POSITIVE LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES
for Women

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Never Underestimate the Power of a Woman’s Influence

Who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?

ESTHER 4:14

If ever there comes a time when the women of the world come together purely and simply for the benefit of mankind, it will be a force such as the world has never known.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

A recent survey of over 7000 leaders from high-performance companies revealed fascinating results concerning the effectiveness of women in leadership. The survey showed that women outperformed men in 12 out of 16 leadership competencies! Women ranked higher than men in areas such as taking initiative, problem solving, building relationships, driving for results, and practicing self-development, to name a few.

Why do you think women seem to have these innate leadership qualities? What is it that stirs in the heart of a woman, motivating her to reach out to inspire others? I believe God has uniquely equipped us as women to feel things deeply and to care passionately about the world around us.

As women we have the opportunity to make a positive difference
in our families, communities, and even our culture. All too often we are tempted to sit back and allow someone else to set the pace for the rest of society, but there has never been a more important time for us to lead with love and integrity. Whether you have the opportunity to be a leader within your neighborhood community, your family, your business, or your church, you have the potential to influence others through your words, ideas, and examples. My hope is that this book will light that fire of influence in your heart and encourage you to stand up and step out as an effective leader. Don't wait for someone else to carry out the job God has equipped you to do.

Perhaps you have never thought of yourself as the “leader type.” Or maybe you are a reluctant leader who has been pushed into the position because no one else would take on the responsibility. Maybe you're a natural-born leader who seems to gravitate toward the top in every organization you join. In a way, as Christian women we all serve as leaders, because we are set apart, called to stand up for biblical principles and lead our culture by being an example of righteousness, love, and compassion.

Whether you are a reluctant leader, a natural-born one, or somewhere in between, you—and every one of us—can grow and develop fresh leadership skills in your life. In this book, I highlight eight principles that can be applied to your personal life as well as your professional one. Each of the principles opens up the door for us to positively influence the people around us. We will explore the lives of eight effective leaders in the Old Testament of the Bible. The time-tested principles we can glean from these powerful leaders have great implications for each of us no matter where we are in our faith journey.
I like to think of this volume as a pocket-sized book with a powerful punch. Each chapter is packed full of insightful stories and powerful principles to help you be an effective leader. At the end of each chapter you will find a recap of the positive principles, as well as several practical action points. You will also find a section with personal application questions to help you take what you have learned in the chapter and implement it in your current situation. You may want to give this book to others on your leadership team so you can study together and build a cohesive bond.

Do you think you could be—or do you know someone who might be—part of the next generation of leaders? I want to inspire and impact you to engage with the culture and relate to others in an effective way. Ultimately that’s what leadership is all about—relationships. Certainly courage, character, vision, and wisdom all play a vital role in the makeup of a great leader, but if a leader does not have the power to relate well to others, their influence is diminished and their effectiveness weakened. The apostle Paul warned that if we set out to do great things without love, we are only resounding gongs or clanging cymbals. Now I don’t know about you, but I don’t have time to waste. I want my work to count, to be effective, to make a difference. *Love* is the difference.

My desire is that you will be encouraged to not only rise up and take on the position of service God has given you, but that you will also do it with extraordinary love. Our greatness in leadership comes as a result of our relationship with God—recognizing His great love for us and pouring that love out to others. We are not the greatest gift to this world, but *He* is! God did not intend for us to be celebrity
leaders; He intends for us to be servant leaders. There is great joy and responsibility in serving as a leader.

The truth is, we don’t serve alone. Just as God has called us to leadership, He will also walk with us through it. May you experience His love as you humbly lead others and make a difference in this world.

_Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others._

_Philippians 2:3-4_
Chapter One

Rise to the Challenge
Making Your Mountains into Learning Experiences

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which
God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:14

I have learned that in every circumstance
that comes my way,
I can choose to respond in one of two ways:
I can whine or I can worship!

