

*The* **ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook**  
***“Barnabas”* Edition**

*Seven Core Values that Impact Every Leader-to-Follower Relationship:*  
HEART-MISSION-APPROACH-STABILITY-LIFESTYLE-FORTITUDE-WORLDVIEW

**Lesson Twelve: A Leader's Need for Skills**

By  
Dr. L. Hollis Jones

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## Lesson Twelve: A Leader's Need for Skills

**CORE VALUE:** The STABILITY for leading created by applying a balance of skills, character, and compassion.

**BIBLE VERSE(S):** Psalm 78:72 & 2 Timothy 1:6

**ONE SIMPLE TRUTH:** The presence of a skill in a person's life comes from a combination of God-given ability and experiences that generate confidence and proficiency.

**APPLICATION:** Recognize your God-given ability and initiate experiences that help transform this ability into a God honoring skill.

### Introduction:

*An ENTRUSTED Leader is a person of vision who faithfully serves the investment God has "entrusted" in one's life by using skills, character, and compassion to guide others toward a common goal while upholding an ENTRUSTED Leader's Core Values.* This definition of a leader originally appeared in lesson two of The ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook. The parable of The Talents, Matthew 25:14-30, inspires the notion of a leader faithfully serving God's entrusted investment in one's life. The concept of a leader creating stability for leading by applying a balance of skills, character, and compassion finds inspiration from the description of David found in Psalm 78:72: "David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them." (NIV)

David led others skillfully with character and compassion. Leading others requires a combination of appropriately developed skills and core values that produce Biblically sound leadership behaviors. Leadership stability and balance increase when a

skilled leader applies the benefits of character and compassion that only come from a spiritually transformed heart.

An ENTRUSTED leader needs skill, character, and compassion in equal measure. A deficiency in any one of the three leaves one out of balance and creates instability. A leader may get away with relying on one or two of these traits in the short term, but in the long term, cracks will appear that compromise one's stability and balance while leading others.

The ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook focuses on the heart development of a leader. The presence of Biblical character and compassion provide evidence that such development has transpired during one's life. The ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook makes no attempt to develop functional leadership skills or knowledge. This leadership program assumes that the participants either have or will develop the leadership skills and knowledge necessary to be a leader in their chosen profession. ELW Lesson twelve will, however, discuss a leader's need for skills in the context of Biblically sound leadership practices and behaviors. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, this lesson discusses skills in conjunction with a leader's need for character (ELW lesson # 13) and compassion (ELW lesson #14) to create stability and balance.

The ELW's primary emphasis resides on the development of a leader's heart. The reader should not, however, construe this to mean that only character and compassion are required to be an effective leader in God's administration. Appropriate leadership skills and knowledge must also be developed apart from the ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook program. The core values and Biblical practices/behaviors of leadership contained in this workbook serve to complement a leader's professional skills not supplant them. An

ENTRUSTED Leader must possess appropriate functional skills to lead as God desires and intends.

The psalmist Asaph said of David in Psalm 78:72: "...with skillful hands he led them." (NIV) David skillfully led Israel. An Entrusted Leader should lead others skillfully as well. Two questions immediately arise: What do we mean by the term "skill"? From where do "skills" come?

**What do we mean by the term "skill"?**

How do you define a "Skill"?

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What qualifies someone to be a "skillful" leader?

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*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines the term "skillful" as:

"possessed of or displaying skill" <sup>1</sup> This same dictionary defines a "skill" as:

**2 a :** the ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance

**b :** dexterity or coordination especially in the execution of learned physical tasks

**3 :** a learned power of doing something competently : a developed aptitude or ability (language *skills*) <sup>2</sup>

The concept of being skillful encompasses a person's intellectual capacity to use learned knowledge and a person's natural or acquired physical dexterity to perform some activity. Skills involve both intellectual and physical ability. Excellence in either area can set a person apart from others. A person does not necessarily have to possess both to be "skillful" in an area of expertise.

