

Characteristics of Great Leaders

Capacity: Leadership

Baton Exchange



Leadership is a sacred calling that carries responsibility, influence, and the potential to impact lives for eternity. In the workplace and beyond, great leaders inspire, guide, and cultivate excellence, while modeling character that reflects God’s truth. From a devout biblical perspective, leadership is more than management skill—it is stewardship of people, resources, and opportunities in a way that honors God.

Great leaders are not defined solely by their titles, achievements, or authority; they are distinguished by the alignment of their character, decisions, and actions with biblical principles. Understanding the characteristics of great leaders from Scripture provides a timeless guide for cultivating leadership that is both effective and God-honoring.

Biblical Precepts for Great Leadership

A. Servant Leadership

Jesus set the ultimate example of servant leadership. In Mark 10:42–45, He taught: “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Great leaders prioritize the needs of others, empowering them to thrive, rather than seeking self-promotion.

B. Wisdom and Discernment

Proverbs 4:7 emphasizes: “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” Leadership requires the ability to discern rightly, make sound decisions, and anticipate consequences in both ethical and practical matters.

C. Integrity and Character

Proverbs 10:9 states: “Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out.” Character is non-negotiable. Integrity builds trust, credibility, and enduring influence.

D. Courage and Faith

Joshua 1:9 exhorts leaders: “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.” Great leaders act boldly, guided by faith in God rather than fear of failure or opposition.

E. Humility

Philippians 2:3–4 teaches: “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.” Humility keeps leaders grounded, open to learning, and responsive to the needs of those they lead.

F. Accountability and Responsibility

Romans 14:12 reminds us: “So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.” Leaders are accountable for their decisions, actions, and the welfare of their teams, ensuring ethical and responsible stewardship.

Basic Principles of Great Leadership

1. **Vision and Direction.** Great leaders see beyond the present, articulating a compelling vision that inspires others to pursue a shared goal.
2. **Empathy and Relational Intelligence.** Understanding the emotions, motivations, and needs of team members fosters trust, loyalty, and engagement.
3. **Consistency and Reliability.** Consistency in decisions, behavior, and expectations builds confidence and a sense of stability within the team.
4. **Commitment to Growth.** Leaders invest in personal development and the growth of their team, modeling continuous improvement and stewardship of talent.
5. **Effective Communication.** Clear, respectful, and inspirational communication ensures alignment, clarity, and motivation.
6. **Servant-Oriented Mindset.** Leadership is about enabling others to succeed, not merely exercising authority. Great leaders elevate those around them.
7. **Moral and Ethical Leadership.** All actions are guided by biblical truth, promoting fairness, justice, and respect for others.

Best Practices for Cultivating Great Leadership

A. Seek God's Guidance Daily.

Prayer, reflection on Scripture, and reliance on the Holy Spirit are essential for making godly decisions.

Practice: Begin each day or leadership meeting with prayer, asking God for wisdom and discernment.

B. Invest in Relationships

Building genuine relationships with team members fosters trust, collaboration, and loyalty.

Practice: Schedule one-on-one meetings, actively listen, and offer support tailored to individual needs.

C. Develop Others

Mentoring, coaching, and delegating responsibility equips team members to grow in skill and confidence.

Practice: Identify potential leaders and create opportunities for them to lead projects or initiatives under guidance.

D. Model Christlike Character

Exemplify integrity, humility, and accountability in all actions. People emulate what they see.

Practice: Admit mistakes, celebrate successes without pride, and consistently uphold ethical standards.

E. Embrace Lifelong Learning

Study leadership principles, read Scripture, and engage in professional development.

Practice: Attend seminars, read books, and seek mentorship to expand your leadership knowledge and skills.

F. Balance Vision with Execution

Communicate big-picture goals while ensuring practical steps and resources are in place to achieve them.

Practice: Use planning tools, set measurable objectives, and involve the team in strategy execution.

G. Exercise Servant Leadership Daily

Seek opportunities to serve, support, and empower your team regularly.

Practice: Offer encouragement, remove obstacles, and recognize contributions publicly and privately.

Benefits of Great Leadership

1. **Builds Trust and Loyalty.** Leaders who model integrity and care inspire confidence and long-term commitment from their teams.
 2. **Enhances Team Performance.** Effective leaders motivate, equip, and coordinate efforts, increasing productivity and organizational success.
 3. **Cultivates a Positive Work Culture.** A leader's behavior sets the tone; ethical, servant-hearted leadership creates a healthy, respectful, and collaborative environment.
 4. **Encourages Personal and Team Growth.** Leaders who invest in development foster skill-building, innovation, and career advancement opportunities.
 5. **Promotes Accountability and Responsibility.** Clear expectations, ethical standards, and consistent guidance hold both leaders and team members accountable.
 6. **Glorifies God in the Workplace.** By demonstrating Christlike character, leaders reflect God's principles and influence others positively, serving as a witness of His kingdom.
 7. **Supports Sustainable Organizational Success.** Organizations guided by great leaders experience long-term stability, resilience, and adaptability.
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Ask Your Mentor

1. Which biblical characteristics have most shaped your leadership style?
2. How do you balance humility with authority in your role?
3. What strategies help maintain integrity under pressure or temptation?
4. How do you encourage growth and development in your team effectively?
5. What are practical ways to cultivate servant leadership in a demanding workplace?
6. How do you maintain vision and direction while staying accountable to God?
7. What lessons have you learned from failures or challenges as a leader?

Self-Evaluation (Quick Assessment)

Rate yourself 1–5 (1 = rarely true, 5 = consistently true):

1. I seek God’s guidance in leadership decisions.
2. I model humility, integrity, and accountability.
3. I communicate vision clearly and effectively.
4. I invest in relationships and the growth of my team.
5. I act with courage and faith, even in challenging situations.
6. I demonstrate servant leadership in daily interactions.
7. I balance vision, ethics, and practical execution consistently.

Reflection & Journaling Prompt

Reflect on your leadership journey. Journal prayerfully, asking God for insight, growth, and the Spirit’s guidance to become the leader He intends you to be.

1. Which characteristics of great leaders do I exemplify consistently?
2. Where do I need growth in wisdom, humility, or servant-hearted leadership?
3. How can I better align my leadership style with biblical principles?
4. What specific steps can I take to model Christlike leadership in my workplace?

Action Step: Pick one

1. Identify one leadership characteristic from Scripture to intentionally develop over the next month.
2. Pray for God’s wisdom, guidance, and strength to cultivate that trait.
3. Seek feedback from team members or a mentor on your progress.
4. Implement practical actions, such as mentoring, service initiatives, or ethical decision-making exercises.
5. Reflect regularly, adjusting practices to ensure growth aligns with biblical leadership principles.

Creative Connection

Think of a song, character or person from a book, movie or history, or an everyday item that personifies the main idea of this lesson and share it.

Sources & Resources

Holy Bible (ESV, NIV, NKJV)

Ken Blanchard & Phil Hodges, Lead Like Jesus

Peter Scazzero, The Emotionally Healthy Leader

Henry & Richard Blackaby, Spiritual Leadership

YouTube: John Maxwell – Characteristics of Great Leaders

YouTube: Ken Blanchard – Lead Like Jesus: Servant Leadership in Action

Book: The Emotionally Healthy Leader by Peter Scazzero

Book: The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership by John C. Maxwell

“Biblical Principles for Leadership Excellence” – Christian Leadership Alliance