

“James Merritt has written a classic!”

PAT WILLIAMS

senior vice president, Orlando Magic

# 9 Keys to Successful Leadership



*How to Impact and Influence Others*

## James Merritt

Founder *Impact I*™ Men's Conferences

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# 9 Keys to Successful Leadership

James Merritt



**HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS**  
EUGENE, OREGON

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## **9 KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP**

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## Dedication

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*To my mentor and hero in the faith,  
Dr. Adrian Rogers*

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# The Heart of a Leader

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I know before you say it: “Not another book on leadership.” Trust me—if this were one of *those* books on leadership, I would not only say the same thing but also tell you not to buy this book, much less read it. Search “leadership” on Amazon, and you will get more than 300,000 matches. Yet a prolific business and leadership author Jeffrey Krames plaintively asks, “Where on earth are all the great leaders?”<sup>1</sup> I think it’s safe to say we don’t have 300,000 truly great leaders in America!

I want to ask the question a different way: “*Where are all the leaders who lead by example and inspire emulation of their character?*” In many ways, one could argue that Genghis Khan, Attila the Hun, and Adolf Hitler were very influential leaders. But do we admire their methods or their mannerisms, and would we want our children to grow up to be just like them?

I believe that leadership is measured not just by how much you can accomplish through followers or how many followers you have. I believe that the highest level of leadership is measured by the person you are and the virtues you display. Great leadership begins with *who you are*, not *what you do*. Simply put, *the level of your leadership will never rise above the content of your character.*

Think of leadership in terms of an iceberg. The 10 percent above water represents your skill. The 90 percent below water is your character. The vast majority of leadership books deal with the 10 percent, but this book focuses on the 90 percent. Why? Because it’s what’s below the surface that sinks the ship.<sup>2</sup>

Like the iceberg, there is far more to leadership than meets the eye. The greatest impact truly great leaders have comes from the personal qualities you can’t see on the outside, not the productivity or the results you can see. I am convinced that 90 percent of our leadership comes from the values that form us and the virtues that flow from us. In other words, *character ultimately trumps competency.*

Inherently and instinctively, we know this to be true. Authors James Kouzes and Barry Posner surveyed almost 1500 managers from around the country as part of a study sponsored by the American Management Association. They asked this open-ended question: “What values, personal traits, or characteristics do you look for and admire in your superiors?” Put differently, they were asking, “What characteristics apart from title or authority would make you want to voluntarily follow a leader?”

More than 225 values and traits were identified, which were then grouped into 15 categories. The number one thing respondents said they wanted most from their leaders was *integrity*. The categories that immediately followed were “is truthful,” “is trustworthy,” “has character,” and “has convictions.” These qualities ranked above “competency,” “intelligence,” and “is inspiring.”<sup>3</sup> These responses focus on the hidden 90 percent of the iceberg.

I have read and collected leadership books for years. Time management, conflict management, staff management... my head swims from all the advice and practical suggestions that I have gleaned—and yes, used successfully. These books greatly enhance the 10 percent of the iceberg and make it shine, and some may have a chapter or two on the 90 percent. But almost all of these books focus on the leader’s head. Very few focus on the leader’s heart.

I’m reminded of the story of a hot-air balloonist who had drifted off course. He saw a man on the

ground and yelled, “Excuse me, can you tell me where I am?”

“Yes, you’re in a balloon,” the guy replied.

“You must work in IT,” the balloonist said.

“I do indeed! How did you know?”

“What you told me is technically correct but of no use to anyone.”

So many leadership tomes pontificate on...

- how to move an organization forward but not how to move people upward
- how a company can go from good to great but not how a leader should be good in order to help his people become great
- how to grow profits and productivity but not how to grow people as you grow yourself

This is the big difference in this book. A great leader doesn’t just have a great mind; he has a great soul. A brilliant brain is no substitute for a pure heart. To paraphrase Jesus, “What does it profit a person to double the revenues, increase productivity, and satisfy the stockholders while sacrificing his integrity, cutting corners, and treating people like property?” Great leaders don’t just produce great results; they portray great character and inspire others to become better people by the way they lead their own lives.

In the classic work *Mutiny on the Bounty*, Captain Christian stood before the tribunal that would determine his fate. They concluded, “If decency does not abide in the captain of the ship, then it is not on board.” I have learned as a pastor that no one sets the tone among our staff, lay leadership, or the church as a whole like the pastor. This is also true if you are a coach, principal, manager, or CEO.

I have worked with hundreds of people over decades, and I have learned that without exception every person is either a thermometer or a thermostat. Some people register and reflect the climate around them; others set it. Some people dance to the beat of the music; others set the beat and direct the band.

Most people—by far—are thermometers. They “go along to get along.” They are perfect reflections of the style, dress, actions, attitudes, and directions of those around them. They are mirrors of their culture and perfectly happy to be so.

Leaders, on the other hand, are thermostats. They set the tone and the temperature of their culture and the people they lead. The currency of their leadership is influence, and they spend it wisely but liberally. The buck stops with them, and that’s exactly where they want the buck to stop. They know the values they live by and the virtues they exude, and they want them to be mirrored in their followers.<sup>4</sup>

Leaders can *drive* others to follow them by force and mandated authority, or they can *move* others to follow them by their character and convictions. Both may get a job done, but the impact and influence of the latter remain long after those of the former have faded.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote this in his poem “A Psalm of Life”:

Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time.

The leaders who have the best and most enduring impact live that sublime life, which is the focus



of this book.

