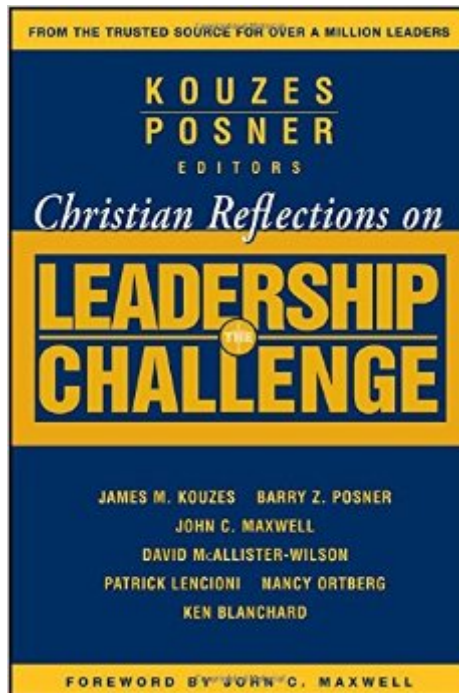


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Christian Reflections On The Leadership Challenge



Synopsis

Christian Reflections on The Leadership Challenge is a faith-based companion to the best-selling leadership book of all time--The Leadership Challenge. Grounded in Jim and Barry's time-tested research, Christian Reflections on The Leadership Challenge describes their Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership --Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart and offers practical guidance and inspiring examples about how Christian leaders can have a powerful impact in their workplaces, communities, and congregations by bringing their faith into their leadership. In addition to Jim and Barry's foundational wisdom, the book brings together five leaders who reflect on the Five Practices from a Christian perspective. John C. Maxwell, David McAllister-Wilson, Patrick Lencioni, Nancy Ortberg, and Ken Blanchard share insights and stories culled from personal experience and the lives of other Christian leaders who have accomplished extraordinary things in churches, communities, classrooms, and corporations. Their thoughtful reflections on the role of faith in leadership will propel leaders and aspiring leaders

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Customer Reviews

Having read and reread dozens of books on leadership, I've always found The Leadership Challenge to be among the best. I was certainly intrigued to see Christian Reflections on The Leadership Challenge and my curiosity paid off in a delightful read that contains both inspiring stories and introspective challenges. As I read about the Willow Creek Axis group donating hundreds

of pairs of shoes to the homeless in Chicago, I wept. As I read about John Maxwell writing out his "I am what" so "I do what" which results in "what", I was challenged and did the same myself. Having just read the book, 7 Triggers to Yes, I was inspired to read that, "Leaders keep hope alive... Hope is attitude in action." As 7 Triggers showed that inspiring hope is a powerful trigger used to influence and persuade and isn't that what leaders do. The book is a quick read (one night for me), but I do believe that the reminders of the principles in The Leadership Challenge are excellent and the inspiration coming from these varied individuals is uplifting. I think you'll enjoy this book.

I just read Christian Reflections on the Leadership Challenge edited by Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, and am I glad I did. This is a fantastic book—both informative and inspiring. Kouzes, Posner, and the five others whose chapters are included in this book offer invaluable insight as to how we can join with Jesus in exercising leadership within the framework of our faith. In so doing, they touch upon such themes as passion, service, and sacrifice. Consider, for instance, these lines from Patrick Lencioni, the author of Chapter 5: "Before setting out on a quest to challenge the process and change the world, Christian leaders should probably ask themselves two questions: 'Who am I really serving?' and 'Am I ready to suffer?'" This chapter, I think, brings us right to the heart of what it really means to be a Christian in a country where so many have forgotten. Throughout each of the chapters, these same themes sound in one way or another. Whether it is a willingness to sacrifice time, credit, power, position, prestige, comfort, or even money, it is clear that suffering and sacrifice are at the very heart of the leadership enterprise. That is perhaps the chief reason why leadership is rightly described as a challenge in the first place. Though it is within the reach of everyone, it will not come easily or without cost. Nobody knew this better than Jesus. There are, of course, other themes discussed, as well as the "The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership" for which Kouzes and Posner are best known. In fact, Chapter 2, which discusses the Five Practices specifically applied within a Christian context, is one of the best in the book. I also thoroughly enjoyed Chapter 6 by Nancy Ortberg. Though trained as a nurse, she answered God's call to ministry in a way that would put many with advanced theological degrees to shame. Very inspiring! And Chapter 8, again by Kouzes and Posner, really brings it all into focus in a very practical way. I have found much to ponder in this book, and I have every confidence that anyone wishing to better emulate Jesus will too.

