

# **A LEADER WORTH IMITATING**

33 Leadership Principles From the Life of Jesus

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*A Leader Worth Imitating: 33 Leadership Principles From the Life of Jesus*

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*To my wife, CC.*

*You are my person, my love, and my crown  
(Proverbs 12:4).*

*Thanks for (inadvertently) inspiring this book.*

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## **INTRODUCTION: “Leadership, Leadership, Leadership.”**

Growing up, I never had a favorite subject in school. I didn't enjoy reading or writing. I wasn't good at math. And I couldn't remember the details about the people and events in history. When adults would ask me what my favorite subject was, I would shrug and answer that I didn't have one. This all changed during my junior year of undergrad when I began studying leadership at William Jessup University (WJU) in Rocklin, CA.

During my time in this program, I learned about how to better lead myself, my family, friends, coworkers, and church members. This is why I fell in love with the topic of leadership. I could apply what I was learning in the classroom to any area of my life.

In his book, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, John Maxwell defined leadership as

“influence.”<sup>1</sup> Reading this was a paradigm shift. I concluded that if leadership is influence, then that means everyone is a leader. You might be a leader in your family, community, workplace, or church. You at least lead yourself. I call these five areas where people lead “Your Circle of Influence” and wrote about it in a short book called, *You Are a Leader*.<sup>2</sup>

Besides its applicability, leadership also helped me appreciate the academic subjects I hadn't enjoyed growing up. I found books I enjoyed reading and topics I was excited to write about. When I saw how statistics worked with my new favorite subject, I got better at math. I also looked at historical people and events as case studies of leadership successes and failures.

To say leadership is my favorite subject might actually be an understatement. I'm more of a leadership fanatic. I have over a decade of experience in leadership. During these years, I have worked for business, non-profit, and academic organizations. After completing my undergrad in leadership at WJU, I went back for seconds and earned my master's degree in the subject. I also collect leadership books



like some people collect trading cards, and watch TED Talks like some people watch sports.

My obsession with leadership has not gone unnoticed by my family and friends. My wife, Claudia (I like to call her CC), often makes fun of me for it. One day, when she was doing laundry, she put on one of my favorite button-up shirts and walked around our house saying, "Look at me! I'm Nick. Leadership, leadership, leadership."

While my wife imitating me was funny and has become one of our ongoing jokes, it got me to think about my leadership. Am I a leader worth imitating? I don't consider myself to be a perfect leader. However, I know someone who is. Similar to how my wife imitated me, I want to imitate Him. He hasn't written a leadership book or given a TED Talk. Nevertheless, He is still one of the most well-known leaders of all time. Of course, I am talking about Jesus Christ.

According to Luke 3:23, Jesus was around 30 years old when He began His ministry. In addition to this, John's Gospel documents three Passover events during Jesus' ministry (John 2:13, 6:4, 11:55). Because of this, some scholars conclude Jesus was 33 years old

when He was crucified. During His time on the earth, He lived a sinless life. 1 Peter 2:22 reads, “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” Essentially, Jesus was perfect; therefore, His leadership was also perfect. So by looking at the 33 years of His life, we can see what it truly means to be a leader.

In this book, we will look at Jesus’ leadership, showing 33 different leadership principles from His life. This book is not meant to be an exhaustive list. Through your personal Bible study, you will probably find other leadership principles that I missed.

You can read this book in a couple of ways. You can read in the order it is written. Even if some principles don’t pertain to your leadership, you will see how all 33 work together. Alternatively, you can read it out of order. By browsing the table of contents, you can select which principles are most pertinent to your circle of influence. However you choose to read, I hope by the end of this book, you will discover different ways to imitate the leadership of Jesus as you lead yourself, your family, community, workplace, or church.

As I previously mentioned, one of my favorite things about the subject of leadership is its applicability. Hence, I will end each principle with some questions. This will help you apply what you are reading to your own leadership.

## Application Questions

1. If one of your family members or friends were to imitate you, what might they say or do?
2. Before reading this introduction, did you consider yourself to be a leader? Why or why not?
3. Think about your circle of influence (self, family, community, workplace, and/or church). Who are you currently leading?

## **PRINCIPLE 1: Purpose**

When I was in college, I would usually begin my papers and projects with a thesis. This is a section that explains the purpose of the assignment. An example of this is the last three paragraphs in the introduction of this book.

It might seem monotonous to write out what you are going to write about. However, many of my professors argued that every A+ assignment has a great thesis statement. Similarly, I would argue that a leader worth imitating has a great purpose.

A leader's purpose is the reason he leads. He might call it his goal, cause, or mission. Also, a leader might say it's what gets her up in the morning. It's the reason behind everything she does.

If I were to ask you what the purpose of Jesus' leadership was, what would you guess?

- A. Eternal life

- B. Forgiveness from sin
- C. Make disciples
- D. All the above

Jesus is not mentioned by name until the New Testament. However, His purpose was congruent with God's purpose in the Old Testament. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus stated, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Meaning, Jesus' purpose was not to start something different. Rather, it was to finish what had already been started. This makes Jesus' purpose the same as the purpose of the Bible as a whole.

If you were to ask me what the thesis or purpose of the Bible is, I would argue it is about God reconciling His relationship with humanity. God's relationship with His creation is the through-line of Scripture. We see it at the very beginning with the creation story of Genesis 1:1-31. Verse 27 reads, "God created human beings in His own image" (NLT). Meaning, God created us like Him to know Him. While this was God's intention, our sins and disobedience moved us from being in a relationship to being

estranged (Genesis 2:1-24). Despite our sins and disobedience, God still made a way for people to have a relationship with Him.

God made a way for people to be in a relationship with Him by creating covenants, which are basically relational contracts. Covenants were a way for a perfect God to have a relationship with sinful people. Examples of this are His covenants with Noah (Genesis 9:8-17), Abraham (Genesis 15:1-21), Israel (Exodus 24:1-11), and David (2 Samuel 7:5-16).

Those examples were God's way of having a relationship with His people in the Old Testament. However, it was not His endgame. Even though Israel disobeyed their relational contract (Jeremiah 11:1-5), God promised to make a New Covenant with them (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

There would be some differences between the Old and New Covenant. The Old Covenant was limited to Israel, but the New Covenant would be open to everyone (Isaiah 42:6). In addition to this, the Old Covenant was rooted in the law, but the New Covenant would be rooted in grace (Hebrews 8:1-13).

We see the origin of this in John 1:14. It reads, “The Word (Jesus) became human and made his home among us” (NLT). This is the beginning of Jesus’ leadership and the New Covenant. The purpose is to reconcile humanity’s relationship with God. In 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, Paul called this “the ministry of reconciliation” (v. 18).

If you had to summarize Jesus’ purpose as a leader in one Bible verse, you could do it with John 3:16. This verse may be the most well-known passage of Scripture. It could even be considered the thesis of the whole Bible. It reads, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” This message of Jesus’ death and resurrection is often referred to as “the gospel” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Based on this passage, one might understandably conclude that the purpose of Jesus’ leadership was simply to bring eternal life. However, I think that John 17:3 helps clarify this. It reads, “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” Meaning, the purpose of eternal life is not simply



eternal life on its own. Rather, the purpose of eternal life is for people to know God. Essentially, reconciling humanity with God was the reason behind eternal life. It's one way Jesus fulfilled His purpose.

Similarly, reconciliation is the reason behind forgiveness from sin and discipleship. Forgiveness from sin allows imperfect humans to have a relationship with a perfect God (1 John 1:9). Discipleship is about becoming more like Jesus. I explain discipleship in Principle 7 (Team). To put it another way, reconciliation was the purpose of Jesus' leadership. Eternal life, forgiveness from sin, and discipleship are how Jesus fulfilled that purpose. At the beginning of this principle, I gave you a quiz. If you haven't figured it out by now, the answer is, "D. All the above."

A leader worth imitating has a purpose. In congruence with all of Scripture, the purpose of Jesus' leadership was to reconcile humanity's relationship with God. That is why He came. That is why He led. To do that, He brought eternal life, forgiveness from sin, and discipleship. As you continue to read this book,

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you will see how Jesus' purpose directed other areas of His leadership.

## Application Questions

1. Think about your circle of influence (self, family, community, workplace, and/or church). Why do you lead where you do?
2. What is the purpose, goal, cause, or mission of your leadership? What gets you up in the morning?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-21. In verse 20, Paul writes we are “Christ’s ambassadors.” Meaning, they include us in Jesus’ work of reconciling other people to God. How does your purpose as a leader work with Jesus’ larger purpose for humanity?

## **PRINCIPLE 2: Presence**

Have you ever worked with a leader who wasn't present? Perhaps he saw himself as being separate or above his followers. Because of this, he never made himself accessible to you. Or perhaps she made herself physically present, but when you met with her, she spent the majority of the time responding to messages or broke away to take a call. Even though she was physically present, it felt like she wasn't really there.

Being present is not just being in the same room with someone. Being present is about giving your time, attention, and interest to that person. As a leader, one of the greatest gifts you can give someone else is your presence.

A leader worth imitating is present. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He was

present. An example of this is His birth (Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2:1-20).

You've likely heard this story read during Christmas time. In Luke 2:8-12, an Angel appears to a group of shepherds and told them the news of Jesus' birth. In addition to this, the angel also shared the purpose of Jesus' presence. Verses 10-11 read, "The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.'" As the well-known Christian leader Linus Van Pelt put it, "That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown."<sup>1</sup>

When we celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas time, we are not only celebrating the hope He brought of reconciling humanity to God, but we also celebrate the gift He gave of His presence. Another name for Jesus is "Immanuel." This means "God with us" (Matthew 1:22).

While Jesus is no longer physically present with us as a man, we can still encounter Him today. In His departing words to His disciples, He states, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age"

(Matthew 28:20). We will look at Jesus' departing words more in Principle 32 (Metrics). There are five ways that we can encounter Jesus' presence today: Scripture, prayer, worship, community, and service.

**Scripture** — The primary way that we can be present with Jesus is through Scripture. Jesus is the subject of God's written word (John 5:39). In addition to this, in John's gospel, he equates Jesus to the Word of God (John 1:1-14). Meaning, Jesus both encompasses and embodies the Word of God. Because of this, when we spend time in scripture, it is as if we are spending time with Jesus.

**Prayer** — Simply put, prayer is our way to talk to God. A lot could be said here about the Trinity. Specifically, the individual roles that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have regarding prayer (John 14:26, Ephesians 2:18, Romans, 8:26). However, you don't need to be bogged down wondering which member to pray to. Simply pray to God. Because Jesus is God (John 1:1), prayer is your way to talk to Him.

**Worship** — Throughout the Gospels, there are many moments where Jesus is given worship. We see examples of this following His birth (Matthew

2:11) and resurrection (Matthew 28:9). While worship is a way to show reverence and adoration, it is also a way to encounter Jesus' presence. In his book, *Reflection on the Psalms*, C. S. Lewis wrote, "It is in the process of being worshiped that God communicates His presence to men."<sup>2</sup> While prayer is our way to talk to Jesus, worship is His way to talk to us.

**Community** — Matthew 18:20 reads, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." Sometimes being present with Jesus can be as simple as being present with someone else.

**Service** — In Matthew 25:32-46, Jesus shares the parable of the Sheep and the Goats. Verse 40 reads, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Meaning, when we serve those who are in need, it is as if we are serving Jesus. I explain how servanthood and leadership go hand-in-hand in Principle 28 (Serve)

While physical presence is important, there are other ways that we can give the gift of presence. Being present is about giving someone your time, attention, and interest. This could look like making

time to talk with them. During this time, put away distractions. Show genuine interest in who they are and what they are talking about. It is important to note that you don't always have to be in the same room. Technology can allow you to be present with people you might not have been able to meet otherwise.

A leader worth imitating is present. Through the story of Jesus' birth and His departing words, we see He was, and continues to be, present with humanity. As Christian leaders, we can be present with Jesus through Scripture, prayer, worship, community, and service. We can also be present by giving others our time, attention, and interest. By doing so, we can imitate Jesus' leadership by giving the gift of presence.



## **Application Questions**

1. What prevents you from being present with others?
2. What are some behaviors that can show a lack of time, attention, and interest when meeting with someone? How can you eliminate those behaviors so you can be more present?
3. What can you do to give the gift of presence to your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members?

## **PRINCIPLE 3: Opportunity**

If you have ever led in a workplace setting, then it is likely that you have a resume. The purpose of a resume is to highlight your leadership qualifications. Every resume should include at least these three things: your experience, education, and expertise. However, it can be frustrating when your qualifications don't match up with the opportunity you are seeking. Because of this, our resumes can sometimes disqualify us from leadership opportunities. The good news is you don't have to let your lack of experience, education, and expertise stop you from finding opportunities to lead.

A leader worth imitating finds opportunities to lead. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He didn't let his lack of qualifications stop Him from leading. An example of this is when He taught at the temple in Jerusalem.

Very little is written in the Bible about Jesus' youth. Luke 2:41-52 is the only account. In this story, Jesus travels at 12 years old. He and His family traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast (v. 41). Jewish boys become men around the age of 13. However, we can conclude from this story that Jesus was probably still viewed as a child. In verse 43, Luke refers to Jesus as a boy. In addition to this, Jesus' parents also anxiously searched for Him when they find out He is missing (v. 44-45, 48). This could show that they still had some parental responsibility for Him.

When Jesus' parents found Him, He was at the temple in Jerusalem with the religious leaders and teachers (v. 46). Because Jesus would have been viewed as a child, He would have been a student in this setting. While He should have been the one learning, He was actually the one teaching. Verse 47 reads, "Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers."