God warned Israel of the priority of character over competency in leadership. Did you know the Jewish kings were required to make a copy of God's law in their own handwriting and keep it on the person at all times? Like American Express, they couldn't leave home without it. Why would God require this of the king? He knew the constant presence of the law would force the king to internalize it, personalize it, and use it as a portable guard around his heart.<sup>5</sup> According to this scriptural admonition, it would cement his legacy and multiply his influence:

This regular reading will prevent him from becoming proud and acting as if he is above his fellow citizens. It will also prevent him from turning away from these commands in the smallest way. And it will ensure that he and his descendants will reign for many generations in Israel.<sup>6</sup>

Did you read that last sentence? The character instilled in a nation, a family, followers of any kind and sort will linger long after competency has evaporated into thin air. This was illustrated to me in an unforgettable way in China more than a decade ago.

I was president of the Southern Baptist Convention (a true test of leadership if there ever was one) and was on a trip to China to visit Christians and churches there. One morning I was taken to the Great Wall and was fascinated by this magnificent engineering feat, constructed more than 2200 years ago and stretching more than 13,000 miles. It was built for border control—to protect against invasion from various nomadic tribes.

The wall was built so thick and so high the Chinese felt it could neither be scaled nor breached. A confident air of security filled the homes of the Chinese people. Yet during the first 100 years of the wall's existence, China was invaded three times! How? Not once was the wall broken down. Not once did an enemy invader climb over it. All three times a gatekeeper was bribed and the enemy marched right through the gates. The Chinese relied on the competency of the wall builders and the concrete of the wall itself, but they forgot the importance of the character of their people.

I am reminded of the story of a train that was about to leave a large railroad station. The conductor began to take tickets. Looking at the ticket of the first passenger, he said, "Friend, I think you're on the wrong train."

"But the ticket agent told me this was my train," the man said.

After a little discussion, the conductor decided to check with the ticket agent. Before long, it became clear that the conductor was on the wrong train! When the leader is lost, how can the followers be going on the right track?

Leadership is not vested in the position one holds in his title but in the principles one holds in his heart. Dwight D. Eisenhower, one of our greatest military leaders and finest presidents, put it best:

In order to be a leader a man must have followers. And to have followers, a man must have their confidence. Hence the supreme quality of a leader is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, on a football field, in an army, or in an office. If a man's associates find him guilty of phoniness, if they find that he lacks forthright integrity, he will fail. His teachings and actions must square with each other. The first great need, therefore, is integrity and high purpose.

Eisenhower was dead-on. I believe that who you are, what you believe and live by, and how you treat others is far more important than what you accomplish, build, and produce. In the long run

character will accomplish far more lasting results, both in time and eternity, than competence alone ever will.

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Paul Borthwick writes this in *Leading the Way*:

The world needs leaders...  
who cannot be bought;  
whose word is their promise;  
who put character above wealth;  
who possess opinions and a will;  
who are larger than their vocations;  
who do not hesitate to take chances;  
who will not lose their individuality in a crowd;  
who will be honest in small things as well as in great things;  
who will make no compromise with wrong;  
whose ambitions are not confined to their own selfish desires;  
who will not say they do it “because everybody else does it”;  
who are true to their friends through good report and evil report, in adversity as well as in prosperity;  
who do not believe that shrewdness, cunning, and hardheadedness are the best qualities for winning success;  
who are not ashamed or afraid to stand for the truth when it is unpopular;  
who can say no with emphasis, although the rest of the world says yes.<sup>7</sup>

I agree, and I believe the way to become this kind of leader is found in the greatest leadership book in the world, the Bible, which tells us about the greatest leader who ever lived—Jesus Christ. Tucked away in this book is a list of virtues that, if sown in the heart to bear fruit in the life, practically guarantee the character needed to be the best leader one can be. The Bible even calls these virtues “fruit.”<sup>8</sup> Jesus was the very embodiment of these qualities and wants to reproduce them in leaders today.

My hope is that this book will be the plow that opens the soil of your heart so that these seeds can be planted and this fruit can be borne.

The importance of this can be seen in the following study. One might think that knowledge, experience, expertise, and competence might be the greatest assets for vocational and leadership success. The Carnegie Foundation discovered that relational skills are far more important to success in leading and managing. Their research found that only 15 percent of a person’s success is determined by job knowledge and technical skills. The other 85 percent is determined by an individual’s attitude and ability to relate to other people.<sup>9</sup>

If you were told that you were going to work for someone who constantly displayed love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, do you think you might be interested? You think this person would not only be worth following but would make you an even better person by doing so?

If you would like to meet that person and *become* that person, hop on board. It’s going to be a fun-filled, eye-opening, life-changing ride.

## The Key That Always Fits

*“The loneliest place in the world is the human heart when love is absent.”*

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Sitting in a cold hospital room, you play with the frayed strings on the edge of your shirt. You’re trying to occupy your mind, pretending not to be nervous for the sake of your wife. Suddenly, the late clicks and the door swings open.

“I’m going to give it to you straight,” your doctor says. “You have only a few days to live.”

The doctor says his prognosis is certain. No chance for error, no possibility the files were mixed up. No cure. No antidote. No treatment. Nothing. Your ticket for the train to eternity has been punched and you will be at the station on time whether you like it or not.

May I suggest that the most important thing in your life will not be the bottom line of your balance sheet, the size of your portfolio, the number of people who reported to you, the title you carried at your company, the size of your pension, or the letters behind your name on your business card. The one thing that *will* leap to the top of your priority list will be relationships.

A recent Harris Poll asked many Americans to name what they considered most important in life. Consider their response.

- Relationships—56 percent
- Religious faith—21 percent
- Making the world a better place—12 percent
- A fulfilling career—5 percent
- Money—5 percent

Respondents to this poll ranked relationships higher in importance than either career or money by a ratio of more than *10 to 1*. While it could be debated that not everyone in the survey responded truthfully, at least the poll reveals what, deep down, people know is truly important.