Nancy Leigh DeMoss

When I was in high school, my mother took me to a lecture by
Sir Edmund Hillary. I must admit, at the time I was not too
excited about hearing some old guy talk about how he had climbed
a mountain. It wasn’t until he started speaking that I realized this
man had accomplished a feat that was considered impossible. He
had faced the seemingly insurmountable, pushed past the limitations,
and climbed to the top of Mount Everest. Before his successful expe-
dition in 1953, numerous groups had tried and failed to reach the
summit. Even within his own expedition group, all but two of the
climbers—he and Tenzing Norgay—turned back because of exhaus-
tion at the high altitude.
Despite the obstacles, the discouragement, and even the abandonment by his group, Hillary persevered. His accomplishment was celebrated worldwide, and his influence inspired many others to reach toward their own personal goals. Oddly, Sir Edmund originally earned his living as a beekeeper in New Zealand. He started climbing mountains in his own country as a bit of a hobby. Little by little he progressed to climbing the Alps and eventually the Himalayas. The small mountains led to bigger mountains, preparing him to conquer the highest mountain—Mount Everest.

What are the mountains in your life? Mountains come in all shapes and sizes. They may be in the form of a difficult work relationship or a rebellious child or an overwhelming project that keeps you up at night. Some mountains may develop in our lives in the form of financial issues or a troubled marriage or even trying to lose weight. Actually, there are also mountains in our lives that aren’t expressly negative; some of our greatest mountains may include such things as starting a new business or learning a new skill set or language.

As women, each mountain that we scale in life strengthens us and prepares us to face grander mountains ahead. Whether we choose the mountain or the mountain chooses us, we still have a choice as to how we will deal with it. We can either look at the mountains in our lives and grumble and complain about them, or we can choose to begin to climb them and conquer them. The secret to rising to the top of any mountain rests in our attitude and ability to persevere. Sir Edmund Hillary said, “It’s not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves.” From beekeeper to record breaker, Hillary conquered fears, discouragements, and failures. It didn’t all happen at once, but he
grew from each experience. We too can look at each mountain in our lives as an opportunity to grow and become stronger women.

**No More Excuses**

The story of Joseph in the Old Testament provides a poignant picture of a young man who found himself in the pit and yet reached the summit. Joseph went from the safe environment of home, to becoming a slave, and then to prison, and yet eventually to second in command of Egypt. It wasn’t a smooth road, yet he scaled his personal mountains again and again. He didn’t allow himself to get caught in the trap of blaming people or circumstances. He didn’t spend time dwelling on the “if only” scenarios or mistakes in his life. Instead he moved forward and rose to the top of each circumstance in which God placed him.

Think about it—he could have easily rested on a big bed of excuses. His brothers had sold him into slavery, he had been unjustly punished, he was forgotten and abandoned. If anyone had a reason to give up and carry a chip on his shoulder, it was Joseph. Yet true leaders don’t waste time making excuses for what they can’t, won’t, or couldn’t do.

Stop for just a moment and consider the excuses rolling around in your head right now that keep you from climbing the mountain in front of you. Are you waiting for someone to change? Are you blaming someone else for your inability to move forward? Are you using your circumstances as an excuse? As we consider the story of Joseph, let’s identify our own excuses and disarm them, not allowing them to get in the way of what God wants to do in our lives.
Perhaps you are familiar with Joseph’s story. He was one of twelve brothers, and he was dearly loved by his father, Jacob. In fact, as the favorite son (never a good idea to institute in a family) he was given a coat of honor by his dad—a coat of many colors. Of course this only instilled more jealousy and anger in the hearts of his brothers. When the opportunity was right, the brothers threw Joseph into a pit and sold him to slave traders from Egypt. Here was a boy who had once lived in the comfort of his own home, most honored by his father, and now he was abandoned and forced into slavery at the cruel hand of his brothers.

