on the bottom line.**

home, in the limited time left for family, they’re tempted to criticize if the house isn’t just so or to cram in everything they want their spouses or kids to know, instead of taking time to build the kind of family relationships that God intends.

In our society, whether we’ll admit it or not, the prevailing attitude is that the ends justify the means. We tell ourselves that “quality time” can make up for a lack of quantity time and that as long as we achieve whatever temporary, worldly goal we’re pursuing, all is well. Just keep climbing. We think our spouses and kids need us first to be successful, and then we’ll have time to be an important part of their lives.

We rationalize this kind of fuzzy thinking until we really begin to believe that our example, our impact, and our value to others—family, friends, and coworkers—are measured by what we produce and by the worldly things we accumulate. Our society loves and respects awards, degrees, money, status, achievement, and image. Just look at the accolades we heap upon business tycoons, movie stars, professional athletes . . . and football coaches.

But without meaningful relationships, relationships we invest ourselves in, what does it all amount to?

That’s an easy one to answer: *dust*.

If you take only one thing from this book, let it be this: Relationships are ultimately what matter—our relationships with God and with other people. The key to becoming a mentor leader is learning how to put other people first. You see, the question that burns in the heart of the mentor leader is simply this: *What can I do to make other people better, to make them all that God created them to be?*

A life spent focused on things of the world will not add value to the lives of others.

Instead of asking, how can I lead my company, my team, or my family to a higher level of success? we should be asking ourselves, how do others around me flourish as a result of my leadership? Do they flourish at all? How does my leadership, my involvement in their lives—in whatever setting we're in—have a positive and lasting influence and impact on them?

If influence, involvement, improvement, and impact are core principles of mentor leadership, how can we make them central to everything we do? That's the question I intend to answer in the pages to follow.

Simply stated, leadership is influence. By influencing another person, we lead that person. Leadership is not dependent on a formal position or role. We can find opportunities for leadership wherever we go. Likewise, leadership is not based on manipulation or prescription, though sometimes it may appear that way to an outside observer. By keeping our motives aligned with doing the best for those around us, we will keep ourselves focused on being a positive influence.

+ Relationships are ultimately what matter—our relationships with God and with other people.

I recognize that the world is not necessarily lacking in leadership books. There is certainly no shortage in the bookstores—and everyone from professors with PhDs to “successful” business executives to politicians and entrepreneurs have gotten in on the act.

Even football coaches have joined the crowd of voices espousing leadership principles—or at least ideas for winning football games. Many of these authors have good things to share, but most are not *other-oriented* enough for me. Maybe I’ve missed something, but most leadership books I’ve seen are too much about the leader, too much about the “me.” Too much about improving the bottom line or upgrading the readers’ status as leaders instead of having a positive impact on those they are called to lead. I once heard an executive say in an interview, “Of course I know how to lead. I’ve been in charge of one thing or another for the last thirty years.” It may well be that this person knows how to lead, but simply “being in charge” is not evidence of leadership or leadership ability.

So much of what has been written about leadership focuses on *positional* leadership, that is, that one’s status, or being in charge, determines whether one is a leader. But you don’t have to look very far to see examples of people at the top of organizational charts who have very few leadership skills. Think about it: It’s much easier to look like a leader when your followers know they can be fired for noncompliance or disobedience. But that type of oversight, governance, direction, and supervision is not what I mean when I talk about leadership—and, in particular, mentor leadership. Mentor leaders understand that if we lose sight of people, we lose sight of the very purpose of leadership.

One’s position, or status, can supply part of the equation, but that is only a piece. In fact, many of the most effective leaders I’ve seen do not have positional authority over the people they lead. In my experience, some of the best examples of mentor leadership come from men and women whose influence extends to people who are not their subordinates.

+

If we lose sight of people, we lose sight of the very purpose of leadership.

Mentor leadership focuses on relationships and positive influence

because success in temporal things can be so fleeting. At the end of it all, sometimes you reach the organizational goals you've set, and sometimes you don't. But either way, if you're a leader, people's lives should be better because of the influence you've had along the way.

MENTOR LEADERS STRIVE FOR SIGNIFICANCE IN LIFE

Young kids with positive male role models have something to live for, somebody who is proud of them, somebody who cares about their well-being.

DONALD MILLER

If you follow professional football, or just read the news, you're probably familiar with the story of Michael Vick. A star quarterback with elusive speed and remarkable athleticism, Michael was drafted by the Atlanta Falcons in 2001 and quickly built a reputation as a game-breaker in the NFL. Then, in April 2007, word surfaced that a dogfighting operation had been uncovered at a house Michael owned in his home state of Virginia. Though Michael initially denied any involvement with the dogfighting enterprise, he later pleaded guilty to federal charges and served twenty-one months in prison. After his release, I had an opportunity to meet with Michael and mentor him, and we established a relationship that continues to this day.

Because of the controversial nature of Michael's crime and his later reinstatement to the National Football League, I have been asked more times than I can remember why I got involved with him. I have answered those questions as candidly as I could, time and again, but I want to expand on my answer here because it is so critical to my approach to this discussion of mentor leadership.

To all appearances, Michael Vick was wildly successful—wealthy, at the top of his profession, and in the public eye. But as we all learned, there was more to the story. For all his worldly success, was he building a life of significance?

Leadership, as I believe it should be understood and displayed, must first and foremost recognize that it is not enough to be successful in the world's eyes. I've heard sociologist Tony Campolo say that the world has "switched the price tags," giving value to the valueless while undervaluing the truly important. Accumulating things is highly prized in our society, as are status and fame. On the other hand, the truly important things of life often happen in quiet, private moments—moments of faith, family, and building relationships.

Before his time in prison, I'm sure there were times when Michael thought about what a great opportunity God had given him. I know he thought about his family, his teammates, and the fans all over the country who looked up to him. But I don't think he ever contemplated the responsibility that goes along with a leadership position, whether in leading his family or his team, or in being a role model for so many other young men.

