

THE 21 INDISPENSABLE
QUALITIES OF
A LEADER

BECOMING *the* PERSON
OTHERS WILL WANT *to* FOLLOW

JOHN C.
MAXWELL



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

NASHVILLE DALLAS MEXICO CITY RIO DE JANEIRO BEIJING

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A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

What makes people want to follow a leader? Why do people reluctantly comply with one leader while passionately following another to the ends of the earth? What separates leadership theorists from successful leaders who lead effectively in the real world? The answer lies in the character qualities of the individual person.

My friend, do you know whether you have what it takes to become a great leader, the kind who attracts people and makes things happen? I mean, if you took the time to really look at yourself deep down, would you find the qualities needed to live out your boldest dreams, the ones so big that you've never shared them with anybody? That's a question each of us must have the courage to honestly ask—and answer—if we want to achieve our real potential.

I've written this book to help you recognize, develop, and refine the personal characteristics needed to be a truly effective leader, the kind people *want* to follow. If you've already read

The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, then you understand that becoming a leader takes time. The Law of Process says that leadership develops daily, not in a day. Part of a leader's development comes from learning the laws of leadership, for those are the tools that teach how leadership works. But *understanding* leadership and actually *doing* it are two different activities.

Recently I talked to a friend named Bill Freeman. He is the president of Watkins Associated Industries, Inc., the largest privately owned trucking company in America. Bill is an excellent executive, and like all good leaders, he is continually looking for ways to learn and grow.

"I'm about halfway through your book," he told me, meaning *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. "It's making quite an impact on me." Then he said something that made quite an impact on *me*. "Let me tell you how I'm going through it," he said. "Each morning I read a chapter of the book. And all through the day, I think about that law. As I work, I look at myself and ask, How am I doing with this leadership law? I watch the people in the office, looking to see whether they practice it. I measure our whole company against it, observing, assessing, reflecting. Every morning it's a different law. It's an eye-opener."

Bill really got my juices flowing. In fact, his comments prompted me to write this book. He is approaching his own leadership development from the inside out, as he should. Leaders are effective because of who they are on the inside—in the qualities that make them up as people. And to go to the highest level of leadership, people have to develop these traits from the inside out.

After talking to Bill, I took some time to reflect on the characteristics of the best leaders I know, the ones who people really want to follow. I looked for common themes. I talked to other leaders and heard their impressions. And I examined leaders who have impacted history. I settled on a list of 21 qualities possessed by all great leaders. These traits are described and illustrated in this book, meant to be a complementary companion to *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*.

As you dive into the book, you may find that you are able to easily breeze through several chapters at a time. You may even be able to knock out the whole book in one sitting. *Don't do it.* *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* is designed to be absorbed the same way Bill Freeman approaches a book: strategically and methodically.

I want to encourage you to live with this book for a while. Read a chapter, and then give it some time. Use it to reflect, review, and renew. If the quality you're studying is a weak area in your life, spend some time addressing it before you move on to the next chapter. You may even want to repeat this process several times over the course of a year, cementing each trait into your character.

Everything rises and falls on leadership. And leadership truly develops from the inside out. If you can become the leader you *ought* to be on the *inside*, you will be able to become the leader you *want* to be on the *outside*. People will want to follow you. And when that happens, you'll be able to tackle anything in this world.