

“Leading With Integrity”

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Notes by Dave Kraft

When I try to accomplish by human means what can be done only by spiritual means, I embezzle God’s authority. Unfortunately we are not as conscious of our character flaws as we are of our inadequacies in the areas of knowledge and experience. In my sixty years in business, nobody has said, “I have a flawed character.” It is much easier to admit a lack of skill than to admit to a character weakness. Yet from 75 to 80 percent of the failures I’ve seen have been character failures. (14) One of America’s wealthiest investors said at Harvard that the three qualities he looks for in those with whom he will invest his money are character, intelligence, and energy. (20)

Ego-driven people satisfy their ego from the cause, while responsibility-motivated people sacrifice their ego to the cause. (22) It requires a tough mind and a strong heart to love truth, no matter where it comes from. (23) The secret is expressed in Jim May’s book, *In His Place*, in which he asks the question, “Are you working for God or is he working through you?” (25) Leadership demands a strong will—not a selfish or stubborn will, but a determined will to do what needs (26) doing. (27) The same synthetic joy can come in the drive for success. Church growth based on ego and ambition may be exciting, but it cannot be joyful in the biblical sense. (29) Every effective leader is imbued with passion. An accomplishment is often in direct proportion to the amount and intensity of the leader’s passion. I like this definition of passion: “Passion is concentrated wisdom with high energy in the pursuit of meaning.” (31)

In leadership, focused passion accomplishes much more than scholarly intellect. The second source of passion is the vision. The clearer the vision, the more focused the passion. If the vision becomes blurred, the passion becomes dissipated and weakened. (32) The apostle Paul, a man of exceptional passion, was willing even to be accused if the purpose for which he was called was not accomplished. Self-sacrifice is the acid test of our passion. (33) Even the desire to *be* significant, rather than the desire to *do* significant things, can be a form of self-love. (35) Oswald Chambers continually repeats that the knowledge of God comes through obedience, not learning. It’s possible for a person to have a head for God but not a heart for God. (37) Regarding the future: “live in peace without worrying about the future. Unnecessary worrying and imagining the worse possible scenario will strangle your faith.” (39) God never complicates what can be done simply. The focused life is the powerful life. Recently I was discussing decision-making with an investment banker. He had good advice: “Once you decide what you want to do and the strategy that will accomplish it, then decision-making becomes simple. You do the things that advance the strategy and avoid the things that hinder it.” (42) Here I received some additional help from the theologian Peter Kreeft, who said that temptation becomes a sin only when we mix will with it. Fenelon doesn’t encourage self-evaluation. I think the apostle Paul took this view by saying that he didn’t even judge himself.

Fenelon says, “If you need to know you’re doing well, you’re not walking by faith. Constant evaluation is just a preoccupation with yourself...” Regarding others, Fenelon writes, “The daily standards that you live by should not be relaxed in any way, yet you must deal gently with the faults of others. Learn to be lenient with the less important matters but maintain your firmness over that which is essential.” (44) It is enough that we *want* solid character, for then we are teachable and reclaimable after failing. The worst flaw is to believe we are not vulnerable. (47) One way we can tell if we’re self-serving is when we are tempted to augment what we say according to the audience reaction. I find confession easily turns into explanation and then into justification, or at least rationalization. (51) Instead of confession, often we see leaders put a spin on sin. (53) Abraham Lincoln, “I’d rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.” (54) Generally a leader who is control-driven is serving self more than God. This desire for control is a major character issue. (55)

The person of God needs integrity of character—not perfect character (60) Power, prestige, and money appeal to most of us, and to use methods that produce these will continue to be a temptation. (63) The church still faces, no matter its size, two basic questions: Can Christ be Savior without being Lord? Are members customers or distributors? The church of any size is faced with the temptation to make the irresponsible comfortable. (64) These spiritual leaders seemingly delight in anonymity. They don’t seek honors or take time to do activities just for recognition. (65) These spiritual leaders select associates according to gifts and passion, knowing that work delegated to people with the proper gifts and passion needs little supervision, only coordination to move the vision forward. None of them is cursed with the need to be needed. They are anxious for others to get the credit. (66) I never knew what a relief it could be not to be establishing the pecking order with people... (68)

As I think about spiritual leadership, I become convinced that the key is the Holy Spirit energizing and directing the leader’s uniqueness and gifts by giving him or her a vision that creates a passion. (69) Respected church consultant Lyle Schaller has said that if a pastor does not have a passion for the mission, he can forget the rest of leadership. A passion to make a worth-while difference is indispensable to effectiveness. Passion and vision need to work together. Passion energizes vision, and vision disciplines the passion. The clearer the vision, the greater the passion. The closer we get to the goal, the more it demands of us and the more it means to us. (77) A linguist with Wycliffe Bible Translators once told me that in twenty primitive languages the word for *belief* and *do* is the same. (81) *Am I content with who I am becoming or who I have become?* (82) As I’ve gotten older, I’ve found the less I do the more I enjoy it because I’m more selective, more thorough, more conscious of what I’m trying to do. I’ve learned that activity is not the mark of accomplishment. The more I can delegate tasks that are not uniquely mine, the more attention I can pay to those that are. (83) Christ had three close disciples, and I find most leaders need to have a few close to them to share in the leadership.

I have found it helpful to employ people in the area of their gifts and passions. Then you have only to coordinate them, not supervise them. (113) Relational skills are important, particularly in team play. Loners can be stars but rarely good team members. (114) During the Second World War, industry discovered that when workers learned new skills, they did not retain the information unless they used it immediately. (135) A prominent psychiatrist once told me that America's second greatest sin, after refusing to delay gratification, is transference, at the heart of so much of the victim syndrome. (146) Dr. Howard Rome, the psychiatrist, once told me, "You don't understand motivation until you understand thirst. Motivation is satisfying a thirst." With this insight I began to observe that many pastors present water to non-thirsty members. (163)