Good Leaders Ask Great Questions

The book title says it all: **Good leaders ask great questions.** John Maxwell, popular speaker and prolific author on all things leadership, proves his point page after page in *Good Leaders Ask Great Questions: Your Foundation for Successful Leadership*. He presents a compelling and practical argument for the place and priority for a leader to have an arsenal of well-framed questions. I walked away with fresh leadership insights, not to mention a lifetime supply of exceptional questions.

Take a look at these BookNotes to see what awaits you.

Title: Good Leaders Ask Great Questions

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Book Description:

In *Good Leaders Ask Great Questions*, John C. Maxwell delves into the process of becoming a successful leader by examining how questions can be used to advantage. What are the questions leaders should ask themselves? What questions should they ask members of their team? He then responds to the toughest problems leaders have presented to him. Using social media, Maxwell offered the floor to followers with unanswered questions about what it takes to achieve their professional best, and selected 70 questions on the most popular topics, including:

- How can I discover my unique purpose as a leader?
- What is the most effective daily habit that any leader should develop?
- How do you motivate an unmotivated person?
- How would you work with a difficult leader who has no vision?

This book is a thorough, insightful response to those readers and anyone who feels they have plateaued on their journey to develop their ultimate potential. Every leader has room to grow, and the advice in these pages will help listeners assess their current position, and structure an effective plan to achieve their goals.

Book Quotes:

If you want to be successful and reach your leadership potential, you need to embrace asking questions as a lifestyle. LOCATION: 39

You Only Get Answers to the Questions You Ask. LOCATION: 41

Asking the right question of the right person at the right time is a powerful combination because the answers you receive set you up for success. IBM founder Thomas J. Watson said, “The ability to ask the right question is more than half the battle of finding the answer.” But that’s true only if you are willing to ask the question.

LOCATION: 67

Questions Unlock and Open Doors That Otherwise Remain Closed. LOCATION: 72

Management expert Peter Drucker said, “My greatest strength as a consultant is to be ignorant and ask a few questions.” He knew the secret. Successful leaders relentlessly ask questions and have an incurable desire to pick the brains of the people they meet. LOCATION: 85

Questions Are the Most Effective Means of Connecting with People. LOCATION: 88

Questions Cultivate Humility. LOCATION: 110

Isn’t it strange how we must surrender being right in order to find what’s right, how humility enables us to be authentic, vulnerable, trustworthy, and intimate with others? People are open to those who are open to them. LOCATION: 122

Questions Help You to Engage Others in Conversation. LOCATION: 124

Questions Allow Us to Build Better Ideas. LOCATION: 136

But there are some questions I try to ask everyone. You may want to use them too:

- What is the greatest lesson you have learned? By asking this question I seek their wisdom.
- What are you learning now? This question allows me to benefit from their passion.
- How has failure shaped your life? This question gives insight into their attitude.
- Who do you know whom I should know? This allows me to engage with their network.
- What have you read that I should read? This question directs my personal growth.
- What have you done that I should do? This helps me seek new experiences.
- How can I add value to you? This shows my gratitude and desire to add value to them.

LOCATION: 142

Questions Give Us a Different Perspective. LOCATION: 173

Questions Challenge Mind-Sets and Get You Out of Ruts. LOCATION: 187

If you want to make discoveries, if you want to disrupt the status quo, if you want to make progress and find new ways of thinking and doing, you need to ask questions. Questions are the first link in the chain of discovery and innovation. LOCATION: 198

Good questions inform; great questions transform. LOCATION: 345

While personal maturity may mean being able to see beyond yourself, leadership maturity means considering others before yourself. LOCATION: 355

Leaders are always in danger of abusing their power. That is why when I addressed leaders at the United Nations, I spoke on the subject “Three Questions People Ask of Their Leader.” Those questions are: Can you help me? That is a competence question. Do you care for me? That is a compassion question. Can I trust you?

