

*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 Thirteen: A Leader's Need for Character**

By  
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## Lesson Thirteen: A Leader's Need for Character

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

**BIBLE VERSE(S):** Psalm 78:72 & Psalm 51:10

**ONE SIMPLE TRUTH:** The presence of character in a leader contains a mixture of moral behavior and courageous acts.

**APPLICATION:** Allow the Holy Spirit to transform your moral behavior to Biblical standards and bolster your courage to lead by trusting in God.

### 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.* 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)

Modern day culture does not fully appreciate the value of a leader possessing a balance of skills, character, and compassion. In fact, many have completely separated a leader's ethical behavior from his or her role as a leader. The prevailing societal attitude suggests that it does not matter what a leader does in one's personal life as long as the job gets done. This attitude is a byproduct of a dualistic worldview; the idea that the world can be cleanly divided between the material and the spiritual. The Bible rejects and

refutes this philosophy. Scripture presents man holistically. God's Word rejects any notion that the impact of a person's ethical behavior can be compartmentalized and limited to one area of life without impacting another. Dualism stands inconsistent with the reality of life. One cannot lead "skillfully" in the marketplace and ignore one's need for character and compassion.

In today's leadership environment, people have elevated skills to a place of prominence that eclipses both character and compassion. Results matter more than method. The means by which a leader achieves results justifies the end. The prevailing attitude exists that if a skilled leader must compromise his or her personal convictions, then so-be-it. Society has a convenient way of turning a blind eye to the cold hearted treatment of followers as long as the leader gets results.

Skills dominate the current landscape when the focus turns to developing, choosing and promoting leaders. Most institutions of higher learning have sophisticated curricular offerings designed to teach leadership and management skills. Unfortunately, these same institutions have no clue how to develop a leader's heart, from which character and compassion spring. Almost all secular and many religious institutions of higher learning reject the Bible as an educational resource. Lasting character and compassion only emerge when a leader's heart has been transformed by the absolute truth of the Word of God. The secular philosophy of relativism, which most schools now readily accept and teach, leaves them with no permanent foundation upon which to teach a leader an enduring code of ethics or a logical reason to treat others with compassion. This limiting set of circumstances has produced a generation of leaders who place a premium on skills and discount the value of character and compassion.

Envision a leader standing on a platform being supported by three columns. The platform represents the leadership position the leader holds. Refer to ELW lesson eight: The Platform of Leadership. One column represents the leader's skills while the other two columns represent character and compassion. Ideally, a leader will possess these three qualities in equal measure. Such a situation results in a level, stable, and balanced platform of leadership upon which a leader can stand. See figure 12.1 on the top of the next page.