+ **Leadership must first and foremost recognize that it is not enough to be successful in the world's eyes.**

When Michael's successful career was brought to a halt and he had time to think about it, he came to the conclusion that he hadn't done his part as a leader. God had blessed him with uncommon talent, and Michael had used it to rise to the top of his profession. Unfortunately, he realized he hadn't helped the people around him as much as he could have. And he wanted to do that—starting with his family, and then, he hoped, with another football team, if he were given the opportunity. But he also wanted to reach out to all the young boys who looked up to him, who wore his jersey, and who wrote him letters while he was in prison asking why he wasn't playing anymore. Could he still do those things? Could he still have that impact for good?

That's why I chose to work with Michael Vick. That's why I got involved in his life. I saw a young man in need, and I had an

opportunity to do something. But more than that, I accepted the responsibility to perhaps provide a moment of significance in his life—a moment that would help him get his life back on track. I did what so many others had done for me—the things that have helped me become more the person I am and the person I want to be than I ever could have done on my own. You never know how these things will turn out, but you’ve got to be willing to try. My goal was to build into Michael Vick’s life what I believe is important, things that Michael himself says he wants in his life—being close to his family, modeling good values for kids, and even speaking out against the animal cruelty that he now knows is wrong. Whether Michael ever regains the status and standing he once had in the NFL is not as important as what kind of man he becomes. Mentor leadership focuses on building people up, building significance into their lives, and building leaders for the next generation.

As you build your leadership skills, it’s important to remember that *why* you lead is as important as *whom* you lead. Leading for the benefit of others is a much more compelling and powerful motivation than leading merely to get ahead or to hit an arbitrary target. Leadership based on building significance into the lives of others is much more energizing in the long term than other types of leadership. The very nature of mentor leadership is that it endures and can be replicated. As we build into the lives of the people around us, one at a time, one-on-one, we have the potential to extend our positive influence *through them* into countless other people as well.

+ **Mentor leadership focuses on building people up and building leaders for the next generation.**

Mentor leadership isn’t focused on self or solely on short-term goals like wins, championships, stock prices, or possessions; it is focused instead on the longer-term goal of bettering people’s lives. And that includes people who have made mistakes, who have made a

mess of their lives. Mentor leaders see potential and strive to develop it in the people they lead.

Michael Vick and I have pressed on with the goal of putting his life on a different and more significant trajectory. My primary goal is to build into his life so that he, in turn, can have a positive impact on other young men. Nothing would please me more than to see him become a mentor to other people in his own sphere of influence.

Because of my experience in the NFL and the fact that Michael Vick and I knew many people in common, I had the opportunity to work with him. But most mentoring relationships will not take place in the public spotlight. In fact, in order for mentoring to be genuine and effective, it should be a part of your everyday leadership style. In whatever setting you find yourself, you should strive to build into the lives of the people around you. The goal is to begin building leaders to take your place someday—to build leaders who will be equipped not only to lead your organization or some aspect of it, but also, when they leave your organization one day, to stand on their own and lead and build other people and organizations.

The personal, one-on-one aspect of mentoring is something our society desperately needs. I'm heavily involved in prison ministry, and far too often I see the results of a lack of mentoring. It is clearly a pattern in the early lives of the men and women who end up incarcerated. As I listen to their stories, it becomes clear that a mentor could have made a difference—just someone who cared enough to guide them, to be a positive influence, at their most vulnerable time. Instead, they sit day after day in a jail cell, hoping to someday get a second chance. Seeing lives and potential wasted is what makes me so passionate about developing mentor leaders.

There are those who don't want to admit it, but one of the most undervalued areas in our society today is the family unit. A number of studies have underscored the importance of a stable family in producing stable adults and a stable society. Statistics show that

many of those incarcerated in our nation's jails and prisons grew up without fathers. Abe Brown, who founded the prison ministry in Florida that I've had the privilege to assist with, estimates that 70 percent of the men in prison today grew up without a father figure in their lives.

+ **The personal, one-on-one aspect of mentoring is something our society desperately needs.**

Judges who review presentencing investigative reports will tell you that the absence of a father or a positive male figure is a key indicator in the lives of the people they sentence to time in prison. We need strong men to build into the lives of our younger men and boys. Not extraordinary people; just ordinary, everyday men who care enough to invest themselves—their time, attention, and wisdom—in the lives of others, whether as a part of their natural leadership environment or as an additional relationship they purposefully undertake. We need people like that—men *and* women—to stem the tide of wasted lives and wasted potential that is increasing at an alarming rate across our nation.

Author Donald Miller founded a group he calls The Mentoring Project, with the not-so-modest goal to close 15 percent of U.S. prisons within a generation through an intentional development of mentoring relationships. Miller, who also serves on the presidential task force on promoting responsible fatherhood, agrees with me that fatherless young men, especially inner-city African Americans, are in desperate need of positive, involved role models. Government statistics show that one in three boys grows up without a father in the home—a statistic that rises to two out of three for African Americans.

Boys and girls without a father at home are five times more likely to end up in poverty and much more likely to make decisions that will negatively affect their lives far into the future, including criminal behavior, drug use, and teen pregnancy.

The need is clear and urgent for men who care about fatherless boys—who simply care whether they live or die and who care enough to pass along what it means to truly be a man.

+ **Part of our purpose in life is to build a legacy—a consistent pattern of building into the lives of others.**

The same is true for young girls in our society. We need more women as well to step up as role models for young girls, women who will spend time with girls, affirming them and building into their lives what it means to be a woman of value, significance, and values. In devel-

oping relationships with young girls, these women will make an immediate and long-term difference in the girls' lives, helping them to become all that God created them to be.

