

SAMPLE CHAPTER
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The Tides of Life

*Learning to Lead and Serve as
You Navigate the Currents of Life*

C . W I L L I A M P O L L A R D

Foreword by Billy Graham

 **CROSSWAY**
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The Tides of Life: Learning to Lead and Serve as You Navigate the Currents of Life

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The Awesome Responsibility of Leadership

A leader has only one choice to make—to lead or mislead.

PETER DRUCKER

Peter Drucker's statement may be all that needs to be said to affirm the title of this chapter.

Leadership is needed at all levels of life: in our families, in our workplaces, in our governments, and in our churches and other places of worship. If the tides of life provide us an opportunity to lead others, will we assume the awesome responsibility to do so?

Leaders should know what they believe, why they believe it, and how that belief will benefit others. They must know where they are going and why it is important for people to follow. They must be able to respond to the changing currents of life. When there is misleadership or an absence of leadership, there will be detrimental results—a net loss to the people who are following. *There is no middle ground!*

Leadership Is Just a Means

As mentioned in previous chapters, Drucker was both a friend and an adviser during my years at ServiceMaster. There were often times when I sought his advice about a challenging leadership issue I was facing. The counsel I received always reflected his years of experience advising and working with leaders, his rich understanding of history, and his exhaustive reading and research on the subject.



Peter Drucker was a thought leader and became a wise adviser, mentor, and friend. (ServiceMaster photo. Used with permission.)

For Peter, leadership was not about the topics often emphasized in many of the popular books on leadership, including leadership qualities, personality traits, charisma, or lists of the seven or ten characteristics of a good leader. He believed the essence of leadership was performance, achieving meaningful results. He often

pointed out that leadership, in and of itself, was not good or desirable. He would go on to say that leadership was just a “means,” and that “to what end?” was the crucial question. For Drucker, and for me, the end goal of leadership involved the people who followed, the direction they were headed, and who they were becoming as they fulfilled the mission and purpose of the organization being led.

One of the first tasks of a leader is to determine whether the mission and purpose of the organization being led are meaningful. People work for a cause, not just a living. One of the reasons why Drucker was so interested in ServiceMaster was our mission, as incorporated in our four objectives: “To Honor God in All We Do; To Help People Develop; To Pursue Excellence; and To Grow Profitably.” The first two objectives were “end goals” and the second two were “means goals.”

Peter saw us as more than just a business firm making money by serving customers. We were a moral community held together by a commitment to a common purpose that extended beyond creating wealth for our shareholders. We were about developing the whole person who was producing the results of the firm, and we had the potential to make significant contributions to the societies within which we worked. The writers of the Harvard Case Studies on ServiceMaster saw the same potential when they discussed our people focus as being instrumental in breaking the cycle of failure among service workers.

In our business, we found that when there was an alignment between the mission of the firm and a person’s reasons for being and doing, there was the potential for extraordinary results and for the growth and development of the people producing those results. For us, this was the essence of performance: a result we as leaders were responsible for achieving.

The Obligation to Those Who Follow

Our leadership was not just a duty or a function of title or rank; it was the fulfilling of our obligation to the people who followed. In

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his book *Leadership Jazz*, Max De Pree referred to this obligation as the leader's posture of indebtedness. As a leader implements this commitment, there develops a relationship and a bond of trust with the followers that confirm the leader's legitimacy, authority, and reliability.

One of the best ways I found to communicate this responsibility and obligation of leadership was to picture it as a debt, a liability, if you will, on the balance sheet of the leader.

When people were given the opportunity to assume significant leadership positions at ServiceMaster, we also gave them the opportunity to purchase some ServiceMaster stock. I remember a time when I was discussing this opportunity with one of our newly appointed officers. He had asked to see me because he was unsure whether he wanted to purchase more stock since he would have to borrow some money to do so. He was delighted about his new promotion and new responsibility to lead one of our divisions, but he was concerned about the risk he would be assuming if he incurred additional indebtedness.

