

A CALL TO SERVANT LEADERSHIP

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Good morning! I am honored and delighted to be with you this morning.

I want to begin by asking you to do a self-survey. It is about sources of personal meaning at work. I have a simple two-sided form for you to fill out. We will take some time and do it now, individually. Please turn it in to me when you are done. I will tabulate them and send you the results in a few weeks. I think you will find it interesting and useful...

Please rate the 34 sources of personal meaning listed in the survey (1 is low, 10 is high). You don't have to rank them in order—just rate each one individually. You can rate them high or low or however you want. If there is a source of meaning that is missing, you can add it in #35. The survey also asks for your overall rating of the amount of personal meaning you find at work. That's #36. So please go ahead—it should only take a few minutes...

Thank you. I will get these tabulated and send the results for you to look at during future meetings.

My Wish for You

You are talented leaders who have already made many contributions to your organizations and society at large. My wish for you is that you will be effective leaders who will find personal meaning and deep happiness in your work. The best way to do that is to become a servant leader. That is what my presentation is about this morning—servant leadership.

During the first part, I will discuss what a servant leader is, and give examples, including a video clip. We will then take some time for discussion, and have a short break. In the second part of my presentation I will discuss the three options, the Paradoxical Commandments, and sources of personal meaning. There will be one more video clip. I hope we will have time for some discussion again at the end.

Based on what I know about you, you are already on the right road. If what I say this morning reminds you of what you already know and hold dear, I will be pleased. My hope is that you will pick up a few ideas that will help you see what you already know in a new way that is useful to you.

From Power Model to Service Model

Looking back, it is clear to me that when I was going to school, ideas about leadership were ideas about power. Leadership was about how to accumulate and use power; how to make people do things; how to attack and win. It was about clever strategies, how to apply pressure, and *realpolitik*. It was a power model.

There are some severe problems with the power model. First, it focuses on *having* power, not on using it wisely. Second, it defines victory in terms of who gains more power, not in terms of who accomplishes the most for his or her organization or community.

A grave limitation of the power model of leadership is that it glorifies conflict between power groups or factions. In a pluralistic democracy, factions can brilliantly battle other factions, and great victories and defeats can occur between them, with no benefit to society. In fact, rather than healing and building, factional warfare usually results in more hurt, and more fragmentation.

I think this is a major reason we find it difficult to get things done here in Hawaii. People were taught that leadership is about power, so they establish themselves in power groups that compete with other power groups. These power groups become so focused on their rivalries with each other, that they can't focus on our society's problems or opportunities. And without that focus, we don't move forward. The pain continues, and the dreams go unfulfilled.

Unfortunately, there are two more problems with power, and that is the impact that it has on those who seek it. First, people who seek power, often become irrelevant as leaders. They focus on what they want, instead of what other people want, and they lose touch with the people they are supposed to be serving. Second, people who seek power can never get enough of it. It becomes a kind of disease. They always want more, and more, and more. This easily results in spiritual corruption and an unhappy life of self-torment.

The Servant Leader

Fortunately, there is another model of leadership, and it has been around for thousands of years. It is the service model. Leaders who live the service model are often called servant leaders. So who is a servant leader? I think a servant leader is simply a leader who is focused on serving others. A servant leader loves people, and wants to help them. Loving and helping others gives a servant leader meaning and satisfaction in life.

The servant leader lives the service model of leadership. 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 is the key concept: Identify and meet the needs of others. That is the mission of the servant leader.

One way to contrast a power-oriented leader and a service-oriented leader is this: 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, healers, partners, 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. In the service model, the hierarchy doesn't matter. That's because *anybody* in a family, organization, or community can be of service. *Anybody* can identify and meet the needs of others. *Anybody* can respond to the call to be a servant leader.

Now, we live in a real world. We know that 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 leaders can be many different types of leader, depending on their personalities and the specific circumstances. What they have in common is this.

They go into a group or organization and ask, is there a gap or missing link or blockage of some kind that is making it hard for this group to achieve what it wants to achieve? If so, can I identify what that gap or missing link or blockage is? If I can identify it, can I do something about it? If I can't do anything about it, can I find someone who can? Since the missing link or gap or blockage will not always be the same, the servant leader does not always perform the same role or service in each case.