The Mentoring Project's method has been to bring two existing entities together: the church and Big Brothers Big Sisters programs around the country. In most cities, Big Brothers Big Sisters has an extensive waiting list of kids in need of a "big brother" or "big sister." Most churches, meanwhile, have a willing population of people seeking a program to integrate into or a ministry opportunity where they can make a difference. The goal of The Mentoring Project is to quickly expand beyond its beginnings in Portland, Oregon (where Don Miller lives), and spread across the country through the existing network of Big Brothers Big Sisters, as churches awaken to the opportunity to serve.

Making a difference, through one-on-one mentoring relationships that truly embrace and demonstrate the value of a single life—that's what mentor leadership is all about.

Part of our purpose in life is to build a legacy—a consistent pattern of building into the lives of others with wisdom, experience, and loyalty that can then be passed on to succeeding generations. Think of the people in your own life whose legacy has touched you. Maybe it was a coach, a parent, a grandparent, or a teacher. It's a fact of our human existence that we need other people to live life with us—to

walk alongside us and help us on the journey. That’s one of the reasons why Derrick Brooks, a great linebacker who had a long career with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, is so beloved in that city. He figured out that it wasn’t enough to lend his name to programs for kids. He needed to get involved in the programs himself. He needed to go beyond providing tickets to football games; he needed to directly touch the lives of the kids who needed his help. Because Derrick Brooks is willing to “get his hands dirty” by going through life alongside a group of kids, the legacy he is building is tremendous—and inspiring.

+ **Building a life of significance, and creating a legacy of real value, means being willing to get your hands dirty.**

Building a life of significance, and creating a legacy of real value, means being willing to get your hands dirty. It means being willing to step out in your life and onto the platforms of influence you’ve been given and touch the lives of people in need. Whether it’s in your business, your school, your community, or your family, if you want to make a difference in the lives of the people you lead, you must be willing to walk alongside them, to lift and encourage them, to share moments of understanding with them, and to spend time with them, not just shout down at them from on high.

Mentors build mentors.

Leaders build leaders.

When you look at it closely, it’s really one and the same thing.

MENTOR LEADERS KEEP AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

JOSHUA 1:8, ESV

The mentor leader sees time differently than other leaders. Though short-term results are important—there are upcoming games to prepare for or quarterly reports to complete or some other expectation

+ **It takes time to build mentoring relationships. It takes time to add value to other people's lives.**

placed on us—a leader must look into the distance, beyond the immediate return, where the rewards are more permanent, and where some rewards are eternal.

There is always a tension between demanding results *now* and implementing a longer-term perspective. In the National Football League, there are coaches and general

managers who want to build a team that can win now, and others who gradually build a successful team. More often than not, coaches who try to build an immediate championship team end up mortgaging their future success at a great cost with free-agent acquisitions. Coaches who desire more sustainable, longer-term success will typically try to build their team through the draft. There's no guarantee that either way will work. Those competing tensions have blown up some good teams and good people when a middle ground could not be found.

Mentor leaders tend to lean toward longer-term results. They are involved in the present, but are willing to defer immediate gratification in order to build value and structure into people's lives, creating a culture based on something more than wins and losses. It takes time to build mentoring relationships. It takes time to add value to other people's lives and to achieve what the book of Joshua refers to as "good success." Here's how my good friend James Brown describes "good success" in his book *Role of a Lifetime: Reflections on Faith, Family, and Significant Living*:

God's success is "good success." It's significance. It's making a difference in the lives of others. It's Joshua standing on the

banks of the Jordan River, feeling anxious and inadequate, and realizing that he is being called to do something that will make a difference in the lives of the people he is being called to lead. And in that moment, it's Joshua also realizing that he can only do it with the leadership and in the strength of God.*

Building an organization for “good success” means creating a culture that will live on through succeeding generations. It means building with a long-term perspective—a perspective that says when God is involved in the process, life takes on eternal significance.

+ Building an organization for “good success” means creating a culture that will live on through succeeding generations.

The difficulty for most people is that maintaining a long-term perspective requires faith. For me, my faith in God directs, sustains, and strengthens my perspective on life and other people because I know that my true reward is eternal. By faith, I'm able to approach the events and circumstances of my life with an eternal perspective. Even though I may not see the results of my efforts today or even in my lifetime, I'm confident that doing the right thing—the *significant* thing—will yield rewards for the organization and for others far beyond what I might otherwise achieve.

Every leader speaks of his or her own *vision*, but mentor leaders keep their eyes focused well downfield, understanding that many of the most significant moments and effects of their lives will happen outside of the public eye—possibly even outside of their own field of vision. In other words, they may never know the full impact of their leadership.

Mike Tomlin, the current head coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers,

*James Brown, *Role of a Lifetime* (New York: FaithWords, 2009), 101.

worked for me as a defensive backs coach with the Buccaneers. During his final season in Tampa, Mike coached a backup safety named Scott Frost. Scott never became a major NFL star, but he went on to a successful coaching career when his playing days were over. Whether Mike knew it or not, he had a significant impact on that young defensive back. Several years later, when Scott came to our house to recruit our son Eric for his college program, I could almost hear Mike speaking through Scott's words.

Mike Tomlin probably knows that he helped Scott Frost become a better player. What he might not know is how profoundly he affected the way Scott would coach hundreds of players during his coaching career. But I know that Eric Dungy will definitely be affected—in a very positive way—by the way Mike Tomlin coached Scott Frost.

During my coaching career, I always talked to my players about doing the right thing the right way. As I shared in *Quiet Strength*, I wasn't always certain I was getting through to some of the guys, including defensive end Regan Upshaw, who was known for his colorful personality. Years later, my family and I ran into Regan and his family when we all happened to be vacationing in Rome. After we had spoken for a few minutes, Regan told me that all the things I had tried to teach him about life were finally making sense.

