

LEADERS WHO LAST

ONLY 30%
OF LEADERS LAST
see page 20 for more

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Dave Kraft

Leaders Who Last

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Introduction

This book is about finishing your leadership race. It is a marathon, not a hundred-meter dash. Like Bill Broadhurst, you will encounter many obstacles and setbacks. But as a leader, your goal is to finish well—and not just to finish by yourself. You must aim to influence others so they can join you in your race and reach their fullest potential as they travel with you on your leadership journey.

The premise of this book is that you *can* learn how to be a good leader and finish your particular leadership race well. “Finishing well” can include (but is not limited to):

- maintaining a vibrant and rich walk with Jesus.
- having a solid relational network that includes at least one good friend with whom you can bare your soul.
- making a lasting and God-honoring contribution in your areas of passion and gifting.

My prayer and hope is that after reading this, you will have insight, motivation, discipline, and confidence. I trust that you will experience the grace of the Lord in such a way that, at the

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end of your journey, you will hear the Lord say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Why is this topic so close to my heart? So many leaders are not doing well and are ending up shipwrecked. Professor Bobby Clinton at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California, is a key spokesperson on the subject of leadership within the body of Christ. His landmark book, *The Making of a Leader*, is a must-read for those in leadership positions.¹ Clinton has come to the conclusion that only 30 percent of leaders finish well. That is deeply disturbing.

There are many things that prevent us from finishing well in this crazy, fast-paced world. Leaders fight battles within and without that cause them to plateau, quit, or be disqualified. As I lead others, study the subject of leadership, and coach emerging leaders, I admit that I am deeply concerned. Too many are dropping out of the race, losing heart, and letting go of their dreams and lofty purposes. They are simply giving up and throwing in the towel. Due to the rapidly changing and fast-paced world we live in, it is increasingly difficult to lead and lead well with joy, clarity, and confidence. Some just hang on by their fingernails, waiting for retirement to rescue them from their disappointments, fears, and frustrations. What will it take for you and me to be leaders who finish the race well? What issues should we be aware of that could hold us back and keep us from finishing?

I read everything I can get my hands on that deals with the subject of leadership, and I am inclined to agree with some who believe that everything rises or falls on leadership. Without the right kind of leaders, organizations seldom go anywhere and the people who lead them fall short of their true potential. Without the right kind of leaders, organizations become

bloated bureaucracies concerned more with policy, politics, and procedures than with creativity and innovation. Sooner or later they have the life choked out of them and quickly become an endangered species!

Most of the leadership books in my library are based on surveys and studies that attempt to crystallize key principles and proven methodologies for discovering, developing, and deploying leaders. These books are written by successful CEOs of large organizations or professors in MBA programs who use the business world as their model.

In contrast, this book is written from my personal leadership journey of over forty years. It is not the result of interviews and surveys from the business sector, nor is it the product of analyzing and dissecting successful leaders from the Bible or history. Instead, it is a personal and extremely practical account of essential leadership principles I have learned and use. As a simple, down-to-earth guide to Christian leadership, this book was born out of leading, teaching leadership, and personally coaching dozens of Christian leaders. It is an easy-to-understand road map for leadership, because I am an active practitioner, not an academic theorist. Everything in this book flows from my personal experience and convictions.

Leaders Who Last is written from a Christian perspective. As I write, my words are primarily, but not exclusively, addressed to the following types of church leaders:

- Senior pastors
- Ministry staff members
- Volunteer leaders

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- Sunday school teachers
- Small-group leaders
- Leaders in local parachurch organizations

I love the church. There is nothing as exciting as the local church when it is properly and dynamically led by the right kinds of leaders. I became a follower of Jesus Christ through the ministry of a local church and ever since have had a burden for local churches.

I share Paul's sentiment expressed in 2 Corinthians 11:28: "There is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches." There are many things to be concerned about today in the church scene:

- A multitude of churches have plateaued, are dying, or are already dead.
- Antiquated forms and methods that no longer work are still in use today.
- Worship wars are raging.
- There is a lack of deep spirituality among church members.
- There is an absence of intentional and relevant outreach.

