# How To Lead When You're Not in Charge: Leveraging Influence When You Lack Authority

***Great leaders lead with or without the authority and learn to unleash their influence wherever they are.***

This single sentence is the thesis of Clay Scroggins and Andy Stanley's book *How to Lead When You're Not In Charge: Leveraging Influence When You Lack Authority.* The book is filled with insights that make you stop and look at leadership from a fresh perspective, especially for leaders who do not occupy the top box of the org-chart. Additionally, I found their comments very valuable on how your identity plays such a telling role in how you engage in the process of leading up.

Take a look at these Book Notes to get an overview of the wisdom packed into this book.

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Title: ***How To Lead When You're Not in Charge****: Leveraging Influence When You Lack Authority*

Author: **Clay Scroggins & Andy Stanley**

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**Book Description:**

Are you letting your lack of authority paralyze you?

One of the greatest myths of leadership is that you must be in charge in order to lead. Great leaders don't buy it. Great leaders lead with or without the authority and learn to unleash their influence wherever they are.

With practical wisdom and humor, Clay Scroggins will help you nurture your vision and cultivate influence, even when you lack authority in your organization. And he will free you to become the great leader you want to be so you can make a difference right where you are. Even when you're not in charge.

**Book Quotes:**

Life teaches us that the authority to lead and the opportunity to lead are a package deal. We think they go hand in hand like cranberry sauce and turkey. When we're given the authority to lead—a title, a uniform, a corner office—then, and only then, will we have the opportunity to lead. But that's just not true. LOCATION: 147

And we learn, at an early age, that having the steering wheel is the only way to lead. And if that steering wheel is not attached to authority and power, it just doesn't work. That's what we're taught by our life experiences. If

we want the cart to move, we must be in control. We learn that the little wheel we're handed is just a toy and doesn't actually work. We think we must be in charge if we want to lead, if we want to turn the cart in a different direction. We come to see positional authority as a prerequisite for effective leadership. LOCATION: 183

Leaders don't sit back and point fingers. Leaders lead with the authority of leadership . . . or without it. The authority is largely irrelevant—if you are a leader, you will lead when you are needed. LOCATION: 229

We live in an authority-based culture where certain positions possess an inherent authority and responsibility. But we all know that positional authority alone does not equate to effective leadership. If a leader does not inspire confidence, he or she will be unable to effect change without resorting to brute force. Influence has always been, and will always be, the currency of leadership. LOCATION: 239

When someone has to pull out the gun of authority, something is broken. You only pull out the gun of authority when nothing else is working. LOCATION: 292

Influence always outpaces authority. And leaders who consistently leverage their authority to lead are far less effective in the long term than leaders who leverage their influence. Practice leading through influence when you're not in charge. It's the key to leading well when you are. LOCATION: 323

All human beings have a measure of leadership loaned to them. We may not immediately recognize it for what it is, but we each have the ability, as well as the opportunities, to influence others and effect change in this world. And the earlier we begin to fan the flame of the gift of influence, the more it will grow. Conversely, the longer we wait, mired in passivity and the sense that we are victims of circumstances and the decisions of others, the more likely we are to diminish and mute the leadership gifts within us. The more I sat back and watched things pass without taking initiative, the softer my voice became. Waiting for others to do something negatively affected the gift of leadership within me. LOCATION: 336

Near the core of what makes a person a leader is their sense of identity. The way you see yourself is determinative for your life and for the decisions you make as a leader. Your sense of identity directs you in every situation. It is foundational, determining the level of confidence you have when you challenge your boss in a disagreement. It establishes your sense of security when you face doubts. It's what enables you to process your emotions during tense conversations. Though much of your identity is formed at an early age, your identity is always evolving. So it's never too early or too late to begin processing your sense of self. LOCATION: 365

Your personal identity is even more crucial when you're determining how best to lead when you're not in charge. Most people in this situation focus on learning new behaviors to compensate for a lack of authority, but the challenge goes deeper than that. Leading well without formal authority has less to do with your behavior and far more to do with your identity. Like the ace of spades, who we are trumps what we do every time. LOCATION: 372

How we see ourselves affects our ability to follow others, our ability to lead others, and our ability to find the future God has for us. And until you know who you are, you cannot do what God has called you to do. As we will see in this chapter, before God pushes men and women into the call of duty, he shapes and molds their character by speaking into their identities. He has done that with me, and I believe he wants to do the same with you. LOCATION: 390

Honestly, I don't know which is more damaging—being too critical or thinking too highly of yourself. Either way, accepting a distorted identity is failing to live in reality, which will ultimately erode your ability to lead. LOCATION: 464

There are five basic components of identity, and to help you remember them, I've made sure they all start with the letter "P." They are your past, your people, your personality, your purpose, and your priorities. Let's take a closer look at each one. LOCATION: 480

