

The Right To Lead

The Privilege and Responsibility of Leadership



For Coaches—Tips for developing responsible leaders:

1. Allow your team to pick your leaders. You may not get the best leaders but you will get the best influencers and that is who you want in the same room with you so that you can make them the best. How they go is how your team will go.
2. Meet with and acknowledge your leaders on a weekly basis. Communication is everything. You may say you don't have time for an extra meeting but I promise you if you lead your leaders they will save you bunches of time and trouble later! Use all or parts of this manual and diligently take them through it. Raise 'em up!
3. Engage your leaders in discussions about what they think a leader is and where you are as a team and where you need to go.
4. Communicate clearly what you expect of them. Discuss the rewards, the risks, and the responsibilities of leaders. Ask for a serious commitment.
5. Share your authority. If these leaders are really going to lead you have to let them encourage and enforce the mission, goals, and rules. Be willing to talk about players' personal issues that need to be dealt with. Remind them **"What we see here, what we say here, stays here."**
6. Be a good role model leader by building a relationship with every player and challenging them to as well. Be a good role model in all that you do.
7. Be sure every class is represented on your leadership team. You might break it down like 4 seniors, 3 juniors, 2 sophs or something similar.
8. Help them develop **THE PLAN** (see **The Expectancy Theory** page 4):
 - a. What are your team core values? (Example—Honesty: we will not lie.)
 - b. What is your mission/vision this year? (Example: We will make the playoffs.)
 - c. What are the team goals that will help you accomplish the vision? (Example: We expect our players to make all off-season workouts.)
 - d. What will be our rewards? You need a system of strong rewards for the weight room, the practice field, game day, and the classroom.

The Right To Lead

Harriett Tubman is known for establishing the Underground Railroad back in the days when slavery was legal. She would help Black slaves from the South escape to freedom in the north. She worked to identify several “safe houses” on the road from the Deep South states to the northern states. The slaves would travel at night and hide during the day in those safe houses. Harriett Tubman was the driving force behind thousands of slaves gaining their freedom in this way.

Sometimes a slave would lose his courage and decide to go back. Harriett Tubman would put a loaded gun to his head and tell him, “*You have two choices—keep moving north or die right here.*” She knew that the whole thing would fall apart if ever a slave went back to tell his owner about the safe houses.

There comes a time when the leader must lead with the understanding that **what we have invested together has become bigger than any one person**. You can’t turn back because we as a team can’t. You can’t give less than 100% effort because we as a team have come too far and paid too great a price.

There is one quality that a leader absolutely cannot do without. It’s what made Harriett Tubman put a gun to the heads of the very people she was leading. It’s the quality of **resolve**. Here’s the definition of **resolve**—“*to come to a definite decision; to absolutely make up your mind about something; to have no hesitation about a course of action*”. Leaders must have great resolve. They must be decisive about moving the team toward it’s goals without hesitation.

A person of resolve and conviction will have these qualities:

- The courage of great faith
- An extraordinary sense of purpose
- A willingness to risk all for the mission
- Sacrifice far above the average
- The will and the ability to finish

What about resolve in your life?

- Do you know a person who is radically sold out to a cause?
- What’s it like being around that person?
- On a scale of one to ten with ten being the highest, what is your level of resolve for what we are doing as a team?
- What needs to change for you to possess the resolve you need to lead?

Former NFL Coach Dick Vermeil once said, “*If your commitment is small then losing doesn’t hurt much and winning is not much fun.*” The greater our sacrifice, the greater is our reward.

Faith and Vision

There is a story about an early American pioneer who was headed west to California and the Gold Rush back in the 1800's. During a fight with Indians he got separated from the rest of his people. As he headed West his horse stepped in a gopher hole and broke his leg. On foot now the pioneer kept pushing toward the far, blue mountains.

On his third day without water he walked up to an old water pump with a wooden bucket sitting underneath it. In the bucket were about 3 swallows of water and a note that read, *"Pour all this water into the pump to prime it and you will get all the fresh, clean water you want."*

The man hesitated only a moment then poured all the water into the pump. As he pushed the handle water gushed out giving him more than enough to make it to his destination. He took the risk of his lifetime and it paid off. That's part of the cost of doing something great and of being a leader. The man had to put his faith in that note in the bucket. You spell faith **r-i-s-k** and risk is what it will take for you to be a leader.

That pioneer could have drank those 3 swallows of water and maybe lived out the rest of the day. But he chose to risk everything to make it to his goal of the California gold mines. He showed great faith and courage, two things the true leader must possess.

Courage is not the absence of fear but the willingness to act in the face of fear. Courage teaches us what should be feared and what ought not to be feared. Only by taking action do we gain that knowledge. And from that knowledge comes an inner strength that inspires others to follow. In the most difficult times courage is what makes someone a leader. Courage, faith, and a willingness to act alone are qualities that earn you **the right to lead**.

