

**Influence**  
MAGAZINE

**MAKE IT COUNT**

An eight-week study  
for leadership teams



**The Character of a Leader:  
8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are**

STEPHEN BLANDINO

**DISCUSSION GUIDE**



## The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are

### Integrity

**Assess:** How do integrity gaps undermine the life and influence of a leader?

#### Insights and Ideas

One of the most important character qualities in the life of a leader is integrity. Integrity is the purity of character that influences every part of a person's life to the degree that what you see in public is what God sees in private.

Having integrity implies being whole and complete. You can't switch it on and off like a light and expect to build enduring influence. You must avoid duplicity. James said a person who is double-minded is "unstable in all they do" (James 1:8). When we lack integrity, double-mindedness takes the driver's seat of our lives. In time, people will see us for who we truly are. As philanthropist Andrew Carnegie once said, "As I grow older, I pay less attention to what men say. I just watch what they do."

Psalm 78:72 anchors leadership to this essential character quality: "And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them." To assess where your integrity needs help, take the following integrity test:

1. In what areas of my life do my words and actions not match?
2. What temptation do I struggle with that has the greatest likelihood of undermining my life and leadership?
3. In what areas of my life do I have a tendency to become most defensive? What does this reveal about my vulnerabilities?
4. What safeguards have I established to protect my integrity?
5. To whom am I regularly accountable?

Your answers to these questions will reveal any cracks in your integrity. Have the courage to address them. Your answers are also a reminder of what's at stake if your integrity waivers. Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, "In order to be a leader, a man must have followers. And to have followers, a man must have their confidence. Hence, the supreme quality for a leader is unquestionably integrity."

When facing a temptation to compromise integrity, a person may fantasize about meeting a physical or emotional need in an unhealthy or unholy way. The next time you experience such a temptation, think instead about the potential *consequences* of your sin. Mentally fast-forward your life, and ask yourself these questions: *What would the fallout look like if I gave in to this temptation? Who, besides me, would my wrong choices hurt? What price will I ultimately pay if I walk down this path?*

This eye-opening exercise will help you see beyond the temptation and into the future you ultimately want to avoid.

#### Reflect and Discuss

1. What are the benefits of integrity in life and leadership?
2. Which question in the integrity test most challenges you? Why?
3. What would the fallout be if you compromised your integrity? Consider the consequences.

#### Apply

Take some time to think deeply about the questions in the integrity test. Identify the places where you have the greatest vulnerability to sin. Consider the potential consequences of leaving this sin unchecked in your life. Finally, develop a plan to build appropriate safeguards and accountability to protect you.

The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are

# Integrity

**Assess:** How do integrity gaps undermine the life and influence of a leader?

Integrity is the purity of \_\_\_\_\_ that influences every part of a person's life to the degree that what you see in \_\_\_\_\_ is what God sees in \_\_\_\_\_.

Andrew Carnegie said, "As I grow older, I pay less attention to what men say. I just watch what they do."

Psalm 78:72 anchors leadership to this essential character quality: "And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them."

**The Integrity Test:**

1. In what areas of my life do my words and actions not \_\_\_\_\_?
2. What \_\_\_\_\_ do I struggle with that has the greatest likelihood of undermining my life and leadership?
3. In what areas of my life do I have a tendency to become most \_\_\_\_\_?  
What does this reveal about my vulnerabilities?
4. What \_\_\_\_\_ have I established to protect my integrity?
5. To whom am I regularly \_\_\_\_\_?

Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, "In order to be a leader, a man must have followers. And to have followers, a man must have their confidence. Hence, the supreme quality for a leader is unquestionably integrity."

**Apply**

Take some time to think deeply about the questions in the integrity test. Identify the places where you have the greatest vulnerability to sin. Consider the potential consequences of leaving this sin unchecked in your life. Finally, develop a plan to build appropriate safeguards and accountability to protect you.

## The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are

## Humility

**Team Review:** As you reflected on the five questions in the integrity test, what most challenged you? What changes have you determined to make to strengthen your integrity?

**Assess:** What makes humility so attractive in a leader's life?

## Insights and Ideas

**H**umility is the quality we hate to develop in ourselves; yet we are quick to point out a lack of humility in others. Though we detest arrogance and egos in others, we are quite comfortable announcing our own accomplishments to the world.

Author C.J. Mahaney defines humility as “honestly assessing ourselves in light of God’s holiness and our sinfulness.” When we honestly assess ourselves from the perspective of God’s holiness and our sinfulness, we quickly realize how small we actually are, and how crucial the quality of humility really is. Without humility, we put ourselves on the same level as God.

