



CEO Devotional – October 20, 2014

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Leadership Worth Following

My life is not unlike my memory of an imaginary high-profile golf tournament where Jesus was my partner and we were playing in an alternate shot format. The only hole of the tournament was a long uphill par 3 into a howling wind. Jesus hit an amazing shot to three inches below the hole. My shot was next. I took my time, I read the green, I allowed for the uphill slope, I considered the direction of the grain, and even checked to see if the wind would be a factor. I lined up the three-inch putt, took a deep breath, and confidently knocked the ball in the center of the cup. When I turned to congratulate Jesus on the great feat WE had accomplished, He was gone. Ever since my great win, I have talked about the tough conditions that I faced on the course that day and how putting under pressure was the key to my victory. Instead you think I would have learned and talked about humility – a key characteristic of a leader worth following.

Arthur Andersen had 90 years of uninterrupted growth in revenue and profitability. The 91st year was a bit problematic. Although the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously overturned their obstruction of justice conviction two years later, the firm was effectively out of business as soon as it was indicted. Leadership worth following is most evident in times of crisis versus the good times. As a Houston-based energy partner at Arthur Andersen, I saw firsthand how fear in a leadership team creates a leadership not worth following. I have kept a personal journal for much of my career and when I re-visit what I wrote I am shocked about the amount of time I spent fretting over the same things that don't matter year after year. Without courage, you cannot practice any other virtue consistently. Courage is learned step by step. Courage – another key characteristic of a leader worth following.

A lack of humility and a lack of courage hinder one from being a realistic optimist. I would never start or join a company or even a challenging change initiative with a team of pessimists. It is very difficult to innovate with a team led by a pessimist. If you don't know if you are an optimist or a pessimist just ask your spouse or a close friend. If they indicate you're a pessimist or delay in their response you should pray about becoming more optimistic. Jesus knew the heart of man but was never cynical. His optimism was based on knowing the Father. Being a realistic optimist is a further characteristic required of a leader worth following.

God's Word encourages, challenges, and empowers us to develop these three characteristics of a leader worth following – humility, courage and optimism – a leader like Jesus:

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up. (James 4:10)

David said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD, my God is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the Lord is finished." (I Chronicles 28:20)

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28) and Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds. (James 1:2)

Next time I talk about my great golf victory or about leadership, I should give more consideration to how I started three inches below the hole, how my source of courage is His Presence, and that my ability to be a realistic optimist is based on knowing He is in charge. Let's be leaders worth following.