**Your Past.** Your family plays a large role in sculpting your identity. And this includes factors like your race, your socioeconomic class, your citizenship, and your gender. How you see your family of origin and the lineage of people from which you've come determines the constancy and consistency of your identity. LOCATION: 482

**Your People**. Your identity is not just a matter of how you perceive yourself based on your past, but it's also based on how you sense others perceive you today. The people you're surrounded by in your existing relationships and roles distinctly shape who you are in the here and now. LOCATION: 498

**Your Personality**. We are all born with some hardwired realities that also shape our identity. Our physical bodies, our characteristics and traits, our emotional and impulsive lives, and our talents and skills all shape how we experience life. This in turn shapes our self-perception. LOCATION: 512

**Your Purpose**. We were all created to have a purpose, but let's go one step further. We were all created to thirst for a purpose. Every one of us has a desire to see and understand how our lives fit into a bigger picture. Every one of us has been hardwired to desire a reason for our existence. Why am I here? What can I uniquely contribute to the world? These kinds of existential questions have more of an impact on our identity than we admit. LOCATION: 527

**Your Priorities**. The last item that determines your identity is your sense of priorities. I'm not necessarily referring to how you prioritize your life in regard to family, work, friends, etc. I'm referring to your priority of truths that shape your identity. This is where your faith—or lack thereof—comes most clearly into play. God has something to say about our priorities—our most important ideals, beliefs, aspirations, values, and passions. And your priorities will shape how you see yourself. While much of our identity is a result of the context and circumstances we are born into, this is an aspect of your identity formation that you can exert some control over. LOCATION: 548

Here is a key truth about your identity as it relates to your leadership: If you fail to believe what God says about your identity, you will fail to reach the potential he's put in you as a leader. Your ability to be a fearless leader is squarely rooted in your identity. LOCATION: 639

But what do we do about it? If you sense fear in yourself, the best way to face those fears is with a healthier sense of self. You turn up the volume of what is true about you, and you listen to what God says about you. As you do, your identity will adjust. And as you adjust your identity, you will also adjust your response to fear. "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18). This verse captures one of the most radical truths we can know as a child of God. When I realize how perfectly loved I am, what is there to be afraid of? If I'm perfectly loved, why not embrace risk? If I'm perfectly loved, why do I need the stamp of approval from others? If I'm perfectly loved, why would I fear failure or the uncertainty of potential outcomes?LOCATION: 674

In its purest form, there's nothing wrong with ambition. It's one of the hallmarks of leadership. Do you feel it? Drink it in, because it's good. Ambition is what drives us to want more opportunities, to have more influence, and to contribute to the overall mission of life with greater impact. The problem for many leaders is that they do not know what to do with that drive. Letting it run wild can be disastrous, but putting it on mute doesn't work either. I've tried both. I'll bet you have too. LOCATION: 757

The first response of many leaders, especially Christian leaders, is to look for ways to kill their ambition. If you've been taught to view ambition as a danger to spiritual growth, an impediment to being a follower of

Jesus, the spiritual thing to do is to kill it. Because our hearts are naturally deceitful (see Jeremiah 17:9), we cannot trust our desires. Unconstrained ambition may just be a selfish desire. I know many church leaders who struggle with their ambition because they see it as an expression of selfishness or a desire for promotion that might come at the expense of others. LOCATION: 772

To be clear, the New Testament has plain warnings against these distortions of ambition, and they should strike fear in anyone's heart and mind. The New Testament speaks against cultivating ambitions—desires—motivated by selfishness in the pursuit of prominence, pride, and power: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit" (Phil. 2:3, emphasis mine) and "For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice" (James 3:16, emphasis mine). LOCATION: 805

Sadly, in the name of holiness and humility, we sometimes take our healthy drive for leadership out back and shoot it, not realizing that drive is actually a gift from God. Without realizing it, we kill the thing that is the very fingerprint of God within us. LOCATION: 811

Eradicating, abdicating, renouncing, ignoring, or killing the ambition within you is not the answer. LOCATION: 815

On the flipside, instead of killing their ambitions, some leaders let them run wild. They uncritically embrace them. And we've all seen ambition run wild—it's what those who kill their ambition were trying to avoid. It's the leader who only thinks about himself. The leader who thumbs her nose at the processes and structures and tramples over others without a care for the damage left behind. LOCATION: 817

Here's the truth you need to know: Your boss is not in charge of you. You are in charge of you. LOCATION: 1092

And that leads us to the second truth you need to know as a leader: When you're not in charge, you can still take charge. LOCATION: 1112

The point is that your greatest responsibility as a leader is to lead yourself. MJ didn't have everything right, but I think he had this right. If you want to see change, begin with the person in the mirror. LOCATION: 1121

