

# A Six-Pack of Principles from a King and *the* King

## GENESIS

When I was promoted from salesperson to sales manager, I thought that my new title officially announced to the world that I was a leader. I was wrong. In fact, I quickly learned three things:

1. A title doesn't make you a leader. It merely affords you an opportunity to become one.
2. As a leader, you don't automatically have followers, you have subordinates; how you act as a leader determines whether a subordinate ever becomes a follower.
3. Leadership is performance and not position. It is a choice you make, not a place where you sit.

Eager to excel in my new position, I worked hard on my job but I abused my body, swelling to 40 pounds overweight and earning my “new manager’s merit badge”—an ulcer—in the process. To my credit, I was good at closing deals for my sales team, scheduling, forecasting, and

writing daily memos for my bulging procedures manual. In a given day, I spent most of my time with “stuff,” which I’ve since come to categorize as everything in my job that had nothing to do with people. In fact, I preferred the stuff over the people because I wasn’t very good with people! I managed through intimidation, substituted rules for relationships, and had a hair-trigger temper that was a catalyst for creating a culture of fear. Although I had never attended a university, coworkers rightly claimed that I had a Master’s Degree in Disempowerment and a Bachelor’s in Bullying.

Then one day everything changed. Norm Albertson, the pastor of my church, stopped by my office and brought with him two leadership training programs by John Maxwell, a guy I had never heard of. One of the programs was on leadership priorities, and the other explained key differences between being a manager and being a leader—which I had wrongly thought were synonymous terms. Listening to Maxwell talk about leadership humbled me because I realized I was, at best, a ceremonial leader. All I had was a new title, which I wrongly assumed made me more competent! His teachings stirred up in me a desire to become a better leader. Frankly, I was tired of doing too much work by myself because I trusted no one else to share the load. I was also discouraged that I wasn’t doing enough to help my people reach their potential. Perhaps what I was most excited about was that he said that the principles he taught were biblically based. This meant a lot to me because I had become a Christian at age 12 and had great respect for the Bible, even though I didn’t spend a lot of time reading it at the time.

After reviewing the tapes several times, I began reading the Bible for business wisdom as well as for life wisdom. As a result, I changed my leadership style, priorities, and thinking. I began using the Bible as a filter to make decisions ranging from personnel to customer care issues. In the aftermath of implementing these changes, my career shifted from a slow shuffle up a steep staircase to an express elevator to the top.

As a student of the Bible, I have found that both success and failure leave clues, and you don’t have to invent leadership principles to become more successful any more than you must suffer countless

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disappointments through personal trial and error to learn what doesn't work. Instead, you can learn from some of the best and worst leaders of all time who preceded you on this journey, as described in the Bible, and apply timeless, proven principles to improve every aspect of your organization. Think about it this way: the Bible is a slice of God's mind! How foolish do we have to be to continue to labor under our own intuition or to chase the fads of others in pursuit of greater success when the source of infinite wisdom is so readily available to us?

In this chapter, you'll learn from two of the best leaders in the Bible—a king and *the* King. You can certainly argue that there are additional or different leaders that I could have chosen to highlight in the following pages. And I would agree with you. In reality, there are too many to list, and enough lessons from their lives to fill volumes of books. Thus, I've chosen the two I believe you will gain the most benefit from in the shortest amount of time and who will best help you to begin running your business by THE BOOK.

**Caution:** Your natural tendency might be to use these principles to first try and fix the people or broken systems and strategies that surround you. That would be a serious error, because nothing is going to get much better in your organization until *you* do! You'll be relieved to know that, in this chapter, David and Jesus will offer six insightful steps (three each) on how you can make this happen.

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### By THE BOOK Blessing

**Leadership is developed more than it is discovered. You work on it, and then it works for you.**

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## DAVID

David was the second king of Israel, reigned for 40 years, and is considered to be its best ruler. His reign preceded the birth of Christ by approximately 1,000 years. Like many leaders, David made major mistakes in the midst of his enormous successes. We can learn from both.

DAVID'S CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

***Critical Success Factor #1: David Assumed the Traits of a Leader Before He Was in the Leadership Position***

Over the years, I've heard this common chorus from non-management employees aspiring to be promoted: "Dave, I would like to be considered for the new management position that has opened up. I've been here a long time, I've been loyal, and I believe that I've earned a shot."

