

# Understanding Leadership

By: Tom Marshall

Amanda Stilborn  
Executive Book Summary  
EADM 424  
For: Keith Walker

## Introduction

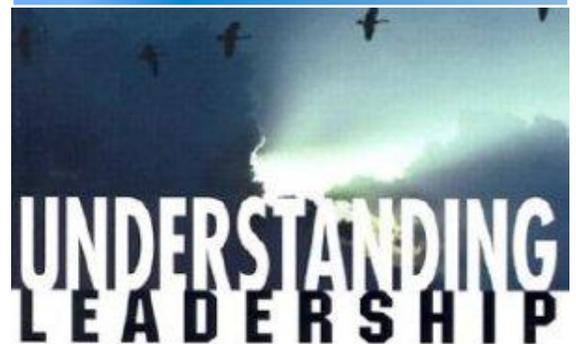
Tom Marshall's view of leadership is broken down and described in his book, *Understanding Leadership*. Marshall views leadership from a different perspective than most business sense theorists. He reveals what he feels it means to be a leader, based on years of experience and scholarly biblical insight. He focuses on servant leadership, as defined by Robert Greenleaf. The book describes how and why leadership is different from management, administration or ministry. It offers guidance on topics such as foresight, status, trust, timing, criticism, failure, caring, and honor. It emphasizes lifestyle, attitudes, and relationships. It provides guidance for today's leaders on fostering interdependence while maintaining identity and integrity within their church, business, or community.

## Author

Tom Marshall was born 1921 in Scotland and moved with his family to New Zealand in 1925. Marshall's experiences and expertise come from being an international bible teacher, serving in World War II, as well as being a motivational speaker, author, and having a background in business. He has worked for the New Zealand Treasury and later in advertising, magazine publishing, teaching and management consultancy. He and his wife were heavily involved in Christian churches in New Zealand and he spoke at many conventions in New Zealand and overseas. Through his experience and research Marshall gained a great deal of insight on leadership and outlines it in this book. Marshall passed away in 1993.

## Index

Introduction/ Author.....	1
Summary/	
Annotations.....	2-8
What leadership is/is not...2	
Foresight and goals.....3	
Timing.....3	
The dangers of power.....3-4	
Servant leadership.....4-6	
Awareness.....6	
Relationships.....6-7	
Summary.....	7
Evaluation.....	8-9



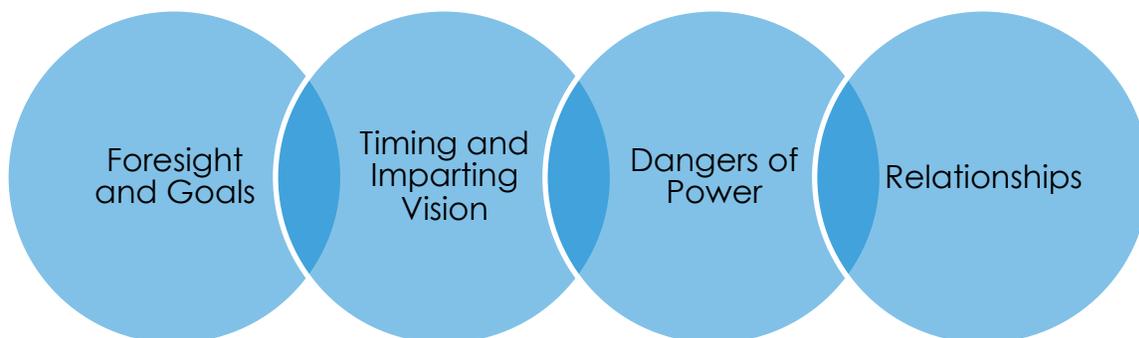
**TOM MARSHALL**

I will first go through an annotated summary of what I feel Tom Marshall's main messages are throughout the book. I will focus on what Marshall believes leadership is and is not, foresight and goals, timing, the dangers of power, servant leadership, awareness, and relationships. I will then provide a short summary of the main points of Marshall's take on leadership and give an evaluation of the book and his view on leadership.