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<sup>1</sup>Inc Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*., Includes Index., 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.,

The Hebrew term used by Asaph in Psalm 78:72 describes David's leadership as (*tēbûnâ*). This word functions as a derivative of the Hebrew term (*bî ñ*). The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* defines *bin* as follows: “**understand, consider, perceive, prudent, regard**. ... Its main English usage means ‘understanding’ or ‘insight.’ ... *bî ñ* includes the concept of distinguishment that leads to understanding. *bî ñ* is a power of judgment and perceptive insight and is demonstrated in the use of knowledge.”<sup>3</sup> The *Dictionary of Biblical Languages* says of *tebuna*: “**1.** capacity for discerning a right course of action **2.** capable to perform a craft”<sup>4</sup>

A person can distinguish oneself by acquiring a superior skill. Refined physical dexterity can result in a person being able to pass a football, hit a baseball, putt a golf ball, or shoot a basketball better than the next guy. A skilled artist can paint a picture, a skilled musician can play an instrument, and a skilled craftsman can forge metals in a manner more appealing to the eye and ear than others. Consider the wisdom of the old Hebrew proverb:

Do you see a man skilled in his work?  
He will serve before kings;  
he will not serve before obscure men.  
(Proverbs 22:29 NIV)

The same applies to intellectual dexterity as well. People who can gather and assimilate data and knowledge often gain an advantage in professions such as business, law, medicine, and education. These examples [and many others like them] have the

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<sup>3</sup>R. Laird Harris, Robert Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999, c1980), 103.

<sup>4</sup>James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), DBLH 9312, #2.

potential to distinguish an individual from others on the basis of superior skills. These types of physical and intellectual skills, however, do not necessarily make one a “skillful” leader.

The *Dictionary of Biblical Languages* definition [quoted previously] includes the idea that a person with a “skill” has the capacity **to discern the right course of action**. David distinguished himself as a skilled musician. He could propel a stone using a sling with deadly accuracy. David excelled tending his family’s sheep. When it came to leading Israel with “skilled hands”, however, I have to believe that the aptitude that set him apart from other potential leaders was the “skill” of **knowing the right course of action**. Knowing and choosing to follow the right course of action becomes critical when one leads as God intends and desires. This skill requires one to view leading from God’s point of view. To skillfully lead others, a person must resist the temptation of focusing on “self” and view circumstances with the goal of choosing a course of action that serves the real needs of one’s followers.

One of the most common mistakes made by organizations involves promoting to a position of leadership a “skilled” individual based on superior performance alone. A person who possesses exceptional ability in a certain field may not be able to teach, guide, and inspire others to perform accordingly. The best salesperson does not always make the best sales manager. Do not assume that individual star performance naturally translates into the skill of leading others to do the same.

A leader has to be able to see the entire playing field. A leader has to be able to see how a myriad of seemingly unrelated variables actually interconnect. Leaders must see clearly the reality of a situation, not just how they that want circumstances to be.

Once the whole landscape is properly discerned, a “skilled” leader can embark on a proper course of action for all members of an organization. Skilled leaders have the ability to see the right course of action for a given situation and the ability of mobilizing their followers to walk the path with them.

**From where do “skills” come?**

The development of person’s “skill set” comes from a unique combination of two factors. How these two factors conjoin in one’s life determines what a person is good at and sets them apart from every other human being. Read 2 Timothy 1:6 and consider the following questions. “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, ...” (2 Timothy 1:6 NIV)

**Questions of the Biblical Text<sup>5</sup> (2 Timothy 1:6)**

What do you think Paul meant when he referred to “*the gift of God*” in Timothy’s life?

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What do you think Paul meant when he encouraged Timothy to “*fan into flame*” his gift?

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**Reflection:**

What “gift of God” do you recognize in your life? How can you “fan it into a flame?”

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<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise noted the questions listed in *The ENTRUSTED Leader’s Workbook* are based on: *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984)

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**Commentary:**

The presence of a skill on one's life results from a combination of ability and experience. A skill forms by the conjoining of ability and experience. Each person has the opportunity to "fan into flames" (experience) the latent potential residing in "the gift of God" (ability) unique to one's life. Ability alone may distinguish a person from others, but not until experience polishes ability does a truly superior skill form.

