

50 Quotations for Fruitful Leaders

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Lewis Center
for Church Leadership

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Springtime tulips at Wesley Theological Seminary

Preface to the 50 Quotations Series

Why a collection of quotations? The right phrase or succinct quotation can sometimes carry more power than long essays or intense discussion. Capturing the essence of a truth in a sentence can cause those who read or hear it to say, “That’s right” or “Of course.” Something seemingly complex seems clearer, or perhaps an issue that appeared narrow now is seen in a broader context. Often a quotation will spark our own imagination and inspire our own creativity.

For these reasons, each issue of *Leading Ideas*, the popular online newsletter of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership, features a brief leadership quotation to stimulate the thinking of readers as well as to give them ideas to share with others.

In response to requests for a collection of these quotations, we have organized selected ones on particular themes. The theme of this collection is quotations *to help you be a fruitful leader*.

Leaders and congregations face many challenges today. We trust that these words of insight and inspiration will bring help and hope to you and those with whom you work in your congregations so that they will bear much fruit.

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1. Anger

The capacity to receive people's anger with an open heart is a great gift to people in an organization in which painful adjustments need to be made.

— Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky

"Leading with an Open Heart," *Leader to Leader*, Fall 2002, 33.

2. Change

Most of us don't really like the arrival of change no matter what we might say in theory about its goodness or necessity. Change is hard.

— Sharyn Pinney

"Most Change Occurs in Ways We Would Not Choose," in David N. Mosser, ed., *Leading Churches through Change Transitions* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 53.

3. Channel

Remember you are a channel of the gospel and not the source.

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958; 2010), 3.

4. Children

Churches all over the country have decided they love their traditions more than their children.

— Erwin McManus

5. Christ in the World

The church's role is to point to Christ in the world and not to itself.

— Letty M. Russell

Human Liberation in a Feminist Perspective (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1974), 128.

6. Church

Although many things may change, God will make a way for the church to be the church in this present day. The church can go along with God's plan, or it can fight that plan with its last breath.

— Dottie Escobedo-Frank

Rudy Rasmus and Dottie Escobedo-Frank, *Jesus Insurgency: The Church Revolution from the Edge* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012), 31.

7. Clarity

What looks like resistance is often a lack of clarity.

— Chip Heath and Dan Heath

Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard (New York: Broadway Books, 2010), 17.

8. Collaborate

When we collaborate, creativity unfolds across people; the sparks fly faster, and the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

— Keith Sawyer

Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 7.

9. Colleagues

Sometimes really good practitioners become really good because of the company they keep.

— Barbara J. Blodgett

Becoming the Pastor You Hope to Be: Four Practices for Improving Ministry (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 35.

10. Common Purpose

This is pre-eminently the leadership quality — the ability to organize all the forces there are in an enterprise and make them serve a common purpose.

— Mary Parker Follett, 1868-1933

Pauline Graham, ed., *Mary Parker Follett — Prophet of Management: A Celebration of Writings from the 1920s* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1995), 168.

11. Communication

If one had to name a single, all-purpose instrument of leadership, it would be communication.

— John W. Gardner

On Leadership (New York: Free Press, 1990), 166.

12. Community

The church of tomorrow will be much more engaged in addressing the needs of the community. This church will be known more for its members' relational acts of compassion outside of the church walls — taking ministry out, rather than waiting for outsiders to come in and sit.

— Linda Ranson Jacobs

Attract Families to Your Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014), 18.

13. Compass

A compass is a leader's most valuable tool, more so than brains or money.

— Bill Shore

The Cathedral Within (New York: Random House, 1999), 184.

14. Conflict

E-mail is not a conflict resolution tool.

— Susan Nienaber

“Is E-mail the New Parking Lot,” *Congregations*, Alban Institute (Summer 2010), 8.

15. Dare

If we lose a generation in the church, that loss won't be because we failed to entertain them, but because we failed to dare them — to take the words of Jesus seriously and to do something about the things that are wrong in the world.

— Shane Claiborne

Foreword to *nuChristian: Finding Faith in a New Generation* by Russell E. D. Rathbun (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2009), vi.

16. Diversity

Prophetic, purposeful, visionary leadership by courageous, compassionate, convicted leaders can grow and sustain congregations that reflect the rich diversity of God's reign.

— Jacqueline J. Lewis

The Power of Stories: A Guide for Leading Multi-Racial and Multi-Cultural Congregations (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), 1.

17. Energy

Leadership is all about harnessing energy — your own energy, and the energy of those in your organization.

— Rajeev Peshawaria

“Energizing the Organization,” *Leader to Leader*, Winter 2012, 19.

18. Equilibrium

Equilibrium is neither the goal nor the fate of living systems.

— Margaret J. Wheatley

Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1999), 20.

19. Evaluation

Evaluation is an act of leadership, not just reporting.

— Sarah B. Drummond

Holy Clarity: The Practice of Planning and Evaluation (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 53.

20. Example

You either lead by example or you don't lead at all.

— James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner

The Truth About Leadership (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), xxiii.

21. Focus

Strategy is in fact the art of focusing.

— Shao Ming Lo

"How Drucker Taught Me to Focus," *Leader to Leader*, Spring 2010, 49.

22. Friendship

I thank and praise our good God for the blessing [God] is pleased to have given us through the exchange made possible by our perfect friendship ...

— Jane de Chantal

23. Fruitfulness

If quantifying the results of our ministry is the science of leadership, then describing the results we are called to make and measuring our fruitfulness by intentional and disciplined conversation is the art of leadership.

