

Executive Book Summary  
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November 24, 2019

EADM 892  
Dr. Keith Walker

# The Next Generation Leader

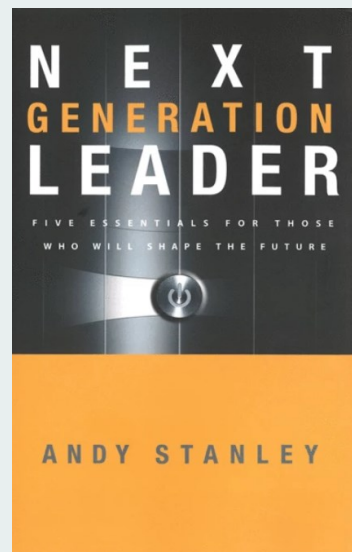
BY ANDY STANLEY

In this book, Andy Stanley draws on his years experience as a successful church leader to compile a set of essentials for you as a burgeoning leader. Throughout the book, Stanley focuses on five components that he sees as crucial to effective leadership. He shares wisdom through his words in this book and hopes that you as well will look to inspire other leaders as a sort of community in a broad sense.

Stanley examines the logistical tasks that leaders complete, the mindset behind decision-making, the communication to followers, and an improvement mentality, and all the while comes back to what it means to be a leader worth following. Thorough discussions on character conclude the book, but Stanley weaves his views on integrity and humility throughout the entirety of the book, as it is clear he views good leadership as something built on a foundation of character.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andy Stanley is the founder of North Point Ministries, which is comprised of seven churches in and around Atlanta, Georgia. He is an effective communicator and engages his congregation of thousands on a weekly basis. He is a sought-after public speaker and has also written over twenty books, most of which centre around biblical teaching and Christian living. Stanley lives with his wife near Atlanta, and they have three grown children.  
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*“These five essentials will provide you with the traction you need to maximize your leadership potential.” (p.161)*

# Section 1: Competence—Do Less, Accomplish More

## THE TWO BEST-KEPT SECRETS OF LEADERSHIP

1. The less you do, the more you accomplish.
2. The less you do, the more you enable others to accomplish.

## CHAPTER ONE - YOU ARE DOING TOO MUCH!

In this first chapter, Stanley contends that you, as a leader, are most effective when you focus on the things you are good at and the things you are passionate about. He goes farther saying that by delegating tasks outside of this range of focus, you are enabling and empowering others with opportunity and responsibility. Your organization will flourish because you will be more driven by vision and less by a to-do list, and because your followers will be allowed freedom to perform at their best.

As a leader, you do not need to be well-rounded or a jack-of-all-trades; your organization should be well-balanced, but you, as its leader, does not. You would be

wise to allow others to reach their potential by stepping into roles you are not gifted in. Even though you may have authority in certain areas, you do not necessarily need to have competence in those areas; delegate well, and trust those you have empowered.

Within this mindset, it is important to admit weakness. By admitting your weaknesses, you model a culture of transparency and learning, and you provide opportunity. As you bring your shortcomings into the open, and allow others to step into these holes, you allow for growth, both in your followers and in your organization as a whole.

*“The responsibilities I was reluctant to relinquish turned out to be opportunities for others. The very activities that drained me fueled other team members.” (p.19)*



## OBSTACLES OF A “PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS” MINDSET

1. The Quest for Balance
2. Failure to Distinguish Between Authority and Competence
3. Inability to Distinguish Between Competencies and Noncompetencies
4. Guilt
5. Unwillingness to Develop Other Leaders

## CHAPTER TWO - DOING THE RIGHT THINGS

Stanley uses this second chapter to make connections to the leaders in the early Christian church. This era of Christianity, in the first century AD, featured incomparable growth, and it is worth determining what early church leaders did that may have assisted in this development.

In the early days of the church, Peter and the other apostles who had spent time with Jesus shouldered responsibility and were involved in all areas of leadership within the church’s work, including that of caring for and feeding the poor. Stanley, citing the sixth chapter of the book of Acts, outlines how these apostles called a meeting to discuss an intentional role distribution. They chose seven men to carry on the task of caring for and feeding the poor, while the apostles would focus on recommunicating the teachings of Jesus.

As a result of this realization and decision, “the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). Because Peter and the early apostles focused on their giftings and responsibility as witnesses to Jesus’s work and teaching and allowed others to focus on indirect tasks, the early church benefitted immensely.