John Donne was right: “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main...any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

Think about how crucial relationships are:

- A successful marriage depends upon the *relationship* between the husband and wife.
- A happy home depends upon the *relationship* between the parents and the children (and between the siblings).
- A prosperous business depends upon the *relationship* between the employees and the customers.

- A peaceful community depends upon the *relationship* between neighbors.
- A successful political campaign depends upon the *relationship* between the candidate and the voters.
- A stable nation depends upon the *relationship* between nations.

Everyone needs someone. Even Batman needed Robin. Variety may give life spice, but *relationships* give life significance, purpose, and meaning.

That principle will help you to understand and appreciate something John Rockefeller once said. In his day, Rockefeller was the richest man in the world. Accounting for inflation, he was far wealthier than Bill Gates is today. A business mind *par excellence*, Rockefeller once said, “The ability to deal with people is as purchasable a commodity as sugar or coffee, and I will pay more for the ability than any other under the sun.”

Rockefeller’s words still ring true today. Who you are in the core of your being and how you relate to others will be more valuable at the end of life’s journey than the political acumen of Bill Clinton or the wealth of Oprah Winfrey, the fame of LeBron James, or the influence of Barack Obama.

No one on earth has the power to influence the people you know more than you do. If you can harness and control your relationships, you will possess incredible power. That’s one of the principles that makes this book so different. Other books discuss the “how” of relationship building, networking, influencing, and ultimately leading; this book deals with the “who.” If you want to have the maximum influence and the greatest impact on others, you must believe that *who you are matters more than what you do*.

Over the last several years, a debate has raged in this country over whether character really counts or ability is all that matters. The consensus appears to be that a person’s behavior in private has little bearing on his or her ability to lead or influence in public. Yet this belief contradicts public sentiment.

A core of character exists within us that, if activated and lived out, enables us to achieve the greatest possible impact on others. One of the biggest components of our character is the subject of this chapter. This component is the most powerful emotion and experience in the world. When expressed, it can forge new partnerships or destroy dreams.

In German, *Ich liebe dich*.

In Mandarin, *Wo ai ni*.

In Japanese, *Sukiyo*.

In Russian, *Ya tyebya lyublyu*.

In Greek, *S’agapo*.

In Spanish, *Te amo*.

In Polish, *Kocham cie*.

In English, *I love you*.

## **The Best App You’ll Ever Add to Your iLife**

I recently broke down after much resistance and joined the other six billion people of the world and bought an iPhone. I previously owned a “crackberry,” and I was frankly very pleased with it. What pushed me over the edge to make the switch? The applications. Everyone knows that the iPhone apps are killer cool. Today, as a proud iPhone user, I visit my neighborhood Apple store at least once a week to see what new apps have been released.

Tim Sanders wrote a tremendous book with an amazing title: *Love Is the Killer App: How to Win Business and Influence Friends*. He states that love is the crucial element in the search for personal

and professional success. According to Sanders, if life were an iPhone, love would be the first app you should add.

From everything I've learned, Sanders is onto something. I am convinced that the greatest leaders are loving leaders—their followers, friends, and employees know that the one above them always has their best interests at heart. Stop and think about this: Would you say that the people who had the greatest and most lasting impact on you were people you felt genuinely loved you and cared for you?

I've studied love a lot over the years. My mentor on this topic knows more about love than anyone in history. You've probably heard of Him: Jesus. Even non-Christians agree that Jesus knew something about loving others. He taught about it, but most importantly, He lived it. In fact, Jesus gave the greatest, most succinct explanations of love ever recorded:

One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:35-40).

This sounds good, but how do love and influence interface? Why is love such a crucial component of an influencer's toolkit? To answer these questions, I propose we delve into Jesus' words. No matter your religious tradition, no one denies that Jesus was a person of profound influence and impact even two millennia after His life. I am convinced that if Jesus were alive today, He would be teaching aspiring influencers everywhere how to love others and impact the world.

## **Love Is a Must**

Jesus' love is a command not a request. This command clues us in about the true nature and behavior of love. If love can be commanded, then it cannot be merely emotional—only a matter of feelings—as is often portrayed in the entertainment industry. That may be an accurate depiction of juvenile ardor, but genuine love is much more than a mere feeling. Love is a matter of the will. That's why Jesus is able to command us to express it. It's a commandment followed by a commitment. Although feelings are important, true love functions regardless of feelings.

For thousands of years (and to this day in some Eastern cultures), parents arranged their children's marriages. Many brides and bridegrooms never saw each other until their wedding day.

A certain young lady from India was to be married to a young man she had never met. One day she received a letter from her fiancé to acquaint her with him prior to the wedding. But the young woman returned the letter unopened, saying she believed love should be developed after marriage and not before. "When we are born," the woman said, "we cannot choose our mother and father or our brothers and sisters. Yet we learn to live with them and to love them. So it is with our husband or wife." In societies that accept such a philosophy, divorce is almost nonexistent.

While I do not suggest that we return to the practice of arranged marriages, I do insist that "romantic love" as popularly understood has little to do with a successful marriage. Love is more than feelings.

My marriage is a perfect example of this. I have been married for over three decades. I proposed to my wife and told her I "loved her" on our second date. I actually experienced "love at first sight," b

I thought the first date might be rushing it a bit, and I wanted to give her time to get used to the idea that she loved me too. Did I *really* love her after only two dates? I can honestly say that I loved her as much as anyone can after only two days of interaction. But my love then was galaxies away from the real love I have for her today.

Thirty years later, I understand that love is a choice rather than a sappy let's-all-hold-hands-and-sing "We Are the World" sentiment. Love is a commitment to caring for others and doing for others regardless of our feelings. We choose to love.