But my biggest concern is the lack of the right kind of leadership. I have a deep and abiding concern for leaders in local churches. This book is an attempt to address all these concerns.

If you are currently in a leadership position or anticipate that you will be in the near future, it should become increasingly clear to you that you will need to live and lead in a new way. This is necessary to stay viable as a leader, survive your journey, and accomplish your objective.

Times have changed, the culture has changed, rules have changed, and expectations of leaders have changed. metathesiophobia is the impossible-to-pronounce word for “fear of change.” Fearing, resisting, or balking at the need to change, grow, and adapt can be your undoing as a leader. It can start a downward spiral for your organization or group. The only thing that seems to remain the same is change. Change is more prolific, rapid, and complex than ever before. The only place you can’t be sure of change is from a vending machine. Everything else is up for grabs.

Here are a few obvious contrasts in the way we need to lead today compared to the ways we’ve led in the past.

Past Leaders

Organizational
Operate in committees
Command and control
Degreed and elected
Linear and pyramidal
Share propositional truth
People of the written page
Tightly structured
Emphasize position

Future Leaders

Relational
Operate in teams
Permission-giving
Gifted and called
Overlapping circles
Tell stories
People of the screen
Highly flexible
Emphasize empowerment

My desire is that sharing my experience will provide ideas that will aid you as a leader. I also hope to help you build into the lives of those you lead. How will you find newer and younger leaders for the next generation, and what will you need to do with them and for them so that they finish well?

Let’s begin by defining our terms. People use the word

Introduction

“leader” in a variety of ways. Some thinkers and writers are of the opinion that everybody is a leader because we all influence people in one way or another. At the opposite end of the spectrum are those who define leader so rigidly and exhaustively that even Jesus wouldn’t qualify. Their list of essential qualities and ingredients is endless and overwhelming.

I have sought to understand and then define what experience has taught me about the nature of leadership. At the moment, I am in between the two extremes of “everybody is a leader” and “a leader as the fourth person of the Trinity” (i.e., a leader who thinks he is a super-leader—omniscient and omnipotent, like the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

Before I toss my current working definition of “leader” on the table, allow me to share a deep conviction. The greatest and most pressing need in the body of Christ today is an army of leaders who have a vision of a desired future and are called and anointed by God. These leaders possess a fire burning in their hearts that can’t be extinguished. They are motivated and led by God to intentionally, passionately, and effectively influence others.

Local churches are well populated with leaders who are good teachers, sensitive counselors, and detailed administrators. These roles and functions are necessary. But we need much more than that—oh, so much more! We desperately need visionary leaders like Paul, who said to Agrippa, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19). Most organizations are over-managed and under-led. That needs to change or the body of Christ will be in deep trouble.

Here is how I define “leader” throughout this book:

A Christian leader is a humble, God-dependent, team-playing servant of God who is called by God to shepherd, develop, equip, and empower a specific group of believers to accomplish an agreed-upon vision from God.

These are the key ingredients of leadership:

- Christian leaders are, first and foremost, servants (bond slaves) of the Lord, and second, servants of those they are leading.
- They are characterized by humility, dependence, and team-playing, rather than being a loner or one-man show.
- Christian leaders are called by God into leadership. They do not decide for themselves to be a leader. They are not pushed into leadership by well-meaning supporters, nor do they arrive at leadership because no one else will do it.
- Christian leaders have at least four major responsibilities:
 - *Shepherding*—a leader loves and cares for those being led.
 - *Developing*—a leader helps those being led in their personal walk with Jesus Christ to become fully devoted followers.
 - *Equipping*—a leader trains those being led for ministry.
 - *Empowering*—a leader inspires, encourages, affirms, believes in, and frees people up to serve out of their gifting.
- Christian leaders are moving toward a specific destination.
- Christian leaders are creating and sustaining an agreed-upon vision. There is an initial buy-in and a growing ownership of the vision among those being led.