The main point is this: Servant leaders begin by watching and listening. They don't begin with the answer, the program, the procedure, the facility. They don't begin with their own knowledge or expertise. They begin with questions that will help identify the needs of others. What do people say when asked about their needs, their wants, their hopes, their dreams? Servant leaders use personal observation, discussions, suggestion boxes, informal interviews, formal interviews, surveys, focus groups, and other forms of research to identify the needs of others. They watch and listen before they take action. They try hard to identify needs, before they try to meet them.

Taking time to identify needs is moral and respectful. It is also very practical. If we are good at identifying needs, we will be in a great position to meet those needs. If we meet those needs, we will be effective leaders and we will provide relevant products, programs, and services. That means we will succeed in having customers, clients, patients, members, and students. We will thrive, because we listened, and made sure that what we offer is what people need.

The Universal Concept of Service

The idea of servant leadership is not new. It goes back at least as far as the teachings of Jesus and Lao-Tzu. I have a handout for you with some quotations on the concept of service—an ancient, honored, universal concept found in the world's great religions and the thoughts of many great minds...

In 1977, Robert Greenleaf published a series of speeches and articles as a book entitled *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. Greenleaf's work launched the modern servant leadership movement in the United States.

Greenleaf distinguished between leaders who are "leader first," and those who are a "servant first." Those who are a servant first, are servant leaders. Greenleaf said:

The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types... The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?

There are no doubt thousands of examples of servant leadership in literature, the movies, history, and daily life today. One thinks of people like Washington and Lincoln, Harriet Tubman, Father Damien, Susan B. Anthony, Albert Schweitzer, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mother Theresa. However, my guess is that most servant leaders have *not* been known outside the group or community they have served. They did not seek fame, they sought to make a difference—and they did.

When you start noticing servant leaders, you find them in fiction as well as real life. Some of my favorite servant leaders are fictitious. For example, there is Atticus Finch, the attorney in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. 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.

Servant Leaders in Business and Politics

Two of the major contexts for leadership today are business and politics. 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, who just passed away this week at the age of 95. Drucker said that the key question that distinguishes an executive is the question: "What can I contribute?" Drucker, in his book *The Effective Executive*, writes:

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.

Different Focus, Different Motivation

Servant leaders can be kings or queens, 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 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 just themselves. And they are motivated to make life better for others, not just 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.

The difference in focus and motivation has real tangible impact. It shows itself in the questions that people ask themselves when they make decisions in their daily life and work. For example, a power-oriented individual may make decisions after asking: What decision will make me look good? What decision will enhance

my power? What decision will give me the visibility I want? What decision will be an incredibly effective way to get ahead of my chief rival? What decision will improve my relationship with my boss? What decision will position me better for my next promotion?

A service-oriented individual will make decisions after asking a different set of questions. For example, a servant leader may ask: Whose needs are we trying to meet? Are there greater needs that should be addressed before this one? In meeting this need, who will suffer negative impacts? How can we mitigate those negative impacts? What decision would be most consistent with the values and goals of my organization?

The questions that are asked by people in the power model are different from the questions that people ask when they are in the service model. Different questions lead to different answers, different decisions, and different results. Over time, the power leader and the servant leader move their organizations in different directions. The power-oriented leader makes decisions that meet his or her needs, while the servant leader makes decisions that meet the needs of others.

Leading the process of change

A servant leader is by far the best leader to take an organization through the process of change. The reason is that a servant leader will not be focused on building his or her own power and position. The servant leader will be focused on meeting the needs of the organization and those it serves.

Trust is a big issue during a change process. I find it very hard to trust a leader of change who lives the power model and is focused on her or his own power and prestige. In the power model, the change process is often about rival personalities and factional politics, and whose power base will be affected by which changes, and who will emerge as the victor when certain changes are adopted.

By contrast, I find it very easy to trust someone who lives the service model and is focused on the needs of our clients or patients. In the service model, the change process is about listening, consulting, and analyzing information so that the organization can adapt and remain relevant to the changing needs of the people it serves.

