

7 Keys to Leading God's Way

By Don Wood, Speaker / Coach / Author

Introduction: The Crisis of Leadership Identity

We live in an era where leadership is more visible than ever—and more fragile. The pressure to perform, impress, and deliver results at any cost has created a generation of leaders driven by *image* instead of *identity*.

A 2023 *Gallup* study found that only **21% of employees strongly trust their leaders**, citing “misalignment between stated values and actual behavior.”

It's not a lack of skill that erodes leadership credibility; it's the disconnection between purpose and practice.

Leading God's way calls for something different. It's not about charisma or clever strategy; it's about **character, conviction, and calling**.

These seven keys are drawn from both Scripture and research—anchoring timeless truth in today's leadership realities.

1. Lead from Identity, Not Image

The world defines leaders by their metrics; God defines them by their motives.

When your sense of worth is tied to your performance, you'll constantly strive for validation.

But when your identity is anchored in who you are in Christ, your leadership becomes an act of *service*, not *self-preservation*.

Neuroscience supports this truth. Leaders who maintain internal self-coherence—alignment between beliefs and actions—experience higher emotional resilience and lower stress (*Harvard Business Review*, 2022).

Consider **Truett Cathy**, founder of Chick-fil-A. He famously closed his restaurants on Sundays, not for branding, but conviction. He led from identity, not image—and built one of America's most admired companies in the process.

“You are my beloved son; with you I am well pleased.” — *Mark 1:11*

Leadership Practice: Begin each day by reaffirming your identity before your agenda. Ask, “Who am I becoming?” before “What am I achieving?”

2. Pursue Integrity Over Influence

Influence without integrity is manipulation.

Modern leadership culture rewards visibility, but God rewards consistency. Integrity is about alignment—when your private choices reflect your public promises.

A *Barna Group* study revealed that **58% of Christian leaders admit feeling pressured to compromise values for success**. This subtle drift corrodes trust and multiplies internal conflict. Integrity anchors you when circumstances shake you.

Case in point: **Alan Mulally**, the former CEO of Ford, inherited a collapsing company in 2006. Rather than masking problems, he insisted on radical transparency, famously telling his team, “We can’t manage a secret.”

The culture of integrity helped save Ford without a government bailout.

“The integrity of the upright guides them.” — *Proverbs 11:3*

Leadership Practice: Build a personal “integrity audit.”

Ask: Where are my actions misaligned with my stated values? Then make one change this week that brings them into agreement.

3. Build a Rhythm of Rest and Renewal

Exhaustion is not a badge of honor; it’s a warning sign. God modeled rest before humans ever performed. Yet leaders today glorify burnout as evidence of commitment.

According to *The Mayo Clinic*, chronic overwork correlates with increased anxiety, poor decision-making, and cardiovascular risk.

Jesus regularly withdrew to pray (Luke 5:16). He didn’t rest because He was weak; He rested because He was wise.

Renewal is the leader’s power source.

Research from *McKinsey & Company* (2022) shows that leaders who protect time for reflection and rest outperform peers in long-term effectiveness. The pattern is clear: when you lead rested, you lead resiliently.

Leadership Practice: Schedule renewal with the same seriousness as strategy. Guard one block of time each week for quiet, prayer, or solitude—no screens, no tasks, just restoration.

4. Seek Wisdom Before Action

Speed is not strategy.

We live in a culture that equates leadership with decisiveness, yet Scripture reminds us that “*plans fail for lack of counsel*” (Proverbs 15:22).

The best leaders are not the quickest decision-makers—they’re the wisest.

Neuroscience tells us that pausing activates the brain’s prefrontal cortex, improving judgment and creativity. Practically speaking, wisdom is not hesitation—it’s *humility before haste*.

Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft, turned one of the world’s most competitive companies into a culture of empathy and learning by slowing down the pace of reactionary decisions. His motto: “Don’t be a know-it-all. Be a learn-it-all.”

Leadership Practice: Before making a high-impact decision, take 24 hours to seek prayer, Scripture, or wise counsel. Clarity often comes in stillness, not motion.

5. Lead with Courage, Not Control

Control is rooted in fear; courage is born of faith.

The more uncertain the world becomes, the greater our temptation to grasp for control. Yet true leadership is often proven in what we *surrender*, not what we secure.

Courage is not recklessness; it’s conviction in motion.

The *Center for Creative Leadership* found that leaders who exhibit courage—defined as “purposeful action in the face of fear”—build greater trust and team engagement.

People follow confidence rooted in calm, not panic.

Moses led through impossible odds, not by certainty, but obedience. His example reminds us that courage doesn’t remove fear—it redefines it.

Leadership Practice: When anxiety rises, ask: “What would faith look like right now?”

Then take the step that aligns with conviction, not comfort.

6. Develop Others, Don’t Dominate Them

Leadership is not about building followers; it’s about multiplying leaders.

A Gallup workplace study found that **managers who prioritize employee development outperform peers by 27% in profitability.**

Empowering others is not just noble—it's smart leadership.

Jesus modeled this perfectly. He didn't just lead twelve men; He equipped them to lead others. He decentralized authority to multiply impact.

As a leader, your success is not defined by control but by capacity with how many people can carry the vision forward because you've equipped them.

Leadership Practice: Identify one person in your organization or circle you can invest in this week. Ask what skill, confidence, or clarity they need—and commit to helping them develop it.

7. Finish Well — Leadership as Legacy

Starting strong is easy; finishing well is rare.

Leadership isn't a sprint of success—it's a marathon of faithfulness.

Studies by *Leadership Network* reveal that **one in three pastors and executives end their career in burnout or moral failure.**

The problem isn't knowledge; it's endurance.

Paul's words ring true today: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith"* (2 Timothy 4:7).

Finishing well requires humility, accountability, and consistency when the spotlight fades.

Leadership Practice: Write down the kind of legacy you want to leave. What would you want those you've led to say about your character 10 years from now? Then make one daily decision that aligns with that vision.

Closing Thoughts: The Quiet Strength of God's Way

Leadership done God's way may not trend, but it *transforms*.

In a world obsessed with visibility, God invites us into a leadership that's invisible before it's impactful. It's shaped in prayer, grounded in purpose, and lived with integrity.

The paradox of godly leadership is this: the more we surrender control, the more influence God entrusts to us.

Your best leadership moments won't come from your brilliance but from your obedience.

That's how you lead with peace, purpose, and power God's way.

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About Don...

He's a Leadership Coach, Speaker, and Founder of **Heart Coach for Life** and the **Men's Leadership God's Way Podcast**.

After overcoming personal trials, including 11 surgeries in 18 months, Don discovered a calling to help men lead with courage, conviction, and connection.

Through his coaching programs, workshops, and podcast, Don equips faith-driven men to live with clarity, lead with integrity, and build a legacy that lasts.

His mission is simple: to help leaders strengthen their walk with God and lead from the heart at home, at work, and in life.

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