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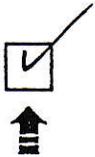
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A Call to Servant Leadership

Kent M. Keith

Keynote Address

1995 Educational Conference

APPA

The Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers

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A Call to Servant Leadership

Introduction

Thank you very much for the kind introduction. It is an honor to be speaking with you today. I have been looking forward to our time together.

As leaders, managers, and administrators, you face a lot of interesting challenges in your work each day. What you do, and how well you do it, is of fundamental importance to your institutions. Your leadership has a wide-ranging impact on thousands and thousands of people on your many campuses.

How you lead is influenced by the ideas about leadership that you carry with you. For most people, ideas about leadership are ideas about power. I believe that we need a different focus. We need to focus on service, not power. And the leaders we need are *servant* leaders.

My purpose today is twofold: First, to explain what servant leadership is, and second, to call you to a life of servant leadership.

The meaning of life

To explain what servant leadership is, and why it is important, I start with a simple and important question: What is the meaning of life? For many, the answer begins with religious faith. For most, the answer either begins or continues with love. I believe that in most countries, cultures, and centuries, people have discovered that love is the meaning of life. Not power, or wealth, or sex, or fame, but love. Happy people are people who know how to give and receive love. For most people, that is the deepest, most exhilarating meaning of life.

When we stop to think about it, we discover that we really do love each other. We love our parents, our spouses, our sisters and brothers, our children, our relatives, and our friends. We may not love them well, we may not love them enough, and we may not love each of them in the same way, but we love them. And because we love them, we care about them. We care about the community they live in. We care about the nation and world they live in. We care about their education and personal growth. We want them to have the opportunity to be all that they can be. We want them to be healthy and happy, with satisfying jobs or activities, living and working in a good environment. We want them to have whatever they need, because we love them, and we want the best for them.

The interesting thing about loving people, and wanting to help them, is that this love

can grow and grow, encompassing more and more people, until it encompasses all of humankind. You begin to feel compassion for all human beings. You begin to identify with their trials and tribulations, and you want to help them if you can. But how do you help?

The servant leader defined

Servant leadership is a way to help. A servant leader is 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 which are meant to be used in helping others. A servant leader is not worried about the attention others pay to him, but the attention he pays to others. A servant leader loves people, and wants to help them.

Servant leadership is not about power, it is about *service*. The servant leader does not go around asking, "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 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.

Servant leaders do many of the same things that other leaders do. They envision goals, affirm values, plan, organize, motivate others, and so forth. The way servant leaders do these things depends on their personalities and the specific circumstances. The servant leader often surveys a group to look for what it needs to be effective and reach its goals. Because the missing link will vary, the servant leader does not always perform the same role or service in each situation.

A servant leader can accumulate and exercise power. A servant leader can become angry and enter the fray to do battle, mobilizing support and taking bold action. What is important is that the servant leader accumulates power or becomes angry *on behalf of others*. The servant leader acts in response to the way *others* are treated, not in response to the way he or she is treated.

There are times when a servant leader has to argue, or engage in conflict, or get into a fight. But there are more times when a servant leader will stop a fight, by deflecting an attack, or by absorbing an attack and going on to do what really needs to be done. People who have the strength to do this can limit the amount of conflict and pain which is suffered by the organizations for which they work and the societies in which they live.

Whatever the situation, the servant leader is servant first. In his book, Servant Leadership, Robert Greenleaf makes it clear that someone who is a leader first, may want to satisfy a drive for power or the possession of material goods. Greenleaf says that a servant

leader makes sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test of whether that is happening is to ask: "Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?"

Servant leadership is not a new idea. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Christ came to serve, not to be served. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and comforted those who were alone, or outcast. And He made it clear that His followers are to do the same.

The concept of servant leadership can be found in other religions or philosophies as well. The Tao Te Ching consists of the ancient writings of Lao-Tzu, a sage who lived in China about 500 B. C. Lao-Tzu is known as the founder of Taoism, a Chinese philosophy or religion which emphasizes simplicity, selflessness, and non-intervention. Lao-Tzu describes a leader who is so effective that he is nearly invisible. When the deeds are done, the people say, "We did it ourselves."

