

TIM HAWKINS

leaders
who will last

10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Leaders who will last: 10th anniversary edition
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Preface to this 10th anniversary edition

Leadership is so important. Without strong leadership, nations do not prosper; companies do not succeed; sporting teams do not triumph; individuals do not achieve their potential. Without effective leadership there is no valuing of the past, there is no way forward through the present, and there is no hope for the future.

When Jesus came to earth to bring the most effective transformation that could ever be accomplished, he spent most of his three years of public ministry developing his leadership team. His twelve. The ones he would commission to spread his life-changing message to every nation of this planet.

Local church youth ministry suffers when leadership is weak. There is no spiritual progress when youth leaders are not developed to the same high level as leadership in other parts of the church. In my thirty-plus years of being involved in youth ministry in local churches the biggest obstacle, in human terms, has been a failure in leadership.

The reason for this book? Simply to take the biblical pictures of leadership and apply them to youth leaders in the twenty-first century. The reason for a tenth anniversary edition? God is still teaching me many things, and this comprehensive revision reflects my journey for the ten years since it was first published.

I pray that this book will take you back to biblical truths which will inspire you to keep becoming the leader that God has designed you to be.

John Warren—Guest contributor

I want to acknowledge the major contribution by John Warren to the writing of this book. John served with me as a faithful part-time staff member in the mid nineties, and he has had a profound effect on my life. I believe that John, and his fantastic wife Catherine, will have a significant ministry in years to come.

When I came to the section on “Growing your Character”, I could think of no better material than what John had written on these topics some years ago. With John’s kind permission, I have edited and reproduced much of his original work. The bulk of Chapters 8, 9 10 and 11 has been contributed by John.

Thanks heaps...

To Jesus Christ. Without you, not only would there be no book, but I would have no life. You have taken me to the Father, and filled me with your Spirit. Without you, I can do nothing.

To my wife, Karen. Without you, I could not do this ministry. I deeply appreciate the way you put up with me as I wrote each page. I love you!

To my children Carly and Joshua. “Out there” youth ministry means nothing compared with the joy of seeing you into Christian adulthood.

To Wayne Alcorn. You first opened my eyes to the possibility of being a “generation changer”.

To the students and leaders at “Crossfire” in sunny downtown Castle Hill. Thank you for allowing me to take you on the exciting journey of having your life turned around by Jesus.

I have taken great care to give due credit to those who have impacted my life and ministry. It is possible that I have inadvertently included material which has not been properly acknowledged. If this has happened, please contact the publisher so that this can be rectified in future editions.

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Grow your leadership vision

SECTION

1

Chapter 1

You are called by God

1. Am I the right person for this job?

“Would you like to help lead our youth group?”

The words sounded innocent enough. I mean, what could be that hard about being a youth leader? And I guess I felt kind of important. “Who, me?”

It sounded good! It would look good on my resumé. It would boost my self esteem. I was impressed that I had been asked. I was sure my friends would be impressed. Probably even God would be impressed!

“What does it involve?”

“Not much—just help lead a Bible-study group. You know, help plan it, help teach it, take responsibility for it.”

Sounded good to me. Why not? What did I have to lose?

My first Bible-study group went okay. I had read the notes—I knew what to teach. The kids were great. The atmosphere was fun. Kids **liked** me. I liked them. This was cool. No one had ever paid me much attention before. These kids were actually looking up to me. Listening to me (occasionally!). Looking to me for answers. Believing what I taught them. Seeking my guidance. Starting to live their lives the way I told them...

Hang on... *“Starting to live their life the way I told them”*? This was scary stuff! What if I got it wrong? What if they took my advice and ended up in a heap of trouble? **These students were depending on me.** What if I let them down?

I remember the first time I went away on a camp as a youth leader. I was a cabin leader. I had six junior-high boys to take care of. They were full of energy and boundless enthusiasm. They were fun; they were foolish; they were fierce; they were high-octane flatulence machines... but I loved them. And here’s the scary bit—I was in charge of them. Caring for them, listening to them, teaching them, keeping them from wreaking untold havoc upon the world that could have easily resulted in grievous personal bodily harm and the mother-of-all-lawsuits.

