

# Mustard seed leadership

## WHY MUSTARD SEED LEADERSHIP?

*Matthew 13:31-32 (NLT)*

*31 Here is another illustration Jesus used: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. 32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches.”*

### **BIG IDEA: Small kingdom adjustments can produce amazing fruit**

- the kingdom is so powerful that even small truths can make significant differences
- So what are some small kingdom leadership truths we can work on?

Sergey Nikiforov, senior director of sales at Persistence Systems:

“I found that every day I had an opportunity to make a small difference. I could have coached someone better, I could have listened better, I could have been more positive toward people, I could have said “Thank you” more often, I could have . . . the list just went on and on.

At first, I was a bit overwhelmed with the discovery of how many opportunities I had in a single day to act as a better leader. But as I have gotten to put these ideas into practice, I have been pleasantly surprised by how much improvement I have been able to make by being more conscientious and intentional about acting as a leader”

The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations  
James M. Kouzes

BIG IDEA: Small kingdom adjustments can produce amazing fruit

## **7 MUSTARD SEEDS TO PLANT INTO YOUR LEADERSHIP GARDEN - L. E. A. D. E. R. S.**

### **A MUSTARD SEED LEADER:**

#### **#1 Listens**

John Maxwell *“If you are talking you are not learning. We are only learning when we are listening”*

*James 1:19 (NLT)*

*19 Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.*

What does “quick to listen” mean?

### **Most understand what “Quick to speak” means:**

1. Speak before listening & thinking
2. You interrupt others to speak
3. You assume you understand so speak

**Illustration:** As a new leader thought my job was to solve people's problems. Listen for one or two sentences and then tell them what to do. And then wonder why they never did!?

### **Why do leaders struggle with listening?**

1. Arrogance of assumption - thinking that you know why they are going to be saying and so cutting them short.
2. Defense mechanism - you don't like what they are starting to say and so jump into defense or justify mode.
3. Superiority - thinking they what I say and my opinion is more important
4. Busyness - projects and deadlines and schedules mean we don't have time to stop and really listen to people

**Story:** Was challenged by one of our deacons. Just before the start of a church meeting someone was telling me how sick they were and how they were struggling. My response? "That's wonderful", and moved on to the next person!

### **Why is listening so powerful?**

1. It is a great compliment - shows people that you value them
2. It brings true understanding - only when you have really understood the problem can you find real solutions
3. Gives you time to really process and consider a response - if you are quick to listen you will be slower to speak and slower to become angry.

*James 1:19 (NLT)*

*19 Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.*

### **How to listen well?**

1. With intentionality of attitude - if you have been with someone who is a great listener then you will know that they have made you feel like the most important person in the world.
2. With your eyes - this is what I teach my kids. "Listen with your eyes". Don't you hate talking to someone when they are typing in their phone! Focus. Body language.
3. With questions - ask clarifying questions. Ask if this is what they meant. Ask them to explain a bit more.

### **Commission:**

- A mark of a great leader is good listening skills - it helps bring out the best in your team.
- If you do it well, your team will grow so much faster.

**This week's leadership mustard seed:** How good are you at listening?

- Will you practice listening to the people around you and see the difference
- Quick to listen is a quick way to grow your leadership influence.

**Why?** Because in the Kingdom, mustard seed adjustments can make a massive difference.

## **#2 Encourages**

- “IN - COURAGE” - literally means helping people find courage
- Means putting courage into people before or during a task to keep them going
- We are created to need encouragement

*Hebrews 10:25 (NLT)*

*25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.*

- **One of the main reasons we meet together is for encouragement**
- people need encouragement daily

**Illust:** John Maxwell story of asking his father, how do you know if someone needs encouragement?

- **Answer:** If they are breathing, they need encouragement

**What happens if someone goes too long without encouragement?**

*Hebrews 3:13 (NIV 1984)*

*13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be **hardened by sin’s deceitfulness**.*

**The lack of encouragement can harden a heart**

- A hard heart becomes defensive, resistant and lacks warmth
- Hard hearts destroy relationships
- Hearts they are discouraged are vulnerable to sin
- that makes encouragement a crucial ingredient for leadership

**Three examples:**

**1. Johnathan, David’s friend helped David find strength in God**

*1 Samuel 23:15-17 (NIV 1984)*

*15 While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. 16 And Saul’s son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and **helped him find strength in God**. 17 “Don’t be afraid,” he said. “My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this.”*

- David was in a bad place
- Johnathan went to him
- Helped him overcome his fears
- Spoke words of support

**BIG IDEA: Encouragement needs to be intentional - GO and help your team find strength in God.**

**2. The Father speaks words of encouragement over Jesus**

*Matthew 3:17 (NLT)*

*17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.”*

**BIG IDEA: Encouragement needs to be spoken - words of affirmation, belief, value, celebration.**

### 3. Jesus encourages Peter out of the boat

*Matthew 14:27-29 (NLT)*

27 But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage. I am here!"

28 Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water."

