

# Simple Truths of Leadership

52 Ways to Be a Servant Leader  
and Build Trust

*Making Common Sense Common Practice*

# INTRODUCTION BY KEN BLANCHARD

I'm excited to share some of the thinking and a few excerpts from my forthcoming book, *Simple Truths of Leadership: 52 Ways to Be a Servant Leader and Build Trust*, which I coauthored with my colleague Randy Conley.

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 this book with 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.

**The book is divided into two sections:  
Servant Leadership and Building Trust.**

## Simple Truths of Leadership

52 Ways to Be a Servant Leader  
and Build Trust

*Making Common Sense Common Practice*

Ken  
Blanchard  
& Randy  
Conley

# PART ONE: SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Effective leadership is an inside job. It is a question of the heart. It's all about a leader's character and intention. Why are you leading? Is it to serve or to be served?

The most persistent barrier to being a servant leader is a heart motivated by self-interest. Self-serving leaders put their own agenda, safety, status, and gratification ahead of others who are impacted by the leaders' thoughts and actions.

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. **That's what we focus on in Part One.**

# PART TWO: BUILDING TRUST

Servant leadership is the vehicle to building trust. Servant leaders act in ways that inspire trust in their followers. They are distinguished by putting the needs of their followers ahead of their own.

When team members believe their leader has their best interests at heart and is there to support them in achieving their goals, trust in their leader grows by leaps and bounds.

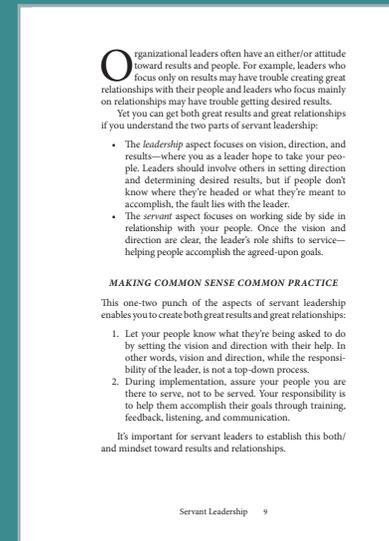
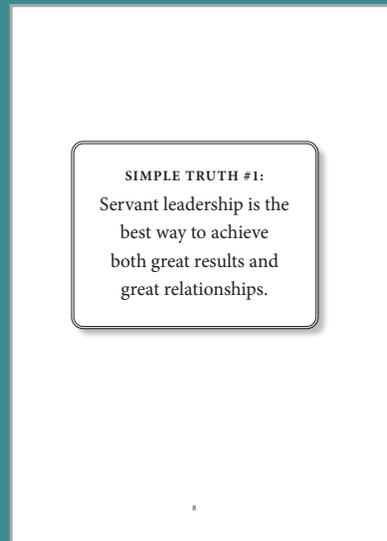
Trust is an outcome. If we act in trustworthy ways, we build trust. If we behave in an untrustworthy manner, we erode trust. It's common sense—but not always common practice. **This is our focus in Part Two.**

The format for the book is simple. On the left page, we identify a Simple Truth about servant leadership or trust. On the right page, we explain why it is important and how leaders can easily apply it on the job.

We've broken up the style a little differently here for this sample eBook, but we think you'll get the idea.

We hope you'll enjoy reading a sampling of our favorite Simple Truths from the book and consider making these a part of your leadership style. We also hope you'll explore all 52 Simple Truths—one for each week—when the book is released on February 1, 2022. We know it will make a difference in your life and the lives of the people you lead.

**Ken Blanchard & Randy Conley**



Part One: Servant Leadership By Ken Blanchard

SIMPLE TRUTH #1:

*Servant leadership is the best way to achieve both great results and great relationships.*

# Ken Blanchard on **WHY IT'S IMPORTANT** (SIMPLE TRUTH #1)

Organizational leaders often have an either/or attitude toward results and people. For example, leaders who focus only on results may have trouble creating great relationships with their people and leaders who focus mainly on relationships may have trouble getting desired results.

Yet you can get both great results and great relationships if you understand the two parts of servant leadership:

- The *leadership* aspect focuses on vision, direction, and results—where you as a leader hope to take your people. Leaders should involve others in setting direction and determining desired results, but if people don't know where they're headed or what they're meant to accomplish, the fault lies with the leader.
- The *servant* aspect focuses on working side by side in relationship with your people. Once the vision and direction are clear, the leader's role shifts to service—helping people accomplish the agreed-upon goals.

# Making Common Sense

## Common Practice (SIMPLE TRUTH #1)

This one-two punch of the aspects of servant leadership enables you to create both great results and great relationships:

1. Let your people know what they're being asked to do by setting the vision and direction with their help. In other words, vision and direction, while the responsibility of the leader, is not a top-down process.
2. During implementation, assure your people you are there to serve, not to be served. Your responsibility is to help them accomplish their goals through training, feedback, listening, and communication.