"I am only one but still I am one. I cannot do everything but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do the something that I can do."—

Edward Everett Hale

Leadership 101

Qualities of a true leader

Many people want to be leaders or think that they are leaders but only a few really are. The cost of leadership is great and one of the most costly qualities a leader can possess is **diligence**. The definition of diligence is *“the constant and real effort to accomplish what is undertaken with persistent force.”* A diligent leader has acquired 7 basic qualities that earn him **the right to lead** and give him the power to lead:

- **He is humble.** Humility isn't about looking down at your feet and rubbing your toe in the dirt. It's not about being weak. It's about bringing all of your strengths under the authority of another. A racehorse is powerful but unless he receives the bit, bridle, and the jockey he can't even get to the starting gate. A humble leader is secure enough to be led by others. Also, he leads and serves others when no one is watching. He's unselfish and accountable.
- **He takes the initiative to act.** He doesn't wait to be asked. He looks around and sees what needs to be done. He is willing to start something that needs to be started! He is good at what he does and has a proven track record of excellence in competition.
- **He understands and communicates the vision.** He possesses a clear picture of where the team is going. He knows what the mission is and has totally bought into it. He has memorized the team goals and always keeps them before himself and his teammates. He has a deep sense of purpose and a written vision with a simple action plan to go after that purpose.
- **He takes risks.** He doesn't wait until his team is successful. He risks now when it matters most. He leads out of faith and confidence not fear and control. He is a person who will speak up **to** the team as well as **for** the team.
- **He has courage.** He is not a people-pleaser and knows that he can't be worried about whether people like him or not. As a matter of fact, he can't lead unless he is willing to stand against all of his teammates for the right thing. He is the same person in public and private. He is honest.
- **He is focused.** He is disciplined enough to remain undistracted in his pursuit of team goals. He is faithful in times of smallness when it looks like nothing is happening. He has no academic or discipline issues.
- **He is an overcomer and a finisher.** He sees adversity as opportunity and problems as stepping-stones to success. When adversity hits he is prepared to take action and lead his teammates through it to the completion of their team goals.

Finding Vision

“Without a vision people are undisciplined.”—The Bible

Definition of vision—“*the ability to see and anticipate a desired future.*”

One of the most effective leaders in modern history was Dr. Martin Luther King. He almost single-handedly moved our nation to look at racial injustices and make real changes. People either loved him or hated him and that’s often the way it is with leadership. What made Martin Luther King such an effective leader? He had a vision. He saw an America without racism and racial inequality. Here are some things I learned from him:

- A leader knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.
- A leader possesses relentless passion for the vision.
- A leader works harder and needs fewer privileges than anyone else.

The expectancy theory states that we must have two things to reach maximum performance: (1) a goal that we really want to accomplish in order to attain a certain reward. (2) a belief that if we follow the plan we will accomplish the goal and gain the reward. The reward must be something so great that players believe they cannot pass it up. And the plan must be so strong and clear they buy in to it 100%. Hopefully your coach has developed **a system of rewards**:

- Special dinners, gear, and recognition before the team are possible rewards.
- Reward players who excel in the weight room, in practice, in the classroom, and in the games. Make a big deal out of those who are taking care of business.

Here is the process for finding your personal and team visions/goals:

- Look within you. What is the fire that burns in you? Champions have passion.
 - Look behind you. What does your past say about your future? Who are the people and what are the lessons that have brought you to this point in life?
 - Look around you. Who are the people God has put in your life right now? What other resources are available to you to help you accomplish the vision?
 - Look ahead of you. Leaders must be the scouts ranging out ahead of everybody else, looking for trouble before it gets to us. Scouts also look for the best direction to travel.
 - Look above you. God has a way of drawing greatness out of our hearts. If you can realize a dream in your own strength, that dream isn’t big enough.
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- With your coach’s leadership determine your team vision, core values, and goals. Write them out, one or two sentences.
 - Write out clear, measurable goals that will help you accomplish the vision. Example: We will work harder than our opponents in the off-season by demanding that our players make every workout.
 - Write down the resources and training you need to accomplish your goals.

Honor's Reward

One of the most important things you can do as a team leader is to help establish a culture of honor on your team. Honor is the foundation of all true greatness. Many people talk about honor but few understand its true meaning and impact. But when you get it and live it out, things will change. Your team will take on a powerful quality that will be very difficult to defeat.

To honor is to accurately recognize the gifting and role of another, to highly value them and always promote them through both my attitudes and my actions. When we value the role of one of our members we focus on his strengths and not his weaknesses. How we feel about him is secondary to who he is among us.