29 "Yes, come," Jesus said.

So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus.

- Jesus modeled courageous behavior
- Then called Peter out of the comfort of the boat into courage

**BIG IDEA: Encouragement calls people to do great things**

**CONCLUSION:** Remember:

1. **Appreciation** - that's what a leader does after an event. Appreciation time.
2. **Encouragement**- happens before and during an event. All the time!

**This week's leadership mustard seed:** How much ENCOURAGEMENT are you sowing?

- stretch yourself. Practice!

**Why?** Because in the Kingdom, mustard seed adjustments can make a massive difference.

## #3 Appreciates

- Means taking the time to recognize the contribution of others and thank them for it.
- Groeschel "Leaders need to stretch themselves to their limit of showing appreciation, and then double it!"
- Don't you love that? We can never give too much **genuine appreciation**.

Listen to how the master shows appreciation:

*Matthew 25:21 (NLT)*

21 "The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!'

- a. full of praise - words, smile, eyes, body language
- b. Specific in what he is appreciating - don't be general, be specific.
- c. Show appreciation through rewarding - didn't have to be big. Interesting that the reward of the master is greater responsibility. **Show greater trust is the greatest reward.**
- d. Culture of celebration - good leaders celebrate victories. Celebrate values lived out. Celebrate steps of progress.

Eg. Chatting to a pastor of a church I was visiting once who then excused himself by saying he needs to go and appreciate some people.

- That stuck with me!
- That's intentional.

The weeks leadership mustard seed: How much appreciation are you sowing?

- stretch yourself

**Why?** Because in the Kingdom, mustard seed adjustments can make a massive difference.

## #4 Delegates

Delegating is not about a boss handing work to a direct report or assistant

- it is about learning to work in team
- And a leaders job is to build a team

Old adage "*Team work makes the dream work*" has stood the test of time for a reason

**Illust:** Jesus - wanting to establish a work that would impact the world for thousands of years to come - built a team of 12

**So why is building a team and working in a team so important?**

*Exodus 18:19-23 (NLT)*

*19 Now listen to me, and let me give you a word of advice, and may God be with you. You should continue to be the people's representative before God, bringing their disputes to him. 20 Teach them God's decrees, and give them his instructions. Show them how to conduct their lives. 21 But select from all the people some capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes. Appoint them as leaders over groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten. 22 They should always be available to solve the people's common disputes, but have them bring the major cases to you. Let the leaders decide the smaller matters themselves. They will help you carry the load, making the task easier for you. 23 If you follow this advice, and if God commands you to do so, then you will be able to endure the pressures, and all these people will go home in peace."*

1. **Team means you can stay in your strength zone** and have team members cover your weak zones - Moses could focus on what only he could do and leave the rest to team members.
2. **Team multiplies effectiveness.** Instead of all the people clamoring for Moses attention they could now have easy access to a team member.
3. **Team carries the load together.** It can be lonely and burdensome trying to lead by yourself. By building a team you increase effectiveness and avoid burnout.
4. **Team makes room for expansion.** Here more people went home in peace instead of standing in long lines all day.

Acts 6:1-7 is another example of why team is so important and gives us three warning signs that tell us that developing a team is overdue:

*Acts 6:1 (NLT)*

*1 But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.*

### **WARNING SIGNS THAT YOUR TEAM NEEDS TO GROW:**

1. **Rumblings of discontent** - when a leader is too busy the people begin to suffer. A lack of contentment in your organization could be a sign that you need to grow your leadership team.
2. **Complaints** - genuine complaints are often a sign that standards are dropping and important things are being neglected. This is a sign of over busyness and another indicator that it is time to grow your team.
3. **Discrimination** - because the leader's time is so stretched they began to favor some people or projects over others. Basically they couldn't juggle all the balls in the air and so had to decide which to let fall. This is never a good idea!