*"The chapters of this book put relationship at the heart of everything..."*  
- Gerald Coates

### What is Leadership?

The understanding of leadership is fundamental to build leadership training skills. Marshall goes to the heart of the matter and identifies the capacities and characteristics that are critical to the whole leadership function regardless of the organization or the level within the organizational structure. These include:



Marshall believes that leaders are born, not made; although they can be developed:

"If you are a leader, that is your calling. It demands that you develop a certain mind-set. The future and what may lie in the future, and what you may do in the future, is one of the primary perspectives from which you must examine everything that goes on around you." (Pg. 19)

He believes that leaders are not superior to others, but that their role requires certain specific and essential abilities that are different from those needed for other roles.

### What Leadership is NOT

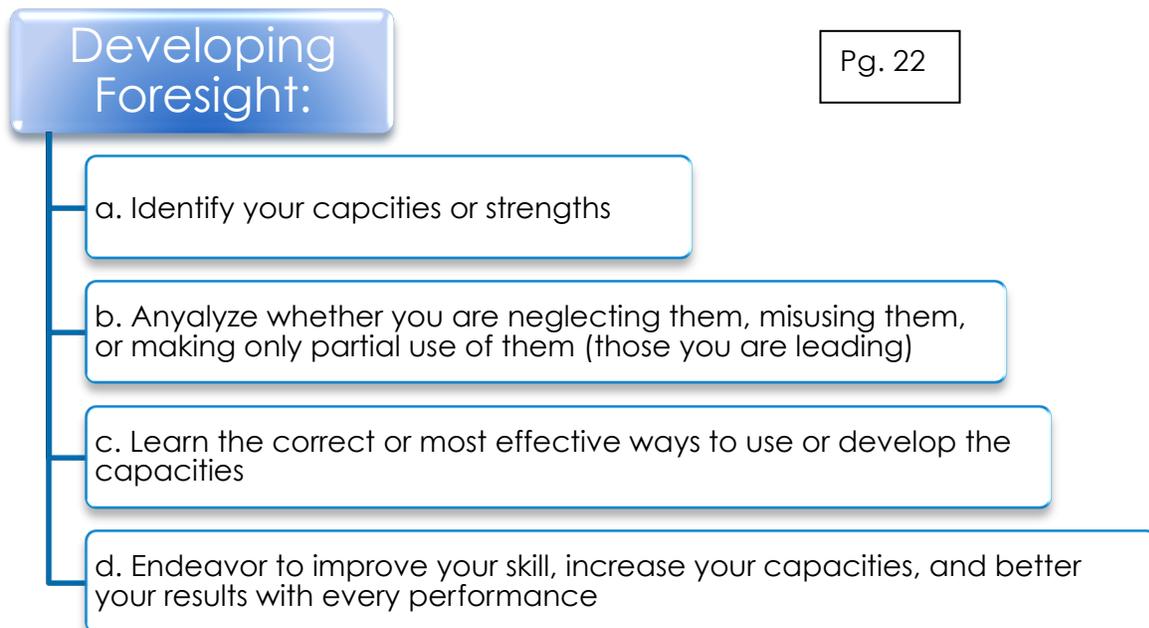
The first point Marshall makes is that leadership is not the same as management, administration, or ministry. A good leader may have good management skills but it is not a requirement of a leader to have them. When leaders think that they need to lead in all aspects, they will almost always come up short. They may be expected to be the best at everything and they may "feel threatened if gifts arise... that appear to

threaten [their] supremacy" (pg.11). Essentially, leaders may or may not have specific management, administration, or organizational skills, but there are certain attributes that true leaders must have to remain successful and to maintain a leadership role.

### Foresight and Goals

The first essential leadership characteristic Marshall describes is foresight. A leader must be focused on the future, rather than the past; "they are heading toward objectives, aiming at targets, and reaching out for things that are ahead of them" (pg. 13). They must be driven by goals and objectives, have a vision of the future and have foresight (the capacity to deal with the future). In order for a leader to have followers, their goals must be consistent with the follower's views; they must stay in touch with their followers, and have a mission statement that the followers agree with.

