

Discussion Guide

"Work hard and become a leader." Proverbs 12:24a (NLT)

"If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously." Romans 12:8b (NLT)

Values, more than anything, influence the way a person leads. Leadership skills can be learned, but values come from your belief system. Without strong values, poor decisions will be made during times when it is easier to say "yes" than it is to say "no." The best leadership skills are developed/learned by observing other leaders/mentors and by being in the crucible of leadership situations. This is not taught in school but learned through experience and mentorship.

Some 210Leaders groups were asked the question, "What are the top five characteristics of a leader that you would like to follow?" Their responses fell into three categories:

Tier 1 Leadership – These are the foundational building blocks for leadership. If a person does not possess these, they should not be considered for a leadership position. Tier 1 are values that people possess within their very nature, their character. These were likely developed and refined over time, beginning when someone is first born. But there can be life-changing experiences later in life that deeply change their character for the better.

- **Integrity** – Ethical, honest, principled, uncompromised. This is the essence of a person. It is who they are when no one is looking. Do they know right from wrong and do they have a reliable process to make decisions?
- **Courage** – Decisive, consistent, accountable, driven, strong yet flexible, lead by example. Integrity is worthless without the courage to stand for the honest and right thing to do even if there are significant consequences.

Tier 2 Leadership – These leadership characteristics are the major building blocks on top of Tier 1. A competent leader may not possess all of these but should possess most.

- **Emotionally Intelligent** – Humble, empathetic, vulnerable, self-aware, transparent, good listener. This is a key aspect of building relationships with others, especially staff and customers.
- **Communication** – Inspiring, transparent. Communication is the ability to clearly articulate the company vision and the strategies to achieve that vision. It is a skill that compels people to want to be part of the company. This does not mean that someone must be a good public speaker.
- **Servant Leader** – Empowerment. A servant is a person that strives to make everyone around them better. They want to know the needs of the people within their sphere of influence.

Tier 3 Leadership – While not as critical as Tier 1 and Tier 2 characteristics, a number of other leadership attributes are valuable.

- Forward thinking, strategic thinking
- Participatory leadership
- Joyful
- Own the problem
- Enthusiasm
- Charisma
- Critical thinking

Discussion:

- What are the characteristics of the leader you respect the most?
- What events have developed your leadership?
- How have you learned leadership?
- What leadership skill would you like to develop more? How can your group help you?

Bottom line: Leadership is hard work and as we work hard, we gain the respect of others. Gaining respect is growing your leadership, which reinforces our need for strong moral compass.

Dig Deeper

Want to learn more?

- *Article:* [Crucibles of Leadership](#) by Warren Bennis and Howard J. Thomas in Harvard Business Review
- *Video:* Ken Blanchard – [Servant Leadership](#)
- *Video:* Simon Sinek – [Empathy of Leadership](#) presented by Motivation Wake Up
- *Video:* Simon Sinek – [How to Get People to Follow You](#), Interview on Inside Quest. This is an excellent video.
- *Video:* Simon Sinek – [How Great Leaders Inspire Action](#), This is one of the top five most viewed Ted Talks with 50 million views (this talk is somewhat dated, but the message is still relevant).
- *Video:* Simon Sinek – [Courage to Lead](#), this has a great story about CVS.
- *Video Podcast:* Simon Sinek – [Leadership has Nothing to do with Rank](#)

Below are leaders who demonstrated strong moral compasses and tremendous courage:

- **George Washington** – Many things have been written about our first president, but what many do not know is that when he was named the commanding general in the Continental Army, he lost several of his first battles. Many considered him a failure, even other generals were working behind the scenes to have him removed. Yet, Washington was steadfast in his beliefs and how he thought the war should be fought. Washington’s strategy proved correct over time.

Recommended resource:

- [Washington: A Life](#) by Ron Chernow

- **Abraham Lincoln** – Lincoln’s moral compass/values is what he used to end slavery. He believed all men are created equal and have equal rights. He was also committed to having a unified country. In the early years of the civil war, he had a hands-off attitude with his military leaders, but he realized he needed to make changes in the army’s leadership, so he made several difficult decisions that in hindsight won the war. As a side note, he was not a great public speaker, but he was a great communicator.

Recommended resources:

- [Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln](#) by Doris Kearns Goodwin;
- [Lincoln](#) by David Herbert Donald

- **Harry Truman** – Truman was a reluctant president. He was thrust into the position at the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) four months after being inaugurated vice-president. He did not have a college degree and had failed as a farmer and businessperson, yet in his first four months in office, he made some of the most monumental decisions a president has had to face. He approved dropping the atomic bomb on Japan, established the United Nations, devised the plan to rebuild Europe and Japan rather than seek reparations, and broke the aggressiveness of the Soviet Union with the Berlin airlift – just to name a few.

Recommended resources:

- [Truman](#) by David McCullough
- [The Accidental President: Harry S. Truman and the Four Months That Changed the World](#) by A. J. Baime