Another advantage of this decision was that two new leaders were allowed to develop. Two of the men that were empowered with the needs of the poor, Stephen and Phillip, went on to become influential members in the broad work of the church. This example illustrates how, by allowing opportunity to your followers, you can enable them to develop as leaders themselves.

*“You are most valuable where you add the most value” (p.33)*

## CHAPTER THREE– FINDING YOUR GROOVE

Stanley spends the first two parts of this section asserting the importance of not trying to do everything, as a leader, but to engage in the tasks that make you valuable. This third component of this section, then, focuses on how to discover what those things are.



### SELF-EVALUATION

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What tasks do you find effortless that others find daunting?
2. With which tasks do others consider you the logical person for the job?
3. What parts of your job do you enjoy?
4. What parts of your job do you wish you could delegate?
5. In response to which tasks do you receive the most praise from others?
6. What environments do you seek to work in?
7. What environments do you avoid?
8. What do people come to you seeking advice for?
9. What would you focus more of your time on if you could?

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*“Helping those around you discover their core competencies and then positioning them accordingly ensures that your organization can perform at peak proficiency.” (p.42)*

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### ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF REFLECTION

With this mindset of discovering core competency, Stanley advises you, as a leader, to encourage your staff or followers to engage in these strategies as well. Ask your staff to self-evaluate regarding desired and avoided tasks. Have your followers create a dream job description and present it to you. By allowing those who follow you to become aware of their passions and competencies, you will be better at delegating effectively and you will be able to arrange them in a way that sets your organization up for greatest success.

### PEER-EVALUATION

Ask people who employ others, who you know well and can trust, and ask them questions like these:

1. *If I came to work for you, where would I add the most value?*
2. *If I came to work for you, where would you have me focus my attention?*
3. *If I came to work for you, where would I be likely to experience the most success?*
4. *If I came to work for you, what would you prefer that I avoid?*
5. *In my current role, where do you see my responsibilities misaligning with my core competencies?*
6. *In my current role, what advice would you give to my boss as to how to better utilize me?*
7. *In my life, do you see my passions misaligning with my competency?*



### IMAGINE A JOB DESCRIPTION

Stanley urges you to create a job description for your current role that seeks to add greater value to your organization.

- What could you be doing differently to add greater value to your organization?
- How could your employer better use you?
- Which of your gifts are not being used fully?

# Section 2: Courage—Courage Establishes Leadership

*“Leaders are not the first to see an opportunity. They are simply the first to seize an opportunity.”*  
(p.53)



*“The courage to dream always precedes the capital needed to finance the dream.”* (p.68)

## CHAPTER FOUR - FIRST IN

Speaking about the importance of Courage in this chapter, Stanley links courage to progress. Every organization needs to progress or it will not experience growth. The challenge with this is that organizations, and the people within them, with tend to maintain status quo and to resist change.

Because of an innate resistance to change, Stanley advocates that it requires courage to be the first to take a step toward progress, and people will naturally see someone stepping out first as a leader. For this reason, courage is a prerequisite for leadership.

As a leader, you will often be directing people to a place they have never been before, and, additionally, you will often be directing them to a place that you, your-

self, have never been before either. In this uncertainty, it is clear why courage is such a significant component of leadership.

Within this uncertainty, many people might see an opportunity, but it is a leader who seizes the opportunity in spite of the unknown. In fact, Stanley argues that it is this dark unknown that provides a leader with the greatest opportunities.



*“Courage is the willingness to move in a direction in spite of the emotions and thoughts that bid you to do otherwise.”* (p.54)

## CHAPTER FIVE - JUST A STONE’S THROW AWAY

In this chapter, Stanley uses the biblical story of David taking on Goliath to illustrate the opportunity that arises in the presence of fear. He shows how David did not have elaborate strategies when he decided to face Goliath, he simply acted on an opportunity in courage.

From this vantage point, Stanley contrasts courageous actions from careless actions; David acted courageously, yet carefully. And through these actions, and the defeat of Goliath, he instilled courage in the rest of the Israelite army. His courage elevated him to leadership.

Again, David stepped forward with courage, not with planned out goals or policies. As a leader, it is important to remember that courage to tackle a problem always precedes the strategies to do so; the “what” always comes before the “how”.