Figure 12.1: Picture of a stable and balanced platform of leadership

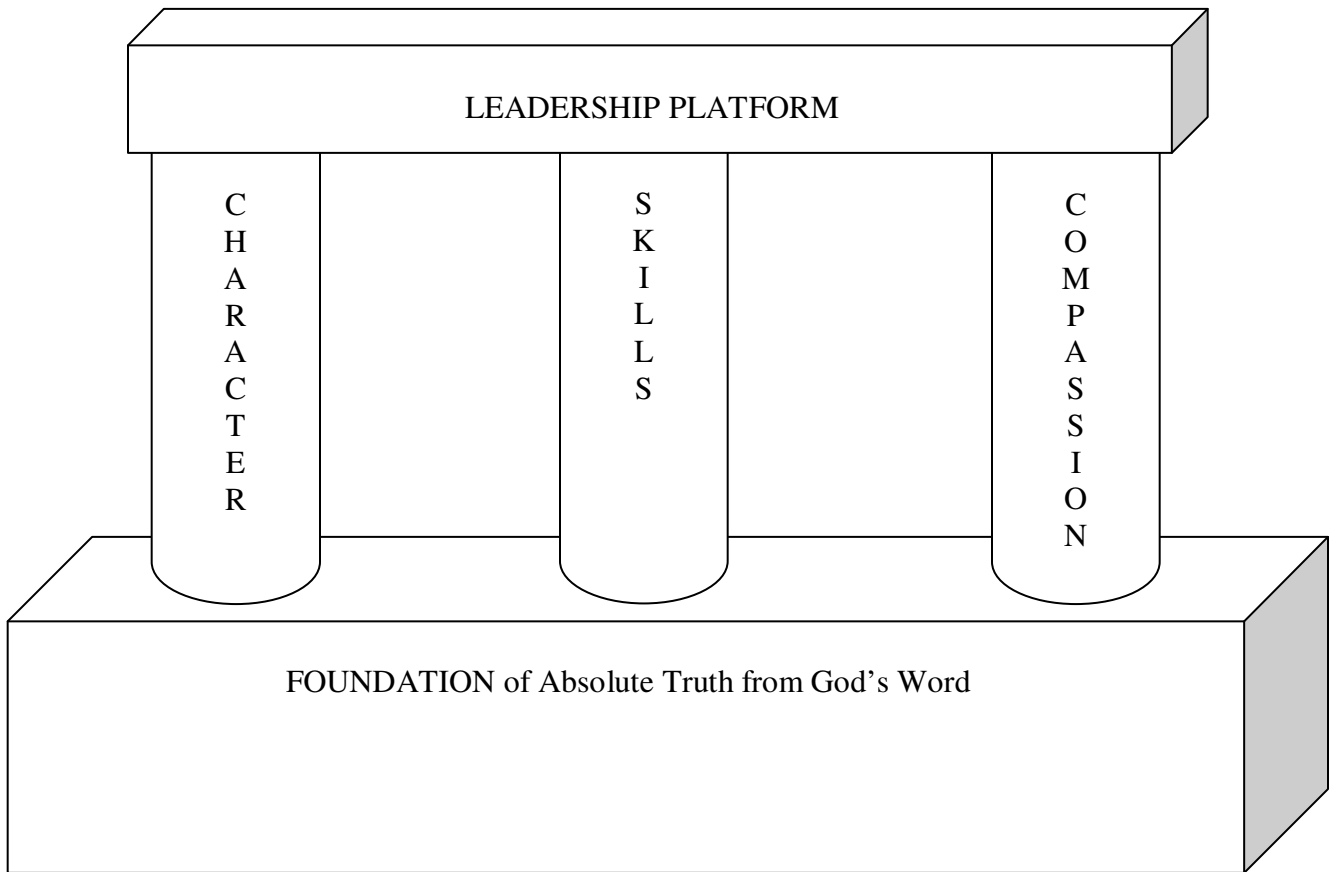
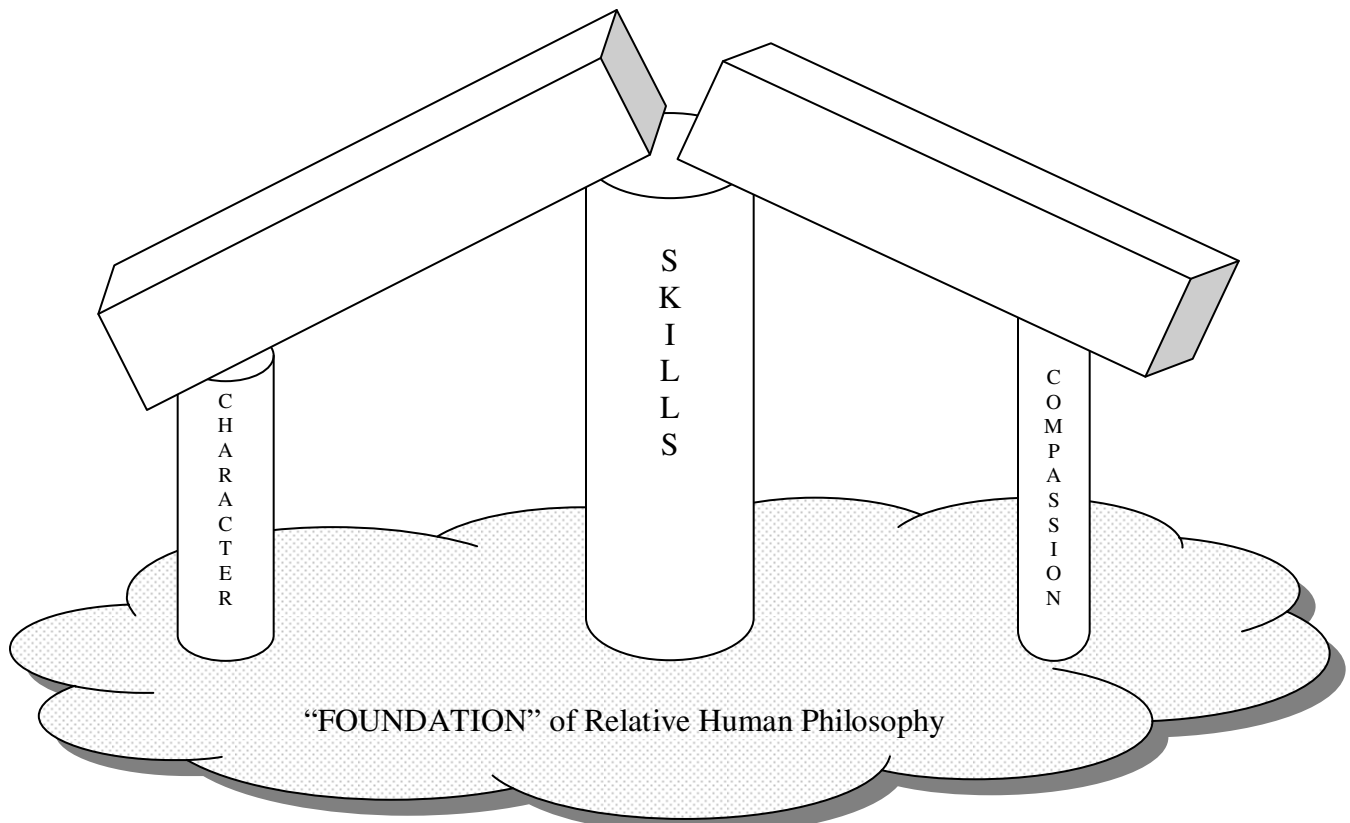


