THE 12 DISTINCTIVE ATTRIBUTES OF TRUE TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS

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The Need for Transformational Leadership
In his book “The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership”, the first law author John Maxwell describes is “The Law of the Lid”. At its essence that law says the organization you lead is only as good as your own leadership ability. If you want to have a better organization, become a better leader. Simple enough to understand.

Dr. Maxwell goes on to make a profound point in his book by saying “everything rises and falls on leadership”. When he says “everything”, he means everything... including families, churches, schools, businesses, governments, and nations. The success of every organization is dependent upon its leadership. The success of your business depends on your ability to lead it.

If you need evidence to prove this point, simply open your Bible and read the Old Testament. A cursory scanning of the historic books of Joshua through Esther will show you how Israel thrived during times of great leadership, and suffered and finally fell under abysmal leadership. If you really want a graphic depiction of the tragic consequences of Israel’s poor leadership, read chapter 52 of Jeremiah. Not a pretty picture. Contrast that with the prosperity Israel knew during the reign of a great leader, King David. The Bible clearly shows us that we need strong, competent, godly leadership in order to thrive, and Dr. Maxwell drew those points out in his popular book.

I want to take this a step further and say that any significant, lasting positive change comes not just from good leadership, but rather from transformational leadership. If you consider some of the major advancements in the world such as manned flight, the Protestant Reformation, disease preventing vaccines, widespread utilization of automobiles, defeat of ruthless dictators, and dramatic changes in communication technology, they are all results of transformational leadership.

Without transformational leadership individuals, families, businesses, schools, and all elements of society stagnate. We grow complacent, dull, set in our ways, and do not achieve our potential.

Fortunately the natural state of a Christian is to be transforming. Chapter 5 of 2nd Corinthians reminds us that we have been transformed into a new creation. As followers of the most transformative leader who ever lived we are commanded to keep that transformation going, both within ourselves as well as with those whom we influence.

What Is Transformational Leadership
According to a Wikipedia definition, transformational leadership “enhances the motivation, morale, and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms. These include connecting the follower’s sense of identity and self to the project and the collective identity of the organization; being a role model for followers that inspires them and makes them interested; challenging followers to take greater
ownership for their work, and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers, so the leader can align followers with tasks that enhance their performance”.

Businessdictionary.com defines transformational leadership more concisely as “a style of leadership in which the leader identifies the needed change, creates a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executes the change with the commitment of the members of the group”.

These definitions give us a good idea of what transformational leadership is, but the real impact is in what transformational leadership does. Transformational leaders help people reach their God-given potential so they can make the most of their lives. Transformational leadership changes people, families, businesses, and societies for the better, often dramatically. The new and improved values and results from transformational leadership can have profound, life changing effects as people think, behave, work, and live differently.

Where Are Transformational Leaders Needed
There is a one word answer to the question of where transformational leaders are needed...everywhere! If significant positive change can result from transformational leadership, why wouldn’t we want it everywhere, including families, businesses, churches, government, hospitals, universities, and schools?

For your business to have an impact for the gospel you need to be more than a good leader. You need to be transformational. You need to know what your business stands for, believe in it, not waiver from it, and inspire others to help you.

There is also a need for you to be a transformational leader in your home right now, today. This is perhaps the greatest area of neglect for entrepreneurial types like us. We are even more responsible for our families than our businesses, although society seems to have that reversed. Without our transformational leadership our kids and marriages will be status quo, just like the world. Deuteronomy 6 talks about teaching our kids to love the Lord and obey His commands, and First Peter chapter 3 tells us how to have transformational marriages. God expects us to take these responsibilities seriously as we fulfill our roles as transformational moms and dads, aunts and uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers.

