

Hope for the Future of Leadership

In a world where true leadership is becoming increasingly difficult to find, it can, at times, seem like a daunting task to be leaders ourselves. Many of us have grown up without strong examples of leadership in our lives. Rising divorce rates and a struggling education system, among myriad other factors, have turned our generation away from mentor-based relationships and pushed us towards our phones. Yet, even in the midst of this technologically cluttered world, there are true leaders among us who consistently influence others towards good.

As renowned author Kenneth H. Blanchard once said, "The key to successful leadership is influence, not authority." This quote is undoubtedly accurate. A good leader cannot just scream orders at his constituents until they are scared into submission – in fact, one of the most important qualities of a good leader is humility. A real leader is someone who is connected to the people they lead. They talk to and with those under them and will honestly strive for the good of everyone involved. They value real and personal relationships over mindless obedience and will sacrifice themselves if that is what is necessary to achieve the best result. Even if they are quiet, not the most charismatic in front of the scrutinizing public, or clumsy in the endless sea of noisy paparazzi, they still influence others towards the good of the common goal. They lead by example and will not ask people to complete tasks that they themselves would not be willing to fulfill if necessary.

One of the current problems with our modern society is that we are not raising strong leaders. Children have to be taught from a young age what leadership really looks like, and in this culture fraught with fractured families and convoluted morality, there is a lack of leaders to set that strong example. Our children are being taught to follow orders and never think for themselves, to turn to their devices before talking through conflicts in person, and to value others' approval more than doing the right thing. It is saddening to think of what will happen in a few years if humility, servant leadership, and integrity are not instilled in the next generation.

Of course, it is not possible to overturn years' worth of social adaptation in a short period of time. Revolutionizing the definition of leadership and then implementing that to teach our children could take years. Thankfully, there are still those among us who are rising to the challenge of becoming a great leader. People like Mike Feinberg, Benjamin Carson, Lance Armstrong, and Marian Wright Edelman are all examples of regular citizens who are doing extraordinary work to help causes that they care about deeply. These people are foot soldiers, crusading tirelessly for the communities that they have influence in, and they exemplify the values of leadership that each of us needs to learn in order to teach it to our children and future generations. There is hope, but we have to work hard.

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