Think about the meetings you have as a leader. It could be a staff meeting, an elders' meeting, a town hall meeting, or even a family meeting.

Now imagine a child not only leading this meeting but also teaching you, the leader, something. That's essentially what is happening in this story! Despite Jesus' lack of age, He found the opportunity to lead.

1 Timothy 4:12 is often used to encourage young people to look for opportunities to lead. In my observation, the first part of this verse is often the only portion quoted: "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young..." However, there is a "but" in the second part of this story. It reads, "...but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity." As a leader, you shouldn't let your lack of experience, education, or expertise disqualify you from leadership opportunities. However, you are still responsible to set an example for those that you lead. It is their responsibility not to look down on you.

A leader worth imitating finds opportunities to lead. Through the story of Jesus' teaching at the temple, we see He did not let His lack of age disqualify Him from leading. Instead, He set an example for those He was with. As Christian leaders, there are things we will lack. However, we cannot let those

things disqualify us from leading. What we lack in our experience, education, and expertise we can make up for in our example.

## Application Questions

1. What are some things you lack as a leader? (experience, education, expertise, etc.). How might you be letting those things disqualify you from leading?
2. Despite the things that you lack, how can you still set an example in your leadership?
3. Think about the people in your circle of influence (family, community, workplace, and/or church). Have you done anything to disqualify them from leading? What are some opportunities you can give them to lead?

## **PRINCIPLE 4: Integrity**

Have you ever worked with a leader whose words and actions weren't congruent? Perhaps this leader had a distinct set of rules for himself than he did for his followers. Or perhaps she had a "do as I say, not as I do" attitude. There is a word for leaders like this: hypocrites.

Jesus warned His followers about these kinds of leaders in Matthew 23:1-12. Verse 3 reads, "You must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach." Meaning, we need to watch out for leaders whose words differ from their actions.

A leader worth imitating has integrity. Hypocrisy is when your words and actions are different. Integrity is when your words and actions are the same. It's when you practice what you preach. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we can see

that He had integrity. An example of this is in His baptism (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22).

Baptism is a practice as old as the Christian faith. Throughout the New Testament, it is often followed by conversion (Acts 2:38-41). To be clear, baptism is not what converts us or saves us. Grace and faith alone save us (Ephesians 2:8-9). While the act of baptism isn't what reconciles our relationship with God, it is still an important part of it.

In Romans 6:1-18, Paul explained the theology of baptism. To summarize, baptism symbolizes the new life we have in Jesus, the hope we have of eternal life, and our commitment to Him. You can think about baptism like you would think about a wedding ring. Wearing a ring doesn't make you married any more than being baptized makes you saved. In addition to this, you could be married without a ring. You could be a Christian without being baptized. In a marriage, the ring acts as a symbol of the commitment you are making. Similarly, baptism is a symbol of a new believer's commitment to God. And the similarities don't end there. Just as a couple would likely



exchange rings at a wedding ceremony surrounded by family and friends, baptisms were often witnessed by the Christian community. Because of this, we could see baptism services as a celebration or commencement of one's relationship and commitment to God.

When we look at the role baptism had in the leadership of Jesus, we can see that it was something He both preached and practiced. In His parting words to His disciples, He instructed them to baptize new followers (Matthew 28:19). However, long before He preached about being baptized, Jesus got baptized. By doing so, He showed integrity.

In Matthew's account of this story, the aptly named John the Baptist objected to baptizing Jesus, stating "I need to be baptized by you" (v. 14). His objection was understandable. As I previously mentioned, baptism is a symbol of commitment to God. Because Jesus was and is God (John 1:1), I suppose an argument could be made that Jesus didn't need to be baptized. However, Jesus was not a "do as I say, not as I do" leader. Instead, He responded to

John's objections by stating, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." (v. 15, NLT).

John obliged, and Jesus was baptized. As Jesus came up from the water, the Heavens opened up, the Holy Spirit as a dove descended, and the voice of God the Father affirmed Jesus the Son (v. 16-17). Through Jesus' baptism, the Triune God is seen in full display.

A leader worth imitating has integrity. Through the story of Jesus' baptism, we see that He was a leader who practiced what He preached. In addition to this, being baptized showed a fuller picture of who God is as the Trinity. As Christian leaders, our actions also tell our followers who we truly are. You have likely heard the age-old adage, "Actions speak louder than words." Nothing is louder than when our actions and words are saying the same thing.

## Application Questions

1. What can cause your words and actions to be incongruent?
2. Think about the things you ask you regularly ask people to do. Is there anything that you are “preaching” but not practicing?
3. How can you have integrity with your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members?

## **PRINCIPLE 5: Scripture**

In the introduction of this book, I explained that leadership is influence. However, influence goes both ways. Just as you could have influence over someone else, someone else could also influence you. While that section focused on who you have influence over, in this principle, I want to focus on who or what can influence you. As leaders, we not only need to be aware of who we have influence over, but we also need to be aware of what influences us. Whatever we let influence us, is what we let lead us. Whatever we let lead us affects how we lead our family, community, work, or church. After all, our leadership can only be as good as our best influence.

In Psalm 119, King David wrote an epic poem with the through-line of following God's Word. With 176 verses, it is the longest chapter in the Bible. Verse 105 reads, "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on

my path.” In this passage, the poet king acknowledged the influence God’s Word had on his leadership.

A leader worth imitating is influenced by scripture. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He was influenced by Scripture. An example of this is when He was tempted in the desert.

Three out of four of the Gospels document Jesus’ 40 days in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). During these 40 days, Jesus was tempted by Satan. 1 John 2:16 explains that all temptations and sins can be put into three categories. It reads, “For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions” (NLT). Essentially, we can be tempted by three things. I call these the three f’s: flesh, fortune, and fame. When we give in to temptation, we are choosing to be led by the things of this world. During Jesus’ time in the desert, He was tempted by these three things. However, instead of being influenced by His flesh, fortune, and fame, He chose instead to be influenced by God’s Word.

**Temptation 1: Flesh** — The first temptation Jesus faced was flesh. Flesh is when we let our physical desire influence us. This could be food, alcohol, sex, or anything else our bodies crave. Knowing that Jesus had not eaten in 40 days, Satan used food to tempt Jesus (Luke 4:3). Quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3, Jesus responded, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone’” (Luke 4:4).

**Temptation 2: Fortune** — The second temptation Jesus faced was fortune. Fortune is when we let material things influence us. This could be money, clothes, cars, houses, or anything else we can see. Satan showed Jesus the many kingdoms of the world (Luke 4:5-6) and said, “If you worship me, it will all be yours” (Luke 4:7). Quoting from Deuteronomy 6:13, Jesus responded, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only’” (Luke 4:8).

**Temptation 3: Fame** — The third and final temptation of Jesus was fame. Fame is when we let success influence us. This could be power, popularity, position, or anything else that makes us prideful. Satan used the people at the temple to tempt Jesus (Luke 4:9-10). Quoting from Deuteronomy 6:16, Jesus

responded, "It is also written: 'It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'" (Luke 4:12).

A leader worth imitating is influenced by Scripture. Through the story of Jesus in the desert, we see He chose not to let flesh, fame, and fortune influence Him. Instead, he was led by the Word of God. As Christian leaders, we will face the same temptations as Jesus. We will be tempted by flesh, fortune, and fame. During these times we can choose to be influenced by Scripture. When we are influenced by Scripture, we are not only being better leaders for ourselves, but also for those that we lead.

## Application Questions

1. Between flesh, fortune, and fame, which temptation do you most regularly face?
2. When Jesus was tempted, He quoted a Scripture to counter the temptation. What scriptures come to mind that could help you face temptations of the flesh, fortune, and fame? If none come to mind, look some up and commit them to memory so that you can use them when needed.
3. Think about your circle of influence (self, family, community, workplace, and/or church). What is something you can do to strengthen the influence Scripture has on you and those you lead?



## **PRINCIPLE 6: Battles**

Have you ever worked with a leader who would regularly turn a small disagreement into a big fight? Perhaps he had a hard time deciding what hills to die on. Or perhaps she didn't know how to choose her battles.

Choosing your battles is not about avoiding conflict. It's about deciding which conflicts to engage in. I explain how to address conflict in Principle 14. When you engage in every small disagreement, you don't have the time and energy to engage in more significant matters. This is why choosing your battles is important.

A leader worth imitating chooses battles. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He knew how to choose His battles. An example of this is when He was rejected at Nazareth (Luke 4:14-20)

In this story, Jesus read from the scroll of Isaiah at the synagogue in Nazareth. The passage He read can be found in Isaiah 61:1-2: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19).

After He read this, He sat down and said, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (v. 21). By saying this, Jesus revealed that He is the Messiah, the one who saves. I explain how healing people played into Jesus’ larger purpose of reconciling humanity’s relationship with God in Principles 18 and 22 (Transformation and Boundaries).

Those who heard His message were initially receptive to it. Verse 22 reads, “All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.” This is reminiscent of when He taught at the temple in Jerusalem as a boy (Luke 2:41-52). However, this story doesn’t end with those in the synagogue choosing to follow Jesus. Instead, it ends with them trying to kill Him.

Jesus continued, "Truly I tell you... no prophet is accepted in his hometown" (v. 24). He then compared Himself to fellow rejected prophets, Elijah and Elisha. He explained that even though there were widows in Israel, Elijah ministered to a widow from Zarephath (v. 25-26). Similarly, though there were Jewish lepers, Elisha healed a Syrian leper (v. 27). Essentially, Jesus told the Jews in attendance He did not just come to save Israel. Rather, He came to save everyone. In Principle 1 (Purpose), I explained the Old Covenant was limited to Israel while the New Covenant would be open to everyone. In this passage, Jesus shared that His purpose of reconciliation was open to everyone, not just one group of people. This is when things escalated.

Verse 28 reads, "All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this." They believed God should save Israel and punish other nations. So the thought of Jesus coming to save the Gentiles enraged them. From there, they drove Jesus out of town and brought Him to the top of a hill, intending to throw him off the cliff (v. 27). This hill is thought to be Mount Precipice in Israel. However, in

the commotion and chaos, Jesus slipped away and went on his way (v. 28). That was not the hill He wanted to die on.

A leader worth imitating chooses battles. Through the story of His rejection at Nazareth, we see Jesus was a leader who knew which conflicts to engage in. Choosing your battles doesn't mean admitting you're wrong and that the other person is right. When Jesus chose His battle in Nazareth, He wasn't admitting He was wrong. He was simply choosing to disengage in that conflict. This allowed Him to engage in a much more significant one. Jesus' purpose was to die on Calvary, not Mount Precipice. As Christian leaders, we will encounter countless conflicts. It could be with family members, friends, coworkers, or church members. Because of this, we must give our time and energy to the battles that have the most impact. When we choose our battles, we are also choosing what is most significant in our leadership.

## **Application Questions**

1. Think about a recent fight you had. Do you think it was small or significant?
2. Do you have a hard time deciding what hills to die on? Why or why not?
3. How can you better choose your battles with your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members?

## **PRINCIPLE 7: Team**

Do you prefer to work with others or to work alone?  
Don't feel bad if you answered the latter. That's usually my preference.

We may idealize the idea of DIY leadership or idolize lone ranger leaders. However, it isn't an accurate view of leadership. While you might do a lot of things well, you can't do everything. You need help. This is why every leader needs a team. Presidents have cabinets. CEOs have teams of directors, managers, administrators, assistants, and interns. Even the actual Lone Ranger didn't work alone. He had his teammate, Tonto.

A leader worth imitating has a team. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He had a team. The funny thing is, if there was one leader who didn't need a team, it was Jesus. I explained in the introduction of this book that He was the Perfect

Leader. He could have done everything if He wanted to. However, despite His perfection, He showed us the value of having a team. When you read the word “team” throughout this book, think about the people in your life who help you fulfill a shared purpose. Your team could comprise your family, friends, coworkers, or church members. In a family setting, your team is your spouse. If you’re not married, your team could be the people you live with.

Jesus’ team comprised twelve men: Simon Peter, Simon the Zealot, James (son of Alphaeus), James (son of Zebedee), John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, Judas Thaddaeus, and Judas Iscariot (Mark 3:16-19). These men would have recognized Jesus as a rabbi. A rabbi was a religious leader and teacher. By asking these men to be on His team, Jesus was asking them to be His disciples. A disciple was a student or follower of a rabbi. The goal of a disciple was to become like their rabbi. Jesus’ original twelve disciples wanted to be imitators of Him. The goal of Christians today should be the same.

As we continue to look at Jesus' team, I want to clear up some confusion regarding the words used for Jesus' followers. The two words "disciple" and "Christian" are sometimes used contrastingly. This should not be the case. Biblical scholar Michael J. Wilkins wrote, "Today many incorrectly use the title 'disciple' to refer to a person who is more committed than other Christians."<sup>1</sup> He explained that the two terms are "virtually synonymous."<sup>2</sup> Who they called a disciple in the Bible, we would call a Christian today. A disciple is a Christian, and a Christian is a disciple—nothing more, nothing less.

While the two words could be used interchangeably, to avoid confusion, throughout the rest of this book I'll use the word "disciple" to refer to Jesus' original twelve followers and the word "Christian" to refer to His modern-day followers.

I explained in Principle 1 that the purpose of Jesus' leadership was to reconcile humanity's relationship with God. Each of Jesus' disciples, including Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him, contributed to this purpose being fulfilled.