It may take time before the results of our leadership are fully known. Our talents and our treasures may pay dividends so far down the road we may never see the outcome. But with the faith that comes from doing the right thing at the right time in the right way, the mentor leader knows that the payoff will be great—and possibly eternal.

+ **Our talents and our treasures may pay dividends so far down the road we may never see the outcome.**

ACTION STEPS

1. Evaluate your integrity: Are your actions consistent with your words?
2. Evaluate your impact: Are you making lives better?
3. Evaluate your perspective: Do you see people as central to the mission of your organization? Or do you see them simply as the means—the fuel—to get your organization from here to there?
4. Evaluate your goals: Are you building relationships, or are you building a tower to climb to the top?
5. Mentor leaders see the opportunity to interact with people—and to build into their lives along the way—as part of the journey itself. How are you looking for ways to directly engage with and influence other people?
6. How does your leadership style need to change so that people will flourish and grow around you?
7. You can lead from a position of authority, but the most effective leaders lead as they build relationships of influence. What can you do to move from an authority-based model to an influence-based model?
8. Identify one person whom you can begin to mentor. Don't look too far or too hard. The opportunity is right in front of you—at work, in your family, or with a friend. Granted, it could be a special situation, outside of your everyday circles of influence, like my relationship with Michael Vick. But more than likely, the person is someone with whom you already have a relationship.
9. Visit The Mentoring Project's Web site (www.thementoringproject.org) and consider how you can get involved.
10. From your perspective, what is the difference between “success” and “good success”?

Q & A WITH TONY DUNGY

CHAPTER 1: THE MANDATE OF A MENTOR LEADER

1. *You mention your father, head coach Chuck Noll, and other mentor leaders who shaped your life. What characteristics did they have in common? What impact did they have on your spiritual life?*

Coach Noll and my dad were very much alike. They both were teachers and used teaching techniques in most situations. They didn't always just give advice or give me direct answers to my questions. They made me think and encouraged me to investigate and come up with my own answers. They both were very patient men. They talked about long-term plans and seeing the big picture. They were also very practical. By that, I mean they were able to help me in what was actually going on in my life at the moment. They both were willing to give their views on things, but always encouraged me to think for myself. I had

other mentors who influenced me more spiritually, but the spiritual lessons I learned from my dad and Coach Noll were to put others first and to treat everyone as valuable in God's eyes. Tom Lamphere, our chaplain when I was with the Vikings, had a big impact on my spiritual life by reminding me that every decision I made had a spiritual component. He encouraged me to look at everything, including my coaching career, from a Christian perspective.

2. *How have you been able to balance time between coaching a successful pro football team and leading your own family and children? What difficulties did you have? How did you overcome them?*

Maintaining balance is the toughest thing to do. You realize that your family is the most important thing you have, but the job requires so much time. You want to do your best in both areas but find yourself spending much more time at work than at home. In the NFL, as with most jobs, you can't dictate the schedule. There were many weekends, evenings, and holidays when I had to be at work. I tried to become as efficient as I could and to be a good time manager at work. I didn't want to cheat my employer or my players, but I made it a priority not to waste time. I also made the decision to forgo some things away from work that I enjoyed, such as golf, to be home more. I tried to include my family in my job as much as possible. That wasn't too hard, because they all enjoy football. However, I really felt I had to do extra things when I was home to make my family understand that they were special, that they were a priority in my life.

3. *A lot of people view you as a truly exceptional coach and leader. But can the average person also become a mentor leader even*

if he or she doesn't share all of your skills or personality traits? What do you believe are the qualities a person needs?

I'm humbled anyone would think that about me. The biggest thing I try to do is to help other people. More than anything, that's what I saw in my parents. If you want to help people become the best they can be, they will gravitate to you. For me, that involved praying a lot, having God put that desire in my heart, and keeping it at the forefront of my mind. I also prayed for the ability to make good decisions and to lead in effective ways. I think God will help you that way as well. Being a good listener is also important. You can absorb helpful information and come up with good decisions by listening to other people.

4. *What would you say to the well-meaning father, mother, husband, or wife who believes that financial success will lead to a more secure and happy home?*

My first response would be something that Christ said: "What do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?" (Matthew 16:26). Many of us think that having a great career, making enough money so we can take care of our family's physical needs, and having enough money in the bank to feel "secure" will lead us to happiness. I've found that's not always the case. First of all, those things—career, homes, wealth—can be taken from us in a moment. And they also will not be emotionally or spiritually satisfying. I've seen too many people who had all the material things they could want and were very unhappy with their lives because they found they weren't fulfilled. One of the best pieces of advice Coach Noll ever gave me was not to make any career decisions based on money. Don't look at salary or security as the most important thing. Rather, before accepting a job, look at what you will learn from that employer, the type of people you will be around, and how it will help you reach your

long-term life goals. And he was right. You can't totally disregard salary, but it can't be the most important thing in your decision-making process. You have to trust that God will take care of your family's needs.

5. *How can one learn to shift from a position-centered leadership style to relationship-driven mentor leadership?*

Just think about the people who have had the most positive impact in your life. Think of what you have learned from them and how they got those messages across to you. When I started coaching, I thought about the coaches who had helped me the most and whom I really enjoyed playing for. I decided to use that as my coaching style. I also thought about lessons and techniques I'd learned from other coaches whom I may not have enjoyed as much but who had given me valuable information. Could I get that information to my players but do it in a way that would be more helpful? I also made a conscious decision to go against the grain of conventional wisdom and continue to foster relationships with the players and coaches I was working with. To me, that was very normal, but it went against a lot of the advice I got from people early in my career, who said you had to keep a certain amount of space between yourself and your players. "You don't want them to be too comfortable around you." But I felt the better I knew my players, the more I could help them become a better team.