I would then ask them the following: "How many management books have you read, and how many leadership courses have you attended?" The predictable response was a sheepish and defensive, "None. I'm not a manager yet," to which I'd respond, "Wouldn't you agree that the best time to prepare yourself for the next step up is before you're in that position? After all, I don't want you to play a costly game of 'amateur hour' with our people. Learn about management before you're a manager. And while you're at it, show me that you can manage your own time, your own emotions, character choices, and discipline *now*, in the position you're currently in. Because, if you cannot manage yourself, how do you expect me to give you an opportunity to manage others?"

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**By THE BOOK Blessing**

**The first obligation of a leader is to grow. The process should start before you're in an official leadership position and continue for a lifetime once you're there.**

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**BY THE BOOK LESSON IN LEADERSHIP**

DAVID LED BEFORE HE HAD A TITLE

Historians estimate that David was a teenager when he fought Goliath. The Bible describes him as a "youth" when he decides to fight Goliath. He was willing to take action while King Saul and his professional soldiers quaked in their sandals as Goliath left his Philistine camp for 40 straight

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days to taunt the Israelis and challenge them to fight him. While others uttered excuses, David offered a solution. This is what leaders do. They begin thinking and acting like leaders before they're in a leadership position. And if they are already in a leadership position, they'll begin thinking and acting like the person who is in the next higher position to which they aspire would think and act.

If you want to own the company you work for, begin to think and act like an owner would think and act, even if you're currently sweeping floors and cleaning toilets. Allow me to relate a brief example of how this mindset works in the business arena.

While being given a tour of his operations by the CEO of a \$300 million retail organization who had worked his way into ownership from the ground floor, I noticed that he'd stop, stoop, and scoop up every piece of trash in his path. When he noticed my amusement with his meticulous housekeeping he explained, "Most people think that I pick up the trash on this property because I own the company. What they don't realize is that I own the company because I've had a mindset from the day I started here that has never allowed me to walk past a piece of trash on this property without picking it up."

In some regards, not much has changed since the time of David. The largest corporations in the world emulate the Israeli army and King Saul by recognizing that their version of Goliath is a problem, but they take no action against the problem. A key aspect of leadership mandates that you move beyond problem-finding to solution-providing. In fact, a key difference between winners and whiners in any organization is that, although both groups point out problems and areas for improvement, the winners will also offer and implement remedies.

A second lesson we can learn from David's emergence as a leader is that he combated Goliath with more than just a great attitude as he repeated affirmations or by displaying the power of positive thinking. While all of these can add value, they are not a substitute for preparation and execution. Perhaps the most telling aspect of this well-known story is

found in 1 Samuel 17:40, where THE BOOK reports that, before facing the giant, David stopped by a brook and chose five smooth stones for battle. He didn't know if he'd need one or five; it was also rumored that Goliath had four brothers. Either way, he was ready! As a leader, you are expected to maintain a positive outlook and to maintain a healthy attitude. These are givens. A more relevant question becomes, "Do you have your five stones?" Have you prepared for the Goliath you're facing in the marketplace? Are you merely a wishful thinker, or have you earned the right to be legitimately optimistic by building a foundation under your organization that guarantees success?

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**By THE BOOK Blessing**

**The difference between optimism and wishful thinking is preparation! You must earn the right to be truly optimistic. A goal without a plan is mere hype.**

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***Critical Success Factor #2: David Honored the Leader Above Him***

An important aspect of leadership is being able to lead up. This means that you add value to, positively influence, and publicly support your leader. Leading up also requires that you don't try to change your leader. Rather, help him or her shore up their weaknesses by assuming duties that make both you and your leader more valuable. Honoring the leader above you is easier when the leader is moral, decent, and competent. But what if he or she is selfish, insecure, and filled with character flaws? Learn from David and his relationship with Saul.

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**By THE BOOK Blessing**

**Lead up well and you will move up fast.**

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King Saul's disobedience had caused God to instruct the prophet Samuel to anoint David as the next king of Israel, even while Saul was still reigning! In fact, David wouldn't assume the role of king for an estimated 15 years after he was anointed. During that time, he was

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intensely loyal to a jealous king who knew that his disfavor with God had numbered his days in power. As a result, and despite David's loyalty, Saul sought to kill him. Ironically, during Saul's quest to eliminate his rival, David had the opportunity to twice kill Saul, but would not do it because he believed that his decision, while expedient, would not be in alignment with God's will. David resolved that he would not take it upon himself to replace what God had put into place. Rather, he waited for God to dispense of Saul before fulfilling his destiny. In due time, God did His part, and David became the greatest king of Israel.