Examples of servant leaders

There are no doubt thousands of examples of servant leaders in literature, the movies, history, and daily life today. I think of historical figures such as Washington, Lincoln, Clara Barton, Eichi Shibusawa, Gandhi, Albert Schweitzer, Martin Luther King, and Mother Teresa.

All of these people are famous. 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 "invisible."

An especially good example of servant leadership is found in the book Watership Down by Richard Adams. This is a wonderful fable about a group of rabbits who set out to find a new home. Hazel-rah, who becomes the Chief Rabbit, is not the biggest rabbit in the group, nor the cleverest, nor the most clairvoyant. But he becomes the leader for a number of reasons. First, he is willing to listen, often asking for advice from others. Second, he knows the different strengths of the other rabbits, and draws out those strengths for the good of the group. Third, he is able to identify the needs of the group, and make decisions and take action in a way which unites the rabbits in seeking to achieve their common goals. And fourth, he is willing to pitch in, and take personal risks on behalf of the group. Hazel-rah is a servant leader in a participatory community. The rabbits face hard times, and are severely tested, but they work together as a team, and they find and build their new home.

Another story which comes to mind is To Kill a Mockingbird, the Pulitzer-prize-winning novel by Harper Lee. The story is set in Maycomb, a small southern town, during

the depression. Atticus Finch, portrayed in the movie by Gregory Peck, is a lawyer who defends a black man, Tom Robinson, who is unjustly accused of raping a white girl. In a time of racial passions, the jury ignores the obvious facts. Atticus loses the trial, and Tom, who is certain that there is no hope in appealing his conviction, is shot when he tries to escape.

Although Atticus loses the trial, what is important is that he placed himself in service to another, and at great personal risk, stood for what was right. Those around him were inspired by his quiet courage. This is dramatized in the scene right after the jury has issued its "guilty" verdict. Atticus says some reassuring words to Tom, chats briefly with the court reporter, and then begins packing up his books and papers. Members of the black community, who are up in the balcony, watch him packing up. One by one, they stand up, in a silent gesture of respect. His daughter is up there in the balcony with them, and as Atticus turns to leave the courtroom, Reverend Sykes leans over and says to her, "Miss Jean Louise! Miss Jean Louise! Stand up! Your father's passing." (Wouldn't it be wonderful if each of us did something so noble that others would ask our children to stand in respect?)

One of the many powerful movies made by Akira Kurosawa 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 achieves the goal and 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 meant something. He had helped somebody. He had made a difference.

I am impressed with the accomplishments of historical figures like Florence Nightingale, an English woman who lived from 1820 to 1910. Born into a wealthy family, her parents were horrified at her interest in nursing, because the image of nurses in those days was that most of them 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 facilities. 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 saved

thousands of lives, and is often considered the founder of modern nursing.

For the servant leader within an organization, the question is: How can I be of service? Or in Peter Drucker's words, "What can I contribute?" Drucker, in The Effective Executive, writes:

The effective executive focuses on contribution. He looks up from his work and outward toward goals. He asks: 'What can I contribute that will significantly affect the performance and the results of the institution I serve?'

Drucker notes that focusing on contribution requires the executive to look toward the performance of the whole-- what is good for the entire organization. He looks *outside* the organization, because that is where the results are-- that is where the people are who need help or need the product being produced. The effective executive comes to think of his work in terms of the purpose of the organization and the needs of the customer, or client, or patient. Drucker, in his own way, has described the effective 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. The fact that many, today, do not act as though they *are* public servants, has caused or reaffirmed a great deal of cynicism about political leaders. It is possible that if more political leaders *were* servant leaders, they could begin to change the image and reality of political leaders in ways that would, over time, develop a new sense of trust and respect between citizens and those whom they have elected.

One of my favorite books as a young man was Profiles in Courage, by John F. Kennedy. Kennedy describes eight U.S. Senators, each different in his own way, who made a tough decision on principle, and served the nation at great personal sacrifice. Whatever kind of leader each had been in his career up to that point, he became a servant leader when he made the decision to put the good of others first. Their examples have always been inspiring to me.

As an aside: Have you ever read the same book several times over the years, to see how much the book has changed each time you read it? I have done this with Profiles in Courage. I first read it when I was 13. Of all the eight Senators, my favorite was clearly John Quincy Adams-- irascible, independent, standing alone against the world. Then I read the book again when I was 28, and I wondered-- who is this John Quincy Adams fellow? Why is he so unhappy? Why doesn't he have any friends? I was more impressed with the melodrama of Daniel Webster and Henry Clay.