As part of discussing this concern with him, I asked him to make a simple T account balance sheet of his assets and liabilities. When he did so and showed me his work sheet, I noticed he had listed only one liability on his balance sheet, and that was the mortgage on his house. I asked why he hadn't listed the obligation he was assuming to the eight hundred people in the division he was going to lead. I followed up with a series of other questions, including:

- In a year from now, will there be opportunities for one thousand people or six hundred people in this division?
- Will there be growth in customers served and in the revenue and profit of this division?
- Will there be the potential for increases in compensation for the people and opportunities for promotions within the division?
- How many people in this division are the principal breadwinners in their homes, with families dependent upon their paychecks?

- How many will be better people, better spouses, better parents, better leaders in their communities because of their growth and development in their work in this division?
- Will your leadership have anything to do with the answers to these questions? If it does, you are assuming an obligation that is a much bigger debt than any amount you would have to borrow to purchase more stock. If your leadership doesn't have anything to do with the answers to these questions, then you are telling me we don't need a leader in this division.

After considering these questions, he asked for more time—not only to think about whether he would buy the stock, but also about whether he wanted to take on the obligation of the new assignment. For me, this was a positive sign. He was beginning to realize the awesome responsibility of leadership and the obligation he would be assuming to the people who would follow. A few days later, he called me and said he was ready to assume the obligation of leadership and that he would buy the stock.

A year later, he was making a big difference in the lives of the people he was leading and in the performance of this division. He was not only fulfilling the obligation he had assumed, but was learning how to serve those he was leading and to subordinate his desires to the needs and development of the people who were following.

The Opportunity to Serve

This dimension of serving is often referred to as servant leadership. There are many books on this subject, and I have discussed it in several chapters of the books I have already written.

It is not a new subject. It has roots in the teachings of Jesus. The often-cited example is His teaching on the night He was betrayed. It was His last time with His disciples before He was crucified. As He took a towel and a basin of water and then washed their feet, He reminded them that their roles would be changing in the future. They would no longer be disciples. They would become

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leaders in spreading the word of God's redeeming love and in building His church. He was teaching them in a very practical and poignant way that effective leadership in His church would not be about them—the titles, positions of authority, or platforms they would assume. Instead, it would be about the people who followed and the nurturing and growth of these people in their faith to the point where they would be able to multiply themselves in the lives of others.

Does this example fit in today's world? There is certainly no scarcity of feet to wash, and towels are always available. I suggest that the only limitation, if there is one, is the ability of leaders to exercise the spirit of humility, subordinate self, and become engaged with compassion and love for those they lead. When we lead by serving, we assume a commitment to be examples in our public and private lives, to be initiators of change and growth, and to be always willing to do whatever we ask others to do.

Servant leadership has always been a learning experience for me. Unfortunately, there are often many trappings around leadership positions, including the perks and prestige of office and the arrogance of success that tempts leaders to focus on themselves and think they have all the answers rather than to focus on their responsibility to others. It is the evil of hubris. It is often subtle and can have a cumulative effect on judgment unless it is nipped in the bud.

The Evil of Hubris

An example from my experience may help to illustrate this point. One of the benefits of my friendship with Peter Drucker was that he never hesitated to point out areas where I could improve my leadership. One of those important moments of learning occurred when we were traveling together to conduct a management seminar in Tokyo.

After the seminar was over, Peter and I had dinner together. I shared my disappointment and, yes, even anger that no one from

the leadership team of our Japanese business partner had come to the seminar. They had been invited and had promised to attend. Since some of our current and prospective customers had been there, it had been an opportunity for the leaders of our Japanese partner to learn and also to make important business connections.

I explained to Peter that we had recently decided to delay bringing one of our new service lines to Japan and that our partners were no doubt upset with the decision, and this was probably the reason they had not come. I also told Peter I had decided to cancel my planned trip the next day to their headquarters in Osaka, and instead I would take an early flight back to the United States. He encouraged me to rethink my position and gave some advice based on his understanding of Japanese culture. Although I politely listened, I had made up my mind I was not going to accept his advice and that I would reschedule my flight the next morning.