Mark Sanborn in his wonderful little book *The Fred Factor* made this observation:

I learned a long time ago that liking people and loving them are different. Liking someone is an emotional response. Unlike love, "like" is a feeling. The tough part is that we can't control our emotions. We can control how we choose to express those emotions but not the feelings themselves. A healthy person can choose to be angry and still choose to act lovingly...A feeling is a reaction. Maybe that's one reason Jesus didn't say "Like your enemies." He knew that liking or not liking someone was not always in our immediate control...I have learned that love is, among other things, an action. I can love someone I don't necessarily like. I can do something or act toward that person in a certain way because I know it is the right thing to do even if I don't feel warm and fuzzy doing it.<sup>1</sup>

Those of you who are managers and leaders would do well to remember that. You may not like your employees, but if you stop loving them, you've gone too far. Your boss may not be likeable, but you must do your best to love him or her despite this sentiment. Jesus commanded us to love, and taking His words seriously makes us better leaders and influencers.

## Love Has an Upward Dimension

Real love is multidimensional. In the passage in Matthew, Jesus reveals three directions for love: toward God, others, and ourselves. The first love—for God—is an upward love that must take priority. We should love God first, most, and best. Jesus tells us that God deserves all of our love, not only part of our love. We should love no one more than God. Jesus taught that if love is to be fully manifested, maximally beneficial, and mutually satisfying, we should love God first, others second, and ourselves last.

Some readers may squirm in discomfort at this juncture and prefer to leave any reference to deity out of the influencer equation. This is neither completely possible nor desirable. Love for God *enhances* our love for others and hence strengthens our ability to influence and impact others in a positive way.

You might be asking, "Is it possible to love others or to experience love apart from God?" Certainly, for people do it every day. But if Jesus was right, unless we first love God and receive His love, we can't fully experience or manifest the greatest love. If you love God, your love for others will grow even greater, for this upward love supernaturally produces a love for others.

When you love God the most, you will love others the best. British author C.S. Lewis once said, "When I have learned to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now." Indeed love is like a river—it always flows *downstream*. When the vertical dimension of love is experienced, the horizontal dimension will be a natural result.

## Love Has an Outward Dimension

Jesus also calls us to love our neighbor. A love for God inescapably motivates a love for others. Of course, it's hard to love everybody. As C.W. Vanderbergh wrote, "To love the whole world for me is no chore. My only real problem is my neighbor next door."

Most businesses would benefit greatly if the boss truly loved his employees and they knew it. Most marriages would be happier if spouses heard and saw constant reminders that they were loved. Most families would be happier if the parents constantly and lovingly affirmed their children.

Consider this simple but powerful principle that can transform any relationship almost overnight: *When it comes to love, say it.*

My dad went to heaven more than 10 years ago. He grew up in a relatively good—but loveless—home. Between them, my grandparents lived a total of 180 years. In the combined 106 years my dad knew them, they never once told him they loved him. I am so glad that the last time I saw my dad alive, I told him, "You are my best man and I love you."

About 20 years ago I met Tony, a Palestinian who has since become a part of my family. Until I told him "I love you," he had never heard another man say those three words to him. At first, all he could say was "thank you." I just kept on speaking those three words. After years of telling him, he said to me, "I love you, man." Later he told me that he has never felt so good about expressing his love to others in such an open way.

Why not start now to become a loving person or a person better at loving? For the next 30 days, try the following:

- Tell every member of your family that you love them, and give them several loving touches, pats, hugs, and kisses every day.
- If you are a boss, manager, or employer, tell your employees that you love and appreciate them for the work they do. Find some way to give a tangible expression (note, card, or pat on the back) of your loving affirmation.
- If you are an employee, do the same for your employers.
- If you have been at odds with someone, go to that person and affirm your love for him, regardless of your differences.

One word of warning: loving others and expressing that love verbally and tangibly can entail great risk. But the risk is worth taking. I can name at least four reasons why those three words need to come from our lips regularly and often: (1) you need to say it; (2) you need to hear yourself say it; (3) others need to hear you say it; and (4) you need to hear it from others. What's wrong with a general telling his troops he loves them? Why doesn't a boss tell his employees he loves them? Why shouldn't a coach tell his players he loves them? In my mind, they should.

In 1999, Duke University played the University of Connecticut for the NCAA men's basketball championship. Duke had a chance to win, but in the last five seconds a Duke player lost the ball and with it, the game.

What did Coach Mike Krzyzewski say after he lost for the fourth time in a national championship game? "I'm really proud of my team," he declared. "I really love these guys. I have a hard time being sad. I don't coach for winning. I coach for relationships." Coach K really does love his players, and people know it. That's one reason why he is considered one of the outstanding coaches and recruiters in America.

Husbands, your wife needs to hear you say those three words, repeatedly, every day. Don't be like

the husband and wife who were sitting on a swing one afternoon. The woman turned to her spouse and said, “You never tell me you love me.” Without looking at his wife, the man dryly replied, “I told you 37 years ago that I loved you, and if I change my mind, I will let you know.”

Your spouse may *know* it, but they still need to hear it.

But saying it isn't enough. There's another action piece at work here: *When it comes to love, show it.* Love must not only be articulated but also demonstrated. Love is proactive, practical, and personal. It is tangible—something to be seen as well as heard. If love is going to be maximally effective, it should be seen, heard, and felt.