### BY THE BOOK LESSON IN LEADERSHIP

#### LEAD UP WITH HONOR

You honor the leader above you by being publicly loyal to him or her, while confronting differences privately. You look for ways to make him or her look good. You volunteer to take on tasks that may not be within his or her strength zone, but are a better fit for your own abilities. You refrain from gossip and never conduct an "it's not my business" conversation with subordinates. Even if you do not like the person, you respect his or her position and authority over you. If your leader performs illegal acts, then you must leave the organization. As Paul warned the Corinthians, "evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Corinthians 15:33). Trust God to deal with the person and to elevate you to a better place, either within or outside of the organization you're already in. Continuing to work for a corrupt leader because you profess that you want to change him or her is merely a rationalization for doing what is temporarily convenient rather than what is morally correct. Don't kid yourself; you can change yourself but you cannot change another human being.

Paul reinforced David's attitude toward authority more than 1,000 years later when he wrote to the Colossians while he was imprisoned in Rome by the same government authority that would one day kill him. Yet, even under those conditions, Paul had the right idea concerning authority:

*“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality”* (Colossians 3:23). It’s important to keep this perspective and to render unto your leader as you would render unto God. You wouldn’t stab God in the back, would you? Would you try to nudge God out of His position and maneuver yourself into it? (Satan tried this and was cast out of heaven along with one-third of the angels, who were his collaborators!) You wouldn’t try to make God look bad or mock His rules or decisions, would you? If not, then don’t do it to your leader, either. And neither should you listen to the voices of others who encourage you to do these things to your boss. David’s men did the same thing to him by encouraging him to kill Saul when he had the chance. David refused to take God’s matters into his own hands, and so should you.

The apostle Peter, when writing from Rome to all five provinces in Asia, said something similar in 1 Peter 2: 18–20:

Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

One final thought in this regard: Don’t worry if you’re not getting enough credit or if you don’t think anyone notices your good performance. God sees and He notices and, when you work according to His will, He will make things right.

I’d be remiss if I didn’t include in this section at least a dash of biblical instruction for how leaders are to treat their people (leading down). Picking up where we left off in Colossians, in the very next verse, Paul creates the standard for how leaders should, in turn, treat their subordinates: *“Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.”*

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In the 23 short verses in the book of Philemon, Paul offers instruction for how leaders should treat their workers, even when they go astray. Philemon was a wealthy friend of Paul who had helped him start the Colossian church in his own home. When Philemon's slave, Onesimus, ran away, Paul offered advice for how to deal with him when he returned. Hold him accountable? Yes, but see him first as a brother and then as an employee. In other words, although you may detest the performance, you must still love the performer.

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### By THE BOOK Blessing

**Don't expect God to move you farther up the ladder until you're willing to hold steady the ladder for the leader whose authority you're currently under.**

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#### ***Critical Success Factor #5: David Confessed His Sins and Genuinely Repented When He Fell***

Some of the most high-profile leaders of all time have failed morally. They've been caught in lies, adultery, and financial malfeasance. How quickly they are forgiven by followers—or not—often depends on their acceptance of responsibility, ability to admit their mistake, and repent for their error. Repenting is more than admitting that you've screwed up. It means that you change your ways and reconcile with those you've wronged. This action goes beyond mere words; it involves a change of heart. Perhaps this is why so many culprits are sorrier for the fact that they were caught than for the wrong they committed. In a nutshell, repentance requires humility before God and men.

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### By THE BOOK Blessing

**The difference between regret and repentance is a heart condition.**

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#### ***David's Affair and Despair***

David committed adultery with Bathsheba and then plotted to have her husband murdered. When confronted with his sin by the prophet Nathan,

David took a road we don't see many fallen leaders choose. He admitted it, he accepted responsibility, and he repented. In fact, Psalms 51, written by David, is a textbook example of how to repent. Those of you familiar with the life of David know that his repentance restored his relationship with the Lord, but it did not free him from the consequences of his sin. As foretold by Nathan, the son he conceived in adultery died, his own household would rise up against him, the sword would never depart from his house, and his women would lie publicly with strangers, in contrast to the sin he committed privately with Bathsheba. All of this happened. Don't mistake forgiveness with freedom from consequences. It is not.