Change is almost always painful to somebody. We should not cause that

pain without a moral justification. Building the leader's power base or getting even with a power rival is not a moral justification for change. The only moral justification is that change is necessary to meet the changing needs of those whom the organization serves— to save their lives or change their lives for the better. Even with the appropriate moral justification, the change will still be painful for people within the organization, but at least there will be a higher purpose, so the pain and sacrifice are arguably worth it.

Anticipating some doubts and objections

We've compared the power model and the service model of leadership, and gone on to define the servant leader. Let me conclude this part of my presentation by anticipating some doubts and objections, which we can pursue if you would like.

In my experience, the power model is so deeply ensconced in our thinking that people have trouble imagining any other model. The power model is taken for granted— which means that it is not usually critiqued and its weaknesses are simply accepted as “the way things are.”

One of the most astonishing things to me about the power model is that it has no moral base. Morality is about right and wrong behavior. It is about how we treat each other as human beings. The power model is not really concerned with that—it is concerned with acquiring and wielding power. If pretending to care about people is good for acquiring power, the leader will pretend to care. The leader will identify some needs, and will make promises about meeting those needs. But once in power, the leader may do little to implement those promises. In fact the leader is likely to do just enough, and only just enough, to keep his or her power. Even worse, a leader may make caring statements, and then do the opposite.

In short, if a leader who lives the power model can gain power without helping anybody, he or she will do so. In fact, the leader may feel justified in making life *worse* for a lot of people, so long as he or she gains power. Power is seen to be self-justifying. Power itself is the end. It is not a means to make life better for others, with the possible exception of those who hold power and their close friends. That is why leaders who live the power model are not very relevant or effective in terms of meeting human needs or making life better for others. It's not what they are trying to do. It's not their focus. It's not what they care about. Often, they can gain and maintain power while being remarkably disconnected

from the needs of society.

The service model, by definition, *does* have a moral base. The whole point of the service model is to be of service—to identify and meet the needs of others. It is about paying attention to others and treating them right. I would argue that those who are trying to identify and meet the needs of others are more likely to help them than those who aren't trying to identify or meet their needs at all. Servant leaders make mistakes, but at least they start with a moral base—the desire to help people and treat them right.

When servant leaders work on problems and opportunities, they carry less ego baggage. They don't worry about their own personal status or prestige. They just focus on the problem or opportunity. That makes it a lot easier to work with people, and build coalitions and partnerships, and get more done. There's an old saying, "It's amazing how much we get done around here when nobody cares who gets the credit." That's what servant leaders are like. They are focused on the work, not the credit.

Again, the power model is so deeply part of our culture that is hard for some people to believe this. They think that servant leadership is a dreamy-eyed, idealistic notion of leadership that is simply not practical. I strongly disagree. I believe that servant leaders are *more* relevant and effective than power-oriented leaders. Servant leaders strive to identify needs, which is what makes them relevant. And then they strive to *meet* those needs, which is what makes them effective. When it comes to getting something done, power-oriented leaders are likely to promise more and deliver less. Servant leaders are likely to promise less, and deliver more.

The paradox is that a servant leader can gain power by not seeking it. People trust servant leaders, and give them power, because they know that power will be used to benefit others—not just the leader. When power is given to you, as a gift, by others who trust you, then it will be a tool that you can use in accomplishing good. So long as you continue to do good, there is no reason for anyone to take back their gift of power.

If, on the other hand, if you have to grab power, you will constantly have to fight to keep it. If you had to grab it, it means that others don't want you to have it, or they want it instead. You will constantly be defending your turf, for fear of losing the power you have grabbed. After all, if you grabbed it, somebody else can grab it away from you, no matter how good a job you are doing, just because *they*

want it. So you have to keep fighting rivals, and building ever-shifting alliances, and trying to be the power broker, and trying to defeat the plans of others so they will not get credit for accomplishing things that might in turn enhance their power and threaten yours.