In short, every home in every city or town on every continent needs transformational leadership. It is the only way a society can advance and prosper. Everything suffers without it, but everything benefits with it.
Examples of Transformational Leaders in the Bible
There are abundant examples of transformational leaders in the Bible. The list below shows some of those key figures, with Jesus of course being the greatest of all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Summary of Achievements</th>
<th>Background</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moses</td>
<td>Led Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land</td>
<td>Born into captivity, raised in royalty, banished to wilderness, chosen by God, reluctant leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>Led Israel to military victory</td>
<td>Prophetess and judge over Israel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joshua</td>
<td>Led Israel into the Promised Land and conquered 31 kings</td>
<td>Courageous assistant to Moses; chosen by God to become Israel’s commander; suffered periods of great discouragement; didn’t always follow directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Conquered Israel’s enemies and led nation to prosperity</td>
<td>Started as shepherd of humble means; became warrior, king; man after God’s own heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esther</td>
<td>Saved Israel from genocide</td>
<td>Israeli orphan in captivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nehemiah</td>
<td>Restored Israel as a God-fearing culture</td>
<td>Cupbearer to king, grieved for his people, became visionary leader &amp; governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>Savior of the world; God incarnate</td>
<td>Left Heaven, became carpenter’s son, martyred; rose from the dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Early church leader; first to bring salvation to Gentiles</td>
<td>Fisherman, impulsive, became eloquent preacher, martyred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>Led first widespread missionary movements; helped Christianity spread into Asia and Europe</td>
<td>Ruling class, Roman citizen, persecutor of church, became preacher, writer, missionary, martyred</td>
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With the exception of the Apostle Paul, all of these leaders had humble beginnings (excluding Jesus’ pre-incarnate life), and most of the so-called leaders of the day would never have chosen any of them to be transformational leaders. Most were
born and raised in humble circumstances, and those who knew them had difficulty accepting them outside their normal roles. For example, David’s brothers struggled to envision him beyond his youthful experience as a shepherd, and the people from Jesus’ home town could not comprehend him as the Messiah since they only saw him as the boy who grew up in their midst.

With the exception of Jesus, none of these men set out to be transformational leaders. In fact, some actually resisted their leadership roles, most notably Moses. Nevertheless, each had a calling from God as well as passionate zeal for Him and His people. Let’s take a deeper look at some of the key distinctive attributes of these transformational leaders.

**Distinctive Attributes of Transformational Leaders**

1. **They were common people chosen by God.**
   - Every one of these leaders came from fairly ordinary stock. Paul was a little out of the norm in terms of his membership in the Jewish ruling class, and Moses had a royal upbringing until he fled to the wilderness. Their calling into leadership shows that people of all backgrounds can be transformational leaders.

   - With the exception of Nehemiah, each leader was called to his position directly by God or one of His prophets. I’ve always marveled at Nehemiah because his call by the Holy Spirit was inaudible, much like our experience today. When God wants us to perform a leadership task He makes it clear to us one way or another.

2. **Each leader had an enormous vision that was focused on bettering their people and drawing them closer to God.**
   - They believed so strongly in their visions that they were willing to make great sacrifices to achieve them, even taking on fierce opposition, sometimes to the point of death.

   - Their visions stemmed from a lack of contentment with the status quo, and a realization that they could help people live much more rewarding and fulfilling lives. They were seeking quantum improvements in the lives of people as well as the societies in which they lived.

3. **They were always with people, attending to specific individual needs. They saw caring for individuals as a primary means for fulfilling their vision.**
   - Notice in the gospels how much time Jesus spent mingling with people, actively seeking to be among them. He took time to listen to their concerns, heal them, and speak reassuringly to them. Jesus made time for children, and even made sure large crowds of people had enough to eat.
After Jesus’ ascension his apostles behaved similarly. Both Peter and Paul were constantly among people in the synagogues, marketplaces, and many other every day locations.

While all of these leaders had bigger than life visions, they did not allow their visions to remove them from ordinary people. Rather than seclude themselves within an ivory tower existence, they knew the achievement of their incredible visions would come from showing love, compassion, and meeting the needs of individuals.