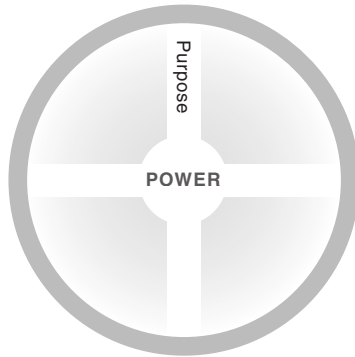
I promise you an interesting and worthwhile trip. Let the race begin!

CHAPTER 2:

The Leader's Purpose

*“A leader is a person with a magnet in his heart and
a compass in his head.”*

ROBERT TOWNSEND



My supervisor, Jim Downing, sat across from me in my living room in Stockholm, Sweden, in the late '70s. I was frustrated with both the lack of direction and the lack of fruit in my life. I poured my soul out to him. “So,” he asked, “If you could do anything, what would you want to do?”

I thought for a moment and then said, “Jim, this might sound strange, but I’m not sure I have an answer to that question. I should have some clarity on such an important issue. But I don’t. I just don’t. I am thirty-eight years old, but I can honestly say I have never thought about what I really want to do.”

At that point I had been on staff with The Navigators for ten years. For the last several years I had been experiencing a lack of motivation, uncertainty, and no clear direction or joy in my assignment as a missionary to Sweden. Something was missing, but I wasn’t sure what it was. “Well,” Jim continued, “give it some thought and prayer, and let me know when you have an answer.”

Searching for Answers

I felt a keen sense of disappointment. I was a mature Christian involved in full-time ministry and I didn’t have a clue about my

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purpose, calling, or direction. I didn't even have an answer to Jim's simple question: "What would you like to do?"

After I recovered from the confusion and disappointment with myself, I sensed the need to get away for a few days to pray, fast, and think things through. I really wanted to get a handle on what my life's purpose was. I borrowed the upper floor of a friend's home and hid away for three days to wrestle in prayer with the Lord. I took my Bible, a legal pad, a couple of books, and most importantly, a strong determination not to leave that room until I had some sense of direction.

This was a watershed experience for me. I won't go into all the details except to say that I developed a list of things I should be doing that would truly be an expression of the man the Lord made me to be. This became a launching pad that enabled me to later move into a role that truly matched the person I was. My family and I eventually left Sweden and returned to the United States.

Over time, a strong sense of purpose began to emerge. The crowning moment took place on my old high school campus.

Epiphany

I was in Sue Krenwinkle's office (the high school counselor for my four children) with one of my daughters. As we were discussing an issue, a collage on the wall behind Sue's desk transfixed me. There were dozens of pictures of her students at football games, school outings, proms, etc. Right in the middle of it all was a quote, which is now displayed on my desk at home:

Some people come into our lives and quietly go. Others stay awhile,
and leave footprints on our hearts, and we are never the same.

I lost track of the conversation we were having. I lost track of time. I lost track of everything. I was mesmerized by that quote. “What an incredible thought,” I whispered under my breath. “Lord,” I prayed softly in my heart, “make me a person who leaves footprints in people’s lives. I don’t want to be a person who comes and goes with no lasting impact. Because of contact with me, may people never be the same again. May I be a person who intentionally and lastingly influences others.” As that prayer flooded my heart and mind, the process gave birth to my purpose statement, which I wrote down a short time later:

To leave footprints in the hearts of God-hungry leaders who multiply.

My Purpose

It is clear to me that I was designed to be in the leader-development business. I mentor, coach, and invest in the next generation of leaders. That is my purpose, my unique contribution to the body of Christ and the kingdom of God.

I want to leave footprints in the lives of people—not just any person, but leaders and influencers who are hungry for God. Many leaders I encounter are self-satisfied. They think they know enough. They aren’t hungry or thirsty for more of God, more growth, and more fruitfulness.

I will not invest my time in them.

Some are hungry, but just for themselves with no intention of reproducing anything in the lives of others.

I will not invest in them.

I am looking for God-hungry leaders who are dissatisfied

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with the status quo (Latin for “the mess we are in”). I am looking for leaders who want to move on in their lives, move out in faith, and move up to their true God-given potential. It’s now so clear to me who I am and what I am about. My purpose focuses me like a laser beam. I am like a ray of sunshine that, when captured through a magnifying glass, has great power and intensity.