**It's important for servant leaders to establish this both/and mindset toward results and relationships.**

Part One: Servant Leadership By Ken Blanchard

SIMPLE TRUTH #2:

*Every great organization has  
a compelling vision.*

# Ken Blanchard on **WHY IT'S IMPORTANT** (SIMPLE TRUTH #2)

When I explain what a compelling vision is to some leaders in organizations, they either give me a blank look or say something like “I’m sure we have one on the wall somewhere.” So what is a compelling vision?

According to my book with Jesse Stoner, *Full Steam Ahead! Unleash the Power of Vision in Your Work and Your Life*, a compelling vision includes three elements: your purpose (what business you are in), your picture of the future (where you are going) and your values (what will guide your journey).

A compelling vision is alive and well in companies that are leaders in their field, such as Disney, Southwest Airlines, Nordstrom, Wegmans, and Starbucks.

# Making Common Sense

## Common Practice (SIMPLE TRUTH #2)

Here's how you can incorporate the three elements of a compelling vision in your organization:

- Make sure the people in your organization know what business they are in. For example, when Walt Disney started his theme parks, he said, "We are in the happiness business."
- Confirm that your people know where they are going—what good results would look like. At Disney, the picture of the future is that all guests of the parks would have the same smile on their faces when leaving as when they entered.
- Find out if the people in your organization are clear on what values will guide their journey. Disney's first value is safety. Its next values are courtesy and "the show," which is about everyone playing their parts perfectly, whether they are a ticket taker or Mickey Mouse. Disney's final value is efficiency—having a well-run, profitable organization.

**If you can share your compelling vision as clearly as Disney does, congratulations! You have just made common sense common practice.**

SIMPLE TRUTH #3:

*Servant leaders turn  
the traditional pyramid  
upside down.*

# Ken Blanchard on

## **WHY IT'S IMPORTANT** (SIMPLE TRUTH #3)

Most organizations and leaders get into trouble during the implementation phase of servant leadership if the traditional hierarchical pyramid is used. When that happens, whom do people think they work for? The people above them. The minute you think you work for the person above you, you assume that person—your boss—is responsible and your job is being responsive to your boss's whims or wishes.

“Boss watching” can become a popular sport where people get promoted based on their upward-influencing skills. As a result, all the energy of the organization moves up the hierarchy, away from customers and the frontline folks who are closest to the action.

Servant leaders know how to correct this situation by philosophically turning the pyramid upside down when it comes to implementation. Now the customer contact people and the customers are at the top of the organization, and everyone in the leadership hierarchy works for them. This one change makes a major difference in who is responsible and who is responsive.

# Making Common Sense

## Common Practice (SIMPLE TRUTH #3)

To make servant leadership come alive, implementation is key:

- Communicate to your people that you work for them, not the other way around. Your job is to serve, not to evaluate.
- Empower your people by letting them bring their brains to work. In this way, they become responsible—able to respond—to their internal and external customers. Your job is to be responsive to them, helping them accomplish their goals.

**This creates a very different environment for implementation and makes it clear to everyone who is responsible and to whom.**

Part Two: Building Trust By Randy Conley

SIMPLE TRUTH #27:

*Leadership begins  
with trust.*

# Randy Conley on **WHY IT'S IMPORTANT** (SIMPLE TRUTH #27)

Some leaders charge headlong into setting strategies and goals for their teams without giving much thought to building trust. Yet trust is the foundation of any successful, healthy relationship. When you have the trust of your team, all things are possible. Creativity, innovation, productivity, efficiency, and morale flourish. If your team doesn't trust you, you get resistance, disengagement, apathy, and, ultimately, failure.

The most successful leaders realize their number one priority is to build trust with their team. Trustworthy leaders demonstrate competence in their roles, act with integrity, show care and concern for team members, and honor their commitments by following through on their promises.

# Making Common Sense

## Common Practice (SIMPLE TRUTH #27)

Does your team perceive you as trustworthy? If you're not sure, ask them.

Here are a few sample questions:

- Do you have confidence in my leadership/management abilities?  
Where or how can I improve?
- Do I walk my talk? Where can I be more consistent in my behavior?
- How well do I listen to you? Do our interactions leave you feeling heard, valued, and supported?
- Am I dependable? Do you trust that I'll follow through on my commitments?

**Demonstrating your vulnerability by having a discussion with your people about trust is a powerful way to introduce servant leadership in your workplace.**

## Part Two: Building Trust By Randy Conley

SIMPLE TRUTH #28:

*Building trust is a skill that  
can be learned and developed.*

# Randy Conley on **WHY IT'S IMPORTANT** (SIMPLE TRUTH #28)

In my work, I have found that people have a common misconception about trust. Many people believe trust just happens, through some sort of relationship osmosis. The truth is that building trust is a skill. And, as with any skill, we can learn it and become better at it with practice. Since trust is either built or eroded by the behaviors we choose to use, we can enjoy more trust in our relationships when we use the right kind of behaviors.