A leader worth imitating has a team. Jesus' disciples were His team. Even though He was perfect, He assembled a team of imperfect men to help fulfill His purpose. As Christian leaders, we can't do it alone. We need a team to help us fulfill our purpose. You might not get to choose who is on your team as Jesus did. In a community setting, you can choose your neighborhood, but not your neighbors. In a church setting, you can choose your church, but not your congregation. While you might not be able to choose who is on your team, you do get to choose how you inspire them to follow you. I explain this more in the next principle (Inspire).

## Application Questions

1. Do you prefer to work with others or to work alone? Why?
2. Make a list of things you do as a leader. What do you do well? What do you need help with? Who is someone who does those things well and could help you?
3. Think about the people in your circle of influence (family, community, workplace, and/or church). Who is on your team?

## **PRINCIPLE 8: Inspire**

There are two reasons someone might follow a leader: Obligation or inspiration. Obligation is when you have to follow a leader. Inspiration is when you want to follow a leader.

A leader worth imitating inspires. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we can see that He inspired His team. An example of this is when He called His disciples (Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 5:1-11; Mark 1:16-20).

In Luke's account of this story, Jesus saw a group of fishermen cleaning their nets (v. 2). The men were done working for the day and were wrapping up their tasks before going home. Jesus asked them to cast their nets out again (v. 4). One of the fishermen, Simon (later called Peter), responded, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything.

But because you say so, I will let down the nets” (v. 5). When they cast their nets, they caught so many fish that the nets almost broke (v. 6). Because of this, they asked for help from another boat. There were so many fish that both boats almost sank (v. 7). Witnessing this, all the fishermen were amazed at what they had just seen. Verse 8 reads, “When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’ Jesus responded, ‘Don’t be afraid; From now on you will fish for people’” (v. 10). When they returned to the shore, the fishermen left their nets behind and followed Jesus.

In this story, Jesus inspired the fishermen in two ways. The first way was by showing them who He was. Following the miraculous catch, Peter immediately recognized Jesus' power and authority. However, Jesus didn't use that power and authority to make the fishermen follow Him. Instead, He used it to show them why they would want to follow Him. The second way Jesus inspired the fishermen was by showing them who they were. By telling them they can fish for people, Jesus showed them how they

could be included in the work that He was doing. These two things inspired them to give up their careers as fishermen to become Jesus' disciples. They didn't have to follow Jesus; they wanted to.

A leader worth imitating inspires. Through the story of Jesus calling His disciples, we see how He inspired His team to follow Him. I explained in Principle 7 that you need a team. However, we can't assume that they will follow us out of obligation. Because of this, it is a leader's responsibility to inspire them. You can inspire your team by showing them who you are. You can do this by showing them what your purpose as a leader is. You can also inspire your team by showing them who they are. You can do this by showing them how they can be included in the work you are doing. You might not get to choose who is on your team as Jesus did. However, you do get to choose how you inspire them to follow you.

## Application Questions

1. Think about the people in your circle of influence (family, community, workplace, and/or church). Do you think they follow you because they have to or because they want to?
2. How can you better show your team who you are? How can you better show your team who they are?
3. What can you do to include your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members in the work that you are doing?

## **PRINCIPLE 9: Empower**

Have you ever worked with a leader who micromanaged others? Perhaps he didn't trust his team to do a good job. Or perhaps she didn't want to give power to her team.

I explained in Principle 8 that one way to inspire people to follow you is to include them in the work you are doing. Part of including them is empowering them. It's giving them the power to decide. Micromanagement happens when you keep power to yourself. Empowerment is when you give power to your team.

A leader worth imitating empowers. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He empowered His team. An example of this is when Jesus sent out His disciples (Matthew 10:1-20; Luke 10:1-20).

Matthew 10:1 reads, "Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out

impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.” In Principle 6 (Battles), we looked at Jesus’ message of bringing freedom and healing. By sending out His disciples, He was not only including them in this work, but He was empowering them to do it.

In addition to this, Jesus’ disciples were not the only people He empowered. Jesus empowered all of His followers in this work. An example of this is in Mark 9:38-41 and Luke 9:49-50. In these corroborating accounts, John and some of the other disciples saw someone casting out demons in Jesus’ name. John informed Jesus that they told this individual to stop (Mark 9:38; Luke 9:49). Jesus responded, “Do not stop him... for whoever is not against you is for you” (Luke 9:50). Essentially, Jesus was saying that this man is also on their team. Because of that, he doesn’t need to be micromanaged. Similar to how Jesus empowered His disciples, they also needed to empower others. The disciples later followed this principle in their own leadership. You can read an example in Acts 6:1-7.

It is important to note that empowerment is not about getting people to do your tasks for you. You



may have known a leader who delegated everything so that he didn't have to do anything. Leaders don't empower others to get out of work. Rather, leaders empower others so they don't have to do all the work. I explained in Principle 6 (Team) that you can't do everything. If you are micromanaging your team, it could be a sign that you are still trying to do everything yourself.

One reason you might be tempted to micromanage your team is that you don't think they will do as good of a job as you. And you might be right. Your team members might not do as good a job as you. However, you won't always be there to do the work. In John 14:12, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father" (NLT).

In this passage, Jesus foreshadowed He would not physically always be with them to do the work. That is why He empowered His disciples. In addition to this, He said that they would do "even greater works." Jesus, the Perfect Leader, put His trust in His imperfect disciples. If He could do it, then so can you.

You can trust your team to do their work without being micromanaged. While they will make mistakes, it is an opportunity for them to learn and grow. I explain this more in Principle 13 (Mistakes).

A leader worth imitating empowers. Through the story of Jesus sending out His disciples, we see He was a leader who empowered His team. As a Christian leader, you can't do everything. You need help. You need a team. If you want to have a team that wants to follow you, you need to give them the power to decide.

## Application Questions

1. Are you a leader who micromanages or empowers? How would you answer that question? How would your team answer it?
2. Why might you be tempted to micromanage your team? Do you think they won't do as good of a job as you? Do you worry they will make mistakes?
3. How can you better empower your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members?

## **PRINCIPLE 10: Discernment**

As a leader, it can sometimes be difficult to know who to trust. We may encounter people who are not who they seem to be. These people may appear to want to help us but actually want to harm us. In Principle 5 (Scripture), I explained how Satan used flesh, fortune, and fame to tempt Jesus in the desert. Because of this, it is important to have discernment.

Discernment is the ability to see people for who they really are. It's discerning safety from harm. When you have discernment, you can identify who is a sheep, who is a wolf, and even who is a wolf in sheep's clothing.

A leader worth imitating has discernment. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He taught His disciples to have discernment. We see this in Matthew 10:16.

In this passage, Jesus stated, “I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves” (NLT). Jesus’ instruction to be “shrewd” is thought-provoking. Shrewdness might not be a characteristic you think about when you consider leadership. It’s probably not something you would put on a resume or praise if you saw it in someone else. The word “shrewd” could be substituted for “wise.” However, I think the word choice was intentional. “Shrewd as snakes” is a direct reference to Genesis.

Genesis 3:1 reads, “The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made” (NLT). If you remember this story, then you know the serpent (Satan) used his shrewdness to tempt Adam and Eve. As a result, sin entered the world, and humanity’s relationship with God became estranged. In Principle 1 (Purpose), I explained Jesus came to reconcile that relationship.

Based on Genesis 3:1, shrewdness could be viewed as a characteristic of Satan. While this book is focused on imitating Jesus, Matthew 10:16 could be misunderstood as instructions to imitate the Devil. As

Christians, we don't want to imitate Satan. However, we do want to know how he works.

Jesus also warned the disciples. He said that they were going to be like "sheep among wolves." Meaning, they were going to be around harmful people. In these types of situations, it's not enough to know how your team works, you also need to know how your enemy works.

In *The Art of War*, military strategist Sun Tzu wrote, "Determine the enemy's plans and you will know which strategy will be successful and which will not."<sup>1</sup> Meaning, when we know how our enemy works, we can plan accordingly. When we do so, our discernment will be like that of Jesus in the desert, rather than Adam and Eve in the garden.

While Christian leaders need to have devilish wisdom, we also need to keep it in check. That's why Jesus' instruction had two parts: "Be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves." Satan's shrewdness caused harm. Because of this, Jesus instructed His disciples to do no harm. We need to think like the enemy without acting like the enemy.

A leader worth imitating has discernment. Jesus was a leader who had discernment and instructed His followers to do the same. As Christian leaders, we need to see people for who they really are. To do that, we need to know how our enemy thinks and works. When we have discernment, we can protect ourselves and others from harm.

## Application Questions

1. Have you ever worked with people who were not who they seemed to be? When you look back in hindsight, were there any signs that they shouldn't be trusted? What were those signs?
2. How can you balance thinking like the enemy without acting like the enemy?
3. Think about the people in your circle of influence (family, community, workplace, and/or church). How can you use your discernment to protect those you lead from potential harm?



## **PRINCIPLE 11: Expectations**

Have you ever worked with a leader who wasn't clear on what he wanted you to do? Perhaps he didn't give you a clear job description. Or maybe she didn't set expectations.

Setting expectations is about helping your team know what they need to do. This is why good hiring managers provide job descriptions. This is why good teachers hand out assignment guidelines. When people are clear on what you expect of them, they can meet those expectations.

A leader worth imitating sets expectations. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see His disciples knew what was expected of them. An example of this is when Jesus instructs His disciples to take up their crosses (Matthew 16:24-26; Mark 8:34-37; Luke 9:23-25).

In these passages, Jesus told His disciples what He expected of them. Luke 9:23 reads, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.” There are two ways to think about the cross in this passage: physical and spiritual. A physical cross is the death of our bodies. A spiritual cross is the death of our will. In addition to this, you can only take up a physical cross once. However, you need to take up your spiritual cross every day.

We know from the story of Jesus’ crucifixion that He took up a physical cross. We will look at the story of Jesus’ death more in Principle 30 (Sacrifice). Most of Jesus’ disciples died for their faith. While James (son of Zebedee) is the only disciple whose martyrdom is documented (Acts 12:1-2), it is believed that ten out of the twelve of Jesus’ disciples were killed for spreading the gospel.

Before Jesus’ body died on Calvary, His will died at the Garden of Gethsemane. In Matthew 26:39, Jesus prayed, “I want your will to be done, not mine” (NLT). We will look at the story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane more in Principle 29 (Resilience).

The two disciples who were not martyred were Judas Iscariot and John. Judas committed suicide shortly after betraying Jesus (Matthew 27:5-8). John is believed to have lived a long life and died of natural causes. Even though John did not take up a physical cross, that didn't make him any less of a disciple. His spiritual cross was being exiled to the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9). In this, John imitated Jesus and chose God's will over His own.

You might never take up a physical cross. Meaning, you might not be martyred for following Jesus. However, that doesn't make you any less of a Christian. Therefore, you are still called to take up a spiritual cross. Galatians 5:24 reads, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." I think this is what Jesus meant when He said to take up your cross daily. This is a daily decision to obey God's will. According to Matthew 10:38 and Luke 14:33, taking up this cross is non-negotiable.

Jesus' disciples were aware of what He expected of them. They were also willing to do it. If your team does not know what is expected of them,

then they cannot do it. If your team knows what is expected of them, but is unwilling to do it, then as a leader, you need to ask yourself if you are inspiring them to meet those expectations.

It is important to note that disciples were not immediately inspired to take up their crosses (physical or spiritual) to follow Jesus. Peter denying Jesus is an example of this. I explain what we can learn from Peter more in Principle 13 (Mistakes). However, Jesus' resurrection changed that. This gave them inspiration and hope to take up their crosses and follow Him. We will look at the story of Jesus' resurrection in Principle 31 (Hope).

Part of setting expectations is modeling what to do. Jesus did not expect His disciples to do something that He was not willing to do. I explained this in Principle 4 (Integrity). If you find your team knows what is expected of them, but is unwilling to do it, then you need to ask yourself if you are leading with integrity.

A leader worth imitating sets expectations. Through Jesus' instructions, we see that His disciples knew what was expected of them. They also met

those expectations. Being a Christian isn't easy. It requires us to die daily to our will. As a Christian leader, the work you and our team do may not be easy. However, it is your responsibility to not only set expectations but to model them. In addition to this, you also need to hold yourself and your team accountable to those expectations. I explain this more in the next principle (Accountability).

## Application Questions

1. Are your expectations clear? How would you answer that question? How would your team answer it?
2. Does your team regularly meet those expectations or fail them? Why do you think that is?
3. How can you do better at setting expectations for your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members?

## **PRINCIPLE 12: Accountability**

If you have ever led in a workplace setting, then it is likely you have had a job review. The purpose of a job review is to evaluate a team member. It is a leader's way of holding the team member accountable to expectations the leader has set, as well as the decisions the team member has made.

A leader worth imitating holds her team accountable. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He held people accountable. An example of this is His interaction with the rich young man (Matthew 19:16–30; Mark 10:17–31; Luke 18:18–30).

In Matthew's account of this story, a rich young man asked Jesus, "What good thing must I do to get eternal life?" (v. 16). Like my Bible college professors would quiz my classmates and I on Scripture, Jesus did the same thing with this man. He told him, "If you want to enter life, keep the

commandments... You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself" (v. 17-19). In this, Jesus is referencing the Ten Commandments (Exodus 10:1-17). The young man responded that he had kept each of the commandments that Jesus listed. "What do I still lack?" he asked (v. 20). Jesus responded, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (v. 21). Verse 22 reads, "When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth."

When we look at this story, some might conclude that Jesus wanted people to sell everything they own. After all, this is what Jesus specifically commanded the rich young man to do. However, there was also an underlying, more important point that Jesus was trying to make. In Jesus' quiz to the rich young man, He left out the first of the Ten Commandments, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). The rich young man's



interaction with Jesus revealed he put money over God. Jesus held him accountable for this decision.