#### BY THE BOOK LESSON IN LEADERSHIP

##### COME CLEAN QUICK!

Fast, forthright confessions of mistakes prevent hiccups from becoming cover-ups, and stop cover-ups from turning into conspiracies. Confessing your wrongs doesn't free you from consequences. However, it can diminish them, attract others to your side, and teach your team valuable lessons in how you expect them to respond in similar situations.

#### *Avoid "I Did It . . . Buts"*

Don't spoil a perfectly good apology or admission of an error with an excuse! "I admit it is my fault . . . but I was basing my decision on what you told me," or "I was wrong to say that. But you shouldn't have provoked me!" When you make a mistake, quickly come clean and don't attempt to rationalize your act! The longer you wait to admit what you did, the more suspect you'll become, and the faster your personal credibility will diminish. If you make the habit of quickly admitting your errors, you'll create a culture that encourages others to do the same and protect your good name as a leader. But if you whip out your black belt in blame to shift the focus off of you and onto something or someone else, you'll breed a brood of followers who become proficient at practicing professional victimhood every time something goes wrong.

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By **THE BOOK Blessing**

**When you make a mistake, admit it without justifying it; learn from it so that you don't repeat it; and understand that failing to do this quickly is another mistake in itself.**

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SUMMARY

David is the only person in the entire Bible described as being “a man after God’s own heart.” Learn from his successes and failures. Preparing yourself for your next leadership position before you’re in that position, honoring the leaders and authority figures above you, and confessing mistakes and repenting when you fall short are three lessons that you can begin immediately internalizing in your life and career. They are also criteria you can use to measure others in your organization. In the next few pages, you’ll learn three more lessons from the leadership of Jesus that will make up the “six-pack of principles” to internalize into your own leadership style as you begin to run your business by THE BOOK.

JESUS

Jesus is the ultimate leader who set the standard by which all other leaders must be measured against. In three short years of ministry, he laid the groundwork for a church destined to become the largest in the world.

JESUS’ CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

***Critical Success Factor #1: Jesus Created Clarity of Vision, Values, and Performance Expectations***

I’ve been told that the most helpful section of my leadership workshops is when I discuss the importance accountability plays in creating a high-performance culture. Although most leaders admit that they would like to build a high-accountability organization, they also confess that they’ve done a poor job of clearly establishing what is expected in terms of

performance metrics and behavioral standards in the first place. Because of this, the question in their quest for higher accountability becomes, “Accountable for what?”

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### By THE BOOK Blessing

**Ambiguity is the enemy of accountability.**

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Throughout the Bible, God clearly spoke to His people. I can find no record of anyone ever saying to the Creator, “What was that? I didn’t get it the first time.” From the beginning of time, God made clear what was important to Him, and throughout His life on earth, Jesus continued this pattern by declaring His mission, vision, values, and what was expected of His followers. In fact, it can be said that the central theme of the Scriptures are the 49 general commands of Christ scattered throughout the Gospels. Many of them were based on Old Testament teachings. The letters of Paul and others speak at length about how to apply Christ’s commands and weave them into your character and lifestyle. This is the essence of clarity: creating the standards, personally living them, and then teaching others to do likewise.

#### BY THE BOOK LESSON IN LEADERSHIP

##### JESUS WAS CLEAR!

From the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), to teaching disciples how to pray (Matthew 6), to the First and Second Great Commandments (Matthew 22), Jesus created clarity for performances and behaviors. Although His values sounded radical to many, they were not unclear!

Author Max De Pree declared that the first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. This being said, have you performed your first responsibility as a leader? Reality in your organization includes your vision, performance metrics, and behaviors. If you’re not sure whether or

not these issues are clear in your enterprise, then they probably are not. You either have them, or you don't. They're either in writing, or they're not. And if they don't positively influence employee behaviors on a daily basis, then they're impotent. Once you define reality, you must model it and talk about it repeatedly, just as Christ did. Point to those who live the standards, as Jesus did in acclaiming the widow who gave all she had (Luke 21:1-4), and confront or correct those who abuse or abandon the standards, as Christ did when His disciples argued about who was the greatest (Mark 10:35-45).

