



## SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AND REFLECTION

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When I think of a spiritual leader I think of a person with tremendous energy, who knows what life is about and is living it well, who is comfortable with chosen values and lives them with integrity, who knows the value of other people and cherishes their lives and input, and who is both rooted in the historical values of a chosen tradition and yet is convinced that any tradition must change to be equally relevant in the future as it was in the past. Above all, a spiritual leader is motivated by an experience that has touched him or her profoundly and has influenced the way he or she now lives. This kind of person shows no embarrassment in talking about the experience, and makes decisions based on the values of this experience. This faith-motivated commitment is desperately needed today, especially when we see so many organizations full of leaders with the wrong mindset. This experience that changes a person's life is what we call an experience of "faith." When we talk about "spiritual leadership," we refer to leadership motivated and inspired by the spiritual values of a person's "faith." So, spiritual leadership is a leadership that is motivated by everything that one holds dear in the depths of his or her own heart as the result of a personal experience that has changed one's life and way of living it in the future. This is not the fruits of a workshop, nor of the acquisition of new skills, nor even of a new experience. Rather it is a call felt deep within one's heart.



This personal experience could be the result of an experience of love, or of suffering, or of another's concern, or of reflection on a world tragedy, or of insights gained in a religious tradition. Thus, Greenleaf was not only motivated by his Quaker tradition but gives special mention to the impact of personally experiencing the story of Leo in Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East*.<sup>1</sup> The businessman, Steven Camden, found his life totally changed forever by the experience he gained in encounter with Maria in the story narrated by Bolman and Deal.<sup>2</sup> The nine leaders terminated in a time of downsizing in Mary Pulley's book found in their own emptiness a new power within themselves for future growth.<sup>3</sup> In each case the experience resulted in changing one's life—all of it, both spiritual and material. I am convinced that spiritual leadership produces this reintegration of all aspects of life.<sup>4</sup>

Spiritual leadership is a form of leadership that results from integrity; living every aspect of leadership based on the core motivating values. Spiritual leadership is not something you add on to an already existing leadership style; rather it permeates everything that one does, whether at home, in social life, or at work. The best leaders are the ones who are grounded in motivating values and have "faith," and they live differently as a result of it. They believe in themselves for sure, but also in values beyond themselves. You cannot pick and choose values or virtues; either they motivate you from within in all you do, or they do not. Sprinkling your leadership with assorted virtues from a variety of sources is simply a leadership technique to make one's management style more palatable—to others or to oneself. Even the components of transformational leadership can be implemented as technique.

When one lives spiritual leadership, that person does not only become more spiritual, rather he or she becomes integrally human. This splendid task of becoming who we are capable of being means journeying into the depths of oneself, stretching out to make one's own those values that in a special experience became the motivation of life. This experience may be called a conversion, a breakthrough, enlightenment, or a fundamental



option. Greenleaf even spoke about “a dream deferred.”<sup>5</sup> The sun is setting on many leadership styles that may have been effective in the past, and already we are seeing pockets of spiritual leadership in a sea of mediocrity, leadership that is based on inner convictions—principle centered leadership. The term “spiritual leadership” refers to a leadership that is the result of living with integrity those values that are the basis of one’s life, and making all decisions in light of those values. There can never be a separation between life values and leadership practice. In recent years, we have witnessed many individuals who truly want to lead others as a service to the community, and we have also seen some individual and corporate disasters in failed leadership, whether in business, politics, or religion, that have cried out for the healing and correction that comes with a clearer understanding of leadership and with a rededication to this vocation. Furthermore, men and women increasingly yearn to be models of leadership in every aspect of their lives—professional, family, community, and societal. Our world today needs leaders like never before, but leaders who are guided by the principle-centered values that arise from a profound, personal faith experience.

#### RECENT EMPHASES ON SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

People’s commitment to leadership development in recent years focuses on four reactions. Some have sought greater information to enlarge their knowledge base, and this is foundational. Some have benefited from workshops that provide new skills. Others have participated in programs, courses, and workshops that have given them new experiences of what leading others could look like. Still others have made the inward journey to discover self-identity, and this has made them more aware than ever of their own responsibility, vocation, and destiny in the world of leadership.

Today the focus needs to be on the fourth point: urging readers to discover their own call to leadership and to appreciate their own responsibility and destiny in the service of others. Trends in the last couple of decades lead to the current focus on the leader’s inner self, and they empha-



size the integral nature of leadership—that it touches every facet of one’s personality. Leadership is part of who one is, and not just what one does; leadership today is spiritual leadership, part of one’s integral human maturing.