# Making Common Sense

## Common Practice (SIMPLE TRUTH #28)

In the book *Trust Works!* Ken and his coauthors Cynthia Olmstead and Martha Lawrence share the ABCDs of building trust. I have built on this work by coauthoring our company's Building Trust training program that teaches leaders how to build trust.

Follow these four aspects of the ABCD model to create trust:

- Able—Demonstrate competence.
- Believable—Act with integrity.
- Connected—Show care and concern for others.
- Dependable—Honor commitments.

**Practicing these ABCD behaviors will foster a growing culture of trust in your relationships at every level, both at home and at work.**

## Part Two: Building Trust By Randy Conley

SIMPLE TRUTH #29:

*“Self-trust is the first secret  
of success.”*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

# Randy Conley on **WHY IT'S IMPORTANT** (SIMPLE TRUTH #29)

What does it mean to trust yourself? It means to have a confident belief in your mission as a leader. I've known leaders who have never taken the time to clearly identify their leadership point of view. What motivates you as a leader? What are your values? What are your beliefs about leading others? If you don't know the answers to these questions, your leadership could be drawn off course.

A leader without a clear purpose is like a ship without a rudder—it is taken wherever the wind blows. But when you have a clear mission statement like Ken's ("I am a loving teacher and an example of simple truths"), your energy is channeled in a specific direction. Self-trust begins when you are clear on your leadership mission.

# Making Common Sense

## Common Practice (SIMPLE TRUTH #29)

Writing your leadership point of view can help you become more authentic, self-aware, and intentional. You can develop your leadership point of view through the following steps, taken from the book *Leading at a Higher Level*. This may sound like a simple exercise, but it can lead to profound discovery about yourself and your leadership style:

1. List the key events and people in your life that have shaped your beliefs about leadership.
2. What lessons have you learned from these key events and people?
3. Based on those lessons, what are your top three to five values when leading others?
4. As a result, what can your team expect from your leadership in the future?
5. What are your expectations of yourself and of others going forward?
6. What is the leadership legacy that you want to leave?

**Take your time to think through your answers to these important questions.  
When you are finished writing, share your work with your team.**

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1. Servant leadership is the best way to achieve both great results and great relationships.
2. Every great organization has a compelling vision.
3. Servant leaders turn the traditional pyramid upside down.
4. All good performance starts with clear goals.
5. The key to developing people is to catch them doing something right.
6. Praise progress!
7. When people are off track, don't reprimand them—redirect them.
8. The best minute servant leaders spend is the one they invest in people.
9. Effective servant leaders realize they have to use different strokes for different folks.
10. Effective servant leaders don't just use different strokes for different folks, they also use different strokes for the same folks.
11. Profit is the applause you get for creating a motivating environment for your people so they will take good care of your customers.
12. Create autonomy through boundaries.
13. You get from people what you expect.
14. The best use of power is in service to others.
15. Never assume you know what motivates a person.
16. People with humility don't think less of themselves, they just think of themselves less.
17. It's okay to toot your own horn.
18. Don't work harder; work smarter.

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19. “No one of us is as smart as all of us.”—Eunice Parisi-Carew and Don Carew

20. Love is the answer. What is the question?

21. Servant leaders don’t command people to obey; they invite people to follow.

22. People who plan the battle rarely battle the plan.

23. Servant leaders love feedback.

24. People who produce good results feel good about themselves.

25. “It’s not about you.”—Rick Warren

26. Great leaders SERVE.

PART TWO: BUILDING TRUST—SIMPLE TRUTHS 27-52

27. Leadership begins with trust.

28. Building trust is a skill that can be learned and developed.

29. “Self-trust is the first secret of success.”—Ralph Waldo Emerson

30. Someone must make the first move to extend trust. Leaders go first.

31. “People admire your strengths, but they respect your honesty regarding your vulnerability.”—Colleen Barrett

32. There’s no trust without us.

33. Fear is the enemy of trust.

34. A relationship with no trust is like a cell phone with no service or internet—all you can do is play games.

35. People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.

# Complete Table of Contents Continued...

36. "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."  
—Maya Angelou
37. "Your actions speak so loudly I cannot hear what you are saying."—Anonymous
38. Tell the truth. Always. It's that simple.
39. Don't ever make a promise you can't keep.
40. "There's nothing so unequal as the equal treatment of unequals."—Anonymous
41. #Trust is always trending. Doing the right thing never goes out of style.
42. True servant leaders admit their mistakes.
43. Since we were given two ears and one mouth, we should listen more than we speak.
44. The most important part of leadership is what happens when you're not there.
45. The opposite of trust is not distrust— it's control.
46. People don't resist change; they resist being controlled.
47. People without accurate information cannot act responsibly, but people with accurate information are compelled to act responsibly.
48. Building trust is a journey, not a destination.
49. A successful apology is essential in rebuilding trust.
50. Apologizing is not necessarily an admission of guilt, but it is an admission of responsibility.
51. Choosing not to forgive someone is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die.
52. Forgiveness is letting go of all hope for a better past.

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*Simple Truths of Leadership* from  
your favorite bookseller today!

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