

Deciding to Lead

Becoming a leader is always a risk. Raising your voice for a new possibility will draw attention to you. As soon as you clearly delineate and communicate your vision you instantly become a target for criticism. To weather the storm of such criticism and remain steadfast, your journey to leadership needs to be seen as a discipline requiring not only energy and tenacity but also a special relationship to the future.

In *Time and the Art of Living*, Robert Grudin observed:

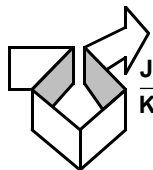
“Fast drivers can see no further than slow drivers, but they must look further down the road to time their reactions safely. Similarly, people with great projects afoot habitually look further and more clearly into the future than people who are mired in day-to-day concerns. These former control the future because by necessity they must project themselves into it; and the upshot is that, like ambitious settlers, they stake out larger plots and homesteads of time than the rest of us. They do not easily grow sad or old; they are seldom intimidated by the alarms and confusions of the present because they have something greater of their own, some sense of their large and coherent motion in time, to compare the present with.”

In order to put a stake in the future, you must allow yourself to be drawn to creating something so worthwhile that you simply cannot allow the small, fear-driven thinking of your critics to sway you from taking immediate, massive and decisive action. Locating such a “great project” is neither a simple nor quick task. It requires devoting a serious invest-

ment of time for reflecting and inquiring about the deeper meaning and enduring value of your work.

Vital Questions for Reflection

1. What do I want to be remembered for?
2. When my children speak to their peers about my work, what can they proudly point to?
3. Which of my fundamental core values see direct expression in what I aim to accomplish?
4. Who will be inspired by the results of my efforts?
5. Where in the greater scheme of things is my contribution going to make a real and on-going difference?
6. Am I willing to transcend any “small” identity I may have permitted for myself so far and take on the bold challenge of devoting myself to a “great project”?
7. Exactly whose permission am I waiting for?



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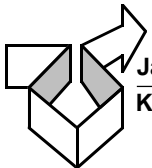
Recommended Reading

To help open your mind and spirit to new and diverse ways of thinking about yourself as a leader, spend some quiet time with one or more of the following recommended books:

Robert K. Greenleaf. *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. New York: Paulist Press, 1977.

Robert Grudin. *Time and the Art of Living*. New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1982.

James Ogilvy. *Living without a Goal: Finding the Freedom to Live a Creative and Innovative Life*. New York: Currency Doubleday, 1995.



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