So here is a paradox: Servant leaders obtain power by not seeking it. Instead, they receive it as a gift from others. And when they receive it, they see it as just one of many tools available to them. The use of raw power is rarely their first choice when it comes to getting something done.

We can argue about the different meanings of the words “power,” “authority,” and “influence.” To me, the important point is that servant leaders have moral power, moral authority, or moral influence. It comes from the fact that they are focused on opportunities and problems that affect others, not themselves. They are concerned about how others are treated. By focusing on the needs of others, they have credibility that power-grabbing leaders can never have. I am thinking here of famous people like Father Damien, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., George C. Marshall, Mother Teresa, and all of our parents, friends, and colleagues who are respected and are given power by others because they are not power-oriented leaders but servant leaders.

That completes the first part of my presentation. I would be happy to have any initial comments or questions. Let’s have some discussion...

Let’s take a short break, here for coffee or the restroom or to stretch...

The Three Options

Welcome back. So far this morning we have defined servant leadership and described some servant leaders. What I want to do now is to talk about the three options, the paradoxical commandments, and sources of personal meaning, and intrinsic motivation. This will be about the personal dimensions of servant leadership—the inner life of the servant leader.

The question is this: Why would anyone want to be a servant leader? Some become servant leaders as a result of devout faith—they are following the scriptures in their religion. But I think most servant leaders back into it, over time, as part of their life experience. I can think of two reasons that happens. First, servant leaders make a moral decision, and second, they discover where to find the most meaning in life.

Let's start with the moral decision. When you understand that people have many needs, I think 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 servant leader option, and it is the only moral one. That is still the right option, even if 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. Servant leaders stay with the third option, no matter how difficult it may be.

The issue of appreciation is a big one. Many of us feel that we are being taken for granted. Many of us are 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.

Each of us likes to be appreciated. That's normal. But it is hard to be a servant leader 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.

I was fortunate to learn this early in life. One of the real “aha!” 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. I felt an immense inner 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.” You have the handout:

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.

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 still find personal meaning and deep happiness. We do that by facing the worst in the world with the best in ourselves.

The fact is that we can't control the external world. We can't control the world economy, and the rate of population growth. We can't control the weather, or natural disasters like fires and floods. We can't control when terrorists may strike or wars may break out. We can't control which companies will acquire which companies, and which jobs will be downsized and which jobs will open up. We can work hard, and prepare, and seize opportunities—and we should. We can join with others to influence those external events—we should do that, too. But there are lots of things in our external world we just can't control.

What we can control is our inner lives. We get to decide who we are 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 we know is right and good and true—no matter what. *No matter what*. The good news is that these are the things that give people the most personal meaning. The even better news is that personal meaning is a keep to being deeply happy.

What do I mean by “deep happiness”? I mean the kind of happiness that touches your spirit and connects with your soul. It is hard to describe. Some people call it joy, or self-fulfillment, or self-actualization, or being centered. For people of faith, it may be finding God's will for their lives, and then living that will. But however we describe it, personal meaning is a key.

Some people see the Paradoxical Commandments as a personal declaration of independence—a declaration of independence from all the external factors we

don't control. Our happiness is independent of the events in the external world. Our happiness is independent of recognition, and appreciation, and rewards given to us by others. Our happiness depends on being who we need to be, and finding personal meaning and happiness in doing what we know we need to do.

Some people call the Paradoxical Commandments a “no excuses” policy. Sure, some people are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered. So what? You have to love them anyway. And maybe the good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. So what? 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 you don't? What if you put your heart and mind and soul into a project, and it fails? What if you do a brilliant job, and nobody notices? The answer is: So what? *So what?* You still have to be who you have to be, and do what you have to do. You still have to live your most cherished values, and stay close to your family and friends, and do what you know is right and good and true because that's where you're going to find the most meaning. That's where you're going to find the deepest happiness. And you don't want to give that up. Don't ever give that up, certainly not when times are tough. Certainly not then.

The Origin of the Paradoxical Commandments

I wrote the Paradoxical Commandments in 1968, when I was 19, a college sophomore. I wrote them as part of a booklet for student leaders, entitled *The Silent Revolution: Dynamic Leadership in the Student Council*. It was published by Harvard Student Agencies and later by the National Association of Secondary School Principals. About 25,000-30,000 copies were sold or distributed between 1968 and 1972.