— Gil Rendle

Back to Zero: The Search to Rediscover the Methodist Movement (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), 59.

24. Funding

There were few revolutions in human history that were adequately funded.

— Rudy Rasmus

Rudy Rasmus and Dottie Escobedo-Frank, *Jesus Insurgency: The Church Revolution from the Edge* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012), 61.

25. Generosity

If American Christians were to give from their income generously — not lavishly, mind you, only generously — they could transform the world, starting right away.

— Christian Smith, Michael Emerson, and Patricia Snell

Passing the Plate: Why American Christians Don't Give Away More Money (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 11.

26. Giving

Giving is a journey, a calling, a way of living. It's not a separate part of life — it *is* life, turning your beliefs and values into action and impact.

— Laura Arrillaga-Andreessen

Giving 2.0: Transform Your Giving and Our World (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 255.

27. God

God is the interesting thing about religion, and people are hungry for God.

— Evelyn Underhill

“God is the Interesting Thing: Evelyn Underhill to Archbishop Lang,” *Christian Century*, October 31, 1990, 998.

28. Groups

If digital technology has taught us anything, it's that how and when people form groups is not determined by location.

— Meredith Gould

Quoted. Carol Howard Merritt, "Virtual Real Presence," *Christian Century*, May 28, 2014, 45.

29. Integrity

The time is always ripe to do right.

— Nelson Mandela

30. Intimacy with God

The secret of leadership is a robust intimacy with God.

— Lewis A. Parks and Bruce C. Birch

Ducking Spears, Dancing Madly: A Biblical Model of Church Leadership (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 109.

31. Leaders All

Through the liberating message of Jesus, all believers are transformed into the role of priests, united and commissioned in ministry together on behalf of a hurting, broken world.

— Sue Nilson Kibbey

Ultimately Responsible: When You're in Charge of Igniting a Ministry (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 65.

32. Leadership

The leadership of men and women, the craftiest and most complicated of all creatures, seems to me the art of arts and the science of sciences.

— Gregory of Nazianzus

Oration 2.16. Quoted. Christopher A. Beeley, *Leading God's People: Wisdom from the Early Church for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 54.

33. Loss

Remember that sometimes it's important to lose for things that matter.

— Marian Wright Edelman

The Measure of our Success: A Letter to My Children and Yours (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 59.

34. Ministry

Ministry is a verb; it is something people do.

— Kathleen A. Cahalan

Introducing the Practice of Ministry (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), xi.

35. Money

Jesus has much to say about money, most of which preachers could not get away with saying themselves. Therefore, preachers do well to let Jesus do the talking.

— Craig A. Satterlee

Preaching and Stewardship: Proclaiming God's Invitation to Grow (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 33.

36. New Generations

It's easy for churches to point fingers at a younger generation for not giving money, but do churches allow a new generation ownership and responsibility in crafting the budget?

— Carol Howard Merritt

“Bridging Economic and Generational Divides,” *Faith and Leadership*, October 25, 2011.

37. Piety

Quit dressing your soul in somebody else's piety. Your soul is not a pauper. Let it live its own life.

— Samuel Miller

The Life of the Soul (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), 21-22.

38. People

Without a vision, the people perish. Without the right people, the vision will perish.

— Kirbyjon Caldwell

39. Recognizing Leaders

We might not recognize the leaders we really need because of who they are, where they're from, or how they behave.

— Linda A. Hill

40. Resources

Acting on a vision that exceeds our resources is a test of our vision, faith, and integrity.

— Robert Quinn

Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 85.

41. Simplicity

The greater the mission, the more simply it can be stated.

— Laurie Beth Jones

The Path: Creating Your Mission Statement for Work and for Life (New York: Hyperion, 1996), 5.

42. Spiritual

The spiritual life is the greatest adventure of the modern age.

— Dorothy Day

43. Success

If souls are not transformed and the world is not healed, the congregation fails no matter what the treasurer reports.

— Dan Hotchkiss

Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 16.

44. Support

Spiritual leadership vocations in America are badly undercapitalized. Far more activity is generated by them than there are resources to support them.

— Eugene H. Peterson

Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 3.

45. Systems

Systems achieve order from clear centers rather than imposed restraints.

— Margaret J. Wheatley

Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2006), 132.

46. Team

Simply having a vision statement is not enough. The key ingredient is a leadership team that lives the vision, breathes it, models it, and tells its story any chance it gets ...

— George Cladis

Leading the Team-Based Church (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 56.

47. Time

How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.

— Annie Dillard

The Writing Life (New York: Harper Perennial, 2013), 32.

48. Values

True success is achieving your purpose without sacrificing your core values.

— Robert B. Rogers

49. Vision

I think Martin Luther King's greatest contribution was to hold up a vision of what the nation could be.

— Gardner Taylor

"Religion and Ethics Newsweekly," April 5, 1998.

50. World

The more churches lose our ability to barricade ourselves off from one another, the more God's grace flows through us into the world.

— Kenda Creasy Dean

Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church (New York, Oxford University Press, 2010), 65.

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- *Focus: The Real Challenges That Face The United Methodist Church* (Abingdon Press, 2012)
- *Bearing Fruit: Ministry with Real Results*, with Tom Berlin, (Abingdon Press, 2011)
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- *The Crisis of Younger Clergy*, with Ann A. Michel, (Abingdon Press, 2008)
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