

# **SERVANT LEADERSHIP**

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Good morning! Thank you for your hospitality. It is a real pleasure to be here this morning to talk about servant leadership.

There are two main parts to my presentation. In the first part, I will discuss what a servant leader is, and give examples, including a video clip. In the second part I will discuss the inner life of the servant leader, including the three options, the paradoxical commandments, and sources of personal meaning. There will be a handout, and a second video clip. I hope we will have time at the end for questions and discussion.

## **Part One: Defining the Servant Leader**

Let me begin by describing the servant leader. A servant leader is simply a leader who is focused on serving others. A servant leader is aware that he or she is an instrument for good, a person who has been given certain abilities or gifts that are meant to be used in helping others. A servant leader cares about people, and wants to help them. Loving and helping others gives a servant leader meaning and satisfaction in life.

Servant leadership is not about power, it is about service. The servant leader does not ask, "How can I get power? How can I make people do things?" The servant leader asks, "What do people need? How can I help them to get it? What does my organization need to do? How can I help my organization to do it?" Thus, rather than embarking on a quest for personal power, the servant leader embarks on a quest to identify and meet the needs of others. That's the key concept: Identify and meet the needs of others.

We can contrast a power-oriented leader and a service-oriented leader this way: Power-oriented leaders want to *make* people do things. Servant leaders want to *help* people do things. That's why servant leaders are usually facilitators, coordinators, teachers, coaches, team-members, and coalition-

builders.

There is another big difference between the power model and the service model of leadership. The power model assumes a hierarchy. Only a few people have power— those at the top of the hierarchy. The service model assumes no hierarchy. It assumes that *anybody* in a family, organization, or community can be of service. *Anybody* can identify and meet the needs of others. *Anybody* can be a servant leader.

Servant leaders can be many different types of leader, depending on their personalities and the specific circumstances. The servant leader surveys the needs of a group and looks for what is missing. The servant leader asks: What type of leadership, what kind of service, will provide the missing link so that action will be possible for this group? The missing link will not always be the same, so the servant leader does not always perform the same role or service in each case.

Power abhors a vacuum. Somebody is going to exercise power, and it makes a difference who that somebody is. Certainly, a servant leader can accumulate and exercise power. A servant leader can even become angry and enter the fray to do battle. What is important is that the servant leader accumulates power or becomes angry *on behalf of others*. A servant leader acts in response to the way *others* are treated, not in response to the way he or she is treated.

Servant leadership is not a new idea. For example, the Gospel of Matthew tells us that Christ came to serve, not to be served. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and comforted the outcast.

The concept of servant leadership can also be found in Taoism. The Tao Te Ching consists of ancient writings attributed to Lao-Tzu, a sage who lived in China about 500 B. C. and is known as the founder of Taoism. In one passage, Lao-Tzu describes a leader who is so effective that he is almost invisible. When the great deeds are done, the people say "We did this of our free will. We did this ourselves."

### **Examples of Servant Leaders**

There are no doubt thousands of examples of servant leadership in literature, the movies, history, and daily life today. I think of historical figures

like Washington and Lincoln, Father Damien, Clara Barton, Albert Schweitzer, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mother Theresa. While there are a lot of famous servant leaders, my guess is that most servant leaders have *not* been known outside the group or community they have served. Like Lao Tzu's servant leader, they have been almost invisible.

There are many fictional servant leaders such as Atticus Finch, the attorney in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The book *Watership Down* is about a servant leader, the Chief Rabbit. In fantasy novels, there are wizards who are servant leaders, such as Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings* by Tolkien, and Belgarath in *The Belgariad* by David Eddings, and Ged in the *Earthsea Trilogy* by Ursula Le Guin.

One of the many powerful movies made by Kurosawa Akira is *Ikiru*, the story of Kanji Watanabe, a Japanese government bureaucrat who discovers that he is dying of cancer and has only six months to live. After wandering around the city feeling sorry for himself, he decides to make a difference before he dies. He sets out to establish a playground for a neighborhood whose children have no place to play. The mothers of the neighborhood have been referred from government agency to government agency, each bureaucrat passing the buck to the other, nobody willing to take responsibility and help them. Watanabe, a branch chief in the Citizen's Section, takes up their cause. While enduring great physical pain, he patiently and courageously confronts each obstacle until he gets the playground built. He dies late one night, sitting in one of the swings in the playground, singing softly, at peace with himself. At last his life had meaning. He had helped somebody. He had made a difference.