The actual meaning of honor is “a valuing by which the price is fixed; from the root word meaning ‘to pay’”. Therefore to honor is to sacrifice something in order to recognize another’s value.

If your most gifted athlete and your teammate who spends the most time on the bench are treated and valued the same, you are walking in honor. Honor draws out individual greatness and courage. When we effectively honor a teammate we are helping him reach his greatest potential.

There is a clear authority structure through which honor flows. When this authority structure is in place your team will be able to function at its peak levels of performance. Here is that authority structure:

- **We honor those over us**—our leaders and coaches. It really doesn’t matter whether we like them or think they are good at what they do. They are our leaders and we value them and are loyal to them in public and in private.
- **We honor our peers, our teammates.** If we feel the need to correct or challenge a teammate we will do it privately. We put a high value on the guys who line up next to us. We will always have their back.
- **We honor those we influence.** No matter who you are somebody is watching you. Every high school player has some little kid, maybe a brother or sister, who looks up to him. Honor demands that we always do what’s best for them.

If we begin to build a culture of honor among us the rewards will be great. **Honor protects** every team member and leader from outside criticism and inside rivalry. Competition between teammates is a must but rivalry is for the enemy. Honor helps us know the difference.

Honor provides. When honor is at work among us it creates a place where we can reach our greatest potential because people believe in us and want to see us succeed. **Honor promotes.** When we value someone and their place among us, we help them to fulfill the role they have been given with dignity.

- Do you see honor at work on your team? In what ways?
- What do you as a leader need to do build a culture of honor among you?

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly Of Leadership

Rewards, Risks, and Responsibilities of Leaders

Lester Marino Perez saved his hard-earned money for months so that he could buy the right windsurfing board. Late one moonless night he secretly drove to the north shore of Cuba. With only the clothes on his back he climbed onto that board and pointed it toward Florida. He had determined to not spend another year under a dictator and he risked everything to seek freedom in the United States.

Twenty hours later the U. S. Coast Guard picked him up a few miles from Florida. He was dehydrated. He had weathered terrible thunderstorms. Sharks had bitten into his board. When they questioned him he said, *“No lie about what I was doing was possible.”* Lester Marino Perez understood that a great vision takes a great leader who will risk everything.

The Risks of being a team leader

- You will be under the microscope. Others will constantly watch you.
- One little thing can cause a teammate to not trust you.
- You won't always be liked.
- Teammates may become jealous.
- You will have to deal with conflict and take the heat when things go wrong.

The Rewards of being a team leader

- Taking care of others. One of the greatest lessons in life is to realize that leading others to success is far more meaningful than succeeding on your own.
- Impact. The people that change the world and reach their greatest potential are those that understand the power of influence. Your leadership now will sharpen you for the future so that your life can have real impact, meaning, and purpose.
- Relationships. A leader that really works at leading will learn how to build strong and lasting relationships, the key to a great marriage or career.

The Responsibilities of being a leader

- Leaders maintain team chemistry. They set the mental and emotional tone for the team.
- They keep coaches informed about team issues.
- They give input on team decisions. They are loyal to coaches and support their decisions.
- They identify and talk with struggling teammates.
- They police the team from within. They handle conflict.
- They exemplify what it is to be a leader both on and off the field.

Questions:

- Can you think of other rewards of leadership? Which one is most important to you?
- Which of the risks of leadership concerns you the most?
- What is the biggest thing that needs to change for your team to reach its greatest potential?

The Path To Greatness

You can't know where to go if you don't know where you are. And you can't lead others into serious commitment if you aren't seriously committed. Below is a chart to help you identify your commitment level and that of your teammates. It represents the path to greatness for your team. You might consider using this with your teammates by having the coaches evaluate where each player is and posting his name on this chart in the weight room.

Owner

This is the highest level of commitment. The owner has bought in totally to the team vision and goals. This person trains, competes, and prepares at the maximum level. He always holds himself and his teammates to a higher standard. He leads from way out front.

Worker

This is the committed level. A person here willingly goes the extra mile in order to reach team goals. He is self-motivated and doesn't have to always have somebody looking over his shoulder.

Employee

He will do what he is told to do by leaders and coaches. He does enough to meet the standard set up by leadership but he is not willing to do anything extra.

Wannabe

This is somebody who wears the uniform but he gives little more than his presence. He is not interested in team goals. He looks like he is in but he isn't.

Fence sitter

This person is not willing to buy in to the common goal. He is half-hearted in his efforts. He takes a "wait and see attitude".

Rebel

This person doesn't want to be led by anybody. He is caught up in his own view of things and does not agree with or care about team goals and rules. He pulls in the opposite direction from where the team is going.

- At what level do you see yourself right now on this scale?
- Where do you think your coaches and teammates would put you?
- At what level would you put most of your teammates?
- What needs to change to move yourself and your team toward being owners?