Figure 12.1 above represents a mental image of the balance and stability created when a leader's platform rests on character, skill, and compassion equally. A skill forms

when God-given ability combines with experience. Institutes of higher education teach leadership and management skills. Character and compassion spring from a heart transformed by the Word of God. When a leader chooses the world's priority of developing skill and ignores the development of compassion and character, the image will look more like figure 12.2.

Figure 12.2: Picture of an unstable and out-of-balance platform of leadership



Development of character and compassion lag behind skill development in the leader who trusts in the shifting sands of relative human philosophy. Such a leader runs the risk that one day the pressures associated with leading will compromise his or her decision-making resulting in the fracture of one's platform. Many choices demanded of a leader rest outside the realm of leadership and management skills. Such decisions require a leader with strong and stable convictions that come from character and compassion.

The collapse of a leader's platform may appear less catastrophic than figure 12.2 portrays. Sometimes the negative impact of character and compassion deficiencies is more subtle such as: a slow erosion of credibility and believability, a lack of trust, confidence, loyalty, or a reduction of productivity because followers resist giving their full effort. Leadership which relies only on skills eventually becomes unstable and unbalanced.

Some would say that character and compassion go hand-in-hand and cannot be separated. One might suppose that character and compassion develop in equal measure as a leader's heart transforms. This proposition sounds logical. Observation and experience, however, suggest other-wise. Character and compassion do not develop in equal measure. I have encountered individuals who have hearts of gold and drip with compassion for others but live an ethically immoral life-style. By the same token, I have encountered people who are morally impeccable and beyond reproach ethically but relate in a cold, unloving, and unsympathetic manner to everyone around them. I believe a leader must consider both one's character and compassion as he or she develops. This ELW lesson will focus on character. The next ELW lesson will consider a leader's need for compassion.

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.

The psalmist Asaph in Psalm 78:72: “And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; ...” (NIV) David led Israel with integrity of heart. Integrity speaks to the core of David’s character. The Hebrew term translated as integrity is *tom*. Swanson defines this term as follows: “**blamelessness**, integrity, innocence, i.e., a state or condition of moral goodness in a life,”<sup>1</sup> I like the idea of a leader having “moral goodness.” In this regard, I use the term “character” when speaking of the “moral goodness or integrity” of an ENTRUSTED Leader. Reflect on this for a moment and answer the following.

**What do we mean by the term “character”?**

How do you define “character”? \_\_\_\_\_  
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What does it mean to you that a leader possesses “character”? \_\_\_\_\_  
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*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* says of the term “character”: “...the complex of mental and ethical traits marking and often individualizing a person, ...moral excellence and firmness...”<sup>2</sup> Keep in mind the idea of a leader having “moral excellence and firmness” and read David’s words recorded in Psalm 51:10. “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (NIV)

**Questions of the Biblical Text<sup>3</sup> (Psalm 51:10)**

<sup>1</sup> James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), DBLH 9448, #1.

<sup>2</sup> Inc Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary.*, Includes Index., 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster, 1996, c1993).

<sup>3</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)

What two requests did David make of God in this Psalm?

1.

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2.

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How do you think a “pure heart” manifests itself in the life of a leader?

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How do you think a “steadfast spirit” manifests itself in the life of a leader?

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In Psalm 51:10, David speaks of two aspects of a person’s character. David asks God to strengthen his character in two ways. The request from David involved creating a pure heart within him. The second petition contemplated renewing a steadfast spirit. From this passage, the reader learns that a person’s character has not only a moral or ethical aspect, but also a courageous aspect. When most people think of a leader’s character he or she typically focuses on one’s moral or ethical behavior. A leader’s character, however, also encompasses one’s courage to lead others.

Psalm 51 records David’s lament after being confronted by the prophet Nathan for having committing adultery with Bathsheba. David recognized that his sin left him morally unclean before God which caused him to be unstable and insecure in his own mind and spirit. Think about your own life for a minute: Doesn’t unconfessed sin leave us feeling unclean and insecure? Isn’t this a natural result of sin separating us from the Lord God Almighty?

### **Character: “A pure heart”**

The Hebrew word for heart, (*leb*), refers to a person’s inner make up: intellect, emotion, and will. David understood that authentic moral character, what he called a “pure heart,” involved more than simple outward conformity to a code of ethics. David knew his inner nature needed become “purified” and that the evidence of such would be a change in his moral attitudes and behaviors.

The Hebrew word for “pure” is *tahor*. Strong defines this term as: “pure, clean. 1A clean (ceremonially—of animals). 1B pure (physically). 1C pure, clean (morally, ethically).”<sup>4</sup> A person only becomes “ceremonially clean” though a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Conformity to rules will not create the “pure heart” David desired. Once a person receives Jesus as Lord and Savior, however, his or her character will change from the inside out and display moral attitudes and behaviors consistent with following Christ. A leader’s moral character involves sinful behaviors a follower of Christ should avoid and wholesome behaviors one should adopt. Read Colossians 3:1-17 and answer the following questions.

### **Questions of the Biblical Text (Colossians 3:1-17)**

Based on Colossians 3:1-4:

What provides the basis for a Christian’s moral character?

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On what should a Christian focus his or her moral character?

