

# 7 Attributes That Demonstrate the Real Strength of a Leader

Dan Reiland

What demonstrates the real strength of leadership? We know things like decision-making, strategy, and execution require strength *from* a leader, and those elements are vital to realizing your vision, but what puts strength *in* a leader?

I'll admit that I like to get things done, make progress, solve problems, and see things change for the good. But the longer I lead, the more I'm aware of the real strength of leadership. The attributes, that when cultivated, bring you true inner strength. None of these attributes produce fast results, but they deliver lasting results, most importantly, toward life change.

The reality that leadership is a long-haul endeavor is a discipline that has taken me a long time to learn. Speed is part of culture. Impatience is part of humanity, but eternal significance is a marathon, not a sprint.

Please don't misunderstand; I'm not an advocate of slow for the sake of slow. Hey, when you can move, go for it. But most things worthwhile take time. It's a balance, I know. Sometimes leadership strength is fast; sometimes, it's more deliberate. But in all cases, it requires substance from within where your real and lasting strength resides.

## 7 Attributes that Demonstrate the Real Strength of a Leader

### 1) Kindness softens hearts and opens doors.

It's difficult to come up with a good reason for leaders to be unkind. Kindness is the most overlooked quality of leadership. Here are three bullets from a full post I wrote on the topic of kindness.

- Kindness is an essential human quality that allows trust, connection, and genuine exchange to take place.
- Kindness brings peace and joy into pressure-filled situations.
- Kindness is not a new idea, but it's often undeveloped as a leadership trait.

Kindness softens hearts, for example, for those who resist the gospel, someone who isn't supportive of the vision, or someone who simply needs to be encouraged. Kindness opens doors of relationships and Kingdom opportunities.

## **2) Humility makes authority attractive.**

The days of heavy-handed authority as an appropriate or effective style are long gone. The challenge today is that *any* authority is often rejected, yet the tension is that all leadership carries authority.

The relevant question is, how do we bridge the gap? We need to begin with the idea that authority is biblical, and you can't lead without it, but how is that lived out? We know that we are not to be demanding or dictatorial (lord it over), and we know that a servant spirit is part of the equation. Yet leadership without spiritual authority is quickly rendered ineffective.

Humility is the best remedy to anything possibly offensive about authority. If your heart as a leader genuinely carries a humble spirit, authority becomes appealing and highly accepted. Authority must always be exercised in the best interest of the people you serve and the vision you are committed to. Nothing about authority should focus on personal gain.

## **3) Wisdom discerns and interprets knowledge.**

If knowledge is silver, then wisdom is gold. It's mind-boggling that we can speak into our smartphones and, in seconds, receive an answer to nearly any question and information on almost any subject. But that doesn't mean the information is good, helpful, or morally sound.

Wisdom is the gift God gives us that allows us to discern right and wrong, good and evil, and especially that which is subjective in nature. It's in dealing with subjective matters where we need wisdom most. Perhaps you need to make a really tough decision, and it's from a cut and dry situation. (Few major decisions are.)

You gain the wisdom you need from four primary sources:

1. Directly from God through prayer
2. Scripture
3. Wise counsel from others
4. Experience

Are you tapping into all four?

## **4) Integrity is the currency of trust.**

We intuitively move toward people we can count on. We trust those who do what they say they will do. The opposite is also true; we don't trust people we can't count on and therefore keep more distance from them.

Think about how that affects your leadership. Can people count on you? If the answer is yes, your influence increases. If it's no, your influence decreases. Integrity is a substantial subject. It encompasses a large spectrum from major life promises to things as simple as calling someone back because you said you would. It's all part of your character, which, over the years, has a cumulative and compounding effect on the strength of your leadership.

## **5) Resilience places the dream within reach**

Resilience is like a leader's superpower. Part of your success is that you just keep going; you don't give up. 2020 is a year in which it's easy to give up, and that's different than quitting.

Far too many leaders have given up, resigned in their hearts, but still go to work every day. They go through the motions but have no resilience to bounce back from the tough stuff that life throws their way.

Resilience is the art of learning to deal with increasing and sustained pressure due to the size and scope of your ministry. How are you doing with this? This is true for pressure or problems in your personal life as well. Work and home are not experienced as separate. Your body and emotions know only one cumulative level of stress.

## **6) Courage inspires others to believe and take action.**

Courage is contagious; it inspires others to action. It helps them believe they can. Whether it's something personal like a public declaration of faith or taking a big risk to start a business or launch a new campus, you set the pace for others by the courage you demonstrate.

Telling your story is one of the most courageous things you can do. It permits others to be real, get honest, and change for their good. When someone hears your shortcomings and failures and sees your consistent Christlike lifestyle, it inspires them to continue to grow and mature too. When you step up to serve and give yourself away for the vision's benefit, others will too.

## **7) Confidence makes leadership believable.**

If you don't believe in yourself, no one else will either. The best place to start is to believe God is with you. I'm referring to something more than the assurance of your salvation and eternal life.

This is about knowing that God is actually *with you* in your leadership endeavors; he knows your struggles and is in the battle with you! You know the story of God's challenge to Moses. God wanted Moses to confront Pharaoh and demand the freedom of the Israelites. But Moses didn't believe in himself. ("Who am I?") Notice God's response. "I will be with you."

*But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" And God said, "I will be with you. -Exodus 3:11-12*