In recent decades there has been an increasing appreciation of spiritual leadership as the leadership that will assure honesty, integrity, the common good, and both individual and communal growth. A variety of authors have focused their call for spiritual leadership on one dimension or another that seems to serve as the focal point for their contribution to spiritual leadership and which also became in each case the title of a book. Thus, Robert Greenleaf (1977) spoke of “servant leadership,” Stephen Covey (1991) “principle-centered leadership,” J. M. Kouzes and B. Z. Posner (1993) “credibility,” LaRue Hosmer (1994) “moral leadership.” Others like Nancy Eggert (1998) spoke of “contemplative leadership,” Donna Markham (1999) “spiritlinking leadership,” Barbara Maskoff and Gary Wenet (2000) “the inner work of leaders,” Robert Spitzer (2000) “the spirit of leadership,” and Russ Moxley (2000) “leadership and spirit.” Along the same lines Genie Laborde (1987) described leadership as “influencing with integrity,” Joseph Badaracco (1989) as “a quest for integrity,” Jay Conger (1994) as “discovering spirituality in leadership,” Jack Hawley (1993) as “reawakening the Spirit,” Terrence Deal and Lee Bolman as “leading with soul,” Dorothy Marcic (1997) as “managing with the wisdom of love,” and Gilbert Fairholm (2001) as “mastering inner leadership.” All these authors speak about spiritual leadership, each one focusing their insights on a critical facet of spiritual leadership.

Spiritual leadership is for those individuals who want to integrate their leadership with the values of their lives. It presumes that they have or search for the integration of the values of faith and the effectiveness of leadership. Nowadays every leader must pause and examine whether his or her leadership is the best it can be, whether one’s leadership qualities in work enhance one’s personal life.

Leadership is a total way of life, a way of living our humanity, a form





of implementing one's philosophy of life, a way of looking at one's self-identity and destiny. Today's world and its many manifestations in organizational life are crying out for a new dedication to the vocation of leadership. The greedy, the abusers, the power hungry, the selfish will always be with us. May there always be those men and women who will give their lives to leadership in service for others. May dedicated individuals exemplify a spiritual style of leadership, confident that the world yearns for such values.

#### SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AND REFLECTION

Leaders today must be men and women who can think, reflect, reintegrate, and transform the many aspects of their lives. Leadership is no longer based merely on knowledge, competence, and experience, unless these are linked with reflection that produces alternative ways of thinking and acting. In the past we tended to stress the value of leaders who were doers and achievers, not reflective thinkers. Today's new models of leadership all demand critical reflection, imagination, and an openness to "the unknown, the unexpected, and the unexplored."<sup>6</sup> The source of real learning in one's leadership is within oneself, and each one must train himself or herself in the new skills needed to be a reflective person.<sup>7</sup> James A. Ritscher expresses this very well: "Overall, the process is one of calming the body and mind until intuitive wisdom comes through. Experience shows that the calmer we are, the more we have access to our creative and intuitive aspects. As we become calmer, we start to see dimensions of a problem we have never seen before."<sup>8</sup> Without reflection leaders cannot bring forth new ideas, and they lose the opportunity to refocus commitment.

This reflective leadership gradually becomes integral; the leader leaves nothing out, leaves no one out, leaves no one's opinion out, and leaves no possibilities out. Likewise, this reflective leadership is non-discriminatory but inclusive. "A transformational leader perceives in a more inclusive way. His/her vision extends to the inner depth of things. The light coming from the leader shines upon the object of inquiry and reveals its hidden pattern of



being and becoming.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, the reflective leader gets to the deeper underlying problems within an organization, as he or she confronts cognitive, emotional, and spiritual components of an issue. When leaders do not spend time in reflection, someone else always has to pay for it. It is useless asking a so-called leader to see a particular insight when they cannot see in ways that only reflection brings.

People who have been involved in leadership for some time can easily recognize that the best ideas do not come while immersed in stressful work but when one is thinking, reflecting, and at peace. The business of work is often the robber of inner peace. Leaders must create space, time, and attitudes that lead to reflective leadership. The first decade of the third millennium has witnessed many self-centered, greedy pseudo-leaders whose lives lost the rootedness that a spiritual approach to life brings. In the years ahead the best leaders will be reflective—yes, prayerful; in fact, one becomes one’s best self in action based on contemplative reflection. This is so true that one author can simply refer to “a contemplative leadership style.”<sup>10</sup>

#### LEADERSHIP AND PREREQUISITES FOR REFLECTION

Mature leaders have a healthy self-concept, maintained by an acquired sense of balance. Such leaders recognize their gifts and talents, accept their weaknesses, and nurture their skills for the service of others. They can resolve their own inner conflict, identifying and accepting both the negative by-products of their strengths and the potential for good in their weaknesses. These kinds of leaders make their own decisions, shape their own lives, responsibly integrate themselves into society, and discern perspective on life.