A simple touch can convey an incredible sense of love, affirmation, and acceptance. A study conducted at UCLA several years ago found that to maintain physical and emotional health, men and women need eight to ten meaningful touches each day. These researchers defined meaningful touch as a gentle tap, stroke, kiss, or hug, given by a “significant other” such as a husband, wife, parent, or close friend. Of course, in a professional relationship (and in certain personal relationships), caution should be exercised in touching anyone of the opposite sex. The point is, love should be tangibly expressed in the right place and time.

An old commercial appropriately asked parents, “Have you hugged your kids today?” Good coaches high-five their players, good husbands hug their wives, and good bosses give employees encouraging pats on the back as a way of expressing loving affirmation. It may sound trite but a “pat on the back” really can be beneficial.

Dr. Dolores Krieger, professor of nursing at New York University, has done numerous studies on the effect of human touch. She found that both the toucher and the one being touched receive great physiological benefit. Here's how: Red blood cells carry hemoglobin, a substance that carries oxygen to the body's tissues. Dr. Krieger found that hemoglobin levels in the bloodstreams of both people increase when one lays hands on the other. As hemoglobin levels rise, body tissues receive more oxygen. This oxygen increase invigorates both parties and can even aid in the healing process (the healing power of love in action).

An incredible true story illustrates this power of a loving touch. Leprosy patients feel no physical pain except in the early stages of the disease. Lack of feeling is the problem, for after leprosy bacteria deaden nerve cells, patients lose pain as an all-important danger signal. They may step on a rusty nail or scratch an infected spot on the eyeball without even knowing it. The result can be the eventual loss of a limb or vision, but at no point does the leprosy patient actually hurt.

Although they do not feel physical pain, leprosy patients do suffer incredibly from the rejection of the outside world. Dr. Paul Brand, a leprosy specialist, tells of a bright young man he treated in India. In the course of his examination, he laid his hand on the patient's shoulder and informed him through a translator about the treatment he would receive. To the doctor's shock, the man began to tremble and sob uncontrollably. Brand immediately asked the translator what he had done wrong. She quizzed the patient and explained, “No, doctor. He says he is crying because you put your hand around his shoulder. Until he came here, no one had touched him in many years.” Dr. Brand expressed love for this man, and it translated into both influence and impact.

The law says, “What's mine is mine; I'll keep it.”

Our lust says, “What's yours is mine; I'll take it.”

True love says, “What's mine is yours; I'll share it.”

Love sets off a divine chain reaction. Love is the spark that kindles the fire of compassion. Compassion is the fire that lights the candle of service. Service is the candle that ignites the torch of hope. Hope is the torch that lights the beacon of faith. Faith is the beacon that reflects the power



God. And God is the power that creates the miracle of love.

~~The way of love is not only the right way; it is the best way. You can experience nothing as self-gratifying or encouraging as loving others through both words and deeds.~~

## Love Has an Inward Dimension

Many forget that Jesus said we should love our neighbors *as ourselves*. On the surface, this seems to be a mandate for self-love. But when we consider His words in context, we see the principle Jesus gave was radical and refreshing. Jesus declared that if we love God properly, we will come to love ourselves properly. The great Swiss psychologist Paul Tournier once said, “If a person will love God the way he ought to love God, he will then love others the way he ought to love others; and when he loves God and others the way they ought to be loved, he will never need a psychiatrist.” Love can give you a healthy mental picture of yourself, enhancing the type of self-esteem that avoids self-worship and self-idolization.

The topics of self and self-esteem have generated an incredible amount of press in recent years. Much of the coverage has been counterproductive, fostering an unhealthy obsession with self and spawning a culture of selfishness that chants the mantra, “What’s in it for me?” Simply affirming “I’m okay and you’re okay” is not good enough, for neither you nor I may really be okay. If you are okay with God and okay with others, chances are you will be okay with yourself. When you love God and your neighbor, self won’t seem so important. You will find that love can motivate in a way that fame or fortune never could.

If you wrestle with insecurities, self-doubt, even self-loathing, it will eventually be revealed in your relationships. Unless dealt with, these traits will greatly hinder your ability to impact and influence others. I have found that people who are irritable, hard to work with, or hard to get along with usually are most unhappy with themselves.

A wise writer and evangelist, Henry Drummond, once said:

To love abundantly is to live abundantly; and to love forever is to live forever. Hence, eternal life is inextricably bound up with love. We want to live forever for the same reason we want to live tomorrow. Why do you want to live tomorrow? It is because someone loves you, and you want to see them tomorrow because you love them back. Being loved and loving others is the only reason why we should continue living. It is when a man has no one to love him, or thinks that he has no one to love him, that he commits suicide. So long as he has friends, those who love him and whom he loves, he will live; because to live is to love.<sup>2</sup>

Drummond was right. If you are not loving, you are not living. Even the poorest person on earth can give away love. We all need to be loved and we all need to love someone else, for someone always needs our love. I must warn you that a life of love is risky. Choosing to love makes you vulnerable. But that is the difference between losers and winners: *A winner is willing to risk not being like others to rise above others.* As author and poet William Arthur Ward says, “Only the person who risks is free.”

## The Gift That Keeps on Giving

Love involves risk, pain, and heartache, but it can bring a tidal wave of joy that washes the toughest times away. David Ireland wrote *Letters to an Unborn Child* while dying from a crippling neurologic disease. He composed these letters to the unborn child still in the womb of his wife—a child he knew

he'd probably never see, hold, rock, kiss, or take to a ball game or a movie. A child he might never shoot baskets with, take to the circus, or comfort after a bad dream. He desperately wanted that child to know that, whether dead or alive, "Daddy loves his son or daughter." With that in mind, David wrote the following:

Your mother is special. Few men know what it's like to receive appreciation for taking their wives out to dinner when it entails what it does for us. It means that she has to dress me, shave me, brush my teeth, comb my hair, wheel me out of the house and down the steps, open the garage and put me in the car, take the pedals off the chair, stand me up, sit me in the seat of the car, twist me around so that I'm comfortable, fold the wheelchair, put it in the car, go around to the other side of the car, start it up, back it out, get out of the car, pull the garage door down, get back into the car, and drive off to the restaurant.