Leading From Way Out Front

Back in the 1980's QB Joe Montana and the San Francisco 49ers were at the top of the food chain in the NFL. Montana once said about his teammates Ronnie Lott and Mississippian Jerry Rice: *"They led our team from way out front. They sweated and bled more than anybody all the time."*

During one game Ronnie Lott got his pinky finger caught in a player's jersey. The damage was so bad that his finger was dangling by just a little piece of skin. The trainer told him he would be out of action for at least 6 weeks while the finger healed after surgery. Ronnie asked him how long he would be out if they just cut it off. The trainer told him he could play almost immediately. Ronnie said, *"Cut it off."* They did and he played in the next game. That's leading from way out front. Here is the difference in good leaders and way out front leaders:

- Good leaders inspire themselves. Way out front leaders inspire their teammates.
- Good leaders do not need someone else to tell them what to do. Way out front leaders have earned the right to tell teammates what to do.
- Good leaders are committed to the team. Way out front leaders sacrifice everyday for the team.
- Good leaders take the initiative to do what is necessary to get the job done. Way out front leaders set new standards for getting the job done.

"If your hand makes you weak, cut it off!" —The Bible

Four Types Of Leaders

The Leader by example

Leading by example means that you have learned to say “no” to yourself. You can’t lead anybody else if you can’t lead yourself. A leader by example excels in four primary areas:

Commitment

He is highly committed and self-motivated. Every great leader is totally sold out to his cause and that radical commitment is what attracts others to him without him even uttering a word.

Confidence

“One person with confidence is a majority.” Most people really struggle with confidence. It is a fragile thing. The most confident people are the ones who have a strong sense of identity and purpose. The most confident man in all of history was Jesus Christ. Listen to what He said about Himself: *“I am the light of the world...I know where I came from and where I am going.”* (The Bible) There are three keys to confidence in what He said:

- *“I am the light of the world”*—Confidence grows in me when I know the role that has been given to me and I have accepted it 100%. When I quit being selfish and do what I have been asked to do, I will be very hard to stop.
- *“I know where I came from”*—I have a strong sense of gratitude for my parents, my hometown, my teachers and coaches, and everybody who has poured in to my life. I have great confidence because I belong to them and to this team. I am not alone.
- *“I know where I am going.”*—Confidence grows in me when I have a strong sense of destiny and purpose. **A sense of destiny is the reality of the future drawing greatness from me in the present!**

Composure

“When things aren’t going well, it’s not what a leader says, it’s how a leader looks that matters.”—Mike Krzyzewski, Duke Men’s Basketball. Self-control is one of the greatest gifts known to man. By it nations are won and lost. How you react in the heat of battle is an essential key to leadership. I coached a kid in high school who became a great college football player. He became great because he had great composure. Parker knew how to compose himself, to quiet his mind and spirit. It’s about focus and it comes from being mentally, physically, and spiritually prepared.

Character

Will you do the right thing in the locker room, in your neighborhood, and in the classroom? If you can't do the right thing then do us all a favor and don't be a leader. Sometimes we think character is going to church and saying, "yes sir" and "no ma'am". Character is who you are at the deepest level. It is the real you. You can only reproduce who you really are. You can't lead others to be honest if you aren't. The real you is what always gets communicated no matter what you say or do. If your own statistics are more important to you than your teammates, they know it. They may not say it but they know on some level. A person of character admits his weaknesses but never stops growing to overcome them. He is a leader not because he is perfect but because he is committed to change and to grow. It is better to be a flawed person than a fake person. A person of character is honest and leads others to honesty.

The Vocal Leader

Very few leaders are born vocal leaders. Sometimes we mistake a loudmouth for a vocal leader. A vocal leader is one who steps up to the plate at the right time to take his team through a doorway of opportunity. Sometimes this doorway is filled with conflict or adversity. Sometimes it is filled with promise and timing. Whatever the case, these situations will often cause a player to rise up and be a vocal leader. Not just anybody can be a vocal leader. Here are some typical qualities of a vocal leader:

- He is often a natural communicator, outgoing, and extroverted.
- He is well established on the team. A newcomer is probably not going to be a vocal leader right off the bat. Having a history and track record with a team is essential for the vocal leader.
- He is a passionate competitor. Sometimes even a quiet guy will rise up and be vocal simply because his competitive nature has to challenge others to victory.
- He has a sense of timing about where the team is. Many times a vocal leader will rise up because he senses that his team is on the verge of greatness or disaster. He sees what is happening and knows he must speak up.

