

# Excellence in Leadership

## Dr. Bob Abramson

In life and in leadership, every choice we make (good and bad) will have its consequences. Though we are often not aware of it, our choices all contribute in some way to the direction of our journeys through life. As leaders, our choices will influence others in their journeys through life. None of us leads without influencing others. Leadership therefore, may be defined as the influence we exercise over others. As we lead, we influence (rightly or wrongly) those around us and especially those who follow us. God has ordained for each of us as leaders, a plan with a destiny. It will be reached, confirmed and fulfilled... or disrupted and denied by the accumulated impact of the choices we make.

### When do we make choices as leaders?

1. We may be confronted with a change in our status quo. This may be in the form of opportunities to improve the status quo, threats to the status quo, or other challenges that will affect our well-being in a multitude of ways.
2. We may be asked to give guidance or counsel to others who are facing decisions of their own. The choices we make about what we say will affect the direction of their lives.
3. We may be seeking the Lord for direction in our ministries. The paths we choose as leaders are choices we make for other. Every leadership responsibility requires us to ask others to follow us in the paths those choices dictate.

### The Process of Choosing

1. We become aware of the need to choose.
2. We try to discern the options available.
3. We try to determine the consequences of those options.
4. We act, or refuse to act. In either case, we have made a choice. The consequences are a function of our ability to make correct and appropriate choices.

### How do we insure we will make consistently good choices?

The answer to this question is vital to both life and leadership. We take our example from Scripture, through the study of a man who consistently made excellent choices. Excellent choices resulted in success and significance for both him and those friends he influenced. His name was Daniel. It was 650 B.C. Jerusalem had

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been conquered. Daniel was taken captive to Babylon. In the midst of his captivity, he made excellent choices that resulted in (1) excellent opportunities, and (2) the excellence of God's loving, protective hand upon him all the days of his life.

In the first chapter of Daniel, we read that he was among a group of the finest youth among those who had been enslaved and taken to Babylon. These young men were chosen to be trained and integrated into the culture of the conquerors. They were all gifted, with high intelligent. All were judged to be full of potential. Yet, they were slaves, young men who had been removed from all that was familiar. Now, they were asked to become like their masters. They were subjected to training for service before the king. This training included a diet that was contrary to God's requirements and restrictions. Daniel faced a choice. His decision reveals the first point for excellence in leadership.

*(Daniel 1:8 NKJV) "But **Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself** with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself."*

**PRINCIPLE**  
of Excellence

**1.**

**Excellent leaders refuse to compromise. They choose holiness in every situation.**

**Purpose in your heart that you will not defile yourself. (You will be tested!)**

The results of Daniel's decision are seen throughout the narrative, but the immediate consequence of this decision is seen in the following verses.

*(Daniel 1:13-17 NKJV) ""Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants." {14} So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days. {15} And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies. {16} Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables. {17} **As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.**"*

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*(Daniel 1:20 NKJV) "And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them **ten times better** than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm."*

### Result #1: "...ten times better"

Daniel, Chapter 2, reveals that the lives of all the king's wise men, including Daniel and his three friends, are threatened by the king's unreasonable demand - to make known not only the interpretation of the dream, but the dream itself! As we read through the narrative, we find that the Lord gives Daniel both the dream and the interpretation. Daniel and his three friends are promoted.

*(Daniel 2:48-49 NKJV) "Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon. {49} Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon;..."*

### Result #2: "but Daniel sat in the gate of the king."

## Our Next Two principles - from Daniel's Three Friends

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego refused to compromise. They would not worship anyone but the Almighty! They knew the consequences of their stand. They had confidence in the Lord, but even if He did not deliver them, they would not bow down to the idol.

*(Daniel 3:17-18 NKJV) "...But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?" {16} Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. {17} If that is the case, our God whom we serve **is able** to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and **He will deliver us** from your hand, O king. {18} **But if not**, let it be known to you, O king, that **we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.**"*

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**2.**

**Excellent leaders never turn from their faith in God because of what they fear!**

**Make it your aim to please God, above anyone and anything else. (2 Corinthians 5:9)**

*(Daniel 3:21 NKJV) "Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace."*

3.

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Daniel's friends knew their faithfulness to God would bring them a trip to the furnace.

- They did not go to the furnace dressed in asbestos suits! They did not plead for their lives.
- They did not relent and worship the idol.
- They did not prepare to battle the fire in some desperate hope that they could escape it.

