



## **Integrity: The Courage to Meet the Demands of Reality**

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While we believe that integrity is important, we often don't connect the dots with how integrity of character works on a day-to-day basis, and how it has a real impact on the areas of life which matter most to us. In *Integrity*, we will look at six areas of character that will bring you results you haven't been able to obtain. Together, these character traits will enable

your talents and abilities to bring you the results that you know you should be getting, but sometimes aren't.

In Integrity, you will learn about the kind of character that:

1. Creates and maintains trust
2. Is able to see and face reality
3. Works in a way that brings results
4. Embraces negative realities and solves them
5. Causes growth and increase
6. Achieves transcendence and meaning in life.

These character traits actually supersede gifts, talent and ability; those who have them succeed, and those who don't ultimately fail. Who a person is will ultimately determine if their brains, talents, competencies, effort and energy will ultimately succeed. One way to observe our character is by looking at our wake. Just as a boat leaves a wake as it plows moves through the water, so people leave a wake as they move through life. There are two sides to every wake: the task side, and the relationship side. In other words, what got accomplished, and how were people dealt with or related to. Some people are able to get a lot done...but none of their co-workers want to work with them again. Likewise, there are people everyone seems to love, but they never get anything done. Neither of those are a healthy wake! A good wake produces results, and has a positive impact on the people involved. Integrating the six key character traits will enable any person to leave behind a good and balanced wake.

Those six traits enable people to meet the demands of reality. Reality puts pressure on people—at work, you have to produce—no excuses. And you have to work with others. That puts a different kind of pressure on you. The truth is, reality makes all kinds of demands on a person, and a person with integrity of character is able meet them, and thrive.

## Summary

Everyone knows that character matters, but we often lack knowledge of how it works in our everyday lives. Character affects results and profits, and making shifts in our own character might make our relationships more fruitful. This book explains how doing so may solve problems or bring previously unobtainable results into reach.

There are three essentials for success. The first two, craft or skill competencies and relationship building skills, are common knowledge; smart, talented people are a dime a dozen. What makes the difference is having the character not to screw it up. How many times have you seen someone whose personhood got in the way of their success? Has it happened to you?

### **Character Counts**

“Who a person is will ultimately determine if their brains, talents, competencies, energy, effort, deal-making abilities, and opportunities will succeed.” Our traditional understanding of character is that it involves morals and ethics, and is a safeguard against bad things happening. However, that’s not all there is to character. True character integration requires that a leader:

- capture the hearts and minds of people they’re leading
- see all of the realities in front of them, including blind spots regarding themselves, others, markets, customers, or other realities necessary to reach their goals
- produce results congruent to resources and abilities
- deal with losses and negative people and situations
- create growth in their organizations, people, profits or industry
- become part of a larger mission

Although little attention is paid to these components of character, they can have greater effect than a person’s industry and alliance building skills. Neglecting them can result in a performance ceiling much lower than one’s aptitude, derailing when one hits an obstacle, or self-destructing shortly after a success, thus negating it.

When we evaluate performance, we often look merely at numbers, but it’s important to look at the wake someone leaves behind them to see the full picture. Performance evaluation can be broken down into two categories. Evaluating task-based success can mean looking at profits made, brand, strength, and development of new ways of doing things; the negative side of this organization means looking at disorganization, lack of focus, inactivity. Most managers are good at evaluating these aspects. However, it’s also important to look at the person’s relationship wake: are people more trusting, fulfilled and encouraged, or are they wounded and bleeding? Time others spend complaining, time a leader spends listening to those complaints, and destruction of morale should be factored into a person’s effectiveness.

When building an airplane, the design & construction are crucial to withstanding the pressures put on it by weather, speed, and torque. Similarly, reality put demands on people, and character is the design, the ability to meet those realities, which can be interpersonal, such as how one deals with conflict, or task-oriented, such as some bad initial projections on

a project. Many people embrace task-based challenges, but get stressed out by interpersonal conflict. The good news is, because character is a structure, it can be fixed if there are flaws.

Traditional definitions of integrity include ideas about character, ethics and morals. However, the other dictionary definitions carry associations of wholeness and effectiveness. In order for character to work, a person needs to integrate the six character areas mentioned above. Deficiencies in any one area compromise the other areas, as well as that person's gifts in a particular field. It's easy to see how establishing trust without being able to see reality can lead to real trouble. Success in these areas virtually guarantees success in all interpersonal and task-oriented goals. Each person has gaps in each competency area, and must ensure that these gaps are areas for growth rather than sites of dysfunction. He or she can do this by first taking a clear look at the nature of reality, fruitfulness and success, as well his or her personal development needs. The next step is to understand the components of character and what makes them work, so one can plan to work toward integration of character.