The Encourager

The encourager is a vocal leader of course. He inspires, supports, and refocuses his teammates. Encouragement at the right time in the right way is just a powerful thing. We all need about 10 encouraging words to every hard or critical word. It usually works out the other way around but the leader can help change that. Being an encourager is one of the greatest things you can do for a teammate and your team. Here are some things an encourager does and does not do:

- He does not flatter people. Your teammates don't need to feel good about themselves. They need to know the truth about themselves.
- He doesn't talk too much. People tune you out if you are always talking. Most people who talk too much are insecure or selfish.
- He pays attention to his teammates so that he can know both their strengths and their weaknesses. He goes after the strengths first by accurately affirming them on a regular basis. He knows the rare times he must point out a weakness. He can't do this without developing a relationship with each teammate.

Building confidence in those you lead: There is great power in remembering. Team leaders must remind their teammates often to keep confidence levels high no matter what is happening around them. Here are some important things to remind your team about:

- Remind them of your team mission and goals. People feel confident with leaders who have a strong sense of direction.
- Remind them of their strengths. Your teammates can't get enough encouragement at the right time in the right way.
- Remind them of their weaknesses. One of our greatest strengths is the guy lined up next to us. We belong. We aren't alone. My teammate covers my weaknesses.
- Remind them of their past successes. "We've done some great things together. We can do it again!"
- Remind them of their preparation and hard work. Make them remember the great price they have paid in blood, sweat, and tears to be on this team.
- Remind them that you believe in them and won't give up on them. Call out greatness in them by challenging them to rise up!
- Remind them to keep it simple by "just-ifying" their thinking. Sometimes we over-analyze putting unnecessary pressure on ourselves. Just-ifying your thinking sounds like this:
 - ✓ Just make this block.
 - ✓ Just put a good swing on a good pitch.
 - ✓ Just stop them on this possession.

The Enforcer

If your team has only a bunch of encouragers you will not reach any championship games. Every team needs vocal leaders who are willing and able to be enforcers. Along with the coaches, leaders establish and communicate the team's commitments and rules. The enforcer holds himself and his teammates accountable to those commitments and rules. Below are listed the most likely issues you will have to deal with as an enforcer:

- Confronting teammates who are not working as hard as they should be in the weight room, in practice, in rehab, the classroom, etc.
- Confronting teammates who break team policies: drinking, curfew, missing workouts, and poor grades.
- Confronting teammates who are in conflict with coaches or other players.
- The vocal leader who has to confront learns to do it in a positive, helpful way. He keeps the main thing the main thing. *"We appreciate the fact that you have a job that takes a lot of your time but maybe you need to make a choice between the job and our season because missing practice hurts you and us."*
- Vocal leaders don't sacrifice being respected for being liked. It takes courage and resolve (remember that word) to lead.
- Remember, more encouraging leads to less enforcing.

Example of team rules:

1. We will not lie.
2. We will not steal.
3. We will not cheat.
4. We will treat women with respect at all times.
5. We will not use drugs or alcohol.
6. We will not possess weapons.
7. We will respect and honor our parents, coaches, and teachers.

Dealing With Conflict

“A house divided against itself will fall.”—The Bible

One of the best football teams I have ever been around had to deal with a fight almost every day in practice. Those guys were so competitive and passionate about what they were doing that they just lit the place on fire! They weren't rivals. A rival is the enemy. They were competitors and healthy competition is a great thing among team members. A passionate team just naturally lives on the edge.

Every great team will have to deal with conflict. If there is never any conflict you need to go out and check the pulse of your teammates. Conflict, disagreement, and adversity are as healthy for a team as water, fertilizer, and sunshine are for a tree. You won't grow without them. An SEC football coach recently commented, *“Every championship team I have been a part of was led primarily by team members not coaches.”* Here are some things you need to lead your team through conflict:

Wisdom

The wise team leader not only knows what we need to do but why we need to do it. When conflict arises he focuses on helping both sides to win something if possible.

Compromise

A leader uses negotiation to find a fair agreement. He leads both sides to give something so the team can stay united.

Conviction

A person of conviction knows what he believes. He has a clear understanding of his values—the non-negotiables of his life. He realizes that there are some things that cannot be negotiated or compromised. A person of conviction is unafraid to offend people to preserve the greater good of the team and the greater value.

Courage

The leader knows there will be times when he must go toe to toe with a teammate and confront him about some work habit or attitude that is hurting himself and the team. He cares more about his teammates wellbeing than about being popular.

Encouragement

A great leader majors on encouraging others so that when times of correction and confrontation come he has earned the right to be heard. Somebody who consistently encourages his teammates will more than likely have to do very little confronting.