One of my favorite servant leaders is Florence Nightingale, an English woman who lived from 1820 to 1910. She was born into a wealthy family. That's why her parents were horrified when she became interested in nursing, because many nurses in those days were either immoral or drunk or both. But Florence pursued her interest, gaining experience in Germany and assuming the management of a small hospital in London in 1853. When the Crimean War broke out the next year, she was asked by the British government to take a group of nurses to Russian Crimea. She arrived with 38 nurses, and found 5,000 wounded and sick men in bare buildings with no equipment. Often working 20 hours per day, she got the hospitals equipped and made them sanitary, dramatically improving the treatment of the soldiers. After the war she published a huge book on army hospitals, and then opened a training

school for nurses. Florence Nightingale is often considered the founder of modern nursing. She was a servant leader who saved thousands of lives.

Servant leaders can be kings or queens, military commanders, political leaders, businessmen and businesswomen, non-profit leaders, coaches, friends, or neighbors. Servant leaders do most of the things that other leaders do— they provide a vision, they motivate, they manage, they communicate, and so forth. What sets servant leaders apart from other leaders is that they have a different focus, and a different motivation, than most other leaders. They are focused on others, not themselves. And they are motivated to make life better for others, not for themselves. This difference in focus and motivation is what really defines and distinguishes servant leaders, regardless of their title, role, or position in their organization or society.

### **Servant Leaders in Business, Politics, and the Military**

Three of the major contexts for leadership today are business, politics, and the military. I believe that the best business leaders are focused on the needs of others-- clients or customers outside the organization, and employees or colleagues inside the organization. They listen to and respond to both internal and external needs.

One of my favorite writers about management is Peter Drucker. Drucker says that the key question that distinguishes an executive is the question: "What can I contribute?" Drucker, in his book The Effective Executive, wrote:

The effective executive focuses on contribution... He asks: 'What can I contribute that will significantly affect the performance and the results of the institution I serve?' ...The focus on contribution turns the executive's attention away from his own specialty, his own narrow skills, his own department, and toward the performance of the whole...to the entire organization and *its* purpose. He therefore will also come to think in terms of the customer, the client, or the patient, who is the ultimate reason for whatever the organization produces...

Drucker, in his own way, describes the effective business executive as a servant leader, focused on contribution, and focused on others.

The politician is supposed to be a public servant-- a servant leader by

definition. One of the simplest and best definitions of servant leadership in politics is found in the movie, *Dave*. It's a wonderful, charming, funny movie with some gentle truths. Dave is an everyday citizen who happens to look a lot like the President of the United States, and is used as a double. When something happens to the President, Dave becomes the de facto president. I will show you the part of the movie where he does something the real president couldn't do. By the way, don't worry when he seems to have a stroke. Dave is fine...

Dave defined servant leadership. He said three things. Do you remember what he said? He said: (1) I should have thought more about you than about me; (2) I should have cared more about what is right than what is popular; and (3) I should have been willing to give up the whole thing for something I really believed in. That's a good definition of servant leadership in politics.

How about the military? You know more about the military than I do, but my reading of history is that great military leaders have identified and met the needs of their troops. In identifying and meeting the needs of their troops, they, too, have been servant leaders. In fact, one of the greatest servant leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a soldier.

I have a prize for the first person who can tell me who that military leader was. Anybody know?

I will start to tell his story. Raise your hand if you know who it is.

He was born in 1880 in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. He was commissioned a second lieutenant of infantry in the United States Army in 1902, and served in the Philippine Insurrection. He was with the American Expeditionary Forces in France during World War I. In 1918, in less than two weeks, he mobilized the gigantic Meuse-Argonne offensive, with 500,000 men and 2,700 guns. General Bullard called him the wizard of "the most magnificent staff operation of the war." In 1919, he was appointed aide-de-camp to General Pershing.

While he was considered an excellent soldier, his career during the next 15 years was not remarkable. He didn't reach the rank of colonel until 1933, when he was 53. MacArthur saw him as a Pershing man, and blocked his promotion. However, when MacArthur resigned as Chief of Staff in 1936,

this soldier was awarded his first star. In 1938 he became the assistant chief of staff, in the War Plans Division, and a few months later, became the deputy chief of staff. A year later, on September 1, 1939—the day that Hitler’s forces invaded Poland—he was sworn in as chief of staff. From 1941 to 1945 he oversaw the recruiting, training, equipping, and deploying of the United States Army during World War II.

Anybody want to guess now?... It was George C. Marshall.