There are many aspects of your job that you can delegate. Defining reality isn't one of them! As the leader, you're expected to see more, to see sooner, and to see farther than followers. It is both your privilege and your responsibility to define reality in your organization, and it matters not if you lead 1 or 100,000. If your "reality" has gotten a bit cloudy, become conveniently forgotten, or was never created in the first place, then redefine it as soon as possible.

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By **THE BOOK Blessing**

**If you don't clearly define what you stand for, then you stand for nothing by default.**

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***Critical Success Factor #2: Jesus Held Others Accountable for Results***

While I was speaking overseas in a workshop on the topic of accountability, an attendee remarked, "Holding others accountable is easier in your country because you have a more 'in-your-face' culture, but over here we're accustomed to acting as gentlemen. How do you recommend we hold our people accountable in a manner that fits our culture?" This gentleman's question is typical of the misunderstanding many people have concerning accountability. They believe that holding others accountable is harsh, mean, disrespectful, intimidating, or caustic. Unfortunately, this faulty grasp of how effective accountability works causes leaders to go light on the issue, inviting entitlement and

mediocrity into their business culture as a result. THE BOOK instructs you to confront in love and also warns against the tendency and temptation to become prideful when you do confront. *“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted”* (Galatians 1:1).

You can confront someone concerning his or her performance and be firm yet fair, and direct while being respectful. You can also be caring without coddling and empathic without condoning the offense. Read the first chapter of Galatians and you’ll discover a textbook case in how to confront in love. Galatians is the only letter Paul wrote where he fails to affirm anyone or anything but jumps right into lovingly contend with the erring Galatian believers.

In the eighth chapter of John, we read how the Pharisees brought the woman caught in adultery to Jesus, reminded Him that Moses’ law mandated that she be stoned, and asked His opinion in an effort to trap Him. The text indicates that Jesus said nothing but stooped down and wrote in the sand. When they continued asking Him, He stood up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first,” whereupon He stooped back down and wrote on the ground again. John related that those who witnessed this were convicted by their conscience and left one by one until none was left. When Jesus stood back up and was alone with the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” She replied, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

This awesome lesson in accountability teaches three key points:

1. Confronting someone and holding them accountable doesn’t mean that you have to condemn, lecture, or demean them.
2. After confrontation, you should always define a new performance expectation: “Go and sin no more.”
3. You can prick the conscience of those who condemn, trash talk, and assail others by gently reminding them of their own shortcomings. Biblical scholars have long speculated what it was that Jesus twice

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wrote in the sand. Many have suggested that He wrote the sins of the men who were accusing the woman. This would certainly explain them being convicted by their consciences and making a hasty exit!

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### By THE BOOK Blessing

**The sole purpose of accountability and consequences is to improve performance. It is *not* to humiliate!**

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#### BY THE BOOK LESSON IN LEADERSHIP

##### USE THEM OR LOSE THEM!

The twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew relates one of THE BOOK's best lessons in accountability: Jesus' parable of the talents. Before talent meant aptitude, it meant money. It was the largest unit of measure in Greek accounting. To put the value of a talent in perspective, consider that a denarius was the measure for a fair day's wage and a talent was worth ten thousand day's wages! Suffice to say, Jesus was talking real money here.

As you read the paraphrased version of this story, consider how you can apply the tenets of accountability in your own organization.

*A master was leaving town and brought together three of his servants to entrust with talents to invest during his absence. Custom dictated that when he returned from his journey, each servant would give an account of his results.*

*The master distributed the talents according to the servant's abilities: five talents to one, two to a second, and one talent to the third. After being gone a long while he returned to settle the accounts with his men. The servant who had received five talents doubled his money! The master was overjoyed and told him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things!" Next, the servant who had received two talents also reported that he had also doubled the master's money! The master was overjoyed once again and*

*offered the same affirmation and promise as he had to the first servant. Finally, the third servant came forth and explained that since he knew the master was a hard man, he was afraid he'd lose the money. Thus, he buried it into the ground and returned to his master the same talent he was given. Well, the master lost his cool, replying: "You wicked and lazy servant . . . you should have at least deposited the money into the bank so that I could collect interest. Take the talent from him, and give it to the one who has ten, because to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant out!"*