I am motivated by the words of Rudyard Kipling who wrote in his poem “L’Envoi” of the artists in heaven:

And only the Master shall praise us,
and only the Master shall blame;
And no one shall work for money,
and no one shall work for fame;
But each for the joy of the working,
and each in his separate star,
Shall draw the Thing as he sees It
for the God of the Things as They Are!¹

With a clear sense of purpose, I can “draw the thing” as I see it for the “God of the things as they are.” Otherwise, my drawings may be random scribbles, with no end in view.

There is a story about a bank president who retired. Before his retirement, this gentleman had a morning routine that mystified his employees. First thing each morning, he would walk to his desk, take a key out of his coat pocket, open a small drawer in his desk, look in it for a couple of seconds, and then lock it and begin his duties.

The Monday morning after the retirement party, the new president quickly went to the prior president’s desk. With all the employees gathered around, he took the key and opened the

secret drawer. In that drawer was a small note with the words, “Credits to the right, debits to the left.”

The guiding principle for the bank president's work was basic, simple, and foundational. That is what my purpose statement should be for me. I want it to be the first thing I think about in the morning and the last thing I think about at night. It is the due north on the compass of my life.

Once I have a clear sense of purpose flowing out of my relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, it is amazing how instrumental this purpose is in managing the day-to-day details of my life—the decisions I make, the people I spend time with, and the books I read. I am slowly but surely experiencing that most of what I do flows out of my purpose statement.

The following notice appeared in the window of a coat store in Nottingham, England:

We have been established for over 100 years and have been pleasing and displeasing customers ever since. We have made money and lost money, suffered the effects of coal nationalization, coal rationing, government control, and bad payers. We have been cussed and discussed, messed about, lied to, held up, robbed, and swindled. The only reason we stay in business is to see what happens next.

Why are you and I in business? What is our purpose?

Most successful enterprises, both private and public, have some sort of purpose or mission statement. It helps the leaders make decisions and prioritize activities, and—coupled with a vision for the future and a set of core values—keeps them on

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task with a high degree of morale and enthusiasm. I now have a purpose for my life that accomplishes the same for me.

Your Life's Purpose Statement

Do you have a brief purpose statement for your life? Peter Drucker says it should be short enough to put on a T-shirt. It should give you energy, motivation, and direction. Do you have clarity about the fulfillment of your dream, the accomplishment of your task, and the completion of your race? Do you want to finish well? Remember that according to Bobby Clinton, only 30 percent of leaders finish well.²

Having a biblically based purpose is like holding a magnet. It motivates, directs, and pulls you around detours and through distractions. If your activities flow out of a God-given purpose and are anchored in a Christ-centered power, you will have a reliable road map for your life.

Scripture Speaks of Purpose

As I read the Gospels and Paul's letters, it seems clear there was a compelling purpose that guided Jesus and Paul, like an internal gyroscope. Jesus speaks of this in John 17:4, where he says, "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do."

Jesus had two purposes for his earthly life: to die for the sins of the world, and to train twelve disciples to carry on his ministry of evangelism and discipleship. His purpose was clear and he stayed on track throughout his life and ministry.

Similarly, Paul speaks of his own life in Acts 20:24: "But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only

I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus.” At the end of his life he could say with confidence, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7).

One of the best books I have found on the subject of formulating your purpose is *The Path* by Laurie Beth Jones.³ I once read this fantastic quote by Jones: “A purpose statement is, in essence, a written-down reason for being. Jesus’ mission helped him decide how to act, what to do, and even what to say when challenging situations arose. Clarity is power: Once you are clear about what you were put here to do then ‘jobs’ become only a means toward accomplishing your mission, not an end in themselves.”