In Principle 11 (Expectations), I explained that the non-negotiable of being a Christian is the daily decision to obey God's will. Despite the rich young man following many of God's commandments, he ultimately chose his will over God's.

In Principle 3 (Opportunity), I explained we shouldn't let people disqualify us from leading. It is important to note that it was not Jesus who decided not to let the rich young man follow Him. Rather, it was the man who decided not to follow Jesus. To put it another way, Jesus didn't disqualify him; he disqualified himself. When we hold people accountable, we are not just holding them accountable for the expectations we set but for the decisions they make.

Some might read this story and think that Jesus was being too hard on the rich young ruler. That's the point. Following Jesus is hard. Choosing God's will above your own is hard. As a Christian, you might not be called to literally sell everything you own. However, you are called to obey God's will. Your

temptation might not be fortune, like the rich young ruler. I explained in Principle 5 (Scripture) the temptations of flesh and fame. As Christians, we will be held accountable for the things that we choose to put above God.

A leader worth imitating holds her team accountable. Through Jesus' interaction with the rich young man, we see He held people accountable to the expectations that He set. As Christian leaders, we need to hold our teams accountable for the expectations we set and for the decisions that they make. Holding people accountable doesn't mean we don't allow them to make mistakes. I explain this more in the next principle (Mistakes).

## Application Questions

1. When was the last time you gave one of your team members a review—a week, a month, a year, ever?
2. Does your team know what is expected of them? Do they know you will hold them accountable to those expectations? Why or why not?
3. Think about the people in your circle of influence (family, community, workplace, and/or church). What does accountability look like to those you lead?

## **PRINCIPLE 13: Mistakes**

Have you ever worked with a leader who didn't allow mistakes? Perhaps he would say things like, "Failure is not an option!" There are three problems with this mindset. The first problem with this is that we are human. Meaning, we're bound to make mistakes. The second problem is it stifles creativity and innovation. People will not risk doing anything original or adaptive if they are afraid of being reprimanded if it doesn't work. I explain creativity and innovation more in Principles 15 and 16. Finally, the third problem with a "Failure is not an option" mindset is that mistakes can often be great teachers. I explained in Principle 9 that we need to empower our teams. Part of empowering our teams is allowing them to make mistakes so they can learn and grow from them.

A leader worth imitating allows people to make mistakes. When we look at the leadership of

Jesus, we see that He not only allowed His disciples to make mistakes but that He also used those mistakes to help them learn and grow. An example of this is in how He led Peter.

It's safe to say that Peter was a klutz. Of the original twelve disciples, he probably held the record for the most mistakes made. To name a few, Peter failed to walk on water (Matthew 14:22-36). He rebuked Jesus (Matthew 16:21-23), and he denied Him three times (Matthew 26:73-75; Mark 14:69-70; Luke 22:55-62; John 18:13-27).

Despite Peter's continuous mistakes, Jesus continued to call him to be His disciple. We see this in John 21:1-25 when Jesus reinstated Peter as a disciple. This story takes place after Jesus had resurrected from the dead. In this story, Peter returned to fishing. I explained in Principle 8 that he was inspired to give up his career as a fisherman to become a disciple of Jesus. Peter likely still fished for food. However, Jesus reinstating him as a disciple could imply that Peter had given up on being a disciple and returned to the life he had before following Jesus. After denying Jesus

three times, Peter might have felt unqualified to follow Him again.

This story played out similarly to when Jesus first called Peter. We looked at this story in Principle 8 (Inspire). As He did when He first called Peter, Jesus asked him to cast out his net. When Peter did, he caught so many fish that the net almost broke (v. 6). After this, Jesus and Peter had a one-on-one conversation. During this conversation, Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him (v. 17). This echoes the three times that Peter denied Jesus. After Peter affirmed his love for Jesus three times, Jesus gave him a simple command: "Follow Me" (v. 19). Jesus didn't disqualify Peter from following Him. Instead, He gave Peter the opportunity to continue being His disciple.

If you worked with someone like Peter, someone who continuously made mistakes, then it is likely you didn't work with him long. In a workplace setting, someone with his record usually gets fired. Even if someone like Peter could stay with the organization, it is unlikely that he would ever advance in it, let alone run it.

However, despite Peter's continuous mistakes, Jesus not only keeps him on His team but also passes the baton of leadership on to him. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus told him, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it" (NLT). Essentially, Jesus is making Peter his successor. You can read about Peter's leadership in the book of Acts. Spoiler alert: he became a great leader.

The reason Peter became a great leader was not that he didn't make mistakes. Peter became a great leader because he learned and grew from his mistakes. When Peter failed to walk on water (Matthew 14:22-36), Jesus taught him not to doubt. When Peter rebuked Jesus (Matthew 16:21-23), Jesus taught him to see things from God's perspective, rather than man's. Finally, when Peter denied Jesus three times (Matthew 26:73-75; Mark 14:69-70; Luke 22:55-62; John 18:13-27), Jesus reminded him he was still called to be His disciple (John 21:1-25).

A leader worth imitating allows people to make mistakes. Through Jesus' leadership of Peter, we see that He not only allowed Peter to make

mistakes, but He also used those mistakes to help Peter become the leader he was meant to be. As a Christian leader, you might have someone like Peter on your team. Someone who makes a lot of mistakes and has a lot to learn. However, just as Peter was to Jesus, that klutz could also be your successor.



## **Application Questions**

1. Think about a recent mistake you made. How did you learn and grow from it?
2. How do you respond when your team members make mistakes? Do you reprimand them or teach them?
3. How can you help your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members learn and grow from their mistakes?

## PRINCIPLE 14: Conflict

Conflict is inevitable. As a leader, you have the choice to either avoid it or address it. I explained in Principle 6 that when you choose your battles, you are choosing what conflict to engage in. Even though conflict isn't easy, the longer you avoid it, the harder it is to address later.

A leader worth imitating addresses conflict. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He taught His disciples how to do this. We see this in Matthew 18:15-17. In this passage, Jesus gave His disciples a three-step template for addressing conflict.

**Step 1: One-on-One** — The first step in addressing conflict is to go to the person one-on-one. Matthew 18:15 reads, "If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back" (NLT). Meaning, the first step in

addressing conflict is not to ignore it or go to someone else. Rather, the first step is to go directly to the person and try to resolve it with him. By doing this, you will probably be able to solve the problem without having to get other people involved.

**Step 2: Witnesses** — The second step in addressing conflict is to bring two or three people with you to meet with the person. Matthew 18:16 reads, “But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses” (NLT). If your one-on-one conversation doesn’t end in a resolution, then you need to bring some peers with you to address the issue. These people will essentially “witness” the conversation and try to help the two of you reconcile.

**Step 3: Leaders** — The third and final step in addressing conflict is to go to the leaders. Matthew 18:17 reads, “If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won’t accept the church’s decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector” (NLT). If both the one-on-one and witness conversations do not end in

a resolution, then you need to involve the leaders above the two of you. From there, they will decide how to resolve the conflict. Within a church setting, this could be the pastoral staff or elder board. In a workplace setting, this could be your supervisor or the HR Department.

As Christians, our goal in addressing conflict should not be to make the person suffer the consequences of his or her actions. Jesus' goal in coming to Earth was not to make us suffer the consequences of our sins. I explained in Principe 1 (Purpose) that Jesus' purpose was to reconcile humanity's relationship with God. Similarly, when we address conflict with other people, our goal should be to reconcile the relationship.

Even though reconciliation should be our goal, it might not always be the outcome. Not everyone who sins against us will want to reconcile with us. In these situations, we still have to imitate Jesus' forgiveness: "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

It is important to note that forgiveness does not mean we have to tolerate someone's

unacceptable behavior. It is not un-Christian to distance ourselves from people who refuse to reconcile. In the same way that our sins separate us from God, sin can also separate us from each other.

A leader worth imitating addresses conflict. Through Jesus' three-step template, we see that reconciliation was the goal of addressing conflict. As Christian leaders, we need to be ready to address conflict when it occurs. With the template that Jesus gave us His disciples, we have a step-by-step process to reconcile our relationships with other Christians.

## Application Questions

1. Are you a leader who avoids conflict or addresses it?
2. Have you ever used Jesus' three-step template for addressing conflict? Why or why not?
3. Think about the people in your circle of influence (family, community, workplace, and/or church). How can you better address conflict with those you lead?

## **PRINCIPLE 15: Creativity**

Would you consider yourself to be a creative person? You might not make art, music, or stories. However, that does not mean you aren't creative. The creation story (Genesis 1:1-31 to Genesis:2:1-3) shows that God is an inherently creative being. Because we are made in His image (Genesis 1:27), we are also creative beings. Creativity, simply put, is making original work. When you make something, you're being creative.

A leader worth imitating is creative. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He used His creativity to teach His disciples. An example of this is the parables.

There are 40 parables in the Gospels. See Appendix A for the complete list. A parable is a short story that teaches a spiritual principle. One of Jesus' most well-known parables is the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Even if you haven't read that story in the

Bible, you have likely heard the idiom “Prodigal Son” used to describe a young person who leaves home, lives recklessly, and then returns to make amends. Jesus used this story to teach about our Heavenly Father's love for us. No matter where we go or what we do, God is faithful to forgive us when we come to Him (1 John 1:9). This is just one example of how Jesus used short stories to teach His disciples.

We even see components of these parables used in creative works today. The Prodigal Son trope has been used in countless books, movies, and TV shows. *Where The Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak is one example.

As I previously mentioned, creativity is making original work. It's as simple as that. You might not like telling stories like Jesus. However, you might be passionate about literature, music, painting, sculpting, photography, fashion, cooking, or baking. Whatever you enjoy making, you can incorporate that into your leadership.

It is important to note that creativity is not limited to artistic expression. Creativity is an integral part of business, education, science, technology,



engineering, mathematics, and leadership. Even if you don't consider yourself an artistic person, you are still a creative person.

A leader worth imitating is creative. Jesus creatively used parables as a storytelling technique to teach spiritual principles. As a Christian leader, you are creative just like your Creator. Whatever you enjoy making, you can use your creativity to lead others. While you might not enjoy making original work, you might enjoy adapting existing work. I explain this more in the next principle (Innovation).

## Application Questions

1. Before reading this principle, did you consider yourself to be a creative person? Why or why not?
2. What do you like making? How can you incorporate that passion into your leadership?
3. How can you encourage your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members to be creative?

## **PRINCIPLE 16: Innovation**

Innovation is related to creativity. I explained in Principle 15 that creativity is making original work. Innovation is adapting an existing work. It's when you use something old to make something new. You can think about creativity and innovation as you would think about a house. Creativity is building a house. Innovation is renovating that house.

A leader worth imitating is innovative. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He was innovative. An example of this is the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:17-30; Luke 22:7-38; Mark 14:12-26; John Chapter 13).

In the story of the Lord's Supper (also called the Last Supper), Jesus had His last meal with His disciples before His death. This meal was a part of the Passover celebration, which commemorated Israel's salvation from Egypt (Exodus 12:1-30). Jesus' disciples

were Jewish, so they would have been familiar with this practice. However, Jesus used this particular Passover meal to innovate.

Matthew 26:26-28 reads, "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'"

By doing this, Jesus used elements of an old practice to create a new practice. Similar to how the Passover meal commemorated Israel's salvation from Egypt, the Lord's Supper commemorated humanity's salvation from sin.

There are parallels between the Passover meal and the Lord's Supper. However, Jesus couldn't simply instruct His followers (present and future) to continue to practice Passover as it was. As I previously mentioned, the Passover meal specifically commemorated Israel's salvation from Egypt. Another reason was that there were restrictions on who could

and could not take part in the Passover meal. One of these was that Gentiles could not take part unless they and their male family members had been circumcised (Exodus 12:48). In Principle 1 (Purpose), I explained Jesus came to reconcile humanity's relationship with God. Because of this, He needed to innovate and make a new practice that all of His followers: Jews and Gentiles alike, could take part in.

Paul fleshes out (no pun intended) the theology of Communion in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. His point is that the Lord's Supper is a practice that all Christians can take part in. Through innovation, Jesus showed everyone can have a relationship with God, not just one group of people.

The Lord's Supper is still practiced by Christians today. In addition to this, it continues to be adapted. You may refer to it as Communion or the Eucharist. Some people use the traditional elements of wine and unleavened bread, while others use juice and crackers as an alternative. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some people used prepackaged communion cups containing both juice and a wafer.

A leader worth imitating innovates. Through the story of the Lord's Supper, we see Jesus was an innovative leader. In your circle of influence, there may be old practices in place that need to be adapted. As a Christian leader, sometimes you will need to make something original. Other times you will need to adapt something that exists.

## Application Questions

1. Would you consider yourself to be more creative or more innovative? Do you enjoy making original work or adapting existing work? Why?
2. How can you empower your team to be more creative and innovative?
3. Think about your circle of influence (family, community, workplace, and/or church). Are there old practices in place where you lead that need innovation?

## **PRINCIPLE 17: Provide**

In previous principles, I explained how a leader provides inspiration (Principle 8), empowerment (Principle 9), and accountability (Principle 11). While these things are important, being a provider does not end there. Scripture also instructs us to provide for the tangible needs of people. We see an example of this in the book of James.

Some scholars conclude that Jesus' disciple, James (son of Alphaeus), wrote the book of James. James 2:15-16 reads, "Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?" In this passage, James used hyperbole to communicate that it is not enough to provide someone in need with inspiration or encouragement.