## 1. Building Trust

Trust can be built in three ways. The first is through connection. Connection in infants and children is crucial to their ability to feel secure later. This continues to be important in work, parenting, friendships and marriages. This does not mean a person has to be extroverted; in fact, such a characteristic might keep people at a distance. Explaining to a person why they should get over their complaints in a logical matter is not always enough; the heart is stronger than willpower. Even if a leader is nice and caring, if she doesn't understand her follower's concerns, or have the appearance of understanding, she will lose them. She needs to "get it" and be fully present with them. This empathy, or ability to enter into another person's experience, takes some depth of character. It requires that the practitioner have a heart that's able to feel, rather than be closed off or sentimental. He must have good boundaries, recognizing that the experience is not truly his. Finally, he must be able to truly listen and understand, which means communicating that understanding. "True listening and understanding occurs only when the other person understands that you understand."

The opposite of this connection is invalidation, allowing no space for another's reality to exist. Leaders do this when someone is complaining, saying "oh come on, get over it," adding their lack of empathy to the list of complaints. If leaders fail to connect, the other person may give up and shut down completely. They might seek an alliance against the leader. "The human heart will seek to be known, understood and connected above all else. If you do not connect, the ones you care about will find someone who will," such as a new romantic partner, a family that turns against you, or a new company or church. If you truly listen to the person and they work against you, they are seen as divisive, but if you don't listen, they can portray themselves as a victim. Remember, acknowledging a person's idea doesn't mean he or she is right or even justified. It means that reality is true for that person.

The second way to build trust is by extending favor. At a basic level, all trustworthy people do what they agree to do, but every situation can't be written into a contract. A leader at a higher level "looks out for your interests, as well as his or her own." It's important to include

people and truly understand their concerns before extending favor to avoid appearing paternalistic. A Hebrew synonym for trust can be translated as “careless”—a person can trust an integrated character to do right and not worry about it. People put out what they receive, so the amount and quality of favor a leader extends garners similar responses from his followers—in a positive or negative manner.

However, a leader can't only give favors to high performers. This is the equivalent of only being nice to a spouse when he does everything you wanted him to do. “It's difficult to trust someone based on the demand for mutual performance” because at some point, a partner will fail or you will fail. Both live in the fear that when that failure comes, they will be left for a better deal. True trust comes when a person realizes that other's goodness is part of their integrity, and that they will look out for us no matter what, even if we fail. We trust people who will not be “against” anyone unless that person is causing harm, and even then, they will take a stand to end the destruction, not to be a predator. These are “person[s] of grace” who leaves others better than they found them, even if means taking on the difficult task of telling people something they don't want to hear. “Leaders without grace set the demand and do nothing to help people meet it”, then turn on them when they fail. Grace means sometimes giving people help they have not earned. This does not mean removing standards, but providing a framework to meet those standards.

The third way to build trust is through vulnerability. People trust other people and institutions that seem strong and stable. However, if a person is impenetrable or on a different level from us, we believe he cannot understand us, and we cannot understand him. Therefore, for trust to occur there must be a balance of power and vulnerability. Followers look for models who are strong and warm, are similar to them, and are actively coping with difficulty. To encourage literally means to put courage into someone, and leaders can do this by revealing that they have overcome obstacles similar to the ones their followers are currently facing, integrating the problem with the solution. Further, it's important that the leader communicates that he or she is dependent on the followers for success. Not only is it true, but followers who feel needed perform better than those who are threatened.

## **2. Oriented Toward Truth**

Obviously, telling the truth at a basic level means not lying. Sometimes even that can be challenging. We often lie because we don't want to hurt people's feelings. Worse, we sometimes lie about matters of fact such as on taxes or when ditching an appointment because it “won't hurt anybody.” We know that there are situations where lying might be appropriate, such as saying there's no one else in the office when a gunman comes in. People who are worried about lying in that situation probably have little need to be concerned about lying. Everyone else should remember that “the consequences of deceit are usually greater than the ones of truth,” and that usually, it's the deceit, not the supposed crime that's unforgivable. People of character “give a representation of reality to others as best they understand it.”

