

The Most Pressing Leadership Issue of Today

During the opening prayer of the presidential inauguration, Rick Warren prayed that Barack Obama would lead with humility. The most pressing leadership issue of today is a lack of humility amongst leaders. Webster's dictionary defines humility as "having or showing a consciousness of one's shortcomings; modest." Jim Collins describes five levels of leadership in his book, *Good To Great*. According to Collins, the Level 5 leader operates at the highest level of leadership, marked with the duality of humility and strong will. Collins states, "Level 5 leaders channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company. It's not that Level 5 leaders have no ego or self-interest. Indeed, they are incredibly ambitious - but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves."

When a leader lacks humility, a number of things occur. One, these leaders, driven by a search for significance and power, serve their own interests in lieu of the interests of the team or organization. Second, these leaders usually have a tendency to micromanage others because they struggle to trust and share power with others. Because trust is minimized, these leaders become highly controlling and fresh ideas and creativity dissipate. Third, these leaders often lack integrity. It is extremely difficult to own responsibility and to admit wrong when humility is not present.

Humility in a leader can transform an organization because the leader sets the tone for how the entire team operates. A great picture of this is within a family setting. When Mom or Dad has humility, the entire tenor of the home is relaxed and open. Relationships are the priority, along with the over-all strength of the family. If the leader, in this case Mom or Dad, lacks humility, they become focused on their power, control and personal success. The home becomes tense and verges on unwelcoming. In this setting, children or spouses can feel an overwhelming pressure to be perfect, losing their sense of individuality.

It takes work to lead from a place of humility, but the difference this effort will make in your life - both personal and professional - is worth pursuing.