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<sup>4</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), H2889.

Based on Colossians 3:5-9, list as many “sinful attitudes & behaviors” as possible.

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What did Paul tell the Colossians to do with these “sinful behaviors”? (Colossians 3:5)

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Read Colossians 3:12-17, list as many “wholesome attitudes & behaviors” as possible.

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What did Paul tell the Colossians to do in regard to “wholesome attitudes and behaviors”? (Colossians 3:12)

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Describe in your own words the potential impact on a leader-to-follower relationship that would come if a leader “put to death” sinful behavior and in turn “clothed” oneself with wholesome attitudes and behaviors.

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A Christian’s character rests on one’s union with Jesus Christ. As followers of Christ we need to focus our hearts and minds on heavenly things not earthly things. A person’s moral attitude and behavior will reflect whatever he or she feeds into one’s brain. The Apostle Paul said in Colossians chapter two that when a person receives Jesus

Christ as Lord, he or she is set free from following human rules and legalism. This does not, however, give one license to live a morally corrupt life. In Colossians chapter three, Paul describes what holy living looks like.

Paul instructed followers of Jesus Christ to “put to death” whatever belongs to our earthly nature. What follows is a list of the immoral attitudes and behaviors from which Christians are to turn away. They are the following: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed, anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language, and lying. I do not take this as an all inclusive list of immoral behaviors, but representative of the attitudes and behaviors a Christian must rid from one’s life. Such behaviors would most certainly damage the leader-follower relationship.

Paul clearly describes the type of moral character that a follower of Jesus Christ should reflect. Paul says that a believer should “clothe yourself” with them. People see the physical clothes a believer wears. Similarly, others should see these attitudes and behaviors in a Christ follower’s life as well. These characteristics are: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, love, unity, peace, thankfulness, wisdom, and gratitude. As with Paul’s list of immoral attitudes and behaviors, I do not consider this an all inclusive list of all moral attitudes and behaviors. Paul’s lists clearly contrast the outward appearance of the person who follows one’s sinful nature compared to the outward appearance of a follower of Christ. The leader, who displays the moral character Paul expects from a follower of Christ, will have a positive impact on his or her relationship with those he or she leads.

A leader’s moral behavior truly reflects the inward condition of his or her heart or character. Most secular institutions and organizations call this ethics. The world’s basis

for ethical behavior rests on the shifting sands of relativism. Worldly leaders function void of any absolute inward moral compass. Consequently, such a leader's moral behavior becomes limited only by what others deem as legal, company policy, socially acceptable, or in some cases simply whatever a leader thinks he or she can get away with.

A follower of Jesus Christ must resist the temptation of one's character being defined by relative, situational ethics. The leader, who claims to follow Jesus Christ, must allow his or her character to be shaped and defined by God's Word, and God's Word alone! The Bible stands firmly as the absolute standard of behavior which supersedes societal norms, company policies, and self desire. A leader must be guided by an absolute Biblically based moral compass of right and wrong that points to what's right even when no one else watches. Consider what David said in this regard in Psalm 119:9: "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word." (NIV)

### **Character: "A steadfast spirit"**

In addition to a pure heart, David asked God to "renew a steadfast spirit" in him. "Steadfast" comes from the Hebrew word *kuwn*. Strong defines this term: "1 to be firm, be stable, be established. 1A (Niphal). 1A1 to be set up, be established, be fixed."<sup>5</sup> A leader must be of a firm and stable character. A leader cannot be insecure or double minded. Such security of conviction and courage only comes from a steadfast spirit establish and rooted in God.