R.C. Sproul said, “The grand difference between a human being and a supreme being is precisely this: Apart from God, I cannot exist. Apart from me, God does exist. God does not need me in order for Him to be; I do need God in order for me to be.”

The Bible is clear about God’s attitude toward pride. Peter wrote, “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time” (1 Peter 5:5–6). Pride is a human path to pursuing favor; humility is God’s path to giving it to you.

Humility begins by dethroning our addiction to self and recognizing our true humanity. Without humility, we live with a false sense that we are at the center of the universe. We detach ourselves from our humanity, and we set ourselves up as something we are not.

Humility is a daily struggle. The world continually tells us to build our platform, promote ourselves and get ahead at any cost. But pride is not the path God calls us to travel. The truth is, pride builds monuments, but humility builds ministry. If you want to improve your humility quotient, consider three steps:

1. *Listen more.* The more you talk, the more others will perceive you as an arrogant know-it-all. Lean in with a posture of listening rather than dominating the conversation.
2. *Admit your faults.* Leaders who can quickly and easily admit their faults are always more respected than those who try to assume an image of success or perfection.
3. *Be teachable.* People who cannot receive coaching or correction haven’t embraced the humility that’s necessary to become lifelong learners.

## Reflect and Discuss

1. Why is pride so dangerous in leadership?
2. What does false humility look like in a leader?
3. Which of the three keys to cultivating humility is your greatest struggle? Why?

## Apply

Do a “pride audit” on your life. In what areas are you inclined to project arrogance? Share your audit with a trusted friend, and ask him or her to pray *with* you and *for* you. Commit to follow up after a couple of weeks to maintain accountability.

The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are

# Humility

**Assess:** What makes humility so attractive in a leader's life?

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**Key Thought:** Pride is a human path to pursuing \_\_\_\_\_ ;  
humility is God's path to \_\_\_\_\_ it to you.

**Key Thought:** Pride builds \_\_\_\_\_ , but humility builds \_\_\_\_\_ .

**How to Improve Your Humility Quotient:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ more.
2. Admit your \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. Be \_\_\_\_\_ .

**Apply**

Do a "pride audit" on your life. In what areas are you inclined to project arrogance? Share your audit with a trusted friend, and ask him or her to pray *with* you and *for* you. Commit to follow up after a couple of weeks to maintain accountability.

## The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are

**Self-Discipline**

**Team Review:** What did your “pride audit” reveal to you? What steps are you taking to replace pride with humility?

**Assess:** In what areas of your life are you most, and least, disciplined?

**Insights and Ideas**

**D**iscipline is among our least favorite topics. We all want the product discipline delivers without having to pay the price of discipline to get it. A body in shape (the product of discipline) happens when we exercise regularly (the price of discipline). Intimacy with God (the product of discipline) occurs when we pray and study regularly (the price of discipline).

Hebrews 12:11 says, “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” You must consider now what kind of harvest you want later.

When a leader lives a life of discipline, it tends to ripple into other areas of his or her life. Conversely, when a leader lacks discipline, it usually perpetuates problems. Just how important is discipline? Consider these self-discipline truths:

1. *Discipline is the great conqueror.* President Harry S. Truman said, “In reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victory they won was over themselves. Self-discipline with all of them came first.” The hardest person you will ever lead will be yourself. If you can’t conquer you, you’ll never fulfill the vision God has called you to pursue.

2. *Discipline brings focus to talent.* Author H. Jackson Brown Jr. said, “Talent without discipline is like an octopus on roller skates. There’s plenty of movement, but you never know if it’s going to be forward, backwards or sideways.” Some of the most talented people in the world never realized their full potential because their talent never married discipline.

3. *Discipline is the pain that repels regret.* It has often been said that there are two types of pain in life — discipline and regret. You can avoid one, but you can’t avoid both.

Self-discipline isn’t easy, but its fruit is well worth it. If you find yourself undisciplined, don’t become discouraged. Rather than trying to improve everything at once, pick one area on which you can focus. Again, self-discipline has a way of multiplying.

**Reflect and Discuss**

1. Who is the most self-disciplined person you know? What “harvest” has this discipline produced in his or her life?
2. Which self-discipline truth challenged you the most? Why?
3. What would it look like for you to become more disciplined in one of the following areas: relationship with God, family, work, health or personal growth?

**Apply**

Read Hebrews 12:11 again: “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” Write down the kind of harvest you want to see in your life. Next, list the areas of discipline that harvest will require from you. Finally, pick one discipline you need to improve, develop a growth plan, and assimilate it into your schedule.