After dinner, we returned to our respective hotel rooms. At about 10:30, Peter called and asked if I would come to his room. He was still concerned about my reactions and wanted a further discussion.

As Peter opened the door, I could tell by the look on his face that he was troubled. He told me to sit on the chair near his bed and he sat down on the edge of his bed. He looked me straight in the eye and said: "Bill, you are suffering from hubris. It's time for you to eat some humble pie." He explained how quickly leaders can lose touch with the reality of their responsibility and be consumed by pride and self. He pointed out that my job as a leader was to go to Osaka, meet with our business partners, resolve our differences, and rebuild the relationship. This result was needed for the continued growth of our business in Japan and for the opportunities it would provide to our people. It was my job as a leader to do this; it was not something I could delegate.

It was great advice. The next morning, I was on the train to Osaka. My meeting with the president of our business partner and his team accomplished the right result for our business and for our

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people as we renewed our relationship. The lesson was clear: my leadership responsibility was not about me or my feelings. It was about what should be done for our business and for our people.

There is another chapter to this story. Six months after this meeting, the president of our business partner in Japan died suddenly. Soon after I heard the news, his wife contacted me and asked if I would come to Japan and participate as a special friend in his funeral ceremony. I was honored, but frankly, I was somewhat perplexed about how I could do so in a way that would reflect the sincerity of our friendship while also sharing the great hope of my faith and the truth of God's redeeming love. I knew it would be a traditional Japanese ceremony led by both a Buddhist monk and a Shinto priest, and I did not want my words to disrupt or offend.

At the funeral, I shared some of what we had discussed the last time we had met, including the importance of forgiveness in building relationships of trust. I closed with a word about what God's forgiveness meant in my life and about His offer of forgiveness for all who would receive it. My message was well received. Once again, God in His wisdom used the doing of business to cross the lines of culture and faith to honor the truth of His Word.

As a leader seeks to be an example for others to follow, it is important to remember that actions speak louder than words. If I had not made that trip to Osaka and eaten some humble pie, there would have been no opportunity and no words to speak six months later.

Acknowledging Mistakes, Seeking Forgiveness

Mistakes in leading people are often painful. Implicit in leadership are the power and authority to make decisions that affect others. You can be right in your intent and decision but wrong in how you use power to implement that decision. The mistakes I have made as a leader that hurt the most are ones that resulted in breached relationships. Sometimes, in seeking to achieve specific performance goals, I have pressed too hard for results without understand-

ing the subjective factors of fear, insecurity, or risk influencing a person's substandard performance. The pain of honestly facing mistakes and seeking forgiveness is part of the learning process of leading and serving others. They often result in a greater relationship of trust with those you lead. This is part of learning the awesome responsibility of leadership.

However, if a leader's mistake or failure results in a breach of trust, forgiveness does not necessarily mean the former relationship of trust has been restored. An act of distrust is not easily forgotten. For trust to be restored, it has to be re-earned, and that takes time. Without trust, leadership is not effective. If trust is not restored, the leader needs to be removed; otherwise, there is the risk of the leader becoming a tyrant as part of getting things done.

There were times when I had to remove leaders and times when I had to terminate their employment. For me, it was always a painful decision. There were questions about whether I had done everything I could have to support and develop that person. Was the original appointment a bad fit? Did the person have the skills and knowledge to do the assigned job? Was it more my fault than the person's fault that he or she had failed?

A decision to terminate is more often than not a mixed bag; seldom is there a clear-cut case of fault. Yet a decision has to be made. When there is ineffective leadership, the people who follow suffer. A decision delayed results in the "stealing" of their opportunities to perform and flourish in their growth and development.

Knowing Right and Wrong

It is important for leaders to exemplify in word and deed the difference between right and wrong, and that their speech and actions reflect an ethic that can be trusted.

When I retired from my leadership role at ServiceMaster, we were managing and employing more than two hundred thousand people, delivering services to more than ten million customers in the United States and in forty-five other countries. There was a wide

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diversity among our people—diversity of skills, talents, gender, race, ethnicity, cultural backgrounds, and religious beliefs. What are the common rights and wrongs with such a mix of people?