A leader's sense of security and courage also reflects the inward condition of a leader's heart or character. Every leader who moves through life separated from God by

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<sup>5</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), H3559.

sin and relies solely on “self” will eventually encounter a giant that overwhelms his or her self-confidence. Facing such a giant alone can leave a leader feeling insecure, indecisive, and afraid. Trusting that God ultimately controls all circumstances and is bigger than all earthly giants, leaves a leader with a sense of security and courage rooted in someone bigger than self. A leader must have the courage to take full responsibility for the lives of those that follow. Leaders get credit for results: good or bad! A leader must initiate appropriate action depending on the circumstances and not wait to simply react. Leaders give clear direction to others. Leaders do not wait for someone else to give directions. Leaders do not waver or second guess decisions. Leaders make the hard decisions and choices no one else wants to make. Leaders do not compromise their convictions on controversial issues, even when their views run counter to popular opinion. Leaders take “calculated” risks. Bold leadership actions take courage and are not for the weak of heart.

Courage of character stems from God’s presence not raw bravery rooted in self. Real confidence does not come from arrogance, pride, or an inflated view of self. The basis of such courageous character is a firm belief in the sovereignty and providence of God. A good example of such courage appears in the story of David and Goliath. Read 1 Samuel 17:45-47 and answer the following questions.

**Questions of the Biblical Text (1 Samuel 17:45-47)**

How did David contrast his “coming” to battle with that of Goliath’s?

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Based on this passage what provided David's courage to fight Goliath?

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David's courage to fight Goliath, and essentially lead Israel in battle, came from his trust in the sovereignty of God not his own skill or strength. David proclaimed that Goliath's trust relied on human fashioned armaments. Goliath relied on his fighting skills (self). David stood up to this giant based on his faith in the Lord Almighty. Goliath defied the God of the armies of Israel. David gave God all the credit for the victory over this giant. David understood that God intended and desired to work through him as a leader so that the "whole world" would know that God exists in Israel.

God desires and intends to use you in the same manner he used David. God wants to make his presence known through you to those you lead. Trusting in God, not self, and standing courageously before whatever giants you face constitutes one way to make God known to others. David's faith and trust in God's sovereignty resided in David's heart long before he faced Goliath. If you trust in whatever human armament makes you successful today; someday you will face a giant bigger than your skills. The result will be a quick melting away of your courage. Trust in God, and no such giant will ever steal your courage.

Fear paralyzes a leader. Being scared causes a leader to become indecisive, unsure, and insecure. Followers can sense this in a leader instantly. Nobody wants to trust his or her fate to a leader that lacks courage. Joshua assumed the leadership of Israel upon Moses' death. Joshua's first challenge as a leader involved leading Israel on a campaign to enter the Promised Land. This meant displacing the current residents who forty years prior Israel saw as unbeatable giants. God said this to Joshua: "Have I not commanded

you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9 NIV) Joshua’s courage resided with God, not self.

If your courage as a leader is anchored to “self”-confidence, you will eventually reach the limits of your skills to face giants. If your courage extends beyond “self”-confidence into the reaches of a limitless and all-powerful God, you will never face a giant too big. This does not guarantee you will always emerge victoriously, but it does provide unsurpassed peace that God controls all circumstances no matter the situation.

### **Application**

I want to challenge you to get alone with God and ask him to clearly reveal to you the make up of your character. BE CAREFUL FOR THIS MAY BE PAINFUL AT FIRST! As David prayed, ask God to create in you a pure heart and a steadfast spirit. (Psalm 51:10 NIV) Ask God to reveal to you any moral attitudes and behaviors you harbor in your heart that are inconsistent with God’s Biblical standards. Ask God to show you where your trust resides in the human armament of your own skills, rather than trusting in God’s sovereign control over the circumstances of your life.

### **Conclusion**

A leader needs character to complement his or her skills. The presence of character in a leader is a mixture of moral behavior and courageous acts. An Entrusted Leader’s credibility links directly to one’s moral character. An Entrusted Leader’s decisiveness links directly to one’s courage. God’s Word remains the only absolute standard for a leader’s moral attitudes and behavior. God’s sovereignty serves as the only reliable basis for a leader’s courage and confidence.