There are at least three lessons in accountability you can learn from the parable of the talents:

1. THE BOOK says that the master distributed the talents according to the ability of each servant. In other words, they didn't all get equal amounts. They got what they had earned and deserved based on past performance. This ethic has disappeared from many modern business cultures, in which entitled employees expect enrichment because they show up rather than step up.
2. The worker who produces the best results should be given more opportunities and resources, even if it is at the expense of a poor performer who doesn't have as much. Don't weaken the strong to strengthen the weak! Rather, leverage the strong, and weed out the weak performers.
3. In the parable, Jesus did not condemn the master for dealing firmly with the servant. Rather, he had the harshest words for he who had an opportunity but failed to do anything with it. After all, the master clearly established the expectation. The servant knew what he was expected to do, but didn't do it.

Jesus was tougher on those who knew better and were in positions of authority, and you should be also. This is why He reserved some of his most critical statements for the Pharisees, scribes, and lawyers.

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Throughout His life, Jesus only held people accountable for what they had been given. He never did and never will hold others accountable for what they didn't have: knowledge, opportunities, resources, position, and the like. Perhaps this is why Luke quotes Jesus as saying:

And that servant who knew his master's will and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more. (Luke 18:47–48)

This standard may be what prompted James, Jesus' half-brother, to write in his epistle a few years after Jesus' resurrection:

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. (James 3:1)

I'd be remiss if I didn't conclude the lessons on accountability with a reminder that without applying the first critical success factor of Jesus' leadership discussed in this chapter—creating clarity of mission, vision, values, and performance expectations—then accountability is impossible.

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### By THE BOOK Blessing

**Gray areas invite complacency, entitlements, and chaos. In a high-accountability culture, there is right and wrong; success and failure; winning and losing.**

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#### *Critical Success Factor #3: Jesus Served Others*

In one of my leadership workshops, I present 20 differences between management and leadership mindsets, and their impact on performance. The first difference that I explain is, "Managers want to be served, whereas

leaders serve others.” I go on to explain that *servicing* is not a warm and fuzzy term that is out of touch with the realities of running an organization. Serving means that you add value to others rather than wait for them to add value to you. Serving acknowledges that, as a leader, you need your people more than they need you. You serve people by setting clear expectations for them, giving them honest feedback, training them, holding them accountable, and offering to them increased latitude, discretion, and opportunities. Serving also acknowledges that the good of the team must come before your own comfort level or agenda.

Leaders serve their people by displaying the Four Cs: character, competence, compassion, and consistency. The Four Cs earn a depth of loyalty from followers that command-and-control pretenders-with-titles can only dream about. Serving puts into motion a reciprocal cycle—the more you serve, the more others want to help and serve you in return. Even a poor leader can buy a follower’s hands with a paycheck, but servant leaders earn their hearts and heads as well. Serving is a mindset. It reminds you that leadership is about performance, and not about position. Serving helps you cultivate humility. It puts into perspective that, despite your lofty title, you’re no better than anyone else. Serving helps you connect with others. It touches the core of their hearts before demanding the sweat of their brow.

Jesus was ready, willing, and able to serve. From the seemingly small things—like at a wedding feast He attended with his disciples in Canaan when His mother, Mary, told him, “They have no wine.” Even though His time hadn’t yet come, He accommodated mom’s request and gave Mary the opportunity to preach her one and only sermon recorded in THE BOOK, when she instructed the servants: “Whatever He says to you, do it.” Then there were major acts like healing the lame, raising the dead, casting out demons, restoring sight to the blind, and feeding hungry multitudes. He served His men by spending three years teaching, mentoring, and pouring His life into theirs, and performed the ultimate act of service: suffering torture and death on a cross so that others might live. Very importantly however, Jesus *looked* for ways to serve; He didn’t sit in a temple waiting for others to come to Him. Jesus managed by walking

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around long before Tom Peters wrote about it in *In Search of Excellence*. Jesus knew that you can't serve well if you're static, stale, or immobile. You must be around people to serve people and must look for ways to connect with them rather than wait for them to connect with you.

