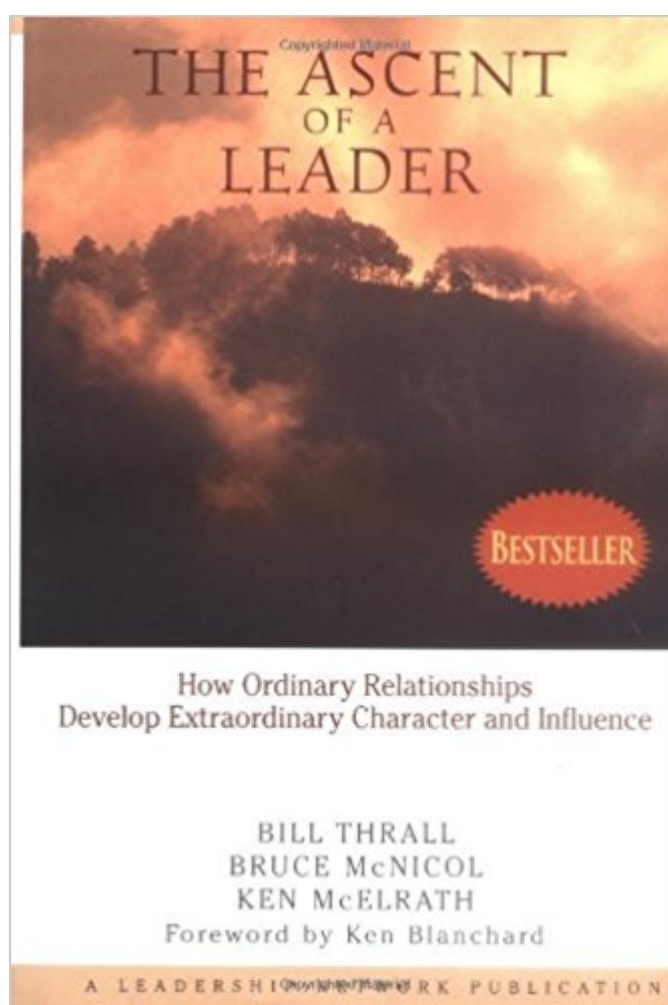


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# The Ascent Of A Leader: How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character And Influence



## Synopsis

A Leadership Network Publication    Become the leader people are proud to follow by opening yourself to the influences that develop character: Anduring relationships with friAnds, family, and God.Solidly based on Christian values, this practical, visionary, and hope-filled book guides readers through a step-by-step process for developing both personal character and the network of important relationships that enable character to win out, even in the face of setbacks, adversity, and temptations to take short cuts. Leadership is about character, the authors assert, and character weaves values like integrity, honesty, and selfless service into the fabric of our lives, organizations, and cultures. The Ascent of a Leader is written for ordinary people-mothers, husbands, bosses, secretaries, pastors, teachers, and students-who want to develop extraordinary character, find and follow God's plan for their lives, and lead others where they need to go. We all have innate leadership potential. To maximize it, we must do much more than develop performance-based skills, the authors assert. We must consciously choose who and what we allow to influence us, find and develop our humility, and build Anduring relationships with colleagues, family, friAnds, and God. They offer engaging real-life examples to show how we can grow into our true potential as leaders and inspire us to "make a difference in the 21st century-in our families, our communities, our companies, our government, and even our world."    With a foreword by Ken Blanchard.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The Ascent of a Leader is a beautifully honest, deeply caring, and positively uplifting book. Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath show us with their compelling stories and inspiring

