

## **Five Habits of Extraordinary Leaders**

*Presented by Lisa Bishop*

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### **Day One**

What makes a great leader? If you are like me, you have worked for great leaders and not-so-great leaders. If you are a leader, you probably have found yourself in both of those categories. I want to equip you with 5 habits of an extraordinary leader. Leadership is influence and how you lead impacts others.

The first habit of an extraordinary leader is the habit of being a learner. Being a learner not only means seeking the technical skills necessary for your job or role, but it also implies you actively and consistently pursue personal character growth.

Proverbs 19:20 gives us a clarion call when it says,

*Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise.*

Good leaders, even leaders who have led for 20 years or more, have a posture of being coachable and teachable. One way you can position yourself to learn and grow is by asking for and humbly receiving feedback.

Whether you lead in the workplace, home, your community, or your church, intentionally ask others to share their observations about your leadership, what you do well, and where you can improve. The truth is you simply cannot grow without feedback. We all have blind spots. They are called that for a reason. Several years ago, I solicited feedback from a few coworkers. The feedback I received from one co-worker cut pretty deep. But I was and continue to be truly grateful for her candor. It caused me to see how I was unintentionally impacting others and as a result, I made a massive shift in the way I led.

If something were limiting your leadership, wouldn't you want to know about it—even if it stings a bit? A few words of caution. When you ask for feedback, even if you do not agree with the person's perspective, keep your defenses at bay, express your gratitude for what they shared, and sit with the feedback long enough to sift through it and pray about it. Ask God what he might be highlighting to you that could help you. And when you receive feedback, do something with it. There's little worse than receiving feedback and then not doing a darn thing to improve on what was pointed out. People will be frustrated, and you will lose credibility.

Who can you ask to give you feedback? Pick a person or two you trust will tell you the truth and be grateful for the growth it brings.

### **Day Two**

I am examining 5 habits of an extraordinary leader. Yesterday's habit was to be a learner. Today's habit is to be present. One way to practice presence is through your listening. We all have been taught listening is important, but few people have mastered this critical skill. You may already think you are a

good listener, but there is a big difference between listening and hearing. And whether you listen or don't, it will affect your impact as a leader.

When you are in a leadership role, you create the tone of your team and your organization. Your actions directly influence the level of trust, collaboration, and contribution you inspire in the people who work with and for you. Being truly present and listening in a way people feel heard and understood creates an experience for people. They sense you really care, and when you demonstrate a genuine interest in other people, you increase trust. How can you level up your leadership through listening? By practicing presence. One way to do this is by maintaining eye contact. I once worked for a senior leader who rarely paid attention when people talked. In one-on-one conversations, if he were anywhere near his computer, he would give a hand motion for someone to start talking but he would keep looking at his screen. In meetings, he would constantly check his phone or be on his iPad. It was pretty deflating for the team, and if I am honest, it was very frustrating, especially when he was the one who called the meeting.

Your lack of listening shows a lack of interest. When you are in conversation with someone, put the phone down, turn it over, or better yet put it in your pocket or bag. Studies have shown just merely holding your cell phone or keeping it visible on the table while you are conversing can have an adverse effect on listening. So, be intentional and give the individual talking your entire focus.

If we look to the example of Jesus, we see he was fully present with people. He had a million things to tend to, yet when someone was face to face with him, he gave them his full attention. He did not allow himself to be easily distracted or fall into the temptation of multitasking.

Do you create an experience for people where they feel your focus is on them when they are talking? Who is someone you can practice being present with today? When you truly listen to others, it's a gift.

### Day Three

I am examining 5 habits of an extraordinary leader. And today we'll talk about the third habit: be an empathic listener.

How do we practice empathic listening? When you listen empathically, it means you are listening intently and deeply to another person with the resolve to understand them and not with the goal to respond.

Think of the last conversation you had at work or home with your spouse or teenage kid. Were you focused on listening to them in a way they felt heard or was your mind racing with a response, your lips poised to give advice or blurt out your point of view? If we're honest a lot of our communication is spent trying to get our thoughts across and have others listen to us. We can be so committed to our way of thinking we make assumptions about what another person means before they finish communicating. Empathic listening flips the script.

Proverbs 20:5 instructs,

*The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.*

When you listen to understand, you not only increase the chance of the person feeling heard, but there is a very high probability—especially in conversations where emotions run high—you will draw out the real issue. The next time someone comes to you with a problem, frustration, worry, concern, or complaint, resist the urge to judge, fix, or give advice. Instead, employ empathic listening. Let them know you hear them by paraphrasing their words and reflecting back the emotion you are sensing them express. For example, imagine your coworker comes into your office in a panic and says, "I'm completely overwhelmed and frustrated with this job. I just don't think I can do it anymore."

