



GIVE **ME** THE BAT

Stepping up to the plate
when it counts the most

by Andy Andrews

When Bear Bryant coached at the University of Alabama, it was said that he could take his team and beat your team, then take your team and beat his. Bear Bryant was a leader. Abraham Lincoln, with courage born of divine conviction, forced healing on a nation that was determined to divide. Abraham Lincoln was a leader.

Both of these examples are reminiscent of the old proverb, “An army of sheep led by a lion will defeat an army of lions led by a sheep.” Is this true? Is leadership that crucial to victory? And what is a leader anyway? A leader has certain characteristics that will allow them to achieve success beyond the ordinary.

Will Clark was one of Major League Baseball’s perennial all-stars. The San Francisco Giants first baseman was considered a leader by his teammates. As a rookie, in his first game, in his first time at bat, he was about to face Nolan Ryan, one of the premier fastball pitchers of all time. As he walked toward the plate, one of his teammates said to him, “Man, you’re facing Nolan Ryan!” Will looked at him and said, “No, he’s facing Will Clark!” In that first at bat, in his first Major League Baseball game, Will Clark took Nolan Ryan over the left field wall—Home run!



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Will was once asked, “What is it that’s different about you? Why is it that other players, with maybe as much talent, haven’t accomplished as much in their careers as you have?” To Will, that was an easy question to answer. He said that it was attitude. It was an attitude of taking charge, an attitude of leadership. He said, “Other players, when the game is on the line, would sit on the bench and maybe... look at their shoes, or look out toward the scoreboard so the coach wouldn’t see their faces when he looked down the row. But I have always wanted to be a leader. And to me, a leader takes charge; a leader puts himself in the game. So to me, if it is the seventh game of the World Series and it’s the bottom of the ninth and the bases are loaded and there are two outs and we are behind, I’ll get up off the bench, I’ll go down and get in the manager’s face and I’ll say: *Give me the bat, put me in the game, I’m ready to swing, give me the bat. Give me the bat!*”

What are you doing right now to claim command of the bat in your life? Leaders put themselves on the line when the game counts most, which in sports, business, and life is every day. Leaders also put themselves in situations that followers simply won’t. A leader’s power always comes from his or her attitude.

Here are three practical and easy steps you can immediately take to begin cultivating an attitude of leadership:

1. Power Up Your Communication. Take responsibility for your results by taking responsibility for the language you use. Leaders understand and constructively apply the power of communication. You can start by taking command of the language you use to communicate to yourself. I know a man whose net worth is over \$1 billion. He starts his mornings by looking

at himself in the mirror and proclaiming loudly: “I feel happy, healthy and terrific!” Talk out loud to yourself. It works. You can proclaim things such as:

- “*If it’s to be, it’s up to me.*”
- “*I can, I will, I must.*”
- “*The buck stops here with me.*”
- “*Today I will lead with the power of who I am.*”

2. Power Up Your Associations. Og Mandino wrote in his book *The Greatest Salesman in the World*: “An army of sheep led by a lion would defeat an army of lions led by a sheep.” The best way to become a lion is to associate with other lions. Clarify the following within yourself:

- *Whom in your organization do you admire for their leadership skills?*
- *If not in your organization, whom in your industry or another industry could you seek out?*

You may think, “I have nothing to offer that person. Why would they want to associate with me?” But talk back to yourself and ask, “If I did have something to offer that person, what would it be?” Perhaps

it is your time, service, intelligence or distinctions in a particular area. You have many resources, tangible and intangible.

- *How are you already serving others with your strengths? How could you continue to do so in new, exciting ways so they reciprocate their strengths with you?*

3. Power Up Your Body Language. Assume the body language of leadership. It’s easy to identify leaders by how they use their body language. Leaders communicate feelings of confidence especially through the use of their physiology. You can see it in one’s facial expression, one’s walk, talk and even stance. Leaders communicate boldness through their body language. You can do the same. Consider the following:

The choices you make today will determine who and what you will one day become.



- *How would you look if you were unstoppable?*
- *What would you do with your eyes? Your facial expressions? Your posture?*
- *Take 10 minutes to observe what the people in your immediate environment are communicating with the use of their body language.*
- *You're always communicating something to others and yourself.*
- *Is your body language attracting or deflecting opportunities?*
- *Choose to consciously mirror the body language of someone you admire. Try it. You'll experience a shift in how you feel about yourself and about the world around you. Changing your body changes how you feel.*

Try these simple exercises. See how you feel. Becoming a leader does not happen instantly. It takes time, effort, energy and steadfast determination. As you begin to change, the world around you will change as well. Breaking out of old, outdated habits and outdated ways of doing things isn't always easy. Through conscious and persistent intention and action you will get there. Notice the results you're getting. If they aren't working for you, do something different. Find what works. Discard what doesn't.

On or off the field, Will Clark did not become a leader overnight. His development took years. Will Clark was a leader long before the evidence was visible to the rest of the world. Your life will likely follow the same pattern.

The simple little things you do and the choices you make today will determine who and what you will one day become. Choose to cultivate the habits and attitudes of leadership by articulating like a leader, forming powerful associations and assuming the body language of a leader. Put these three simple steps into motion daily, and before long you will be the one saying: "Give me the bat!" 



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