As we developed certain standards for the ethical behavior of our people, our core value system was centered on our view of the dignity, worth, and potential of every person regardless of the differences cited above. It was wrong to deceive or withhold material information from our people. It was right to have a compensation system that represented a fair distribution of the results of the firm and provided every employee with the opportunity for ownership in the firm.

We believed the truth of what we said should be told by what we did. We believed that, to our customers, truth involved exceeding their expectations in the quality of the services we delivered. We all shared in the risk of the performance of the firm, with those in senior management assuming higher risk. We were all to take part in developing the whole person, not only in what they were doing in their jobs but also in the people they were becoming.

We sought to be an open community. This principle was reflected in the way we designed our corporate headquarters. Nobody worked behind closed doors. Glass was everywhere, confirming our desire to have an open office and an open mind. No executive office captured an outside window; the view to the outside was available to all.

We made our share of mistakes in implementing these ethical standards, but our first objective was a constant reminder that the rights and wrongs relating to the treatment of people should never be compromised. This objective required both fairness and accountability. Our mission became the organizing principle for the firm wherever we operated. It was a self-correcting tool. When we made mistakes or acted in a way inconsistent with our mission, the mistakes were typically flushed out into the open for correction and forgiveness.

Noel Tichy, a professor at the University of Michigan's Graduate School of Business, in his book *The Leadership Engine*, describes companies that build and develop leaders at every level of the organization. One of the companies he studied and reported on was ServiceMaster. At first, he was concerned about whether we would be a valid example because of our mission and objectives. He writes:

For many people who don't know the folks at ServiceMaster, the stated value of "To honor God in all we do" is troubling. Before we went to visit them, one of my colleagues suggested that their religious orientation might make them unsuitable as models for more "normal" organizations. But the truth is that . . . when you get to know the people at ServiceMaster, you quickly see there are no traces of ethereal other-worldliness about them. They are serious businesspeople firmly focused on winning. In Pollard's recent book, *The Soul of the Firm*, he talks about the link between God and profits. "Profit is a means in God's world to be used and invested, not an end to be worshipped. Profit . . . is a standard for determining the effectiveness of our combined efforts."

Tichy goes on to say:

ServiceMaster has achieved such adherence to its values . . . because everyone from [the top] on down works at making them an everyday reality. One of [their] twenty-one leadership principles says (No. 6), "If you don't live it, you don't believe it." And they really mean it. Service permeates all the way to the highest level of the company. . . . And no matter how senior they become, each spends at least one day a year performing front-line service.

How one determines right and wrong and how one exercises authority in the appointment or termination of a person's job are two of the most important questions that need to be asked in determining whether a person has the integrity to lead. If leaders

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have no ultimate reference point for determining what is morally right or wrong, or if they fail to accept their potential responsibility in the nonperformance of those they lead, they don't understand the meaning of integrity.

Defining Reality

The essence of performance is achieving meaningful results. It has been my experience that in order to achieve meaningful results, leaders must be able to define reality. They must know what is happening to the business at the margin, understand the trends of today that will impact tomorrow, and initiate needed changes for continued growth.

One of the challenges for leaders, as the organizations or units they lead grow in size and complexity, is that most of the reports they receive on whether the desired results are being achieved deal with averages, which relate more to the past than the present and are often not indicative of future trends.

An example of a business measurement that is indicative of what may happen in the future is a marginal revenue/marginal cost curve that provides a view of the returns from adding new business. This information helps leaders understand whether trends are developing that indicate future growth or reduction in the profitability of the firm. The world is always changing and moving. Tides are coming in or going out. Good businesses always collect more competitors, which often can change the rules of the ball game. Employee turnover rates, customer retention rates, and sales close ratios are also sources of key indicative information at the margin of business.