Marshall describes steps or stages in developing foresight:



*"People do not generally follow visions or dreams or schemes or ideas; the follow leaders. Therefore, leaders, even if they have the right goals, that make contact with the aspirations of the people, need something more. Leaders also have to be effective persuaders and relationship builders. And the way they present the vision and the goal has a good deal to do with the way people receive them and respond to them." Pg. 39*

## Timing and Responsibilities

The leader has a responsibility to understand his or her followers as well as allow those followers to understand him or her. A leader must know how and when to spring plans into actions. This task can be stressful and difficult but is a very important skill for a leader to have in order to be successful.

## The Dangers of Power

Leaders must be able to handle power. Power can be dangerous for those that it is used on and for those who exercise it; it can be a blessing or a curse. Historically power has often corrupted leaders, churches, countries, and other entities.

Marshall points out that there are several classic symptoms of a character that is beginning to show the corrupting effects of handling power:

1. Pride: an exaggerated sense of one's importance
2. Arrogance: one that thinks they are always right
3. Self-Aggrandizement: using power for one's own personal gains
4. Insensitivity: lack of regard for others
5. Domination: maintaining leadership position at any cost
6. Tyranny: uncontrolled and coercive authority

Because of the manifest abuses and evils that arise from power, there have been continuous attempts to find ways of keeping it under control. Marshall classifies two main categories of approaches:

1. Checks and Balances: dividing the power among several different power centers
2. Replacement of Leaders

Marshall seeks biblical teachings for remedies or solutions to these dangers of power. He believes that power belongs to God; when people try to gain power for themselves they misuse it. He looks to Jesus as the model for how to handle and redeem power, to honor God and to serve Him.