Ability comes from God. Each person ever created by God has a unique set of talents. Some refer to this as "giftedness". Paul reminded Timothy that the talents in his life constituted a gift from God. God created each person exactly according to his plan and purpose for one's life. Each individual has the perfect set of ability to accomplish all God intended for his or her life. People often get into trouble when they either use their ability to pursue a purpose God did not intend, or they pursue a purpose that they do not have the ability to accomplish. Evidence of a God-given ability can be seen in: Activities that come natural to a person. What someone loves to accomplish. The tasks a person can perform with minimal stress and anxiety. Ability takes into consideration a person's physical, mental, and emotional talents and limits. Leaders who excel typically have honestly assessed their own ability, applied their strengths, and stayed away from situations that expose their weaknesses.

Experience embodies the human activity that helps transform a God-given ability into a "skill". Human initiatives such as the repetition of practicing a physical movement, the discipline of studying information that expands one's knowledge and understanding, and the observation of others using a skill all are examples of how a person uses experience to help transform ability into a skill. Often the gaining of such experiences

comprises activities a person must initiate and persevere in to acquire. At others times, unexpected circumstances arise that one must respond to that provide an experience that can be draw upon for the rest of someone’s life. The more often one utilizes an ability and gains experience, the faster the combination becomes a skill.

A “skillful” leader knows how to choose the right course of action. Frequently this insight comes from past experiences. The formation of an experience base typically includes successes and failures. Wise leaders learn from their mistakes and do not repeat them when such circumstances arise again. Wise leaders learn what works and what does not work in given situations. This is how experience contributes to transforming ability into skill.

### **Questions of Biblical Texts that relate to: Ability**

“I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.” (I Corinthians 7:7 NIV)

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. <sup>7</sup> If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; <sup>8</sup> if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.” (Romans 12:6-8 NIV)

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:4 NIV)

In all three of these passages, the Greek termed for “gift” is *charisma*. Strong defines this term as “a favor with which one receives without any merit of his own.” <sup>6</sup>

Based on these passages and Strong’s definition of a “gift”, describe in your own words where do a person’s “gifts” come from and how much of the credit should a person claim for their presence?

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<sup>6</sup>James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), G5486.

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The story of Bezalel and Onoliab illustrates the reality that God gives people ability by grace. God distributes ability to people according to his purpose. People do not acquire ability from God through merit. Read Exodus 31:1-11 and 35:30 – 36:1 and answer the following questions.

Then the LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup>“See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, <sup>3</sup>and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts— <sup>4</sup>to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, <sup>5</sup>to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship. <sup>6</sup>Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you: <sup>7</sup>the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent— <sup>8</sup>the table and its articles, the pure gold lampstand and all its accessories, the altar of incense, <sup>9</sup>the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, the basin with its stand— <sup>10</sup>and also the woven garments, both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests, <sup>11</sup>and the anointing oil and fragrant incense for the Holy Place. They are to make them just as I commanded you.” (Exodus 31:1-11 NIV)

God commanded Moses to lead Israel in the task of building a tabernacle, so the Lord God Almighty could dwell among them. “Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.” (Exodus 25:8-9 NIV) In Exodus 25 – 30 the reader will find a detailed description of the tabernacle and its furnishings that Moses and the people of Israel were to construct. Based on Exodus 31:1-11, answer the following questions:

Describe all God had done for Bezalel and Onoliab.

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Describe what God intended Bezalel and Onoliab to do with their skills and ability.

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By grace, God chose Bezalel and Onoliab. The Lord God Almighty filled them with skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts. God filled all the craftsmen of Israel with skills. God's purpose involved building the tabernacle and its furnishings.

Ability comes from God. The Lord intends for people to use their ability according to God's purposes. How do you think God might have reacted to a craftsman of Israel who refused to work on the tabernacle because he or she was too busy pursuing selfish gain? Peter taught that a follower of Christ should use his or her gifts to serve others and to administer God's grace so that God is praised and glorified (1 Peter 4:10-11).