I don’t know about you, but I would have started feeling sorry for myself right there. I would have been tempted to give up hope, yet Joseph handled this mountain a little differently. He didn’t succumb to the temptation to feel sorry for himself and wallow in discouragement. Instead he jumped into his situation with both feet, embraced the challenge, and rose to the top. It’s as if he said, “This is where I’m at right now, so I’ll make the best of it.” He was sold to an Egyptian named Potiphar, and here he climbed to the top of his first mountain. The Bible describes his climb this way:

The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the
Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph’s care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.¹

God shined His favor on Joseph and blessed his work, but keep in mind that Joseph had to do the work. He didn’t lazily sit around hoping God would do it all for him. He was responsible and trustworthy to the point that Potiphar put him in charge of everything. He didn’t have family or friends there to offer encouragement and support. He didn’t have inside connections or favors from those in authority to make his promotion happen. He had God, and God was his help and his companion. Joseph did his work with excellence and proved himself to be a faithful servant, and God blessed his work.

During his time in Potiphar’s household, Joseph learned administrative responsibilities, accounting, logistics, and managerial skills, among other valuable lessons. He was in charge of both Potiphar’s house and his field, which was an important training ground to prepare him to lead Egypt one day. It was a small mountain preparation for the big mountain of being in charge of all the storehouses of Egypt, yet it was a mountain within the confines of slavery. He didn’t choose this mountain, but with God’s help he was able to climb it and make the most of a difficult situation.

Perhaps you feel stuck in a situation that seems hopeless or circumstances that don’t seem to be utilizing all your gifts and talents. Pay attention to the training God is giving you right where you are. Don’t try to rush Him and move ahead of what He is teaching you. God doesn’t waste any experience in our lives. What may seem like

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¹ Rise to the Challenge
a mistake could be just the situation He wants to use to prepare you for your next role in leadership. Let’s get in the habit of asking the question, “God, what do You want to teach me here?”

Joseph not only learned administrative skills, but he also learned humility and dependence on God. He grew in integrity as well. Imagine trusting someone so much that you completely put him or her in charge of everything! Do you have someone like that in your life? Let’s admit it—that kind of person is rare. Joseph proved himself faithful in the small tasks in order to be put in charge of the greater ones. Yes, he had climbed the bitter mountain of slavery, overcoming the loss of his comfortable life and family, and he found himself at the pinnacle—the top of the household.

Sadly, there are times when we get thrown off the mountaintop, sometimes not by our own doing. Falling off the mountain doesn’t mean it’s over. God is there to break the fall, care for us, and put us on the path again. Joseph lived a life of integrity and honor, but we can’t say the same about Potiphar’s wife. She was attracted to Joseph and tried to entice him to sleep with her. He refused, saying, “With me in charge…my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?”

Notice that Joseph recognized this kind of action was a sin against God. He had a healthy fear of the Lord, which is the very foundation of wisdom. Joseph not only knew who God was, but he also wanted to walk in obedience to Him. A godly leader has a sense of God’s presence and a recognition that they ultimately answer to
Him. Joseph knew he answered to a higher calling. A woman with a deep sense of integrity does what is right even when no one is around to see, because she knows she answers to God, not people.

Potiphar’s wife became angry at Joseph and accused him of rape. He was thrown in prison for a crime he didn’t commit. Welcome to your next mountain, Joseph! He found himself at the base of the mountain of unjust accusations, misunderstanding, dishonor, discouragement, and imprisonment. At this point it would have been easy to throw in the towel, stay in the valley, and be filled with anger, hatred, and revenge for everyone throughout his life who had done him wrong. If this were a Hollywood movie, the Joseph character would have probably reacted with revenge, but not the real man. Instead we see him put on his hiking boots and begin to scale the next mountain.

**Lessons Learned Outside Our Comfort Zone**

Recently I had the opportunity to visit the Gospel for Asia headquarters and seminary in India. The young women at the seminary live a beautifully disciplined and devoted life to the Lord. On their faces I saw a true joy in the Lord as they surrendered their lives to His service. One thing I will always remember were the thatched huts on campus that served as classrooms for the students. The reason the classes met in thatched huts was to help the students experience the feel of what it would be like for them as they went into tribal areas and out of the comfort of seminary. It was a visual reminder of the surroundings they would face in the future.

