

# Foreword

Leaders make people and places better. They move organizations from where they are to where they should be. Our world desperately craves good leadership.

Tragically, in an age when leadership is in great demand, people have a low view of most leaders. Many leaders today have become self-serving rather than others-serving. They pursue positions for their own benefit, not to edify others. Politicians hold office for decades. At the end of their tenure, they have bloated bank accounts, but their constituents' problems have only grown worse. Corporate executives collect generous stock options while using and discarding many of their employees. In recent years, there have been horrific disclosures of church ministers who fleeced their flock rather than shepherding them with love and integrity. The world is crying out for trustworthy leaders who make their followers' lives better.

We may suspect that the Bible contains answers for society's problems. Yet, too often we go to the Bible for trite devotional thoughts and to the world for down-to-earth leadership wisdom. While we admire Jesus and His disciples, their leadership style

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often appears obsolete or impractical for our modern challenges. After all, most of them died as martyrs! Modern leaders do not generally aspire to such a goal.

Misunderstandings often arise when discussing “servant leadership.” Jesus is typically portrayed as humbly washing His disciples’ feet and dying for them. Such leadership is inspiring during a church service but seems highly ineffective for corporate America. Yet such a view grossly misunderstands both Jesus and servant leadership. Jesus may have served His followers, but He was always their leader. His vision, authority, and influence were unparalleled. Jesus was not merely a servant; He was a servant *leader*.

As a result of Jesus’s leadership, the small band of followers He led for three years grew into a worldwide movement. Two thousand years later, Jesus’s followers continue to lay down their lives for Him. He has inspired much of the world’s greatest art and thought. Today, despite its apparent problems, no organization on earth matches the Church’s breadth, scope, diversity, and influence. Surely, Jesus was onto something!

I am so pleased with Tom Harper’s book. *Servant Leader Strong* takes an insightful, thought-provoking look at Jesus’s practical and effective leadership. Many authors have tackled this subject before. But this book is special. Tom is a leader who understands leadership. Better yet, he knows biblical, servant leadership. And he is an engaging communicator. This book is easy to read and difficult to put down.

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Why yet another book on leadership? Because we still don't get it. We must keep learning and growing as leaders until we are leading our families, churches, businesses, and institutions the way God intended. There is too much at stake to continue leading as we always have. This book will help you move your leadership to a higher level. So read it carefully, thoughtfully, and personally. Then go out and change your world for the better.

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and coauthor of *Spiritual Leadership* and *Experiencing God*