When George C. Marshall became the Army Chief of Staff, U. S. troop strength was less than 200,000 men. We had the 19<sup>th</sup> largest army in the world—smaller than the armies of Greece, Portugal, and Switzerland. In the next five years, he expanded the army into a well-trained, well-equipped force of 8.3 million. During those five years we also produced 300,000 combat planes, more than 87,000 warships, millions of guns, and billions of rounds of ammunition.

In their book entitled *Co-Leaders*, authors Heenan and Bennis refer to him as the most influential military leader of World War II. Churchill called him “the true organizer of victory.” When the American public was polled and asked who was most responsible for the success of America’s war effort, they chose Marshall above everyone else, including President Roosevelt.

Marshall resigned at the end of the war, but two years later, in 1947, he was appointed Secretary of State. His proposal to aid Europe in its recovery after the war is known as the Marshall Plan. In 1953 he became the first professional soldier to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Marshall was respected and trusted by the public, the Congress, the president, and world leaders. Integrity and idealism characterized his thinking. Secretary of War Henry Stimson said that Marshall was one of the most selfless public officials that he had ever known. For Marshall, duty was more important than ego. He placed his country first. He often sacrificed his own personal ambitions and dreams in the nation’s interest. Heenan and Bennis say:

Marshall transcended rank and office. He was the exemplary servant-leader whose power grew out of his rare moral authority (not unlike Gandhi and Martin Luther King). Always putting service before ego, Marshall was willing to do anything for his country, except

compromise his principles.

We refer to military service. The world “service” is right up front. You are “in the service.” You are serving your country. You are also involved in many ways in serving and supporting your local community. The idea of service is built into your profession.

When you recruit and work to retain good people for this life of national service, you are identifying and meeting needs, just the way other servant leaders do. You are matching the needs of those you recruit with the needs of your country. As a servant leader, your work is of fundamental importance to the nation.

Well, that completes the first part of my presentation. Are there any questions?... Okay, let’s take a short break, here for the restroom or to stretch...

## **Part Two: The Inner Life of the Servant Leader**

Welcome back. So far this morning we have defined servant leadership and described some servant leaders. I want to move now to the second part of my presentation, the inner life of the servant leader. I will talk about the three options, the Paradoxical Commandments, the Meaning Maximizers, and the importance of finding personal meaning in your life work. We will have a handout and another video. This will be about the personal dimensions of servant leadership—the inner life of the servant leader.

### **The Three Options**

When you understand that people have many needs, you have only three basic options:

- (1) do nothing, and ignore the needs of others--which is an option I consider a moral failure; or
- (2) take advantage of people's weaknesses, cynically exploit their needs, and seek personal gain at their expense-- which is an option I consider an even worse moral failure; or
- (3) do the right thing, and try to meet people's needs.

The third option is the only moral one. That is still the right option, even if conditions are difficult and you fail to achieve what you hope to achieve.

If you try to do what is right and good and true, and feel that you have failed, you may be tempted to shift to the cynical option of exploiting others or the indifferent option of doing nothing. But there is no justification for falling into the two *immoral* options, just because things are not going the way you had hoped, or people don't appreciate what you have done, or people even criticize you for the good you are trying to do.

The issue of appreciation is a big one. Many of us feel that we are being taken for granted. We are probably right. The people we serve don't appreciate us. So why should we give them our best? The answer is that we have our own integrity and standards, and we derive a sense of meaning and satisfaction from doing a great job. It doesn't matter whether anybody else knows or appreciates what we do— *we* know. We know what we're doing, and we still have to do what's right. We still have to be the best we can be. This is about *us*, not *them*. This is about how much *we* care, not about how much *they* care.

One of the stories I read in elementary school that has stayed with me was about the foreman who was supervising the construction of the foundation of a pyramid in Egypt. He wouldn't let his men stop until every slab was perfectly aligned.

Another foreman came over, watched him, and then said: "Why bother making them all perfect? They will be underground. Nobody will ever know."

"I will know," the first foreman replied.

That's what it means to be a professional. Professionals have standards of service, and ethics, and duty regardless of whether anybody else can see or understand or appreciate what they are doing. Professionals do it right, no matter what. The standard is how much the professional cares, not how much his clients or customers care.

Each of us likes to be appreciated. That's normal. But it is hard to be a servant leader—and a professional—if you crave applause. Focusing on



applause means that you are focused on yourself, not others. You should focus instead on the meaning and satisfaction that you receive when you help others. That is something that nobody can take away from you. The meaning and satisfaction are yours, whether anybody else applauds or not.