Quality leaders are inspirational and have a passion for service. Their commitment is lived with energy, enthusiasm, and excitement. They sense responsibility for themselves, others, and society, can eliminate the sacred cows of their institutions, and have the courage to take risks.

Dedicated leaders are reflective and are always learners. They criti-



cally reflect on their own actions, listen to their own bodies and to others' input, and with environmental sensitivity listen to the world around them. They are always asking questions, are open to the spirit, and embody prophetic challenges.

Great leaders are witnesses to the values they proclaim and are able to transcend themselves in their selfless service to others. People of empathy, benevolence, sensitivity, and compassion, they think with their hearts, as they struggle to discover consensus in others. They accept the transforming power of love and, with spiritual perception, seek the more and greater outside of themselves in the community.

The best leaders are people of inner peace who can integrate leisure into their lives. They have self-discipline, ability to manage others, and commitment to maintain balance in their lives between times of involvement and times of seclusion. They can live with anxiety and tension, concentrate on the task, and maintain healthy limits for effective work. Moreover, as people of balance, their decisions and choices become self defining.

Leaders are people who offer new horizons to their followers and move people beyond mediocrity and indifference. They give hope amidst the problems of contemporary working life. They are willing to take risks and transcend boundaries. As leaders they share their experience of the mystery of God and thus bring a sense of hope to followers, reestablishing the perspective of life under God, and providing the basis for value-oriented leadership.

Such leaders are able to do what they do because their lives are nourished by reflection and prayer.<sup>11</sup> In quiet reflection they discover their true selves, intensify a passion for service, humbly know they must always be open to learn, find their calling in self-transcendence, emphasize the need for balance in life, and move to the growth of a God-given future. Reflection nourishes and strengthens their lives.



#### FOUR STEPS FOR LEADERS TO DEVELOP REFLECTION

The major preparations for reflective leadership can be viewed as one's personal contribution in attitudes of stillness, inspiration, concentration, and silence. Each of these is a gift and is also an acquired art that benefits both reflection and leadership. We need to specifically train ourselves in stillness of body. We need to sit still, do nothing, and completely relax. For people of religious faith, any of the present techniques for relaxation which help in the acquiring of stillness in the presence of God can be used. This first simple stage should not be passed over. In our present speed-prone age, it can be a real effort. In the long run, it pays high dividends. Linked to this outward relaxed position should be deep and regular breathing. The stillness that reflection and prayer require is also a fine attitude in daily life and leadership. People who are always rushing here and hurrying there are not noted for the quality of their presence to others, whether colleagues, family, or friends. No one can be consistently still in times of reflection unless he or she can be still in the presence of others, giving them attention and interest. Stillness is not something that we can turn on for moments of reflection. Rather, it must be very gradually acquired through self-training and sacrifice. This effort to train oneself in stillness and to place oneself in the presence of God is a "prayer of the body."

To facilitate the second step in reflection one needs, throughout daily life, to train oneself in openness to the varied and continual inspirations of the day from wherever they come. To help the development of the genuine spirit of inspiration we need to know ourselves as we are, with the good and weak sides, and express ourselves as we truly feel. If we hide from or close ourselves to the unacceptable about ourselves this just becomes a block to our reflection and prayer. We also need to be open to being inspired by others and by the world; and here one need only apply the general principles of dialogue in openness to others and in the signs of the times.

If in times of reflection and prayer and decision-making in leadership



we are able to show openness to inspiration, then it will be because we have developed in life this attitude of total attentiveness to the varied inspirations that come personally to us in our hearts, in others, in the world with its history and in daily events. If we have not a listening heart and not trained ourselves in the art of listening, then when a critical time of change and challenge comes it is humanly impossible for us just to switch on to becoming inspired or inspirational.

