

Honorable Mention

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### The Great Misunderstanding: A Look into the Truths of Leadership

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, “To be great is to be misunderstood.” This suggests that many great leaders were misunderstood by the people around them. For instance, some of the examples Emerson suggests are Socrates, Jesus, Galileo, and Copernicus. All of these men were extraordinary leaders in their own specific way, but all had something in common: they all faced strong opposition. Every single one of them had “haters” that tried to get rid of them or stop their cause. Not one of the leaders backed down; that’s what made them so great. Even with the most influential people staring them in the face, they stood their ground. Money, fame, and popularity weren’t at the top of their priority list. That is something that often gets lost in translation with the word leadership. Leadership isn’t simply having as many followers as possible or having power; it takes much more to be a great leader. Great leadership requires a leader that knows how to surrender, how to go against the norm, and how to show apathy toward glory and fame.

First, a leader needs to know how to surrender. Typically when someone thinks of the word leadership, much less great leadership, surrender is not a word that comes to one’s mind. When one thinks of surrender, they imagine an army of soldiers running away waving a white flag in the air. However, that’s not the type of surrender that is being discussed. A leader needs to know how to surrender their pride, selfish desires, and time for their cause and followers. Being a great leader is not some hobby that someone does on the side. In order to be a leader and to have respect from those being led, a leader needs to learn to let go of things that they may want, and ponder what their cause or followers need. Surrendering in this way shows great strength and integrity in a leader, a quality that many people could use.

Second, a leader needs to be ready to go against the norm. In the world today, leaders are viewed as powerful, popular figures. Yet, oftentimes those “leaders” are not all that effective. True leaders should stand up for what they believe in even if it isn’t the most popular view. Isn’t that what a great leader looks like? A leader needs to have a passion for what they are leading, for who wants to follow someone who cares more about their social status than their cause? Frequently in today’s society leaders are not wanting to offend anyone. They carefully tiptoe around everyone’s views or beliefs in order to stay on good terms with everyone. What happened to leaders that stirred up controversy because they didn’t change their beliefs due to the current trend? The world needs more people willing to get a bad reputation because they were brave enough to stand up for what’s right.

Third, a great leader should not be leading if they are simply looking for the glory or fame. The cause and the people should be what pushes leaders to do what they are doing. Fame and glory may come from it, but that should not be the goal. Passion for their cause and followers should be what is driving them, not some selfish desire to be on the front of magazines. All of Emerson's examples of great leaders--Jesus, Socrates, Copernicus, and Galileo--did not care about how famous they were. If that is what is driving a leader then their cause is going to crash and burn. People want to follow someone who cares about their needs more than how much money they are making. This is what great leadership looks like.

In conclusion, in order to be a great leader one has to surrender, go against the norm, and be apathetic toward fame and glory. The world is in desperate need for these kind of leaders. Imagine if more people stood up for what was right, and cared more about others than themselves. All it takes is one great leader to stand up to have many more follow in step.