Leaders Don't Hesitate in the Face of Conflict

Seven Steps To Resolving Conflict

1. Understand the real problem. Sometimes an issue arises on a team that is just a symptom of a deeper problem. The wise leader defines that deeper issue. Check things out before accusing anybody of anything. Remember, you want to attack the problem not the person. A good motto for a team is *"What we do here, what we say here, stays here."*
2. Brainstorm solutions. Get together with coaches and other leaders and make a list of possible action steps you can take to deal with the problem.
3. Agree on a solution and develop a simple action plan. Write it down.
4. Decide who among the leaders will do what regarding the carrying out of your plan. Hold that person accountable to follow through. Confront with humility in the spirit to help not in arrogance with the spirit to control.
5. **Here is a proven process for dealing with teammates who need disciplining:**
 - a. A member of the leadership team should confront the individual one-on-one. Do it privately and keep it private.
 - b. If the individual listens and makes changes that's great. If the individual has a bad attitude or refuses to change, take 1 or 2 more leaders with you and confront again in private.
 - c. If the player takes no corrective action you may have to take him before the leadership team as a last resort.
 - d. Keep the coaches advised each step of the way.
6. Evaluate the success of your solution.
7. Pick your battles. Know where you team is, how mature or immature they may be. Don't try to tackle every weakness or need your team has. It's a process. Go after the biggest and most impacting issues.

Leaders Take Action

J.C. Brignone is a big, strong guy. But he was not the biggest or strongest guy on his college football team. He may have been the baddest. And he definitely was a leader. I saw him in the 4th quarter of a 3-point SEC game standing nose to nose with a much bigger player while challenging that player's manhood. Most of the team saw that exchange and it electrified them! We owned that 4th quarter, mostly because J.C. took action at the right time. That's what leaders do. Here are some key points about taking action in a timely way:

- A leader acts out of a contagious and passionate heart.
- A leader practices and plays harder than anybody else.
- A leader is a catalyst. He initiates movement and momentum for others by seeing the bigger picture and recognizing moments of great importance.
- A leader is an optimist. He leads first with constant encouragement for his teammates. He has learned their weaknesses and their strengths and knows when to go after them.
- He is practical. He is aware of the everyday problems teams face and he seeks simple answers to them.
- He has the courage to face his fears. He always does what he is afraid to do for the good of the team.
- He is a pioneer. He acts as a scout by going ahead of the team and finding hidden dangers that might hurt us.
- He knows how to say no to himself. He understands that **leaders don't give up what they want most for what they want at the moment**. This is no big secret. It's just maturity.

Important questions:

- Who has been a leader in your life who knew how to take action when it mattered?
- Where are you the weakest in knowing when to act and what to do to lead?
- Was there a time last year when you should have stepped up to challenge your team and you didn't do it? If you could do it over again what would you do?

3D Leadership

Most coaches and leaders live out of a two-dimensional model of leadership. That is they focus on two basic areas of development. Those areas are:

The Physical

This is the area of fundamentals—strength, cardio, speed, quickness, technique, and tactics.

The psychological

This is the area that focuses on how the mind can affect the body—motivation, confidence, intensity, emotions, mental toughness, and goal setting.

The spiritual

There is a third dimension that many coaches and leaders ignore or misunderstand. It is the spiritual dimension. If you haven't considered this area of player development I challenge you to take another look. I have heard some players and coaches express the thought that God is not interested in the game of football and all that spiritual stuff is for Sunday school not the playing field. I totally disagree and here are the basic reasons why:

- *“Leadership is first a matter of the heart. Whenever we have an opportunity or responsibility to influence the thinking and behavior of others, the first choice we are called to make is whether to see the moment through the eyes of self-interest or for the benefit of those we are leading.”*—John Maxwell
 - The spiritual dimension is about the heart and heart is the foundation for greatness. It is out of the heart that a person's whole life flows. It affects everything else for good or for bad.
 - Inspired players are tougher and more reliable than motivated players. The physical and the psychological are about motivation. Fear, intimidation, and other motivational tactics can work with players for a while but not over the long haul. If you are just motivating players then you have to wake up everyday and start over again. This is because motivation is external and temporary. Inspiration is a heart issue. It is internal and permanent. An inspired player lives it because he believes it on the deepest level possible, the heart level. Motivated people can carry the standard but inspired people will set the standard.
 - Without honor a team will never reach its greatest potential. They can win it all but if honor is not the foundation they will fall short of who they were to become. Honor is a heart issue and like most heart issues it originated in the heart of God. When you take Him out of the picture your team might look strong from a distance but it is one event away from crumbling. God meant business when He said, *“Those who honor Me I will honor. But those who dishonor Me will be themselves dishonored.”*—The Bible
- What grade would you give your team in these three areas on a scale of 1 to 10?
 - What are some ways that you can grow yourself and your team spiritually?