4. **They were team builders and teachers. Their visions were so huge that they knew they would need to develop other leaders who could move their vision forward.**
   - Developing people by teaching, modeling, delegating, and giving authority were foremost on the minds of these leaders. Look no further than Jesus’ admonition to go into the world and make disciples. He sent the seventy out early in his ministry, while they knew very little and had almost no experience. Obviously Jesus believed in on the job training.
   - Similarly, David had his Mighty Men on whom he relied to lead his government and military. The apostles appointed deacons and elders to extend the work of the church. Moses appointed judges to help him rule over Israel.
   - Relationship building was a key component of their leadership development strategy. While the vision and message they had was enormously compelling, the personal relationships each leader developed with his mentees created powerful leaders who zealously moved the core leader’s message forward.
   - The lone exception to this seems to have been Nehemiah, who created strong followers but does not appear to have developed strong leaders to replace him.

5. **They viewed their visions a so critical that they left nothing to chance.**
   - They were tough with people when they needed to be, particularly with people who opposed them.
   - They did not let their followers deviate from the vision. If they did, the consequences were severe. As an example, Nehemiah severely reprimanded and threatened wealthy Israelites for oppressing their poor countrymen. Likewise, Jesus sternly condemned the Pharisees, the ruling religious leaders of his day.
They chose leaders to succeed them, and spent tremendous amounts of time developing them. They knew the propagation of their mission required them to primarily be in the business of people and leadership development.

While they did not let their followers stray from their visions, they did allow them the flexibility of moving the vision forward with their own gifts and talents.

6. **They thought huge thoughts.**
   - Though they did not think of themselves as particularly powerful people, the realization that God could and would do mighty works through them spurred them on to great achievements.
   - They wanted to be constantly growing and moving forward as individuals and leaders. They focused on acquiring wisdom in order to become more useful and effective.

7. **They believed in the power of prayer and depended upon it for success.**
   - Some of the greatest prayers in the Bible came from King David through the psalms he wrote.
   - Nehemiah asked for God’s direction regularly.
   - Jesus himself frequently retreated to solitary places and prayed.
   - This reliance on prayer was a strong acknowledgment of their need to be connected to God as well as their dependence on Him for direction and power.

8. **They lived and modeled their message.**
   - They didn’t expect to be treated any differently than anyone else, and they didn’t expect anyone else to do anything they wouldn’t do. They walked their talk.
   - They expected themselves to be constantly growing and transforming.

9. **They were humble.**
   - They did not put themselves above anyone else, and did not seek their own glory.
   - When they succeeded, which was often, they gave glory to God.
The most humble of all was Jesus, who also happened to be the greatest of all. Philippians 2 tells how he humbled himself by leaving heaven on behalf of those whom he would save.

10. They were willing to forgive wrongs done against them.
   • With the exception of Jesus, who led a sinless life, each leader realized he had been forgiven much by God, and was therefore obligated to forgive others.

   • Of course Jesus exemplified forgiveness, and he told Peter that seventy times seven was the appropriate number of times to forgive people. Jesus used this example to illustrate that there is no upper limit on how many times we should forgive people who wrong us.

11. They took risks in order to fulfill their visions and trusted God’s promises to grant them success.
   • Nehemiah was extremely fearful when he made his presentation to the king. He could have been executed.

   • Moses could have been executed upon his return to Egypt, where he confronted Pharoah, the most powerful leader in the Middle East.

   • Joshua and David went to war against powerful enemies on numerous occasions.

   • Paul the Apostle often had his life on the line when he would preach the gospel in various cities.

12. They went through periods of intense preparation before becoming leaders.
   • Moses spent 40 years tending sheep before being called.
   • David spent many years tending sheep.
   • How many thousands of cups of wine did Nehemiah serve before gaining his calling? Clearly he also had spent many years in scripture study and prayer.
   • Jesus spent many years under his parent’s authority as well as learning in the synagogues.
   • Peter spent three years under Jesus.
   • Paul spent many years studying Jewish law under Gamaliel before learning directly from Jesus.

The Undeniable Mandate for Christians to be Transformational Leaders
If you are a Christian you are called to be a transformational leader. However, that doesn’t mean you must be a Christian to be this type of leader. There are numerous examples of remarkable non-Christian leaders past and present. In addressing Christians here I simply want to point out that the Bible unequivocally demands you to become a transformational leader. Let’s explore that.
As Christians we are already transformed people, and have continuous opportunities to act as transformational leaders. Colossians 1:13 says we have been conveyed, or transferred, from the power of darkness into the kingdom of Christ. Verses 21-22 say we were once enemies but are now reconciled in Christ, holy and blameless in the sight of God. That’s real transformation.