### **The Paradoxical Commandments**

I was fortunate enough to learn this early. One of the real pivotal experiences of my life occurred as I walked to the stadium for the student awards ceremony at Roosevelt High School my senior year. It occurred to me that I was so happy about what I had done that year, and felt so good about what I had learned, and who I had helped, that I didn't need any awards. *I had already been rewarded.* I already had the sense of meaning and satisfaction that came from doing a good job. That realization was a major breakthrough for me. I felt liberated, centered, at peace.

Two years later, in 1968, at the height of the student unrest on American college campuses, I urged high school student leaders to learn how to work through the system to get things done. I challenged them with what I called "The Paradoxical Commandments of Leadership." They are on the hand out. There are also some small posters in the back that you can have—they are suitable for framing.

Here are the Paradoxical Commandments:

1. People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered. Love them anyway.
2. If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway.
3. If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway.
4. The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.
5. Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway.

6. The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men and women with the smallest minds. Think big anyway.
7. People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs. Fight for a few underdogs anyway.
8. What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway.
9. People really need help but may attack you if you do help them. Help people anyway.
10. Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you have anyway.

I wrote the Paradoxical Commandments in 1968, when I was 19 years old, a college sophomore. They were part of a book I wrote for student leaders, entitled The Silent Revolution: Dynamic Leadership in the Student Council, published by Harvard Student Agencies and later by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. About 25,000 copies were sold between 1968 and 1972.

The Paradoxical Commandments are about finding meaning in the face of adversity. That's why the first phrase in each commandment is about adversity, or difficulty, or disappointment. People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered. The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. People really need help, but may attack you if you do help them.

Each statement about adversity is followed by a positive commandment: Love people anyway. Do good anyway. Help people anyway.

The paradox in each case is that even when the world is doing its worst, we can give the world our best. And we *should* give the world our best, because that is where the most personal meaning is to be found.

Why is personal meaning so important? I believe that personal meaning will give you the deepest happiness in life. Perhaps the best description is "deep joy," or true self-fulfillment, or self-actualization, or finding God's will for your life. Whatever the description, personal meaning is a key.

What this means is that each of us can find personal meaning and ultimately, the deep happiness that it brings. Even when there is adversity in our external world, we can still find happiness in our internal world.

The fact is that we don't control the external world. We don't control who is going to get elected and what their policies will be. We don't control the economy. We don't control the weather. We don't control the behavior of other nations. We can work hard, and prepare, and seize opportunities, but there are lots of things in our external world we just don't control.

What we do control is our inner lives. We get to decide who we are going to be and how we are going to live. We can decide to live our values, and stay close to our families and friends, and do what is right and good and true. The good news is that we control the part of our lives that gives us the most personal meaning.

Another way to look at the Paradoxical Commandments is to see them as a personal declaration of independence. It's about doing what is right, and enjoying the personal meaning and satisfaction that come with that, *even if* nobody else notices or you don't get the results you had in mind. It is a declaration of independence because you don't have to depend on the applause or rewards that others give you. All you have to do is enjoy the personal meaning and satisfaction that you receive from doing what is right.

You could also call the Paradoxical Commandments a "no excuses" policy. Sure, some people are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered. So what? That's no excuse. You have to love them anyway. And maybe the good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. So what? That's no excuse. You have to do good anyway. You have to love people and do good because that's who you are. It's about your character, your values, your life—who you are and what you stand for.

Some people have told me that when they first read the Paradoxical Commandments, they thought I must have been having a very, very bad year when I wrote them. That's not true. I have always been very optimistic. I think that if you do what is right, and good, and true, things will usually work out for you, and you will often receive recognition and praise.

But what if things are tough? What if you don't get any recognition or

praise? You still have to live your most cherished values, and stay close to your family and friends, and do what is right and good and true. You still have to be you.

Servant leaders understand, and live, the Paradoxical Commandments. When they do so, they aren't being selfless or self-sacrificing. They simply understand where the personal meaning is to be found, and it is personal meaning that brings them the most happiness. So servant leadership is not about self-denial, it is about self-fulfillment.

### **Where the Paradoxical Commandments Traveled**

So that's why I wrote the Paradoxical Commandments in my first student leadership booklet in 1968, and that's what they are about. I went on with my life, extending my adolescence as long as possible, finally finishing college and graduate school. I got married, started a career, started a family, and so forth. I tried to live the Paradoxical Commandments, but I wasn't writing or speaking about them. Twenty-five years went by before I started hearing about the Paradoxical Commandments again.