The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are

## Self-Discipline

**Assess:** In what areas of your life are you most, and least, disciplined?

Hebrews 12:11 says, “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”

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### Three Self-Discipline Truths:

1. Discipline is the great \_\_\_\_\_ .

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It has often been said that there are two types of pain in life — discipline and regret. You can avoid one, but you can’t avoid both.

### Apply

Read Hebrews 12:11 again: “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” Write down the kind of harvest you want to see in your life. Next, list the areas of discipline that harvest will require from you. Finally, pick one discipline you need to improve, develop a growth plan, and assimilate it into your schedule.

## Study 4

## The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are

# Faithfulness

**Team Review:** In which area did you choose to become more self-disciplined? What steps have you taken to cultivate that discipline?

**Assess:** What does faithfulness mean to you?

### Insights and Ideas

**W**hen you hear the word “faithfulness,” your mind may gravitate to a variety of ideas. You might think about your spouse and your commitment to remain faithful in the good times and the tough times. You might interpret faithfulness through the lens of the church and a determination to attend frequently and serve faithfully. But how do you define faithfulness?

In Matthew 25:14–30, we read the Parable of the Bags of Gold. In the story, a master gives three servants a sum of money. To one, he gives five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag. Then the master leaves on a trip for an extended period of time. While he is gone, the servant with five bags puts his money to work and doubles it, as does the servant with two bags. But the servant with one bag digs a hole in the ground and buries his master’s money.

When the master returns, he settles accounts (Matthew 25:19). The master commends the servants who started with five bags and two bags, saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matthew 25:21,23). But the master isn’t pleased with the third servant. He uses words like, “wicked, lazy and worthless” to describe him.

In this context, we see that faithfulness involves much more than showing up on time to church or work. True faithfulness is stewardship. The servants didn’t own the property or the bags of gold; they were simply stewards of what their master entrusted to them. A steward is a manager of someone else’s possessions, handling those possessions according to the owner’s desires.

You will be faithful only when you steward your God-given resources (money, talent, time, opportunities and influence) in a manner that is consistent with the desires of your Heavenly Father. To gauge your own faithfulness, consider these questions:

- Am I growing (or just maintaining) my abilities and skills?
- Am I stewarding the resources of the ministry I lead in a way that honors God?
- Am I managing my influence and opportunities for good?
- If God were to settle accounts with me today, what would He say?

Faithful leaders don’t compare themselves to others; they compare themselves against their God-given potential. They carefully examine what God has entrusted to them, and then evaluate whether they are managing those resources in such a way that their Father would say, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

### Reflect and Discuss

1. If you were to entrust a valuable resource or important job to somebody else, what would cause you to consider that person “faithful”?
2. How does the concept that “faithfulness is stewardship” most challenge you?
3. What part of your potential are you not fully maximizing? What would it look like to steward that area in a way that pleases the Lord?

### Apply

On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being the best), how faithful are you in the following four areas: time, talent, money and influence? What can you do to improve your lowest score?



The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are  
**Faithfulness**

**Assess:** What does faithfulness mean to you?

In Matthew 25:14–30, we read the Parable of the Bags of Gold, also known as the Parable of the Talents.

The master commends the servants who started with five bags and two bags, saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matthew 25:21,23).

**Key Thoughts:**

True faithfulness is \_\_\_\_\_.

A steward is a \_\_\_\_\_ of someone else’s possessions, handling those possessions according to the owner’s \_\_\_\_\_.

You will be faithful only when you steward your God-given resources (money, talent, time, opportunities and influence) in a manner that is consistent with the desires of your Heavenly Father.

**Four Faithfulness Questions:**

- Am I growing (or just maintaining) my abilities and skills?
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- If God were to settle accounts with me today, what would He say?

Faithful leaders don’t compare themselves to \_\_\_\_\_ ; they compare themselves against their God-given \_\_\_\_\_.

**Apply**

On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being the best), how faithful are you in the following four areas: time, talent, money and influence? What can you do to improve your lowest score?

## The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are

# Selflessness

**Team Review:** In what area of your life do you feel most faithful (understanding faithfulness as stewardship)? In what area do you plan to elevate your faithfulness?

**Assess:** Who is the most selfless person you know?

### Insights and Ideas

**T**he leadership that Jesus modeled was characterized by a spirit of selflessness. We see this over and over again in His ministry, and it's a continual theme throughout the pages of Scripture.

Selflessness says a lot about the character of a leader. In fact, some of the previous character qualities we've discussed (such as humility and faithfulness) are bolstered by selflessness. For leaders, selflessness is especially important in three areas:

1. *Motives.* The apostle Paul said, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Philippians 2:3-4). Selfless action never follows selfish ambition. The driving motive of a leader's heart will always pollute or purify the fruit of his or her labor.

