



SIMPLE TRUTHS OF LEADERSHIP

Ken Blanchard & Randy Conley

SERVANT LEADERSHIP: KEN BLANCHARD

The beginning of my mission statement is “I am a loving teacher and an example of simple truths.”

That focus has been central in all of my work, including the study of servant leadership. I have always looked for simple truths that reflect commonsense practices people can use to make their work and life—as well as the lives of the people they care about—happier and more satisfying.

To that end, I find it fun and inspiring to work with coauthors who share a similar philosophy—because I have always found that $1 + 1$ is greater than 2. That’s certainly been the case as I have worked on my new book with my colleague Randy Conley. Randy’s focus over the last fifteen years has been on distilling the complex topic of trust into simple, actionable principles that help people experience more authentic and fulfilling relationships.

When it comes to servant leadership and trust, Randy and I both wonder why the principles we see as common sense are so seldom used in common practice. If today’s leaders had a more commonsense approach to leadership, we’d venture to say that 65 to 70

percent of the workforce would not be considered disengaged. We wrote the book because we know a lot of leaders aren't applying common sense in the workplace.

The first half of our book is about my favorite topic, *Servant Leadership*. Much of my work in the past was focused on leadership behavior and how to improve leadership style and methods. My colleagues and I attempted to change leaders from the outside. But in recent years, we have found that effective leadership is an inside job. It is a question of the heart. It's all about a leader's character and intention.

The shift from self-serving leadership to leadership that serves others is motivated by a change of heart. If leaders don't get their heart right, they will never become servant leaders. Why are you leading? Is it to serve or to be served? Answering this question truthfully is so important—because you can't fake being a servant leader.

Here are two of my favorite Simple Truths of Leadership that are found in the *Servant Leadership* section of the book.

SIMPLE TRUTH #8: THE BEST MINUTE SERVANT LEADERS SPEND IS THE ONE THEY INVEST IN PEOPLE.

People sometimes wonder why Spencer Johnson and I titled our book *The One Minute Manager*. They can't imagine how someone can manage in a minute. The reality is that many managers don't take the time, even a minute, to set goals for their people, praise their progress, or redirect their efforts—the Three Secrets from the book.

Investing a little time in your people is similar. Part of *The One Minute Manager's* significance is how it helps leaders understand that the best ways to serve your people don't have to involve long conversations, scheduled meetings, or performance reviews. Sometimes the simplest acts—like paying attention, commenting on what people are doing, or having a friendly chat—can be the most meaningful. Investing in people is about spending time focusing on them, not yourself.

MAKING COMMON SENSE COMMON PRACTICE

The best minutes you invest in your people can focus on simple things:

- Listen to people's suggestions or discuss a problem.
- Ask people what they did over the weekend or how a sick family member is doing.
- Wish someone good luck on a presentation or say, "Happy Birthday."

Making people feel special doesn't have to take a lot of your time. Spending a few moments of your day to let them know you care could mean more to them than you'll ever know.

The shift from self-serving leadership to leadership that serves others is motivated by a change of heart.

SIMPLE TRUTH #11: PROFIT IS THE APPLAUSE YOU GET FOR CREATING A MOTIVATING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR PEOPLE SO THEY WILL TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOUR CUSTOMERS.

Some leaders worship the bottom line. They think the only reason to be in business is to make money. They don't understand that the best run and most profitable organizations know their number one customer is their people.

If you train, empower, and care about your people as your number one most important customer, they will go out of their way to take care of your organization's number two most important customer—the folks who buy your products and services. When that happens, those customers become raving fans of your organization and, in many ways, part of your sales force. This takes care of your company's bottom line and the financial interests of the owners or shareholders. Now that's a winning environment!

MAKING COMMON SENSE COMMON PRACTICE

To create this winning environment as a servant leader, you must do two things:

- Focus on your people by letting them know they are important to your organization and their contributions count, particularly in terms of satisfying customer needs.
- Empower your frontline people to listen to their customers—both external and internal, act on their needs, and, in the process, exceed their expectations.

The second half of the book is about Randy's area of expertise, *Building Trust*. I'll let him take it from here.

BUILDING TRUST: RANDY CONLEY

Anyone would be hard-pressed to argue that trust isn't critically important to leadership success.

So why do so few leaders have a defined strategy and plan for building trust? Because trust is like oxygen: most people don't think about it until they don't have any.

It can be difficult to know where to start. Trust goes deep and wide. There aren't any magic solutions when it comes to building trust. It requires a comprehensive and sustained approach over time.

I want to share with you two of our Simple Truths of Leadership that are found in the *Building Trust* section of the book.

SIMPLE TRUTH #45: THE OPPOSITE OF TRUST IS NOT DISTRUST—IT'S CONTROL.

Many leaders like to play their cards close to the vest. They are afraid to give up too much control for fear that something will come back to bite them. They think it isn't worth the risk to give up control.

Because giving up control opens the door to risk, it makes these leaders more vulnerable to being hurt. In response, they withhold trust and try to control people and situations around them to protect their own safety. The result of this behavior is a culture of uncertainty.