And then, it starts all over again; she gets out of the car, unfolds the wheelchair, opens the door, spins me around, stands me up, seats me in the wheelchair, pushes the pedals out, closes and locks the car, wheels me into the restaurant, then takes the pedals off the wheelchair so I won't be uncomfortable. We sit down to have dinner, and she feeds me through the entire meal. And when it's over she pays the bill, pushes the wheelchair out to the car again and reverses the same routine.

And when it's over—finished—with real warmth she'll say, "Honey, thank you for taking me out to dinner." I never quite know how to answer.<sup>3</sup>

I have never met this tremendous woman, but I guarantee you she knows how to impact and influence *anybody*. I want her on my team anytime! Even while her husband was dying, she kept his *really* living by her loving. Risky? Yes. Difficult? Absolutely. Yet she teaches us all that the greatest rewards in life come when we love and are loved.

Like Ireland's wife, we too have been given the task of loving. We must learn to love God, others, and ourselves in the proper proportions and order. It is risky, but it's worth it. And it will pay dividends from the bank of influence and impact for years to come.

**Principle One**—Lead with love, and people will gladly follow.

# The Key to a Happy Team

*“You can’t do much about the length of your life, but you can do a lot about its depth and width.”*

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Laughing is one of the best parts of life. It is such good medicine that it can relieve stress, cure headaches, fight infections, and even alleviate hypertension. Laughing produces well-documented physical benefits similar to those obtained through vigorous physical exercise. When you tip your head back and cackle aloud, muscles in the abdomen, chest, shoulders, and elsewhere contract, which causes the heart rate and blood pressure to increase. In one burst of this activity, the pulse can double from 60 to 120, while systolic blood pressure can shoot from a normal 120 to 200. Once laughing ceases, the heartbeat and blood pressure dip below normal—a sign of reduced stress.

Laughter is good for you and laughter brings health—a fact that was known by wise King Solomon: “A cheerful heart is good medicine” (Proverbs 17:22). That really is more than a verse of Scripture—it’s also a medical statement, as we just saw. When merriness fills the tanks of our hearts, we feel better on the inside.

## **Joy and Happiness: Not Siamese Twins**

Don’t confuse happiness with merriness. Merriness comes from joy, not from happiness. Understanding this is crucial to your emotional well-being as well as your influence on others. There are times we cannot and should not be happy—when people are hurting, going through tragedy, losing jobs or loved ones. In the face of injustice, happiness is inappropriate if not impossible. Yet, in a real sense we should always remain joyful. We cannot be happy without being joyful, but we can be joyful without being happy.

This is a key point that you must not miss. Jesus said to His disciples, “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:11). The Great Rabbi makes it plain that the joy He is speaking of is unique (“my joy”) and fulfilling in a way that the world’s happiness is not (“that your joy may be complete”). Jesus makes clear that being a faithful follower of His teaching brings one an inner joy that is real and resilient regardless of economic indicators, interest rates, government deficits, or the triumvirate of pestilence, disease, and death.

How can this be? He had just told them previously that they enjoyed a love that transcends all others—the love of a heavenly Father that is unconditionally offered and, once accepted, permanently experienced (John 15:9-10). Nothing can compare to the love of God. His love is not based on looks, personality, wealth, or even moral goodness. It is offered without any preconditions and is neither fickle nor failing. You can’t do anything to make God love you more, and you can do nothing to make God love you less.

Furthermore, divine love doesn’t just give you warm fuzzies; it is constantly at work to direct you to make wise decisions, protect you from making poor decisions, and even correct you when you make bad decisions. God’s love guarantees acceptance when all others have rejected you, forgiveness when

all others judge you, and mercy when all others want to condemn you. When you bask in this love, you bathe in a wellspring of joy bubbling up in your heart. Nothing and no one should be able to take that away from you.

I called a dear friend of mine the day I wrote this chapter because the date represented one of the saddest days of his life. Twenty years ago his 23-year-old son was killed in a motorcycle accident. As I called him to let him know I was thinking of him, I couldn't help but think of how full of joy my friend is every day. I said, "Ken, I'm writing a chapter on the necessity of being a joy-filled person and I was wondering how you've maintained your joy all these years?"

Ken thought for a moment and said through tears and a breaking voice, "I came to understand quickly that even though grief can rob you of your happiness, it cannot rob you of a joy that is far deeper and stronger. Even in the terrible moment when I landed and was met with this devastating news, I was simultaneously strengthened by my faith, which helped me see the big picture."

He took a deep breath and continued. "I knew that Paul was not suffering, and I would see him again. We had enjoyed a great father-son relationship. We had a love for each other that death could not end, and I had a wife and two loving daughters who adored me, and a faith that had prepared me for this moment. I can't explain it, but even in the most difficult of times, I had a joy in my heart that helped me smile on the inside even through the tears on the outside."

Listening to Ken, I was reminded of the contrasts between joy and happiness. Consider the distinctions:

- Happiness is external; joy is internal.
- Happiness depends on outward circumstances; joy depends on inward character.
- Happiness depends on what happens to us; joy depends on who lives within us.
- Happiness is based on chance; joy is based on choice.

The word *happiness* comes from the old English word *happ*, which literally means "chance." It corresponds to the Latin *fortuna*, which means "luck." These words suggest that if things happen the way we want them to happen, then we are happy. But if they don't happen the way we want, we are unhappy. Happiness is temporary and fickle; joy is permanent and settled.

