

94 Leadership Quotes for You and Your Church

By Dr. John C. Maxwell

I like to distinguish between a "goal mindset" and a "growth mindset." A church leader with a "goal mindset" has very tangible, numerical goals to achieve over a specific period of time. Nothing is wrong with clearly defined goals, but there's a better way of thinking that I call a "growth mindset." A growth mindset recognizes goals on the journey, but only as part of a process—not as the end results.

Leaders of successful churches are tempted to stop working on themselves, but when the pastor doesn't grow, the people don't grow. It's the Law of the Lid: a stagnant church leader stunts the growth of the church. I hope these thoughts on leadership will inspire you to maintain this "growth mindset," for your personal benefit and for the benefit of those you lead.

Character

1. It's true that charisma can make a person stand out for a moment, but character sets a person apart for a lifetime.
2. You build trust with others each time you choose integrity over image, truth over convenience, or honor over personal gain.
3. Character makes trust possible, and trust is the foundation of leadership.
4. Character creates consistency, and if your people know what they can expect from you, they will continue to look to you for leadership.
5. Over time, is it easier or harder to sustain your influence within your organization? With charisma alone, influence becomes increasingly more difficult to sustain. With character, as time passes, influence builds and requires less work to sustain.

Communication

6. Great communication depends on two simple skills—*context*, which attunes a leader to the same frequency as his or her audience, and *delivery*, which allows a leader to phrase messages in a language the audience can understand.
7. Earn the right to be heard by listening to others. Seek to understand a situation before making judgments about it.
8. Take the emotional temperature of those listening to you. Facial expressions, voice inflection and posture give clues to a person's mood and attitude.
9. Persuasive communication involves enthusiasm, animation, audience participation, authenticity and spontaneity.

Credibility

10. Credibility is a leader's currency. With it, he or she is solvent; without it, he or she is bankrupt.
11. Speak the truth. Transparency breeds legitimacy.
12. Don't hide bad news. With multiple information channels available, bad news always becomes known. Be candid right from the start.
13. A highly credible leader under-promises and over-delivers.
14. Diligent follow-up and follow-through will set you apart from the crowd and communicate excellence.
15. A trustworthy leader goes the extra mile to remedy strained relationships, even when it doesn't appear to be required.

Failure

16. "Failing forward" is the ability to get back up after you've been knocked down, learn from your mistake, and move forward in a better direction.
17. Don't buy into the notion that mistakes can somehow be avoided. They can't be.
18. Failure is not a one-time event; it's how you deal with life along the way. Until you breathe your last breath, you're still in the process, and there is still time to turn things around for the better.

19. You are the only person who can label what you do a failure. Failure is subjective.
20. Don't allow the fire of adversity to make you a skeptic. Allow it to purify you.
21. Generally speaking, there are two kinds of learning: experience, which is gained from your own mistakes, and wisdom, which is learned from the mistakes of others.
22. Seek advice, but make sure it's from someone who has successfully handled mistakes or adversities.
23. When to quit: (1) Quit something you don't do well to start something you do well. (2) Quit something you're not passionate about to do something that fills you with passion. (3) Quit something that doesn't make a difference to do something that does.
24. People change when they *hurt* enough that they have to, *learn* enough that they want to, or *receive* enough that they are able to.

Followership

25. More than anything else, followers want to believe that their leaders are ethical and honest.
26. When your people see that you are not only competent to lead but also have a track record of successes, they will have confidence in following you, even when they don't understand all the details.
27. As a leader, it's your job to get your people excited about what their work will accomplish; it's a natural motivator.

Fostering Creativity in Others

28. People are an organization's only appreciable asset, but creative people are an organization's most needed asset.
29. Be willing to absorb some risk and failures to allow people freedom to express themselves.
30. Creative leaders inherently know when rules need to be challenged, and they can see when a more flexible approach should be taken.
31. Handle the ideas of your people carefully: If an idea is half-developed but has potential, pass it to the people in your organization who are proven process thinkers and implementers.
32. Sometimes giving your people permission to be creative is not enough; inspire them by modeling creativity.
33. The word 'reactive' and the word 'creative' are made up of exactly the same letters; the only difference between the two is that you 'c' (see) differently.

Fostering Your Own Creativity

34. When you are the leader in your field, it takes a greater level of innovation and commitment to stay there.
35. Make a point to continually search for a better way of doing things, even when things are going well, to ensure that a better alternative has not been overlooked and to keep your creative talents in practice.
36. Practice mental agility: Before you write off a far-fetched idea, back up and look at the big picture, because it might fit perfectly on another level.
37. Have fun: When you are truly having fun in your work, creativity flows freely.

Leading Difficult People

38. Consider who you are working with: Part of the art of leadership is discovering the unique relationship between the needs of the individual and the organization.
39. People only know that you and the organization intend to meet their needs when you tell them so.
40. Determine how to help the person, tell them how you will do it, and follow through – *before* asking the individual to do things in return for you.
41. People working together ultimately succeed or fail based on their commitment to one another.
42. Never give up easily on one of your people; it does a disservice to that individual and to you.

Leading Leaders

43. The better you are at surrounding yourself with people of high potential, the greater your chance for success.
44. Every relationship in your organization will affect you one way or another. Those who do not increase you will inevitably decrease you.