Then I read it again when I was 42, and I had a new favorite: Lucius Quintus

Cincinnatus Lamar. Lamar lived from 1825 to 1893. He was a professor at the University of Mississippi, and then a Congressman. He drafted the Mississippi ordinance of secession, and participated at the state convention that passed the ordinance in 1861. He was a Lt. Colonel and then a judge advocate in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. After the war he returned to teaching, was re-elected to the U. S. House and then the U. S. Senate, and finally became an Associate Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court. While a strong partisan for the South before and during the war, after the war he worked at reconciliation, and provided a humane, balanced, reasoned approach to moving the South and the nation forward. He was a courageous, productive man who did our nation a lot of good.

Many people would not expect to find servant leaders in the military. The word "servant" seems to clash with our images of great commanders issuing orders. And yet, great commanders have placed high priority on taking care of their troops. This has included not only their food, clothing, shelter, equipment, health, and training, but also opportunities for growth and recognition. Great commanders have also identified with their troops, and have been willing to suffer what their troops have suffered. Alexander the Great trained with his men, and when they were on the march, if his troops didn't have water to drink, he would not drink either. George Washington stayed with his beleaguered troops during the bitter winter at Valley Forge. The troops have always known if the commander cared, and great commanders have cared.

Different focus, different motivation

The differences in human motivations are fascinating to observe. An excellent example is the movie Chariots of Fire, the story of the British track team at the 1924 Olympics. The movie contrasts the personalities and motivations of several of the runners. Harold Abrahams has a chip on his shoulder. He is an intense, driven man; he runs to prove something to the world. When he loses a race against Eric Liddel, he is crushed, he is destroyed, he doesn't know what to do. Ironically enough, the same thing happens later when he *wins* at the Olympics. Having only one goal, he is completely disoriented when he reaches it. Now what does he do?

Lord Lindsey runs for fun. He has money and position, and no possible worry for the future. He runs because-- well, old chap, one has to do something with one's time, doesn't one!

Then there is Eric Liddel, the Scotsman, who runs with a depth of joy and strength of courage that delights the crowds and astounds other runners. During a race before the Olympics, a competing runner shoves Eric to the side, causing him to fall. Eric shakes himself, and then gets up, to run the greatest race of his life. As he breaks through the tape, he collapses, heaving and contorted on the ground. "It's not the prettiest race I've ever seen,"

says Coach Musabeni, "but certainly the bravest." Eric explains his motivation to his sister, who is opposed to his running. "God made me fast," he says, "and when I run, I feel His pleasure." Eric runs not to prove something to the world, nor for mere fun, but to feel God's pleasure when he uses the special gift that God has given him. To win is to honor that gift.

It is Eric Liddell's motivation which matches most closely what current writers are saying about good leaders. Good leaders are not driven; they lead out of a desire for self-expression, a desire to use the gifts they have been given. And good leaders are not just opportunists; they have personal integrity. When the British officials at the Olympics try to pressure Eric Liddell to run on a Sunday during the Olympics, Eric refuses as a matter of principle, since the Sabbath is the Lord's day, and not a day for sport. Lindsey solves the problem by offering Eric his own slot in another race on another day. One of the British officials, the Duke of Sutherland, understands Eric and tells Lord Birkenhead afterwards that it is a good thing Eric refused to run on a Sunday. "He is a true man of principle," Sutherland says, "and a true athlete. His speed is a mere extension of his life, its force. We sought to sever his running from his self." In Eric's case, and in the case of servant leaders, one cannot sever what one *does* from what one *is*.

Servant leaders 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.

The attributes or character traits of servant leaders are likely to include compassion, understanding, and selflessness. Their lifework is likely to focus on meeting the fundamental needs of others, such as food, clothing, shelter, education, jobs, and basic human rights. Colleges and universities have a major impact on at least three of these fundamental areas-- education, jobs, and basic human rights. So you and your colleagues on your campuses are doing the kind of work that servant leaders do.

The nature of humankind

To serve others well, servant leaders have to *understand* others. They have to learn as much as they can about their fellow human beings-- their fundamental needs, and their hopes and dreams.