A major component of our transformation is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8 lets us know the Spirit assures us of our position in the kingdom of Christ, and also shows how the Spirit leads us on the path of transformation, from justification through glorification.

**Primary Characteristics of Transformation**

In Romans 12 the Apostle Paul calls Christians to ongoing transformation, and begins to show us what this transformation looks like.

In that chapter Paul starts by telling us to live our lives as sacrifices to Christ, to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and to make sure we do not conform to the standards and practices of the world.

What do you think that means? Transformation has to result in something, right? Since we think differently we should also act differently. We have a whole new set of values in every aspect of our lives, and we’re supposed to use them to execute God’s will.

What does having your mind renewed mean to you? To me it indicates the need for continuous learning, growth, and transformation. In a spiritual sense it means I have to work on gaining a better understanding of Christ and improving at living out my faith. From a business perspective it pushes me to constantly embrace new technologies as well as improve all aspects of my business skillset.

Interestingly, one of the first stops on our path of transformation is what Paul calls “a sober assessment” of ourselves. Paul says not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought, but rather to have sound judgment regarding ourselves according to the degree of faith God has given us. Paul knows the root cause of malice among people is pride and arrogance, so here he is calling us to reasonably assess the gifts God has given us within the context of the body of Christ, and to not think of our own abilities as better than anyone else’s.

Paul goes on to remind us that all Christians are part of the body of Christ, and as such all have useful skills and abilities. It is clear that Paul is much more concerned with the zealous application of our abilities than he is with the actual abilities themselves. In other words, his message is, “Look, the Lord has given you specific skills and abilities. I don’t necessarily know what your particular gifts are, but I’m sure they are needed within the body of Christ. Therefore I want you to work hard
at assessing what they are, and use them with gusto in a way that complements the folks around you”.

As Paul works his way through Romans 12 he gives us the following list of characteristics that should be expressions of our ongoing transformation:

- Loving each other, acting kindly, giving preference to each other;
- Being fervent and diligent in our service to God, steadfast in prayer, hopeful;
- Patient, hospitable, caring for the poor and needy;
- Forgiving our enemies, overcoming evil with good, not taking vengeance;
- Being of the same mind toward one another;
- Not setting our minds on lofty things but being humble;
- Living peacefully with all people.

Besides Romans 12 there are numerous other scripture passages that point to our need to become transformational leaders. One of them is in Philippians chapter 2, which says we are to shine as lights in the world in a crooked and perverse generation. That chapter also gives us the encouraging thought that God is working in us to bring about the transformation He’s seeking in us. He doesn’t just leave us alone, but once again works in us through His Holy Spirit.

A few more great examples of what transformation looks like come from Galatians, where Paul tells us our lives should be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit, which are:

- Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self control;

In Galatians 6 Paul adds to those by telling us to:

- Bear one another’s burdens, be generous, do good deeds, and not grow weary in doing good.

**Application for Business Leaders**

Let’s face it, neither you nor I are Jesus, and our vision doesn’t give eternal life. Neither are most of us like Peter, Paul, Nehemiah, David, or any of the other leaders we’ve discussed whose very lives were endangered by carrying their visions forward. However, what we stand for and how we carry it out can have great impact on those whose paths we cross.

For example, I never met Steve Jobs, but here I sit in my office typing on a wonderful Apple desktop computer his company made, with my Apple iPhone next to me, and my Apple laptop, iPad, and iPod not far away. They are all elegant and extraordinary pieces of equipment that have enabled me to work, learn, and communicate globally. Without the transformational leadership of Steve Jobs I would not have such a high level of productivity.
Another example is Olive Garden. Every time I go there with my family the experience is predictably excellent. The waiters and waitresses are friendly, professional, and very well trained; and the food is always good. I always end up commenting to my son about the high level of service and food quality. Someone in that organization is a transformational leader in order for it to perform at such a consistently high level, and their leadership results in a wonderful time for my family and many others.