Now your instinct may be to start commiserating or giving your opinion or advice, and while there may be a proper time and place for that, first try responding in a way your coworker feels like you are listening and hearing what they said. You might say something like, “It sounds like you feel discouraged at work.” Or, “I hear you’re frustrated.” And then just stop and let the person respond. Don’t be afraid of silence. When you listen this way, it creates a space for the person to keep talking and for you to gain greater understanding. If you are not used to listening in this way it can feel awkward at first but try it in the workplace or at home. See what happens when you press pause on fixing and advising and listen with the intent to truly understand.

## Day Four

Do you express genuine appreciation for others? I am examining 5 habits of an extraordinary leader. And today is the fourth habit: show appreciation.

Gary Chapman’s book *The Five Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace* shares a statistic that 65% of North Americans reported they had not received recognition or appreciation at their workplace in the past year. And while 51% of managers believe they do a good job of recognizing employees for work well done, only 17% of employees believe their manager actually does a good job of recognizing them<sup>1</sup>. Clearly, something is off!

Data shows 79% of employees will quit their jobs due to a lack of appreciation (Zippia.com), while employees who feel valued are motivated to do their best work<sup>2</sup>.

How regularly do you show appreciation in the workplace? It’s been said encouragement is oxygen to the soul.

Just as every person has inherent value, every human being has a desire (whether they will admit it or not) to feel valued and appreciated; it’s one of the deepest and most basic human needs. While it’s been proven there is a bottom-line benefit to organizations for fostering a gratitude culture in the workplace, the buck doesn’t stop there. As a leader, and especially as a follower of Jesus, you are entrusted with tapping into the potential of the people in your care, helping them unleash their gifts and talents. This is a different mentality than, “Just do your job.” You have a high calling for cultivating a work environment that is built on an attitude of trust and to inspire and not to embrace the old “command and control” mindset.

How can you genuinely show appreciation? Don’t just show gratitude for what people do, show appreciation for who they are. Be specific, rather than general, saying “Hey, good job on that project,” doesn’t point out what you specifically valued. Instead, it might sound something like this. “Hey Jim, I just wanted to say I really appreciated your attention to detail on the presentation last week. You do your work with excellence, and you bring a lot of heart and passion to the team.”

When showing appreciation, go beyond pointing out a person’s performance to acknowledging their intrinsic value too.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapman, G. D., White, P. E., & White, P. (2012). *The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace: Empowering Organizations by Encouraging People*. Northfield Publishing.

<sup>2</sup> Kizer, K. (2023, June 29). *35+ powerful leadership statistics [2023]: Things all aspiring leaders should know*. Zippia. <https://www.zippia.com/advice/leadership-statistics/>

Dr. Paul White says, “Even the hardest heart will soften and respond to a freely given ‘cup of water’ of appreciation—reviving their spirit and creating new growth.”

How will you make showing genuine appreciation a leadership habit in your life? Who is someone in your workplace you will encourage this week?

## Day Five

I am examining 5 habits of an extraordinary leader, and today we're wrapping up with: be reliable.

Before we dive into our final leadership habit, I want to acknowledge you've most likely heard about these skills and habits. While these competencies may sound like common sense, ask yourself, “Do I make these skills my common practice?” There is a big difference between knowing about something and actually doing it and living it out. As you gauge your leadership, measure it by the degree these habits are regular and consistent. Consistency is key. Being consistent in positive actions and behaviors will help you create trust with those you lead. Others will see you as reliable.

When you are reliable you keep your commitments. You do what you say you are going to do. You follow-through. One of the quickest ways for you to lose trust and undermine your leadership is by not keeping your word.

Sounds simple, doesn't it? Yet, how many times have you said you would do something and dropped the ball or neglected to carry out what you committed to?

In Matthew 5:37, Jesus says, *all you need to say is simply yes or no*. Now the context of this verse has to do with oath-keeping and is part of the sermon on the mount when Jesus is addressing the subject of telling the truth. He tells the crowd not to break their oaths. An oath was a promise to do or not do something, invoking God as a witness and the one to bring judgment if the promise was broken. Back in the day, it was common for people to make oaths to emphasize their seriousness and truthfulness. While you are most likely not invoking God as your witness when you make commitments at work, this biblical truth applies to your witness as a follower of Jesus. Are you impeccable with your word? Do you have a reputation as someone who says something and does it? Or do you say you will get back to someone, but you never do or fail to complete a task that you agreed to. The reality is there are no small things when it comes to keeping your word.

Our reliability is questioned when what we might consider the insignificant things are in fact significant to others. To be an extraordinary leader, have integrity and be faithful to your word so others know they can rely on you.