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The Meaning of Leadership Today

Although a leader should possess many attributes including patience, strong morals, compassion, and most importantly love, this still doesn't answer the fundamental question: "What exactly embodies leadership?" But before we decide on anything, we should take a glance at the past to examine the present. It is my opinion that there are three, largely different qualities that would compel a person to follow someone else.

Foremost of all is being a servant. Servitude is paramount to leadership. I believe that Odysseus was undoubtedly correct when he said; "Sometimes you need to serve in order to lead." Even though servitude and leadership seem like opposites, most of the time, they actually walk hand in hand. In order to fully understand this, let's go all the way back to year 1 with probably the best leader this world has ever seen, Jesus. The Bible states that Jesus was a servant, "...he [Jesus] did not come to be served, but to serve..." (Mark 10:45), yet masses of people followed him. Why follow someone who serves? I would follow a leader who serves because servitude shows care.

Secondly, a good leader must have integrity. An honest person can gain respect of his peers merely by being honest. Mainly because of the fact that being honest to someone else shows that you respect them and, more importantly, shows that they can trust you. People usually don't want anything to do with people they can't trust, making George Washington one of the greatest presidents of them all. Washington himself said that he could never tell a lie, making it easier for his troops to trust him, a necessity in war.

Finally, while looking at Martin Luther King Jr., a more modern example, we discover some more valuable traits for being a leader. Before becoming an exceptionally famous civil rights leader, Martin had to find ways to be able to draw people to his cause. He succeeded for one main reason. Martin Luther King Jr. had a vision, or as he stated, "I have a dream..." He had purpose for even coming up with the idea of protesting. His vision was true freedom previously expressed in the Constitution, but never fully appreciated until now. With a preconceived new and appealing idea, people will follow you. You simply need to be passionate about it. People generally don't like to be leaders because they don't have a goal. Well, following someone with a vision who knows where they're going gives them that goal. Of course, it didn't hurt his position any that Martin had intense charisma. Talking to people is a large part of being a leader. They need to know your goal, and they need to know your general thoughts in order to relate to you. I would want to know that the person I am following has my best interests at heart.

It is very difficult to find a widely known, good leader that is currently living. I believe it is because of the media. The media loves their "dirt". They need to have all the bad information on everyone; especially their leaders. Every lie, every mistake, every fault in character that occurs in anyone of importance is broadcast to the world.

However, if you can overlook minor faults and find someone with all the characteristics mentioned above; servitude, integrity and a goal, they are most definitely meant to be a leader. From the head of a school project to commander and chief of the US army, a successful leader should have at least an understanding of these traits. I believe they represent the meaning of leadership today.