Neither one of those two organizations ever tells me anything about Jesus, and I don’t care. I’m looking for a great product, service, or experience, not a religious epiphany. However, if they did have a Christian message for me somewhere along the way, or a charitable cause they wanted me to support, I’d be willing to listen because of the excellent services I get from them. The same goes for you and me. If we want to have businesses that stand for Christ they need to provide excellent services or no one is going to listen.

Here are some other points of application worthy of your consideration:

• **Get Over Your Own Sense of Smallness:** Sometimes I’m overwhelmed by the fact that there are billions of people in the world and I’m just one guy in Arkansas. I live in a normal American house in a normal American neighborhood in a normal American city. I have bills to pay, mouths to feed, and kids to raise. I let the dog out to do his business, pull weeds from the flower beds, go to the drug store to get medicine, and on and on. Normal, normal, normal. How can average people like you or me be transformational leaders in such a vast world?

To answer that question let’s consider Moses and David. Moses left his royal life in Egypt when he was forty and spent the next forty years herding livestock in the wilderness. He may well have had regrets and dismay over his seemingly mundane life until God called him to lead Israel. Likewise, David may have at times wondered if his life would ever amount to more than being a little-known shepherd. History shows us that God used these two men, both with humble lives, to impact generations of people far beyond their lifetimes.

Another illustration of this principle comes from the book of Acts. There we read of a Thessalonian mob accusing the apostles and other disciples, who were common people and relatively few in number, of turning the world upside down. And indeed they did, didn’t they?

With these examples in mind, surely it is possible for a “normal guy” in Arkansas or anywhere else in the world to become a transformational leader. God chooses young, old, rich, poor, educated and uneducated, and all races and nationalities to lead transformations.
So can we get over our humble stations in life, or our sense of powerlessness to influence billions of people? As we learned from the biblical leaders, we don't need to think about the billions, we need to think of individuals and their needs.

Above all, let's keep in mind what the Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 3, that God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to His power at work in us.

- **Have Double Vision:** With the thought of excellence in mind, I suggest you need to have double vision. That means having a vision for your business as well as how to use it as a ministry. As an example, Nehemiah envisioned the physical rebuilding of the walls and houses of Jerusalem, but his vision for ministry was that the rebuilding process would lead to a renewal of the culture. However, the ministry vision would not have been possible without the completion of the construction project.

Your vision for your business doesn’t need to be solving the world’s hunger problem. It can be simple. For example, a restaurant owner might envision owning three stores that delight middle class families with great food, a cozy setting, and friendly staff. A physical therapist may envision an enterprise that enhances people’s lives by helping them regain their mobility in an encouraging atmosphere that minimizes pain.

I hope you get the picture. You don’t have to solve the world’s problems with your business, but you do need a vision that leads you to become great at what you do. That's what lets you put your vision for ministry in place.

In his excellent book “The Missional Entrepreneur”, author Mark Russell cites studies done in Thailand of businesses started by missionaries. The ones with the greatest ministry impact were run with excellence, created cultures yielding high employee retention, and engaged their communities. In contrast, businesses run primarily as missionary endeavors rather than authentic businesses had very little ministry impact.

Therefore, the gateway to using your business as a ministry is creating a profitable business with excellent products and services, a culture that values and elevates people, and community engagement. With that firm foundation in place you can use your business as an effective ministry.

An example is Barnhart Crane and Rigging in Memphis, TN, USA. Starting with humble beginnings, the two Blanchard brothers have built their company into a worldwide leader in moving heavy objects. They dedicated their business to God from the very beginning, and their success has allowed them to minister to the needs of their own employees as well as support other ministries in the United
States and abroad. They would not have been able to achieve their desired ministry impact if they had not first created an outstanding business.

**Your Vision Must Stand the Test of Time:** In other words, we know business is moving fast. Technologies come and go, and the need for different skillsets evolves. Customer expectations increase. Competitors get better. Those are all given in the world of business. Your vision has to transcend all of those dynamics while simultaneously using them to move forward.