As Christian leaders, we are also instructed to provide for people's physical needs.

In a family setting, providing for the needs of those you lead is non-negotiable. Paul had harsh words for leaders who didn't provide for their families. It reads, "Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).

A leader worth imitating is a provider. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He provided for the physical needs of those in His circle of influence. An example of this is when He fed the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13).

This story is often referred to as feeding the 5,000. However, there were actually many more people there. The 5,000 number only counts the men. It does not count the women and children who were also present (Matthew 14:21). Because of this, Jesus likely provided for over 10,000 people that day.

In this story, the disciples suggested Jesus send the people to go get the food (v. 15). However,

Jesus instructed them to provide everyone with something to eat (v. 16). His disciples protested, “We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish” (v. 17). This wouldn’t have filled a single basket, let alone feed thousands.

Jesus took those five loaves and two fish and gave thanks to God for them. He broke them into pieces and gave them to the disciples to pass out to the people (v. 19). Matthew 14:20 reads, “They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.” Not only did they have enough to feed everyone, but they also had leftovers. It didn’t matter that they had little to begin with. Jesus and His disciples ended up having everything they needed to provide for the thousands gathered.

A leader worth imitating is a provider. Through the story of feeding the 5,000, we see Jesus was a leader who provided for those He led. As Christian leaders, it is our responsibility to provide for those we lead. In Principle 2 (Presence), I briefly mentioned the parable of the Sheep and the Goats. The spiritual principle of this story is that when we

serve those who are in need, it is as if we are serving Jesus. Sometimes it might feel as if you have little to give. The five loaves and two fish didn't look like much either. However, they turned out to be even more than they needed. If Jesus can feed thousands with five loaves and two fish, imagine what He can do with what you have.

## Application Questions

1. Think about your circle of influence (self, family, community, workplace, and/or church). Who do you provide for?
2. When you think about what you have to give, do you think it is enough, not enough, or more than enough? Why?
3. Whatever you have, how do you think God can use it to provide for those in need?

## **PRINCIPLE 18: Transformation**

Leaders have the power to change people's lives. Sometimes that change is positive. Sometimes that change is negative. Throughout this book, I have explained different principles that can have a positive change in the lives of those you lead. However, you may have worked with a leader who didn't do these things. Perhaps he didn't address conflict (Principle 14). Or maybe she stifled creativity and innovation (Principles 15 and 16). These leaders likely had a negative impact on those they led. This is why transformation is important. Transformation is a positive life change. It can be physical and spiritual.

A leader worth imitating transforms people. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He positively changed people's lives. Examples of this are His healing and resurrection miracles.

There are twenty-four healing miracles and three resurrection miracles documented between the four Gospels. See Appendix B for the complete list. These were just the healing and resurrection miracles the Gospel writers documented. They don't account for the miraculous signs Jesus performed, such as turning water into wine (John 2:1-11). There were also miracles and miraculous signs that were undocumented. Jesus' disciple, John, concluded his Gospel by stating, "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written" (John 21:25). Because of this, it is likely that Jesus physically transformed the lives of many more people.

I explained in Principle 17 that Jesus provided for the physical needs of people. However, as we look at these lists of miracles, it is important to look at both the physical and spiritual transformations that took place.

In the miracle of the paralyzed man (Matthew 9:2-7; Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:18-25), we see Jesus emphasize both the physical and spiritual

transformation that took place. In this story, Jesus told him two things: “Your sins are forgiven” (Matthew 9:2; Mark 2:5; Luke 5:20) and “Get up, take your mat and go home” (Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:11; Luke 5:24). By doing this, Jesus showed that He had the power to transform people’s lives both physically and spiritually. Just as He restored the paralyzed man’s ability to walk, Jesus also restored the man’s relationship with God.

A leader worth imitating transforms people. We see that Jesus physically and spiritually transformed people’s lives through the miracles He performed. As a Christian leader, you might not physically heal people as Jesus did. However, that doesn’t mean you can’t positively change the lives of the people that you lead.

## Application Questions

1. Think about the leaders you have worked for. Who positively changed your life? Who negatively changed it?
2. What are some examples of physical transformation? What are some examples of spiritual transformation?
3. Think about your circle of influence (self, family, community, workplace, and/or church). What does transformation look like where you lead?



## **PRINCIPLE 19: Feedback**

Have you ever worked for a leader who wasn't teachable? Perhaps he would say things like, "My way or the highway!" Or perhaps she didn't receive feedback from her team.

Feedback is empowering your team to ask questions, make suggestions, raise concerns, and/or challenge ideas.

A leader worth imitating receives feedback. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He allowed people to ask questions, make suggestions, raise concerns, and challenge ideas. An example of this is in the miracle of the centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10).

Centurions were leaders in the Roman army who usually commanded around 100 soldiers. In Matthew's account of this story, a centurion came to see Jesus (v. 5) to ask Him to heal his paralyzed

servant. Jesus offered to go to the centurion's house to heal his servant. When we look at many of the healing miracles of Jesus, such as the miracle of the paralyzed man (Matthew 9:2-7; Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:18-25), we see that He primarily healed people in person. However, the centurion challenged this idea. He stated, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it" (v. 8-9).

Essentially, the centurion had a leader-to-leader conversation with Jesus. While he was challenging Jesus, his feedback was not rooted in disrespect. It was against Jewish law for a Jew to enter the house of a Gentile (Acts 10:28). Because of this, the centurion's concern was likely out of respect for Jesus and Jewish law. The centurion suggested that Jesus simply heal his servant right then and there. As a leader himself, the centurion recognized the authority Jesus had over the supernatural was like the authority he (the centurion) had over Roman soldiers.

Instead of Jesus healing the servant in person as He had done in previous miracles, the centurion was asking Jesus to adapt, to be innovative (Principle 16).

Jesus could have easily said something like, "My way or the highway." In the introduction of this book, I explained Jesus was the Perfect Leader. Because of this, it could be argued that the way He healed people in person was the best way or the only way. However, Jesus didn't dismiss the centurion's feedback. Instead, He received it. Jesus turned to His disciples and stated, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith" (v. 10). By doing this, Jesus showed His disciples that they could learn from the centurion's faith. He then turned to the centurion and said, "Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would" (v. 13).

It is important to note that the centurion did not correct Jesus or teach Him anything new. Jesus was not wrong for wanting to go to the centurion's house, nor was He unaware of the authority He had. The centurion simply offered feedback and Jesus received it and used it to teach His disciples about faith (v. 10-12).

This conversation reminds me of when my professors asked my classmates and I guided questions. The professors already knew the answers. After all, they were the ones teaching the subject. However, this allowed us to show what we knew about the subject. Jesus basically did the same thing in this story.

A leader worth imitating receives feedback. Through the miracle of the centurion's servant, we see Jesus allowed the centurion to ask questions, make suggestions, raise concerns, and challenge ideas. As Christian leaders, we aren't perfect. We don't know everything like Jesus. If He could receive feedback, then so can we. Just as the centurion's faith taught the disciples, your team can likely teach you something.

## Application Questions

1. When was the last time you received feedback—a week, a month, a year, ever?
2. Is your team empowered to ask questions, make suggestions, raise concerns, and/or challenge ideas? How would you answer that question? How would your team answer it?
3. What are some things that you can learn from your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members?

## PRINCIPLE 20: Self-Awareness

In the introduction of this book, I explained everyone is a leader. Even if you aren't a leader in your family, community, workplace, or church, you at least lead yourself. To effectively lead yourself, you have to know yourself. This is why self-awareness is important.

Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves have written extensively about self-awareness. In their book, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, they wrote, "Simply put, to be self-aware is to know yourself as you really are."<sup>1</sup> Self-awareness is knowing your strengths and your weaknesses. It's knowing what energizes you and what drains you. It's knowing how you lead when you're calm versus how you lead when you're stressed.

A leader worth imitating has self-awareness. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He taught His disciples to be self-aware. We see this in Matthew 7:3-5: "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

I can't think of a better passage that illustrates the importance of self-awareness. It is comical to imagine someone walking around with a 2x4 wooden beam stuck in his eye. Talk about a blind spot! However, it becomes less funny when you realize Jesus was talking about you. This passage is not about pointing out the blind spots in other people. Rather, it is about having the blind spots in your own leadership pointed out.

The problem with a blind spot is just that: it's something we can't see. This is where self-awareness can be challenging. It's one thing to know what

self-awareness is; it's quite another to know if you have self-awareness. We might think we have a particular strength until someone points out that we don't. In Principle 12 (Accountability), I explained that the rich young ruler thought he was following all the Ten Commandments until Jesus pointed out that he wasn't. Because of this, we sometimes need our blind spots pointed out.

Self-awareness and feedback go hand-in-hand. I explained in Principle 19 that feedback is empowering your team to ask questions, make suggestions, raise concerns, and/or challenge ideas. A leader might think that he empowers his team (Principle 9). However, his team might think that he micro-manages them. This is where self-awareness and feedback work together. In this scenario, micro-management is the blind spot. For the leader to have self-awareness of this weakness, the team needs to point out that empowerment is not one of his strengths. The goal of this is not to disqualify the leader. I explained in Principle 13 that mistakes are an opportunity for us to learn and grow. When our teams are empowered to give us feedback, we can



learn from our mistakes and grow in our self-awareness.

A leader worth imitating has self-awareness. Through Jesus' teaching, we see He taught His disciples to be self-aware. As a Christian leader, it is important to know yourself. One of the best ways to get to know yourself is to empower your team to ask questions, make suggestions, raise concerns, and challenge your ideas. And, as you continue to grow in self-awareness, you will find that it benefits both you and your team.

## Application Questions

1. What are some of your strengths and weaknesses? How do you lead when you're calm? How do you lead when you're stressed?
2. Ask your team the same questions: What do they think are your strengths and weaknesses? How do they think you lead when you're calm? How do they think you lead when you're stressed?
3. Think about your circle of influence (self, family, community, workplace, and/or church), how can growing self-awareness benefit those you lead?

## PRINCIPLE 21: Self-Care

Have you ever worked for a leader who was a workaholic? Perhaps he didn't take care of himself. Or maybe she didn't practice self-care.

Self-care, simply put, is taking care of yourself. It's giving yourself time to rest and recharge. When you go long periods of time without self-care, it will not only affect your energy but also your effectiveness as a leader.

It is important to note that self-care is not selfish. In his book, *Let Your Life Speak*, Parker Palmer wrote, "Self-care is never a selfish act—it is simply good stewardship... we do it not only for ourselves but for the many others whose lives we touch."<sup>1</sup> Meaning, we first need to care for ourselves before we can care for others.

A leader worth imitating practices self-care. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He

took time to rest and recharge. An example of this was when He prayed. We see this in Luke 5:16: "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." Prayer was one way that He practiced self-care. I explained in the introduction of this book that He was the Perfect Leader. However, despite His perfection, He still took time to rest and recharge. Therefore, if Jesus needed to practice self-care, then so do we.

Self-care and self-awareness go hand-in-hand. I explained in Principle 20 that self-awareness is knowing what energizes and drains you. One example of this is knowing if you are an introvert or an extrovert. If you are an introvert, being alone energizes you, while being around people drains you. If you are an extrovert, then it's the other way around: being around people energizes you while being alone drains you.

Some might read Luke 5:16 and conclude that Jesus was an introvert. However, I think John 4:1-42 shows that being around people could also energize Him. In this story, Jesus ministered to a Samaritan woman. After His conversation with her, His disciples encouraged Him to eat something (v. 31). Jesus

declined and responded, “My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work” (v. 34 NLT). Essentially, Jesus was energized through ministering to her. Therefore, He practiced self-care by being alone and by being with others. We will look at the story of the Samaritan woman at the well more in Principle 24 (Counterculture).

Another example of knowing what energizes and drains us is knowing what activities help us rest and recharge. As I previously mentioned, the spiritual activity of prayer helped Jesus rest and recharge. In addition to community and prayer, other spiritual activities that can energize us are Scripture, worship, and service. I explained in Principle 2 (Presence) that these are five ways for us to experience Jesus’ presence. Sometimes the best self-care a leader can have is spending time with the Perfect Leader.

A leader worth imitating practices self-care. Through Jesus' example, we see He took time to rest and recharge. He did this through being alone and being with others. As Christian leaders, we need to practice self-care. When we take better care of ourselves, we can take better care of our teams.

## Application Questions

1. Are you an introvert or an extrovert? If you are an introvert, how often do you make time to be alone? If you are an extrovert, how often do you make time to be around people?
2. What spiritual activities help you rest and recharge—community, prayer, Scripture, worship, service, or something else?
3. How can practicing self-care help you better care for your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members?

## **PRINCIPLE 22: Boundaries**

In Principle 4 (Team), I explained that leaders can't do everything. However, it's easy to fill up our to-do lists with anything and everything that is brought to our attention. While some of these tasks may be important, they can also deter us from fulfilling our purpose. Because of this, it is important to have boundaries.

Henry Cloud and John Townsend have written extensively about boundaries. In their titular book on the topic, they wrote, "We need to set mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual boundaries for our lives to help us distinguish what is our responsibility and what isn't."<sup>1</sup> Essentially, boundaries are the things we say *no* to.

A leader worth imitating has boundaries. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He said *no* to some things. An example of this is the



miracle of the man with leprosy (Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-15).

In this passage, Jesus encountered a man with leprosy. Leprosy was a big deal in biblical times. Leviticus 3:1-46 had detailed instructions on what people needed to do if they had it. This included having to live alone outside of the city until a priest could confirm that they no longer had the disease (Leviticus 13:46). Because of this, living with leprosy was synonymous with living in isolation.