Thirdly, we must train ourselves to concentrate; then in dealing with others or in discerning institutional direction we will be able to concentrate individually and with others in the challenging moments of life. Here again, we have an act of reflection and prayer which is an art, and we can develop it by the way we approach other aspects of our daily leadership life. Therefore, as a remote preparation for reflection and prayer, try to develop concentration. As Jack Hawley pointed out, "We discovered that when you search for the soul of any idea you have to enter into your own soul."<sup>12</sup>

The ability to concentrate, which is also a common necessity in human growth, is something to be acquired by daily effort. Only short moments are needed, a few minutes while traveling, a view in the city, a scene in the country, a person's face, a picture, a child—all can be objects of a moment's concentration. On the other hand, listening intently for a short while to a piece of music, or just one sound, or a bird, or a person's voice, or the rustling of leaves—all can open us to concentrate on something we did not perceive before. This is the self-training and remote preparation we need for reflection and prayer and a preparation to discover the best in others.

The kernel of genuine reflection is silence, and of genuine prayer silence in God. There are several attitudes of daily life which can undoubtedly help and prepare the way for this recollected silence. Awareness to the quality of one's presence to others and recollection are fundamental. Effort given to this reflective silence is generally more profitable for growth in reflection than is anything else. To these ought to be added a cultivated sense of wonder and astonishment. These qualities are often missing in life



today, but if reflective leadership must also include an attitude of openness to the ever newness of others and of organizational growth, we will need a genuine sense of mystery and wonder to appreciate what is always ahead of us, always new, and our growing efforts at concentration will be an aid here. In this connection we need a healthy sense of aloneness, an awareness of our own lack of fulfillment except through others and in God—in other words, the attitude of one who is a real searcher.

Above all, one needs patience and a willingness to wait. Sometimes in the reflective moments of a day we try to push ourselves—disliking emptiness, we return to the normal actions of each day at the first sign of “nothing happening.” Those who do wait are generally the ones who can come up with a new insight, can see links with vision and mission, and can see how every member of the group “fits in.” All these above attitudes are also aspects of daily life, and

living through them in daily life can be a preparation for reflection and an enrichment of our leadership skills. Nancy Eggert suggests four means to enter into contemplative experience: 1. Through appreciation of the material world (appreciation). 2. By letting go and letting be (detachment). 3. Through creative breakthroughs (creativity). 4. By means of social justice and compassion (compassion).<sup>13</sup>

#### QUALITIES THAT FACILITATE REFLECTION AND LEADERSHIP

Leaders today need to be people of deep reflection, and we call such people contemplatives. Moreover, being a contemplative is a critical aspect of spiritual leadership. All who wish to be great leaders can open themselves to the enrichment of contemplation. Others who wish to disassociate themselves from explicitly religious dimensions of life will need to involve themselves in practices similar to prayer and reflection even though they use nonreligious vocabulary to describe such activities and practices. Contemplation, however, does require approaches to life that are found in the broad sweep of values we have grouped under spiritual leadership. When these values are part of life, an individual will be a better contemplative and



a better leader. Anyone who has worked in leadership knows that no action is complete until the leader and team have reflected on it.<sup>14</sup>

Contemplation requires stillness, quiet attentive waiting for values beyond ourselves (and for believers, for God). Growth is a gift, and believers do no more than prepare themselves to receive the gift. However, the attentive waiting is itself an effort that includes many factors that foster a contemplative experience. This is another way of looking at time. “The human core approach to time management is, first to know the difference between authentic and inauthentic experiences of time and, second, to achieve control over lived time.”<sup>15</sup>

Contemplatives are persons who are comfortable with themselves, at ease with their own strengths and weaknesses, and yearn to identify who they are capable of being. At peace with themselves, they know authenticity is found in the center of oneself—not by having more or doing more, but by being more. This inner peace produces creative and visionary leaders. “Meditation may help you achieve access to and control over inner space and inner time. To concentrate on them is also to expand your mind. As you get a sense of the infinity of your inner world, your mind will also expand its creative and innovative potential.”<sup>16</sup>

Contemplatives are not afraid to be alone, isolated from others for a while. They do not need to fill every spare moment with activities. They are happy on their own, can enjoy prayer in solitude, and are aware of the enriching experiences of silence, emptiness, and stillness. Nowadays, leaders need to feel comfortable just facing critical decisions alone and being happy and peaceful about their responses. Once again, I quote from Koes-tenbaum: “Courage, like freedom, is the decision also for energy, the decision to be positive and enthusiastic, the decision not to be depressed, the choice to live with greatness. It is also the discovery of centeredness, the still point in your core that is the source of peace and thus of self-confidence and mature strength.”<sup>17</sup> Time alone can also be an experience of self-emptying which precedes times of real fulfillment.