6. *You mention your involvement in prison ministry. What are some practical ways in which ordinary men and women can begin to develop mentoring relationships through similar ministries and organizations?*

A lot of organizations that focus on helping people rely on volunteers. Whether it's a prison outreach, a youth or senior

citizen outreach, or a church group, I think that by working in these types of environments you can really help others as you grow yourself. Some of the most rewarding experiences I've had were talking to people in these settings. It makes you think about your priorities in life and causes you to evaluate the advice you're giving. By volunteering, you can also control the amount of time you give. But be careful, because you may find you enjoy it so much you'll be tempted to give up your full-time job, just as I did.

7. *Why is it so important to “get our hands dirty” living life alongside those we mentor?*

Young people, especially today, are not impressed by “tell me what to do.” They are much more engaged with “show me what to do and how to do it.” Those you mentor want to feel that you really know what they're going through and that you can understand the questions they're asking. The way to do that is to be there, to be involved, and to show them you care by spending time with them. The other benefit of being right there with those we mentor is that we will actually learn some new things ourselves. By observing and listening to them, many times I find out things I would never have known otherwise.

8. *Did you ever struggle to maintain a long-term perspective while mentoring your players and others you knew? How did you overcome that?*

I always tried to think long-term because so many of the people in my life encouraged me to do that. But it's not always easy—especially with young people, because they're looking for answers right now. I try to remember that when I was younger, I was that way myself!

CHAPTER 2: THE MIND-SET OF A MENTOR LEADER

1. *In the high-pressure world of the NFL, how did you keep your focus on establishing a lasting legacy rather than succumbing to organizational pressures to win?*

Coaches are judged on winning, and that's important, but I felt we would win more consistently if we stayed true to the goal of building a great organization. I didn't want to fall into the trap of making short-term adjustments for the benefit of one season. It's hard to keep that focus, especially if you have some disappointing seasons. But fortunately, I worked with people who had the same idea in mind, to be as consistently good as possible. Then my job was merely to keep everyone focused on that goal and not to look at quick-fix ideas or succumb to the pressure to change. We knew we had a good plan that would stand the test of time if we persevered.

2. *You mention some of the different leadership styles used by mentor leaders. Does your leadership change depending on whether you're working with your players, your colleagues, your children, or someone in a more formal mentoring relationship, such as Michael Vick?*

I don't think my tone changes, but you do have to keep in mind the needs and the maturity of the group you're leading. I'm always following the path of my parents and trying to help my groups learn as they go, to develop confidence in themselves, and to become good decision makers. Sometimes that involves more encouragement, sometimes more discipline or direction, and sometimes more role modeling. But the underlying tone is the same, and my motivation is the same—to help them become the best they can be.

3. *Have you ever had a time when you almost walked away “just before the break of dawn”? What was the outcome of the situation?*

There are many times when you don't feel as if you can get over the hump, whether it's perfecting a skill on the athletic field, learning a concept in school, or getting through to a talented individual who is not performing up to potential. I've learned over the years to pray for perseverance in those situations. Probably the biggest example that comes to mind is when I decided to quit my high school football team before my senior year because I wasn't sure about my relationship with my coach. Fortunately, I had some people around me who talked me into not giving up so quickly, and it certainly changed the course of my adult life.

4. *What makes for an effective mission statement?*

Mission statements are very simple. They explain what you are or your organization is all about at the very core. An effective mission statement will let you know what is really important about what you're doing. It will allow you to stay focused when you have to make decisions about which direction to go. Ask, “Will this path help me or hurt me on my journey to fulfilling my mission?”

5. *In John 13, Jesus kneels before His disciples and washes their feet. What do you hope people can take away from Jesus' powerful example?*

Christ said He, as the ultimate leader, had set an example by serving. It was a reminder that the most effective leaders, who will have the most effective teams, will base their approach not on ego or position but on commitment to other people and making other people better.

6. *Are there any practical benefits of being in a position of service rather than a position of authority?*

Authority and leadership sometimes come with position. When you're the head coach, you have authority over the team. But even though the players must submit to your authority, it doesn't mean they will respect your leadership. The best way to create an environment where people willingly follow your leadership is to let them know that your number one priority is to help them. And there's no better way to show that than by demonstrating your desire to serve.

CHAPTER 3: THE MATURITY OF A MENTOR LEADER

1. *If people are unwilling to think through their pasts and forgive themselves and others, how will this hinder their ability to be strong mentor leaders?*

Confidence is a trait that people look for in their leaders. You have to feel good about yourself and where you're going to lead effectively. If you don't get over past failures, learn from them, and move on with confidence, it will be hard to lead. Everyone makes mistakes. My goal in letting people know that I've made mistakes is to help them avoid making the same ones. My shortfalls can help others. I think that's one of the reasons God allows disappointments in our lives.

2. *How were you able to strike a healthy balance between your passions and your priorities in your career?*

I think God gives us passions, and that is great. That's what makes us tick. We just have to keep those passions in the right spot in our lives. There's a fine line between passion and addiction, between a dedicated employee and a workaholic. I pray constantly for balance in my life, thanking God for the things

I enjoy but asking Him to help me keep them in perspective. It also helps to have someone—your spouse or a close friend—who is able to tell you honestly how you're doing.

3. *What lessons can we learn from mentor leaders who know they don't have all the answers, but who still are constantly looking for ways to grow?*

When I was younger, I used to shake my head at my dad. I couldn't wait to stop going to school, and yet he was always taking more courses, even after he had received his PhD. But he didn't want to shortchange his students. What if there was something new in the biology field that he wasn't up on? Not only would he miss it, but his students would be disadvantaged. It took me a while to understand that, but when I started coaching it began to make sense. I couldn't undermine my players' ability to perform at their best because I hadn't taken the time to keep learning more about football. The more you know, the better you'll be able to teach.