However, if people “miss parts of reality that are important to making things work,” their view of reality will be distorted. Seeing the big picture is always the best option. Admiral Jim Stockdale, a Vietnam veteran, torture survivor, and congressional medal of honor winner, said in Jim Collin’s *Good to Great*, “You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end—which you can never afford to lose—with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality.” Although alternate realities may be a great comfort to us, “the scorecard doesn’t care” what could have happened. A person of character must deal with reality as it happens, and if that reality is negative, figure out where he or she went wrong.

People who are in touch with reality share three qualities. First, they seek the truth. Many people avoid the truth, perhaps because they have emotional investment in some other reality, are afraid of dealing with the ramifications, or are caught up in their own arrogance. A successful person avoids the temptation of certainty: assuming, thinking or acting as if they know what reality is. He wants to learn about things in the external world, such as his industry, the market, or the universe. He takes on the difficult task of learning about other people. Distorted views of others form when those people might remind us of our unresolved past, or the distortions fill our needs. We also often project onto others qualities we can’t see in ourselves, good or bad.

A successful person also seeks the truth about himself, actively soliciting feedback from mentors, accountability groups, and therapists. He is not looking for flattery, but for reality. He asks others “what is it like to be on the other end of me?” and is excited about an honest answer because he realizes that “the less we look at our shortcomings, the more others do.” He knows to ask for the feedback that people have been holding back, which is what he needs to be his best. Sometimes this is positive feedback, which still carries fear and the possibility for change. This person gets feedback from that part of himself that observes, and sometimes self-corrects behaviors before they can become a problem by remaining constantly aware. Many people avoid plunging these depths because they have a fear of seeing that they are wrong or ugly and may lose love or prestige as a result. They may have a fixed view of self from past experiences, a lack of skills to deal with results of their investigation, or they might need a total redo of their life plan. A successful person finds ways of dealing with feedback, building on strengths and finding workarounds for areas that aren’t strong points. He knows that while we must have all six components of character, if we’re not good at scheduling, it’s acceptable to hire an office manager.

The second quality of a person who faces reality is emotional valence. Children never have a grey day. Everything they encounter is either great or terrible. Adults can also split reality in this way, and it’s easy to see that this view says more about a person’s emotional health than about what’s actually happening. It’s normal to sometimes be overwhelmed by emotions, but it’s important to understand the globalizing effects of these emotions. Often one bad experience colors our entire experience of reality. This might be a sign that the emotions are strong or that the thinking brain doesn’t have the strength yet or skills to deal with the situation. To face reality, we have to not allow our emotions to take over. When truth comes to you, does it sting, or is it welcomed? Leaders must learn to neutralize hard truths so they are not overwhelming.

Finally, a person who understands reality can incorporate new information that's in conflict with existing paradigms. We all have set ideas of certain people or groups, but a leader can change her ideas when they no longer serve. She assimilates or takes in new information. Then, she accommodates, making room in her existing system of knowledge for the information.

### **3. Achieving results.**

A lot of people know their field and work hard without the results they can achieve. High producers share some characteristics that we often neglect when we think about work training, and these are more often about character than factual knowledge.

The first characteristic is self-knowledge. People don't want to just "do a good job"; they want to live up to their full potential. To do this, they need to know their likes and dislikes, their values and beliefs, and what they're good at. Before they can focus on strengths, they need to realize what those strengths are. Humility means honest self-evaluation, not denying the reality of one's gifts. People who lack self-knowledge and follow others expectations will be less than fully engaged and will not perform well. Successful people stick to what they like and are good at.

Second, high achievers have a ready, aim, fire process of action; they follow its three steps in order and find balance between them. "Ready" means prepared and able to take on the task. Impulsive characters jump into "half-brained ventures or good ventures for which they are unprepared," typically because they lack the discipline for preparation, which takes time and patience and is boring to those needing a manic "fix." A lot of people find after the fact that if they had taken the time to prepare, they would have done things differently. The research of Walter Mischel at Stanford, quoted in Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence, found that impulse control (the delay of gratification in service of a goal) in four year old children was a better indicator of their high school success than IQ. This preparation must have an aim, or "purposeful, goal-oriented action that knows where the energy and resources are being spent and therefore spent well." Many people hop from one project or person to another, like a child in a candy store who has forgotten her first demand. It's important to remember that resources and energy are finite, so that focus on one goal may mean giving up on another. Focusing on two things at once means that neither gets full attention. Finally, once the goal is in sight, the person must be able to pull the trigger. Many fail at this stage because of fear of failure, rejection, loss of security, or poor outcomes in general. Integrated characters see another reality that they can adapt to and realize that they have already minimized risk through their careful preparation.