It is also important for a leader to personally "dip" and keep in touch with what is happening at certain strategic intercept points of the business. This is another way of understanding what is happening at the margin. In our business, one of those points was where the service met the customer. During my term as CEO, one of the standards I set for myself was to talk with at least one customer

and several of our service workers every week to listen and learn what was happening at the margin of our business. Our “We Serve Day”—one day each year when every employee, no matter his or her job or title, was expected to participate in delivering one of our services—was designed to keep all our people in touch with the needs of our customers and those who were delivering our services.

Knowing your business at the margin helps in defining the realities for determining growth expectations, especially as budgets are developed. One year, as I was reviewing our business with Warren Buffett, an important shareholder, I was trying to explain why one of our units was forecasting only ten percent growth for the coming year when our standard for the overall business was twenty percent. I told him that before budgets were finalized, I thought I could get the team leading this unit to look at the possibility of a twelve percent or fifteen percent growth rate. He looked at me and said: “Bill, why would you do that? The market they are in isn’t growing. An eight percent growth would be a great result. Remember, it’s not how hard you row the boat, it’s how fast the stream is moving.” He was helping me to define reality. I realized I had not been close enough to this unit to understand how slow the stream was moving.

Knowing the business at the margin is also helpful in determining when and where to initiate change. Change is inevitable. Tomorrow is always different than today. Doing what you did yesterday will not always take you to where you need to be tomorrow. Some of your business lines are always in the process of becoming yesterday’s breadwinners. Change and innovation are necessary to keep growing.

The people out making it happen every day are often the experts at knowing what changes need to be made. Leaders have to provide an environment for innovation and change, with elbow room for mistakes and with the recognition that if a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing poorly to begin with. New ideas may look good on the planning board, but only when you get started can

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you test them with customers. Not every new idea will be a good idea, and some of them will have to be shut down. As Drucker reminds us, “A dead corpse doesn’t smell any better the longer you keep it around.”

There are times as a leader when you find yourself in the middle of a crisis. The unexpected happens or a slow-burning fire turns into an explosive event. Being able to define reality is of critical importance in determining what decisions need to be made and in communicating what happened and what action has to be taken.

Several months after I came back into the CEO role at ServiceMaster as the result of the illness of my partner, two relatively minor issues suddenly became major issues. One involved a business unit that had experienced slow growth and then suddenly reported a big operating loss. The other involved a lawsuit that had been pending for several years. After a short trial, a jury had rendered a verdict against us and awarded the plaintiff a relatively small amount of compensatory damages but a large amount (more than \$100 million) of punitive damages.

The news of both events hit at about the same time. What had gone wrong? Why were we surprised with these results? We were a public company. News releases had to be issued. The news would affect the value of our stock. What would I say to our shareholders, to the investment community, to our people? What needed to be done to correct these situations? How would these events affect the future of our company? The answers to these questions and the decisions that needed to be made all required the defining of reality. Time was short.

The news of the loss in the business unit came just before the close of the quarter. While the operating loss was not large enough to change what we had previously projected for the quarterly earnings of the entire company, it did have a potential impact on whether we should take a write-down of the intangible assets of this business unit.

As I listened to the alternative views of our accountants and our outside auditors, including their review of the various methods of computing the present value of these intangible assets, it was clear that some methods of valuation would support a conclusion that no write-down would be necessary. I also realized that if we did take a write-down, we would report a down quarter in profitability for the first time in more than twenty years. I also knew this business unit would probably not be part of our future and that we should consider selling it within the next year.

As part of defining reality and determining what decision should be made, I asked the operating leader responsible for this business unit some simple but direct questions: "If we sold the business today, what could we sell it for? And how would we, or the buyer, value these intangible assets?" His answers led all to agree that a major write-down should be taken. Reality was defined and a decision, although difficult, was made. We also decided that steps would be taken within the next twelve months to sell this business unit.

The second issue involved a meeting with our in-house attorneys and the attorneys representing us at the trial. I was advised that the trial judge had a bias against large public companies and that he had determined in the middle of the trial to strike our answer and deny us the opportunity to present our defense to the claims of the plaintiff. So the case had gone to the jury with only the claims of the plaintiff.

