

"The 9 Virtues of Exceptional Leaders is a must-read for anyone who wants to become a better leader." —Dr. Robert K.egan, Harvard University

**The 9 Virtues of
Exceptional Leaders**
Unlocking Your Leadership Potential



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What Makes *The 9 Virtues* Different? by Rob Jenkins

One of the questions Karl and I are often asked is, “What makes *The 9 Virtues of Exceptional Leaders* different from all the other leadership books?” That’s a fair question, because—let’s face it—there are LOTS of leadership books out there, with more being published every day. Why should anyone read ours, in particular?

We’re glad you asked, because there are several reasons:

A contribution to the literature. First of all, we’re not saying people should read our book *instead* of other leadership books. There are indeed a lot of great books out there, and people interested in growing as leaders should probably read all of them (or at least a good number).

We do believe, however, that our book constitutes a valuable contribution to the leadership literature—that, as more than one reviewer has noted, it builds directly on books such as *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen F. Covey and *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. People whose lives have been positively impacted by books like those, we’re convinced, will find more of the same in *The 9 Virtues*—with, perhaps, a bit of a twist.

A classical foundation—with a modern slant. One of the things that sets our book apart, we believe, is its solid foundation in classical philosophy. Few people in history have had more impact on our modern way of looking at leadership than Aristotle, Plato, Buddha, and Jesus Christ, and we reference all those great thinkers and more.

At the same time, one of our goals in this book was to take those classical ideas and make them accessible to modern readers, while at the same time demonstrating their relevance to today’s world. That’s why, along with references to Aristotle and Jesus, our book also includes quotes from great modern-day leaders, like Winston Churchill, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Martin Luther King, Jr., along with examples from our personal experience.

An inclusive perspective. Don't let the term "virtue" or the references to religious figures throw you. While virtue, for some, may be intertwined with religious belief and practice, we believe it is not limited to any particular religion or even religion in general. You don't have to be religious to be virtuous.

That's why we reference so many of the world's great thinkers, both religious and otherwise. They all have valuable things to say about virtuous living. That's also why we include so many modern examples that have nothing to do with religion—but have everything to do with virtue.

An accessible style. Despite the book's rather philosophical bent, it's not a textbook. (Even though several universities are already using it as a text in their leadership courses). We put a lot of time and effort into making *The 9 Virtues* an enjoyable reading experience, employing a conversational style and sprinkling the text with plenty of entertaining anecdotes.

So don't be put off by all the stuff I mentioned above, about Aristotle and the Buddha. We guarantee you'll enjoy reading the book—and perhaps learn something in the process that you can interject into in a conversation one day and impress people with your knowledge.

A virtue-based approach. So much of what passes for leadership "training" these days, as we note in the book, consists of "programs" and quick fixes. But as any real leader knows, there are no quick fixes. There is no shortcut to becoming a better leader. It requires a lot of reflection, self-knowledge, hard work, discipline, and patience.

That's why we talk about virtues in this book, and not just about "ethics" or "values." Ethics involve a set of prescribed behaviors—what you will do and won't do in a given situation. Values have to do with what you deeply believe and truly want out of life and therefore underlie ethics.

Virtue, on the other hand, underlies everything. Virtue refers, not to what you do or what you want, but to who you are—who you really are, your essential self. And it starts with a set of behaviors that over time become habits, until eventually they occupy the very core of your being. Those are what we call the Virtues.

A positive message. Obviously, *The 9 Virtues* is not unique in this regard. Most leadership books have a positive message. Our message, though, if not unique, is one that people can't hear often enough: Anyone can become a more effective leader, if they're willing to put forth the time and effort to reach that goal.

In other words, while acknowledging that some people have undeniable gifts, we believe that true leaders are made, not born. And the way people become exceptional leaders, in our view, is by developing, internalizing, and practicing the 9 Virtues.

Furthermore, our message is that the 9 Virtues themselves are completely obtainable, although not without effort. This is not a "preachy" book, designed to make readers feel bad about all the things they ought to be doing but aren't. On the contrary, it's an uplifting book, because its main theme is very simple: You CAN do this.

A practical guide. We don't just stop with convincing people they can acquire the 9 Virtues and thus become more effective leaders; we actually show them HOW. Each of the chapters on the virtues concludes with a list of "homework assignments"—concrete, practical steps readers can actually take to help them develop and internalize that particular virtue.

These assignments include both personal and public actions. They involve simple things, common aspects of everyday life like e-mail, phone calls, friendly conversations, and committee meetings. These are things people CAN do—things you can do—and by doing them take positive steps toward becoming more virtuous people and leaders.

In conclusion, these are just a few of the reasons you should read this book. I hope I've been able to answer your questions about why this book in particular, while at the same time encouraging your to read not only our book but all the leadership books you can get your hands on.

However, if you're only going to read one leadership book this year—well, we humbly recommend *The 9 Virtues of Exceptional Leaders*.