Like we said previously, each of the transformational biblical leaders had big thoughts, thoughts that were much larger than themselves, and their visions were far beyond whatever new technology was in vogue. That doesn’t mean we don’t actively engage innovation and increasing customer expectations. Just the opposite. We want to be setting the table, leading in our respective competitive space.

However, we don’t want any trend to define our vision. We want to use trends and technologies to bring our vision to fruition. For example, social media allowed the vision of the gospel to spread even more easily, but it did not change the vision of the gospel. Staying with the social media example, its goal is to help people communicate easier and make the world smaller. Social media will adopt new technology platforms as they come along, but the fundamental vision of social media will not change. This is what I mean by having a vision that can stand the test of time.

**Be Unyielding With Your Vision:** We’ve discussed the fact that you’re really in the people development business, just as God has always been. However, it’s development with a purpose, with a vision, not development for its own sake.

Once you have your vision in place, whether you conceive it alone or with other like-minded individuals, be unyielding with it. This can mean doing some tough things, like letting people go who do not support your vision, even if they are talented employees. Nothing will sabotage your progress more than having people on your ship who don’t support your vision.

I know from first-hand experience those kinds of people are debilitating to your company. You will invest too much time thinking and worrying about them, and correcting their behaviors. You have to get rid of them. I once attended a leadership seminar where Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, said high performers who weren’t good cultural fits were the most dangerous types of employees. The biblical leaders we examined earlier were quick to get people who disagreed with their mission off their bus, and you need to embrace this too.

You may have a friendship with an employee, or you may feel sorry for an associate because she has a difficult personal problem, but if they are not
actively embracing your vision you absolutely have to let them go or be content with falling short of your goals. I hope I have made myself abundantly clear on this point. If I could come to your office and counsel you personally on this issue I would. That’s how strongly I feel about it, and how strongly I am urging you to abide by it.

Listen, if Martin Luther King, Jr. had compromised on his vision for civil rights, America would be in a worse place today. If Nelson Mandela had compromised in his vision to end apartheid, South Africa might not have a racially mixed government now. If English Parlamentarian William Wilberforce had compromised in his vision to end the slave trade in the United Kingdom, that nation would be suffering today.

Let me warn you by saying you will encounter resistance, especially if you are truly trying to build a God-honoring business. All the leaders we studied experienced it, and more often than not it was life-threatening. In the instances of Nehemiah, Jesus, and Peter, they were asked to compromise their vision, and in each case they refused and exposed themselves to danger.

At the Christian preschool my wife and I operated we encountered resistance on numerous occasions, but we didn’t compromise our vision even under tremendous stress.

I say it again, don’t compromise your vision, and don’t let anyone get in your way. Nurture and support the people who embrace your vision, and quickly dismiss the ones that don’t.

• **Keep Growing and Transforming:** Each transformational biblical leader was committed to an ongoing relationship with God, as well as growing in wisdom. Jesus said we can’t do anything without him, and the writer of Hebrews chastised the Hebrew Christians for not growing. Clearly a commitment to spiritual, personal, and professional growth is what God expects from transformational leaders.

Keep in mind that each leader we studied was mentored in some fashion. Likewise, you cannot hope to achieve the growth you need without being mentored yourself. I have different mentors, both formal and informal. Mine include a business coach, the faculty of the John Maxwell Team, my pastor, my wife, and many other entrepreneurial friends from who I gain wisdom. In addition, I am mentored by the many authors whose books I read.

Build a strong support group of wise, caring individuals around you who can strengthen and sharpen you, and help you keep growing. Build the habit of reading good books by experienced authors.
Since we’re talking about growth and transformation, we would be negligent if we didn’t mention the role of humility. We spoke of humility earlier in this text, and I wanted to refer you to a simple humility quiz from Dr. John Maxwell’s book, “Sometimes You Win, Sometimes You Learn”. Dr. Maxwell asks the following questions in order to help us discern our level of humility:

- Do you tend to believe you now it all?
- Do you tend to think you should be in charge?
- Do you sometimes believe the rules don’t apply to you?
- Do you believe you shouldn’t fail?
- Do you tend to believe you get things done all by yourself?
- Do you believe you are better than others with less talent or status?
- Do you think you are as important as or more important than the organization?

