

The Twelve Principles of Personal Leadership

Principle #12 – Embracing Spirituality – Part 1

-One Leader's Perspective

By Greg L. Thomas



In 2004, former ABC News science correspondent Michael Guillen wrote a thoughtful book entitled, "Can a Smart Person Believe In God?" As a theoretical physicist, Guillen offers some insightful comments about the deep importance of spirituality in one's life. He correctly observes that there are two important and distinct qualities about human existence. The first quality is most understood and one that many people are aware of. It is commonly called our IQ. This is our *Intelligence Quotient* and refers to our ability to analyze situations, solve problems and acquire intellectual knowledge. However, there is a second quality that is also extremely important and is lesser known. Sometimes it is blatantly ignored or rejected and it is called our SQ.

This is our *Spiritual Quotient* and it is our ability to perceive

nonphysical aspects of reality. Possessing both IQ and SQ gives one the enhanced ability to solve complex physical and nonphysical problems through spiritual knowledge and conviction. Our journey through life is maximized when we fervently seek both a higher level of IQ and SQ.

Allow me to provide an analogy. Our vision works best when we have two healthy eyes. Even though they are positioned differently in the head, both eyes combined are able to see in stereo and balance different dimensions by focusing together. There is more to dimension and reality than can be seen by just one eye! In a process called *stereopsis*, the human brain pools the two flat one-dimensional images from each eye and converges these images together to create a stereoscopic image. So too...there is more to our existence than possessing a high IQ while neglecting or denying our need for SQ. If we ignore our SQ, we are looking at the purpose of life from only a limited single perspective and dimension.

Guillen also writes that someone who embraces physical science and denies spirituality is an Intellectual Cyclops. On the other hand, a religious person who embraces theology but denies scientific discovery is a Spiritual Cyclops. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "The religion that is afraid of science dishonors God and commits suicide." Some insist that science and religion are at odds. This is not necessarily so. What is usually at odds are different people's personal interpretation of science or religion.

So what has religious belief done for the world? The critics of spirituality are the first to point out that more wars have been fought over religion than any other cause in history. What this tells us is that people get passionate about their religious beliefs in the same way they become passionate about their allegiance to their family or their nation. Passion can be an emotion used for good or evil. The

truth is that many of civilization's greatest achievements and advances were also a result of passionate people of religious faith. We have established our greatest educational institutions, achieved significant scientific breakthroughs, cured diseases, comforted the afflicted, and advanced civil freedom primarily due to deeply religious individuals. In 2002, the *NonProfit Times* reported on the seven largest publically supported philanthropies in the United States. Each one had religious origins and were founded by individuals who possessed a strong religious faith.

Other critics of spirituality boldly proclaim that religion is simply a myth needed to comfort the superstitious or ignorant. The truth is that history is documented with the lives of people who achieved great things because their faith in something bigger than themselves motivated them to continue when *others* decided to stop and give up.

Most personal leaders realize and accept the fact that there is indeed a *spiritual element* to life. They may not totally understand it, or always sense it, but they know it is there. I know the discussion of spirituality is not considered in vogue or "politically correct" in many circles today. That is too bad and is their *personal* loss. Respected author and management consultant Peter Block reminds us that, "Spirituality is the process of living out a set of deeply held personal values, of honoring forces or a presence greater than ourselves. It expresses our desire to find meaning in, and to treat as an offering what we do".

This spiritual element provides a number of positive characteristics that cannot be found or nurtured anywhere else. The personal leader knows the purpose of their existence must go far beyond the pursuit of the "whoever dies with the most toys wins" philosophy of our modern society. They know that every day of life is a precious *gift* and an endowment to become something or someone even better. This spiritual element also provides them a *mental* toughness to endure the difficult periods of their life. They come to realize that sad or tragic things also happen for a *purpose* even if we do not yet understand exactly what that purpose is. There are a few moments in American history that highlight this fact. One is the *American Declaration of Independence* written in 1776. Before we discuss its content lets remember the times in which it was written.

For thousands of years the Western world believed in the *divine right of kings*. This political and religious philosophy taught that all kings and queens ruled under the direct authority of God. They were ordained and given their royal titles and offices by the direct will of God. Any challenge to their rule was not just rebellion against the civil authority, but rebellion against the will of the Creator. This concept was supported by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament book of Romans where he wrote in chapter 13 that, "every soul should be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves."

The North American group of British citizens who considered civil rebellion and a declaration of independence were well aware of these traditional and entrenched beliefs! There were also hundreds of Protestant ministers who taught the dogmatic words of the Evangelist Paul regarding being subject to the existing civil authorities. So by what authority could they rebel against the British crown? It is revealed in the *Declaration of Independence* as modified and ratified by the 2nd Continental Congress of 1776. In a bold demonstration of underlying spirituality this document acknowledged the presence of God three times in its text. The divine providence of God was used as a reason and justification for rebellion from the British crown. Here are the 3 references...

1. When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.
2. We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress,

Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States;

3. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

Let's remember what signing this document actually meant to the signatories. It was a *suicide pact* for these 56 men to write their names to a document that would be considered treasonous. They were challenging the greatest military power on earth and were surrounded by many neighbors who were still loyal to the British crown. The odds of achieving independence were slim. The odds of being captured and hung for treason were great. So what drove them to sign the document? By what authority could these individuals declare independence and violate the established divine right of kings? They tell us that Nature's God entitled them, that the Supreme Judge of the World would judge their intentions and that they would rely on Divine Providence for protection and success.