Our in-house counsel also advised me that some of the actions and statements of our trial attorneys had alienated the judge. Both attorneys were confident the decision of the judge and the jury, including the large punitive damage award, would be reversed on appeal. Although I left that meeting with concern over the way we had been represented, I had taken time before the meeting to read some of the trial record, and it was clear to me that the judge had acted inappropriately. A decision was made to appeal.

In seeking to define reality, I could communicate to the public,

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our shareholders, and our people that we were confident the decision of the trial court would be reversed on appeal. In the next twelve months, we achieved that result and were able to settle the case with the payment of a reasonable amount.

Talking to God

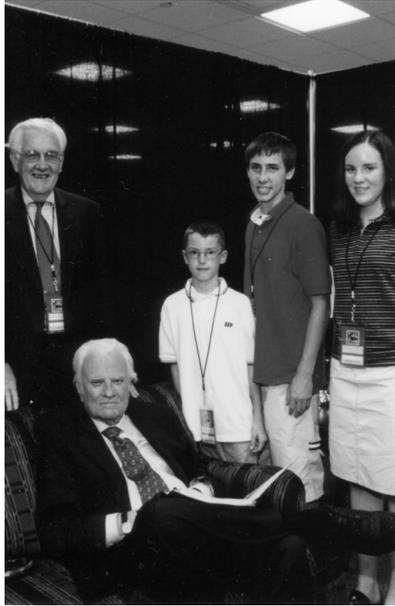
During this time of crisis, I specifically sought God's guidance in my decision-making. For me, as a Christian, prayer is a vital link in developing my relationship with God. One of the privileges I have had has been working with Billy Graham and participating as a board member of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and as chairman of its executive committee. Billy has been a mentor to me by his words of encouragement and advice, and by the example of his life, including his prayer life. His continued focus on prayer and the study of God's Word has provided direction in his life and ministry. Fame and popularity have not distracted him from a single-minded calling, preaching and sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—the good news of salvation for all who will receive it.

Billy's genuineness and his passion for the physical and spiritual welfare of others confirm the reality of his message. He has been not only a good preacher but a great leader. The organization he has led reflects his integrity. His leadership has not been about promoting self but about promoting the Gospel.

Along the way, he faced criticism from those of other faiths and ideologies. Some also came from other Christians. He dealt with detractors by sticking to his message rather than trying to answer his critics. C. S. Lewis said of Billy during a meeting they had in 1954, "You have many critics but I have never met one of your critics who knows you personally."

Some have suggested that Billy Graham has a spiritual aura about him. I would never describe it as such; however, I would say this about him: there has never been a time when I have visited with him—in his office, in his home, in a hotel room, in a hospital

room—when there hasn't been an open Bible he had been reading just before I came. And before I left, he would either close our time with prayer or ask me to do so. Knowing God and being known by Him has been Billy's strength.



Billy Graham, God's messenger of the good news of the Gospel, taking the time to share from his open Bible with some of my grandchildren.

Deciding and Delegating

Leaders make decisions. Good decisions are often based not on all we know at the time, but on the steps of implementation we build into a decision at the time it is made.

Many of the decisions made by leaders are based not on facts but on other people's opinions or perceptions of the facts. This was the reason why Drucker suggested we need some disagreement about what should be done as part of testing the perceptions upon which we are basing our decisions. In making decisions, we should

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always seek to resolve the generic issues. Otherwise, we may be dealing only with symptoms and not causes.

Although some decisions cannot be delegated by leaders, many can. Learn to delegate. It is an important part of the development of the people with whom you are working. At times, you may want to retain the right to approve before a decision is implemented, but in a well-run organization, leaders always push decision-making out to where the action is and as close as possible to those who understand how it will affect the customer.

My predecessor at ServiceMaster, Ken Wessner, was an expert in delegating. He did so in a manner that, when you walked away, you knew you were now responsible for making the decision, and you never wanted to let him down. I remember the day, about six months after I had been appointed CEO, when he came in to see me and to talk about how the business was doing. After ten minutes of talking about general trends in the business, he asked me about one of our major business units. I told him I had some concern, including whether this unit was going to meet its goals for the next quarter.