I was responsible for them. On the first night, I was having trouble sleeping. Eventually the room was deathly quiet, and I was aware that I was probably the only one awake. So I got up for a little while, and stood in the middle of our cabin. In the faint moonlight I walked around and glanced at each person. Each one was sound asleep. Each one was at rest. Whatever had gone on in their day, it was all behind them. They trusted me to look after them. In their sleep they were relying on me—depending on me—trusting me.

Then it hit me. **They were trusting their safety and their future into my hands.** I was in a position of awesome trust, and awesome responsibility. Man—did I feel inadequate! Why me? What made me the right person for this job? How could I lead these young men? I was still sorting out my own life! I was young. I hadn’t had that much training. I’d only been a Christian for a short time myself. Surely God had someone better than me for this awesome responsibility!

How could one inadequate person possibly make a difference in the lives of any of these fragile teenagers?

2. God chooses the strangest people

Throughout history, we see that God often chooses the strangest people to achieve what he wants. When he wants to influence a nation—when he wants to lead his people—when he wants to call crowds to turn back and follow him—he often calls an individual person to lead them. God doesn’t have to do it this way—but he chooses to involve us in his mighty plans. The pages of Scripture are a record of how God achieves mighty miracles with huge numbers of people—and he often accomplishes this by choosing just one person to lead them.

Some quick examples:

a) Abram (you probably know him as “Abraham”!)

Even before God had ever formed his Old Testament nation of Israel, he called on one man—Abram—to lead the whole shebang. Before they had any land—before they had any people—before anything at all had happened to gather God’s people together so they could worship him as one nation—God called on Abram to be their leader.

The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. **Genesis 12:1**

How about that for an invitation to a leadership position? Did you note what God asked Abram to do?

- i. *Leave his country* (and he didn’t give him an airline ticket).

- ii. *Leave his own culture* (he would be ministering to people who were “different”).
- iii. *Leave his own family* (cutting him off from every support he had).
- iv. *Go to a land “that I will show you”* (he had no idea where God would lead him).

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. **Hebrews 11:8**

Through that one man, Abraham, God established his own people—his own nation—a world power that would influence other nations to turn to God—and set the stage for the mighty works he would do throughout eternity.

To achieve all that, God called one man to lead his people. That one man—Abraham.

b) Moses

God’s people were in slavery in Egypt. God had not forgotten the promises he had made to Abraham. He planned to rescue his people from the slavery of Egypt, overpower the evil Pharaoh who held them in shackles, and lead them out as conquerors toward the new land that he would give them.

To achieve all this, God raised up one man—one leader—Moses.

Firstly, God got Moses’ attention with a burning bush—then he declared his great plan to rescue his people out of slavery—and then there’s the crunch point for Moses:

*So now, go. I am sending **you** to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt. **Exodus 3:10***

“Who, me?”

I think that’s what I would have said!

“I mean, it’s a nice plan to rescue your people—free us from slavery—overpower the evil Pharaoh—and lead us out to this land you promised to us, but you want me to lead all this? You’ve got to be joking!”

That’s what Moses said too! He came up with all sorts of excuses: all sorts of reasons why he was the wrong man and all sorts of plausible arguments as to why he was absolutely the wrong person. But God had something mighty planned—God had the destiny of a whole nation that he wanted to change. So he raised up one man—Moses—to be the leader that he wanted.

c) David

By the time we get to the story of David, we see that God had now established his Old Testament nation of Israel. He was going to appoint a new leader—a new king to rule over his people. Who would he choose?

God had sent Samuel—his prophet—to go and anoint the new king. He had told him that one of Jesse’s sons would be the new leader of his people. You can imagine the fuss at Jesse’s house as all his sons lined up to impress the prophet who was about to arrive. They were on their best behaviour. Their hair was done and their shoes were shined. They had their “power suits” on. Mobile phones turned to “vibrate only”. They only had one shot to make a good first impression. Who would win the job to be this new leader that God was going to choose?