*“Leadership is about moving boldly into the future in spite of uncertainty and risk.”* (p.55)

CAREFUL ACTIONS	FEARFUL ACTIONS
Cerebral	Emotional
Fueled by information	Fueled by imagination
Calculates risk	Avoids risk
Wants to achieve success	Wants to avoid failure
Concerned about progress	Concerned about protection



## CHAPTER SIX - THREE EXPRESSIONS OF COURAGE

Although previously promoting the need for leaders to seize opportunities, wisdom is required in this; you, as a leader, must not think that every opportunity is one worth pursuing. This idea recalls the themes from Section 1 in relation to doing less, not more. In order to maintain your vision, you must maintain your focus; do not provide attention to opportunities that do not align with your vision.

### THE COURAGE TO SAY NO

*“The ability to identify and focus on the few necessary things is a hallmark of great leadership.” (p.69)*

#### THE SEVEN COMMANDMENTS OF CURRENT REALITY

1. Thou shalt not pretend.
2. Thou shalt not turn a blind eye.
3. Thou shalt not exaggerate.
4. Thou shalt not shoot the bearer of bad news.
5. Thou shalt not hide behind the numbers.
6. Thou shalt not hide behind the numbers.
7. Thou shalt not isolate thyself.

### THE COURAGE TO FACE CURRENT REALITY

Sometimes, as a leader, you will want to see the good in everything; ego plays a part in this. It is important to be optimistic, but seeing the positives in every problem, while ignoring evidence to the contrary is a recipe for being out of touch and ineffective. You must have courage to seek out truth about your organization in order to know where you stand as a leader and as an organization. If you don't know where you are it will be very difficult to get where you desire to be.

#### THE COURAGE TO DREAM

The reason dreaming takes courage is because every dream is followed by doubt. When you have a dream of the way something could be, you will no doubt be given, by yourself or other, numerous reasons why it will not work. It is easier to not pursue the dream at all. If this is how leaders lead, your organization and, as Stanley suggests, the world as a whole, will not progress and experience anything new.

### THE COURAGE TO DREAM

## Section 3: Clarity—Uncertainty Demands Clarity

### CHAPTER SEVEN - LEADING IN THE SHADOW OF UNCERTAINTY

Stanley takes the opportunity in this section, to speak to the inevitability of uncertainty within the leadership context. Furthermore, he argues, uncertainty is not only inevitable, it is also the result of success. As you receive greater responsibility as a leader, you will be faced with greater uncertainty—the more you are responsible for, the less control you will have, and the less certainty of results you will have.

Uncertainty is not something to shy away from; it is something to acknowledge and to be ready for. In the face of uncertainty, you, as a leader, must focus on providing clarity for those who follow you into it. You do not need to be certain of an outcome, but you do need to be clear on direction.

Being confident in your direction and clear in your directives is important when dealing with intangibles, especially on a large scale. Natural feedback on your decisions can take time to arrive, and your followers will need your clear leadership waiting for affirmation on the direction you are collectively moving in.



*“Uncertainty is not an indication of poor leadership; it underscores the need for leadership.” (p.79)*

### CHAPTER EIGHT - I’LL TELL YOU WHEN WE GET THERE

When leading, you have to be willing to make decisions even when you do not have enough information. Under this premise, Stanley recounts the story of Ulysses Grant during the Civil War. His willingness and ability to make decisions with limited information made him extremely valuable to the Union efforts. Even when he was uncertain, and even when he was wrong, he was clear in his directives.

Stanley asserts that people will continue to follow you when you are uncertain, but they will not long follow you when you are not clear. Not being clear leads to not being able to hold people accountable and to not appearing confident. That type of leader is hard to follow.

Because of the significance clarity has to leadership, it works in reverse as well. In an organization, the person who provides the most clarity in a situation will be seen as the leader. If you are the leader, this is your goal; be clear to retain your influence. If you are not the leader, and you gain and provide clarity, it is important to ensure you are conscious not to usurp the authority of the one in charge.

*“As a leader you must develop the elusive skill of leading confidently and purposefully onto uncertain terrain.” (p.89)*



*“You must be clear if you are to retain your influence.” (p.91)*



## CHAPTER NINE - MANAGING YOUR UNCERTAINTY

*“Uncertainty exposes a lack of knowledge. Pretending exposes a lack of character.” (p.94)*



*“Leadership is not about making decisions on your own. It is about owning the decisions once you make them.” (p.95)*



*“If you are unclear about the destination of the journey, even the most sophisticated, well-thought-through strategy is useless.” (p.97)*

### SUGGESTION 1:

#### DETERMINE YOUR CERTAINTY QUOTIENT

Stanley urges you, as a leader, to think about how certain you have been making past decisions. By looking back to right decisions made or wrong decisions made, you can see what level of certainty it takes for you to commit to a decision. Know that you will never be 100% certain; in fact, Stanley believes you will rarely be more than 80% certain. Determine your required level so that you will know when you are comfortable to make a decision.

