

The #1 Overlooked Quality of a Leader

This month, I am excited to have long-time friend Dan Reiland write a guest post for Lead With Your Life. Dan serves as Executive Pastor at [12Stone Church](#) in Lawrenceville, Georgia. He is the author of [Amplified Leadership](#) and [The Pastor's Coach](#) blog. Dan has served the local church with distinction for years. His leadership voice is packed with wisdom, experience, energy, and love for people.

Good leaders are tough-minded. They're able to take the heat. They can handle the difficult stuff that comes their way.

People don't respect leaders who are considered soft, weak, or indecisive.

But there is another side of leadership. It brings heart into play. It balances out the tough side.

Without heart, leadership can feel like medicine; necessary, but undesirable.

The heart brings, among other essentials, *kindness* into leadership.

Kindness is the #1 overlooked quality of a leader.

We don't talk about kindness much in leadership circles – at least in terms of what is required to be a successful leader.

- Kindness is an essential human quality that allows trust, connection, and genuine exchange to take place.
- Kindness brings peace and joy into pressure-filled situations.
- Kindness is not a new idea, but it's often undeveloped as a leadership trait.

God delights in kindness.

*... but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who **exercises kindness**, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.*

Jeremiah 9:24

You can see the balance: Justice, righteousness *and* kindness.

As I read through both Old and New Testaments it's easy to see that kindness is a consistent expression of God's

heart.

It's not complicated to be kind, but it can be difficult to practice on a consistent basis at the pace that most leaders run.

I don't believe that leaders generally lack kindness. In fact, I think most good leaders are kind at heart. The problem is that there are things that steal a leader's kindness which in turn has a huge negative impact on any leader's effectiveness.

The 4 Great Thieves of Kindness:

1. Pressure

The higher the pressure you're under, the more you are tempted to behave in an unkind way. You are expected to produce results, and the demand for results can become an unintentional contributor to the lack of kindness. It's counterintuitive, but an expression of kindness helps bring relief to the pressure you feel.

2. Busyness

Kindness can't be rushed. It requires time. The encouraging truth is that kindness often does not need a lot of time. But when you are super busy and feel compelled to maintain speed, kindness may be squeezed out. Slowing down, at least a little, is necessary. Create space for kindness.

3. Impatience

I can be impatient. How about you? Type A's are often driven, want things "now," and don't like roadblocks. If you can relate, here's the caution flag. We don't always see it. Drive is necessary and good, but without considering your level of patience, kindness may at times escape you. Practicing patience is difficult but necessary.

4. Insecurity

This is the sneaky one. It appears in reverse. Insecurity can cause you to want to please people, seek approval, even make unwise decisions. That can *seem* kind, but because it's not truly genuine, it's ultimately unkind. (It's more about you than them.)

Kindness isn't weakness, it's the expression of strength from someone who has something to offer. Kindness is not automatic, it's a gift that you must choose to give.

You can be tough and kind, but weak leaders are often mean. They can be bullies. It's only through bluster that a weak leader appears strong. Strong leaders delight in kindness.

Kindness embraces 3 essential elements:

- **Genuine humility**
- **A desire to serve others**
- **Personal contentment**

All three of these naturally bring kindness into play.

Kindness from a leader demonstrates itself in nearly limitless ways such as:

- Giving someone a second chance.
- An intentional expression of benevolence.
- Listening lovingly and carefully when you don't have time.
- Giving an unexpected or even undeserved gift.
- Taking time to explain something ... again.
- Slowing down so someone can catch up.

Sometimes we need to stop and think to be kind. Hopefully, however, over the long haul, kindness becomes as natural and automatic as breathing for anyone who leads.

There are only nine words included in the cherished set of "fruit of the Spirit" found in Galatians 5:22-23.

Kindness made the list.