Samuel walked through this parade of leadership wannabes. Some were tall, some were commanding, some were real leadership material. Jesse was no doubt anxious to see one of his boys become the new head honcho of everything God was doing.

Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.” So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?” “There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered, “but he is tending the sheep.” Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

1 Samuel 16:10-11

God had one person in mind to lead his people. And it wasn't one of the executive parade that Jesse had lined up to impress the prophet. There was one more son—the kid brother, David. Not even old enough to be invited to the interview. Left to do all the work of tending the sheep while the big brothers showed off their talent. Not the person that any of us would have chosen.

And yet God chose the “little boy”—the runt of the family—to become the greatest king over all of Israel. Through King David, God's people grew in faithfulness and prosperity. It was David who was given the promises by God that Jesus himself would come from his family line.

God wanted a leader for his people. So he chose one person to be the leader who would accomplish what he had planned.

d) Paul

I really don't know what God was doing when he chose Paul to be his leader. I mean, look at his credentials! He opposed the name of Jesus. He persecuted Jesus' followers. He gave

his permission for Christians to be killed. He was a man who had devoted his life to opposing everything that Jesus stood for.

And yet this was the very man whom God chose to influence the world in a way that no other had. It was Paul who took the message of Jesus to all the other nations of the planet. It was Paul who stepped into dangerous territory because God wanted his message to be for “all the nations”—and not just for his Old Testament people of Israel. God had a worldwide message—and he wanted it proclaimed “to the ends of the earth” (even to Australia and New Zealand!) It was Paul who wrote a great slab of our New Testament. Probably more people have been influenced through his ministry than practically anybody else.

God had a worldwide ministry to accomplish. So he chose this one man—Paul—to be his leader, and to accomplish great things.

3. But why me?

Who knows why God has chosen you to be a leader in his ministry? Who knows what great things he has planned for you? Who can count the number of people who will be influenced because of your faithfulness? Which nations of this planet will be changed for ever by the people you nurture and disciple? Who will be the one person who needs the tender touch of Jesus in their life—where God will use you to bring his word of comfort and healing?

If you look at it on paper, it was a ridiculous move for God to choose me to be a leader at all. I was a self-righteous moralist. I was full of my own accomplishments. I looked down on other people and their failures, and I had no time for flawed earthlings and their irritating habits. I lived in a

self-contained world and viewed most folk as interruptions to my life's ambitions. I was **nothing like** the person who could be used by God to influence the lives of others! (*If you would like independent witnesses of where God has taken me from, then talk to my wife... or my sister... they knew me then!!*)

And yet God took me by the hand—and worked on me from the inside—and he changed my spirit and my character so that I could be used by him. I do not know why God has done that. If I were God, I would have given up on me ages ago!

If God is calling you to be a leader, I want to assure you that he has a purpose and a plan in mind. It is no accident. Maybe you got into leadership “because the pastor asked you to”. Maybe “there was no one else”. Perhaps in a moment of weakness you offered to help out for a week, and found that you were stuck with a job for life. But God is not a God of accidents and emergencies. He is a God of plan and purpose. You might not know **how** God will use you for his glory as you lead others, but I want to assure you that he **will** use you.

4. Welcome to the ranks of the foolish

God's plan is not to produce a team of super-leaders who will change the world with their natural charm and invincible powers. Rather, he chooses his faithful servants so that he can work powerfully through them.

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things

*that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. **1 Corinthians 1:27-29***

God will use you—with whatever strengths and weaknesses you have—so that he will accomplish his mighty things in this world. The end result of this is not meant to be that everyone will think, “*You’re a great leader*”, but that people will fall on their knees and say, “*God is a great God*”.

What a privilege! I get to be a fragile, imperfect creature, so that others will see the immeasurable value of God’s gospel at work in my life. Cool!

Welcome to the world of Christian youth leadership. Welcome to the ranks of the foolish. Let’s journey together so that we can learn how to be the leaders that God wants us to be.

Leaders who will last.

Read on!