message how magic happens when leaders of character nurture an environment filled with grace. This book embraces you, and once you've read it you won't ever forget it. In a world filled with so much cynicism and fear, this is one book that definitely will fill your heart and soul with hope and joy." — Jim Kouzes, coauthor, *The Leadership Challenge* and *Encouraging the Heart*; chairman, Tom Peters Group/Learning Systems "The Ascent of a Leader reiterates a truth that is timeless: "No man is an island." Through well-chosen parables and real-life examples, Thrall, McNicol, and McElrath offer valuable lessons in interdependence and show us how to engender 'trust, creativity, and hope'--in ourselves and others." — Jon Kyl, U.S. Senator from Arizona "The Ascent of a Leader fits in the fine lineage of Greenleaf's *Servant Leadership* and De Pree's *Leadership Is an Art*. A must-read for leaders who know and leaders who wonder about a deeper foundation and a higher pinnacle. Transcendent, transparent, and authentic." — Daryl C. F. Wilson, general manager manufacturing, Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada, Inc. "Most leaders are familiar with and thrive on challenges and risks. The Ascent of a Leader deals with the greatest risks any of us can face: humility, transparency, and sacrifice. This book will challenge you in unique ways and help you view your calling with a new perspective." — Jack Alexander, CEO, WorldTravel Partners "Leadership is all about relationships. This book is a must-read for those who want to lead in relationship building." — C. William Pollard, chairman, The ServiceMaster Company "This inspiring book is essential reading for those who seek to earn the respect of the emerging generation who hunger for leaders whose personal and professional lives are centered on character and dignity." — Dick Capen, former U.S. ambassador to Spain, chairman and publisher of The Miami Herald "Climbing the ladder of success is a driving passion for many in today's corporate America, but too often character is compromised on the way up. The Ascent of a Leader helped me think through both motives and means to true success." — John Beckett, president, R. W. Beckett Corporation; author, *Loving Monday: Succeeding in Business Without Selling Your Soul* "The Ascent of a Leader powerfully cuts through all areas of life. I am confident these principles will profoundly enrich the leader's marriage, family, social, and corporate relationships." — Mike Singletary, NFL Hall of Fame "The leadership journey that The Ascent of a Leader describes so well is truly an extraordinary experience, although not for the faint of heart. If we stay with the journey as the authors advise though, it takes us beyond our own minds and imaginations and leaves us astounded by grace. I would recommend this book for any leaders who are sincerely attracted to the challenge of letting God take them to places they've never been before." — Janet Hagberg, director, Silent Witness National Initiative; author, *Real Power* and *The Critical Journey* "This powerful and inspiring book points to vital steps that can help readers

move from selfishness to selflessness, from self-sufficiency to God-sufficiency. True leaders are spawned, the authors write, by small groups of faithful people in which participants can be healed and restored, and broken loose from human bondage to do the real work of the world."

•George Gallup Jr., chairman, Gallup International Institute "The Ascent of a Leader represents a ground-breaking blend of the technical and character aspects of leadership."

•Bill Hybels, chairman, The Willow Creek Association "Fresh, introspective, noble—this book contrasts the conventional leadership climb to sacred truth, mature living, and selfless achievement. The authors deftly describe what it means to lead by example and answer one of life's great questions, 'Why do people follow?'"

•William Boyajian, president, Gemological Institute of America "No matter what your leadership style, The Ascent of a Leader will make you reassess it. I hope that future leaders will adopt the important creative suggestions and insights in this book. A must-read for us all."

•Wallace R. Hawley, founder, InterWest Partners; vice chairman, Center for Economic Policy Research, Stanford University "A fascinating journey about personal relationships and the importance of character, integrity, and faith, which prepares one to step up the ladder in leadership."

•Jerry Colangelo, president and chief executive officer, Phoenix Suns; managing general partner, Arizona Diamondbacks "This outstanding book of principles provides leaders with unusual how-to's and practical steps for developing character. The Ascent of a Leader is a remarkable look at how young leaders learn to serve others and how older leaders learn to reach their destiny."

•Matthew Parker, president, Institute for Black Family Development "Today we see so many visible and disappointing examples of fallen and falling leaders ... in business, in government, in sports, even in religion. The Ascent of a Leader provides important insights into the critical importance of character development (rather than just skill development) in helping you fulfill your potential as a positive leader."

•Dale Gifford, chief executive officer, Hewitt Associates "A must-read for those wanting to make a difference in their businesses, communities, and families. A perfect blend of wisdom, compassion, and practical experience!"

•Jay Abraham, director of sports, Franklin Covey "This book is a profound and unique answer to the questions of our tumultuous society ... uncompromising character development produces profound influence and leadership ability."

•Naomi Rhode, past president, National Speakers Association and '97 Cavett Winner "This profound and timely book teaches us how to live well and to lead wisely. The Ascent of a Leader creatively shows us how to center our lives in unchanging principles that produce an enduring influence in all our relationships."