### **So how do we go about establishing a leadership team?**

*Ex 18:21 But select from all the people some capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes. Appoint them as leaders over groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten. 22 They should always be available to solve the people's common disputes, but have them bring the major cases to you. Let the leaders decide the smaller matters themselves. They will help you carry the load, making the task easier for you.*

1. **CHARACTER** is crucial. You can risk with skills and experience but risking with questionable character always comes back to bite you. Who do people respect? Learn to watch and observe - people respect people who have strong character.
2. **CAPACITY** - Choose people who have the capacity to lead. They must be available to the people. If they are not currently coping with their work load and if they are not currently available to people then choosing them is a mistake.
3. **COMMITMENT** - will they help carry the load or drop the ball? There is another Biblical truth that says that if you are faithful with the little you will be faithful with much. Are they committed and faithful to what they are currently involved in?
4. **CHEMISTRY** - do they have the same spirit as you? If you don't connect easily with them now then you will suffer having them on your team later!

### **Commission:**

- A mark of a great leader is the ability to build a team and work with a team.
- If you do this well you will be able to scale up your organization and maintain growth.
- If not, the growth of the organization hits a ceiling or you hit burnout!

**This week's leadership mustard seed:** How good are you at developing and working with a team?

- Will you begin to work at raising up other leaders around you to multiply your growth?

**Why?** Because in the Kingdom, mustard seed adjustments can make a massive difference.

## #5 Example

The example of a leader's life will always be one of the top leadership tools we carry.

Quote: *"People first need to buy into the visionary before they buy into the vision"*

That means mustard seed changes to the example of your character and behavior can produce significant growth in your leadership effectiveness.

Eg.

- Way you speak
- Kindness shown to others
- Punctuality
- Respectful attitude
- Way you handle stress and conflict
- The list goes on...

People have the rightful expectation of leaders that they *"Practice what they preach"*

### **Personally I have found two things really tough about setting an example for the people we lead:**

1. People only ever seem to reach a maximum of 80% of the example you set! That's why we have to aim high and live a life worthy of the calling God has given us. Leaders need to be maximum people - your example will set the standard.
2. Sadly, a negative example is a lot more contagious than a positive one. Eg. For years we teach our kids to say please and thank you and still they struggle. But say one swear word and the door is open!

**Illust:** I was rudely reminded a few years back that there is no day-off from a good example. Usually as a preacher I take Mondays off after a busy Sunday. So one Monday I was grumpy and tired and frustrated with the cashier at the grocery store. When I finally walked away she said "Goodbye Pastor, I hope to see you Sunday!" - Yikes. Someone is always watching.

So what encouragement can we get from the scriptures about setting a good example?

### WHY YOUR EXAMPLE IS SO IMPORTANT

#### 1. **To try and lead without a good example is to lord over**

*1 Peter 5:3 (NLT)*

*3 Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example.*

A good example is what leadership is. If your leadership message and your life example are in any way different then you are going to have to start forcing people to follow you - and Peter says DON'T

Don't just teach your vision and values but practice modeling them to your organization.

#### 2. **Your example will win followers that your title won't**

Having a title doesn't make you a leader. Setting an inspiring example does.

*1 Timothy 4:12 (NLT)*

*12 Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.*

Timothy had the position of leadership in the church but Paul the wise old apostle advises him to use the influence of his example and not his title to win the hearts of those who were difficult to lead.

This is also true of leading up - that means influencing those who are in positions of leadership over you. Let your actions speak louder than your words and then respect will follow. And when someone respects you they will listen to your opinion.

### 3. **Play the long game**

Every day you set a good example is like storing up leadership credit in your leadership trust account.

*Hebrews 13:7 (NLT)*

*7 Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith.*

Leading by example is not a quick fix leadership solution but a long term trust builder. The better you lead yourself, the more powerfully your example will impact others.

Your example is the most powerful form of teaching you have.

#### **Commission:**

- A mark of a great leader is the example of their lives.
- If you do this well you will be building influence all the time which compounds over time.
- If not, and there is a gap between what you say and what people see, then you will always be struggling to get people to follow you.

**This weeks leadership mustard seed:** How good is the example of your life?

- Will you take a moment to evaluate your behavior and ask yourself if this is how you want the people of your organization to behave?

**Why?** Because in the Kingdom, mustard seed adjustments can make a massive difference.

## **#6 Reviews (Feedback)**

Means telling people how they are doing

- John Maxwell "*Experience is not the best teacher, **evaluated** experience is the best teacher*"
- Feedback is a way of helping people evaluate how they are doing.
- We all have BLINDSPOTS - areas of weakness that we don't even know about



**Eg.** When I preached I had this nervous habit of rubbing my stomach!! Maybe to calm the butterflies inside!

- only when my wife gave me feedback did I realize I was doing it

The Bible doesn't use the word feedback - it uses three words together:

2 Timothy 4:2 (NLT)

2 Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently **correct, rebuke, and encourage** your people with good teaching.

### **This is what a good shepherd leader is always doing**

- Feedback is a prepared correction or rebuke with encouragement.
- But the way we give feedback is crucial. If it is not given well it will not be received well.
- People easily feel insecure or threatened when they receive feedback.