Fortunately, the fundamentals are easy to identify. One useful list of fundamentals is Abraham Maslow's famous "hierarchy of motives" that describes various levels of needs. These are usually presented in the form of a pyramid. Basic needs at the bottom of the pyramid include physiological needs such as air, water, food, shelter, sleep, and sex. Then we move up to safety and security. Climbing farther up the pyramid, we find love and feelings of belongingness. Even higher, we find competence, self esteem, and esteem by

others. Then there are a series of growth needs such as meaningfulness, self-sufficiency, effortlessness, playfulness, richness, simplicity, order, justice, completion, perfection, individuality, aliveness, beauty, goodness, and truth. Finally, at the top of the pyramid, we reach self-actualization.

I believe that basic needs include spiritual needs, and the needs of the soul. In virtually all cultures, human beings have pondered the Creator, the Divine, and those things larger than themselves that are part of the wonder and mystery of their lives. We human beings search for meaning; we search for ways to fulfill the longings of the soul.

The emphasis on different needs varies by individual and by culture. However, when it comes to human values, we are all more alike than we are different. In all countries, cultures, and centuries, there have been similar ethical codes and laws regarding the right relationship of one person to another.

This was demonstrated by C. S. Lewis in his book, The Abolition of Man. As a simple research project, he collected writings, laws and customs in ancient and modern societies in different parts of the world. He found that all agree that it is wrong to murder or be cruel to other human beings; that it is right to love one's spouse; that it is right to give to the poor and to love and care for neighbors and strangers; that there are duties to parents, elders, and ancestors; that there are duties to children and posterity; and that there are laws of justice, good faith, truth, mercy, and magnanimity. C. S. Lewis quoted from Hindu, Roman, Norse, Babylonian, Egyptian, Jewish, Australian Aborigine, American Indian, Chinese, Greek, and Christian texts.

There is something about the nature of humankind that has led each culture to a very similar code of conduct. It seems to me that the codes of conduct are similar because the basic wants and needs of all human beings are similar. These include the need to love and be loved, to belong, to participate in community, to have a sense of self-worth, to have the opportunity to learn and grow intellectually and spiritually, and to find meaning, dignity, and peace.

This is of great importance. The similarity of basic human needs means that servant leaders *can* understand the people they seek to serve. And that means that they can serve them well.

I began by saying that love is the meaning of life. It is also essential to physical growth and survival. Maslow once wrote that love is as essential to the growth of a human being as vitamins, minerals, and protein. This was sadly indicated many years ago in a study in which observations were made of babies in orphanages. The babies were given food, water, clean clothes, and bedding. It was discovered, however, that if the babies were not

touched or held, they died. They actually *died* for lack of physical contact, the simple everyday hugging and holding which are natural in every family.

This has special meaning for me. Four years ago, in April 1991, my wife and I returned to Honolulu from Romania with two babies, a 14-month-old baby boy and a 8-month-old baby girl. The baby girl, Angela, had not been fed much during her first four months, when her birth family abandoned her at a hospital in Bucharest. She had whooping cough, she had pus coming out of her ears, she had open sores on her back. The nurses told us she was going to die before we could adopt her. When we first held her, she didn't move. She was just hanging on. Our baby boy, Spencer, had been abandoned at birth, and was at an orphanage. He was being fed a kind of rice gruel, but he had been kept in a crib, with nothing to play with, and he didn't know how to crawl or walk, much less stand up.

The adoption process was chaotic and traumatic. I have many vivid memories. For example, I will never forget walking into a room at an orphanage and seeing 50 babies and young children, in bare cribs next to bare walls, banging their heads against the sides of their cribs because it was the only way they could get any stimulation. And I will never forget seeing the nurses outside in the lobby, smoking and playing cards, instead of holding and walking and talking to those children, who were literally dying for lack of attention.

Angela and Spencer were only half as far along in their physical and mental development as a "normal" child in America would have been at their age. During their first eight or nine months with us back in Honolulu, Angela doubled her body weight from 12 to 25 pounds and grew 7 ½ inches. Spencer increased his body weight from 19 to 30 pounds, and grew five inches. They quickly learned to crawl, and then to walk, and then to talk. And then to talk and talk and *talk!*

According to diagnostic tests conducted after their first year with us, they had both caught up to the "normal" range in their development in all areas except speech. They were behind in speech, because nobody in Romania had talked to them, and they didn't know what speech was. In addition, Spencer's ears had been infected and were blocked, and he was not able to hear very much.