### SUGGESTION 2:

#### EXPRESS YOUR UNCERTAINTY WITH CONFIDENCE

When you do not have certainty, it may be tempting to pretend that you know more than you do, acting under the myth that leaders know everything. Your followers will typically notice when you are pretending to know something you do not; therefore, pretending erodes respect and reveals a lack of integrity. The other thing that you do when you pretend is you create a culture that does not ask questions or seek to learn or improve. You do not exemplify a desire for others' input, and your followers will follow suit.

### SUGGESTION 3:

#### SEEK COUNSEL

An important piece of managing uncertainty is to look for advice from others who have experience and wisdom. In pursuing counsel from others, you show that you show your willingness to learn as much as you can, and you also have the opportunity to receive affirmation or caution from another perspective. Your uncertainty may remain the same, but your confidence to move forward will increase.

### SUGGESTION 4:

#### MEASURE YOUR SUCCESS BY THE SCOREBOARD, NOT THE PLAYBOOK

You, as a leader, can manage your uncertainty by ensuring you are focused and clear on your vision and flexible with your strategies. One reason for this is because there is naturally more certainty associated with a vision than with plans and decisions. You must know with a good amount of certainty where you are trying to go, but you will have less certainty about how you will get there. Because of this, be willing to adapt or abandon strategies that you may think are great if they are not taking you to where you have set out to be.

## Section 4: Coaching—Coaching Enables a Leader to Go Farther, Faster



### CHAPTER TEN - LISTENING, LEARNING

In this section, Stanley makes the important point that you will be the best version of yourself only when you are coached. This applies to leadership as much as it applies to sports. A coach is often a counselor, consultant, and mentor wrapped into one, helping you to see yourself clearly, envision where you want to be, and develop strategies on getting there.

You can see only so much; it is a coach who will see what you miss and will do so from a unique perspective. Individually, you will naturally measure yourself against others and how they perform in relation to yourself. A coach can see your potential and will measure your performance against that potential.

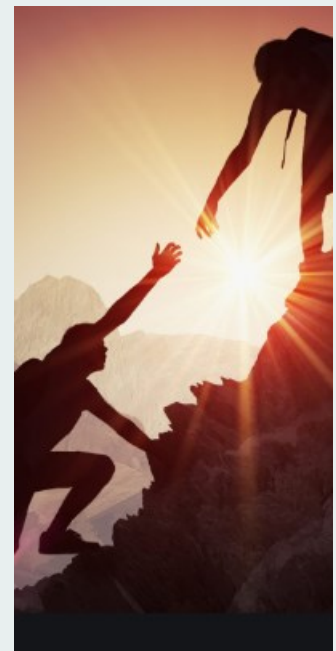
In seeing your limits, a coach will push you to them, whereas you will not have that same ability—to both see your limits and push toward them. It requires an external perspective and external force to effectively make this happen.

These words align with much of what Stanley has written in other parts of the book—that good leaders have the courage to look for the hard truth, the desire to know what their strengths and weaknesses are, and the willingness to seek wise counsel. These values are all brought together in the role of a leadership coach.

*“To be the best next generation leader you can be, you must enlist the help of others. Self-evaluation is helpful, but evaluation from someone else is essential. You need a leadership coach.” (p.106)*

### CRUCIAL REALIZATIONS FOR LEADERS

1. I can go farther and faster with someone coaching me than I can on my own.
2. An effective coach does not need to possess more skills than the person he or she is coaching.





## CHAPTER ELEVEN - THE KING WHO WOULDN'T LISTEN

Stanley uses this spot in the book to illustrate how the actions of Rehoboam, a king of Israel mentioned in 1 Kings 12, show the importance of seeking and listening to wise counsel.

Rehoboam, son of Solomon, takes power after his father's death, and the people of Israel urge him to be more lenient in construction work demands and taxes. Rehoboam wisely decides to consult with the elders who provided counsel to King Solomon, and they advise him to serve the people so that he, in turn, will be served by them. He rejects the advice of these men and instead turns to friends who suggest that he rule with a heavier hand than his father.