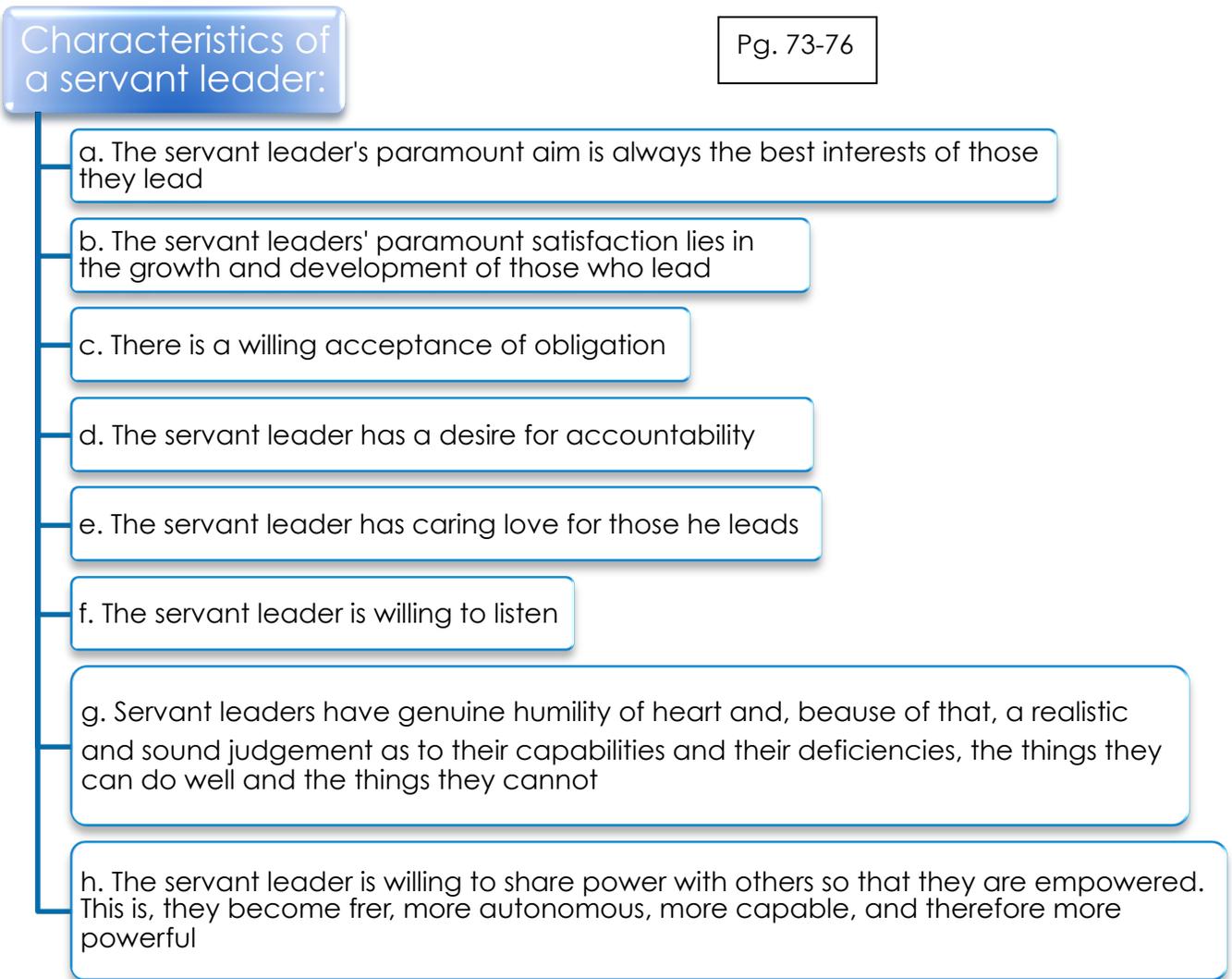
## Servant Leadership

With the redemption of power, came the redemption of leadership. Marshall explains that "Jesus not only brings into existence a new and redeemed type of power, he creates and models a new kind of leader to handle that power" (pg. 69). This type of leadership is what Robert Greenleaf referred to as *Servant Leadership*. He says there are two kinds of leaders: strong natural leaders and strong natural servants who assume leadership because they see it as a way in which they can serve. Greenleaf says that natural servants will be better leaders for society.

Marshall distinguishes that servant leaders are servants by nature and character, not just by what they do, the style they decide to lead with, or the roles they take on.

A leadership image that Marshall (and many others) look to is "the leader as a shepherd, because the shepherd is there for the sake of the flock... [but] the flock is not there for the sake of the shepherd" (pg. 73).

Marshall believes that leadership that springs from a true servant nature will manifest the following characteristics:



*"Attitudes are the things that determine what we are like and how we act and react." Pg. 78*

After providing an explanation as to what servant leadership is, Marshall attempts to provide us with an explanation of how we can better become a servant leader. Marshall believes that there is only one source of servant leadership - Jesus Christ. He embodied fully the meaning of servant leadership, emptying himself to serve God and humanity.

In describing how to become a servant leader, Marshall stresses the importance of attitudes. He explains that attitudes are more than beliefs, that they are made up of a cognitive element (intellectual beliefs or convictions), an emotional element (feelings we have about those beliefs), and a volitional element (the behavioral responses we make because of our beliefs).

### What Servant Leaders Need to Deal With

1. The status syndrome and its effects
2. Coping with criticism
3. Dealing with authority
4. Stress management

### Relationships

Leaders must be involved with the dynamics of the relationship with their people, as well as the relationships their people have with each other.

Marshall outlines the essential functions and contributions of a leader:

*"Good relationships nurture and foster interdependence while maintaining identity and integrity."  
- Gerald Coates*

### *The Ten Commandments of Leadership*

Pg. 136-137

1. To develop and conceptualize the overarching vision or the long-term overriding purpose to be achieved
2. To clarify and articulate goals and objectives
3. To see that the long-range plans and the organizational structures that will be needed to enable the organization to attain its goals are specific
4. To allocate the responsibilities and determine the accountability for major departments, or segments of the task
5. To determine the means to be used to monitor results, measure progress, and decide the corrective action that may be required
6. To act as a key resource for solving problems and overcoming difficulties encountered along the way

7. To communicate goals and objectives and any modifications or changes in direction
8. To motivate, inspire, encourage, and reward effort and achievement; correct and discipline unsatisfactory performance; maintain morale and team spirit
9. To take final responsibilities for results or outcomes
10. To represent the group or organization in its dealings with the wider environment

### *The Four Building Blocks of a Relationship*

Pg. 147

1. Trust (the most fragile of the four)
2. Love (the most rugged and enduring)
3. Respect of honor (the most neglected)
4. Understanding or knowledge (the one that takes the longest)

To foster positive relationships we must keep in mind these four components. Positive relationships are necessary for leadership.