James Kouzes and Barry Posner are business professors at Santa Clara University, but are better known for authoring what has become a cornerstone in business and leadership theory: "The

Leadership Challenge." The book has enjoyed numerous printings, leading to "Leadership Challenge" seminars, "Leadership Challenge" based consulting, and spin-off books on "the Leadership Challenge." "Christian Reflections on the Leadership Challenge" is a book that revisits the time-tested leadership paradigm, and features prominent practitioners of the Christian faith musing on what the five dimensions of leadership look like in a Christian context. The book is divided into seven chapters. The first--and lengthiest--of the chapters is authored by Kouzes and Posner and is an introduction to "The Leadership Challenge" for those who have not read it. Yet, even though the basics of the leadership paradigm are introduced, the faith component of leadership is heavily interwoven throughout this chapter. The examples of people who have successfully displayed a characteristic of successful leadership were all active in parish ministry, faith-based charities, or secular business-people whose faith influenced workplace decisions. This chapter was well-written and served as a valuable introduction to the remaining chapters. Each of the following chapters is authored by a prominent Christian and gives his/her reflections on how a leadership skill and faith interplay. John Maxwell (former pastor and author of numerous leadership books) reflects on "Model the Way," the habit of (a) determining your own personal values and (b) aligning your actions to reflect those values. Maxwell provides a very well-structured chapter in which he demonstrates not only a thorough understanding of aligning values and action, but lays it out in such a way that it is clear that he has made the concept his own. Showing pastoral concern for the reader, Maxwell organizes his chapter around five objectives that will aid the reader in exploring his intrinsic values and how to allow these values to surface in the workplace. The next chapter is authored by David McAllister-Wilson (president of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC) and concerns "Inspire a Shared Vision," the habit of (a) discovering your vision for the future and (b) communicating that vision in an inspiring way. For a well-respected academic, this reader was surprised at the abstract and emotional the chapter was written. Granted, the subject matter deals prominently with relationships and inspiration, but there was surprising little in the chapter that was concrete. Amidst musings on the personality of Jesus and anecdotes that went for the "you-had-me-at-hello-effect" were genuine gems of practical wisdom I wish McAllister-Wilson would've fleshed out more. Reading this chapter felt like a wasted opportunity to learn from one of the best; instead this reader felt "talked down to." Next, Patrick Lencioni (businessman and author) illustrates what it means to "Challenge the Process," that is to (a) embrace changes to internal functioning and external opportunities and (b) experiment, risk failing, and learn from these events. Lencioni provides the best-written, most concise chapter of the book as he out-right challenges the reader to examine his motivations for leading, challenging processes, and intrinsic determination.

He is not abusive toward the reader at all, but makes it clear that leadership is often sought out for the wrong reasons; the reader is advised to first see to it that pride is sufficiently restrained. Once it is, challenging the process is a natural by-product of passion and courage. Helpful illustrations of Lencioni's successes and failures in challenging the process illustrate larger points and make the author more relatable. Following Lencioni, Nancy Ortberg (member of the pastoral staff at Willow Creek, suburban Chicago's most prominent mega-church) shows how "Enabling Others to Act" has played out in her life. This is the habit of (a) building coalitions and teams and (b) giving power away to trusted team-members. This reader felt it necessary to read Ortberg's chapter multiple times. At first, abstract emotion and pointless (yet heart-warming) anecdotes appeared to prevail; after several readings, the chapter proved to have more depth than originally thought. Like McAllister-Wilson, Ortberg provides helpful advice on leadership through team-building, but finding these gems requires a lot of digging. Finally, Ken Blanchard (businessman and author) reflects on "Encouraging the Heart," that is, the habit of (a) showing genuine appreciation for good work and (b) strengthening bonds by celebrating achievements. While the subject matter lends itself well to emotional sentimentalism, Blanchard resists that temptation and provides a nice balance between inspiration and practicality. Structuring his chapter to argue that leadership is an "inside-out" art, Blanchard provides practical day-to-day tips while holding up Jesus as the ultimate "One-Minute Manager" (what would such a book be without a cheap plug?). Finally, Kouzes and Posner close out the book recapping leadership and the importance of credibility. This final chapter whets the appetite for more wisdom and practical advice. As with any anthology, "Christian Reflections on the Leadership Challenge" contains the good, the bad, and the ugly. Fortunately, the reader will find a great deal of the former and not so much of the latter two elements. This book is recommended for those who find themselves working in a church/faith-based not-for profit, but is also applicable for those who hold to the Christian faith and desire insights on how that faith can manifest itself in the secular workplace. Also, those who would like a taste of "The Leadership Challenge" in under 130 pages will also find this book beneficial. In all, recommended.

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