•John R. Castle Jr., executive vice president (retired), EDS "No topic is more timely for our culture than to learn how character and influence develop in

relationships over a lifetime. The Ascent of a Leader shows us how to lay hold of it." **•Larry Crabb**, best-selling author, psychologist, distinguished scholar in residence "A fresh-revolutionary-look at leadership. This book will not just change your leadership style, it will change you and the lives you touch." **•Daniel Dominguez**, CPA/partner, BDO Seidman, LLP "Due to the current lack of spiritual leadership in our country, the message in these pages is deeply needed at this time across our land. It clearly promotes a principle-based pathway of leadership that fosters hope, trust, reconciliation, and character." **•John M. Perkins**, founder, John M. Perkins Foundation for Reconciliation and Development "The Ascent of a Leader is truly a 'holy' book for anyone on the leadership path. As a young leader of a family business, this book provided a roadmap (or ladder!) for me on how to lead from values and integrity." **•Louise Slater**, chairman of the board Consolidated Systems, Inc. "Having spent several years on the staff at West Point contemplating the development of leaders of character, I find in The Ascent of a Leader a powerfully insightful, honest, and encouraging model for practice by leaders who genuinely seek to grow in character and in the impact for good that such leadership makes possible." **•Larry Donnithorne**, author, The West Point Way of Leadership: From Fostering Principled Leadership to Practicing It "Successful leadership is a spiritual journey. In these inspiring pages, you will find a rare map for your soul, a map that can help you negotiate the thrills, risks, and lonely moments we all visit as leaders. You may also discover a yearning to share this map and journey with emerging leaders of the next generation." **•Karen Brugler**, manager, Health Care Consulting Practice, Ernst & Young, LLP "This book, written from the experiences of three gifted leaders, gives practical suggestions of how one can climb the character ladder, the ladder of self discovery, each of which draws one to his or her true self." **•Tom Phillips**, president, International Students, Inc. "We live at a time in history when there is a pronounced vacuum in leadership. Our need is for clear, inspiring, and above all timeless teaching on the subject of leadership. The Ascent of a Leader powerfully provides us with all these and more." **•Michael Card**, best-selling composer, author, teacher "As each chapter unfolded, I found myself desiring the next. If you want to be prepared for a meaningful leadership opportunity when it arrives, then this book is for you." **•Karsten Louis Solheim**, executive vice president, Karsten Manufacturing Corporation "The Ascent of a Leader addresses the two most important questions leaders-actually anyone-must answer if their lives and work are to have meaning: Who are you? And who cares? Character shapes cultures and culture nourishes character. Who you are makes a difference." **•Walter C. Wright Jr.**, president, Regent College "My job of training young managers for The Weather Channel during its startup would have been much easier if this resource had been available. It will

also spark a renaissance for senior managers who may have forgotten how or why they climbed the ladder." — Hugh Eaton, startup business manager, The Weather Channel "The Ascent of a Leader shows how character is a lifelong building process between God and yourself that then translates into leadership." — Karl Eller, chairman, Eller Media Company "Superb, a must-read for everyone who would lead others with God's help by developing extraordinary character." — Robert A. Fulton, chairman and chief executive officer, Web Industries, Inc. "In this remarkable and helpful book, the authors carefully and clearly help us to understand that leaders are made, not necessarily born. Anyone who aspires to leadership-young or old, male or female-will be helped immensely by this significant publication." — Ted W. Engstrom, president emeritus, World Vision "Truth has a way of drawing us into a clearer sense of purpose and identity. This book gets beyond the cheap routes to "success" with engaging stories which highlight enduring principles of leadership throughout the ages. A must read for all who desire to bring life and hope to others...and themselves." — Robert C. Andringa, president, Council for Christian Colleges & Universities