“Above all else guard your heart for out of it your whole life flows.”—The Bible

The Importance Of Focus

I have known teams that had everything they needed to be the best but didn't reach their potential. They were lacking the one thing that draws out every bit of their talent, vision, and effort. That one thing was FOCUS. And there are so many distractions. Here is one way focus can look:

Forget yesterday. Learn from past victories and defeats but don't let them cause you failure today. You need a 24-hour rule. Talk about and learn from the last game but after 24 hours let it go and move on. Success can distract as badly as failure.

One thing today. The reason vision and purpose are so important is because they have great power to draw us toward our goals. Without a vision of a great future we surely will be distracted by less worthy pleasures. Keep communicating the vision!

Commit to excellence everyday. The person who lives strong in the everyday situations of life will be strong when the battle is raging around him. He makes excellence a habit. Demand that your teammates do like wise.

Unite the team. None of us can reach our greatest potential alone. If all my energy is for my own good, eventually I will become so caught up in myself that I can't be objective about anything else. Unselfishness keeps my vision clear. Go after selfishness like the mortal enemy it is.

Surrender your heart. When you give your heart to the team goals you are all in. The heart is usually the last thing that gets in and without heart you won't finish. Commitment without the will to finish is a big, fat zero. Put the demand on yourself and your teammates that it's all in or all out.

- What are some distractions that you personally will have to fight this season?
- What are some distractions your team will have to fight?
- How will you know that your teammate or your team has gotten distracted?
- What will you do about it?

Your Team Covenant

Do you think you could learn something from a team that won a National Championship? In 2007 the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College football team did just that. We had some great coaches and some great players but they are not the reason we were the best junior college team in America. We entered in to a commitment that year that was beyond the normal and gave us the power to compete well beyond individual talent.

What we experienced at Gulf Coast was covenant relationship. **A covenant** is a promise of commitment between two or more people. A covenant is bound by honor and loyalty to one another. In a covenant relationship all my actions and attitudes are determined by what is best for my coaches and my teammates. A covenant describes what I am bound to.

Many players are contract players not covenant players. **A contract** is a legal agreement between two or more people. Contracts protect my rights and meet my expectations. A contract describes what I am entitled to. Gulf Coast did not have a written team covenant but if they had, this is what it would look like. Take a look at it and use it to write your own.

- **I will learn to live under authority.** [To the degree that I am submitted to leaders over me is the same degree of authority and leadership I can walk in.]
- **I will work to build a culture of honor among us.** [Honor demands that I recognize and value the giftings and roles of every team member.]
- **I will be a role-player.** [I will sacrifice by valuing our team goals above my own.]
- **I will overcome offense.** [When I get insulted, corrected, or otherwise offended I will not allow resentment or bitterness to poison our team. I will get over it quickly.]
- **I will never stop growing.** [I will dedicate myself to live with excellence everyday.]
- **I will be tough.** [I will not allow weakness or whining in me or on our team.]
- **I will be whole-hearted.** [I will not be distracted by lesser visions than our vision or lesser goals than our goals.]
- **I will look forward to our rewards.** [I will let the promise of reward draw me into our great future.]
- **I will finish.** [I will carry the burden of victory for us, alone if necessary.]

_____ signed _____ date

- Which kind of team is yours—covenant or contract?
- Does your team have a team covenant? If not, do you need one?
- What does your team covenant need to look like? Write it down and present it to your coaches for their input.

Demanding Commitment

As a team leader it is your job to remind your teammates about your team's mission, rules, and goals. Don't wait till the season starts before you ask these questions of yourself and your teammates. Do it as early as possible before pre-season workouts start. Don't just hang these questions in the locker room. Leadership should confront each teammate and demand an answer. You must have their commitment early and always!

- Will you always bring unity to us by growing, learning, and changing?
[Key qualities to look for—adaptable, teachable, correctible.]
- Can we depend on you day in and day out to discipline and prepare yourself with 100% effort?
[Key qualities to look for—dependable, self-control, excellence.]
- Will you recognize and value your coaches and teammates strengths before you judge their weaknesses?
[Key qualities to look for—honor, loyalty.]
- Will you bring us a great attitude every day?
[Key qualities to look for—enjoyable, enthusiastic, energetic.]
- Will you consistently care about and get along with your teammates?
[Key qualities to look for—compassion, forgiving, unselfish.]
- Will you be a fighter?
[Key qualities to look for—intensity, passion.]
- Will you be willing to carry the burden of victory for us, alone if necessary?
[Key qualities to look for—finisher.]

The Law Of The Weakest Link

“Say what you mean and mean what you say. Who you really are is who you are when you are alone in your room, at the party with your friends, or just you and your girlfriend.”—The Bible

To build a great team you have to find and deal with your **weakest link**. The weakest link may be a person, place, or thing. Your team is mostly strong except at that one point. You can go forward toward your vision and the accomplishment of your team goals with great success. But in the middle of crisis or conflict your weakest link will break and everything can fall apart.