4. *Why do you think so many leaders have a difficult time admitting their weaknesses? Are there constructive, loving ways that their colleagues and friends can help?*

Number one, it's human nature not to talk about our weaknesses. We want people to know our strengths. As leaders, we've also been taught not to give any appearance of vulnerability—we always have to appear as if we have the answer to everything. That's not possible, of course, but that's the image we feel we have to portray. Many times, as leaders, it's tough to get honest, constructive criticism from the people around us. They're afraid of how we might respond. When I was an assistant coach, I used to have great talks with my fellow staff members about how we would improve the way we did things if we were in

charge. Of course, we would never go to the head coach and tell him that, even though we knew that some of our ideas could help the team. Then, when I became the head coach, the same guys were hesitant to come to me because now *I* was the boss. But it's important to create a climate in which people feel they can come to you with constructive criticism. It's the only way we can all improve.

5. *In order to form a cohesive team of individuals with complementary strengths, is it also necessary to detach ourselves from damaging or negative relationships?*

I talked to my teams about relationships all the time. Our goal has to be for the team to function well. Anything that detracts from that hurts our mission. That includes our relationships. It's hard to tell people (especially adults) who their friends should be or whom they should associate with. But those relationships will affect their performance and eventually affect the performance of the team. Part of being a mentor leader is getting that message across.

CHAPTER 4: THE MARKS OF A MENTOR LEADER

1. *One of the relational qualities you describe is character. How is character different from integrity? What are some ways a mentor can encourage others to develop their character?*

Integrity is part of character. In fact, it's the biggest part. If you have integrity, that's going to impact everything you do and make you a person of high character. But character is all-encompassing. Are you going to be a good teammate? Are you going to help others be better? Are you hardworking, someone who will persevere through tough times? Are you a person who's going to put the team first, ahead of your individual goals?

These are facets of character that are separate from integrity. You may be one of the most honest people in the world, but that alone won't make you a good teammate.

2. *Many people are evaluated on the basis of their professional "win/loss record." Should character also be a factor when reviewing performance? How can that be accomplished?*

There's no question that character has to be considered. How you accomplish your goals is more important in the long run than merely getting to the top by any means possible. We're seeing that today in the debate about certain baseball stars being selected to the Hall of Fame after they've been found to have used performance-enhancing drugs. Ben Roethlisberger has quarterbacked the Pittsburgh Steelers to two Super Bowl wins, but the people of Pittsburgh have been turned off by some of his off-field problems. More and more often people are coming to the conclusion that character has to be part of our evaluation of performance.

3. *Accountability is often a difficult leadership trait to practice. Why do you think this is so, and what can be done to make it easier?*

We are generally held accountable at work by our superiors. We have to report to them, and they are responsible for evaluating our performance. As we attain leadership positions, there are fewer and fewer people to hold us accountable. In our personal lives, very few people have access to our lives to really know how we are living. We have to initiate that type of relationship by intentionally allowing certain people access into our thoughts and deeds. It isn't easy because we don't want to tell people our faults and shortcomings. We have to find someone we trust and someone who cares enough about us to ask the

tough questions. Someone who knows us well enough to tell when we're being open and honest. Someone who will stick with you. It's not easy to find such a person, but it's important. If you're married, don't neglect the role of your spouse in this process. He or she knows you better and cares about you more than anyone else. My wife definitely helps me stay on track and helps me stay on the lookout for problem areas in my life.

4. *If leaders feel they have made mistakes that have damaged their integrity, what can they do to correct the situation? How might they use their experience in mentoring others?*

As the Bible points out, the first thing we have to do is admit the mistake to ourselves and to God. Then we have to acknowledge it to the people we've affected. That's the toughest part. Many times, it's embarrassing or may be hurtful to people we're close to—family, friends, or coworkers. However, once we get through the initial pain, those relationships will grow stronger. If we're honest and sincere, we may be surprised by how willing people are to forgive. Those situations can be used greatly when we're mentoring others. We can acknowledge that no one is perfect and that maintaining our integrity is critical. We can encourage them by admitting some of our own mistakes and showing how we were able to overcome them.

5. *How has understanding the importance of being available and approachable strengthened your mentoring relationships?*

Whether it's with my children, friends, staff, or coworkers, being available and approachable are the two most important components of helping someone. If people feel you're approachable, they will be at ease and feel good about sharing with you and learning from you. At the same time, you may be the most approachable person in the world, but if you're not available, it

doesn't help. So you have to pick your spots, because there are so many opportunities to mentor. For me, I have to constantly take inventory of my time, because I want to make sure I'm available for my children and not neglect their need to have me as the leader of the household.

6. *Do you agree with Jim Zorn's practice to "act medium"?*

"Acting medium" is a great principle, but it's tough to do. I've always tried to keep on an even keel myself, and I encouraged my teams to do the same. When we had big wins, I wanted us to enjoy them—God calls us to a joyful life, after all—but not get so excited that we didn't continue to prepare ourselves for the following week's game. If we lost, I never wanted the players to act as if it were the end of the world. We could learn from our losses and improve the next week. It's the same thing in life, but it goes against our human nature. We're emotional creatures, and we are going to have highs and lows. We just have to try not to let those highs and lows affect us too much.

7. *Are there certain things a mentor can do to demonstrate loyalty? Is it of equal importance that those being mentored also show loyalty?*

Loyalty means being there for other people, supporting them and sticking with them no matter what. The way you demonstrate loyalty is by your actions. You have to let people know that you're there *for them*—not because it benefits you. Being consistently available is important, as is being available in the tough times as well as the good times. Confidentiality is also critical—keep things that are supposed to be private from getting out to others. Of course, loyalty is a two-way street, but as the mentor you may have to take the lead in demonstrating how to show loyalty.

8. *Do you believe a mentoring relationship can exist without any one of the leadership traits, attributes, and qualities you describe in chapter 4? Why or why not?*

Yes, I think you can mentor and help people without all of those attributes, but the relationship will be maximized when all the qualities are there. That's when the person being mentored will get the most out of it.