That is a character question. LOCATION: 430

The third thing that can keep leaders grounded is their calling. Recently during a Q and A session I was asked the difference between a dream and a calling. My answer was that a dream is something you really want to do, but a calling is something you have to do. LOCATION: 483

Work isn't work unless you'd rather be doing something else. LOCATION: 492

For many years now my definition of success has been having those who are closest to me love and respect me the most. LOCATION: 606

Socrates is quoted as saying, "The unexamined life is not worth leading." I would add that the unexamined leader is not worth following. Leaders who never take time to ask what they are doing and why they doing it are unlikely to stay on track, lead at their best, and reach their potential. That is why we need to keep asking ourselves tough questions. LOCATION: 667

Successful leaders don't only take action. Good leaders listen, learn, and then lead. Because I believe in that so strongly, I have worked to discipline myself to become a better listener. LOCATION: 688

Though I often find it difficult, I try to follow the advice given by Robert Newton Peck: "Never miss a chance to keep your mouth shut." LOCATION: 689

One of the best ways to persuade others is with your ears. That may seem counterintuitive, because we expect persuasion to involve speaking. But when a leader listens to members of the team, that act gives the leader greater credibility and therefore influence. On the other hand, when team members no longer believe that their leader listens to them, they start looking around for someone who will. LOCATION: 737

High Point University president Nido Qubein believes, "Most of us tend to suffer from 'agenda anxiety,' the feeling that what we want to say to others is more important than what we think they might want to say to us." LOCATION: 754

Good leaders ask great questions that inspire others to dream more, think more, learn more, do more, and become more. LOCATION: 779

I believe that leaders see more than others see and see things before others do. Having leadership gifting is often like having a head start in a race. LOCATION: 803

Experience isn't the best teacher—evaluated experience is. LOCATION: 924

Two of the fastest ways to connect with another person are to ask questions and to ask for help. Most people genuinely want to help others. And most people enjoy being an expert in their field and sharing their wisdom and experience. LOCATION: 1059

Questions Related to How People Can Lead Themselves Successfully

- Why does leading myself seem more difficult than leading others?
- What gives a leader sustainability?
- What are the most important values for a leader?
- What is the most effective daily habit for any leader to develop?
- How does one change one's heart to increase the desire to add value to and serve others?

- If I am reaching goals and achieving success, why should I take care of developing myself as a leader?
- How do you lead with humility when in the tough corporate world it's viewed as a weakness?
- How transparent should a leader be?
- Is it OK for the team to know of personal challenges, such as cancer?
- The leadership process is a long journey—lasting a lifetime.
- How can I overcome the loneliness I sometimes feel?
- How can leaders develop the ability to "filter" their emotions to make good leadership decisions? LOCATION: 1142

What are blind spots? They are areas in which people continually fail to see themselves or their situation realistically. LOCATION: 1177

Insecure leaders continually think of themselves first. They worry about what others think of them. They fear that they may look weak or foolish or insignificant. Insecure leaders take more from people than they give. Because they feel they are less, they seek validation more. As a result, their teams and organizations suffer because others' best interests are overlooked in favor of the insecure leader's best interests. LOCATION: 1206

Character protects your talent. With character, all those other attributes help a leader to be successful. Lack of character is a deal-breaker when it comes to leading yourself or others. Character is the sum total of all our everyday choices. It is putting right values into action every day. It's consistency of values, ideals, thoughts, words, and actions. LOCATION: 1242

Passion gives you two vital leadership characteristics: energy and credibility. LOCATION: 1272

Successful people do daily what unsuccessful people do occasionally. They practice daily disciplines.

LOCATION: 1286

Even if you have only one person in your corner cheering you on, you can still lead successfully. Meanwhile, work to bring positive supportive people around you. Look for… Believers: People who believe in you and your vision. Achievers: People who contribute to the team with excellence. Conceivers: People who bring good ideas to the table. Relievers: People who complement your skills and abilities. LOCATION: 1300

Purpose: Let Your Why Direct Your What. LOCATION: 1322

You can't grow to your potential if you don't know your purpose. LOCATION: 1325

When you become a leader, you must focus more on your responsibilities than on your rights. LOCATION: 1334

If you could cultivate only one habit to practice every day of your life, I believe it should be this: giving more than you receive. LOCATION: 1359

When your mind-set is to give more than you take, it forces you to think of others more than of yourself.

LOCATION: 1367

So the bottom-line answer to the question about changing your heart toward people is that it is a choice. You

must decide to love people and be authentic and vulnerable with them. You must choose to let them into your life so that you can add value to them and they can add value to you. LOCATION: 1398

Humility doesn't mean being weak. It just means thinking of yourself less. LOCATION: 1440

One of the most important principles of decision making for leaders is to not make decisions at an emotional low point. When you're in an emotional valley, your perspective isn't good. Everything looks difficult. The mountains around you look huge. You can't tell how high they are or how far you are from being able to reach a goal. LOCATION: 1487

You don't want your emotions to run away with you when you're making decisions, but you also don't want to ignore your instincts. Professor and management consultant Weston H. Agor calls intuition "what we know for sure without knowing for certain." Often your instincts warn you in a way that goes beyond the facts. LOCATION: 1503

