

Leadership

————— by the —————

Book

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Leadership

by the

Book

Tools to Transform Your Workplace

KEN BLANCHARD,
BILL HYBELS, and PHIL HODGES



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To
all leaders who struggle daily
to produce good results and
bring out the best in themselves and others

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Introduction

If you're like most leaders in today's complex, fast-paced world, you've sensed a desperate need for a relevant and competent role model of effective leadership. You long for some true standard of perfection and rightness in leadership.

We believe there *is* a perfect practitioner and teacher of effective leadership. That person is Jesus of Nazareth, who embodied the heart and methods of a fully committed and effective servant leader.

People today seeking practical advice on effective leadership rarely give serious consideration to Jesus. This is true of people with different religious beliefs as well as many who call themselves followers of Jesus. For whatever reason, Jesus is not regarded as a relevant model and teacher of how to inspire, direct, and equip people to produce good results.

In this book we invite students of leadership from all faiths, cultures, and experience to take another look at the leadership genius of Jesus. In three years he demonstrated a radical form of servant leadership that created spectacular results with otherwise ordinary people, thereby transforming the course of human history.

By presenting this message of unified moral character, sound method, and consistent behavior, we hope to bring new hope to a world in desperate need of leadership revival.

Leadership by the Book tells a story that portrays three different leaders—at least one of whom is probably much like you—and how together they were able to tap into the leadership principles of Jesus in a practical and effective way.

We recommend, as your approach to this book, that you read through once to follow the story, then again with pen or marker in hand to highlight the major principles and methods. For your assistance, these practical guidelines are summarized in the book's closing pages.

As authors, we bring very different backgrounds to this book. Ken has spent more than thirty years writing and teaching about leadership. Bill, a pastor as well as an author, has focused his energy for more than two decades on building up Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago, and in teaching others what he has learned about leadership along the way. Phil, meanwhile, has been living out his faith in the marketplace as a practicing manager and consultant in the areas of labor relations and human resource management.

While *Leadership by the Book* is a parable about a professor, a minister, and a businessman, it isn't meant to be autobiographical. But it is a story that allows us to share our common commitment to help organizational leaders—whether in business, churches, educational institutions, governmental agencies, the military, or volunteer groups—to create a legacy of significance by implementing the servant leadership values and practices modeled by Jesus.

We hope this book arrives in the nick of time to help you develop servant leadership as your natural, spontaneous response to whatever role you're called to play—so that whether you're making your own decisions or carrying out someone else's, whether you're issuing instructions or obeying orders, whether you're pioneering something new or facilitating someone else's vision, you will do it *to serve* . . . and in the process, produce good results by bringing out the best in yourself and others. God bless you in this endeavor.

Ken Blanchard
Bill Hybels
Phil Hodges
Fall 1999

The Heartbreak

When the plane touched down, the Professor awoke from a sound sleep. With all the traveling he did, he counted as one of his blessings that he could sleep anywhere. As the 727 taxied to the gate, the Professor pondered his visit the previous night with Michael.

Michael was considered by many—especially the analysts on Wall Street—to be one of the top managers and business leaders in the country. At one time, the Professor had been proud to consider Michael his best pupil as well as a very good friend. During the three and a half years he had mentored Michael, the Professor and his wife, Allison, had become close friends with Michael and his wife, Carla. Both families lived in the same community just outside of San Diego. They shared common interests, and because their kids were the same age, they often took family vacations together.

The Professor and Michael started to drift apart when Michael accepted a big opportunity in New York. After a few months of fairly regular contact, Michael started to be slow to return calls from the Professor. When they did talk, if the Professor inquired about something Michael was doing or made any suggestions, there would be an awkward silence at the other end of the phone, or Michael would say he had to take another call.

Maybe it was Michael's attraction to fame and fortune or the pressure to succeed, but whatever it was, the Professor's relationship with Michael had slowly faded over the last five years.

Then why last night?

Their reunion had been initiated by Carla. Although he and Michael had lost contact, Carla and Allison had kept in touch over the years. The Professor knew through Allison that Carla was worried about Michael, but he hadn't discovered how out of kilter things were until Carla had called him in tears several weeks earlier.

"I don't even know Michael anymore," Carla wept, "and neither do the kids. All he has time for is work and the next deal. Michael has always worked hard, but he managed to spend time with me and the children. He never does anymore," she said.

“He doesn’t seem to be close to or care about anyone at the office, either,” Carla continued. “All that counts with him is the bottom line and what the Wall Street analysts think. I’m starting to think I’m living with a stranger.

“Michael used to listen to you,” Carla pleaded with the Professor. “Would you talk to him? You’re my last resort.”

As good luck would have it, Michael and Carla’s home north of New York City was less than an hour’s drive from where the Professor was due to conduct a leadership seminar in a few weeks. Sensing Carla’s desperation and being concerned about Michael, the Professor rearranged his schedule to visit them while he was nearby.