Today, Angela and Spencer are 5 and 5 ½ years old, both happy and healthy. It is true that they needed food and medicine, but mostly, they needed what any human being could have given them: Love and attention. When they began to receive that love and attention, they blossomed in an astonishing way. We feel very blessed to have them, and to be growing and learning while helping them to grow and learn.

What I conclude from all this is that human beings were built to run on love. We are designed that way. If we are not giving and receiving love, we are not operating on all our

cylinders. We are not who we are supposed to be; we are not all that we *can* be.

I have said that love for others is the basis for servant leadership. It is also important to remember that when we give our love to others, it can change their lives in a wonderful way. When we see that change, and are touched by it, then our gift comes back to us, inspiring us and sustaining us as we continue to serve.

Relevance and meaning

Servant leadership is the best kind of leadership for both the leader and the led. All other types of leadership become irrelevant to the needs of those being led, or result in the corruption of the leader himself.

It is really common sense. The leader who is not focused on others, will be focused on himself or herself. But the desires or needs of the leader may be in no way connected to the desires or needs of the rest of the organization or the rest of society. That is why it is easy for that kind of leader to become irrelevant.

Also, leadership which is not servant leadership easily results in the personal corruption or unhappiness of the leader. The leader who seeks power for himself or herself can never get enough. *Never*. Power becomes a disease, a drug, a fanatic drive, an addiction. After a while, it no longer matters what the power is for-- the leader simply craves more and more of it. As the addiction grows stronger and stronger, the leader loses his values and becomes spiritually corrupt. And since the leader can never get enough power, he is never happy. The victories mean too little; the defeats mean too much. He lives a life of frustration, restlessness, dissatisfaction, rage, and even self-torment.

Unfortunately, in the never-ending drive for power, the leader's ego becomes over-enlarged, and false pride, pettiness, crassness, spite, and a desire for conflict set in and take hold. The leader thus becomes an *obstacle* to the achievement of society's hopes and dreams. The over-enlarged egos of leaders have prevented an immense amount of good from being achieved in our world.

Servant leaders achieve an immense amount of good because they are relevant-- they focus on the needs of others. Servant leaders also succeed because of their spiritual resources. Servant leadership provides the leader with something that power and its trappings cannot provide: Personal meaning and inner peace.

A person who embarks on a quest for power will never be satisfied. A person who embarks on a quest to serve others will always find meaning, and will always be at peace with himself. He or she will have a reservoir of spiritual strength to draw upon. This is a

secret of servant leadership-- it provides the inner resources which make it possible for the servant leader to go on, to continue striving and serving others, no matter how difficult it may be.

The three options and the paradoxical commandments

When you love people, and you see that they have many needs, you only have three basic options:

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

This is important: A person who tries to do what is right and good and true, and feels that he or she has failed, may be tempted to shift to the cynical immoral option of exploiting others, or the indifferent option of doing nothing. But the servant leader option is the only truly moral option, even if things are not going the way you had hoped, or people don't appreciate what you have done, or people even attack you for the good you are trying to do.

The issue of appreciation is a big one. It is a big issue for those who serve, especially those who serve behind the scenes. A lot of good people are always being taken for granted, never being thanked. I imagine that in your work, people expect you to keep everything operating perfectly-- 100% perfect all the time. Since they view perfection as the norm, you get no credit for being perfect. However, if anything is *less* than perfect, by golly, you're going to hear about it. So, in their eyes, you can only fail.

In an environment like that, where people take your good work for granted and only give you input when they are unhappy, you have to have your own reasons for getting up and going to work in the morning. You also have to resist the lowering of standards. I have heard this many times, and so have you: The people we serve don't appreciate us, so why should we give them our best? The answer is that you have your own professional standards, and you derive a sense of meaning and satisfaction from doing a good job-- no, a *great* job. And it doesn't matter whether anybody knows it or appreciates it. You still have to do what's right. You still have to be the best you can be. This is about *you*, not *them*. And *you* are a professional with high standards.

Each of us likes to be appreciated. I know that I do. I think that's normal. But it is hard to be a servant leader if applause is what you crave. Focusing on the applause means that you are focused on yourself, not others. Also, people who crave applause are like people who crave power-- they can never get enough. *Never*. No matter how much recognition they get, they are convinced that they are still being slighted.