I have to confess my guilt on some of those, and there is still a lot of work to do. Keep in mind that humility was a key trait of each biblical leader we studied, and is a universally admired quality. Make it one of your key attributes.

- **Get to Know People, Care for Them, and Be Accessible:** In the life of your business your employees and customers will have hardships, tragedies, and times when they need support and encouragement. Be there for them, just like the biblical leaders were there for people. Don’t be there just so you can achieve your business goals, but be there because you genuinely care about those people.

How hard this is to do when there are deadlines, bills to pay, and numerous other pressures. But if the Savior of the world had time for people, shouldn’t you and I?

In my leadership roles I have found it beneficial for business and morale when I have taken time to understand the role of each person in my company, and showed an interest in the details, complexities, and nuances of their jobs. It gave me ideas of how to challenge people to improve, and they always appreciated the fact that I considered them important enough to spend time with.

Doesn’t every American alive in 2001 remember President George W. Bush with his megaphone at Ground Zero telling us all that our enemies would soon hear from us? What tremendous comfort and compassion he showed the victims of the 9/11 attacks, and the entire nation was moved by his authentic care for those who suffered in that tragedy.

Be assured that when you genuinely care for people, they will give you all they have. I once met a woman at a Marriott hotel serving breakfast. She had been there 24 years, and when I asked her why she had stayed there so long she told
me, “Mr. Marriott and his son take care of their people”. Do your employees say that about you?

- **Nurture and Trust Your Leadership Team:** In John Maxwell’s “21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership”, he discusses the importance of your inner circle. Your inner circle isn’t necessarily the same as your leadership team, but for your vision to progress you had better develop close, trusting relationships with your management team. None of the biblical leaders we studied did it by themselves, and neither can you.

Think of the amount of time Jesus spent with his disciples. Instead of giving them a one-time leadership training program, he nurtured them continually and gave them assignments as part of the process. He was truly a believer in on the job training.

In Luke 9 Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to preach and heal the sick. They went out and had a big impact in their surrounding region, actually performing miracles and seeing God act in powerful ways. After debriefing with Jesus upon their return, he immediately stretched their faith and learning by asking them how to feed the hungry crowd of 5,000 people they had been teaching. Despite having been eyewitnesses to Jesus’ miracles and performing their own, they were still trapped in their old mentality. As evidence that they were not yet fully developed in their thinking, their collective answer to Jesus was the equivalent of, “Huh? We can’t do that.”

Similarly, you are going to have to nurture your leadership team. They are going to do some great things, and then they are going to frustrate you because they won’t have progressed as fully as you would have expected. As long as they are earnest in their desire to learn, grow, take your company’s vision forward, and are showing progress, be patient and persistent in your continued development efforts.

People that share your vision and who are eager to grow and improve are a joy to work with. The time you give to them will reap bountiful rewards in many ways. You won’t expect perfection from them, just like Jesus didn’t with his disciples. But look how his training and nurturing of his inner circle affected the history of the world.

In the Great Commission Jesus instructed his followers to teach and make disciples. Why then would we ever think that doing these same things wasn’t a primary part of our responsibilities?

- **Build Your People, Build Your Team, But Don’t Abdicate Your Authority:** I hate management by consensus because it leads to indecisiveness and inaction. I can’t stand it. There, I said it, and I am unapologetic about it. I have been in too
many organizations where the owner or CEO abdicated authority to a committee which wouldn’t make a decision. “Give me more information.” “Go ask so and so what they think.” “We might be able to put that on hold.” For crying out loud, if you’re in charge, make a decision and don’t put up with any whining.

You want your people to enjoy working for you, and you want them to grow and prosper. The same goes with your management team. However, you can’t let the inmates run the asylum until you’re ready to move on or God calls you to something else.

What I mean by that is your people can usurp your authority and undermine your business if you are not careful. If you are a nice, caring person who is trying to create a great work environment while delegating authority and helping people develop to their fullest, sometimes people will take advantage of you. I know because it has happened to me. People get accustomed to having some authority, and if you don’t draw careful boundaries, they can put themselves on a par with you in terms of decision-making. When this happens it can lead to disaster. Trust me.