Comparing those thatched huts to the nice comfortable classrooms we have in college here in the states, I think I would choose...
nice and comfy. Isn’t that what we want life to be like? “Lord, help me to grow and be a great leader, but could You do it in a nice, cozy, happy environment without any discomfort or challenges?” You know, as well as I do, that some of the most important lessons happen in the “thatched huts” of life. Once again, God prepared Joseph for a higher mountain by taking him to the classroom of discomfort.

It’s hard to imagine what prisons were like in 1800 BC Egypt. I’m going to assume that Joseph’s prison wasn’t the nicest of environments, certainly lacking the comforts of Potiphar’s home or the life Joseph once knew with his father. Yet in this dungeon classroom, God was with Joseph, teaching and training him for greater leadership and important service on a higher level. Once again, he was faithful in his responsibilities and worked with excellence even in the small prison tasks he was given. He was faithful in the small things! God showed him kindness and gave him success once again.

Here’s what we read in Genesis:

> While Joseph was there in the prison, the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph’s care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.⁴

What lessons did Joseph acquire here that he had not already learned in Potiphar’s house? Here, in prison, his faith was bolstered as he experienced the continued faithfulness of the Lord. God was with
him and blessed him in the midst of this dark time. He became confident that even in the dark valleys, God was always there and would not leave him. Joseph most likely learned humility and compassion as he reached out and touched the other prisoners and cared for their needs. He developed a servant’s heart. He became resourceful with the little that he had. Most important, he learned patience, and the value of waiting on the Lord’s timing.

While he was in prison, two of his fellow prisoners had perplexing dreams. Joseph told them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams.” Notice his simple reliance on God. Joseph’s focus was on God, and he was confident in what God could do. Once Joseph interpreted the dreams, one of the prisoners was released and sent back to his post with the Pharaoh of Egypt. Joseph asked the prisoner to remember him once he was back in the position of serving in the royal court, but the freed prisoner forgot. What an opportunity for Joseph to depend on God and not man, and wait on God’s perfect timing.

**God’s Plan Is Best**

Eventually, Pharaoh had a dream and Joseph’s prison friend remembered him. Joseph was called before Pharaoh to interpret the dream. As a result of properly interpreting Pharaoh’s dream about the seven years of growth and subsequent seven years of famine, Joseph was elevated to second in command. He was put in an administrative position to direct the storage of goods in order to prepare for the years of famine. God took Joseph to the top of the mountain! It was time. He was ready. God had taught him and prepared him through the classrooms of suffering so that he would have the skills to lead
and oversee the entire land of Egypt. He was wise, organized, and resourceful as a result of his earlier mountain climbs. As a leader of Egypt he was responsible, efficient, and he ruled with integrity.

Most important, Joseph did not hold a grudge. He moved on, forgetting the past and releasing the entanglement of hatred and bitterness. One of my favorite passages in all of Scripture is found at the end of his story and reveals the secret to his ability to rise above his circumstances. In the end, he was reunited with his brothers and father. After his father passed away, his brothers feared that Joseph would retaliate and take revenge on them for their past cruelty toward him. He responded in grace, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.6

No anger, no revenge, only kindness. Why? Because Joseph knew that God had a plan all along. His eyes were on God and His plan, not on the pettiness of his brothers. When Joseph was just a boy, he had a dream that his brothers would one day bow down to him. God had set this vision in his heart, and Joseph never forgot it.

What vision has God given you? Don’t lose sight of it, but more important, don’t lose sight of your dependence on Him. He has a plan. Even through the dark times when you feel as though your mountain is too difficult, you can trust Him. He has not left you.

Let us see the mountains in front of us as opportunities to learn and grow. They are in our lives not to discourage us, but rather to strengthen us and prepare us for bigger mountains in the future. The powerful theologian C.H. Spurgeon faced many personal mountains
in his own life. He wrote, “If you would find the men who serve God the best, you must look for the men of the most faith. Little faith will save a man, but little faith cannot do great things for God.” How does our little faith grow into big faith? It happens as we climb the mountains in front of us, depending on God every step of the way.