**Questions of Biblical Texts that relate to: Experience**

“Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.” (1 Timothy 4:14-15 NIV)

What three actions did Paul instruct Timothy to take in regard to his gift?

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What result did Paul expect from these actions?

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Paul recognized the God-given ability in Timothy's life. Paul knew that the full potential of Timothy's gift would only come forth with experience. Paul encouraged Timothy not to neglect his gift. Paul instructed Timothy to be diligent and to give himself wholly to the things God had given him the ability to do. Paul knew that with experience, Timothy's ability would progress in such a way that others would notice. Using and practicing the disciplines associated with one's God-given ability results in a skill reaching its full potential in one's life. Consider what Solomon said about this reality in Ecclesiastes 10:10 "If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed but skill will bring success." (NIV) The mundane task of sharpening an ax produces a sharper edge and more efficient work. In the same way, the discipline of gaining experience helps transform an ability into a useful skill.

The story of David and Goliath provides a good illustration of how past experience helps refine a God-given ability and produce a skill. Keep in mind that past experiences pave the way for future confidence. Also, discipline practice ahead of time leads to familiarity and proficiency. God-given ability and past experience intersected resulting in David's triumph over Goliath. Read all of 1 Samuel 17:32-48 and answer the following questions. Selected passages from these verses are below.

<sup>36</sup>Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. ...<sup>38</sup>Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. <sup>39</sup>David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

“I cannot go in these,” he said to Saul, “because I am not used to them.” So he took them off. <sup>40</sup> Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine. ...

<sup>48</sup> As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. <sup>49</sup> Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

(1 Samuel 17:32-48 NIV)

### **Questions of Biblical Text (1 Samuel 17:32-48)**

What past experiences gave David the confidence that he had the skill necessary to face Goliath?

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Why did David refuse Saul’s offer to use his armor?

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Why do you think David choose to face Goliath with a sling and a stone instead of a sword?

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God gave David the hand-eye coordination and strength to use a sling and a stone. David had the natural ability that allowed him to become proficient with a sling. While the text does not say so per se, given his profession as a shepherd, one can presume that David had plenty of time and opportunity to practice using a sling to propel a stone with deadly speed and accuracy. Such practice and experience help turn his ability into a skill that he had confidence in.

Conversely, David was not familiar with the armor and sword of a trained military man. David did not have confidence using such instruments because he

had no experience with them. Consequently, when offered by Saul, David rejected the use of his armor and sword.

### **Application**

God has given you a unique set of abilities. God intends to use you as a leader and to bring these abilities to bear accordingly. God expects you to use these abilities to their fullest potential.

Skillful leaders know at what they are good. Leaders know where their God-given abilities lie. Skillful leaders humbly recognize areas in which they lack talent. You need to honestly appraise your strengths and weaknesses if you want to be the “skillful” leader God desires and created you to be. Many ways exist to increase your understanding of your God-given abilities, such as: prayer, honest personal introspection, recognize past experiences – good and bad, talking to friends and colleagues that know you well, and professional “skills” inventories/surveys that profile your abilities. Taking such initiatives to honestly assess your God-given ability will help you become the leader God desires.

Once you have an accurate assessment of your set of abilities you will be in a position to gain the experience required to transform your abilities into skills. You can gain experience in a variety of ways, such as: practice a certain discipline, read and study the writings of others, observe and learn from others with similar skills, and find a mentor who will guide and teach you. Fan into flame the gift God has given you. Take initiatives which promote experiences.

### **Conclusion**

Skills, character, and compassion work in concert to create stability and balance for an ENTRUSTED Leader. The presence of a skill in a person's life comes from a combination of God-given ability and experiences that generate confidence and proficiency. Recognize your God-given ability and initiate experiences that help transform this ability into a God honoring skill.

David led Israel skillfully. David chose the right course of action that served God's purpose for his people. Knowing the right course of action requires selflessness. Circumstances must be viewed from according to God's purposes not one's selfish ambition and desires. A leader must consider the impact on those who follow when selecting a course of action. This is what "skillful" leaders do.