Rehoboam's poor judgment resulted in his country, Israel becoming divided and having ten tribes split off from the other two to form the nation of Judah. Rehoboam's legacy is one of infamy due to his pride and unwillingness to accept wise recommendations from people with experience.

Stanley's decision to include this account is clearly one of caution to you as a modern-day leader. Seek out the words of those with wisdom and value their experience as a perspective that you do not have. Understand how their view of you as a leader is one you cannot see yourself.



*“Most of the time it is not even what a coach knows that makes him valuable. It is what he sees that counts.” (p.113)*

## CHAPTER TWELVE - WHAT COACHES DO

### THE ROLES OF AN EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP COACH:

#### 1. To observe:

A coach needs to physically see you at work in your leadership role. It is not enough for you to discuss your own leadership; a coach must see you in action. A good coach is not there to critique or judge, he or she is there to help you improve.

#### 2. To instruct:

You have sought the knowledge and experience of a coach, so naturally, instruction is what follows. There may be hard truths, but this is why coaching is necessary—to help you see what you need to do to reach your potential.

#### 3. To inspire:

A coach will help you see what you can become and will inspire you to do anything you can to achieve it. Observation and instruction are not enough; a good coach will help you to strive for your best.

### FINDING A GOOD COACH

Most people will not know what a leadership coach is or consider themselves qualified to be one. Therefore, in order to seek out a coach, identify an area of your leadership you want and need help in. Ask someone you trust, with experience, to evaluate that specific component of your work. Once this door is opened, you will have freedom to continue to seek out counsel from this person, and the coaching relationship can develop. Through this process, however, the onus is on you to reach out and to develop the relationship.

### BECOME A COACH, YOURSELF

Realize you are qualified to be someone's coach. Stanley encourages you to evaluate and inform, but only once you have earned trust with another leader. You should not wait until you feel you meet the requirements; realize that leaders must be learners. You have a responsibility to share what you know and offer your perspective.



## Section 5: Character—Character Determines the Leader’s Legacy

### MORAL AUTHORITY

- “Moral authority is established once it becomes clear to those who are watching that progress, financial reward, and recognition are not a leader’s gods.” (p.139)
- “Moral authority is the credibility you earn by walking your talk. It is the relationship other people see between what you claim to be and what you really are. It is achieved when there is perceived alignment between conviction, action, belief, and behavior. Alignment between belief and behavior makes a leader persuasive.” (p.140)
- “You can manage people without moral authority. But you cannot influence them.” (p.140)
- “Every decision you make will either add to or detract from the influence you have.” (p.140)

### CHAPTER THIRTEEN - A NONESSENTIAL

Stanley acknowledges that character is not an essential component for you to be a leader, but he goes on to say that it is an essential component for you to be a good leader, a leader worth following. He supports this with countless survey results referencing followers desiring from their leaders traits like honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness over traits like competency and intelligence. People will value the way in which you lead more highly than where you lead them to.

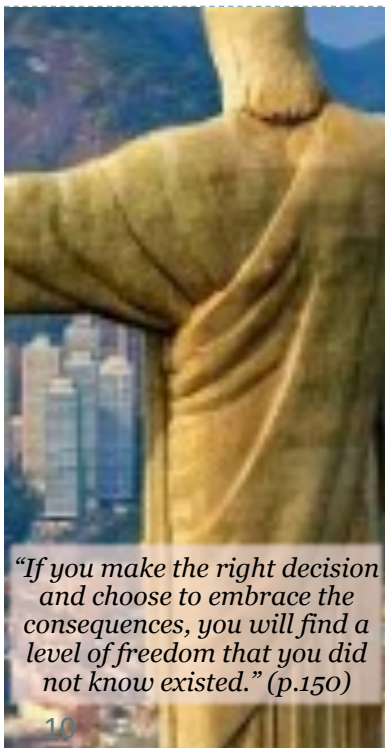
Having character is not innate, nor does it automatically develop in you, it is a constant choice to do the right thing even if it is difficult. This means that you must make choices to do what’s right before an incident occurs; you must have convictions and values that you will never compromise.

A leader with character chooses what is right without a calculation of what it will cost. For you as a leader, you will have to sacrifice your goals because of your convictions. Success that you obtain will bring about the difficulty of maintaining that success, resulting in an even greater need for you to hold true to your character.