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### By THE BOOK Blessing

**If you think that your people are there to serve you, versus you serving them, you're not a leader; you're a tyrant.**

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#### BY THE BOOK LESSON IN LEADERSHIP

THE BOOK relates several instances of Jesus' disciples arguing about which of them was the greatest. (Does this sound like the dialogue in the corridors after your weekly management meeting?) In the tenth chapter of Mark, Jesus sets the record straight concerning greatness:

Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Mark 10:43-45)

Please note two key points in this passage:

1. Jesus didn't knock trying to be great. He merely offered a recipe for making it happen: serving others.
2. Jesus defined His own mission as not coming to be served, but to serve. This is particularly important when you read Romans 8:29, where Paul writes that we are called to be conformed to the image of Jesus. In other words, we are to serve as He served.

#### *Foxhole Leaders Are Servants*

Foxhole friends are those you want on your side when the going gets tough. You can count on them. They've got your back. When you're

coming under attack and hunkered down in a foxhole, you need someone at your right hand with the Four Cs of character, competence, compassion, and consistency. The characteristics required to be labeled as a foxhole friend attract loyalty from others, and in leadership this is essential. Foxhole friends will pay a price to be with you and to be a part of what you're doing. Considering this, would your people classify you as a foxhole leader? Can they count on your character, competence, compassion, and consistency, even when things get tough? Do they trust you to put their own welfare ahead of your own comfort level? Do you have followers who because of your leadership style are willing to trouble themselves for you, sacrifice for you, take heat for you, or maybe even take a bullet for you? Jesus did. And it wasn't because He got lucky. Rather, He lived a life of integrity, competence, and service that drew others to Him. Jesus was such an effective foxhole leader that even 2,000 years later His followers are willing to die for Him, and they often do.

One of the greatest tests of a leader's effectiveness is whether or not he or she still influences people after his or her departure. Although THE BOOK doesn't say much about the fate of Jesus' disciples and closest followers in the early years of Christianity, early church historians like Eusebius and Josephus tell us plenty. If judging the sacrifices others are willing to make for your sake is a key indicator of your success as a leader, you will be impressed with what is next. While John died of natural causes in A.D. 98, the fates of the rest of the 12, who continued to spread the message of their leader, as well as a few key others, are as follows:

- James the apostle, brother of John, was beheaded A.D. 44.
- Philip the apostle was stoned and crucified A.D. 54.
- Matthew the apostle was beheaded in Ethiopia A.D. 70.
- James the apostle, son of Alphaeus, was stoned in Syria A.D. 60.
- Matthias, the apostle who took Judas' place, was stoned in Jerusalem A.D. 70.
- Andrew the apostle was crucified in Patras A.D. 70.

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- Mark, author of the gospel bearing his name, was dragged to death in Alexandria, Egypt A.D. 64.
- Peter the apostle was crucified in Rome A.D. 69.
- Paul the apostle was beheaded in Rome the same day Peter was crucified A.D. 69.
- Judas, also known as Thaddeus the apostle, was killed by arrows/javelin in Armenia A.D. 70.
- Bartholomew, also known as Nathanael the apostle, was skinned alive and crucified in Armenia A.D. 70.
- Thomas the apostle was tortured, baked in an oven, and stuck through with spears in India A.D. 70.
- Luke, author of the gospel bearing his name and Acts, was hanged in Greece A.D. 93.
- Simon the Zealot the apostle was sawed in half in the Middle East A.D. 74.
- James, half-brother of Jesus, was thrown from a building, stoned, and beaten in Jerusalem A.D. 62.
- Timothy, Paul's right-hand man and the Bishop of Ephesus, was stoned and beaten in Ephesus A.D. 80.

### *Your People Would Rather See a Sermon Than Hear One!*

One of the most well-known stories of Jesus' servant leadership is when He washed the disciples' feet, the night of the Last Supper—less than 24 hours before His torture and murder. For three years, Jesus had preached and lived servant-based leadership, yet His own disciples continued to argue about greatness and jockey for position. Rather than give a final lecture on serving others, Jesus decided to show, again, what good performance looks like. But this time would be even more dramatic because washing feet was such a despicable and degrading act that a master could not even order his slave to do it. In biblical times, there was no part of the body—and I do mean *no* part—that was more filthy, stinky, and disgusting than one's feet! Read the account in the thirteenth chapter of John with a servant leader's eyes.