### **When Leaders Fail**

Marshall concludes his book with a chapter on “When Leaders Fail”. Because a leader’s role is so visible to others, it will likely be focused on when there is a failure. Marshall focuses on “the recovery and restoration of leaders who fail” (pg. 215). He explains how “failure can be a crucial stage on the pathway to a leader’s real usefulness” (pg. 215). To recover from any failure Marshall prescribes restitution and reordering which requires “wisdom, compassion, patience, and above all, the heart of a father who is willing to minister discipline firmly but fairly and lovingly and who rejoices when it is all over” (pg. 222). The specific areas of failure that need to be addressed are:

- What is the nature of the failure? What happened?
- What is the cause of the failure? Why did it happen?
- How can the cause or causes of failure be corrected?
- How can we know that the weakness or failure has been corrected and that the leader can begin to function with some confidence in those areas again?

---

### **Summary of Key Concepts**

- Leaders must have a vision and be able to conceptualize that into goals
- Trust and relationships are key for maintaining leadership
- Jesus Christ provides the example of what ideal servant leadership looks like
- Leaders must be aware of power, authority, and criticism

### Evaluation

Tom Marshall makes a lot of great points regarding leadership. His take on servant leadership is one that resonates as a positive and powerful one.

Marshall made many comparisons which likely helped the readers relate the message he is trying to portray with their own life. Personally, I enjoyed the sports metaphors. For example, comparing a leader's vision/foresight to the sense of a good athlete's ability to be in the right place at the right time was a way that this concept was successfully related to me. Others may relate to the business, political, spiritual or other metaphors.

I feel as though Marshall could have done a better job of distinguishing leadership qualities from leadership roles. Although these two concepts will work together, having them distinct from each other would have made the understanding of this book easier. The book is not categorized how I personally would have categorized the information in this book. I liked how Marshall explained servant leadership but I would have laid out the leadership qualities and roles more distinctly.

Tom Marshall's beliefs stem heavily from and are influenced by his Christian beliefs. I feel that Tom Marshall's belief that "clearly the Christian community should be able to produce more and better leaders than any other sector of human society" (pg. 15) could be seen as degrading to other cultures, beliefs, and religions. I agree with taking biblical lessons on leadership but this statement slightly turns me off by possibly degrading others. This book is written from a Christian perspective which supports and promotes these values; I feel that it can be suitable or applicable for people who do not have the exact same beliefs. This perspective on leadership could be portrayed in a more open-minded way by basing the principles and beliefs on Christianity, but not by putting down other beliefs.

As I read the last sentence of the book and turned the page I felt as though I had just finished watching a movie where the credits started rolling before I was satisfied with the ending. The last chapter of the book, entitled "When Leaders Fail" seems to be an awkward ending to a book about understanding leadership. This chapter may leave readers with a pessimistic view of this type of leadership by having it as the final message that they are left with. I wish that this book would have ended with a summarizing chapter of Marshall's main points or a chapter leaving the reader with a final thought on understanding of leadership.

Overall, I think that Marshall hit the major elements of servant leadership. He provided us with an understanding of what servant leadership is, how to attain it, and what you will need to be aware of to deal with issues that often come along with leadership. This servant leadership style can be utilized in almost all leadership positions, whether it is in an educational, business, sport, ministry or another context. The key is that leadership

stems from a servant nature, is visionary, and is maintained through consistent relationship building and evaluating.

Marshal, Tom. (2003). *Understanding Leadership*. Baker Book House Co.