Self-Leadership Principle #1: Model Followership…If you want to lead well when you are not the one in charge, it's imperative that you learn how to model followership. LOCATION: 1166

Your moral authority is vastly more important than your positional authority, and nothing erodes moral authority more than undermining the person you claim to be following. LOCATION: 1170

Self-Leadership Principle #2: Monitor Your Heart and Behavior…Monitoring your heart involves checking those deep-rooted motives and emotions that lie inside you and give direction to your behaviors. LOCATION: 1179

Self-Leadership Principle #3: Make a Plan. LOCATION: 1216

Jim Collins noted this mistake made by some successful leaders and companies in *How the Mighty Fall: And Why Some Companies Never Give In*. He called it "the hubris of success." The first misstep success brings is to credit the success to your own doing, but this only sets leaders up for future failure: "Truly great [leaders], no matter how successful they become, maintain a learning curve as steep as when they first began their careers." For you to maintain a steep learning curve in this season of your life, you'll need to be honest about where you are and how you got there. LOCATION: 1226

To think God cannot use bad leaders to grow a church, organization, or even you is ludicrous. God has used bad leaders for generations. Where would we be if Daniel had said, "I just can't learn under Nebuchadnezzar. I

need to leave." The church at large wouldn't be what it is today if it always took great leaders to get stuff done! I say that because too many young leaders seem shocked to have had bad bosses. Sometimes, if our boss isn't the greatest of bosses, we act like God is not in the situation. I imagine God just shaking his head, thinking, *If you only knew how many bad bosses I've used over the years*. LOCATION: 1356

What if God wants to accomplish something in you more than he wants to accomplish something through you? What if the only way for him to grow it in you is to put you under a bad leader? Don't we all learn more from times of struggle than we do from times of ease? Of course we do. LOCATION: 1361

Don't let the frustration you feel over what you don't have keep you from doing what you can do. Changing your perspective on your situation can change everything. Seeing what you do have will allow you to overcome what you don't. LOCATION: 1505

In Patrick Lencioni's book *The Advantage*, he argues that people are more likely to buy in when they've had the opportunity to weigh in. But that doesn't always happen, does it? When the team is small enough for you to weigh in on all the decisions, it's easy to buy into the decision that's made. But it's challenging to choose positivity when you are asked to buy into an opportunity you didn't weigh in on. No one asked your opinion; they just made a decision. LOCATION: 1550

More important than making the right decision is owning the decision handed to you and making it right. LOCATION: 1563

Learning how to exercise the skill of thinking critically for the good of others is essential to leading when you're not in charge. LOCATION: 1651

But leaders who are critical thinkers don't just criticize and whine; they learn. They start by questioning things. Why do we do it this way? Is there a better way? What would happen if we stopped that? Why is this working? What's the real "win" here? Asking questions is at the heart of critical thinking. Questions challenge assumptions. Questions uncover the invisible forces behind behaviors and actions. LOCATION: 1708

Shift #1: Stop thinking as an employee. Start thinking as an owner. LOCATION: 1751

Shift #2: Stop stacking your meetings. Start scheduling thinking meetings. LOCATION: 1781

If you're in a church, a small business, or working in a corporation, you may get sucked into a multitude of meetings. It's the natural gravitational pull of any organization. My favorite description of this comes from *The 4 Disciplines of Execution* by Chris McChesney, Sean Covey, and Jim Huling. The authors describe this gravitational pull toward busyness as "the whirlwind." The whirlwind is described as the massive amount of energy needed to simply keep your operation going on a day-to-day basis. When I think of the whirlwind, the first thing that comes to mind are the countless meetings that show up on my calendar. Sometimes numerous meetings just start to appear. After a while, you start wondering, Do I run my calendar or does my calendar run me? LOCATION: 1782

Shift #3: Stop being critical. Start thinking critically. LOCATION: 1812

Shift #4: Stop giving others a grade. Start lending them a hand. LOCATION: 1834

One of the most dangerous temptations we face when we're working for someone else is passivity. LOCATION: 1904

If you truly want to be a leader who is leading when you're not in charge and capable of being trusted with more, you have to be willing to add responsibilities to your current role. When you sense yourself standing

around waiting for more, a great first step is to look around for things that no one is addressing and take the first step. Don't play the waiting game. You'll miss opportunities to lead. LOCATION: 1970

When you wait for your boss to tell you what to do, your boss then has to think about how to do their job and your job. If you're always waiting to be handed more responsibility or a new opportunity, you'll likely become someone who can't be handed anything of importance. On our team, the people I trust most are the ones handling the most and taking the initiative to find and solve the problems I haven't even noticed yet. So if you're not busy, get busy! A waiting posture doesn't win in the long run. If you don't know where to start, look around. There are always responsibilities, projects, processes, products, or even people who are underutilized that others around you are just not noticing. LOCATION: 1981