What I know now is that they have traveled around the world and have been used and shared by hundreds of thousands of people—some say millions of people. People have used them in speeches, and put them up on the wall next to their computers, and taped them onto their refrigerator doors, and shared them with friends. It has been preached from pulpits. It has been used by business leaders, and government leaders, and coaches, and rock stars, and teachers, and students, and home-makers. It was used last month by General Myers, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at Admiral Blair's change of command ceremony here in Honolulu.

It has been used by many organizations. It has been used by Boy Scouts in Canada and the United States; Rotarians in Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Alabama; the Cambodian free speech movement; and a student leadership conference in South Africa. It has been used by a homeless shelter in Pennsylvania, a welfare agency in Texas, a Methodist church in Kansas, and the Special Olympics in New York.

It was used by Karl Menninger in a speech at the United Nations in 1981. It has been translated into Japanese and used in homilies by a Japanese Catholic priest in Tokyo. It has been used by a Family Council in Ohio and

the Oklahoma Girls State program. It appeared in an Ann Landers column, and it appeared in Reader's Digest. It has been used in books by John C. Maxwell and Wayne Dyer. Over the past year and a half I have found it on more than 90 websites, and I am told by experts that it is probably on thousands of websites. My favorite is the website of the English Cocker Spaniel Club of America.

The discovery that changed my life was the discovery several years ago that the Paradoxical Commandments had been found on the wall of Mother Teresa's children's home in Calcutta. It happened at my Rotary Club. We usually begin each meeting with a prayer or a thought for the day, and my fellow Rotarian got up and noted that Mother Teresa had died, and said that in her memory, he wanted to read a poem she had written. I bowed my head in contemplation, and was astonished to recognize what he read out loud—it was eight of the original ten Paradoxical Commandments.

I went up after the meeting and asked him where he got the poem. He said, "Isn't it wonderful?" And I said, "Well, actually, I wrote it." He gave me one of those looks, you know—the one you give a poor, demented, self-delusional megalomaniac. He said it was in a book about Mother Teresa, but he couldn't remember the title.

The next night I went to a bookstore and started looking through the shelf of books about the life and works of Mother Teresa. I found it, on the last page before the appendices in a book entitled, *Mother Teresa: A Simple Path*, compiled by Lucinda Vardey. The Paradoxical Commandments had been reformatted to look like a poem, and they had been re-titled "Anyway." There was no author listed, but at the bottom, it said: "From a sign on the wall of Shishu Bhavan, the children's home in Calcutta."

That really hit me. I wanted to laugh, and cry, and shout—and I was getting chills up and down my spine. Perhaps it hit me hard because I had a lot of respect for Mother Teresa, and perhaps because I knew something about children's homes—my wife and I adopted our three children from children's homes in Japan and Romania. The idea that Mother Teresa or one of her co-workers had put the Paradoxical Commandments up on the wall to look at from time to time as they ministered to their children—that touched me deeply. That was when I decided to write a book about the Paradoxical Commandments.

## Why the Paradoxical Commandments Traveled

Why have the Paradoxical Commandments traveled throughout the world for the past 30 years? I don't know, so I will guess. First, they are a call to meaning, a call to live a meaningful life regardless of the whims of fate and twists of fortune that affect each of us. They remind people what life is really supposed to be about—about loving, and doing good, and building, and thinking big, and fighting for underdogs, and helping others. People are searching for meaning, and that's what the Paradoxical Commandments are about.

Second, the Paradoxical Commandments are about fundamental values, common to a number of religions and philosophies, so most people can relate to them. I have found them on Catholic, Protestant, and Mormon websites, as well as a website for Jainism, a religion found in India that I understand is similar to Buddhism. I also know that the Paradoxical Commandments have been read out loud in a synagogue. They seem to be useful to people of many faiths and no faith.

Third, they are short, easy to read, easy to put on a wall or inside a notebook, easy to send to a friend or post on a website. They can be used as a kind of checklist, a simple, quick reminder of how we need to live and who we need to be. I have received messages from people who have told me that they look at the Paradoxical Commandments every morning before going to work.

Finally, they aren't questions or issues—they are commandments, written in the imperative voice: Love people. Do good. Succeed. Be honest and frank. Think big. Fight for a few underdogs. Build. Help people. Give the world your best. They're not wishy-washy. They don't say: Think about the possibility of maybe considering doing something. No—they're forceful. They say "Do it!" And no excuses—"Do it anyway!"