High achievers, like everyone sometimes have to make hard calls, and they are willing and able to get them done quickly and effectively. "Nothing erodes respect in a person more than his or her inability to make the hard call." They also know that they can always find a way, realizing that "perseverance takes courage, stamina, emotional reserves, judgment, creativity, and other aspects of character to do. But without it, great things do not happen."

In order to lose well, we first have to lose. We all do this from time to time, but high achievers learn from past losses and lose less. Losers carry the same pattern forward. To get better at losing, it's first important to realize the loss has occurred. As they say in Vegas, "don't throw good money after bad." Some may be emotionally tied to not giving up, over-identifying with the idea. Healthy people face the pain and re-emerge from grief with their hearts available. Second, the reason for the loss must be examined; otherwise, the pattern will surely be repeated. People metabolize experience like food, breaking it down into parts and eliminating what is not useful. If waste isn't eliminated, it becomes toxic. Some people skip this process, jumping into rebound projects or relationships to "avoid the natural feelings of loss and depression that followed the last one." It takes depth of character to sit with grief rather than seeking the next fix. High achievers are optimistic that there will be another day, but they realize they must live through this one first.

Finally, high achievers, give up the good for the best, freeing up time and resources for the next stage in their development. This can be scary, and one can't replace the good with better as long as he or she is attached to the old, so making a firm commitment to the new goal is necessary.

#### **4. Eating problems for breakfast**

Life is largely about solving problems. That reality is not going to go away, so if people can't orient themselves to finding solutions, they will stagnate. Of course, if this were an easy task, anyone would do it, and we all know that anything valuable takes work. Putting in the hard work to do the confrontation means relief of pain later. Knowing this on an intellectual level is not enough. Problem solvers also need to be equipped with following seven traits to handle the problem.

First, they do not avoid the elephant in the room. Language reveals attitude; passive people talk about the terrible thing that has happened to them, while problem solvers talk about what they need to do to resolve problems and how they relish the chance to make things better. This requires an absence of internal and interpersonal fears generated from past experience, but must be attempted because avoiding pain keeps it going. Further, the one who prolongs the pain often faces as much blame as the person who caused it initially, such as the blame children place on a caring but enabling parent who does not save them from an abuser.

Next they possess the ability to recover, to regain functioning after a negative emotional event. Many people withdraw when things get tough, which can make both relationships and projects worse. Only engaged people can solve problems.

Third, they can just get in the box and swing. "People who perform have a stable sense of self no matter what happens," because they have an identity separate from the outcomes of their actions. They do not need approval, symbols, or riches to show who they are.

Problem solvers take ownership of their mistakes and don't try to excuse them. To acknowledge responsibility means that we are in control, and that's scary. While it's true you

don't have control of everything, and at some point you have to move on, not owning your mistakes "puts a ceiling on... performance" by hiding a growth area. Workers care about being seen as "good", doing what's asked of them, but managers care about results, which the "good self" can never produce. Blaming others also makes it difficult to improve. Fault does not have important implications for mature characters. They wonder what will make it work. Often people try to hide mistakes because of an underlying wish to appear flawless. They thrive on praise and being admired to combat vulnerability. However, there will never be enough praise to keep reality at bay, so eventually, problem solvers learn to integrate the "bad self" and shame, revealing it to those who accept them. Problem solvers also help others to do this by not beating them up when they make mistakes; rather, they take the opportunity to redouble encouragement.

Another skill of problem solvers is productive confrontation. "Confrontation adds structure to teams, projects, relationships and life," leading to security, whereas avoiding confrontation leaves messes everywhere. However, sloppy confrontation that causes fear is just as dangerous as avoiding it. A good rule of thumb is to "go hard on the issue and soft on the person," delivering the message from a place of love and respect and using the skills discussed in the chapter about viewing reality to neutralize a hard truth. The goal of problem solvers is to get results, not blow off steam, so they present things as "you and I versus the problem." They remember that confrontation is a process not an event, so they check-in during the initial conversation and follow up afterwards.

