

10 Ten Qualities of Servant Leaders

Bill Turner, Former W.C. Bradley Co. Chairman and CEO

Yogi Berra, one of my favorite philosophers, once said, “You can observe a lot just by watching.” I have been blessed to have had the opportunity to observe a number of great servant leaders. This list includes my Grandfather (W.C. Bradley), my Dad (D. Abbott Turner), Robert W. Woodruff, and Roberto Goizueta at the Coca-Cola Co. I am also watching a wonderful group of young people in the Servant Leadership Program at Columbus State University grow into servant leaders. In reflecting on this group of servant leaders, who have influenced my life, I have developed my own list of common qualities of servant leaders that I would like to share with you.

Quality #1 **Unconditional Love** is the foundation of servant leadership. Without love, servant leadership becomes just another way to manipulate people to get something done. Scott Peck defines love as a commitment to extend one’s self for the spiritual growth of another. Love is what gives joy and meaning to life, and man can not live productively for very long without love and meaning.

Quality #2 **Brokenness** is realizing that life is empty without love; or as Jesus put it, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs” (the Kingdom of Heaven is a Kingdom of right relationships). A leader must have brokenness in order to stay humble in the midst of accolades and successes, and **pride is the deadly enemy of servant leadership**. Pride creates the desire for power to coerce and control people, and this kind of power always causes resentment, strife and even violence. The Bible says, “Pride goes before destruction.” Most of the world’s problems today are caused by pride. Pride breeds what I call “*The Deadly P’s*” – *the desire for power, position, prestige, popularity, possessions and prejudice*. Unfortunately, when we **think** we have humility, we have already lost it.

Quality #3 **Self-awareness** only takes place in an atmosphere of love and humility. A leader needs to make an honest assessment of his/her strengths and weaknesses, and either work to eliminate the weaknesses or delegate the weaknesses to someone else. Leaders need to understand and identify their feelings and why they react the way they do. I love Carl Sandburg’s statement, “There’s a zoo within me, but I am the keeper of the zoo.” I have learned that feelings come in layers. For example, when I experience anger, there is usually some kind of fear beneath that anger – fear of failure, fear of not being in control, or fear of not being useful. A servant leader must understand self, share self, and forget self in service to others.



Quality #4 **Being Real** – Servant leadership requires being a real authentic, vulnerable, and transparent person. One of the greatest gifts we can give another person is to trust them with our true self. It takes courage to be fully human, but this is the only way we can know unconditional love. When we pretend to be something we’re not, we project a phony image that we hope people will love and admire. But there is tremendous freedom in being who we really are. Being real develops trust among people, and **trust and integrity are an organization’s greatest competitive weapon**. A leader has the responsibility to model what he/she wants to see happen.

Quality #5 **Foresight** – Robert Burkhardt defines leadership as “the inability to sit back and watch the world go to Hell.” A servant leader should be committed to building a better community and a better world. A company can not be the best place to work unless its community is the best place to live. Robert Greenleaf said that “lack of foresight in a leader is an ethical failure.” Foresight comes from empathy, compassion, and the ability to listen between the lines – for the needs of others. Great leaders have the ability to always “see around the corner.”

Quality #6 **Facilitates a Common Vision** – A leader needs to help people work together to create and “own” a common vision. There is tremendous creativity and energy in people if they are allowed to participate in creating the vision. The good things that are happening in Columbus are the result of people working together to create a common vision.

Quality #7 **Building of Community** – A leader should work to build a “we” culture instead of a “them and us” culture. We all have a hunger to belong and be in community – (meaning and belonging are critical to fulfillment in work).

Quality #8 **Empowers Others** – The leader must create an atmosphere of love where people can grow – intellectually, materially, and spiritually. A leader must empower others to love, to be creative, to learn that failure isn’t fatal, and to learn from their mistakes.

Quality #9 **Meets the Needs of Others and Removes Obstacles** – Meeting the needs of others is the primary responsibility of the servant leader. I am proud of the role our company and the Bradley-Turner Foundation played in creating the Pastoral Institute. The Pastoral Institute addresses the problems of living that we all face and offers programs like the Employee Assistance Program. There are now over 120 companies and 40 churches

in the Columbus area that have followed our lead of providing the Employee Assistance Program to their people.

Quality #10 **Being a Cheerleader** – In a well-run servant leadership organization it is essential to recognize and celebrate both individual and group performance and achievements. A leader must be a cheerleader in bad times as well as good times.

Servant leadership is a way of life, not a system, and can be summed up in what I call **“The Caring C’s” – Commitment to caring produces compassion, which produces communication, which produces creativity, which produces a common vision, which produces community.**



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The Center for Servant Leadership fosters the development of a community that cares and cooperates, a community that emphasizes service to others, a balanced

approach to work, and the sharing of responsibility and recognition. The goal of the Center for Servant Leadership is to facilitate this effort through programs and collaborative efforts including:

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Servant Leadership Program**

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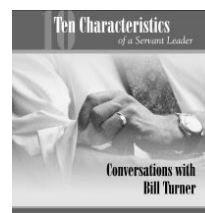
**Leadership clubs at local elementary
and middle schools**

Workshops for Church Leaders

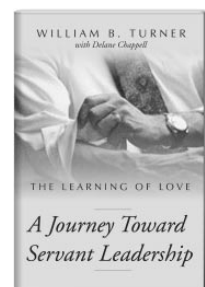
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“The engine of servant leadership is love, and love is a gift from God.” – Bill Turner

10 Characteristics of a Servant Leader!



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How is servant leadership different from traditional leadership models? What is the most important characteristic? How do you balance being a servant leader and holding people accountable?

In 1999, Bill Turner published the book, “The Learning of Love: A Journey Toward Servant Leadership.” As he works to improve the quality of life in his community, Bill Turner is guided by the concepts of servant leadership and seeks to live them out on a daily basis. This presentation focuses on Turner’s ten characteristics of a servant leader and includes conversations about how to lead as a servant.

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