So those are my guesses as to why the Paradoxical Commandments have traveled around the world during the past 34 years. They are a call to meaning; they are about fundamental, universal values; they are short and easy to share; and they are not wishy-washy—they are commandments.

## Meaning Maximizers

You will note that the Paradoxical Commandments point away from popular symbols of success like power, wealth, and fame, toward the things that have given people the most meaning over the centuries—loving people, helping people, doing what is right and good and true. And that’s what the Air National Guard has to offer—a lot of personal meaning. The Air National Guard is not focused on power, wealth, and fame, but on protecting our loved ones and our way of life, so that we can live our most cherished values. We love our country, and we love our families and communities, and we know that they are worth fighting for and—if necessary—they are worth dying for. That’s the kind of commitment that brings great depth of meaning. Not every organization offers that.

Servant leaders know that the search for success and the search for meaning are not the same search. They may overlap, but they are not the same. The things that our commercial, secular society considers to be attributes of success may have little to do with personal meaning. To find personal meaning, we have to shift from the attributes of popular success to what I call the Meaning Maximizers... You can find them on the other side of the handout, which has “Sources of Personal Meaning.”

### *Symbol of “Success” < Meaning Maximizer*

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Cynicism	<	Values
Infatuation	<	Love
Individualism	<	Community
Fame	<	Intimacy
Wealth	<	Richness of Life
Power	<	Service
Winning	<	Personal Best
Appearance	<	Health
Job	<	Mission
Artificial	<	Natural
Information	<	Wisdom

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The attributes listed under “success” are not necessarily bad. You will want to give up cynicism, because it is self-destructive and leads nowhere, and infatuation can wear you out, so you will want to move to love as soon as you can. But the attributes in the left column aren’t really bad. They’re just *not enough*. That’s why I use the “less than” symbol. The things in the left column are less important than the things in the right column, when it comes to personal meaning.

So if you want more meaning in your life, you have to shift from the left column to the right column. The right column is where servant leaders live. The right column is where the Air National Guard lives.

One thing that fascinates me is that finding personal meaning may be beneficial to your health. One benefit of focusing on the Meaning Maximizers is that you will probably be healthier. Margie Hesson, in her book *Health Yourself*, wrote: “By focusing on the greater issue, spiritual well-being and meaning in life, you may find that your unhealthy behaviors, which often compensate for unmet underlying needs, begin to improve.”

Focusing on meaning may also give you a longer life. Let me mention a total health program that is being developed by a number of YMCAs on the West Coast. The health assessment being used in the program has 12 optimum factors for a healthy lifestyle and a long life. The first nine optimum factors were about food and exercise and sleep. The last three factors were different. They were:

- very happy and very satisfied with my life
- have family/friends to get help from if needed; I talk frequently (weekly) with them
- believe in spirituality/religion, life directed by spiritual values, meet regularly with others of similar belief.

I think it is fascinating that how happy you are, having friends and family, and believing in spirituality or religion, are three of the 12 factors that affect your physical health and longevity. I believe that finding personal meaning in your life will help you to be healthier and to live longer.

The odd thing is that our society continually pushes people to be a



success, and to acquire the attributes of success in the left column, even though being a success may provide relatively little meaning, and therefore relatively little joy or fulfillment. For example, our society measures the importance of a job by its power, prestige, and pay, not by how much it contributes to society or how much meaning it provides the person who is in the job.

Military service can provide a person a huge amount of meaning. This is what you really have to offer the new recruit, and the person deciding whether to stay in the military or not. You can talk about money, and working conditions, and retirement income, and lots of benefits of being in the military. But the Air National Guard is offering more than that. It is offering the depth of meaning that comes from serving your country and protecting your loved ones.

Many people in our society have jobs that are challenging and exciting and pay well, but are *not* deeply meaningful. Think about it. If you work for a company that manufactures soft drinks, or does scientific research, or develops shopping centers, you will do your best to produce high quality products that benefit people. But you may never meet any of the people whom you hope will benefit from your products, and the benefits to them may not be very significant, anyway. You may be making money, but you may not be making a difference. That's not necessarily wrong, but it's not necessarily satisfying. You need to make a living, but you also need to make a life.

One way to make a life is to become part of something larger than yourself. I see this in successful business people who donate time to non-profit organizations, serving on boards and volunteering for service projects. Their jobs are fine, but they are missing something—they are missing personal meaning. They find that personal meaning outside of their regular jobs, when they give back to the community. One way of finding personal meaning outside of one's regular job is to join the Air National Guard. Part-time service through the Air National Guard can add depth of meaning to a person's life.