Contemplatives are people with a sense of purpose, free from distract-



ing and disintegrating secondary values. Their lives are unified in one great commitment to the vision they pursue. They are detached from secondary attractions, or rather have integrated all dimensions of life into a single-minded, single-hearted dedication to their purpose in life. They are truly free people who are not controlled by selfish desires but are the pure of heart that the beatitudes call happy. Speaking of individuals who experienced downsizing and grew through the process, Mary Pulley concludes: "The people who experienced transformative change all talked about tapping into something bigger than themselves that helped them through their transition process and put their job loss in perspective. They interpreted their experience as part of a bigger plan or a bigger picture."<sup>18</sup>

Contemplatives appreciate anything that is beautiful: people, senses, music, art, literature, or drama. The ability to experience something beautiful prepares for the best in others, the best in others' ideas, and, for believers, the beautiful experience of God. The same is true of joy, as the contemplative enjoys life, friendships, and love, or food, drink, and entertainment. A person who can be enthusiastic about music or friendship can also possibly be enthusiastic about life, family, and work, and can enthuse others too. People who are rarely enthusiastic about life are unlikely to be enthusiastic about others, an organization's mission and goals, and so on. This includes a positive attitude to the world around us that enables us to be leaders who manifest a social responsibility for the environment around us. "Ecological virtues are habits that allow us to work lightly on this earth and therefore to pass on its blessings of health and wholeness, of goodness and beauty to future generations. Because we have been so oblivious of these virtues during the industrial era and the urbanization of our lives and souls in this century, it is important that we pay heed to them now."<sup>19</sup>

Contemplatives are skillful in finding opportunities to reflect, either spontaneously while out in the country, or parks, or by deliberately preparing a part of their home to be conducive to a reflective experience. Much of our contemporary world is distracting and disturbing, but a careful choice





of place, artwork, colors, and music can foster the uplifting of spirit needed for genuine reflective prayer. Thus, Pulley suggests: “Learn how to learn by moving back and forth between the external and internal, combining action with reflection to derive lessons from experience.”<sup>20</sup> Another author goes even further in linking the need for reflection with transformational leadership. “Meditation, contemplation, and reflection prepare the mind for wordless thought. Transformational leaders solve problems by not thinking about them, or perhaps we should say, by thinking about them without words.”<sup>21</sup>

A contemplative experience cannot be fitted into a tight schedule but needs a prolonged, open-ended time. When many of us are trained to use time well, plan schedules, and use time management planners, it goes against the grain to leave adequate open-ended time for reflection, and yet it is necessary. When we begin to experience emptiness in times of reflection, it often seems appropriate to end, as if we have got the best out of that particular experience. However, the emptiness is frequently what is needed before a new phase with new alternative ideas emerges. Only when one is empty can one be filled with a new reality. Greenleaf expressed this well: “Awareness is not a giver of solace—it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener. Able leaders are usually sharply awake and reasonably disturbed. They are not seekers after solace. They have their own inner serenity.”<sup>22</sup>

Contemplatives know the importance of the body for quality reflection and prayer. They take diet and exercise seriously and appreciate that the Christian tradition of fasting can have a healthy impact on a life that is reflective. With experience, each person finds an appropriate and comfortable posture, a position he or she can stay in for the prolonged period of reflection on values, ethics, mission, and so on. It is difficult to spend time in reflection if you are in an uncomfortable position, if your stomach is rumbling, or if you get a cramp. This prayer of the body is an excellent preparation for contemplative reflection. When a leader is in tune with



himself or herself, that leader can give self to others, to the organization, and to society.

Contemplation needs nourishing with ongoing education in values, complemented by good literature of all kinds and an awareness of contemporary world events. It is difficult to give quality leadership to others without ongoing education. Hitt indicates that he believes there are five types of knowledge that contemporary leaders need: “Knowing oneself, knowing the job, knowing the organization, knowing the business one is in, and knowing the world. Lacking any one of these sources of knowledge handicaps a leader.”<sup>23</sup>

A basic conviction is that what is good for religious commitment is good for life in general and personal fulfillment in leadership for individuals. Reflection and prayer are further examples that faith and religion are never separate from human growth, since what is conducive to prayer growth is also part of a healthy recuperative experience, so suitable for today’s busiest individuals.