Motivating Others

45. When you delegate a task to your people, make a point to help them capture your vision for what the completed task will look like.
46. Hold your people accountable to a measurable standard of excellence, and make rewards and consequences a part of enforcing the standard.
47. Give your people full responsibility (ownership) for the completion of specific tasks and the prospect of sharing in the rewards that result.

People Skills

48. Successful leadership is about 90% people knowledge and 10% product knowledge.
49. You can have strong people skills and not be a good leader, but you cannot be a good leader without people skills.
50. The highest compliment a person can receive is one given by his or her leader; make a habit of being generous and sincere with your compliments.
51. When your people are having trouble seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, remind them of the purpose of their work and help them envision what their work will accomplish.
52. Don't judge what your people want to tell you before they've told you. Listen to them.
53. Part of your job as a leader is to help your people figure out what they're most passionate about, and then to help them pursue it.

Personal Growth

54. The more seriously you take your growth, the more seriously your people will take you.
55. Leaders never outgrow the need to change.
56. My leadership began to take flight when I allowed myself to press people to change—whether they thanked me or cursed me.
57. Eventually, you must disengage from the relationships you've outgrown, or they will limit your growth as a leader.
58. Leadership involves the heavy burden of responsibility, and the fear of getting it wrong can paralyze a leader.
59. Confront your inadequacies and push your personal boundaries: It's the surest way to grow, improve and expand the scope of your influence.

Procrastination

60. It doesn't matter how hard or long you work if you're not accomplishing what needs to be done.
61. Plan and execute your first failure so that you no longer have to fear it.
62. If the size of a task causes you to procrastinate or completely shy away, break it into smaller, more manageable tasks.
63. Often people fail to start or complete a task because they don't see any connection between what they're doing and what they really want to accomplish in life.

Recognizing Leadership Potential

64. Your key people can be spotted when important decisions are being made, because they're the ones explaining what needs to be done.
65. Determine how your potential leaders relate to the rest of your people; the people with the greatest potential won't have burned too many bridges.
66. A potential leader who obeys God is in a much better position to succeed than one who ignores God's will for his life.
67. Your potential leaders must have established a foundation of trust with others.
68. A potential leader is the one who would be able to mentally sustain your organization's vision if you quit thinking for the next month.
69. Potential leaders come to you to offer help more often than you go to them to give guidance.
70. True leadership requires serving others full time; potential leaders are ready and willing to do so.
71. Potential leaders make themselves valuable because they see and seize opportunities to better the organization—regardless of the nature or size of the task.

72. Though loyalty does not make a leader, disloyalty prevents a person from becoming one.

Success

73. Reaching the top is a monumental achievement, but remaining there may be the most spectacular feat of all.

74. The biggest detriment to tomorrow's success is today's success.

75. Passion creates energy and magnetically pulls co-workers and customers into a shared vision, and it is exceptionally strong when linked with a leader's values.

76. Leaders don't rise to the pinnacle of success without developing the right set of attitudes and habits; they make every day a masterpiece.

77. The best leaders are humble enough to realize their victories depend upon their people.

Teamwork

78. Teams make you better than you are, multiply your value, enable you to do what you do best, allow you to help others do their best, give you more time, provide you with companionship, help you fulfill the desires of your heart and compound your vision and effort.

79. Transmit your vision emotionally by gaining credibility, demonstrating passion, establishing relationships and communicating a felt need. Transmit it logically by confronting reality, formulating strategy, accepting responsibility, celebrating victory and learning from defeat.

80. Values hold the team together, provide stability for the team to grow upon, measure the team's performance, give direction and guidance and attract like-minded people.

81. Coming together is a beginning, and staying together is progress, but only when teams sweat together do they find success.

82. The Wrong Person in the Wrong Place = Regression. The Wrong Person in the Right Place = Frustration. The Right Person in the Wrong Place = Confusion. The Right Person in the Right Place = Progression. The Right People in the Right Places = Multiplication.

83. An organization's structure does not cause growth, but it does control the rate and size of your growth.

84. Talented performers flock to the best and brightest leaders, and these leaders in turn lift the lids off their people and uncork the latent talent inside of them.

85. The best way to serve the individuals on the team is to see that the whole team wins.

Time Management

86. Although it's admirable to be ambitious and hard-working, it's more desirable to be smart-working.

87. Though it's tempting—especially if you're a people pleaser—you have to learn to discern what wheels really need grease, what ones can be greased by others and what ones will squeak no matter how much oil they have on them.

88. The key to becoming a more efficient leader isn't checking off all the items on your to-do list each day. It's in forming the habit of prioritizing your time so that you are accomplishing your most important goals in an efficient manner.

Timing

89. The timing of your decision is just as important as the decision you make.

90. To establish appropriate timing for a decision, first discern the connection between the needs around you and the calling within you.

91. When assessing the ramifications for decisions, leaders must take into account the repercussions of failure.

92. Plain common sense can be the best deterrent to far-fetched opportunities.

93. All too often, would-be decision-makers take too much time collecting, analyzing and reanalyzing information, hoping for that one last convincing detail that will dictate the correct choice.

94. Consider if the passage of time shrinks available options or creates new ones.