People have jobs, but the Air National Guard offers more than a job—it offers a mission. A meaningful mission makes a difference in the lives of others. I was reminded of that by an Air Force advertisement on TV a year or so ago. You may have seen it as well. The ad began with a family scene, with a mother and her children. The scene froze, with the mother and children

facing the camera, smiling. The camera drew back, and you could see that the frozen scene was a photo attached to a wall. The camera drew back further, and you could see that the wall was the side panel in the cockpit of an airplane. As the camera continued to draw back, you saw the pilot, the husband and father. He was flying at night, with the photo of his family there next to him. Flying that plane wasn't just a job. Flying that plane was part of an important mission. He was protecting his family and his country. He was making a difference. He was finding a depth of personal meaning that is just not available in any other way.

When it comes to symbols of success, the first one that comes to mind is usually money. I am sure that money is always a consideration, but we know for sure that it is over-rated as a source of personal meaning. Yes, when most Americans are asked what they would like to have more of, or what would make them happier, say they would like more money. But surveys in which rich people are compared with middle income people reveal that rich people are not happier, and are often less happy, than people with modest resources.

If you want to accumulate money so you can retire with a nest egg and never have to worry, you don't have to have a high salary. You just have to live below your means and put aside some money each year for long-term investments.

That is the conclusion of 20 years of research on millionaires that was published in a book entitled *The Millionaire Next Door* by Stanley and Danko. It's not how much you make, it's how much you save and invest that determines your retirement nest egg. The doctors and lawyers who earn hundreds of thousands of dollars per year often retire with a very small nest egg. The reason is that they spend all the money they earn. They don't save or invest. They have to have the million-dollar house, and the \$80,000 car, and the \$40,000 country club membership, and the \$20,000 vacations, and on and on. They spend everything they earn each year.

The millionaires next door are too clever for that. They don't burden themselves with million-dollar houses, or \$80,000 cars, or \$40,000 country club memberships, or \$20,000 vacations. They live in a modest house, drive a modest car, go to the YMCA instead of a country club, and vacation at camp. They save and invest their money and retire with a million dollars or more. A lot of doctors and lawyers retire with only \$200,00 or \$300,00—if they're

not in debt.

Ironically, most of us can do better than those doctors and lawyers if we have a good retirement plan and add a little extra to it. I know for example that there are people who are retiring from the YMCA with a million dollars in their accounts, and they never made much money. So a high salary may not provide much meaning, and it may also not take care of the retirement issue. Going after money as a symbol of success doesn't work very well.

Let's look at another symbol of success. In addition to our culture's focus on money, we are also very focused on winning. Certainly, it makes no sense to set out to lose. If you're going to play the game at all, you should try to win fair and square. But there is something more meaningful than winning, and that is doing one's personal best.

I'd like to show you a movie clip. It is the last ten minutes from the movie *Cool Runnings*. How many of you have seen it? Great. It's the story of the Jamaican bobsled team in the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary, Canada. There had never been a Jamaican bobsled team in the Olympics before, for good reason— there is no snow or ice in Jamaica to practice on.

In the movie, there are three Jamaican sprinters who don't make the Jamaican sprinting team because one of them trips himself and two others during the qualifying race. They have trained for years, and now, the dream is gone. Then one of the sprinters, Derice, whose father was an Olympic medal winner in track, learns that there is a retired American who was an Olympic bobsledder. His name is Irving Blitzer, and he is played by John Candy. Derice learns that Blitzer tried to persuade his father, 20 years earlier, to form a Jamaican bobsled team because he thought that fast sprinters would be good at it. A bobsled race begins with the four team members running and pushing the bobsled, and the faster they start, the faster they race. Derice's father wouldn't do it, but Derice could see no other way of getting to the Olympics, so he tracked down Blitzer.

Blitzer reluctantly agrees to coach them, using a kind of boxcar version of a bobsled on dirt paths on Jamaican hillsides. Eventually they raise money and go to the Olympics. When they get there, they are a laughingstock. They aren't used to cold, or snow, and they slip and slide on the ice, making fools of themselves. There is prejudice against them as Jamaicans, and prejudice against them as novices.