Unfortunately, it is not just a matter of whether you get applause. Servant leaders are just as likely to be attacked, as they are to be praised. I figured this out pretty early in life. By the time I was 20, I had discovered that you had to do what was right and good and true *because* it was right and good and true, not because anybody would appreciate it. Doing what was right and good and true gave me meaning and satisfaction that nobody could take away-- and, for that matter, which nobody could *add* very much too, either. The meaning and satisfaction were mine, and they were sufficient unto themselves.

So at the age of 20, I sat down and wrote what now looks to me like a simple credo for servant leaders. It was 1968, at the height of the unrest on American college campuses, and I was writing a booklet for high school student leaders about how to work through the system to get things done. I challenged them with what I called "The Paradoxical Commandments of Leadership." Here they are:

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 think that servant leaders understand and accept paradoxical commandments like these. Servant leaders do what is right and good and true, whether they get no applause, indifference, or even a negative response. They appreciate recognition, but they are not in it for the applause. They like to be treated well, but they are not especially surprised or discouraged when they are treated badly.

Another reason servant leaders do not live on applause, is that when it comes to achievement, servant leaders often see "success" in different terms than the rest of the world. A concept that means a lot to me in this regard is found in the Bible at John 17: 14-15. The idea in this passage is that Jesus and His disciples are *in* the world without being *of* the world. The scene is the Last Supper, and Jesus is praying for his disciples. He says in His prayer:

I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

We are *in* the world, and we should engage it fully, loving others, serving others, feeling joy and sorrow, working hard, growing in wisdom, growing toward the perfection that God wants for each of us. But even as we are fully engaged in the world, we do not have to be *of* the world-- we do not have to base our actions on the world's values, nor judge ourselves by the world's definitions of success. We can live by deeper values, and reaffirm more fundamental truths. We can keep our eyes on a higher heaven.

The secret is to set high goals, and yet find joy in even the smallest improvement or advance. Servant leaders do not expect instant, total success. They keep their eyes on the goal, and they keep working. This is dramatized in Jean Giono's story, "The Man Who Planted Hope and Grew Happiness." The man was a Frenchman who lived in Southeastern France at the turn of the century. He lived alone in a barren area which had once been a forest with its own villages. He went out each day and planted trees. Year after year, decade after decade, seed by seed, he kept planting. The trees began to grow into a forest, which held water in the soil, so that other plants could grow, and birds could make nests, and streams could flow again, and people could return and build homes and raise families. By the end of his lifetime, he had totally transformed and restored the natural environment of an entire region. This is a good metaphor for the work of a servant leader, who works each day, planting hope and growing happiness for others. The work may seem simple and modest, and yet be powerful and long-lasting in its impact.

Those same words could be said to every parent, or guardian, or foster parent, about what they do to help their children: The work may seem simple and modest, and yet be powerful and long-lasting in its impact.

Servant leaders may accumulate power, prestige, fame, and fortune, and be a great success in the world's terms-- or they may not. It is possible to be both a worldly success and a servant leader at the same time. But servant leaders know that the challenge is to not set worldly goals as the final goals, because if they do, those worldly goals may take their eyes off the people whom they wish to serve. And success, for the servant leader, is ultimately defined in terms of those they serve.

Deciding what to do

How do servant leaders decide what to do? Certainly, some of the things that servant leaders do, they do as a result of their analysis of world or national problems. War, starvation, disease, and environmental degradation are big problems. Crime, unemployment, racial discrimination, health care, substance abuse, and education are big problems.

In addition to world and national problems, servant leaders often deal with issues or events that are right in front of them, directly affecting them or their families, friends, and neighbors. They often work on problems which they just happen to come across, as in the story of the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan saw a man who was injured, at the side of the road, beaten by robbers. He went to him, bandaged his wounds, took him to an inn, and took care of him.

Apparently, the Samaritan did not debate with himself as to whether there might be somebody with a greater need further down the road, or on another road, or in another city, or in a different season. He apparently did not argue with himself as to whether he was the right man to help, or whether he had the time to help, or could afford to help, or whether somebody else should come to help instead. He didn't say this is a rural problem, outside his urban jurisdiction. No-- he saw a need, right there in front of him, and he acted.