#### GREENLEAF, SERVANT-LEADERSHIP, AND REFLECTION

Many of the qualities of contemplative leadership are evidenced in Robert K. Greenleaf, both in his general vision of leadership and specifically in his writings. In fact, it is clear that the values of his heart and spirit motivated all he did. Greenleaf, himself a wonderful example of spiritual leadership, stated that his insight into servant leadership was not the result of study, attendance at workshops, business practice, and the like, but rather the result of reflection on the role of Leo in *Journey to the East*. He went on to analyze the crisis in leadership, concluding, “I have reflected much on why we do not hear and heed the prophetic voices in our midst.”<sup>24</sup> Saddened by the problems of the day, he wondered what was the distinguishing feature of times of growth. “The variable that marks some periods as barren and some as rich in prophetic vision is in the interest, the level of seeking, the responsiveness of hearers” (p. 8).

For Greenleaf, a leader is a person who reflects, seeks, listens, and



whose vision is “born of inspiration.” In fact, he claims that the only reason why anyone should follow a leader is that he or she manifests “more than usual openness to inspiration” (p. 15). This unusual openness to inspiration is not only evidenced in reflection on his Quaker tradition, or on the scriptures that challenged him, but by the daily tasks of listening, understanding, and imagination. These qualities are enriched by times of quiet and intense reflection—“pacing oneself by appropriate withdrawal,” by the acceptance of others—“lifting them up to growth,” and by the ability to empathize—critically judging what other people are capable of doing (p. 21). Greenleaf moves so easily from practical business suggestions to profound reflection on inner values that he is unquestionably a contemplative leader.

When considering the requirements of leadership, Greenleaf emphasizes just two. A leader must “have a sense for the unknowable and be able to foresee the unforeseeable” (p. 28). He acknowledges that these are qualities traditionally linked to mysticism and contemplation, but which he sees as having practical equivalents accessible to contemporary leaders in foresight, awareness, and perception. It is interesting that in passing Greenleaf comments, “Living this way is partly a matter of faith” (p. 29). Reflection, acceptance, and empathy linked to foresight, awareness, and perception prepare a leader for the dedicated work of healing and service, community building, and institutional transformation.

For Greenleaf, reflection is the source of servant leadership. If anyone wishes to prepare himself or herself to be a servant leader, that preparation consists of reflecting, seeking, listening, and being open to inspiration from whatever source. Then the contemporary leader must facilitate within himself or herself foresight, awareness, and perception. Servant leadership is in essence a form of contemplative leadership. Certainly, it has practical qualities that can change one’s approach to others in leadership, but these qualities can become unsustainable techniques unless they are the result of an inner transformation in which a person finds “a great dream” (p. 88) which will motivate him or her in everything. Every servant leader must make this inward journey and “come to grips with who they are and where they



are on the journey” (p. 314). This is a conversion experience that implies a self-emptying of former approaches to leadership and a new commitment to servant leadership. The attitudes of the latter cannot be built on an old foundation. In reflective insight there must be a letting go before there is a welcoming of the new. Greenleaf put it this way: “You must be lost enough before you can find yourself. The test, maybe, is: If you can’t find yourself, you’re not lost enough” (p. 321). While this seems a strange saying, it is quite common among spiritual writers; it is an insight that is acquired only in contemplation.

Larry Spears, in this journal and elsewhere ([www.greenleaf.org](http://www.greenleaf.org)), has summarized for us the ten major characteristics of a servant leader. In the spirit of Greenleaf, he urges “a deepening understanding” as a basis for “a meaningful practice of servant leadership.” The resulting portrait, a further example of spiritual leadership, presents what has been called contemplation in action. In other words, the activities of servant leadership emerge from contemplative reflection and insight. *Listening* must be “coupled with periods of reflection,” and encompass “getting in touch with one’s own inner voice.” *Empathy* also necessitates that leaders “become skilled empathetic listeners.” *Healing* is the mutual task of people who know themselves well enough to see that everyone is in need of mutual healing. *Awareness* can be acquired only in contemplative reflection that enables a person to perceive realities as they are. *Persuasion* is based on a different perception of oneself, of the value of others, and of the importance of community. It is a form of faith-motivated consensus building. *Conceptualization* requires imaginative and visioning skills that come from a meditation that stretches our ways of thinking. *Foresight* results from perceptive analysis of past, present, and future. It is a form of intuitive and therefore contemplative analysis. *Stewardship* includes a new vision of responsibility for institutions. *Commitment to the growth of people* is based on a transformation of one’s approach to others and a form of believing in others that comes from a conversion of ideas. *Building community* starts with a new awareness about people and organizations. It starts with an inner convic-



tion that comes from faith. So, each quality is intimately linked to reflection and unattainable without it.