They dressed in their trousers and turbans, and all the other garments that they would normally wear in their pursuit of excellence! They were dressed for success!

<b>PRINCIPLE of Excellence</b>	<b>3.</b>	<b>Excellent leaders do not dress for the furnace. They dress for the finish!</b> <b>Dress for what you expect <u>after</u> the fire. The battle is the Lord's. He will take you through!</b>
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They would not bow!  
They would not break their loyalty to God.  
They found that they would not burn!

### The Finger on the Wall

We read in Daniel, Chapter 5, Beltshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's nephew, has a feast, in which he defiles the vessels taken from God's temple. The consequences are ominous.

*(Daniel 5:5 NKJV) "in that same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace...."*

Nebuchadnezzar's Queen then recommends they call Daniel to interpret the writing. Here is what she says:

*(Daniel 5:11a-12 NKJV) ""There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him.... {12} Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation.""*

**"...an excellent spirit"**

<b>PRINCIPLE of Excellence</b>	<b>4.</b>	<b>Excellent leaders have excellent spirits. An excellent spirit does not promote itself (Nor does it need to!).</b>
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**Daniel put his life in God's hands. He was satisfied to serve the Lord, in whatever way God guided him.**

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*(Daniel 5:16-17 NKJV) ““And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.” {17} Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, “**Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another**; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation.””*

**PRINCIPLE  
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**5.**

**Excellent leaders are continually faithful.**

(Closely related to Principle #2, above)

**Consistency of character is a visible mark of excellence in a leader! You can count on them!**

*(Daniel 6:4 NKJV) “So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; **but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful**; nor was there any error or fault found in him.”*

**PRINCIPLE  
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**6.**

**Excellent leaders are praying leaders.**

**Consistency of prayer is the defining mark of excellence in a leader!**

*(Daniel 6:12-13 NKJV) “And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king's decree: “Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions.” The king answered and said, “The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter.” {13} So they answered and said before the king, “That Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, **but makes his petition three times a day.**””*

Daniel did not pray out of obligation, but out of relationship. He delighted in his times with God. He valued them above the other times of the day. Nothing would come between him and God, not even the threat of the lions' den! He would be unwavering in his faithfulness to God.

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**7.**

**Excellent leaders have thankful spirits!**

**It is easy to be thankful after the deliverance.**

**Daniel gave thanks before he went, knowing he was going to face the lions! That is faith in action!**

*(Daniel 6:10-11 NKJV) “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, **he knelt down on his knees three times that day,***

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*and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. {11} Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God."*

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**8.**

**Excellent leaders please God and not man. They regard no one above God.**

(Closely related to Principles #2 and 5, above)

*(Acts 5:27-32 NKJV) "And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, {28} saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" {29} But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "**We ought to obey God rather than men.** {30} The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. {31} Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. {32} And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."*

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**9.**

**Excellent leaders continually serve God, especially in times of tribulation, trials and trouble. Even unbelievers respect that!**

*(Daniel 6:14-16 NKJV) "And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. {15} Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed." {16} So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "**Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.**"*

*(John 16:33 NKJV) "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

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**10.**

**Excellent leaders will survive their trials and walk out of with dignity and victory.**

God will respond to your faithfulness and will bring you through the trial. He is faithful!

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*(Daniel 6:20-22 NKJV) "And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, **has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"** {21} Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! {22} **My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him;** and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you."*

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**11.**

**Excellent leaders will testify of the saving power and mercy of God.**

*(Daniel 6:22-23 NKJV) ""My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you." {23} Then the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God."*

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**12.**

**Excellent leaders will be well and prosper. They are winners and champions!**

*(Daniel 6:28 NKJV) "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian."*

## **Ten Characteristics of God's Winners and Champions** (source unknown)

1. God's champions focus on what they do. Losers focus on what they are going through.
2. God's champions are willing to do things they hate... to create things they love.
3. God's champions pursue completion... but not necessarily perfection.
4. Everyone stumbles... but God's champions get back up.
  1. God's champions refuse to accept defeat as long as God is in the battle.
  - God's champions refuse to set their own time-tables. They let God play out the plan.