In Mark's account of this story, A man with leprosy asked Jesus to heal him and Jesus said yes (v. 40-42). After healing the man, Jesus instructed him not to tell anyone about the miracle, but to go and be examined by a priest, per the Levitical law (v. 43-44). However, the man ignored Jesus' instruction and instead told everyone who would listen that Jesus had healed him (v. 45).

While ignoring Jesus' instruction is never a good idea, it's hard to blame the man. His life had been transformed by Jesus. Not only was the man physically healed, but he could also return to his community.

Jesus set a boundary by instructing the man not to tell anyone. I think He knew if word got around that He had healed the man with leprosy, then everyone who heard would also ask Him for a miracle. This is exactly what happened. Verse 45 reads, "As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere." Because Jesus' first boundary had been broken, He had to set another boundary. By staying outside of the town, Jesus said *no* to some people who wanted a miracle.

Some of you might scratch your heads at this. Why would Jesus not want to heal people? To help us understand this, I don't want us to focus on who Jesus said *no* to. Instead, I want us to focus on who He said *yes* to.

I explained in Principle 18 (Transformation) that when Jesus physically healed people, He emphasized both the physical and spiritual transformation that took place. The man with leprosy in this story is no exception. There is a direct parallel between what Jesus did for the man with leprosy and what He did for humanity on the cross. Just as this

man's leprosy separated him from his community, our sins separated us from God. By healing the man's leprosy, Jesus restored his relationship with his community. In the same way, by dying on the cross for our sins, Jesus restored our relationship with God. His purpose was not to give miracles to everyone who asked. I explained in Principle 1 that Jesus' purpose was to reconcile humanity's relationship with God. Healing the man with leprosy illustrated that purpose.

In addition to this, boundaries can be self-care. I explained in Principle 21 that self-care is not selfish. To take care of ourselves, sometimes we have to say *no* to taking care of others.

A leader worth imitating has boundaries. Since Jesus only had 33 years on Earth, He couldn't do everything. Because of this, He had to say *no* to some miracles so that He could say *yes* to His purpose. As a Christian leader, you too will have to say *no* to some things. This includes saying *no* to good things.

Setting boundaries isn't just about saying *no* to things we don't want to do. Sometimes it's saying *no* to things that we want to do. However, having boundaries can help us say *yes* to what is really

important. I explain this more in the next principle (Priorities).

## Application Questions

1. Do you have a hard time saying *no*? Why or why not?
1. Think back to the application questions in Principle 1 (Purpose). What is the purpose of your leadership? What are some things that can deter you from fulfilling your purpose?
2. Think about your circle of influence (self, family, community, workplace, and/or church). What boundaries do you need to have where you lead?

## **PRINCIPLE 23: Priorities**

Priorities are related to boundaries. I explained in Principle 22 that boundaries are what you say *no* to. Priorities are what you say *yes* to.

A leader worth imitating has priorities. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He taught people what to say *yes* to. An example of this is in His interaction with Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42).

In this story, Jesus was teaching at the home of two sisters: Martha and Mary. They also had a brother named Lazarus who Jesus would later raise from the dead (John 11:1-44). We will look at this story more in Principle 26 (Empathy).

Martha and Mary were a dichotomy of priorities. In this story, Martha was working on tasks, while Mary sat at Jesus' feet to learn (v. 40). This led to Martha asking Jesus to tell her sister to help. In verse 40, Martha said, "Doesn't it seem unfair to you that

my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me" (NLT).

Jesus responded, "Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her" (v. 4-21 NLT). Essentially, Martha had prioritized her preparations, but Mary had prioritized Jesus' presence.

It is important to note that what Martha was doing was good. If you have ever led an event, then you know a lot of preparation goes into it. However, it is possible to prioritize your to-do list over the people at your event. This is what Martha did. In Principle 2 (Presence), I explained that one of the greatest gifts you can give someone else is your presence.

I explained in Principles 22 (Boundaries) that it's easy to fill up your to-do list with anything and everything that is brought to your attention. Because of this, there are four things you can do to help you prioritize. I call these the four e's: evaluate, execute, empower, and erase.

**1: Evaluate** — When a potential task comes up, the first thing to do is to evaluate it. Before you assign something to yourself or your team, you must first decide if it's something you and your team should do. The litmus test for this can be if it helps fulfill the purpose. I explained in Principle 1 that Jesus' purpose was to reconcile people's relationship with God. We see this in the story of Martha and Mary. By prioritizing Jesus' presence, Mary was prioritizing her relationship with God.

**2: Execute** — If you decide to make something a priority, then either you or your team will say *yes* to it. If you say *yes* to it, then it is your responsibility to execute it. From there, you can decide when and how you want to execute it. It is important to note saying *yes* or *no* to something often has little to do with whether we want to do it. In Principle 11 (Expectations), I explained being a Christian means obeying God's will. Because of this, sometimes we will have to prioritize the things we don't want to do. This is why resilience is important. I explain resilience more in Principle 29.



**3. Empower** — Something might be a *no* for you. However, it could be a *yes* for your team. In this scenario, you need to empower them to do it. I explained in Principle 9 that empowerment is not about getting out of work. Rather, it is about getting help with work. A potential task might be something you don't have time to do, but something a team member does. It could also be something that you don't have expertise in, but something that a team member can do. Before you delegate work to your team, you do need to consider their boundaries. In the story of the two sisters, Martha tried to get Mary to help her with her tasks. However, Jesus stood up for Mary and her boundary. As a leader, you need to do the same for your team.

**4. Erase** — Something might be a *no* for you and a *no* for your team. In this scenario, you have no other choice but to erase it from your to-do list. I explained in Principle 22 (Boundaries) that sometimes we have to say *no* to good things. Priorities and boundaries go hand-in-hand. You can't have priorities if you don't have boundaries. You can't say *yes* if you don't say *no*.

A leader worth imitating has priorities. Through the story of the two sisters, we can see that Jesus taught Martha and Mary what to prioritize. As Christian leaders, we can't do it all. Our teams can't do it all. Because of this, it is important to prioritize what is really important.

## Application Questions

1. Evaluate the things that you regularly do as a leader. What can you execute? What can you empower your team to do? What can you erase?
2. Think back to the application questions in Principle 1 (Purpose). What is the purpose of your leadership? What are some things that can help you fulfill that purpose?
3. How can you better help your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members prioritize?

## **PRINCIPLE 24: Counterculture**

Have you ever worked with a leader who was averse to change? Perhaps she would say things like, "We've always done it this way!" There are two problems with this mindset. The first problem is that it lacks purpose. There are a lot of good reasons to continue doing certain things a certain way. However, cultural norms alone are not one. The second problem with this is that cultural norms can sometimes be unhelpful or even harmful. This is why being countercultural is important.

Being countercultural isn't about breaking rules for the sake of breaking rules. It's about not letting cultural norms dictate how you fulfill your purpose. It's about changing cultural norms that harm those you lead.

A leader worth imitating is countercultural. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He

broke cultural norms. An example of this is His interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-42).

In this story, Jesus and His disciples stopped in a Samaritan town. While His disciples went to look for food, Jesus waited near a well. When He saw a Samaritan woman approaching the well, He asked her, "Will you give me a drink?" (v. 7). This might seem like a simple request. However, Jesus was being countercultural by talking to this woman. In Jesus' time, men were not supposed to speak to women in public. In addition to this, Jews and Samaritans did not get along. Therefore, Jesus broke two harmful cultural norms in one conversation.

Understanding the cultural context helps us comprehend the woman's response to Jesus. She answered Him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" Essentially, she was saying, "We've always done it this way!" Men don't talk to women. Jews don't talk to Samaritans.

The Samaritan woman wasn't the only one who noticed that Jesus was breaking cultural norms. When Jesus' disciples returned they were surprised to

see Him talking to her (v. 26). However, Jesus wanted to help this woman reconcile her relationship with God. To do that, He would have to be countercultural.

During their conversation, Jesus used a creative metaphor (Principle 14) about water to teach her a spiritual principle about Himself (v. 10-13). In addition to this, He also told her personal things about her life (v. 16-18). Finally, as He revealed Himself in Nazareth (Luke 4:14-20, Principle 6), He revealed Himself to her as the Messiah, the one who saves.

She responded by returning to her town. She told everyone who would listen about her encounter with Jesus. Verse 39 reads, "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony." By being countercultural, Jesus not only reconciled this woman's relationship with God but also with those who heard her story.

A leader worth imitating is countercultural. Through Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well, we see He was willing to break cultural norms to fulfill His purpose. Whether you think so or not, there are cultural norms in your circle of

influence. Some of these cultural norms might help your purpose, while others might hinder it. Some of these cultural norms might help those you lead, while others might harm them. As a Christian leader, it's not your responsibility to maintain unhelpful or harmful cultural norms. It is your responsibility to break them.

## Application Questions

1. Are you change-averse? Why or why not?
2. What are some cultural norms in your circle of influence? Are these cultural norms helpful or harmful?
3. How can you be countercultural where you lead?



## **PRINCIPLE 25: Honor**

Have you ever worked for a leader who didn't show appreciation? Perhaps he downplayed his team's work. Or maybe she didn't honor people.

Honor is when you show public appreciation for someone else. If you don't take the time to honor your team and their work, then they have no way of knowing whether you appreciate them. This is why honor is important.

A leader worth imitating honors people. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He honored people. There are many examples of this throughout Scripture.

In Principle 23 (Priorities), I explained Jesus honored Mary for prioritizing His presence (Luke 10:38-42). In addition to Mary, Jesus honored the widow's sacrifice who gave two small coins (Luke 21:1-4; Mark 12:41-44). Today, this would be a few

cents. He also honored the faith of the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30), as well as the faith of the bleeding women (Matthew 9:20–22; Mark 5:25–34; Luke 8:43–48). And He honored the woman who anointed Him with expensive oil (Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; Luke 7:36–50; John 12:1–8).

One thing that each of these examples has in common is that they were women. Jesus lived in a culture that didn't honor women. Even Jesus' disciples were guilty of maintaining that cultural norm. In the story of the woman who anointed Him, some disciples downplayed her gift and said it was a waste of money (Matthew 26:8–9; Mark 14:4–5; John 12:4–5). Jesus called them out and said, "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me" (Mark:14:6).

In Luke's account of this story, the Pharisees spoke dishonorably about her. They said, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner" (v. 39). Despite this, Jesus was countercultural

(Principle 25). He honored the people that His culture thought were unimportant.

It's easy to honor people you think are important. In a workplace setting, it might even be strategic. If you regularly show the CEO, director, and/or manager public appreciation, then he might eventually do something for you. This could be a raise or a promotion. While this might be the cultural norm in a workplace setting, it is not what honoring people is about. Honor isn't about flattering people who can do something for you. Honor is about giving public appreciation to those who are overlooked.

In your circle of influence, it is likely some people are overlooked. CEOs, directors, and managers probably receive their share of public appreciation. However, other people often get left out. This could be the administrators, assistants, interns, IT staff, mailroom clerks, security officers, and custodians. I probably even left someone out on that list. The irony is not lost on me. While I don't know who is on your team and what they do, the point is there is likely someone being overlooked. Because of

this, it is important to honor those who are underappreciated or unappreciated.

A leader worth imitating honors people. Through Jesus' words and actions, we see He honored women in a culture that didn't. As Christian leaders, it is our responsibility to honor those that we lead. Especially if others don't.

## Application Questions

1. When was the last time you showed your team appreciation—a week, a month, a year, ever?
2. In Jesus' culture, women were not honored. In your circle of influence, who are some people that are not honored?
3. How can you better honor your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members?

## PRINCIPLE 26: Empathy

In Principle 2, I explained why presence is important. As a leader, you will inevitably be present with people during times of loss. It could be losing a job, losing a dream, or losing a friend or family member. This is why empathy is important.

Brené Brown has written extensively about empathy. In her book, *Daring Greatly*, she wrote, “It’s simply listening, holding space, withholding judgment, emotionally connecting, and communicating that incredibly healing message of ‘You’re not alone.’”<sup>1</sup> Essentially, being empathetic is about being present with someone during times of loss. This can be a physical and emotional presence.

A leader worth imitating has empathy. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He was present with people during times of loss. An example of this was when Lazarus died (John 11:1-44).

In this story, Jesus received news that Lazarus was sick (v. 1-4). In Principle 23 (Priorities), we looked at Martha and Mary. Lazarus was their brother. Two days after receiving the news that Lazarus was sick, Jesus and His disciples traveled to see them (v. 6-7). While this passage doesn't give any details about their trip, it likely took them several days to get there. Before they arrived, Jesus told His disciples that Lazarus was already dead, but he would rise again (v. 11-15). When they arrived, Lazarus' death was confirmed to them. They were also told that Lazarus had been buried in a tomb for four days (v. 17). His sisters Martha and Mary even told Jesus that if He had gotten there sooner that He could have healed Lazarus (v. 21, 32).

After seeing people weep for Lazarus (v. 33), Jesus asked to be taken to where he was buried (v. 34). When Jesus arrived at Lazarus' tomb, we see Him respond with empathy. Verse 35, the shortest verse in the entire Bible, simply reads, "Jesus wept."

It is important to note that Jesus had told people that Lazarus would be raised from the dead (v. 11, 23, 25-26). Because of this, Jesus didn't need to

weep. Instead, He could have told those who were mourning to stop crying because Lazarus would not be dead for much longer. That would have been true. However, it wouldn't have been empathetic. Jesus wept with those who wept. He had empathy.