**Think Pink**

Mary Crowley, founder of Home Interiors & Gifts (now part of the company Celebrating Home), was one of the premier Christian businesswomen of Dallas, Texas. Her life was not an easy journey, but as a woman with a firm faith in God, she grew and learned through each struggle in her life. Married in 1932 and with children coming soon after that, she and her husband struggled to survive through the Depression. Mary realized that if she was going to be able to feed her family, she would need to find work. Although jobs were scarce at the time, especially for women, Mary chose a store she wanted to work in, dressed up and armed herself with a confident smile, walked in the doors of the store, and got the job!

Although she didn’t realize it at the time, this job enabled Mary to develop a shrewd business sense that later prepared her to become head of a multimillion-dollar company. Sadly, her marriage crumbled in 1939. She began studying to be a CPA and worked full-time at an insurance company. Additionally, Mary suffered from insomnia, yet she turned her problems over to God. She used to pray, “Lord, You know I’ve got to get my rest. You worry about these problems. You’re going to be up all night anyway.” She would then go to sleep, leaving her problems in God’s hands. Her faith in Him never wavered, and she found her confidence and strength in Him during those lean years.
In 1948 she married David Crowley Jr., whom she had met at the insurance company. As a newlywed, Mary wanted to make her home as attractive as she could despite her limited funds. She took a job as an accountant in a furniture company, and soon she began to notice that when people came to buy furniture, they had no idea how to accessorize their new furniture. Ideas began to dance around in her mind as to how she could help these people, but she also longed to be home with her children. In God’s way and in His timing, He began to put it all together. Several years later, a man who imported gifts and decorative accessories asked Mary to become his sales manager in a new direct-sales company.

After working with this company for only three years, Mary’s staff had increased to 500 women selling accessories through home parties. Sounds like a Joseph-type success, doesn’t it? The owner was pleased, but he decided to add cocktail parties to the company functions, and he put limits on the commissions the saleswomen could make. Mary told him she didn’t agree with these conditions, so he sent her the office furniture that belonged to her and told her he was done with her position. Mary grieved the loss of being tossed off of that mountain, but she trusted God and knew He had a plan.

It was then that she founded her own company, Home Interiors & Gifts. She followed God’s leading, and she gave Him credit for the success of her company. She knew that it was He who opened the doors, but it was her responsibility to walk through them. Mary’s desire was to help woman and minister to their needs. Many of the women who became a part of her team had never held jobs before and even needed help with their appearance. Soon the company was helping women both personally and financially, paying dividends
and bonuses. The business continued to grow, and in 1962, the sales force recorded one million dollars in sales. Sadly, in that same year Mary was diagnosed with cancer. She ended up fighting two bouts (mountains if you will) of cancer, but continued to go forward and bless many women in the process.

Mary was one of the first women to serve on the board of directors of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. She received two honorary doctorate degrees before her death in 1986. Today, the Mary Crowley Cancer Research Centers in Dallas provide hope to cancer patients by expanding treatment options through investigational vaccine, gene, and cellular therapies. Just as God used the mountains in Joseph’s life to eventually save many generations to come, so the Lord used the life of Mary Crowley to impact the lives of women and bring hope to generations of cancer patients as well.

--- Positive Leadership Strategy ---

**Powerful Truth**
God uses the obstacles in our lives to prepare us for leadership, building courage, character, and confidence.

**Practical Application**
Embrace the mountains in front of you and see them as opportunities for growth.
Don’t blame others or make excuses.
Do your work with excellence and integrity.
Be faithful in the small tasks.
Always ask, “Lord what do You want me to learn here?”
Keep your eyes on God’s plan for you.

**PERSONALIZE IT**

1. What mountain are you currently facing in your leadership role?
2. What is God teaching you personally through this challenge?
3. How can you thank God specifically for this mountain?