I went on with my life, and for 25 years, I didn't know that the Paradoxical Commandments were spreading around the world. What I know now is that people were taking the Paradoxical Commandments and putting them up on their walls, and their refrigerator doors, and putting them into speeches and articles. They

spread around the world, until today it is estimated that they have been used by millions of people.

From doing some searches on the internet, I know that they were used by business leaders, politicians, military commanders, religious leaders, teachers, social workers, coaches, and students. They were used by Boy Scouts in Canada and the United States. They were used by Rotary Clubs in Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Alabama—I like that combination! They were used by student leaders in South Africa, and the Cambodian Free Speech Movement, and a university in Belgium. They are on an Iranian website for news and culture. They were used by a homeless shelter in Philadelphia, a welfare agency in Texas, a Family Council in Ohio, a Methodist church in Kansas. They were used by Karl Menninger in a speech at the United Nations in 1981. They were used by Abel Muzorewa, a Methodist Bishop, who was the President of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. They have been translated into Japanese and used in homilies by a Japanese Catholic priest in Tokyo. They are being used with an Eskimo group in Canada. They were published in John C. Maxwell's book, *Becoming a Person of Influence*, and Rev. Robert Schuller's book, *Turning Hurts into Halos*, and Wayne Dyer's book, *There's a Spiritual Solution to Every Problem*. They are in Stephen Covey's new book, *The 8th Habit*.

A few months ago I learned that Superman was raised on the Paradoxical Commandments. Roger Stern wrote a book titled *Superman: The Never-Ending Battle* that was published last year. In his book, Superman's father, Jonathan Kent, brings home a copy of the Paradoxical Commandments one day and he and Superman make a frame and put the commandments up in the family library. Superman's father told him that the Paradoxical Commandments were good words to live by, and later in his life, when Superman saw them again in the family library, he agreed that it had been good advice.

Now how does that happen? Superman was one of my heroes when I was growing up, before I wrote the Paradoxical Commandments. So how could Superman be raised on something I hadn't written yet? I guess he jumped ahead in time, flying really fast around the world, and got them, and came back and put them where his Dad would find them... I don't know.

If you go to the internet and use a search engine, and type in the first phrase of the first commandment, "People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centered, love them anyway," you will get as many as 61,000 hits without a hyphen in the word "self-centered" and 23,000 with a hyphen. Not all of those are the

Paradoxical Commandments, of course. Friends tell me the commandments are on at least 6,000 websites. My favorite website... well, I don't know if I should share this... Well, my favorite website is the website of the English Cocker Spaniel Club of America!

The Mother Teresa connection

The discovery that changed my life happened at my Rotary Club meeting, which took place down the street at the Royal Hawaiian hotel, in September 1997. My fellow Rotarian got up to do the inspiration. He 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 what I heard was eight of the original ten Paradoxical Commandments, exactly as I had written them thirty years before.

I was astonished, but I was cool—I didn't jump up and go "Hey!" I just 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 didn't say a word, but he gave me a look. I don't know what the look meant to him, but to me, it meant "you poor, delusional megalomaniac." I said, but where did you get it? 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. The idea that Mother Teresa had put the Paradoxical Commandments up on the wall to look at from time to time as she and her colleagues ministered to their children—that touched me deeply. That was when I decided to write and speak about the Paradoxical Commandments again after 30 years.

I have now published three books about the Paradoxical Commandments. My first book, *Anyway: The Paradoxical Commandments*, is an introduction to the Paradoxical Commandments. It was published in 2002 and became a national bestseller, translated in 16 languages. My second book, *Do It Anyway*, is a

handbook that helps explain how to live the commandments in your daily life. My third book was released last week. It is titled *Jesus Did It Anyway: The Paradoxical Commandments for Christians*. The book illustrates the commandments with stories and verses from the Bible.