While Jesus shared the hope of Lazarus' resurrection, He also shared the loss of Lazarus' death. We will look at the hope of resurrection in Principle 31 (Hope). As Christian leaders, we can have hope for eternal life and simultaneously grieve the loss of earthly life. When you hear about someone losing a friend or family member, you could focus on how you will see them again in Heaven. This is essentially what Martha did when she told Jesus, "I know (Lazarus) will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." (v. 24). This response is true; however, it is not empathetic.

If you don't know how to respond to someone who experienced loss, try putting yourself in that person's shoes. Ask yourself how you would respond if you were in her situation. Ask yourself what you would want to hear and what you wouldn't want to hear. It's possible you wouldn't want to hear anything.



You might just want someone to sit and grieve with you. Romans 12:15 reads, “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.” Sometimes empathy is as simple as that.

A leader worth imitating has empathy.

Through the story of Lazarus’ death, we see He was present, physically and emotionally, with Martha and Mary. It can be a challenge to sit and grieve with someone. As Christian leaders, we want to inspire others. And we rarely associate grief with inspiration. I explained in Principle 8 that inspiration is when someone wants to follow you. Who wouldn’t want to follow a leader who is physically and emotionally present during times of loss?

## Application Questions

1. When was the last time you experienced loss?  
How did people respond? How do you wish they had responded?
2. Is it easy for you to put yourself in someone else's shoes? Why or why not?
3. Think about your circle of influence (family, community, workplace, and/or church). How can you have empathy where you lead?

## **PRINCIPLE 27: Anger**

As a leader, you will get angry at times. In fact, you should get angry. I don't mean when your team makes mistakes. In Principle 13, I explained that mistakes help people learn and grow. I mean you should get angry when you see people take advantage of the vulnerable. Because of this, the question is not whether a leader should get angry. Rather, how a leader should respond when they are angry. Psalm 4:4 reads, "Don't sin by letting anger control you" (NLT). Meaning, it is your responsibility to control your anger, not let your anger control you.

A leader worth imitating controls her anger. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He got angry. An example of this is when He cleared the temple (Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-48; John 2:13-16).

In this story, Jesus saw people buying and selling animals for sacrifice. He responded by flipping over the tables and kicking out the merchants (Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-16; Luke 19:45; John 2:14-15). In the introduction of this book, I explained that Jesus never sinned. Therefore, we can conclude what He did was right.

If you have ever led in a church setting, you have likely seen coffee, books, or other items being sold in the lobby. It is important to note that this is not the same buying and selling that angered Jesus. In Principle 12, I explained that Jesus' command to the rich young ruler was not about money. Rather, there was an underlying, more important point He was trying to make. Similarly, Jesus clearing the temple was not necessarily about money. Rather, it was about the merchants taking advantage of people.

As I previously mentioned, the merchants were selling animals for sacrifices. The book of Leviticus details several reasons for needing a sacrifice. Usually, these sacrifices required lambs. In Matthew's account of this story, he specified Jesus flipped tables that were selling doves (v. 12). This is an

important detail. According to Jewish law, if someone could not afford a lamb to sacrifice, doves were an acceptable substitute (Leviticus 12:8). Because of this, the merchants were likely taking advantage of the poor. In Matthew 21:13, Jesus said, "My Temple will be called a house of prayer, but you have turned it into a den of thieves!" Essentially, they were stealing from the vulnerable.

While Jesus' anger led Him to flip tables and kick people out, He didn't stop there. Matthew's account of this story reads, "The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them" (v. 14). Luke's account adds, "Every day he was teaching at the temple" (v. 47). By doing this, Jesus restored the temple to a house of prayer, as it was meant to be.

You can think about anger as you would think about home renovation. My wife and I like to watch home renovation shows. In these shows, before the builders construct someone's dream home they first have to knock down some walls or tear up some floors. I think leadership is similar. Sometimes you have to break something before you can make something.

I explained in Principle 24 (Counterculture) that there could be unhelpful or harmful cultural norms in your circle of influence. In Principle 25 (Honor), I explained this could look like not showing appreciation. However, before you can make something helpful, you first have to break the harmful cultural norm.

A leader worth imitating controls her anger. By clearing the temple, we see Jesus used His anger to restore the temple to a house of prayer. As a Christian leader, there are likely people in your circle of influence who are vulnerable. It should anger you when they are taken advantage of. Like Jesus, you too can control your anger and use it for good.

## **Application Questions**

1. Think about the last time you got angry. Did you control your anger or let your anger control you?
2. What are some things that make you angry?
3. Think about your circle of influence (family, community, workplace, and/or church). How can you use your anger for good?

## **PRINCIPLE 28: Serve**

Have you ever worked for a leader who acted like he was better than other people? Perhaps he refused to do tasks he thought were beneath him. Or perhaps she expected her team to serve her. Leaders today might segregate themselves from those that work for them. However, this was not how Jesus led. As He told His disciples, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45 NLT).

A leader worth imitating is a servant. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see that He served people. The ultimate example of this was in His crucifixion. We will look at this story in Principle 30 (Sacrifice). In this principle, the example we are going to look at is when Jesus washed His disciples’ feet (John 13:1-17).



This story takes place during the Last Supper, shortly before Jesus' death. We looked at the Last Supper meal in Principle 16 (Innovation). In John's account of this story, Jesus used some of His last moments to serve His team. John 13:4-5 reads, "He got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and washed his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him."

This likely would have shocked the disciples. Foot washing was often associated with servanthood. Therefore, it would have been a task for a servant, not a leader. Peter seemed to be aware of this cultural norm. "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" he asked (v. 6). Jesus simply responded, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will" (v. 7). Peter eventually gave in and let Jesus wash his feet.

After washing His disciples' feet, Jesus explained why He did it. "I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master" (v. 15-16).

Essentially, Jesus made a leadership paradigm shift. He broke the cultural norm that a leader is better than a servant. In Luke's account of the Last Supper, Jesus told His disciples, "In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people... But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant" (Luke 22:25-26 NLT). By washing His disciples' feet, Jesus showed that servanthood and leadership go hand-in-hand. Foot washing was a practice that the early church continued to do (1 Timothy 5:9-10).

Foot washing is not as common today as it was in Jesus' day. If you have led in a church setting, you might have seen it done during a worship service or wedding ceremony. However, there are modern-day equivalents. Think about a task that you would have an administrator, assistant, or intern do. Picking up coffee for the team is an example of this. By doing this task yourself, you can both serve and model servanthood to your team. This is also a way that you can honor them (Principle 25).

A leader worth imitating is a servant. By washing His disciples' feet, Jesus served and modeled servanthood for His team. As Christian leaders, we are not better than the people we lead. It is not our team's responsibility to serve us. It is our responsibility to serve them.

## Application Questions

1. Have you ever worked for a leader who thought he was better than you? What were some things he did as a result? Have you ever done some of those same things?
2. What are some modern-day equivalents of foot washing? What are tasks that you would have an administrator, assistant, or intern do? Do you think that any of these tasks are beneath you?
3. How can you better serve your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members?

## **PRINCIPLE 29: Resilience**

As a leader, there will be times when you want to quit. I explained in Principle 23 that we sometimes have to prioritize things we don't want to do. Meaning, you might need to say *yes* to something that you really want to say *no* to. This is why resilience is important. Resilience, simply put, is seeing something through to the end.

A leader worth imitating is resilient. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He saw things through to the end. An example of this is at the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46).

In this story, Jesus was preparing to go to the cross. I explained in Principle 1 that Jesus' purpose was to reconcile humanity's relationship with God. To fulfill that purpose, Jesus had to die.

If there was a time for Jesus to quit, that time was at Gethsemane. I think He knew that. In Luke's account of this story, Jesus prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me" (v. 42a). Essentially, Jesus was asking God the Father if there was another way to fulfill His purpose.

Besides His imminent death, Jesus was also preparing to be betrayed, arrested, and abandoned (Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:1-12). In addition to this, Peter would deny Him (Matthew 26:73-75; Mark 14:69-72; Luke 22:55-62; John 18:13-27). He would also stand trial before religious leaders (Matthew 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:66-71; John 18:19-24) and political leaders (Matthew 27:11-26; Mark 15:1-15; Luke 23:1-25; John 18:28-19:16). Finally, He would be beaten, stripped, and mocked (Matthew 27:26-31; Mark 15:15-20; Luke 22:63-65; John 19:1-3). Any one of these things on its own could have been reason enough to quit.

Jesus had several reasons to quit. However, He chose to see it through to the end. In His prayer, He said, "Not my will, but yours be done" (v. 42b). I

explained in Principle 11 (Expectations) that the spiritual cross all Christians must take up is obeying God's will. Before Jesus could take up His physical cross at Calvary, He first had to take up this spiritual cross at Gethsemane. As Jesus prayed, an angel came to give Him strength (v. 43).

As Christian leaders, we will have Gethsemane moments. There will be moments in our leadership when we will want to quit. It could be after betrayal, embarrassment, or any of the other things that Jesus faced on His way to the cross.

It is important to note that being resilient does not mean you need to tolerate unacceptable behavior. In Principle 14 (Battles), I explained that forgiving someone does not mean tolerating their unacceptable behavior. In addition to this, there are sometimes good reasons to quit. An example of this is changing your workplace. When discerning whether to quit, our prayers need to be the same as Jesus': "Not my will, but yours be done." We can ask God if there is another way to fulfill our purpose. If there is, then we can ask Him to show it to us. If there is no other way, then we can ask God to give us the

strength to see it through to the end. Just as God sent an angel to strengthen Jesus, there are people on your team who can strengthen and support you.

A leader worth imitating is resilient. Through His time at the Garden of Gethsemane, we see Jesus saw His purpose through until the end. Being a Christian isn't easy, nor is being a leader. Being a Christian requires resilience, and so does being a leader. If you aren't resilient, you won't be a leader for long.



## Application Questions

1. Think about the last time you quit something. Do you wish you had seen it through to the end? Why or why not?
2. Think about the last time you saw something through to the end. What helped you be resilient?
3. Think about your circle of influence (family, community, workplace, and/or church). How can you be resilient where you lead?

## **PRINCIPLE 30: Sacrifice**

In Principle 1, I explained that a leader worth imitating has a great purpose. It can be easy to idealize our purpose. As we've seen throughout this book, purpose can give us opportunities (Principle 3), inspiration (Principle 8), and even creativity (Principle 15). However, there will come a point when fulfilling your purpose is anything but ideal. In this principle, I will focus on the point when your purpose doesn't give you something. Instead, you have to give it something.

Jesus told His disciples, "Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:38). In Principle 11 (Expectations), I explained that there are two ways for us to think about crosses: physical and spiritual. A physical cross is the death of our bodies. A spiritual cross is the death of our will. While you might not be called to

take up a physical cross in your lifetime, you are still called to take up a spiritual cross every day. This is the non-negotiable of following Jesus. Being a Christian means making sacrifices. The same thing can be said about being a leader. To fulfill your purpose you will have to make sacrifices.

A leader worth imitating makes sacrifices. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He made sacrifices to fulfill His purpose. There is no better example of this than His crucifixion.

All four of the Gospels document Jesus' death at Calvary (Matthew 27:32-56; Luke 23:26-49; Mark 15:21-41; John 19:16-37). Before Jesus breathed His last breath, He uttered His famous last words: "It is finished" (John 19:30). It is important to note that Jesus was not referring to His life being finished. Rather, He was referring to His purpose being finished.

In Romans 5:1-21, Paul explains the theology of how Jesus' death reconciled humanity's relationship with God. Verses 10-11 read, "For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved

through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God" (NLT).

By dying for humanity, Jesus made the most significant sacrifice a person can make. John 15:13 reads, "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends" (NLT). While dying for someone else is the most significant sacrifice a person can make, the reality is many leaders will not take up this cross. While you might not physically lay down your life, you can still lay it down spiritually.

Paul referred to this as being a "living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1). In Romans 14:8, he wrote, "If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord." His point is that our lives, and our deaths for that matter, belong to God. When you lay down your will for God's will, your life becomes a sacrifice for Him.

You might be wondering what all this means for you and your leadership. You can begin by asking yourself this question: what are you willing to give up to fulfill your purpose? I can't answer that for you.

Only you can. Because only you can decide to make that sacrifice.

You cannot make sacrifices reluctantly or under pressure. Taking up your cross, spiritual and physical, is a deliberate decision that only you can make. When something is unwillingly taken, we don't call that sacrifice. Instead, we call that seizure.

While I can't tell you what to sacrifice, I can tell you what to consider. We can't discuss sacrifice without also discussing significance. Sacrifice and significance go hand-in-hand. I explained in Principle 6, that the battles we choose could either be small or significant. Because of this, the level of sacrifice must match the level of significance. You can't make significant sacrifices for something small. You also can't make small sacrifices for something significant.

A leader worth imitating makes sacrifices. Through Jesus' crucifixion, we see He sacrificed His life to reconcile humanity's relationship with God. As Christian leaders, we will have to make sacrifices to fulfill our purpose. Moreover, we are called to live sacrificially for those we lead. By doing so, we

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practically imitate both the purpose and sacrifice of Jesus. There is no greater leadership than that.

## Application Questions

1. Think back to the application questions in Principle 1 (Purpose). What is the purpose of your leadership? What are you willing to give up to fulfill your purpose?
2. Think about a recent sacrifice you made. Did the level of sacrifice match the level of significance?
3. How can you live more sacrificially for your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members?

## **PRINCIPLE 31: Hope**

I don't need to tell you that the times we are living in are not the most hopeful. Your favorite cable news network can probably do that for me. There are plenty of things happening around the world that would make us feel hopeless. Because of this, it can be easy for people to let the current circumstances dictate how much hope they have. This is one reason leadership is important and opportune. Hopeless times call for hopeful leaders.