## Created for Joy

Unfortunately, many people think God is some type of cosmic killjoy who frowns at smiles and cringes at laughter, and hates anything that smacks of joy and delight. Yet, as C.S. Lewis noted, "Joy is the serious business of heaven." And as we just saw, the person universally accepted as the greatest teacher who ever lived said His teachings were not just for information but for transformation—bringing a joy that would be permanent and complete.

Indeed, the Bible is one of the most joy-filled books ever written! It might surprise some to learn that the Bible uses the words *joy* and *joyful* some 245 times. The word *rejoice* appears 150 times. The Bible instructs us to be joyful and rejoice nearly 400 times.

It might seem odd that God tells us to experience joy, but that fact illustrates the difference between joy and happiness. Joy sometimes just happens when good things unfold for us. No doubt you may feel joy when, as the song from the musical *Oklahoma* declares, "Everything's going my way." But it is important to note that *joy is also a choice*.

Let me tell you a secret about joy that differentiates it even more from happiness: More than a

emotion, joy is an attitude. Emotions cannot be chosen—no one can tell you to feel happy if you are not. But you can choose to be joyful regardless of your circumstances.

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Imagine you are mired in a muck of unhappiness, and you go to a professional counselor and lie on the couch, spend tons of money, spend countless hours pouring out your unhappiness to him only to hear him say: “Don’t worry, be happy!” You would probably be ready to take action to make him extremely unhappy! Telling someone to be happy is foolish, for happiness is not a choice.

Neither is it a commodity that can be bought. Too many people find out too late that money cannot buy happiness, much less joy. It has been wisely said that the poor are better off than the rich because the poor still think that money will buy happiness; the rich know better. Trying to find happiness or joy in material things is like drinking saltwater: the more you drink, the thirstier you get.

A well-dressed restaurant customer was staring sullenly into his drink. The waitress, trying to be kind, asked if something was wrong.

“Well, two months ago my grandfather died and left me \$500,000 in oil wells.”

“That doesn’t sound like something to get upset about,” the waitress said.

“Yeah,” the young man said, “but last month my uncle passed away and left me \$100,000 in stocks.”

“So why are you sitting there so unhappy?”

“Because this month, so far, nobody’s left me a cent!”

The great poet Horace wrote these words:

Happy is the man and happy is he alone,  
He who can call today his own.  
He who is secure within can say,  
“Tomorrow do thy worst, for I have lived today.”

Today is really all we have, and we can choose to be joyful today. We get to ride on the merry-go-round of life only once. Why not choose to enjoy the ride?

## **The Power of Joy**

Joy gives us strength for living. It allows us to walk in the sunshine even when the rain pours down. It gives us wings to fly when most of the world is walking. It gives us strength to persevere even under the worst circumstances. Searching for a silver lining in every dark cloud is indeed far better than seeing a dark lining in every silver cloud.

Furthermore, joy “bait the hook” with the one thing people want most in this world: hope. Joy gives people a sense of optimism, hope, and merriment that endures with the times and doesn’t evaporate with troubles. Even his political foes agreed that Ronald Reagan was one of the most well-liked presidents in our history. His sunny disposition radiated an infectious joy.

Human beings spend many of their waking hours seeking something to fill the emptiness in their souls. That something is joy, and if you can offer someone joy, you will be a winner and an influencer far beyond your wildest dreams. I once heard a friend say, “Joy is a winsome magnet that draws people in because it is the one thing they do not have.”

Leaders pull everyone else around them up when they are down. Not only do they see the glass half-full, but they invest energy in the lives of those around them so that they keep a joyful perspective as well. If you are going to maximize your influence and leave a lasting impact on others, you must become contagious with joy. There are two practical ways to do this.

First, *create a joyful environment*. My wife loves to go to certain restaurants for what she calls the “atmosphere” or “ambiance.” The surroundings, the service, and the sounds create for her a relaxed and romantic feeling that you won’t get at McDonald’s. Leaders can create environments of joy so that others experience it and even catch it. It can be something as simple as walking around the office giving everyone a smile or a thumbs-up, or encouraging a mother and father to make sure fun is on the agenda every day in some way in the home.

Second, *invest in others*. When you share your life with another person, you can give him or her a “joy transfusion” even when times are tough. We really do have the power and ability to help people see that life is good in so many ways, that it is always full of potential, and that we have reasons to smile, laugh, and even give thanks for the many positives that are with us daily. Zig Ziglar has been a mentor and encourager to me. Many times he has called out of the blue with that bubbly joyful voice of his and breathed a joyful attitude into my life. Who will you become a mentor and encourager to? Choose to invest in others, and you’ll unlock the power of joy.

The greatest secret of personal joy—and perhaps the one principle that will practically guarantee it—is this: *Give joy to others, and you will get it for yourself*. Helen Keller once wrote in her journal, “Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes happiness [and joy]. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.”

Look around and you will find that the most joyful people are those who invest their time and energy in others. The unhappiest people are those who wait around, wondering how someone is going to make them happy. Someone once asked Karl Menninger, the great psychiatrist, how a lonely and unhappy person should deal with the unhappiness. “Lock the door behind you, go across the street and find someone who is hurting, and help him or her,” he said.

## **Chief Enjoyment Officer**

Dale Carnegie said the expression you wear on your face is far more important than the clothes you wear on your back. Carnegie tells how a New York City department store recognized the pressure its salesclerks felt during the Christmas rush. It presented its customers with the following philosophy:

It costs nothing but creates much.

It enriches those who receive without impoverishing those who give.

It happens in a flash, and the memory of it lasts forever.

None are so rich they can get along without it, and none so poor but are richer for its benefits.