The New York Times called me the Rip Van Winkle of inspirational gurus. I wrote something when I was 19, thirty years went by, and then I “woke up” and discovered where it had traveled all those years. It has been truly amazing. Every day I hear from people who tell me what the Paradoxical Commandments mean to them—how they have used them to raise their children, or get through a tough time at work, or establish their goals. I set out to inspire people, and now they are inspiring me. Every month, people from more than 50 countries visit my website, and many of them send me messages. I have become part of a growing network of kindred spirits, and I am deeply grateful.

Servant leaders understand the Paradoxical Commandments. The Paradoxical Commandments focus on personal meaning, and so do servant leaders. That is what makes it possible for them to keep working, whether they get applause, indifference, or even a negative response. They like to be treated well, but they are not especially concerned when they are treated badly. Servant leaders are not worried about the attention others pay to them, but the attention they pay to others. That’s where the meaning is to be found.

Meaning Maximizers

Remember I said that I think people become servant leaders because, first, they make a moral decision, and second, they discover where to find the most meaning in life.

Let’s talk about meaning. Servant leaders know that the search for success and the search for meaning are not the same thing. 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. They are on the yellow handout entitled “Sources of Personal Meaning.”

Symbol of “Success” < Meaning Maximizer

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

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. If you want more meaning in your life, if you want to be more deeply happy, you have to shift from the left column to the right column. Servant leaders live in the column on the right.

Let me take just one example from the list—winning versus always doing your 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 bum 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, and his team. That's why he went to Jamaica, thousands of miles away 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 Jamaican team out of the competition as quickly as possible. When the Jamaicans qualify anyway, the officials make a new rule that will disqualify them. Finally, they are 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 don't have it *without* the medal, you won't have it *with* the medal. 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 persevered against the odds. 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.

As you go through life, keep your eyes on two scoreboards. One is the regular scoreboard that measures public success: The results of the election, the bottom line of the business, the outcome of the athletic event. The other scoreboard is a private scoreboard that measures your personal best. I like to call this “God’s scoreboard,” because it is about whether or not you are using the gifts that God has given you, and are living your values. It is possible to win on both scoreboards, of course, and that is often the case. But the personal meaning comes from scoring high on God’s scoreboard—the one that measures your personal best.

My Hobby

One of my hobbies is conducting research on sources of personal meaning. Over the past few years I have surveyed about 2,500 people on the sources of meaning in their lives. I have used a survey instrument similar to the one you filled out this morning. I ask 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 samples of convenience, not random samples, so I 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 “intimate relationships,” doing my personal best,” “a sense of accomplishment,” and “living my values.” I find these results encouraging.

Even more 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.

Recently, I have begun surveying people about sources of meaning at work. I use the survey form that you filled out this morning. The sources of meaning that have gotten the highest scores so far include:

Always doing my personal best
Living my values

Always doing what's right

Power, wealth, fame, and winning get low scores as sources of meaning at work—they are often the bottom four on a list of 34 sources of meaning.

This is why a life of servant leadership is not about self-sacrifice or self-denial. I repeat: Servant leadership is not about self-sacrifice or self-denial. It is about *self-fulfillment*. It is about living in the column on the right. It is about living in a way that maximizes your meaning and deep happiness. Servant leaders find satisfaction and meaning that are simply not available in any other way.

Intrinsic motivation

Finding meaning is a secret of the servant leader's success. That's because meaning is an intrinsic motivator. Meaning can keep us going.

Going back at least as far as the industrial revolution, extrinsic rewards have been heavily emphasized in the work place. Extrinsic rewards are the carrot and the stick—wages, benefits, bonuses, and working conditions, as well as negative threats such as punishment or dismissal. Extrinsic rewards were emphasized in the industrial revolution because the work was routine, highly prescribed, repetitive, and not very interesting in and of itself.

Extrinsic rewards will always be important. We need to earn money to take care of ourselves and our families. But people want more than extrinsic rewards, and in fact need more than extrinsic rewards, if they are to do their best at work. Research and common sense tell us that we are happier, more productive, more committed, more innovative, and less likely to burn out, if we are *intrinsically* motivated. We are intrinsically motivated when we do something because we want to, not because we have to. We are intrinsically motivated when we do something because it is fun or good or the right thing to do. We are intrinsically motivated when our work is interesting, and fulfilling, and important to us—when our work gives us meaning.