## **How to give good feedback**

### **1. Preparation**

- I like to make notes when members of my team are preaching or working in some way so that when we have a meeting I am prepared
- Before giving feedback I like to pray and write out clearly what I see them doing and how they can go from good to great.
- Don't just feedback on the negative, point out the positive as well.

### **2. Intent is more important than content**

**ie.** People won't listen to **what** you say until they know **why** you are saying it

- are you trying to love them?
- Or humiliate or criticize them?

*Ephesians 4:15 (NLT)*

*15 Instead, we will speak the truth in **love**, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.*

### **How do we speak the truth? IN LOVE!**

- When people know that you love them, they will be open to receive
- If they suspect you are just trying to be nasty, critical or embarrass them they will get defensive and threatened.
- First convince people you really care about them BEFORE unloading truth on them.

### **3. Speak the TRUTH**

*John 8:32 (NLT)*

*32 And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

### **Truth received causes growth**

- be honest as you can
- But use words like "To me it looks like.."
- Or "My perspective is .."

- or “I feel ...”

Don't attack them, share what you are seeing from your perspective

But be as truthful as you can be.

#### 4. **Choose the right and place**

*Matthew 18:15 (NLT)*

*15 “If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back.*

This might not be sin but I believe that the same principle applies

- go privately
- Don't give feedback in front of others

#### **Personal:**

- I love encouragement and it keeps me growing.
- But the really big growth steps have come from correcting feedback
- It was tough to receive but a great gift

#### **Commission:**

- a mark of a great leader is a willingness and ability to give good feedback
- If you do it well, your team will grow so much faster.

**This weeks leadership mustard seed:** How much FEEDBACK are you sowing?

- Who on your team can you give feedback to today?
- Prepare it well and give it lovingly

**Why?** Because in the Kingdom, mustard seed adjustments can make a massive difference.

## **#7 Serves**

To serve means to put the needs of others before yourself.

The description of “servant leadership” has become quite popular over the last 10 years. As Patrick Lencioni, author and leadership consultant says: “*Servant leadership is not one form of leadership. It is the only form of leadership*”

### **What does it mean to be a servant leader?**

*Philippians 2:3-4 (NLT)*

*3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.*

1. **It means being focussed on others and not self absorbed. This is the mark of humility.**

**Quote** *“Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It is simply thinking about yourself less”*

## 2. **It means honestly seeing others as being worthy to be served**

If you see yourself as superior you will expect to be served. If you see others as worthy then you will want to serve them.

## 3. **It means taking an interest and caring about the lives of others**

One of my favorite stories of Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa, was how he got to know personally his bodyguards and the lady who made him tea in his presidential office. The way you treat the “least” reveals the most about you.

## **How to be a servant leader?**

Jesus modeled this revolutionary new way of leadership and expected his followers to adopt the same style.

Once when they were arguing about who would be the greatest amongst the team, he had this to say:

*Matthew 20:25-28 (NLT)*

*25 But Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. 26 But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. 28 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

## **How do we lead as a servant?**

### 1. **Leverage your authority to connect people to the opportunities and connections you have**

- Having authority gives you opportunities and connections that those you lead won't have.
- **Eg.** Because of my role on an apostolic team I have open doors of opportunity to many churches in many nations. I can serve young and upcoming leaders by opening those doors of opportunity and taking them along for the journey.

### 2. **See your leadership role as an opportunity to add value to the people around you**

- Many have the wrong perception of leadership - they see title or privilege.
- Learn to see leadership as an opportunity to add value to the lives of others.
- **Eg.** Having 20 years of leadership experience means I've learned some things along the way. One of the best ways I can serve is to find ways of passing on that experience to other leaders.

### 3. **Grow your leadership by growing the number of people you serve**

- Many would evaluate their greatness by the number of people who serve them.

- Jesus reverses that by saying your greatness is measured by the number of people you serve.

**Here is a final thought: Kingdom leaders serve people because they are servants of Christ**

*2 Corinthians 4:5 (NLT)*

*5 You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are **your servants for Jesus' sake.***

In other words - as leaders we serve but not because people are our master but because Christ is our Master

**Commission:**

- A mark of a great leader is their willingness to serve
- If you do this well God will promote you in the Kingdom
- If not, and you expect people to serve you because you have a leadership title then you will find yourself pushing against God.

**This weeks leadership mustard seed:** How much of a servant are you, REALLY?

- Will you take a moment to evaluate your behavior and see if you are really serving others or expecting others to serve you

**Why?** Because in the Kingdom, mustard seed adjustments can make a massive difference.