

## Climbing the Ladder

Last week we discussed leadership, some of the traits associated with character and how we are being trained for a future role. I thought I'd begin with a portion of a speech given by former President Teddy Roosevelt, titled Citizenship in a Republic. The passage in question is referred to as "The Man in the Arena." It was given in Paris, France on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1910.

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is *actually* in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."- President Theodore Roosevelt

The content of this speech always stuck with me in my thoughts on leadership. Someone who is heavily involved in a situation that requires courage, skill, or tenacity, as opposed to someone sitting on the sidelines and watching, is

sometimes referred to as "the man in the arena." It identifies with someone "out front", actually in the thick of the arena.

Leading by example. Keep this perspective in mind when we read **Revelation 1:6 and 5:10**. Also, remember the "cold and timid souls, who neither know victory nor defeat", the cowards sitting in the bleachers. "But the *cowardly*, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."- **Revelation 21:8**

Having survived 30 years in the arena, I can relate to being "out there." My initial desire to climb the ladder of rank was financial motivation as I had a family to care for and a higher rank meant a bigger paycheck. In climbing the ladder in search of a greater income, I found that higher ranks had higher responsibilities. Leadership was not foremost in my thoughts. The next 3 decades of reality changed this perspective completely.

Homicide Detective was the first step on the ladder for me. Working in an office in plain clothes removed me from the arena to a point but I joined the SWAT team as a sniper to stay in the middle of things. It gave me the tactical background that later proved to be an asset.

I remember when I was first promoted to Patrol Sergeant and had a squad of 5 or 6 deputies. Making the transition from Homicide Detective back to patrol wasn't too difficult as I had simultaneously served as a SWAT alternate. The only thing about the transition was there wasn't a manual on how to lead. I now was not only responsible for myself but for the entire squad and the shift and district we were assigned. Early on, I realized my area of responsibility had dramatically increased. With rank came responsibility. It was not about stripes or gold bars. Making critical decisions became routine. I think I wore out my little Gideon's Bible I carried with me in my patrol car seeking God's wisdom. My 7 years as a detective and concurrent service as a SWAT member provided a strong foundation on the importance of the patrol function. In addition to that, I was blessed with a great bunch of experienced professionals who "showed me the ropes."

I learned that one of the core values of leadership is humility (**Proverbs 15:33, 22:4, 1 Peter 5:5**). It can manifest in many ways – being confident enough in yourself to delegate to others and let them shine instead of taking the spotlight, for instance, is an example of humility. **1 Corinthians 10:24**- "Let no one seek that which benefits himself; but let each seek that which benefits the other." **Romans 12:10**- "Be kindly affectionate toward one another in brotherly love. Let each esteem the other more highly than himself."

It was a continual learning experience for the next 11 ½ years when I was promoted again. This time, by God's grace, I was promoted to Division Commander of the entire Special Operations Division. Not just a squad but a division, over 10 Bureaus and Units with well over 100 specialized and highly skilled law enforcement officers. Now the responsibility included the specialized law enforcement functions for the entire county as well as the 9-county region and a \$12 million dollar budget to manage as well.

Again, no manual came with the job. The principles I had learned over the previous decade seemed to have been successful so the foundation had been laid. The agency did send me to an FDLE Senior Leadership Program in Tallahassee for a 13-week period over a year. As I attended this course it was apparent, they had a different perspective on what leadership was. They focused on managerial skills and not on character traits of true leadership. I did learn how to construct Power Points and write papers. Now we can discuss the differences between the two, manager vs. leader, but it is safe to say there is a difference. Some things can never be taught in a classroom. The true hardening of the steel has to be tempered with fire.

I was hoping the instructors would get into the character traits of leadership, integrity, virtue and so forth. These core principles of integrity consist of virtues

such as: compassion, dependability, generosity, honesty, kindness, loyalty, maturity, objectivity, respect, trust, and wisdom. The instructors didn't.

However, God has already given us the example of leadership in His Son and in His Word (**John 13:15, 1 Corinthians 10:11, 1 Peter 2:21, 2 Peter 1:3-11**). The Bible is full of examples of leaders.

Being honest is one of the most vital leadership traits in successful leaders.

Honesty should be shown displayed in every aspect of the leadership role (**Luke 8:15, Acts 6:3, Romans 12:17, 13:13, 2 Corinthians 8:21, 1 Timothy 2:2, Hebrews 13:18**). How many in leadership these days can be considered honest?

Now it's been argued that there are some that are born leaders. Not all but some seem to be. Most develop skills from within.

One thing I learned is that the pyramid model of leadership (used in business, military and schools) needs to be turned upside down. This example is where successive levels of leaders provide direction to those in the lesser ranks or further down the pyramid. Jesus inverted the pyramid, teaching that those who aspire to greatness must become a slave, washing the feet of others (**John 13:5-14**). The higher rank anyone achieves, the more responsibility they have to those they serve.

All too often, some people in leadership roles definitely do not belong there. For whatever reasons or whatever circumstances that put them there, they are a bad fit.

But we know that God permits them to be there (**Romans 13:1**). Too many are self-serving, abusing power and authority (**Proverbs 29:2, 29:12**), or throwing their arm out of socket trying to get noticed.

Now I've heard from a couple of you that you're not ready to lead. This is not an issue at this time. We are all in training. Looking back, perhaps I wasn't ready for some of the roles that came my way either. But God was. It was part of His plan as it is for all of us (**Revelation 1:6, 5:10**). "Being confident of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."-

**Philippians 1:6.**

God has called us, His people, to serve one another. As we serve, the "give me" way of life must not be our motivation, pushing us to be in the spotlight or gain notoriety. "But the greatest among you shall be your servant."- **Matthew 23:11**.

All glory belongs to God. As we strive to grow in the Image of our Savior Jesus Christ, we will realize there is no higher rank we will ever achieve on any leadership scale than the rank of Servant.