Looking at Jesus, the Apostles, Moses, or any of the other leaders in our study, they were not timid in exercising their authority when they needed to. They weren’t always heavy-handed, but there was never any doubt as to who was in charge. Yes, they taught, delegated, and encouraged their followers to use their gifts and creativity within the context of the big vision, but they never abdicated their authority, and you shouldn’t either.

God gave you the vision, and He put you in charge. You are responsible for the success or failure of your business. You owe it to yourself and your people to be clear and open with them about when you will and won’t intervene and exercise your authority. You also need to be clear about how you expect them to respond when you do make a decision. You can tell them that most decisions will be made jointly with key people, but sometimes you will make the call and you expect it to be followed. You just can’t compromise on that.

**Don’t Expect Perfection From Yourself, and be Candid When You Make Mistakes:** You are periodically going to mess up wildly and make some calamitous errors. I certainly have made some serious mistakes that negatively impacted many people and lost my family a great deal of money. Even though we know we have to move on from them, the impact of those mistakes can haunt us for a long time.

I can hardly think of a more serious mistake than David’s adulterous relationship with Bathsheba and subsequent complicity in the murder of her husband Uriah the Hittite. Yet David confessed his guilt, asked God’s forgiveness, and is counted as one of the heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11.
We all try hard not to make mistakes. If you’re like me, you hate being wrong. It helps me to remember what consultant Alan Weiss says, which is “I am constantly amazed at how dumb I was two weeks ago”. He is one of the foremost consultants in the world, a man whose opinion is sought by some of the world’s best companies. If he still makes mistakes and has room for improvement, who are you and I to think we’ll ever be perfect? As Alan says, seek success, not perfection.

When you make a mistake, admit it to your people, find a way to fix it, and learn from it. It may sting for a while, or even hurt badly, but your people are counting on you to move past it and lead them forward. Moreover, your effectiveness in your ministry will be stymied until you move past your error.

- **Make Prayer an Integral Part of Your Life and Business:** I have a friend in Little Rock, Arkansas who operates a Christian school. He once told me he and his staff for decades have prayed together every day at 6:00 a.m. He tells them, “If you don’t pray, you can’t stay”. That’s how important he believes prayer is to the success of his school.

Each biblical leader we studied prayed and acted in faith. Jesus himself prayed, and taught us to pray. Nehemiah prayed constantly, and once even did so when he was standing in front of the king. Paul tells us to pray without ceasing. This isn’t a course on prayer, but scripture tells us all things are fair game to pray for, and that means every aspect of your business and personal life are available for prayer. Many of the issues we face seem monumental and impossible to handle, but when we pray we acknowledge God’s power and our faith that He will lead us through good times and bad.

**Conclusion**
In this brief discussion of transformational leadership I’ve given you 12 distinctive attributes of true transformational leaders and a number of ways to apply them to your business. These constitute a lifetime of leadership traits to work on. The essentials that I’ve distilled for you are:

- Get over your own sense of smallness;
- Make your business great before moving on to ministry;
- Create a vision that stands the test of time irrespective of technology or competition;
- Don’t ever compromise your vision. Be unyielding;
- Keep growing and transforming yourself;
- Get to know your people, care for them, and be accessible;
- Build your people and your team, but don’t abdicate your authority;
- Don’t expect perfection from yourself. Be candid when you make mistakes;
- Make prayer an integral part of your business.
My advice is to carve out time daily to work on these. If you are brave, get feedback from your team. Don’t be discouraged if they let you know you have room for improvement. That’s a big club. It will take tremendous effort to apply these suggestions, and there will be an adjustment period for your team. Start with a solid vision and begin refining it. Get people on board, and try to discern who your staunch advocates are, and who might not be so supportive of your direction.

You can also evaluate yourself against the 12 distinctive characteristics of the transformational biblical leaders we studied. Track your progress over time and diligently work on developing those leadership skills. If you are focused and determined to master them, you will surely see great results over time.

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