

# The Tool You Already Own

I can remember those days as if they were yesterday—building upscale homes in the suburbs of north Dallas to support my family during the grad school years. Pounding nails one day and studying theology the next.

While I had always enjoyed building things as a kid, my first day on the job was an eye-opener. One of my first discoveries was that I had a very limited set of tools. My small gun-metal gray Craftsman toolbox didn't quite make the grade. I was outmatched and outsized by journeymen carpenters who had to call on a one-ton pickup to transport their tools to the jobsite.

Tools are essential. A carpenter needs a hammer. A plumber needs a wrench. An accountant needs a spreadsheet. A surgeon needs a scalpel.

But what about a leader?

If you've been at the leadership task for any length of time, you realize more and more that a leader's greatest tool, their greatest asset, is their life. **Leaders ultimately lead with their lives.** The undeniable pattern is inside-out. God works in you and then He works through you.

I love how this reality is shown up in the lives of Peter and John, a couple of first-century leaders, in Acts 4. The religious VIPs of the day were shell-shocked by the boldness that Peter and John displayed. At first glance, they accurately took note that these were ordinary men without many bullet points on their curriculum vitae. But that wasn't the whole story. On closer examination, they recognized them as "men who had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). There was something about their relationship with Christ that was reflected in the weight of their lives and leadership.

That's worth thinking about. What happens to you when you're around leaders who "have been with Jesus"? Chances are good that you're encouraged. Refreshed. Challenged. Blessed. Inspired.

Reggie McNeal put words to it in [A Work of Heart](#): "Great spiritual leaders are great spiritual leaders because they enjoy exceptional communion with God."

Crawford Loritts in his book [Leadership As An Identity](#) notes: "Everything you do as a leader is an extension of the presence and the work of God in your life."

So here's the bottom line: What do people say about your leadership? Would they say, "Here's a person who has been with Jesus"?

I still think about that gray toolbox sometimes—how small it looked next to a truckload of someone else's tools. Turns out the most important tool I ever owned was never in it.

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