Problem solvers know when to let bad things go. They grieve, as we've already discussed, but they can also forgive, because they know that's the only way the pain can end. They know that forgiveness is not avoidance. It is facing the problem, then letting go. People who don't own their mistakes, especially toward others, then receive forgiveness, rarely forgive others. They find comfort in moral superiority.

Finally, problem solvers know that the best way to solve a problem is not to have one, so they trust their instincts when a situation seems uncomfortable. They have usually done enough homework to know good from bad, and have developed the ability to spot a bad situation before they can fully explain why it's bad. This impulse, like the immune system or the skin, functions as a protective boundary. Like the other components of character in this book, it requires integration: to refuse a bad situation means being strong enough to disappoint others, give up some ideas, and to realize when something is causing pain and that suffering can be avoided by delaying gratification.

## 5. Getting better all the time

As the introduction noted, each area of character has to be integrated with the other areas, so being stuck in one area affects the others. Growing and dying are both always happening, although one predominates; if a person is not focusing on growth, he's leaning into death. We learn by doing. Those things we practice get better and stronger, like exercising a muscle. However, people choose which muscles they will use: "People do not get put to use by others. They have to invest themselves." It's normal and healthy to want to grow, but

normal is not common. Most people's appetite for growth has withered or been injured, through experiences of lack of support and criticism. This experience shapes a person's character and stimulates negative self-talk, which in turn shapes how and what they will produce in the outside world, more so than any actual failures. To escape the loss that follows negative feedback, people learn to detach, to believe that growth is no longer possible. "Death takes over." At the opposite extreme, a person can hunger too much or hunger from a bad place and use this as an excuse to live inauthentically.

Growth involves risk, a voluntary exposure to danger, and people of character know they will have to live with the consequences, good or bad. The danger in a smart risk is usually in others' minds because an integrated character has already mitigated the risk.

Safe growth or risk-taking in projects or relationships is merely an expression of what they're already successful at, and is taken in increments. There are a number of factors that determine whether an entity will grow. According to the second law of thermodynamics, entropy, the descent into chaos happens over time in a closed system.

Ask yourself—are you a closed system? Is information able to get in? Willpower and commitment are not enough to stimulate growth if a person does not encounter new, different stimuli. By contrast, in an open system, the entity has the potential to become better organized and move to a higher order because of its interconnection.

This requires energy (fuel), which has a better likelihood of lasting if it comes from an outside source such as new group, counselor or coach than merely from internal motivation, and a template or organizing principle, such as school curriculum, a training program or some set path. The fruit of this plant will be whatever the template sets out to be. If the plan is good and the fuel is good, the product will be too.

A person's desire to change is visible in the degree to which they invest resources. It takes courage to put things on the line for growth. People who want to grow must think of themselves as farmers who put aside some of this year's crop so they can grow again the following year. Successful people are always busy, so they can't wait until they have time for growth. They make time for growth, and that time is sacred.

Their calendars might list the following: retreats, non-required continuing education, seminars, or a personal trainer. They will also find time to share what they know with others who are growing.

Teaching is a great way to grow, because the best way to learn is to teach, and it helps others to grow as well. They may spend some of these resources on finding a mentor, someone who is a little further down the road than they are. To do this they need to be open and vulnerable, neither arrogant and narcissistic nor thin-skinned, nor unable to take direction. Narcissistic people will gravitate toward people who will stroke them but those who want to grow will find a challenging mentor.

To grow, we must value the present, but not want to stay there. A Jewish proverb says: "a goal accomplished is sweet to the soul" At one extreme, some will constantly set goals, never enjoying the one they just met, while others will never set or reach goals due to lack of motivation.

Successful people celebrate and internalize their victories but don't rest on their laurels too long. This is not to say they don't rest. The brain needs a growth Sabbath- when not producing, successful people are regenerating. Some people cannot be still because unresolved conflicts emerge—their production will be "linear and more of the same."

Finally, successful people subject themselves to their inability because "you will not grow without attempting things you are unable to do."

## 6. When you're small, you're bigger

If you ask people if they are God, they will invariably say what a silly question that is. But they often act like they are the center of the universe; some even wear shirts that proclaim how important they are. "It's all about me," they say.

Paradoxically, those who are the most narcissistic want to claim admiration that their character does not earn. However, if we are the center of the universe, it's a pretty small universe, which Thomas Merton calls "the doorstep of hell."