Think of a heavy steel chain. I’m talking about one of those big boys that could pull an eighteen-wheeler and not break. If you replaced one link of that chain with a paper clip, how good is that chain? You couldn’t pull a tricycle out of the mud with it because it’s only as strong as its weakest link, which in this case is the paper clip.

Here’s an example of the law of the weakest link: The Great Wall of China is so big that it can be seen from space. Forty feet thick and thirty feet high, it stretches across China’s border for over 1500 miles. When it was built in the 2nd century no foreign army could penetrate it. Yet, invading armies got through it twice in its first year of existence. How? Both times they bribed the Chinese gatekeeper and he let them in. That’s the law of the weakest link at work. The greatest wall ever built didn’t work because one guy had no character.

Your team’s weakest link might be a teammate. It might be a place—“We have never won there.” It might be an attitude—“We have never won here.” One thing is for certain—leaders must identify their weakest link and effectively deal with it. Here are some tips for doing that:

- Make sure you aren’t the weakest link. Ask your coach or another strong leader to hold you accountable about your like, your habits, and your attitudes.
- Communicate your vision and goals every day in some way. Keep the commitment before the team.
- Without being judgmental look for slackers in the weight room and in practice. When you see one find out what is going on in that player’s life. He might be slacking because of big issues outside of your team. Get with your other leaders and get a plan to go after him. Ask him questions. Help walk out his problem with him. Tell him you are for him but something’s got to change.
- Have a plan in place with your coach about how you will deal with players who are slacking in the classroom or making bad choices in their social lives. Do you bring that player before the team leaders? What discipline measures will you have in place? Write it down and be ready.

Unconditional Respect

Your team cannot play at maximum potential unless you respect one another. There is a respect that must be earned through hard work, commitment, and loyalty. But there is a respect that must be unconditional. If you ever give up on one of your coaches or teammates you might as well head to the locker room because it's over. But unconditional respect will carry you through anything. The fact that your teammate will never give up on you is a powerful motivating force. Many teams have talent, coaching, and opportunity but they lack this one thing. As a leader, don't let it be your team. Here is what unconditional respect looks like:

To my teammates and coaches:

I will believe in your potential regardless of your ability, performance, or past failures. I will trust you to grow, to rise to the occasion, to do the right thing. But if you fail my trust, I commit to not give up on you and I will do what ever I can to help you succeed. If I see a weakness in you, I will first pray for you. If necessary I will privately confront you face to face and challenge you to rise up to our team's standard. If you hear me I have won you. If you don't hear me I will come to you with our leaders. I will not talk about you and I will not talk down to you but I will talk truth to you. I commit to do whatever it takes to call out greatness in you. I will fight for your honor if you are attacked in any way. I will stick up for you and stick by you always. But I will not see us fail.

"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love...love never fails." —The Bible

Decision Making

Every decision on or off the field has a consequence that is either good or bad.

When I make a decision I will think how it will effect:

God

Me

My teammates

My family

My school

I will consistently makes decisions that honor God, family, team, school, and me.

Quotes from great leaders

- *"A leader does the little things that others are not willing to do."*—Steve Campbell, Head Coach Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College Football
- *"Our leaders can't just lead from out front. We expect them to lead from way out front."*—Norman Joseph, Head Coach Mississippi College Football.
- *"Never be intimidated by people, circumstances, or the enemy."*—Mike Barbera, Pastor Church of the Good Shepherd, Pass Christian, MS.
- *"One life to live, it soon will pass. Only what's done for Christ will last."*—Mike Cavanaugh, founding pastor Elim Gospel Church, Lima, NY.
- *"Every championship team I have ever been a part of was led by team leaders not coaches."*—Dan Mullen, Head Coach Mississippi State Football.
- *"The most important part of leadership is maintaining composure in the middle of chaos."*—Mike Coggins, long time Mississippi and Tennessee coach/administrator.
- *"Vision is often birthed in times alone with God and huge ideas come out of vision."*—John Paul Buckley, Project manager, Caffey Inc., D'Iberville, MS.
- *"Ownership is the key to leadership. The head guy has to give his authority to his leaders and be willing to let them fail."*—Woody Davis, physician Meridian, MS.
- *"Be personal but don't take things personal."*—Bernard Evans, pastor and elder ELim Fellowship, Lima, NY.
- *"People see what you do louder than they hear what you say."*—Dot Easterwood Murphy, nations only female receiver coach, Hinds Community College, former basketball Olympian.
- *"When things aren't going well it's not what a leader says, it's how a leader looks that matters."*—Mike Krzyzewski, Head Coach Duke University Basketball.

**Written and edited by Bill Buckley
for the great coaches of the state of Mississippi.**

June, 2011.

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