I have had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Kenneth Thomas, who has done research on intrinsic motivation. In his book *Intrinsic Motivation at Work: Building Energy and Commitment*, he says:

...[S]tudies show that the intrinsic rewards are consistently related to job satisfaction and to performance. These findings hold across types of

organizations and for managers as well as workers. Studies have also shown that the intrinsic rewards are related to innovativeness, commitment to the organization, and reduced stress.

Research conducted by Dr. Kenneth Thomas and his colleagues suggests that there are four intrinsic rewards at work. The four intrinsic rewards are (1) a sense of meaningfulness, (2) a sense of choice, (3) a sense of competence, and (4) a sense of progress. As for a sense of meaningfulness or purpose. Dr. Thomas says:

“A sense of *meaningfulness* is the opportunity you feel to pursue a worthy task purpose. The feeling of meaningfulness is the feeling that you are on a path that is worth your time and energy—that you are on a valuable mission, that your purpose matters in the larger scheme of things.

This is very fundamental to our nature as human beings. Thomas says:

... There is a great deal of evidence that people are hardwired to care about purposes. We seem to need to see ourselves as going somewhere—as being on a journey in pursuit of a significant purpose...There is also much evidence that people suffer when they lack purpose. Clinical studies show that people deteriorate in various ways without purpose.

The most profound account of the importance of meaning and purpose that I have read is Viktor Frankl's book, *Man's Search for Meaning*. Viktor Frankl was a Jewish psychiatrist who survived the Nazi concentration camps in World War II. He tells a painful story of suffering and death. Prisoners had to work each day, with little food, clothing, or sleep, in an environment of fear and death. Frankl observed that prisoners who had faith in the future, who still had a reason to live, were the ones who were most likely to survive. From this, he developed his theory of *logotherapy*, or meaning therapy, in which a patient is “confronted with and reoriented toward the meaning of his life.” Frankl believed that “striving to find a meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force in man.” That meaning varies from person to person, because each person's circumstances and tasks are different.

By focusing on identifying and meeting the needs of others; by living in the column on the right, servant leaders can always find meaning. They can always be intrinsically motivated, and therefore more likely to be committed and happy and productive, and less likely to burn out. They also understand that one of their roles as a leader is to be a “meaning maker” for their colleagues, to enhance their

intrinsic motivation as well.

Paradoxes of leadership

Let me see if I can summarize some of these points in the form of three statements about the paradoxes of “successful” leadership:

1. Our society describes the “successful” leader as one who has power, wealth, and fame. The paradox is that a “successful” leader by this definition is not likely to be relevant or effective, and therefore, not good for society. The “successful” leader will be focused on accumulating power, wealth, and fame, not identifying and meeting the needs of others. Thus, a “successful” leader may be a failure in terms of solving problems and seizing opportunities that make a difference in the lives of others. The “successful” leader is also extrinsically motivated, and is less likely to be happy and more likely to burn out than a servant leader who is intrinsically motivated. This kind of “success” doesn’t work for the leader or for those who are being led.
2. The most effective leaders do not seek power, wealth, or fame—they seek to make a difference in the lives of others. Paradoxically, when they *do* make a difference in the lives of others, they are often *given* power, wealth and fame. However, when that happens, they treat their power, wealth, and fame as tools to be used in continuing to make a difference in helping others. They do not seek it, but when they are given it, they use it.
3. Perhaps the most notable paradox is that when the leader focuses on helping others, the leader gets the greatest rewards for himself or herself. The leader gets personal meaning and deep happiness—spiritual rewards that other leaders never find. Or to put it the other way around, the leader who focuses on himself or herself gets less for himself or herself in the end, than if he or she had focused on others instead.

I don’t want to be misunderstood. I am not against success. Each of us has talents and abilities, and we should use them to the fullest. I do not go out into the world each day to fail, and I hope you don’t either. I have worked hard to be successful in a number of fields. I have a great job, a wonderful house, and a nice car to drive. So far as I can remember, I have never turned down a promotion or a pay raise. I do not wear sackcloth and live on locusts in the desert.