People of character have transcended ordinary human selfishness and self-centeredness that we all express in small ways at some time or another, realizing that life is about the things that are bigger than them. The greatest people are those who greatly serve important missions and causes.

A boss or company that values employees and people will bow to those values at the expense of self-interest. When people see themselves as the ultimate interest, results like the 2004 financial meltdowns occur, wreaking havoc for themselves and everyone else, including innocent bank employees, stockholders, and the general public. Laws exist to fill a void in character and should really be a backup system, like putting a kid in time-out when they misbehave. In a 2002 Businessweek article, Cendant CEO Henry Silverman suggests that "if there's something you'd prefer not to read about on the front page of the Wall Street Journal, then just don't do it," but he fears that most companies don't instill that culture.

However, a few companies seem to place a value on people more than profits. Johnson & Johnson pulled the brand Tylenol nationwide in response to a serial killer who laced bottles with cyanide in Chicago, rather than merely taking the financial consequences of the relatively few deaths, while the pharmacies of Wal-Mart, CVS, and others offered free medications to victims of hurricane Katrina.

Characters that possess transcendence share several factors. These people aren't on autopilot, guided by passions, but pursue ego ideals of love, service and justice. Many factors contribute to the development of these goals, from parenting, to hitting bottom (alcoholics),

to being around other inspired leaders. Some people find emptiness in their own lives and realize there must be more, or the dissatisfaction of loved ones pushes them to change. The next step is to find out what that “more” is, and not to succumb to a “more” that continues to be self-centered. Finding that more usually means a growth process like the one in the last chapter, beginning by an examination of current resource allocation.

Remember, “Where our treasure is, there our heart is also.” The more people adapt to the new structure, the more they find space to grow rather than just thinking “what I just did was good”. They form a new addictive cycle, giving in to their values and the reality that needs to happen rather than the competitive, petty attitudes of everyday.

## **Conclusion**

Images of people in power are often distorted, and this has damaging effects on their viewer’s character. Some people idealize leaders, hiding their own shortcomings out of shame and limiting opportunity for growth. Others assume poor character, such as dictator-like qualities, are what made people successful. They don’t acknowledge that this leader actually succeeded in spite of those qualities and the terrible wake he or she left behind him. If the bad qualities disappeared, the good ones that made him successful would not vanish!

All people are in some way un-integrated, even people with credentials, and we need to get over the fantasy that some are not. In the end, character is not something people have or don’t. Everyone, including high achievers, has a mixture of strengths and weaknesses. People shouldn’t be ashamed of this. Rather, they should embrace the chance to grow.

While it is good for a person to look back at their life and identify the reasons their character has developed as it has, the important thing is to recognize that change and growth are possible. Some people will need role models and teaching; others need structured feedback; still others may need support that is not just enabling, or opportunities to practice (without catastrophic consequences for failure). It may take some effort, even risk, but it is possible. And once a person begins the process of growth, they will find that life works better—they are more productive at work and have better relationships. Integrity brings many rewards, many riches, and many fruits. But ultimately, integrity is its own reward.



## From the Pastor's Perspective

I love Cloud's definition of integrity: the courage to meet the demands of reality. I think there are two challenges implicit in his definition that we need to pay attention to.

The first is to pay attention to reality. It's all too easy, and common, to live in denial, in some kind of fantasy land that doesn't look honestly at challenges, problems, patterns, etc. Eventually reality forces its way into view, but often too late for us to do much about if we haven't been paying attention to it. As leaders we need to pursue "reality" and deal with it.

The second challenge is the courage challenge. It takes courage to face reality, and courage to meet its demands. It takes courage to be honest and more courage to make decisions and then walk them out. Courage because it isn't easy, and there will be obstacles, difficulties, and failures in our path; Courage because some people will always disagree with us; courage because we are taking a risk. But the fruit of it is significant and long-lasting.

While most of us are generally aware of our strengths and weaknesses, we often have blind spots that can undercut us. Looking at the "wake" of our lives can help us to see ourselves from a new perspective, and give us the insight we need to grow. In order to see our wake accurately, we need to pursue feedback from others. We have to recognize that our vision is always somewhat skewed, and we need help to be able to get an accurate picture. That also takes courage!

It isn't enough anymore to just pursue skill development as a leader; we need to give just as much time and energy to developing our integrity, in the fullest sense of the word. The pay-off is well worth it.