As we look at spiritual leadership, of which servant leadership is an excellent example, we can also see that the source, essential qualities, and resulting life-style of servant leadership focus powerfully on activities that result from inner changes in a way a person sees self, others, and the world. "Servant leaders differ from other persons of goodwill because they act on what they believe. Consequently, they 'know experientially' and there is a sustaining spirit when they venture and risk" (p. 329).

#### PRACTICES SUPPORTIVE OF BOTH REFLECTION AND LEADERSHIP

The following are important prerequisites to contemplative reflection and also attitudes that are beneficial in reflective leadership: a sense of astonishment and wonder, concern for others, a sense of obligation, a healthy loneliness, an accepted experience of doubt and temptation, and finally a deep hope. Other necessary conditions include: faith exercised, common sense, and creativity. Perhaps we should not exclude the following prerequisites for contemplation: living faith, freedom of expression without inhibitions, and a life of communion.

These prerequisites for contemplation are also components of a leisured approach to life that nourishes our leadership. Those who give themselves to the service of others need a sense of wonder and mystery in the life chosen; a personal concern for all who share in the encounter; a sense of obligation towards individuals and community; a healthy acceptance of the loneliness that misunderstandings that dealing with others can bring; an accepted experience of doubt and temptation regarding the validity of aspects of this lifestyle; and finally hope. Likewise they need a living faith; freedom of expression towards others; and communion with all for support, friendship, and love.

I would like to suggest eight exercises which are preparatory to reflection. I also propose that these exercises are preparatory to a more leisured



life for a busy leader. As reflection is not possible without them, or something like them, neither is leisure, and neither is leadership.

1. Listening. A helpful exercise to prepare for reflection is a self-training in listening, a quality that benefits our leadership. Close your eyes and pretend to be blind; receive all through your ears. Listen carefully for sounds outside the room, then inside the room. Do not hurry this but let it last for five minutes or more. This exercise can help in praying; it is also a vital quality for reflective leisure. Really listen to what others say. Block everything else out and just listen. All other qualities added to relationships are wasted if listening is not the first.<sup>25</sup>

2. Seeing. For quality reflection, focus on any one point or object. Any training like this is a training to concentrate on the decisions we encounter in leadership. When you look at a thing it changes you. Pay attention to the ordinary until you see what is of value. This prepares for the faith encounter of recollection; it takes time and restfulness. This seeing beyond the immediate picture helps leaders get away from the tyranny of petty laws and the way things have always been done and to see something else. This self-training in listening also helps the leader to see and read a situation accurately.

3. Sitting Still and Doing Nothing. A vital quality for reflection, this is also vital for a healthy leisured life. We need to resist the competitive consumer-society in which we live. We do not always have to show power, drive, insight. We do not always need to share, contribute, dialogue, discuss. So much of spirituality is permeated with compulsiveness. However, some of the greatest Christian qualities will always be important—abandonment, passive commitment to God, openness to divine providence. “Silence is the sound of creation. It is pregnant with life trying to be born. It is the great womb of creation. The transformational leader creates from this place.”<sup>26</sup>

4. Relaxation. Relax. Reflection cannot develop while the body is tense in all the muscles and leadership is not possible without the rest that brings balance in life. Wellness and wholeness will not be developed amid similar



tensions of mind and heart reflected in the body. Relaxation fosters inner peace and thus opposes the robbers of inner peace—frustration, fear, worry, anxiety, conflict, guilt, and ineffective adjustment strategies.

5. Development of the Other Senses of Taste, Smell and Touch. We all have touch hunger and anxiety. We all need to touch and to be touched. This surfaces also in our intense desire to be in contact with others, to share values with those around us. It surfaces in the need to have close personal relationships with the others who are significant in our lives.

6. Worship by Affirmation. This and the next, are great aids to reflective leadership and help us develop benevolent attitudes in our leading of others. Look at a scene with concentration and from it raise your mind to ultimate values and to God its maker. See anything in the scene of positive value, admire this, and affirm it to perfection. This training to focus on the positive has lots of practical consequences in leadership, such as approaches to performance appraisal.