It is important to remember that in doing what is right, you are not doing so to avoid consequences or to appear favourably, you are doing so because it is right. It is not a means of getting you somewhere, it is a pillar crucial to who you are as a leader and as a person.

You will know if you are leading with character if the person you are as a professional is the same person you are outside of your environment as a leader. You cannot expect to have influence if your character does not extend to your personal life.

*“Character is the will to do what’s right even when it’s hard.” (p.133)*



*“If you make the right decision and choose to embrace the consequences, you will find a level of freedom that you did not know existed.” (p.150)*

### CHAPTER FOURTEEN - THE KING WHO FOLLOWED

The king referred to in the title of this chapter is King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, written about in the book of Daniel in the Old Testament in the Bible. King Nebuchadnezzar’s empire conquered Jerusalem and brought back the bright and gifted to serve the king in Babylon. Among these taken were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and they were given positions of leadership and prestige in this foreign country. Here, Stanley recounts the story of their character in response to an edict from King Nebuchadnezzar.

The king ordered that anyone who heard certain music in the kingdom must bow down before a gold statue of himself. The three men from Jerusalem refused to bow, out of allegiance to their God of Israel. After giving them time to reconsider, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego not relenting, King Nebuchadnezzar carried out the established penalty of death by fire.

In standing firm on their principles, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego demonstrated their character. They showed that they would not compromise on their convictions even in the face of death; this, surely, is true character. They understood that if their God had given them the gifts, wisdom, and status that enabled them to be prestigious and sought after, it would be folly to abandon His principles in order to maintain those blessings.

Of course, this account does not end with these men dying in a blazing furnace. They were miraculously saved from the fire by the God they continued to serve .

*“Your talent and giftedness as a leader have the potential to take you farther than your character can sustain you.” (p.151)*

*“Leaders worth following predetermine their response to invitations and opportunities that have the potential to sink them morally and ethically.” (p.155)*

*“Your character is reflected in every decision you make and every relationship you establish.” (p.157)*

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN - THE LEADER WORTH FOLLOWING

As a final thought, and as the culmination of his book, Stanley uses this last chapter to discuss what it means to be a leader that is worth following.

Just because someone is gifted or has a large followership, does not necessarily make that person worth following. As he considers earlier, having character is what enables you, as a leader, to have moral authority, to receive respect, and to experience true dedication from your followers.

How you respond to the temptations success brings shows your character, but if you wait to see how you will respond when these temptations arise, it will be too late. You must prepare yourself for eventual success by being intentional and disciplined to become a person of strong character even before you see great levels of success.

One way to prepare yourself is to think about your legacy—what do you want people to remember about you? To consider what is important to you, for people

to say about you, can inform the small decisions you make today.

Something else that can help you prioritize character and make it apart of who you are is to bring your values out into the open. By telling others about who you are trying to become, you have an added incentive to not only refrain from making poor choices, but also to take responsibility for your actions when you inevitably do make poor choices. People already have opinions about who you are, so it makes sense to enlighten them on who you are trying to be.

Stanley talks about making choices now to set yourself up for the future. Decide now what you will do when offered certain, potentially compromising, opportunities. Identify areas of your life or choices you have made that have the possibility of coming back to bite you later on. Bring those things into the open; resolve them now and take accountability. By focusing on these things now, you are ensuring that your character will be solid when it counts.



### FINAL THOUGHTS

Stanley’s discussion on leadership in this book is thorough and provides depth. Throughout, his points centre on what it takes to be effective and influential. All five of his emphases—competency, courage, clarity, coaching, and character—contribute to a well-balanced form of leadership. Stanley maintains that if you, as a leader, overlook one component here, you will be sacrificing progress and wasting efforts.

As the title of the book suggests, Stanley views this book as somewhat of a torch-passing. He has acquired lessons and experience from his years as a church leader, and he has seen success. His compiled thoughts, anecdotes, and suggestions are recorded as a means of inspiring and instructing a new crop of leaders. He views this as a responsibility leaders have. As such, a further intent of Stanley’s work here is to push other leaders to seek out younger leaders to challenge, instruct, and coach, in order to continue to improve leadership on a broader scale.

Although Stanley focuses formally on character in his final section, exhorting leaders to serve with integrity and honesty is a clear goal throughout the book as a whole. Stanley speaks humbly about his experiences, and it is clear that he endeavours to lead in his setting with humility and uprightness while striving to be courageous and clear with his decisions.