In short, I encourage you to work hard, and get ahead, and receive whatever power, wealth, or fame comes your way. That's fine. You don't have to avoid all the symbols of success in the left column. But trying to achieve the symbols of success is the wrong focus for a leader. You will be a better, more relevant, more effective leader and a much happier person if you stay focused on the column on the right, the Meaning Maximizers.

Going against the secular, commercial culture

Of course, staying focused on the column on the right is counter-cultural these days. TV, movies, radio, magazines and newspapers all promote the symbols of success. But this is a good time to be counter-cultural. Here's why.

The American dream, toward which generations have been working, is finally being achieved by millions of Americans. However, it is not making people happier. Let me read you a quote from a book by Gregg Easterbrook, titled *The Progress Paradox*.

If you sat down with a pencil and graph paper to chart the trends of American and European life since the end of World War II, you'd do a lot of drawing that was pointed up. Per-capita income, "real" income, longevity, home size, cars per driver, phone calls made annually, trips taken annually, highest degree earned, IQ scores, just about every objective indicator of social welfare has trended upward on a pretty much uninterrupted basis for two generations. Many subjective graphs would also show steady upward trends: personal freedom, women's freedom, reduction of bias against minority groups.

But your graphs would lose their skyward direction when the topics turned to the inner self. The trend line for happiness has been flat for fifty years. The trend line is negative for the number of people who consider themselves "very happy," that percentage gradually declining since the 1940s. And the trend line would cascade downward like water over a falls on the topic of avoiding depression. Adjusting for population growth, ten times as many people in the Western nations today suffer from "unipolar" depression, or unremitting bad feelings without a specific cause, than did half a century ago. Americans and Europeans have ever more of everything except happiness.

Easterbrook writes that what most people want in life is love, friendship, respect, family, standing, and fun—things which are not priced in the economic system and don't pass through the market. They are things that are in fact available to most of us, every day, regardless of our economic status.

For generations, many Americans have sought to achieve the American dream. Unfortunately, the dream was a materialistic dream, and now that many people are achieving it, they are discovering it is not especially meaningful. Yes, advances in medicine and technology and personal freedom are much appreciated. But in our relentless drive for materialistic well-being, we have wandered away from the things that have given people the most meaning for thousands of years—giving and receiving love, being close to our family and friends, living our values, and doing what's right. We need to get back to those things. Getting back to them will appear, in the short run, to be counter-cultural.

My research has convinced me that most of us know where the personal meaning comes from. So what's the challenge? The challenge is to *remember* the most important sources of personal meaning as we live our daily lives. To do that, we need to gently remind each other, and encourage each other, and inspire each other to live the way we know we should live. Focusing on meaning is not easy in a world that measures us by the symbols of success. But we will not be deeply happy until meaning is our focus.

One of the good things about focusing on meaning is that we can always find it. Finding personal meaning is entirely up to each of us—we control the variables. Meaning is about our values and beliefs and relationships. 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 the world does to us.

Conclusion

Let me conclude with a short summary. Society teaches us the power model of leadership, but you will find greater meaning and satisfaction in the service model. You can be a servant leader, identifying and meeting the needs of others. As Drucker said, you can focus on contribution, and focus on the client or customer or patient. As servant leaders you won't *make* people do things, you'll *help* people do things. Whether in your family or organization or community, you can be a servant leader who identifies and meets the needs of others.

If you become a servant leader, you will be sustained by personal meaning and deep happiness. 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. You will be intrinsically motivated, and therefore happier and more productive and less likely to burn out than leaders who are extrinsically motivated.

You don't control all the variables that go into success, but you can always find personal meaning and the self-fulfillment that it brings. If you live the life of a servant leader, identifying and meeting the needs of others, then when you look back at the end of your life, you won't have many regrets. You may not have any, because you'll look back on a life filled with meaning. Even more important, you won't wonder why you lived. You'll know. *You'll know*. And that may be the greatest blessing of all.

I truly wish you all the best. Godspeed!