CHAPTER 5: THE MOMENTS OF A MENTOR LEADER

1. *What is a platform? What do you think is your platform as a mentor leader? Can one's platform change over time?*

A platform is merely the place where God puts you and the space you have to exercise your gifts and influence people. We all have one. We have a circle in which we travel where we impact others. It could be at home with family, at school with our fellow students, or at work with coworkers or customers. We don't really know the full scope of our platform because as we influence one person we have an indirect influence on other people. My high school football coach, for example, couldn't have known when he gave some advice to me during my sophomore year that I would repeat that advice to hundreds of NFL players over the next thirty years.

2. *What would you say to a mature young man or woman who would like to be a mentor to his or her younger friends?*

I would say to step out and not be afraid to do that. I have shared how my life was affected by people who reached out to me when I was growing up. Due to the number of broken homes in our society, we need mentoring more than ever today, because so many of our young people aren't getting that guidance from their parents.

3. *Amid the busyness of your personal and family life, do you ever find it difficult to focus on having an impact on others? How do you handle it?*

Yes, it's easy to get busy and to get caught up in your own schedule and personal needs. I try to read the Bible every day, and that helps me to stay on course and look for opportunities to help others. The Bible always reminds me of why God put us here—to be leaders of our families, to help others, and to point people to Christ.

4. *What are some consequences of not recognizing an opportunity for influence?*

When we help someone, we may get positive feedback—a letter or an e-mail thanking us. But we don't always see the ramifications of *not* helping someone in need—or worse, of being a negative influence. I can only think of some of the poor decisions I might have made, had someone not been there to lead me. I know how much I owe to those people, and that's what motivates me to look for similar opportunities to influence others.

5. *Are you ever wary of labeling public figures and famous celebrities as role models for young people? What do you think are the dangers of seeing them as role models? What are the benefits?*

No matter how we look at it, those people *are* role models. They have a tremendous influence on our young people. This can be a great benefit because they can reach our youth and get a message across to them. The danger is that it may be the wrong message. We have to try to get our young people to examine their heroes and follow those people who have the right lifestyle and the right message.

6. *How can Christians demonstrate their character to colleagues, teammates, and opponents who do not share the same values?*

People want to see if our actions match our words. I've always felt that the most important thing I could do was to live out my Christian beliefs amid the people I'm in contact with. Then, if they see something attractive in my life and ask where it comes from, I can share that it's because of my relationship with Jesus Christ. But I find that my actions and my attitude speak louder than my words.

7. *We've all seen or heard of coaches—even Christian ones—who permit, tolerate, or encourage dirty or aggressive play in order to achieve the goal of winning. Is there any validity to their apparent belief that "it's all part of the game"?*

One of the things I think is very important in sports (and also in life) is to win with class and integrity. If you don't do it the right way, if you teach your players that anything goes as long as you win, you're leading them down a dangerous path. There's a difference between aggressive play and dirty play. If you break the rules, it will eventually come back to haunt you, in sports or in life.

8. *How can coaches teach their teams to display Christian character but still play tough?*

There is nothing in the Bible about Christian character that says we shouldn't play tough. One of my favorite passages is 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, in which Paul says that we are to "run to win!" But as we're doing our best at everything we do, we have to keep in mind not only the rules of the game but also God's rules. We can be tough, and we can be winners, and still show others what it means to be a Christian.

CHAPTER 6: THE MODEL OF A MENTOR LEADER

1. *Do you believe that mentors need their own mentors in order to stay accountable and to make sure their actions match their words?*

Yes, it's important for all of us to have other people who are helping us grow, looking out for us, and keeping us focused. We should never think we've come to a place in life where we don't need that.

2. *You mention that faith is the foundation and strength of a mentor leader. How has faith helped you coach your teams through difficult seasons? How have you relied on faith to lead your family?*

An athletic season is never a completely smooth road, and neither is life. There will be ups and downs, disappointments and challenges, and our perseverance is going to be tested. My Christian faith is what has helped me get through those tough times, on the field and off. I believe that God wants me to keep going, to set a good example, and to rely on Him in the tough times. That's what I've tried to do in leading my teams, and it's the same attitude my wife and I have tried to instill in our children.

3. *How should mentor leaders react when someone under their leadership blatantly disregards their authority or is disrespectful? Can you give an example of how you handled such a situation?*

As the leader, you have to confront situations where people aren't following your design or are being disrespectful to you or others in the group. But the goal has to be to make the situation better. I've always tried to find out why the person is behaving in that manner and to explain what the team needs in order to be successful. In 2003, when I was coaching the Colts,

we had an incident in which one of our players made some statements to the media questioning my leadership as well as that of our quarterback, Peyton Manning. Most people told me I should get rid of that player immediately, but I wanted to see what was in his heart and what was behind the statements he had made. We talked it out, and I came to the conclusion there was some frustration and some bad judgment involved. We were able to straighten out some hurt feelings, and he went on to have his best year the next season.

4. *How would you counsel an athlete who wonders, “Does my behavior on the field reflect Christian values?” What does that mean when you’re in the heat of the battle?*

As a Christian, I think I have to display the characteristics that please God all the time. That includes in the heat of battle. It’s not easy, and times of high emotion can cause us to do things we later regret. But just like anything else, the more we practice the better we get. So, we have to *practice* staying under control in high-pressure situations. Many people comment on my calm demeanor during games, but I wasn’t always like that. It’s something I worked on and improved because I felt it was an important part of my Christian witness.

5. *For coaches who are trying to be mentor leaders, how should they “manage” referees and umpires? Where is the line between arguing a call and defending a player?*

There is nothing wrong with disagreeing with an umpire or a referee, or standing up for your players. It’s all in how you do it. I believe I got my points across to officials, and did my job for our players, without using profanity or trying to embarrass an official. Again, I think it’s important when you’re the leader to lead in the right way in all situations.