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- In times of weakness, God's champions pull themselves up in His strength.
  - In times of personal famine, God's champions feast on His Word and drink of His faithfulness.
  - In times of sorrow, God's champions turn to His presence and rest in His arms.
5. God's champions know they don't decide their futures. They decide their habits and their habits decide their futures.
    - God's champions are well able to look at themselves objectively. They willingly see their flaws and quickly make adjustments.
    - God's champions are habit forming people. They are habitual in the Christ-like testimony of their lives.
  6. God's champions position themselves for blessings.
    - God doesn't send the blessings to you. He sends your blessings to where you are supposed to be.
    - God's champions seek the voice of God... so they will know the will of God... so they can find the blessings of God.
  7. God's champions defend their ground.
    - Unless Satan is on the attack, you are not functioning as a champion. He is not interested in toppling losers. They are already at the bottom. He wants to knock you off the high ground.
    - God's champions stand when it's easy to run. They stand when it's easy to surrender. They stand when it's easy to fall. Having done all to stand, they stand!
  8. God's champions watch their mouths. They speak life and not death.
    - They are careful of what they reveal and who they reveal it to. God's champions never discuss their problems with someone who is not capable of solving them. God's champions submit themselves to people who can cover them spiritually and provide wise answers to serious questions.
    - They speak great things for God. They can only do so because they are wise enough to position themselves to hear great things from God... and they are bold enough to speak great things for God.
  9. God's champions refuse to just "be." God's champions are "becomers."
    - They engage themselves in the process of becoming all that God has designed them to become. God's champions understand the value of learning and changing. God's champions are teachable.
    - They are disciples first and disciple-makers second.
  10. God's champions seek out and fulfill their call from the Lord.

**If you were arrested for being a champion for the Lord,  
would there be enough evidence to convict you?**



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**13.**

**Excellent leaders have tremendous favor and affection from God.**

**God's leaders are greatly beloved. They walk in the favor of God!**

*(Daniel 9:20-23 NKJV) "Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, {21} yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. {22} And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. {23} **At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved;** therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision:"*

**"...for you are greatly beloved"**

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**14.**

**Excellent leaders give genuine godly loving "agape" affection to their followers.**

**Your sheep are greatly beloved by God. They ought to be greatly beloved by you!**

*(John 15:15-17 NKJV) "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. {16} "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. {17} **"These things I command you, that you love one another."***

Leadership is not given for you. It is given to you for those God gives you to lead. You are the Good Shepherd's sheep with a bell around your neck. Lead your fellow sheep to green pastures and still waters. Christ, our Lord and Good Shepherd will be pleased!

**PRINCIPLE  
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**15.**

**Excellent leaders will ultimately be judged by the fruit that remains when they are gone.**

We are appointed to our purpose (leadership) for two reasons. First, we are to be fruitful among the people we lead, and that the fruit remains long after we are gone. Second, we are to be shining examples of agape love to those around us.

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- **The only way to see healthy fruit on the vine is to let an abundance of light shine on it.**
- **The only way to see healthy fruit among the brethren is to let an abundance of His light shine on them!**

*(Matthew 5:14-16 NKJV) "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. {15} "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. {16} Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*

***"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."***

### Let's review.

1. **Excellent leaders refuse to compromise. They choose holiness in every situation.**
2. **Excellent leaders never turn from their faithful in God because of what they fear!**
3. **Excellent leaders do not dress for the furnace. They dress for the finish!**
4. **Excellent leaders have excellent spirits. An excellent spirit does not promote itself.**
5. **Excellent leaders are continually faithful.**
6. **Excellent leaders are praying leaders.**
7. **Excellent leaders have thankful spirits!**
8. **Excellent leaders please God and not man, and regard no one above God.**
9. **Excellent leaders continually serve God, especially in times of tribulation, trials and trouble. Even unbelievers respect that!**
10. **Excellent leaders will survive their trials.**
11. **Excellent leaders will testify of the saving power and mercy of God.**
12. **Excellent leaders will be well and prosper. They are winners and champions!**
13. **Excellent leaders have tremendous favor and affection from God.**
14. **Excellent leaders give genuine "agape" affection to their followers.**
15. **Excellent leaders will ultimately be judged by the fruit that remains when they are gone.**

*(Psalm 16:2-3 NKJV) "O my soul, you have said to the LORD, 'You are my Lord, My goodness is nothing apart from You.' As for the saints who are on the earth, 'They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.'"*