A leader worth imitating gives hope. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see that He gave His disciples hope. An example of this is His resurrection (Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10).

After Jesus died and was buried, He rose from the dead three days later (Luke 24:7; 1 Corinthians 15:4). However, Jesus didn't simply resurrect and



immediately ascend to Heaven. Instead, He appeared to many people. First, He appeared to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18). He also appeared to the eleven remaining disciples (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:34-43, John 20:19-29; 1 Corinthians 15:5). Paul wrote that Jesus appeared to over 500 people after rising from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:6). Paul also saw Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-9). In 1 Corinthians 15:8, he wrote, "Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him" (NLT).

There are two reasons that Paul wrote about Jesus' resurrection in 1 Corinthians Chapter 15. The first reason was to record the large number of witnesses who saw that Jesus had risen from the dead. The second reason was to explain the theology of Jesus' resurrection and the implications it has for all Christians. Verses 17-19 read, "If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world" (NLT). Essentially, if Jesus had

not risen from the dead, we would have no hope of eternal life, forgiveness from sin, and being reconciled with God. Jesus' resurrection gives us hope and His resurrection appearances are proof of that hope.

1 Corinthians Chapter 15 concludes with a reminder of the hope that Jesus' resurrection is for all Christians. Paul wrote, "For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless" (1 Corinthians 15:56-58, NLT).

In Principle 11 (Expectations), I explained it is believed that ten out of the twelve of Jesus' disciples were martyred for their faith. I don't think that they would have done that if they didn't have the hope of Jesus' resurrection. When leaders give hope to their teams, it not only inspires them to meet expectations but also to make sacrifices.

A leader worth imitating gives hope. Through Jesus' resurrection, we see He gave hope to His past,

present, and future followers. As a Christian leader, you will lead during hopeless times. You can show your team that those current circumstances do not dictate how much hope you have.

## Application Questions

1. Do you let the current circumstances dictate how much hope you have? Why or why not?
2. Think about the leaders that you have worked for. Who was a hopeless leader? Who was a hopeful leader? What did the hopeful leaders do to give hope?
3. Think about your circle of influence (family, community, workplace, and/or church). How can you give hope where you lead?

## **PRINCIPLE 32: Metrics**

Throughout this book, I have explained the role that purpose has in one's leadership. It's one thing to have a purpose, it's quite another to know if you are fulfilling it. This is why metrics are important.

Metrics, simply put, are what you measure. In a work setting, you might measure sales, profits, and customer service. In a church setting, you might measure attendance, new salvations, and tithing. Whatever metrics you choose to measure, they need to help you and your team evaluate whether you are fulfilling your shared purpose.

Metrics and purpose go hand-in-hand. I explained in Principle 1 that Jesus' purpose was to reconcile humanity's relationship with God. I also explained in Principle 9 that He empowered His disciples to continue that work when He was no longer physically present with them. In this principle, I

will explain the metrics that the disciples had measured their work.

A leader worth imitating has metrics. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see His disciples had metrics to measure their work. We see this in His parting words (Matthew 26:18-20).

Jesus' parting words to His disciples are often referred to as the Great Commission. Verses 19-20 read, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The Great Commission can be broken down into three metrics: discipleship, baptism, and obedience. When we look at the disciple's leadership in the book of Acts, we see that these were the three metrics they used when they documented their work (Acts 2:41-47).

**Metric 1: Discipleship** — The first metric in the Great Commission is discipleship. In Principle 6 (Team), I explained that the goal of discipleship was for a follower to become like their leader. For Jesus'

disciples, this looked like them imitating Him. As the disciples strove to imitate Jesus, one of their metrics was to help others do the same. The modern-day equivalent of this would be to make Christians. Disciples make disciples. Christians make Christians. Imitators of Christ make imitators of Christ.

In addition to this, Jesus emphasized making disciples of all nations. In Principles 1 and 6 (Purpose and Battles), I explained that His purpose of reconciliation was open to everyone, not just one group of people. Because of this, the metric of discipleship also included everyone.

**Metric 2: Baptism** — The second metric in the Great Commission is baptism. In Principle 4 (Integrity), I explained that baptism is a symbol of a Christian's commitment to God. I also explained that baptisms were often witnessed and celebrated by the Christian community. As the disciples made disciples, one of their metrics was to commemorate those conversions.

**Metric 3: Obedience** — The third and final metric of the Great Commission was obedience. In Principle 11 (Expectations), I explained that the

non-negotiable of being a Christian is choosing God's will over our own. Even Jesus obeyed God's will. I explained this in Principles 29 and 30 (Resilience and Sacrifice). Because of this, Jesus' disciples didn't just stop at making disciples and commemorating those conversions. They also had the metric of teaching new Christians the necessity of obeying God's will.

A leader worth imitating has metrics. Through the Great Commission, we see Jesus gave His disciples the metrics of discipleship, baptism, and obedience. As Christian leaders, metrics keep us from second-guessing ourselves and our efforts. When we know what to measure, we can confidently know when we are fulfilling our purpose.



## Application Questions

1. Think back to the application questions in Principle 1 (Purpose). What is the purpose of your leadership? Do you have any metrics to evaluate whether you are fulfilling that purpose?
2. Does your team know what to measure? Why or why not?
3. What are some metrics you can use to evaluate your leadership with yourself, your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members?

## **PRINCIPLE 33: Legacy**

Have you ever thought about what your family and friends will say at your funeral? Or what about what your coworkers will say about you when you retire, quit, or get fired? Regardless of how your leadership ends, the point is that it eventually will. This is why legacy is important.

Your legacy is what people remember about you when you're gone. This can either be a positive or negative thing. Will your family remember you as present or as absent? Will your coworkers say you served them? Or will they say you expected them to serve you? Whatever the people in your circle of influence remember about you when you're gone is your legacy.

A leader worth imitating leaves a legacy. When we look at the leadership of Jesus, we see He left a positive legacy. An example of this is in Paul's writings.

Even though Jesus had already died, resurrected, and ascended back into Heaven, Paul still had a lot to say about Him and His leadership. In Philippians 2:6-8, he wrote: “(Christ), being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!”

In this passage, Paul remembers how Jesus led. Jesus was present with humanity (Principle 2). He was a servant (Principle 28). He put God’s will over His own (Principle 11 and 29). And He sacrificed His life for humanity (Principle 30). This is Jesus’ legacy.

As I previously mentioned, your legacy is what people remember about you after you are gone. However, that doesn’t mean that you can’t start working on your legacy today. You can begin by asking yourself two questions:

1. What do you want to be remembered for?
2. Are you already doing that?

Let's say you want to be remembered as a servant. Ask yourself if you are already serving your team. If you answered *yes*, then keep doing that! If you answered *no*, then look for ways to start. You can apply these two questions to any of the leadership principles in this book.

A leader worth imitating leaves a legacy. Through Paul's writings, We see Jesus left a legacy of presence, service, obedience, and sacrifice. As Christian leaders, every day is an opportunity to work on our legacy. When we do the things that Jesus did, we leave a legacy of being imitators of Him.

## Application Questions

1. Think about your circle of influence (family, community, workplace, and/or church). If someone were to ask them what kind of leader you are, what do you think they would say?
2. What do you want to be remembered for?
3. Are you already doing that? If you answered *no*, how can you start?

## **CONCLUSION: Becoming A Leader Worth Imitating**

At the beginning of this book, I explained I am a leadership fanatic. This is part of who I am. However, it is not the first thing I want people to see when they look at me as a leader. I don't want them to see the degrees on my wall, the collection of books on my shelves, or even the button-up shirts that I (and occasionally my wife) wear. When my family, friends, coworkers, and church community look at me as a leader, I want them to see Jesus. To put it another way, I want to be a leader worth imitating.

The funny thing is that when you imitate a leader worth imitating, you become a leader worth imitating. We see this in the leadership of Paul. He was perhaps the most influential leader in the early church. You can read about his leadership in the book of Acts and many of the New Testament Epistles.

Despite Paul's influence, his leadership was not unique on its own. Rather, it was an imitation of the Perfect Leader. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, he writes, "You should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ" (NLT).

As I wrote in the introduction of this book, everyone is a leader. The people in your circle of influence are who you lead. As you imitate the leadership of Jesus, you may find that your family, friends, coworkers, and/or church members will imitate you.

When you have purpose and integrity, you become a leader worth imitating.

When you provide and sacrifice for your family, you become a leader worth imitating.

When you are present and empathetic with your friends, you become a leader worth imitating.

When you inspire and empower your coworkers, you become a leader worth imitating.

When you honor and serve your church members or apply any of the other leadership principles discussed in this book, you become a leader worth imitating.

As you strive to become a leader worth imitating, you won't walk around saying, "Look at me! Leadership, leadership, leadership." Instead, your words and your actions will say, "Look at Him! Jesus, Jesus, Jesus."



## Application Questions

1. Of the 33 leadership principles that we looked at in this book, which ones have been the easiest for you to apply?
2. Of the 33 leadership principles that we looked at in this book, which ones have been the hardest for you to apply?
3. If someone in your circle of influence were to imitate you, what is something you would want them to do or say?



## APPENDIX A: The Parables of Jesus

1. Lamp Under a Bowl (Matthew 5:14-15, Mark 4:21-22, Luke 8:16, 11:33)
2. Wise and Foolish Builders (Matthew 7:24-27, Luke 6:47-49)
3. New Patch on an Old Garment (Matthew 9:16, Mark 2:21, Luke 5:36)
4. New Wine in Old Wineskins (Matthew 9:17, Mark 2:22, Luke 5:37-38)
5. Sower and the Soils (Matthew 13:3-23, Mark 4:3-20, Luke 8:5-15)
6. Weeds (Matthew 13:24-43)
7. Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32, Mark 4:30-32, Luke 13:18-19)
8. Yeast (Matthew 13:33, Luke 13:20-21)
9. Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44)
10. Valuable Pearl (Matthew 13:45-46)
11. Net (Matthew 13:47-50)
12. Owner of House (Matthew 13:52)
13. Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:12-14, Luke 15:4-7)
14. Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:32-34)
15. Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)
16. Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32)
17. Tenants (Matthew 21:33-44, Mark 12:1-11, Luke 20:9-18)

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18. Wedding Banquet (Matthew 22:2-14)
19. Fig Tree (Matthew 24:32-35, Mark 13:28-29, Luke 21:29-31)
20. Faithful and Wise Servant (Matthew 24:45-51, Luke 12:42-48)
21. Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)
22. Talents (Matthew 25:14-30, Luke 19:12-27)
23. Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25:32-46)
24. Growing Seed (Mark 4:26-29)
25. Watchful Servant (Mark 13:35-37, Luke 12:35-40)
26. Moneylender (Luke 7:41-43)
27. Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)
28. Friend in Need (Luke 11:5-8)
29. Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21)
30. Unfruitful Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9)
31. Lowest Place at the Feast (Luke 14:7-14)
32. Great Banquet (Luke 14:16-24)
33. Counting the Cost (Luke 14:28-33)
34. Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)
35. Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)
36. Shrewd Manager (Luke 16:1-8)
37. Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)
38. Master and His Servant (Luke 17:7-10)
39. Persistent Widow (Luke 18:2-8)
40. Pharisee and Tax Collector (Luke 18:10-14)

## APPENDIX B: The Miracles of Jesus

### Healing Miracles

1. Man with leprosy (Matthew 8:1-4, Mark 1:40-45, Luke 5:12-15)
2. Centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10)
3. Peter's mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14-15, Mark 1:30-31, Luke 4:38-39)
4. Demon-possessed men in tomb (Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-15, Luke 8:27-35)
5. Paralyzed man (Matthew 9:2-7, Mark 2:3-12, Luke 5:18-25)
6. Bleeding women (Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-29, Luke 8:43-48)
7. Two blind men (Matthew 9:27-31)
8. Mute, demon-possessed Man (Matthew 9:32-33)
9. Man With Shriveled Hand (Matthew 12:10-13, Mark 3:1-5, Luke 6:6-10)
10. Blind, mute demon possessed man (Matthew 12:22, Luke 11:14)
11. Canaanite woman's daughter (Matthew 15:21-28, Mark 7:24-30)
12. Demon-possessed boy (Matthew 17:14-18, Mark 9:17-29, Luke 9:38-43)

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13. Blind men (Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10:46-52, Luke 18:35-43)
14. Deaf-mute man (Mark 7:31-37)
15. Demon-possessed man in synagogue (Mark 1:23-26, Luke 4:33-35)
16. Blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26)
17. Crippled woman (Luke 13:11-13)
18. Man with abnormal swelling (Luke 14:1-4)
19. Two men with leprosy (Luke 17:11-19)
20. Ten men with leprosy (Luke 17:11-19)
21. High priest's servant (Luke 22:50-51)
22. Official's son at Capernaum (John 4:46-54)
23. Sick man at pool Of Bethesda (John 5:1-9)
24. Man born blind (John 9:1-7)

### **Resurrection Miracles**

1. Jairus' Daughter (Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:22-42, Luke 8:41-56)
2. Widow's Son At Nain (Luke 7:11-15)
3. Lazarus (John 11:1-44)

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**NICK CHELLEN** is passionate about helping Christians become better leaders. He has over a decade of experience in leadership. During these years, he has worked in business, non-profit, and academic organizations. He also holds a master's degree in leadership. Through his experience and education, he has learned many life-changing leadership principles. His goal is to help Christians learn and apply those principles in their leadership. He regularly posts on his website at [nickchellsen.com](http://nickchellsen.com).

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