He said, “You are worried about whether the leader of that unit is making the right and necessary operating decisions, aren’t you?” When I told him I was, he replied: “But Bill, that’s not your job. It’s the job of the person leading that business unit. He’s got to make it happen. You have delegated that responsibility to him. I know you will feel the pain and accountability if he doesn’t meet his goals, but you are no longer operating that business unit. You are the CEO of the entire company. You’ve got to start thinking about where this company is going to be three years from now, five years from now, not just the next quarter.”

Ken then reminded me of the importance of the principle of subsidiarity, that *it is wrong to steal a person’s right or ability to make a decision*. He said: “He’s got the right to make the operating decisions. See to it that he feels the responsibility to make them and

to meet the goals he has set. If he doesn't, then you have to make the decision about whether he should be removed."

Ken went on to point out some of the strategic issues before us if we were to maintain our growth momentum: "Bill, we are going to need another growth curve. What that will be is your decision and it's your responsibility to make it happen." It was another one of those great moments of learning from a mentor who was a good teacher and a great leader.

Soul Craft

There is much more I could say about the awesome responsibility of leadership, but most of it has already been said in the other books I have written. Let me close with the story about Maria and a question for you.

Maria joined the ServiceMaster family as a housekeeper doing menial cleaning tasks in a long-term care facility we served in the Chicago area. At the time, she spoke only Spanish. She had no prior regular work experience and had limited formal education, but she did have a desire to learn. She had empathy for others. She wanted to do something significant. She had hope.

Maria accomplished much in her ServiceMaster career, not just for herself but also for her teammates and customers. She soon became a supervisor, then a manager, and then led the ServiceMaster program in several health care facilities and school districts in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Texas. She became proficient in English and mastered college-level courses in accounting, history, and English literature. In her career, she accomplished not just work objectives, but also important family objectives, including supporting her aging mother. People have cared for Maria along the way, and her response has been loyalty to the firm and leadership in providing excellent service to the customer.

While most of what I have just said about Maria was in my book *The Soul of the Firm*, the following comments she sent to me after that book was published confirm that she had become a leader

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with a sincere care for the people who followed her and a deep gratitude for those who had invested in her. She told me: “Leadership is much more an art, a belief, a condition of the heart than a set of things to do. I have had many mentors in ServiceMaster and their care has benefitted me and helped me develop my leadership skills and loyalty to the company and its objectives.”

The world is filled with Marias. Our job as leaders and managers is simply to identify them and provide an environment in which they can be nurtured, grow, and develop. In so doing, we are participating in what I refer to as soul craft—the soul of the person and the soul of the firm.

So, will the leader please stand up? Not the person with the title of president, but the role model. Not the highest-paid person in the firm, but the risk taker. Not the person with the most perks, but the servant. Not the person who is the promoter of self, but the promoter of others. Not the maintainer, but the initiator. Not the taker, but the giver. Not the talker, but the listener. People want effective leadership, leadership they can trust, leadership that will nurture their souls, leadership that will make a difference in achieving meaningful results.

The workplace is not just where we get things done. It is also a place that can become a moral community for the development of the human character. A community that reflects a responsibility for its people and a care for those they serve. A community where it is okay to raise the question of God.

I have retired from my leadership responsibilities at ServiceMaster. As I look back, I can add up the numbers that show growth in profits, customers served, and a return for our shareholders averaging twenty percent a year. While these figures are part of a normal business assessment of performance, the conclusion for me cannot be limited to money or value-creation measurements. The real and lasting measurement is whether the results of my leadership can be seen in the changed and improved lives of the people I led as they had the opportunity to grow and

develop in their work and respond to the reality of God and His redeeming love for each one of them. We are all prisoners of our hope. It is our hope that sustains us. It is our vision of what could be that inspires us and those we lead.

If you are currently in a leadership position, or you are ready to assume such a role, the choice will be yours. Will you lead or mislead? Will you invite God to be with you?