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LEADERSHIP 101c – Character with Influence By Mark Gorman

If you died today, how much of what you know would die with you?

In other words, you may be a very studious, disciplined person of tremendous character. You may have a deeply devoted walk with God - a life of prayer and devotion to God. You may have a generous heart, a willing mind, and a humble walk. But if your existence on this earth is so subtle, so quiet and demure that no one else is challenged to follow in your steps, then at some point, you must ask yourself, "What purpose do I serve on this earth? If I had not been born, how much different would this world have been?"

These are very probing questions. In fact, they may make you uncomfortable. But if you don't ask yourself these questions now, and you go on, living a life which is pretty much inconsequential, then at some point, you must admit that the only life you have affected on this earth is your own.

It has been said that "No man is an island." I believe this to be true. So, therefore, no matter how small our influence may seem, in reality, we all have some affect on the world around us. But, how great or small is your influence?

You may ask, "But isn't it more important to be a good Christian, to live a devoted, prayerful life, a life of honesty, truth and character, than to simply desire to have influence?"

And my answer would be, without any hesitation, "Yes!" If you must choose between the two ingredients of a leader, character and influence, the greater of these is character.

But must we choose? Is it possible to desire, and even to attain both?

Absolutely - it is not only possible to desire both, but also, it is better to pursue both of these than to "settle" for the better of the two.

So then, how do we achieve influence?

Well, as we have all seen in our lives, many people derive influence by force - by intimidation or coercion. This brutish manner of gaining influence over another person is not leadership. This is a "bully's" way of getting what he wants, with no concern for others, or for the consequences which his selfishness may leave in its path.

This coercive type of influence is powered by fear, which results from the intimidation they use to gain the upper hand. And because it is based solely on fear - a desire to avoid interaction with the person who is wielding the assertive hand - it does not engender any loyalty. Instead, there is a constant desire to avoid any further contact with the pushy bully who must use fear to get their way, because logic and fair play are not an option, since their motives are selfish and unfair, at best.

This type of manipulation is probably the best example of influence without character. True, they can get others to do what they want, not because they are a leader, but rather, because they instill panic and fear in the hearts of those they wish to dominate.

We see this type of so-called "leadership" in countries and regions throughout the world where dictatorial bullies wield an unsympathetic arm of power over those they wish to dominate. And, sad to say, it is a very effective way of creating activity, but again, it is devoid of anything which would inspire loyalty.

Even in America, a democratic republic, where we champion the cause of freedom, many of our citizens live in constant fear of reprisals from those who dominate them and seemingly "own" their lives, whether they are a brutal husband, an abusive parent, an overbearing, domineering boss, a "pimp", who forces a woman to sell her body for his own financial gain, a drug dealer who has no concern for the lives which are ruined as he lines his pockets with money, or an opportunistic loan shark, taking advantage of those who are in the most desperate of financial circumstances. In each of these cases, we see common ingredients: domination, fear and a total absence of loyalty.

Their agendas are fulfilled at the cost of others.

A true leader of character has an agenda which is only realized when their followers achieve success and the fulfillment of their own dreams.

Why are each of these relationships devoid of loyalty? Simple - it is a one-sided arrangement. The scales are terribly weighted on the side of those whose selfishness cares little for what others must suffer as they seek their own agenda, designed to benefit one person, at the expense of another. One is a user, and the other is being used. There is absolutely no mutual benefit in these cases.

On the other hand, the person who aspires to be diligent, loyal, fair and compassionate, may never cause pain for others, but the question is, do they inspire others? Does their life create hope for someone else, or do others only think of you

as someone who is "safe" because you won't hurt them or take advantage?

"The man who is worthy of being a leader of men will never complain of the stupidity of his helpers, of the ingratitude of mankind, nor of the inappreciation of the public. These things are all a part of the great game of life, and to meet them and not go down before them in discouragement and defeat, is the final proof of power."

Elbert Hubbard

If you enjoyed this teaching, and would like to share it with a friend, feel free to forward this e-mail to someone else.

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