CHAPTER 7: THE MEANS OF A MENTOR LEADER

1. *What did Jim Irsay mean when he said he wanted to “change the culture” and build an organization that stood for something beyond football?*

He knew that the Colts did not have a long history with their fans in Indianapolis. He wanted to develop a winning team, but more than that, he wanted to connect with the fans. He wanted the city to embrace the players for who they were and how they carried themselves in the community, not just for how much they won.

2. *What problems do you see permeating the culture in America’s workplaces and in our families?*

Many of the problems we’re seeing in the workplace go back to the problems we’re experiencing with our family units. Many of our children are not being mentored properly early in life. Whether it’s because of the time parents have to spend working, or because of the breakdown of the American family, our kids are not being taught the core values that will help them succeed in the workplace. Honesty, hard work, teamwork, and reliability are values we should learn very early in life. They are the foundation for productivity. I think we have to do a better job of getting that message across to young people who may not have gotten it from their parents.

3. *Have you ever faced resistance when trying to build a team that represents a variety of backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses? How have you dealt with this?*

Sure. Not everyone buys into the idea that diversity is important to success. I tried to show how the complementary strengths of people with different experiences and backgrounds would help us in the long run and to be consistent in emphasizing the common

values that defined us as a team. I also looked for people who were willing to work together and blend their individual talents with others for the good of the team.

4. *Do you think coaches in particular have a hard time hearing correction and constructive criticism?*

Coaches are no different from anyone else. We think we have the right ideas and that our way is the best way. It takes a certain amount of self-confidence to be a successful coach, but it also takes humility to realize the ways in which you can improve. The best coaches are the ones who keep their core values in place but continue to adapt and improve—and that means listening to constructive criticism.

CHAPTER 8: THE METHODS OF A MENTOR LEADER

1. *Are there certain boundaries that exist in mentor leadership? How does one navigate these? What advice would you give to mentor leaders who are unsure of how much to engage in other people's lives?*

Yes, it is important to have appropriate boundaries in a mentoring relationship. But the important thing in building relationships is to do everything you can for the *benefit* of the other person. If you keep that in mind, you'll never cross the line and go beyond where you should.

2. *What are some practical ways in which mentor leaders can create an environment that equips their teams to thrive and be successful?*

Lead by example. Make sure that you're doing the things you're telling your group to do. Make sure you keep articulating the mission statement. This can be done in a number

of ways, including signs in the office or on notebooks—anything to keep the message of what you’re trying to accomplish in front of your group. Do things to stimulate dialogue. They can be planned events or in informal settings (as Mr. Rockquemoore did with my friends and me in junior high), but let your people know that you want to hear their thoughts—both positive and negative—expressed in a way that will help the group.

3. *How can mentor leaders strike the right balance between encouragement and constructive criticism?*

I always have to remind myself to praise people and let them know when they’re doing a good job. We expect things to go well, and when they do we don’t comment. That can lead to a habit of only correcting people or only commenting when things aren’t done right. Without realizing it, we can come across as being totally negative when that’s not our intent at all. There will be times when you have to correct people, so make sure you balance those times with times of encouragement and praise.

CHAPTER 9: THE MEASURE OF A MENTOR LEADER

1. *How can mentor leaders know that they have added value to the lives of others?*

You don’t always know. You just have to do what you feel in your heart is right and trust God that you are helping others. You can see performance, and that is somewhat of an indicator. But the true life lessons, the things that are really meaningful in the long run, sometimes will take a while to come out in the people you’re mentoring. However, there’s nothing like a phone call or a letter that comes years down

the road from someone who says that you helped in some small way. When you get some positive feedback, it makes all your efforts seem worth it.

2. *While you have been able to encourage, empower, and educate countless people over the years, what are some lessons that these same people have taught you?*

I've learned that people can usually do more than they think they can, and many times more than I think they can. Sometimes, they just need the right spark. I've also learned that people who are motivated to do well will generally find a way to succeed. But perhaps the biggest thing I've learned is that it is such a great feeling to see the people you work with experience success, especially when those relationships go deeper than simply that of an employer and employee.

3. *What would you say to people who are having doubts about whether they can truly make a positive difference in the lives of others? Did you ever face similar doubts?*

There will always be times when we feel less than adequate trying to help other people. If someone asked me to help a young man become a better football player, I have no doubt that I could do that. I believe that's my area of expertise. But take that to other areas, and I become much less confident. What I have to remember is that I may not have all the answers, but that's okay. If I don't know, I can at least point the person in the right direction. And most times, I end up helping more than I thought I could.

4. *In this chapter, you share the story of Jethro and Moses and the example of John the Baptist, leaders who gladly deferred their own status of power to others. Have you ever had to do*

the same in your coaching career or in your role as a mentor to young men?

Yes. I always wanted assistant coaches to come to our staff and grow. If they excelled, I thought it helped us as a team. It allowed me to delegate responsibility and be more efficient as a leader. I never worried that our owner or our players would think any less of me because we had strong assistants. I have enjoyed training other coaches and seeing them go off and embark on successful careers, even though their success could come back to haunt my teams. One of my most painful days in football was during the 2002 playoffs when the New York Jets, coached by Herman Edwards, one of my former assistants, beat our team 41–0. But as disappointed as I was, I was happy for Herm—he had learned his lessons . . . too well!

5. *What has been the most fulfilling part of being a mentor leader for you?*

For me, the real joy is seeing a person come to our team and leave as a better player and a more mature person. Seeing those individuals grow is great. Then, seeing how those individuals come together and function as a unit—with a single purpose in mind—and have some success and develop lifelong friendships; for me, it doesn't get any better than that. Outside of the team setting, seeing someone feeling better about themselves, becoming more whom God intended them to be—whatever their age—makes it all worthwhile.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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