

“Conviction To Lead”

by Albert Mohler

Notes by Dave Kraft

The leadership that really matters is all about conviction. The leader is rightly concerned with everything from strategy and vision to team-building, motivation, and delegation, but at the center of the true leader’s heart and mind you will find convictions that drive and determine everything else. You can divide all leaders into those who merely hold an office or position and those who hold great convictions. Convictional leaders propel action precisely because they are driven by deep convictions, and their passion for these convictions is transferred to followers who join in concerted action to do what they know to be right. And they know what is right because they know what is true.

Positions and offices and titles fade faster than ink. Without conviction, nothing really matters, and nothing of significance is passed on. Without convictions you might be able to manage, but you cannot really lead.

Convictional Intelligence

When I calculated the ratio of technical skills, IQ, and emotional intelligence as ingredients of outstanding performance, emotional intelligence proved to be twice as important as the others for jobs at all levels. Many of the world’s most intelligent people lack the emotional and empathetic skills necessary for effective leadership. The Christian leader stands out as one who has developed intellectual habits that are consistent with biblical truth. The Christian leader must have mental reflexes that correspond to biblical truth.

Leadership Is Narrative

The most important truths come alive through stories, and faithful leadership is inseparable from the power and stewardship of story.

Leaders Understand Worldviews

The great aim of leadership is to lead followers continually into a deeper and more comprehensive love for what is most real, most true, most right, and most important. The thrill of leadership is in seeing this happen, and long-term success depends on it.

The Passion to Lead

Leaders need to possess and develop many qualities, but the one element that drives them to the front is passion. Without it, nothing important happens. Passion is not a temporary state of mind. It is the constant source of energy for the leader, and the greatest cause of attraction for followers. When the mission is ambiguous and the beliefs of the organization are nebulous, passion dissipates quickly. The most powerful leaders know how to speak the language of passion rather than the language of bureaucracy and dispassionate analysis. Leaders learn to speak of causes, not structures; of movements, not mechanics; of people, not statistics; of cherished principles, not mere policies.

Leaders Are Thinkers

Leadership does not really happen until the right course is chosen and the organization responds with the right action and corresponding energy. The leader who faces the facts, leans into truth, applies the right principles, and acknowledges the alternatives will then be ready to make the decision—the right decision.

Leaders Are Teachers

The leader who wants to effect long-term, lasting, determinative change in an organization has to be its lead teacher, changing minds in order to transform the organization. The organization of the future will learn fast, learn well, learn together, and learn to keep on learning. The best teachers are those who simply can't wait to teach something they truly love. The best teachers are infectious with their enthusiasm and love of what they are trying to teach. Augustine defined the ultimate goal of teaching in a powerful way that should reshape every leader's vision of what we do. The old theologian specified that the goal of teaching is to see every student instructed, delighted, and moved. The most effective leaders are unstoppable teachers.

Leadership Is All About Character

Leaders Are Trusted When Their Lives Are in Alignment With Their Convictions Character is indispensable to credibility, and credibility is essential to leadership.

Leadership and Credibility

Leadership Happens When Character and Competence Are Combined No leader can be effective without character, but character does not ensure that a leader is effective. But leadership requires trust in something beyond who the leader is. True credibility rests in the ability of others to trust what the leader can do. When you enter the room, trust and confidence had better enter with you. If not, leadership is not happening. Every single day, the faithful leader must be aware that credibility is the essence of leadership, and that it can be both earned and lost. The effective leader cannot afford to lose credibility—in fact, he needs to stockpile it and build it in reserve.

Leaders Are Communicators

Leadership doesn't happen until communication happens. To be human is to communicate, but to be a leader is to communicate constantly, skillfully, intentionally, and strategically. The effective leader aims for three essential hallmarks of powerful communication. The first is clarity. The second hallmark is consistency. The third hallmark of powerful communication, courage.

The Leader and Power

We instantly recognize that something dangerous has entered the picture when power becomes the focus of attention. While power can be associated with coercion and oppression, it should also be linked to influence and guidance. There is no escaping power, and there is no way to lead without it. The real issue is what kind of power a leader should possess and how that power is exercised. The Christian leader will respect the role of power in leadership but will never glory in it.