It creates happiness in the home, fosters goodwill in a business, and is the countersign of friends.

It is rest to the weary, daylight to the discouraged, sunshine to the sad, and Nature’s best antidote for trouble.

Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed, nor stolen, for it’s no earthly good to anybody until it is given away.

And if in the last-minute rush of Christmas buying some of our salespeople should be too tired to give you a smile, may we ask you to leave one of yours?

For nobody needs a smile so much as those who have none left to give!

When I speak of smiling, I do not mean a forced smile that shows a cynical spirit. I mean a smile that naturally reveals a heart filled with joy. Joy is difficult, if not impossible, to conceal.

Some prospectors out in California once discovered a rich vein of gold; the strike would make them all instant millionaires. They had but one problem: they had not legally staked their claim. They made a solemn vow to one another that they would not tell a soul about the discovery until they had completed the legal work and bought all of the supplies and tools needed to begin digging. They went into town and divided their duties—some going to get food, others to get tools, and others to file their claim. But as they left, they noticed practically half the town was following them. At first each felt fury, believing one of them had betrayed the others. But when they asked how their discovery had leaked out, one of the townspeople replied, “It was the look of joy on your faces. We don’t ever see that around here—and we knew it must be gold!” Joy and excitement so filled these men that their faces betrayed what was in their hearts.

As a leader you can be a CEO—Chief Enjoyment Officer—regardless of your official position.

## **The Journey to Joy**

Think of life as a journey you can either endure or enjoy. Since you make the journey only once, you may as well enjoy the ride. But the ride begins when you establish a personal relationship with God, the ultimate source of all joy. This is the first step to experience joy that will stick and last a lifetime. The Bible says:

You [God] have made known to me the path of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence,  
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.  
(Psalm 16:11)

God made you for Himself, and only when you find His purpose for your life will you also find peace and joy.

If you were to take a fish out of the ocean and place it on the beach, you would watch its scales drip up as it gasped for breath. Is that fish full of joy? Absolutely not. If you covered it with a mountain of cash, would that make the fish joyful? No. Would a beach chair, an iPod, a good book, and some iced tea restore its joy? Of course not. Suppose you bought it a new wardrobe of double-breasted suits and people-skin shoes. Would that satisfy it? Obviously not.

Only one thing will restore joy to this fish: putting it back in the water. That fish can never have joy on the beach because it wasn’t made for the beach, it was made for the ocean. In the same way, we were made for fellowship with God, and we will be like a fish out of water—never knowing the true source of everlasting joy—until we find it in Him.

The journey begins with God but continues with you. When you plug into God, He changes you into a person of joy. And as a person of joy, you must remember to be a grateful rather than a grumbling person. Gratitude is often the missing link in the chain that binds joy to the grind of everyday living. Grumbling and complaining not only take your focus off the positives; they drain the energy of joy from the battery of your heart. Stop and take notice of the simple things in life you can feel grateful for.

A man was sitting on a train, looking out the window as his railcar traveled through the countryside. Whenever the train passed open fields, he would say, “Wonderful.” As it chugged through woods, the man would again say, “Wonderful.” Everything he saw—cows grazing in

pasture, birds sitting on fences, or just ordinary buildings—would evoke an amazed look and an exclamation of “Wonderful.”

Another man watched him for a while and then said, “Sir, why is everything so wonderful to you? I don’t see the big deal.” The man replied, “I’m sure you haven’t understood. You see, I have been blind since birth, but I have just had an operation and now I can see—and to me, *everything* is wonderful!”

*Be satisfied with what you do have; don’t be sour about what you don’t have.* Remember two words: *greed* and *envy*. These are guaranteed joy killers. A wise person knows that more is not necessarily better and that others are not necessarily better off. Even if the grass *is* greener on the other side, that just means it grows faster and is more difficult to cut.

A wealthy businessman felt disturbed to find a fisherman sitting lazily beside his boat. “Why aren’t you out there fishing?” he asked.

“Because I’ve caught enough fish for today,” the man replied.

“Why don’t you catch more fish than you need?” the rich man asked.

“What would I do with them?”

“You could earn more money and buy a better boat so you could go deeper and catch more fish. You could purchase nylon nets, catch even more fish, and make more money. Soon you would have a fleet of boats and be rich like me.”

“Then what would I do?” the fisherman asked.

“You could sit down and enjoy life,” the rich man said.

The fisherman looked peacefully across the water, smiled, and said, “What do you think I’m doing *now*?”

That fisherman had learned the secret of enjoying life.

## Don’t Miss Out

Life is too short to miss out on the joy of knowing God, serving others, and delighting in becoming a blessing to others. Make the decision now to go through life with a smile on your face, a smile that radiates from joy in your heart.

I don’t know of a more difficult profession on this planet than being a pastor. A pastor is somewhat like the president of the United States; his popularity index and approval rating is like an ocean wave—up one moment and down the next. I constantly have to choose to maintain my joy—even after complaints about the music, gripes about the temperature, or second-guessing one’s statement I may make out of a 40-minute message.

When I find myself tempted to chuck it all in and lose the smile in my heart, I remember Viktor Frankl. He was a Nazi concentration camp survivor. He describes how everything tangible was taken from the Jewish prisoners—clothing, personal belongings, pictures. In the ultimate dignity robbing degradation, their captors even removed their names and gave them numbers. I ask you—where do you find joy in *that* situation? But then Frankl says: “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances.”<sup>1</sup>

People of influence choose joy over gloom, gladness over sadness, optimism over pessimism—and lead others to do the same thing. Life is indeed short, and the journey is over almost from the time it begins. Beginning today, make it a joy ride!

**Principle Two**—Joyful leadership produces happy followers.



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