2. *Influence.* Jesus made it clear that leaders have influence, but the purpose of that influence is quite different from the self-centered focus our world often touts. No passage captures this better than when Jesus called His disciples together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28). History has taught us this lesson repeatedly: When a leader uses influence to serve personal interests, the people always pay a price.

3. *Resources.* Leaders are entrusted with two types of resources — personal and organizational. Personal resources include time, talent and treasure. Organizational resources include vision, people and money. If a leader does not steward these resources from a posture of selflessness, the fallout will stretch far beyond his or her personal life. When the third servant in the Parable of the Bags of Gold failed to steward his resources wisely, the master said, "So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:28-30).

### Reflect and Discuss

1. How have you seen impure motives negatively impact the character of a leader?
2. How can you (and our team) better steward our influence to serve the people entrusted to our care?
3. What specific resources have been entrusted to you? What would the selfless use of those resources look like personally and organizationally?

### Apply

Take a few minutes to evaluate your "selflessness" in the three areas discussed above — motives, influence and resources. In which area do you need to grow the most? What are two things you can do this week to be more selfless in that area?

The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are

## Selflessness

**Assess:** Who is the most selfless person you know?

The leadership that Jesus modeled was characterized by a spirit of selflessness.

**Three critical areas for selflessness in a leader’s life:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Philippians 2:3–4).

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**Apply**

Take a few minutes to evaluate your “selflessness” in the three areas discussed above — motives, influence and resources. In which area do you need to grow the most? What are two things you can do this week to be more selfless in that area?

## The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are

# Peace

**Team Review:** What is one thing you did this past week to be more selfless as a leader in your motives, influence and resources?

**Assess:** What does peace look like in the life of a leader?

### Insights and Ideas

**L**eadership is a deeply emotional endeavor. Leaders carry not only the normal personal weight that everybody experiences, but also the weight of the people, department, ministry or organization they lead. If a leader doesn't cultivate the emotional health to stand up under the pressure, their vision will diminish in size.

Author Sam Chand observed, "When you interpret your pain as bigger — more important, more threatening, more comprehensive — than your vision, you'll redefine your vision down to the threshold of your pain."

Managing the threshold of your leadership pain is difficult. The larger your ministry grows, the larger you have to grow as a leader. If you don't learn to find peace in the midst of the pain, your character will likely take the hit.

It's not uncommon for leaders to become angry and irritable as leadership pain increases. Ecclesiastes 7:9 warns us, "Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools." It's easy to act foolishly when anger slips in. To cultivate greater peace — and, as a result, greater emotional health — embrace these four strategies:

1. *Cultivate spiritual habits.* We all know that time alone with God is essential, and yet it's the easiest to dismiss from our busy schedules. Let the words of the apostle Paul challenge you: "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being" (Ephesians 3:16). To withstand the external pressures of leadership, you need Spirit-infused strength in your "inner being."

2. *Protect your family time.* Family is also a common casualty in the landscape of leadership. You will find renewal, encouragement and peace when you keep your time with family frequent and alive.

3. *Identify healthy distractions.* Leaders need activities to get their minds detached from the constant demands pulling at them. Healthy distractions — like hobbies, time with friends, family vacations and a regular day off — will deepen your emotional reserves.

4. *Seek leadership coaching.* Regardless of the size of your church or ministry, you need a leadership coach. Having somebody with whom you can share your struggles, and from whom you can glean wisdom, will serve as a pressure release valve to help you stay sane as you navigate your toughest leadership challenges.

### Reflect and Discuss

1. What are some of the most common emotions you feel as a leader?
2. Which of the four strategies have you found most helpful in cultivating a greater sense of peace in your life?
3. Which of the four strategies do you need to employ to improve your emotional health?

### Apply

There are so many pressing needs that can keep our emotional reserves depleted. Carefully evaluate the condition of your emotional health. Where do you need help? What steps do you need to take so that peace can return to your mind, emotions and soul? Do you need to talk to a coach or counselor to get into a healthy zone? Define, and then take, your next step.

## The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are

# Peace

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### **Four strategies to find greater peace (and emotional health):**

1. Cultivate \_\_\_\_\_ habits.

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being” (Ephesians 3:16).

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Leaders need activities to get their minds detached from the constant demands pulling at them.

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### **Apply**

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## The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are

### Love

**Team Review:** What are you doing to cultivate a greater sense of peace and to increase your emotional reserves?

**Assess:** What difference does love make in leadership?

#### Insights and Ideas

**P**eople often view love and leadership as being on opposite sides of the spectrum. Love usually appears soft and gentle, while leadership seems rigid and firm. Love is compassionate, while leadership is confronting. Love is heartfelt, while leadership can be heartless. Interestingly, Scripture paints a different picture.