Everything rises and falls on leadership. LOCATION: 1542

Leadership is developed, not discovered. LOCATION: 1558

I love the leader's prayer written by Pauline H. Peters: "God, when I am wrong, make me willing to change. When I am right, make me easy to live with. So strengthen me that the power of my example will far exceed the authority of my rank." LOCATION: 1621

Peter Drucker, who has been called the father of modern management, observed, "Whenever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision." LOCATION: 1704

Most potential leaders overestimate the perks and underestimate the price of leadership. LOCATION: 1731

Leaders can afford to be uncertain, but we cannot afford to be unclear. LOCATION: 1799

With that context in mind, here is how I would recommend that you lead and serve people during difficult times:

1. Define Reality
2. Remind Them of the Big Picture
3. Help Them Develop a Plan
4. Help Them Make Good Choices
5. Value and Promote Teamwork
6. Give Them Hope

LOCATION: 1783-1818

To people who don't understand success and the seasons of life, winter is a bleak time. The ground is cold. The earth is unproductive. The trees are bare and seem lifeless. For unsuccessful people winter is a time of hibernation, drudgery, and low expectations. For successful people winter is a time of beginnings. This is the time for vision and dreams. It is a time of anticipation. Goals are set and plans are made during winter, and without them, the chance of a successful harvest is slim. LOCATION: 1864

Your ultimate goal as a leader should be to work hard enough and strategically enough that you have more than enough to give and share with others. LOCATION: 1904

Until you have credibility, don't even try to get buy-in for your vision. You won't get it. You need to earn trust before people will buy in, and you must earn it through character and competence. LOCATION: 1943

If you are new to leadership, tap into your passion and fuel it. If you're not new to leadership, make sure you don't lose your passion. A cold leader never inspired anyone to a cause. A red-hot leader inspires nearly everyone. LOCATION: 1993

It takes time to learn about yourself, but it also takes effort to remain true to yourself. People will ask you to depart from the path that's right for you. But the better you know yourself and the truer you are to yourself, the greater your success will be as a leader. LOCATION: 2030

Today I rely on these five qualities every day when working with people, whether one on one, in a meeting, or onstage:

- Humor: I enjoy a good laugh and I don't mind being the butt of the joke.
- Authenticity: I am myself in all situations, and I don't teach anything I don't live or believe.
- Confidence: I feel good about myself and I believe strongly in people.
- Hope: I naturally lift up and encourage people, and I love to do it.
- Simplicity: I'm pragmatic, not intellectual. I don't try to impress people with big words or complex sentences. I want to connect with people, so I keep it simple. LOCATION: 2078

If you work hard, learn how to connect with people, develop credibility, and prove yourself every day, after a while people will begin to believe in you. You will have influence, and you will be able to get things done. And here's what's really ironic. Lead well long enough, and people will shift from giving you no credit, to giving you proper credit, to giving you too much credit. Today people think I'm better than I actually am. LOCATION: 2103

To start figuring out what tasks you can shift, ask yourself these questions:

- What am I required to do personally? Some tasks cannot be delegated. If you own a business, you know that you have a responsibility to the organization to help it succeed. The buck stops with you.
- What gives the organization the greatest return? Some of the things you do return great value to the organization because they use your greatest strengths.
- What rewards me personally? There are certain tasks that we simply enjoy doing.
- What reproduces productivity and leadership in others? When most people think of delegation, they focus on the benefit to themselves. They understand that it frees up their time to take on additional responsibilities, like leading. And that's good. But there is another benefit of delegating: it allows others to grow in their ability to produce or lead. LOCATION: 2165-2181

Believing in the cause creates your conviction. Believing in your vision fuels your inspiration. Believing in your people builds your motivation. LOCATION: 2208

It's easier to move from failure to success than from excuses to success. LOCATION: 2464

Statesman-philanthropist Bernard Baruch said, “Every man has a right to his opinion, but no man has a right to be wrong in his facts.” LOCATION: 2740

Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle asserted, “A person with a clear purpose will make progress on even the roughest road. A person with no purpose will make no progress on even the smoothest road.” LOCATION: 2878

Life means transition. Most people intuitively understand that the world is moving fast, yet they still have a difficult time with it. Brian Tracy was right when he said, “In a time of rapid change, standing still is the most dangerous course of action.” If you don’t learn how to make good transitions, you either get run over or get left behind. LOCATION: 3074

Note: should you wish to find any quote in its original context, the Kindle “location” is provided after each entry.