Are you the kind of leader that others want to follow? Climbing the corporate, political, or organizational ladder is a driving passion for many of us. But too often during our ascent, we compromise our character to reach a performance goal, forgetting that lasting, positive influence depends on the kind of person we become, not simply on the titles, power, or wealth we've achieved. While many leaders work hard to develop performance-based skills, relatively few are intentional about developing character. In fact, many simply do not know how. Solidly based on spiritual values, *The Ascent of a Leader* presents a process for developing character and influence in the context of community amid the kind of relationships and environment where character wins out, even in the face of setbacks and against the temptations to take shortcuts. Character is crucial, the authors assert, because it "empowers our capacities while keeping them in check. It makes the difference between those who abuse power and those who steward it well. It weaves values like integrity, honesty, and selfless service into the fabric of our lives, organizations, and cultures." Written for ordinary people who want to develop extraordinary character and influence, this practical, visionary, and hope-filled book guides us up the "long ladder" to significance, as contrasted to the "short ladder" that most of us know. On the short ladder, we develop skills and abilities. But on the long ladder, success depends on character growth, nurtured in a community where people find fulfillment. If you want to find and follow God's plan for your life and lead others where they need to go, this book offers engaging real-life examples to show you how. You can grow

into your true potential, becoming one of the leaders inspired to "make a difference in the twenty-first century in our families, our communities, our companies, our government, and even our world." It's time to create a legacy that will last. Embrace th

I really enjoyed reading this book. The business slant of the book was refreshing because it contains many very practical applications for any circumstance. In my current work situation, I find that there are neither relationships of grace nor an environment of grace, and in the topics covered in this book I can see many of my boss's specific mistakes. I thought a lot about the ideas in chapter three. Our organization has gone through constant change, and cultural change has been one of those. Unfortunately, the underlying assumptions have not always been worked on. It seems that we have often ended up with an "environment of ungrace" as the author calls it. Overall, I reacted very positively to this book. I identify very strongly with the concept of making character the utmost priority, because there are many leaders today whose passion and skill take them to places that their character can't sustain. I am freshly inspired by the vision of leaders who simultaneously build their character while building their capacity. Too often, we can tend to focus on all the work that needs to get done and fail to take time to develop ourselves as individuals. Even in business school, where I was just a few years ago, they have placed a fresh commitment on teaching ethics but have not yet developed the idea of teaching character or leadership. With this focus, ethics merely becomes another rung on the capacity ladder, a step to be taken to ensure that one reaches his or her highest potential. I feel strongly about working on my own steps on the integrated ladder. I need to continually place an emphasis on choosing vulnerability, developing my true capacities in team, and aligning with the truth. I am waiting for opportunities to come that match who I am, so I will spend my time at the moment choosing mentorship and learning. I must continually re-examine my own life to ensure that my character is intact.

This is simply one of the finest books on leadership I have encountered. The writers address the core issue: who the leader is becoming and how the leader's values will shape the culture of whatever entity the leader serves. I use this book with everyone I mentor and in addition I have probably given out forty copies of this book. Almost every single recipient has found it as meaningful as I have.

Excellent book that effectively draws the connection between growth in character and growth in

influence. Presents a practical plan for growing not only in capacity to do a job but also growing in the character that increases influence and makes the work environment one everyone will thrive in.

This is a must read if you are a leader who desires to influence others in a positive way. I love this little nugget of truth: A true leader is someone that others "want" to follow rather than someone that "must" be followed. So simple and yet a lot of us miss out on this truth.

Transformational leadership where grace and empowerment change a secular competitive environment into a together everyone achieves more environment. Where all go farther up and closer to the goal.

The subtitle of this excellent book is a bit misleading. While it does describe how our ordinary relationships impact our growth as leaders (of families, of companies, of communities, etc.), mainly it provides guidelines for leaders stalled on the "ladders to success" to help themselves redefine success in ways that "help others while nourishing [their] heart[s] and soul[s]". I recommend this book to everyone who leads any person or group of persons--whether at home, at school, at work, or elsewhere. All leaders can benefit by reading this book. Another review by: Michael Patrick King, author of *Confessions of a Rock 'n' Roll Wannabe: The Verse and Prose of Michael Patrick King: Volume One*

Good stuff. All the way around. Started out a little slow, kinda like the salad before the main course. But the main course was very good indeed. All about personal growth and how to apply it to leadership. Good (christian) common sense stuff. YMMV. Best read with a very open mind, with a view toward personal responsibility.

Love this book - I have been A Christian in leadership for a long time. This book is the best one I have read about leadership. It deals with the true issues that can hinder leaders, and also the true ones that can make great leaders. I learned so much and taught it to others. I went through the book with a group of women leaders in my community - they loved it too.

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