The Olympic officials remember Blitzer, the coach, because he was banned from Olympic competition 20 years earlier. Blitzer won two gold medals in bobsledding, but then he cheated, and his medals were taken back-- embarrassing himself, his family, his team, and his country. That's why he went to Jamaica, thousands of miles from anybody or anything resembling snow or ice or bobsledding. The officials make it hard on him, and raise the qualifying standards, trying to knock the Jamaicans out of the competition as quickly as possible. When they qualify anyway, the officials make a new rule that will disqualify them. Finally, they're allowed to race. On the first day, they do embarrassingly badly. The second day, they loosen up, and get much better. The third and final day, the day the medals depend on-- well, let's look at the movie clip. The clip is the last ten minutes of the film. It begins with Derice, the bobsled driver, asking the coach about his past. Here it is...

The coach says something simple and powerful. He was only out to win, and when he was winning, he thought he had to keep winning, no matter the cost. So he cheated, and was disgraced, and his life was a wreck. He told Derice: If you aren't enough *without* the medal, you will never be enough *with* it. If you are missing something in your life, winning won't give it to you. On the other hand, if you are a whole person, you will continue to have the same quality of character and clarity of spirit, win or lose.

The Jamaican bobsled team lost. But they did their personal best. They finished the race, even if they had to carry their bobsled across the finish line. They had dignity. They found meaning, even in defeat, and so did those who watched them. Which means, of course, that in a very important way, they *were* winners— winners of the world's respect.

Things won't always go your way. There will be days, weeks, and even months during which you aren't winning. But you can still do your best, and earn your own self-respect as well as the respect of others. You can still lift your bobsled onto your shoulders and carry it to the finish line.

Because I am so interested in the issue of personal meaning, I have a hobby. That hobby is surveying people and asking them to rank the sources of personal meaning in their lives. Over the past few years I have surveyed several hundred people. I have surveyed Army officers, business and community leaders, University of Hawaii students, and YMCA staff members at a Northern California Program School.

I have used a survey instrument asking people to rate 27 different sources of personal meaning on a scale of 1 to 10, in which 1 is low and 10 is high. I have used very small samples of convenience. They are not random samples, so we can't extrapolate from them to larger populations. But the results are interesting.

All the groups I have surveyed have given the highest average rating to "my family." The rating is always a 9.0 or higher. Most have given the next-highest rating to "giving and receiving love." Other sources of personal meaning that have received high ratings are "doing my personal best," "intimate relationships," "a sense of accomplishment," "living my values," and "my friends." I find these results encouraging.

Equally interesting, I think, is that all the groups I have surveyed so far have given low average ratings to power or influence; winning; and fame—all typical symbols of success. These symbols of success usually get a 3, 4, or 5. The average ratings for money or wealth are always pretty low, as well—a 5 or a 6. People know that these are not important sources of personal meaning.

People know where the most personal meaning comes from. The challenge is to *remember* where the most personal meaning comes from. The challenge is to *remember* the importance of your family, your friends, and giving and receiving love, living your values, and doing your personal best, as you live each day.

One of the benefits of being a servant leader is that a servant leader is not focused on power, wealth, and fame. A servant leader is focused on exactly those things that bring the most personal meaning, and ultimately, the deepest happiness—loving and helping others, living one's values, doing what is right and good and true.

No matter what the world does to us, we can always find personal meaning. We can always decide to live our most cherished values, stay close to our families and friends, and do what is right and good and true. Nothing can keep us from doing that. It is about the way we live, and what we do, not about the way others judge us or select us or reward us. Meaning is where we find it, and we can always find it, no matter what. I think we can always find it in serving our country.

## Conclusion

Let me conclude with a short summary. Servant leaders identify and meet the needs of others. They don't *make* people do things, they *help* people do things. As Drucker said, a servant leader focuses on contribution, and focuses on the client or customer or patient. A servant leader in politics will think more about others than about himself; more about what is right than what is popular. A servant leader in the military can be what George C. Marshall was—a person of loyalty and integrity, who put his nation first.

If you become a servant leader, you will be sustained by personal meaning and inner peace. You will know that you are living the only moral option—not ignoring others, or exploiting them, but helping them. You will understand the Paradoxical Commandments, and you will do what is right and good and true because of the meaning and satisfaction you receive. By focusing on the Meaning Maximizers, you will be happier, healthier, and will even live longer than those who are focused on the attributes of secular, commercial success.

You don't control all the variables that go into worldly success, but you can always find personal meaning, and the self-fulfillment that it brings. Whatever the world does to you, you can still give the world your best. If you focus on finding personal meaning, then at the end of your life, you won't have many regrets. Even more important, you won't wonder why you lived. You'll know. You'll look back on a life filled with meaning. That will be a great blessing. It is a blessing that I wish for each of us.

Thank you for serving our country. God bless you, and Godspeed.