

All of us, at some point, have been frustrated at the ineptitude of some leaders, especially when their actions reveal an attitude of *'what's in it for me?'*, or when self-preservation is clearly the goal no matter how it affects others.

A discussion on character, or values, may not be as riveting as the latest sales techniques, marketing strategies, or innovative product ideas. However, early Greek thought suggests it is critical for both individual and corporate success.

Below are six things leaders need to hold in careful tension as they contemplate the relationship between their character and how it is expressed through their leadership:

- The notion of individual responsibility and responsibility to the wider community
- A person's experience of truth and the existence of an objective, universal morality shared by others
- The presence of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards
- Pursuing an ethic of virtue that is attainable and yet never fully achieved
- *Being* virtuous and *doing* virtuous acts
- What can be taught or learned and what must come, as Socrates says, from "divine dispensation" because we are not capable of achieving the ideal of virtue from a position that is quickly corrupted by our self-interest.

Like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD) believed our intellect gives us the ability to *choose virtue or vice*, and that it is ultimately the gift of grace that enables us to achieve 'greater' goals in place of self-centered ones (Nullens and Michener, 2010, 124). This is founded on his belief that our "mind is guided naturally by wisdom and supernaturally by faith" (Nullens and Michener, 2010, 125).

In the West, this worldview is not an easy thing to grasp. We compartmentalize the physical from the spiritual, our intellect from our emotions, our work life from our personal life and our public life from our private life. Character, however, permeates all of them.

What's the bottom-line?

A lack of character in one area of a leader's life quickly infects other areas, and when this happens, it is understandable that people begin to lose faith in their leaders.

Here are some questions for further reflection:

- What would it look like if my life was totally congruent with my values?

- How would I describe my personal brand? Is it consistent with my organization's brand, or are they in conflict? What steps can I take to align them?
 - How do my values ground me, and help me to sustain a high level of performance and focus on what is important?
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References

Patrick Nullens and Ronald T. Michener. (2010). *The Matrix of Christian Ethics: Integrating Philosophy and Moral Theology in a Postmodern Context*. Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster Publishing.