The “love chapter” in 1 Corinthians describes an amazing picture of love. Paul writes, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:4–8).

What we often forget is that this chapter appears in the midst of Paul’s instructions on spiritual gifts. In fact, the four verses immediately preceding this chapter say, “And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:28–31).

Many of the gifts to the Church are expressions of leadership — apostle, prophet, teacher. Without love, these gifts are like a “clanging cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1). Said another way, leadership without love languishes in the basement of insignificance.

In leadership circles, we often think of strength, power or influence, but George Washington Carver provides a different perspective. He said, “Be kind to others. How far you go in life depends upon your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because someday in your life, you will have been all of these.”

These words provide great perspective. You may be a strong leader today, but one day you will be weak in body. You may be a hard-charging, goal-oriented, activist leader today, but one day you, too, will be in need of compassion and sympathy. Be the kind of person (and the kind of leader) you will one day need someone to be to you.

#### Reflect and Discuss

1. When was a time in your life that a leader showed you unconditional love?
2. What would it look like to be a 1 Corinthians 13 leader in our present day?
3. What are some practical ways you can show love to the people you lead?

#### Apply

Love is personal. Author Eric Hoffer once said, “It is easier to love humanity as a whole than to love one’s neighbor.” If you want to be a loving leader, you have to make it a personal matter. Take a few minutes to read and reflect on 1 Corinthians 13. Which description of love sounds least like you? How can you infuse that quality into your life so that you are a more loving leader?

## The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are

### Love

**Assess:** What difference does love make in leadership?

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:4–8).

“And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:28–31).

**Key Thought:** \_\_\_\_\_ without \_\_\_\_\_ languishes in the basement of insignificance.

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**Key Thought:** Be the kind of \_\_\_\_\_ (and the kind of leader) you will one day need someone to be to \_\_\_\_\_.

### Apply

Love is personal. Author Eric Hoffer once said, “It is easier to love humanity as a whole than to love one’s neighbor.” If you want to be a loving leader, you have to make it a \_\_\_\_\_ matter. Take a few minutes to read and reflect on 1 Corinthians 13. Which description of love sounds least like you? How can you infuse that quality into your life so that you are a more loving leader?



## The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are

# Courage

**Team Review:** Which description of love from 1 Corinthians 13 did you discover you need to infuse into your leadership?

**Assess:** When are you most courageous as a leader?

### Insights and Ideas

**E**ach of the qualities we've discussed so far are like layers to character. The more layers you have, the greater the depth of your character. But there is one quality that leads the way in a unique dimension when it comes to the development of our character — courage. Winston Churchill once said, "Courage is the first of all human qualities because it is the one which guarantees all the others."

The truth is, it requires courage to be a person of integrity when everybody else is cutting corners. It takes courage to be faithful when everyone else is slacking off. It takes courage to be selfless when it would be far easier to do what would personally benefit you the most. Developing character is hard work, but courage opens the door to let the other character qualities into your life.

In Joshua 1:9, God said to Joshua, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." This verse offers three insights into courage.

1. *Courage is a command.* God didn't suggest to Joshua that he be courageous. Why? Because too much was at stake. The people were on the edge of the Promised Land, and they had already missed once. Joshua's need for courage was more than a personal issue; it affected millions of people. When we lack the character quality of courage, disobedience usually follows.

2. *Don't give authority to fear.* God said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." Too often we let fear have unnecessary authority in our lives. When that happens, fear dictates our response to the voice and leadership of the Holy Spirit.

3. *God is with you.* The reason we can be courageous isn't because of who we are, but because of who God is. God is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. His knowledge, presence and power are vast. We can be courageous because God, in all of His greatness, is with us. We are not alone.

As leaders, we cannot run to the path of least resistance. The most significant things you will ever accomplish will require the greatest courage. Like Joshua, be strong and courageous, and let that courage expand the other dimensions of your character, too.

### Reflect and Discuss

1. How have you seen courage deepen other areas of your character?
2. What other part of your character would grow the most if you chose to be courageous?
3. How does Joshua's story inspire you to be courageous?

### Apply

Ask yourself three questions to help you apply today's lesson to your life:

- What is my greatest fear at this moment in my life?
- What is at stake if I do not move past this fear?
- What's the first step I need to take to overcome this fear?

Take a few minutes to pray and commit to the Lord your decision to move forward in the face of fear. Thank Him for His presence as you take this step.



The Character of a Leader: 8 Qualities Essential to Who You Are

## Courage

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### Three Insights on Courage:

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