Here are three lessons that should stand out:

1. Jesus didn't just talk about good performance. He demonstrated what it looked like because He knew that seeing a sermon is more impacting to a follower than hearing one.
2. Jesus didn't delegate this task of servant-hood, nor did He run an ad in the *Jerusalem Times* seeking a good foot-washer. He did the deed Himself.
3. Jesus washed the feet of Judas—the man He knew would betray Him. He didn't only serve the people He knew would serve Him.

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### By THE BOOK Blessing

**You can't serve others until you first die to yourself. There is no "I" in servant.**

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### SHINE THE LIGHT

As he lost election after election, Abraham Lincoln was reported to have declared, "I will prepare myself and some day my chance will come." It did come for Lincoln and, fortunately, for the United States, he had forged, during his down times, the character and temperament to effectively lead the nation through the Civil War.

Waiting for your next, bigger, more exciting leadership opportunity can be painful, but it needn't be if you use the time wisely and maintain the proper perspective. You can start by following the examples of Lincoln and David, and work diligently to assume and develop the traits necessary for your next leadership opportunity before it presents itself. Here are some thoughts on converting "waiting time" into "prime time."

1. A study of the Scriptures reveals that those God used greatly were often prepared for those exploits during periods of solitude, quietness, and obscurity: Moses, David, Joseph, Elijah, and John the

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Baptist. Sustained periods of preparation fuel the future effectiveness of great leaders.<sup>1</sup>

2. Becoming more precedes doing more. The “becoming” must happen first and includes increasing in maturity, discipline, humility, knowledge, competence, righteousness, and focus. To do more than you’ve done, and to get more than you’ve got, you must first become more than you are.
3. You can’t advance spiritually when you’re immersed in busyness. Becoming a deeper leader, capable of accomplishing greater things, requires an incubation period that includes solitude, study, and reflection.
4. During your waiting period, don’t promote yourself, drop hints, or push yourself to the front. Let others do this. Better yet, let *God* do this. Self-promotion is neither necessary nor attractive. If you’re truly gifted, people will find you. During the times when no one seems to notice you or your contributions, practice the discipline of becoming more valuable so that you can add more value.<sup>2</sup>
5. Exceptional work and achievement is often preceded by extended waiting. Don’t despise the wait that adds depth to your life. Moving fast in order to give the impression that you’re more accomplished than you actually are is both dangerous and delusional. Speed can disguise the fact that you lack the foundation of character and competence necessary to justify additional responsibility and opportunity. Sadly, advancing quickly without a foundation can render you as shallow, and shallow lives impact no one and add value to nothing.
6. During your waiting time, remain obedient to God. Don’t rush God or take shortcuts anchored in your own wisdom. Trust God, and you’ll obey Him. Obedience always stimulates growth.<sup>3</sup>
7. A life marked by depth and steeped in preparation can only be cultivated in protracted periods of feeling like you’re in “no man’s land” and getting nowhere fast. Cherish these times, because in them you plant and cultivate the seeds that position you for your next leadership harvest.

## SUMMARY

Jesus was perfect. We're not. But we become complete as we conform ourselves to His image and imitate every aspect of His life. Lead in a manner so that your followers see less of you and more of Him. Pray that you will see the way He sees, hear the way He hears, think the way He thinks, love what He loves, and hate what He hates.

## REVELATION

I've presented six essential traits to incorporate into your leadership style. The chances are good that you knew these things before you read them in the preceding pages. But knowing isn't the point. *Doing* is what counts! By taking the time to do the following exercises, you will demonstrate a commitment that affirmations alone could never accomplish and create personal momentum to help you begin leading by THE BOOK.

### ACTION EXERCISE

#### SIX LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP FROM A KING AND *THE KING*

Considering the six principles presented:

1. Which offers you the greatest opportunity to improve your own leadership style?  
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2. Which are your strongest?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Which are your weakest?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. List at least one step you can take to improve each of the six traits listed:
  - A. How can you assume the traits of the next position to which you aspire?
  - B. How can you better honor the leader/authority over you?

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- C. What action/behavior must you admit and repent from?
- D. How can you improve clarity in your organization?
- E. How can you improve accountability in your organization and your personal methods for holding others accountable?
- F. What mindset must you assume or actions can you take to assume a more genuine servant's role as a leader?

Use the six previous questions as a coaching tool to improve the leadership style of your key leaders.

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