That is what life is like for many servant leaders. They live each day, discovering needs and addressing them. Their biggest challenges as servant leaders may be ones that they just happen to come across, ones that are right in front of them, like the man lying injured by the side of the road.

Servant leadership on campus

So far, I have been talking about who we are as individual leaders-- how we see leadership, what motivates us, our sense of meaning, and how we decide what to do. This

is philosophical and personal. It may not seem very practical.

In fact, I can't think of anything *more* practical. People who work with you, or for you, or for whom you work, will judge your character pretty quickly. They know almost instantly whether you are in it for power, or for service; whether you are focused on yourself, or on others. They know if you are willing to listen, or only to speak; whether you want to help *them* succeed, or see them only as pawns to be manipulated for your own success. They may perceive you correctly or incorrectly, but these perceptions color all of your relationships. These perceptions either enhance or limit what you are able to accomplish as a leader.

If you are a servant leader, you will find that your relationships are enhanced and your ability to facilitate accomplishments is expanded. When it is clear that your focus is on the needs of your institution, those who work there, and those you all serve, then more people will listen to you, and more people will trust you. A few, of course, will be suspicious or confused, and wonder what you are *really* up to. However, most will understand, and will be truly grateful.

Being a servant leader is especially important during hard times. We all know that higher education in the United States is going through a difficult and important period of cutting and shaping-- a period of reconsidering what is being done, reaffirming that which is good, and cutting or reallocating from areas of lower priority to areas of higher priority. You have already made many hard decisions, and you will be making many more. The changes you need to make will not be effective unless people understand them, and however reluctantly, accept them. Few will follow you into the new paradigms unless they trust you, and believe that you are acting for the good of the institution rather than for your own power or position.

To make a change stick, you have to bring most of the people with you. *They* have to make it stick, by understanding and supporting it. Otherwise, it won't happen. You can get excited about change, blow your trumpet, jump on your horse, and gallop off-- to discover that nobody is following you. People *will* move forward if they have been part of a process which helped them to understand where they need to go and why, and includes some of their own ideas about how to get there. People *will* move forward with a servant leader. They'll need a little time to find their horses, and get their saddles adjusted, but they will move forward.

All this is true of any organization undergoing change. However, it seems to me that servant leadership is especially appropriate as the leadership model for colleges and universities. Colleges and universities need strong leadership and clearly assigned responsibilities at all levels of the organization. However, colleges and universities also need

to share governance and operate in a collegial fashion, with consultation, participation, and information-sharing throughout the campus community. The challenge is to achieve *both* strong leadership *and* collegial, campuswide participation.

The power model of leadership is *not* well suited to collegiality and participation, since it focuses on obtaining and using power to make people do things. The power model presupposes and even promotes conflict. Leaders using the power model tend to be more autocratic.

The service model, by contrast, focuses on identifying and meeting the needs of others. The service model presupposes and promotes collegiality, with consultation, participation, and information-sharing as part of the daily life of the organization. The service model is also open to everyone, regardless of where they are in the power structure. Each faculty or staff member, each administrator or trustee, can identify and help meet the needs of others. Each faculty or staff member, each administrator or trustee, can be a servant leader.

Many colleges and universities are working hard on customer service or student-centered service. It seems to me that the concept of servant leadership provides us with an important philosophical foundation for the service model. If we love people, and care about them, we want the best for them. We want to identify their needs, and seek to meet those needs. In our daily lives on our campuses, we want to pay attention to our students, and strive to serve them well. We also want to pay attention to *each others'* needs, as colleagues, and respond to those needs, so that *all* of us, as a team, can serve our students well.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by affirming that the world needs many, many more servant leaders, facilitating, healing, focusing on the needs of others. No other leadership role requires as much wisdom, compassion, strength, and skill as servant leadership. And no other leadership role is as exciting, meaningful, and satisfying as servant leadership. It is a role that will draw upon all that you are, and stimulate you to grow and become all that you can be. It is a role that is badly needed in each family, each college or university, each community, each nation.

I call you to servant leadership. I commend it to you as the basis for your life's work.

As you return to your campuses, I ask you to carry with you this simple idea: To be an effective and relevant leader who finds meaning and peace in using his or her God-given gifts, one *must* be a servant leader, dedicated to making life better for others.

Thank you.