“Michael usually gets home around nine o’clock,” Carla said, thrilled to hear the Professor’s plan. “I think it would be best if you just surprised him with a visit, saying you were in the area and thought you’d stop by . . .”

As the Professor walked off the plane in San Diego, he was still thinking about last night’s visit with Michael. He usually took the shuttle bus home because parking around the airport was expensive and the traffic a real zoo. However, this night, much to his surprise, Allison was at the gate to meet him.

As they hugged, Allison said, "I have some bad news. Michael had a heart attack this afternoon and he's in critical condition."

The Professor felt weak in the knees at the impact of Allison's words. He'd been with Michael less than twenty-four hours earlier.

"Carla called just as I got home from the office," continued Allison. "She sounded numb. It seems that Michael stopped by the health club for a workout and just collapsed on the exercise bike. They called 911 and the paramedics rushed him to the hospital. He's in intensive care. I think we should get on a plane early tomorrow so we can be there to support Carla and pray for Michael."

The Professor nodded in agreement.

This shocking news about Michael quickly brought someone else to the Professor's mind. He turned to Allison and asked if she'd called the Minister.

"Yes, I did," she said. "I knew you would want him to know."

"He'll meet us tomorrow night at the hospital," continued Allison.

"Great," said the Professor. "Thanks for thinking about him."

The Minister, who had worked with the Professor in mentoring Michael years ago, was now living in Dallas on a summer sabbatical leave from his church, engaged in a special assignment at his old divinity school.

As they waited for his luggage, the Professor told Allison about his visit with Michael the previous night. “I arrived at their house before Michael had returned from work,” said the Professor. “Carla greeted me with a hug that seemed one part joy at seeing an old friend, and one part relief that help had arrived.

“As we settled down in the den to talk, Carla filled me in on more of the background of Michael’s situation. She told me that after Michael’s big promotion and their move, he had plunged into his new job with all his characteristic energy and enthusiasm. His work schedule had been horrendous, but Michael’s drive to succeed and his natural competitive nature seemed at first to fit well with the new demands.

“At the same time, Carla said, she had been engrossed in getting their two children settled in new schools, as well as in decorating their new home. ‘We were so busy that first year,’ she recalled, ‘and so excited about all the new opportunities opening up for us that we didn’t take time to realize what was happening to our private world. It just crept up on us, and we were in deep trouble before we even realized something was wrong.’ ”

Carla explained how the same gradual erosion seemed to have taken over Michael’s spiritual health as well. But she mentioned one ray of hope: Michael had recently told her about meeting a top corporate manager who struck him as a model of efficiency and effectiveness. She was very successful at work but also had time for her family. Everyone admired her—her people, her family, friends, and neighbors. Michael mentioned in passing to Carla that when he asked the woman how she did it, she replied, “I simply work day to day to fulfill the Lord’s purpose in my life.” Carla was grateful that this woman’s words had impressed Michael strongly enough for him to remember and repeat them.

“When Michael arrived home about an hour later,” the Professor continued, “he joined us in the den and expressed surprise at seeing me. After about ten minutes of small talk, Carla excused herself, saying she was tired and had an early appointment the next day.”

The Professor then related to Allison how at first both he and Michael searched awkwardly for words. It had been so long since they had seen each other face to face. “But eventually we began to reminisce about old times and what we’d learned from each other during our weekly meetings with the Minister.

“As we talked into the night,” the Professor told Allison, “I sensed that Michael regretted what had happened to his life. He admitted how the pressure at work had separated him from his people and eroded away his time with Carla and the kids. All his energy was focused on the bottom line and being successful at work, and yet he talked wearily about his loneliness and the choices he’d made the last few years.

“By the end of the evening,” the Professor continued as he retrieved his bag, “we’d even made plans to get together again.”

Allison sighed. “Carla and I were praying that would happen,” she said as they made their way out of the terminal. “And now this!”

* * *

Late that night, back in New York, Michael gradually woke up. His first sensation was of fear and frustration. He recalled the sharp, stabbing pain in his chest and the feeling of heaviness in his arms and legs as he slumped on the exercise bike. He could remember nothing else, but easily imagined what had caused the pain.

Why me? he wondered.

Then the remembrance of his father’s untimely death at about this same age brought back the feelings of abandonment and loneliness that had haunted him for years. Was he going to leave Carla and the kids with the same mountain to climb?

Why now—when I was just starting to get some perspective back in my life?

How could he have been so blind to the warning signs? And where was God in all this? Was this some kind of cosmic joke God was playing on him, as his punishment for drifting away?

At least I'm still alive. But he knew he was in trouble. He focused on the sound of the heart monitor and the uncomfortable tubes in his nose. He was vaguely conscious of voices.

Before drifting back to sleep, he called out to God for help with the silent prayer of a frightened child.