7. Worship by Detachment. As above, look and concentrate, but this time find what is not of ultimate worth and admire its opposite. Affirm the opposite and ask for the purification of the negative human quality. In this you should not become involved in the human negative, but immersed in the positive that is attainable. It helps us maintain distance from the negative we find in our organizational work. This practice can counteract the tendency among many leaders to have selective perception—seeing only what they want to see. This also gives courage to confront the falsity of the sacred cows of every organization—those things we think we can never be without

8. Breathing Exercises. This is a training in calmness for prayer and life. While developing calmness, it deepens our awareness of the care of the Lord for us, and our dependence on the Lord. One example of the many for Christians: breathe in with the prayer “The Lord is my shepherd.” Breathe out with the prayer “therefore I lack nothing.” The contemplative exercise and the conviction on ultimate values of life and love go together. This use of a mantra focuses our thoughts and reflection.



We have reflected on the links between reflection and leadership. What prepares us for the former can profoundly influence the latter. A great leader creates a sense of the spiritual within the organization. Most organizations today do not need plans and strategies, they need a healthy spirit that is life-appreciating and life-giving. For the spiritual leader, leadership is not an occupation but a deliberate choice that permeates all life, physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual.

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#### NOTES

1. See Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977), 7.
2. See Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Leading with Soul: An Uncommon Journey of Spirit* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995), 15-25.
3. Mary L. Pulley, *Losing Your Job – Reclaiming Your Soul* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977). See chapter six, “Dark Times,” and chapter seven, “Soul Searching.”
4. But why say “spiritual values,” or “spiritual leadership,” as if there was some inadequacy with material leadership. Older literature made a distinction between spiritual and material levels of life, considering the former good and the latter weak. Nowadays, we tend to still use this vocabulary, as in “spiritual leadership,” but use it in a more integrative way. “Spiritual” now means permeating the whole of life with the very best values that motivate a person.
5. Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Power of Servant Leadership*, Larry C. Spears, Ed. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1998), 93. See also throughout this work where he gives the components of a life deferred: a lifestyle of greatness, cultivation of one’s own creativeness, building a new morality, growth in wisdom, trust, sense of realism, learning to live with anxiety.
6. See David Ramey, *Empowering Leaders* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1991), 94.
7. Perhaps we can be challenged by George Bernard Shaw, who said: “Few people





think more than two or three times a year. I have made an international reputation for myself by thinking once or twice a week.”

8. Ritscher, “Spiritual Leadership,” 66. In *Transforming Leadership: From Vision to Results*, John D. Adams (Ed.), 61-80 (Virginia: Miles River Press, 1986). See also Fred Kofman and Peter M. Senge, “Communities of Commitment: The Heart of Learning Organizations,” *Organizational Dynamics* 21 (Autumn, 1993), 5-23, where the authors insist on page 7 that real leadership learning takes place “in a continuous cycle of theoretical action and practical conceptualization.”

9. Leland Kaiser, *The Road Ahead: Transform Yourself, Your Organization, and Your Community* (Englewood, CO: Estes Park Institute, Notes, 1998), 2.

10. Nancy J. Eggert, *Contemplative Leadership for Entrepreneurial Organizations* (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 1998), 231. See also Marilyn Wood Daudelin, “Learning from Experience Through Reflection,” *Organizational Dynamics* 24 (Winter, 1996), 36-48.

11. I use the word *prayer* along with other religious terms since leadership is an intimate part of who a person is. For the religious person there can be no separation of the inner self’s awareness of God from any aspect of life.

12. Jack Hawley, *Reawakening the Spirit in Work* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1993), viii.

13. Eggert, *Contemplative Leadership*, 123.

14. In this section I suggest components of the nature of contemplation. For Eggert’s view, *Contemplative Leadership*, see 114–118.

15. See Peter Koestenbaum, *Leadership: The Inner Side of Greatness* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 131.

16. Koestenbaum, *Leadership: The Inner Side of Greatness*, 123.

17. Koestenbaum, *Leadership: The Inner Side of Greatness*, 93.

18. Pulley, *Losing Your Job — Reclaiming Your Soul*, 148.

19. Matthew Fox, *The Reinvention of Work* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1994), 147.

20. Pulley, *Losing Your Job — Reclaiming Your Soul*, 207.

21. Kaiser, *The Road Ahead*, 2.

22. Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader*, 28.

23. William D. Hitt, *The Model Leader: A Fully Functioning Person* (Columbus, OH: Battelle Press), 11. See also Warren G. Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publ. 2003), 56 for lessons on knowledge.

24. See Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977), 8. All references in this section on Greenleaf come from this book.

25. Fred A. Manske, *The Secrets of Effective Leadership* (Germantown, TN: Leadership Education and Development 1987), 92-94, gives twelve excellent and practical approaches and techniques to improve listening skills.

26. Kaiser, *The Road Ahead*, 126.