If we define control as that which we have direct and complete power over, we quickly realize we don't possess that much control. We may be able to influence people or situations, but we can't control them. The only control we truly have is over ourselves: our actions, attitudes, values, emotions, and opinions.

People often assume mistrust or distrust are the opposite of trust, but that's not true. Control is the opposite of trust. Are you willing to give up control and trust others?

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MAKING COMMON SENSE COMMON PRACTICE

If you struggle to relinquish control and trust others, start with baby steps:

1. Identify low-risk situations where you feel comfortable extending trust.
2. Assess a person's trustworthiness by gauging their competence to handle the task, integrity to do the right thing, and commitment to follow through.
3. As you become more comfortable giving up control and learn that others can be trusted, extend more trust as situations allow.

SIMPLE TRUTH #47: PEOPLE WITHOUT ACCURATE INFORMATION CANNOT ACT RESPONSIBLY, BUT PEOPLE WITH ACCURATE INFORMATION ARE COMPELLED TO ACT RESPONSIBLY.

Simple Truth #47 is from the book *Empowerment Takes More Than a Minute*, coauthored by Ken, John Carlos, and Alan Randolph. I love this quote because it illustrates the importance of trust.

Leaders who don't trust others don't share information. They keep everything under lock and key. In the absence of information, people often make up their own version of the truth, which may be more negative than reality. When people don't have accurate information, it's as if their leader is handcuffing them from being their best.

Servant leaders trust their people and realize that openly sharing information about themselves and the organization is the right thing to do. When people have accurate information, they can make decisions that are in the best interests of the organization.

MAKING COMMON SENSE COMMON PRACTICE

Great leaders understand that trust is the foundation of effective leadership. A key aspect of trust is sharing information with your people. Here are some tips on how to do it:

- Create a culture of accountability by providing access to information. If you aren't at liberty to share certain details, say so. Your people will understand.
- Speak plainly in ways that are easily understood. Present complicated data in simple terms and focus on having a dialogue with people, not bombarding them with trivia.
- Be a straight shooter. Your team members are adults who can handle the truth. Use healthy doses of compassion and empathy when delivering tough news.

MAKING COMMON SENSE COMMON PRACTICE IN YOUR LEADERSHIP AND LIFE

We are certain a number of our Simple Truths will be meaningful to you. We are grateful for the opportunity to share them with you. But that's not enough—now it's time to turn common sense into common practice. We want to remind you why it's important to be a trusted servant leader and how you can get there.

WHY BECOME A SERVANT LEADER, TRUSTED BY YOUR PEOPLE?

The world is in desperate need of a new kind of leadership. The type of leadership we've seen in past decades has produced record low levels of trust and engagement in the workforce. Clearly, what we've been doing isn't working. We need a leadership philosophy grounded in the knowledge and belief that the most successful leaders and organizations are those that place an emphasis on serving others and leading with trust.

Trusted servant leaders are the answer to today's challenges. People are looking for deeper purpose and meaning as a way to meet the rapid changes happening in our lives. They are also looking for leaders they can trust and believe in—leaders whose focus is on serving the greater good.

Servant leadership is not just another management technique. It is a way of life for those with servant hearts. In organizations run by trusted servant leaders, serving others becomes the norm. The byproducts are better leadership, better service, a higher performing organization, and more success and significance.

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HOW CAN YOU GET THERE?

An ancient Chinese proverb says, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” We’ve made it easy for you to take that first step.

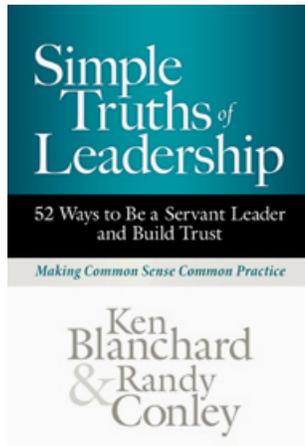
It’s no coincidence we share fifty-two Simple Truths in the book—one for each week of the year. Each week, choose a Simple Truth and focus on turning its commonsense wisdom into common practice. We also included a discussion guide to help you reflect on these truths more deeply. The guide contains prompts from each of the servant leadership and trust subtopics we addressed. You can use it for personal reflection, or you can explore the prompts with a colleague or your team. Once again, do whatever works best for you. The point is to use it, to put it to work.

We believe leadership is more than a job. It’s a calling. We all have a tremendous opportunity—and responsibility—to positively influence everyone we lead.

Now, go and do it! 📌



Info



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ken Blanchard is cofounder of The Ken Blanchard Companies, a leading international training and consulting firm. He is coauthor of more than sixty-five books, including the iconic *The One Minute Manager*, with combined sales of over 23 million copies in forty-seven languages. In 2005, he was inducted into Amazon's Hall of Fame as one of the top twenty-five bestselling authors of all time.

Randy Conley is vice president of global professional services for The Ken Blanchard Companies and coauthor of Blanchard's Building Trust training program. Inc.com named him a Top 100 Leadership Speaker. Conley is a contributing author of three books, including *Leading at a Higher Level* with Ken Blanchard. Conley's award-winning blog, *Leading with Trust*, has influenced over 4 million viewers since its inception in 2012.



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