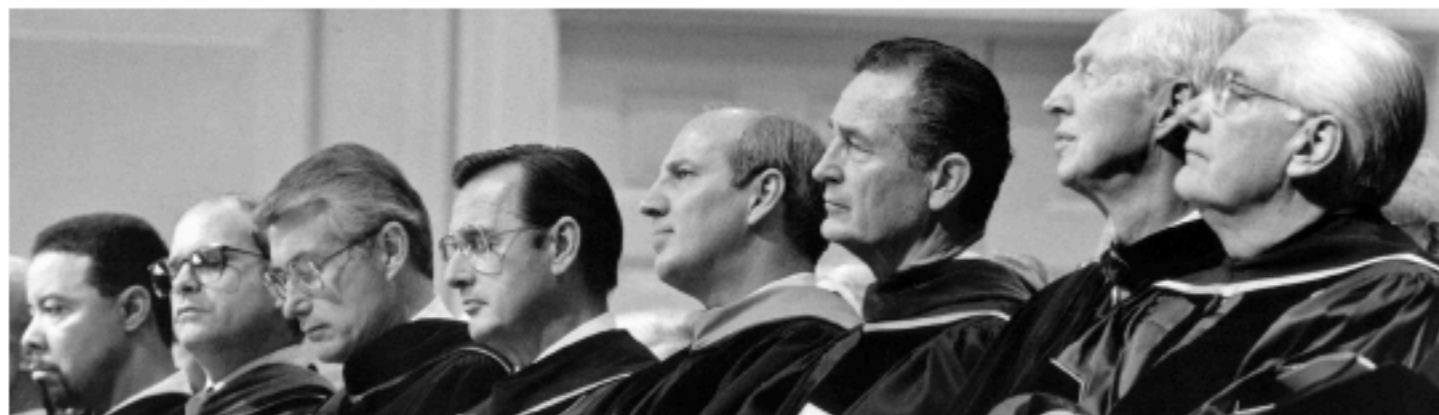


The Awesome Responsibility of Leadership

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 responsibility to do so?

BY C. WILLIAM POLLARD '60



People want effective leadership: leadership they can trust, leadership that will nurture their souls, leadership that will make a difference in achieving meaningful results.

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. The mission of ServiceMaster is incorporated in our four objectives: To Honor God in All We Do, To Help People Develop, To Pursue Excellence, and To Grow Profitably.

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. 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.

This dimension of serving is often referred to as servant leadership. 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 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? 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 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.

These thoughts on leadership come from Mr. Pollard's new book, The Tides of Life: Learning to Lead and Serve as You Navigate the Currents of Life, ©2014 by C. William Pollard. Used by permission of Crossway, www.crossway.org.

C. William Pollard '60 has a J.D. from the Northwestern University School of Law and is Chairman of Fairwyn Investment Company. For 25 years, he participated in the leadership of The ServiceMaster Company, twice serving as the company's CEO. He is the author of numerous books and articles, including *The Soul of the Firm* (Delta One Leadership Institute, 2010). He and his wife, Judy '60, have been married for over 55 years and have four adult children and 15 grandchildren.