To get out of the passivity cycle, it's going to take some initiative. You simply need to choose something—anything—that you will pick up and own. LOCATION: 2002

This is a key idea to remember for your own work: never present your boss with just a problem. Always bring a plan for the solution. LOCATION: 206

Leaders see problems. They see things that aren't working. And they come up with solutions. LOCATION: 2137

Great leaders challenge up with the best motives. LOCATION: 2299

Great leaders are keenly aware of what the boss is most interested in. LOCATION: 2302

Great leaders know what's core and what's peripheral. LOCATION: 2306

Great leaders challenge up quietly, but they are not silent. LOCATION: 2310

The words you use when you share your idea are bricks that will either build a bridge of relationship for your idea or a wall of distrust. LOCATION: 2328

Is there a better way to do what you're currently doing? Possibly. Is the idea you have for change a better way to approach the problem? Maybe so. However, definitive statements shut down conversation. They reveal a lack of empathetic thinking, which will ultimately build a wall and not a bridge. When someone is reckless with definitive statements, it reveals a lack of discernment and creates distance in relationships. LOCATION: 2343

Victory is not just the change that takes place because you challenge up and lead when you aren't the one in charge. The victory is also the growth that takes place when you enter this process of learning as a leader. God has grown me more through the process of challenging my bosses than just about anything else at work. LOCATION: 2374

As I mentioned last chapter, when you decide to challenge up, nothing is more important than the relationship you have with the person you're challenging. Before you decide to approach your boss or even someone in another department with something potentially challenging, you need to think through the relationship you have with them. Do you get the sense they like you? Do you feel they respect you? Do they trust you? LOCATION: 2404

Leadership is not simply a matter of authority. Leadership is about influence. And challenging up is a form of leadership. You are leading your boss to make a decision that they might not make on their own. Choosing to love your boss is imperative if you're trying to lead your boss. You cannot lead someone well if you don't love them. Loving someone and leading them are a package deal. You can't have one without the other. LOCATION: 2433

One of the greatest difficulties in challenging up is learning to challenge the process without appearing to challenge the person. Challenging someone personally always puts that person on his or her heels and creates an obstacle in the way of a mutually beneficial conversation. Being convinced that God establishes authority will allow you to challenge up without the sense that you're challenging them as a person. LOCATION: 2444

The more challenging the conversation, the more private it should be. Challenge privately. Champion publicly. Do not confuse these two! LOCATION: 2487

Though your physical posture is important, when I talk about the posture of a leader, I'm thinking more about your nonphysical posture. How do you position yourself? How do you carry yourself? Your physical posture is important, but your nonphysical or emotional posture is just as important, if not more so. Your emotional posture is determined by the thoughts and feelings you allow yourself to have toward yourself and your boss. Nothing affects your posture more than what you tell yourself about yourself and about your manager. LOCATION: 2493

For more on this, Markus Buckingham's chapter from *The One Thing You Need To Know: About Great Managing, Great Leading, and Sustained Individual Success* is a must-read. Buckingham argues that the most common behavior in every great marriage is the decision to believe the best about the other person. He summarizes his advice with this directive: "Find the most generous explanation for each other's behavior and believe it." This insight is congruent with what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:7 about love: "It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." Very little will influence your posture toward your boss more than choosing to trust your boss. LOCATION: 2499

Emotions are such a powerful force for us, which is why we must learn to stay in the balcony when we're in the middle of tense situations. LOCATION: 2545

With over thirty million views, Simon Sinek's video has brought insight, and the power of the question of why is no secret anymore. Not only has his TED Talk shaped me, but the guiding principle of his book, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, has been profoundly helpful as well. He writes, "People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it. And what you do simply proves what you believe." Although pastors and preachers need to be careful not to "peddle the word of God for profit" as the apostle Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 2:17, there is a sense in which we are all selling something. When you challenge up, you are selling an idea, a new way, a different path toward a better future. The clearer your why, the more they'll buy. LOCATION: 2595

Disciplining myself to lead with questions helps me avoid the trap of rash judgments. Curious questions cause humility. Lately, I've begun every important conversation similar to this: "I've got a lot of thoughts about this situation, but I know you do as well. Tell me how you're processing it." This is crucial for me. Incorrect assumptions create walls and cause humiliation. If you choose to start the challenging conversation with questions, it will teach you something. It will build trust, and it will save you some embarrassment. LOCATION: 2673

A Gallup study showed that fifty percent of people who leave their jobs do so because of their bosses. Fifty percent. If two people have left under your employment, odds are one of them left because of you. Yikes. How many leaders think to take responsibility for someone leaving? LOCATION: 2772

Leadership is not about waiting until people call you a leader. It's about doing everything you can to lead right where you are. LOCATION: 2872

Great leaders love what they do, who they do it with, and who they do it for. LOCATION: 2876