

## **Self-Monitoring with the Beatitudes**

Teaching in a Masters of Organizational Leadership (MOL) program, one of our biggest concerns is that graduates can not only read, write and speak about leadership but also be able *practice* it. We have developed weeklong courses in team-building and people skills are more experiential. We have also added a project management course, where our students learn to apply the principles we teach in their workplaces.

***Leaders are born and made.*** One of the questions I get asked is: *Are leaders made or born?* This is a nature versus nurture question. It has befuddled scholars for centuries. My response is *both*. It is a *false dichotomy*, like many either-or questions about leadership. If leaders could *not* be made, I would not be devoting my life to teaching full-time, speaking at conferences, holding leadership trainings and writing this book.

***The real question is: How can we make leaders?*** What works? What does not work? How can we assist people who have decided to improve as leaders? The true test of leadership is not how many followers we lead, but how many leaders we develop (Reference my first book).

Some people have a natural talent for leadership. This is obvious to anyone who coaches, mentors or trains leaders. Every person has a range of leadership potential. Our job as teachers and trainers is to challenge, probe, inform, enlighten and inspire our students, protégés and participants to reach the highest possible level of their leadership potential. This is my mission in life.

***That leaders can be made*** is a major assumption in my work. It drives me every day. My mission is to improve the effectiveness of our organizations (public and private, for-profit and not-for-profit) by developing leaders who reach their full potential. The empirical evidence about what works and what does not is the subject of hundreds of studies. We try to incorporate the best practices from these studies into our leadership courses and trainings. My ideas for best practices will be spread throughout this book.

### ***Leadership Monitoring***

***Education needs a theoretical base to attach the practical applications.*** This is where the Beatitudes come in. They can be the set of guidelines for personal reflection and action. In his work on emotional intelligence, Daniel Goleman refers to *self-monitoring* as a process that enhances self-awareness about your leadership style. Our MOL students describe many of their bosses as people who have no clue about how their behaviors impact others around them. They seem to be totally oblivious to their surroundings.

One of our faculty members tells the story of a boss who attended a leadership seminar and returned with the insight that he needed to generate more innovation from his team. So he announced that each team meeting would begin with ten minutes of open forum for anyone to present new and creative suggestions to improve the way they do business. A week later, one

brave person started the forum by presenting her new idea but it was not what the boss was looking for. He responded, “That is the stupidest idea I have ever heard in my whole life! *Now, who is next?*” Obviously, that question was met with stunned silence.

Positional leaders may talk about participation, empowerment and servant leadership. According to our students, too many act like control freaks. We hear about bosses who have one personality when showing off for their superiors and another one when they are dictating what their subordinates should do. They might know how to *manage up* but not to manage or to lead sideways. They know how to use the *political frame* but not the *human resources frame* (See Bolman & Deal). They cannot see that they are supportive in managing up and directive in managing down, instead of using *situational leadership* theory to adjust their behavior to the situation (See Hersey & Blanchard). They just don’t get it.

In the 1967 classic movie, *Lilies of the Field*, it is interesting how Sidney Poitier’s character, Homer Smith, can see the dictatorial ways of the Mother Superior when he describes her as “Hitler”. But he falls into the same behavior when he becomes the leader of the common people building a chapel for the nuns. Ironically, the Mother Superior can see that command and control leadership in Homer when she later describes him as “Hitler”.

**Self-monitoring** has been compared by Ronald Heifetz as *getting on the balcony* and watching yourself as if you were on a stage. Have you ever started to say something in a meeting and caught yourself thinking, “*Wait a minute! How is this message going to be received by the others around the table?*”? Have you ever been ready to make a decision and caught yourself thinking, “*Wait a minute! How will this decision impact someone else who might not be at this meeting? Should we consult with anyone else first?*”? That little voice is self-monitoring your leadership behaviors.

**Using the Beatitudes.** The Beatitudes can *inspire* the reflective process as we *monitor* our behavior. Ask yourself:

*Am I poor in spirit?*

*Was I compassionate today?*

*How can I grow in humility?*

*Do I hunger for integrity?*

*Was I merciful today?*

*Are my motives pure of heart?*

*Did I make peace with anyone today?*

*Am I being persecuted for the right reasons or for my own lack of sincerity?*

**Team monitoring.** The poor in spirit recognize that they also need others. A good team can help us monitor our behavior more objectively.

One mark of a high-performing team is the ability to be totally open and honest with each other (See Patrick Lencioni). This is a measure of trust. These teams show a high level of *task conflict* without allowing that to grow into *relationship conflict* (See Karen Jehn's work). They separate the person from the problem (Fisher & Ury). Such teamwork can be a real blessing to those who welcome open and honest feedback. It is a gift to those who can handle that feedback and adjust their behavior accordingly.

**Teams class.** We teach a weeklong MOL course on team-building and during the first two days, we tape the interaction of the team as they make consensus decisions. Then the team goes back into their work rooms and watches the tape to monitor and assess their behaviors. They ask themselves: *Who was facilitating? Was anyone summarizing what others were saying? Was anyone interrupting? Was everyone participating? Was anyone dominating? Was anyone particularly quiet?* The videotape does not lie! As the students watch the interaction and reflect on these questions, they see themselves in an honest light. The video gives them the momentary opportunity to really *get on that balcony*, see their interaction, reflect on their behavior and obtain honest feedback.

This is a powerful experience. Some students recognize and admit their leadership weaknesses and failures for the first time. Their *subjective* self-monitoring is replaced with the *objectivity* of the videotape. The team monitoring by their colleagues is done in a safe classroom environment. The goal is to develop team cohesion and interpersonal relationships that are open and honest. The five-day course is designed around the five stages of the Tuckman Model: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning. We also use the Lencioni Model with its emphasis on five similar concepts: Trust, Open conflict, Commitment, Accountability and Great results.

**Monitoring our own behavior is such a subjective activity** that we need others to do it right. Self-monitoring leaders make mistakes. But they admit them. The first step toward correcting our mistakes is to recognize them. It takes poverty of spirit to admit that we need others to monitor our leadership behaviors. Leaders who monitor their behaviors well are poor in spirit, compassionate, meek and so forth. In Blessings for Leaders, we look at how each Beatitude can become a point of reference for reflection, monitoring and change.