The Leader and Personality

Leaders get things done. Faithful leaders get the right things done in the right way. Faithful leaders understand that while they will influence the organization with their personality, they must never allow personality to be the defining mark of leadership. The other danger is that the leader will rely on personality as a substitute for conviction or competence. The line between the right deployment of personality and the disaster of cultic leadership is often very fine indeed. If the leader's main task is to lead by conviction, then the convictions must be more central and prominent than the leader's personality.

If the personality looms larger than the convictions, alarms should go off, and they had better be heeded. With power and responsibility must come accountability. A leader without accountability is an accident waiting to happen.

Leaders Are Managers

Not All Managers Are Leaders, but All Leaders Are Managers. What leaders must do—“put people with different skills and knowledge together to achieve common goals.” As a matter of fact, that is why leadership exists, and that is why management is essential to what leaders do.

“Managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing.”-Warren Bennis

As Drucker explains, the fundamental task of management is “to make people capable of joint performance by giving them common goals, common values, the right structure, and the ongoing training and development they need to perform and to respond to change.”

Common goals are the product of intensive communication, enduring influence, and constant affirmation. A good structure does not ensure success, but a bad structure can ensure failure. Leaders must work to make the organization’s structure serve, rather than impede, the work. Our task is to deploy people so that each can do his or her job.

Leaders Are Speakers

If you are truly unable or unwilling to stand up in front of people and speak with conviction, you are not called to the role of leadership. In contrast, no form of communication can exceed the spoken word in terms of transmitting and communicating passion and conviction. I follow a simple process as I get my speech, and myself, ready for the occasion.

- First, know what you want to say
- Second, know your audience
- Third, outline your message
- Fourth, frame your presentation
- Fifth, punctuate and illustrate
- Sixth, get yourself ready
- Seventh, speak like you mean it
- Eighth, tell the audience what to do

Leadership as Stewardship

- We are the stewards of human lives and their welfare
- We are the stewards of time and opportunity
- We are the stewards of assets and resources
- We are the stewards of energy and attention.
- We are the stewards of reputation and legacy
- We are the stewards of truth and teaching

The Leader as Decision Maker

Indecisiveness is one of history's greatest leadership killer. Six simple steps, taken sequentially can greatly assist any leader in this task:

- First, define the reality
- Second, identify the alternatives
- Third, apply analysis
- Fourth, pause for reflection
- Fifth, make the decision, and make it count. If indecision is a fatal flaw, equivocating afterward is just as deadly.
- Sixth, review and learn

The Moral Virtues of Leadership

If your followers find out that you are not trustworthy, your leadership is undermined, usually fatally. Tenacity of purpose is what defines great leadership, and the greater the purpose, the greater the tenacity required.

The Leader as Writer

When the leader writes, he writes to inform, to motivate, to explain, and to inspire. The leader needs to be "Digital."

There are now 5.9 billion cellular subscribers, which is 87 percent of the world's population.

The Leader and Time

Leaders have to be available, but no one can be available at all times. The effective leader learns how to be available at the right times—the times that will make the most difference. lean into your strengths and compensate for your weaknesses. When the leader has discretion, he should plan the stewardship of time so that strengths are maximized and weaknesses are minimized.

Leadership That Endures

"Some days you just have to live with the fact that, if today is all there is, the folks who hired me would never hire me again. As a matter of fact, if today is all there is, I wouldn't hire myself."

The Leader and Death

The American ideal of retirement does not meet the Christian standard of faithfulness. For Christians the issue should be redeployment rather than retirement.

John Piper puts this new vision of our lives into clear focus when he writes, Finishing life to the glory of Christ means resolutely resisting the typical American dream of retirement. It means being so satisfied with all that God promises to be for us in Christ that we are set free from the cravings that create so much emptiness and uselessness in retirement.

Instead, knowing that we have an infinitely satisfying and everlasting inheritance in God just over the horizon of life makes us zealous in our few remaining years here to spend ourselves in the sacrifices of love, not the accumulation of comforts.