

Module 3 Notes

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

— Theodore Roosevelt

Recap: Christian Conviction and Leadership

Welcome to Module 3! Before we begin this week's topic, let's briefly recap our previous discussions. We explored the importance of Christian conviction as a guiding force for leaders, rooted in faith, hope, and love. This conviction shapes leadership styles and approaches, influencing how leaders navigate diverse challenges.

The Essence of Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership centers around the genuine character of a leader. It's about being true to oneself and embodying values that reflect sincerity and integrity. As Teddy Roosevelt famously said in the quote above, "It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles... The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena." This quote underscores the importance of showing up, being courageous, and leading from a place of authenticity. Read the quote above again, what do you consider your arena? When did you step up to lead and why?

Cardinal Virtues and Character Formation

Authentic ethical leadership is deeply tied to virtues that contribute to the development of character. Virtues are a fancy way to say the behavior that evidences good moral character. We could discuss many virtues but in Catholicism, the four cardinal virtues—prudence, justice, temperance, and courage—play a crucial role in shaping a leader's moral compass, so we will focus on these four virtues. Do you recall what we learned in week one about ethical conduct and your moral compass? This week, we make those ethical considerations more pragmatic by analyzing the key virtues that ethical leaders need from Chapter 7 of *True Leadership* by Habiger.

1. **Prudence:** Prudence is the virtue of wise decision-making. It involves discerning the right course of action through careful consideration of circumstances, consequences, and values. Prudent leaders make thoughtful choices that align with their convictions.
2. **Justice:** Justice embodies fairness and equity. Authentic leaders treat all individuals justly, ensuring that their actions respect the dignity and rights of every person. Justice is essential in creating an environment of trust and respect within teams.
3. **Temperance:** Temperance reflects self-control and moderation. Authentic leaders exhibit temperance by managing their impulses, emotions, and desires. This virtue contributes to a balanced leadership style that promotes well-being.

4. **Courage:** Courage, as a cardinal virtue, is particularly pertinent to our discussion today. It's the strength to face challenges, persevere in the face of adversity, and take calculated risks. Authentic leaders lead courageously, stepping into the arena with resilience and determination.

Vulnerability, Necessary Endings, and Courage

When we think of leadership we often think of strength and resilience. While these traits are common in leaders there is a counterintuitive trait that is key for leadership, **vulnerability**. Authentic leadership requires vulnerability—an idea emphasized and recently made popular on social media by the work of Brené Brown (see the videos in Module 3 Lecture Materials & Resources in Canvas). In her work, she explains how vulnerability allows leaders to connect deeply with their teams, creating an atmosphere of openness and trust. When leaders courageously share their vulnerabilities, it encourages others to do the same, fostering an environment of authenticity. Consider a leader that you admire and follow, is he/she authentic? Vulnerable?

Another essential and often overlooked component of leadership is the **courage to end situations**. While courage is an accepted hallmark of leadership we often focus on the courage to begin things and rarely discuss that to begin something we must usually end something else. This is a difficult concept for many people of faith because we believe that endings are bad. It is normal to focus on the positive, ever consider why so many Christians speak of the resurrection and do not discuss the crucifixion? There is no Easter Sunday without a Good Friday, no resurrection without a crucifixion. In fact, the concept of endings and beginnings is central to Judeo-Christian theology. Henry Cloud's book "Necessary Endings" explores the importance of letting go of certain situations, relationships, or strategies to make room for growth. Endings require the courage to face uncomfortable truths and make tough decisions for the betterment of the organization and its members. Please watch his talk on his book and consider that a successful life requires endings. Think about what needs to end in your life so that something better can begin.

Courageous Authentic Leadership in Action

Leaders who embody authentic leadership with a focus on courage are unafraid to step out of their comfort zones. They lead by example, demonstrating the vulnerability to connect with their teams. They are willing to face necessary endings, making difficult decisions for the greater good.

Incorporating the wisdom of Teddy Roosevelt's quote, the four cardinal virtues, Brené Brown's vulnerability concept, and Henry Cloud's insights on necessary endings, authentic leaders craft a character rooted in strength, humility, and ethical decision-making.

Conclusion

Authentic leadership begins with nurturing a strong character, guided by virtues that align with one's convictions. Courage is the bedrock of authenticity, enabling leaders to step into the arena of challenges, lead with vulnerability, and make difficult choices when necessary. Remember, as we explore authentic leadership further, that it's not about perfection but about being genuinely human in your leadership journey. Leadership is a growth process.