

# Keys to Successful Leadership – Part 1

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Leadership is a collection of activities by which we accomplish tasks, objectives and goals to fulfill the mission of our organizations. Leaders must affect others to accomplish anything. Who we are, as leaders and how we behave have greater impact on the people we lead rather than what we say. In the following paragraphs, I will share with you how the Bible gives attitudinal and behavioral parameters for those important 50+ hours a week during which, you are in contact with your employees.

The Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew, is a powerful message from Jesus on lifestyle and behavior. Thomas Aquinas considered the messages from the Sermon on the Mount as wise counsel and referred to it as the highest standard of morality and as the perfect measure of the Christian life. Most commentaries I read refer to The Sermon on the Mount as the basis for ethical behavior.

Contained within the Sermon on the Mount are the Beatitudes. They are comprised of the ten verses from Matthew 5:3-12. These ten verses contain eight statements of counsel. Popular translations of the Bible separate the Beatitudes into verses. However, the original Greek shows them as one continuous flowing thought. This is important, for today's leaders must take the Beatitudes as a whole and not as an *a la carte* menu. The people whom we lead see our attitudes, ethics and beliefs in total. When you read the Beatitudes, read them as one thought, inseparable, with the view of timeless application.

Matthew 5:3-12

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

"Poor in spirit" is a state opposite of "rich in pride." What a paradox! Leaders always look up to the "king of the hill" who is full of bravado and proud of his accomplishments. This Beatitude instructs you to avoid that pride and see yourself as being empty. An empty cup can hold much, but a full cup can receive nothing more. A full cup must live on what it already contains, nothing more.

The Greek words better translate to "Blessed are you poor," (Baker, 1963, p 30) which connotes someone who knows he is poor. This is an excellent definition for one who is humble. Scripture is replete with references to the need to be, and remain, humble.

Consider the positive characteristic of the leader to be humble and contrite of spirit regarding his employees. The leader who is poor of spirit knows that his employees are intelligent people who, many times, know more of the details of the job-tasks performed and thus, have worthwhile advice to give. This is a key premise of total quality management – to teach the employees how to solve problems, develop solutions, and then trust them to do the work. A humble leader does not lord it over his employees and force answers and solutions upon them.

A humble leader is teachable. The cocky know-it-all leader is so full of himself that there is no room for God's kingdom in his daily life. God looks for the humble to fill them with His kingdom. Can you think of leaders who mentored potential up-and-coming junior leaders? Only the poor in spirit can receive teaching. Why should God spend time training the untrainable? The same is true for leaders mentoring employees.

A humble leader shows respect to all, whether to superiors or subordinates. This concept of respect is important to consider. Would you rather work for someone who treats you with respect or treats you as dirt to be walked upon? The answer is obvious. We all look forward to working with leaders/bosses who are kind, considerate and look upon us as co-workers rather than slaves to abuse.

Humbleness of spirit is important in reaching the mission of the organization. A humble leader places the goals of the organization above his own goals. The haughty leader looks for how the organization can help him achieve his own goals.

This humbleness does not mean poor in finances or ability. The essence of excellent customer service is the subjugation of our own interest, feelings and self-aggrandizement to the needs, wants, and desires of our clients. Blanchard, in his book Raving Fans, consistently shows leaders who create "raving fans" in customers and employees by placing their own interests behind the interests of the clients and employees. Sometimes it feels like you are losing when you yield to another. The paradox of Jesus' teaching is that, although you feel like you lose, you win. Blanchard's case studies describe people whose companies do well and improve daily. Clients flock to companies that delight them. Employees gravitate to humble leaders who treat them well.

Humbleness does not mean avoiding the limelight. A great actor goes on stage to serve his customers and delight his audience. He places his entire being into the performance. He feels satisfied if he does his best. If the audience feels satisfied enough to applaud, so much the better. If the audience gives a standing ovation, he accepts it warmly and appreciatively and the next morning continues with rehearsal to ensure that he delights the next client. The applause is icing on the cake and is akin to the saying: "money follows ministry." If the actor sets out only to gain a standing ovation, he serves himself rather than others. Success is doubtful in this situation. Thus, we face the paradox again. Try not to achieve, but to serve and delight, and success will follow; try to succeed for selfish gain and fail.

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How much more could a humble leader accomplish with eight employees working hard to please him, compared to a haughty leader with eight employees who care less if the leader lived or died? Blessed is the leader who is poor in spirit, for his shall be the kingdom of heaven.

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Editor's Note:

In this new series of articles, based upon Winston's book, "Be A Leader for God's Sake," we will examine Biblical concepts for successful leadership. These excerpts will provide practical insight to allow you to immediately incorporate each concept into your current situation. We encourage you to put these concepts to the test! Be sure to return for part II in our next issue where we will examine the importance of showing genuine care and concern toward your employees.