The Unhappy Businessman Who Had It All

Os Guinness records this sobering confession by a successful businessman with no clear purpose:

“As you know, I have been very fortunate in my career and I’ve made a lot of money—far more than I ever dreamed of. Far more than I could ever spend, far more than my family needs.” The speaker was a prominent businessman at a conference near Oxford University. The strength of his determination and character showed in his face, but a moment’s hesitation betrayed deeper emotions hidden behind the outward intensity. A single tear rolled slowly down his well-tanned cheek. “To be honest, one of my motives for making so much money was simple—to have the money to hire people to do what I don’t like doing.

“But there’s one thing I’ve never been able to hire anyone to do for me: find my own sense of purpose and fulfillment. I’d give anything to discover that.”⁴

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My deep desire would be to sit down with that wealthy, directionless man and give him some practical steps to discover his true purpose in life. I long for the same thing for those reading this book. Words cannot adequately or effectively communicate what a difference a compelling purpose has had in my life. Here are a few steps that will help you on the road to identifying your purpose:

1. Record Bible passages God has applied to your life.
2. Reflect on how God has used you in the past.
3. Determine what you are passionate about.
4. List your known gifts and strengths.
5. Delineate what you have excelled at in your work experience.
6. Define what action words best describe what you like to do.
7. Write down what you enjoy doing in your free time.
8. Reread all your answers.
9. Take note of common themes.
10. Write down key words or ideas that repeat.
11. Summarize those key words in a short, energizing statement about yourself.

Purpose and Career

I have come to the conclusion that it is easy to confuse purpose and career. When I speak of a compelling purpose, I am speaking about the spiritual focus of your life. Whatever your career may be—teacher, chemical engineer, pastor, doctor, lawyer, janitor—you have a purpose that is higher and more eternally significant than what you do to put bread on the table.

I once read, “People today are talking about calling, vocation,

and destiny more than ever. A *USA Today* poll discovered that if most people could ask God one question, it would be: 'What's my purpose in life?'"⁵

What is your God-given purpose? Have you identified it? What has the Lord gifted and called you to do in the body of Christ and among the lost? What is your contribution to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission? It so happens that I am a pastor and the director of Coaching and Leadership Development for the Resurgence Training Center at Mars Hill Church in Seattle. That is my career. But my purpose (in the context of my career) is to discover, develop, and deploy God-hungry leaders.

I would be doing that if I were a doctor, engineer, public school teacher, or anything else.

I would always be on the lookout for those special people in whom God would want me to invest—some during the working hours of my career, and some during the nonworking hours, evenings, or weekends. It all begins with keeping Jesus Christ central through the practice of time-proven discipline (holy habits of the heart). Out of that relationship with him, a clear purpose is crafted. It is based on who he created me to be and how he has gifted me.

When you are plugged into Jesus and have a clear, defined purpose, it will create a sense of joy and enthusiasm in your leadership role and responsibilities.

“Drawing from three decades in ministry and coaching ministry leaders, my friend and fellow Mars Hill pastor Dave Kraft has combined his best insights into *Leaders Who Last*.”

Mark Driscoll, *Pastor, Mars Hill Church; President, Acts 29 and The Resurgence*

“Dave Kraft has written a thorough and enlightening book on leadership that is easy to read and practical. This is a book for leaders who want to keep growing in their understanding of leadership, finish strongly, and lead with passion.”

Mike Treneer, *International President, The Navigators*

“Carefully constructs a scriptural approach to leadership in a manner that is both accurate and practical. Christians at all levels of responsibility in their organizations will find this information invaluable to their personal growth and effective leadership.”

Keith McGuire, *Instructor, University of Southern California's Aviation Safety Program*

“I love it when a practitioner, not a theorist, writes a book on leadership. *Leaders Who Last* is a powerful tool written by a respected leader who knows how to finish well.”

Greg Saliccioli, *Founding President, Ministry Coaching International*

“I could have used this book when I began volunteering at Saddleback Church in the Children's and Jr. High Ministry. I believe this book to be an essential tool for any church volunteer starting to serve in their prospective ministry.”

Dave Makela, *Director of Marketing, Ministry Coaching International*

DAVE KRAFT served with the Navigators for thirty-eight years before joining Mars Hill Church in Seattle. As leadership development pastor at Mars Hill, Kraft recruits, trains, and places leaders for the church's seven campuses.

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