

LESSON 5

THE CRITERIA OF LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL

“Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a leader among them.”
(Numbers 13:2)

1. Our Lord’s assessment of leadership potential tended to cut right across the popular opinion and custom of that day, as well as our own.

He chose laymen, rather than men from the religious hierarchy. All of the disciples came from the humbler people; they were not from the influential class but men unspoiled by the sophistication for their day.

2. He chose men with little formal education. But to their latent talents they added fervent devotion and fierce loyalty, albeit with some isolated instances of failure. Failure is a great teacher. It is a better teacher than success. The ability to fail is a great quality.

3. Because qualities of natural leadership are by no means unimportant in spiritual leadership, there is value in seeking to discover leadership potential both in oneself and in others.

4. Most people have latent and undeveloped traits that through lack of self-analysis and consequent lack of self-knowledge, may long remain undiscovered. An heart-searching study of the suggested standards of self-measurement could result in the discovery of such qualities where they exist, as well as the detection of incipient weakness that would make one unfit as a spirit leader.

A. Have you ever broken yourself of a bad habit? To lead others, one must be master of oneself.

B. Do you retain control of yourself when things go wrong? The leader who loses self-control in testing circumstances forfeits respect and loses influence. He must be calm in crisis and resilient in adversity, and disappointment.

C. Do you think independently? The spiritual leader cannot afford to let others do his thinking or make decisions for him.

D. Can you handle criticism objectively and remain unmoved under it? The humble man can derive benefit from petty and even malicious criticism.

E. Can you use disappointment creatively?

F. Do you readily secure the cooperation and win the respect and confidence of others?

G. Do you possess the ability to secure discipline without having to resort to a show of authority? True leadership is an internal quality of the spirit and requires no external show of force.

H. Have you qualified for the beatitude pronounced on the peacemaker? It is much easier to keep the peace than to make peace where it has been shattered. An important function in leadership is conciliation, the ability to discover common ground between opposing viewpoints and then induce both parties to accept it.

I. Are you entrusted with handling of difficult and delicate situations.

J. Can you induce people to do happily some legitimate thing that they would not normally wish to do?

K. Can you accept opposition to your viewpoint or decision without considering it a personal affront and reacting accordingly? Leaders must expect opposition and should not be offended by it.

L. Do you find it easy to make and keep friends? Your circle of loyal friends is an index of the quality and extent of your leadership.

M. Are you unduly dependent on the praise or approval of others?

N. Are you at ease in the presence of your superiors?

O. Do your subordinates appear at ease in your presence? A leader should give an impression of sympathetic understanding and friendliness that will put others at ease.

P. Are you really interested in people? Or do you entertain respect of persons? Is there hidden racial prejudice?

Q. Do you possess tact? Can you anticipate the likely effect of a statement before you make it?

R. Do you possess a strong and steady will?

S. Do you nurse resentment or do you readily forgive injuries done to you?

T. Are you reasonably optimistic? Pessimism is no asset to a leader.

U. Are you in the grip of a master passion such as that of Paul, who said, "This one thing I do?"

V. Do you welcome responsibility?

5. While always aiming at excellence, one should avoid the snare of perfection. However, inflexibility and intolerance in attitude is likely to alienate people who is creative and ambitious.

6. An unwillingness to accept responsibility for failure or the tendency to lay blame at someone else's door will forfeit confidence.

7. In ability to keep a confidence has cost many a leader his influence with his people. Similarly the inability to yield a point, and thus shatter the image of infallibility, will achieve the same result.