The Declaration of Independence was greatly influenced by Enlightenment thinkers who believed that government existed by consent of the governed and that people should rebel if their natural rights, granted by their Creator were violated. Furthermore they concluded that all men are created equal and possess certain inalienable rights provided by Nature's God.

Actually, in Jefferson's original draft he also used the phrase "we hold these truths to be sacred & undeniable" but it was modified to "we hold these truths to be self-evident" to avoid the document from sounding like a sermon. What drove these British citizens to suffer harassment, potential loss of material possessions and possible death? It was a belief that what they were doing mattered for *future* generations because they were part of a movement approved by Divine Providence. It was the underlying spirituality possessed by many of the delegates that pressed them to their greatest level of commitment and service, when reality told them to stop, shut-up and go home.

How about your life and personal goals? Do you have the benefit of spirituality to guide and inspire you when everything seems lost? Do you have both a high IQ and SQ?

Another example of how spirituality provides mental toughness is recorded in the notes of the Constitutional Convention of 1787. After the United States achieved independence the nation had been struggling because it had a weak central government. The existing *Articles of Confederation* insured the strong independence of each state, and the weakness of a federal government. The leaders of the nation recognized this fact and gathered together to find a solution. It was a sweltering hot summer day in Philadelphia as about 30 delegates from 12 of the 13 colonies met in a small room at the State House in Philadelphia during this historic constitutional convention. The quarrels between the states were deep and divisive. There was no real union of the colonies at this time. Each state raised or lowered tariffs between each other and some minted their own money. The northern states insisted that political representation be based on population while the southern states claimed representation should be based upon land under cultivation. The smaller states feared they would be overwhelmed and controlled by the large states. And the topic of slavery simmered over every major issue between the northern and southern states. Almost all the states were concerned that a strong central government would interfere in their own affairs.

The delegates had been arguing for over 4 weeks and the convention was about to disband in failure. It would come to the brink of collapse many times. History records that the personality of General George Washington was perhaps the only unifying force. These former colonies had come only so far in the 11 years since 1776 and the disunited states were on the verge of disintegration. In the midst of this very convention, it seemed that all the events leading to independence and freedom may have been in vain. On June 28th, at one of the most critical times during the contentious deliberations, it's most elderly statesman rose to speak.

Next to George Washington, this talented 81 year old man was one of the most respected and revered patriarchs of the original American revolution. He simply asked the president of the convention if he could address the delegates. His request was granted and at this critical moment he rose and spoke quietly. It was none other than Dr. Benjamin Franklin, the aged patriot, who spoke to the divided delegates. Here is what he said...

“MR. PRESIDENT,” - “The small Progress we have made, after 4 or 5 Weeks' close Attendance and continual reasonings with each other, our different Sentiments on almost every Question, several of the last producing as many “Noes” as “Ayes”, is, methinks, a melancholy Proof of the Imperfection of the Human Understanding...”

“In this Situation of this Assembly, groping, as it were, in the dark to find Political Truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illuminate our Understandings? In the Beginning of the Contest with Britain, when we were sensible of Danger, we had daily Prayers in this Room for the Divine Protection. Our Prayers, Sir, were heard; -- and they were graciously answered. All of us, who were engaged in the Struggle, must have observed frequent Instances of a superintending Providence in our Favor. To that kind Providence we owe this happy Opportunity of Consulting in Peace on the Means of establishing our future national Felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful Friend? or do we imagine we no longer need its assistance? I have lived, Sir, a long time; and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this Truth, that God governs in the Affairs of Men. And if a Sparrow cannot fall to the Ground without his Notice, is it probable that an Empire can rise without his Aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the Sacred Writings, that "except the Lord build the House, they labour in vain that build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe, that, without his concurring Aid, we shall succeed in this political Building no better than the Builders of Babel; we shall be divided by our little, partial, local Interests, our Projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a Reproach and a Bye-word down to future Ages. And, what is worse, Mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate Instance, despair of establishing Government by human Wisdom, and leave it to Chance, War, and Conquest.”

“I therefore beg leave to move, That henceforth Prayers, imploring the Assistance of Heaven and its Blessing on our Deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to Business; and that one or more of the Clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that Service.”

Except for three or four persons, the majority of delegates thought prayers were unnecessary and defeated the resolution. However, the convention rested for a day and many of the delegates sought God's guidance through private *personal* prayer and fasting. The convention then reconvened and eventually a constitution was approved. Franklin's stirring reminder of the need for spirituality and what was at stake for future generations resulted in a breakthrough that made the constitution possible. It was not a perfect charter and almost immediately needed amendments. Yet, it was a personal appeal to their spirituality that prompted many delegates to submerge their petty differences to craft a basic constitution that forever changed the world and how people are governed. It has endured with amendments for over 200 years and has become the democratic template used to introduce freedom to many other nations.

It you think about it, Franklin faced the same problem with most of the delegates we still have today. Many people are uncomfortable hearing about the topic of spirituality! Can you imagine sitting in a large publicly owned corporation and discussing a very complex problem? Perhaps a large loan is being contemplated or massive layoffs of employees are anticipated. Maybe a merger is being discussed or bankruptcy is looming if things don't change. Now picture a senior executive of the corporation standing up and suggesting that the group have a prayer to seek Divine guidance on their serious decision. What do you think the reaction would be? Some would be obviously embarrassed by the suggestion, others might be offended and a few would be in shock that a suggestion of this type was even presented. This is why your own *personal* embrace of spirituality is so important. You may

not be able to influence a group or committee to realize that IQ and SQ are essential to sound decision-making, but you can make the choice on your own.

Jefferson and Franklin understood that what we do, or don't do, has consequences far beyond today and the present generation. It is true that both of these patriots rejected the traditional religious institutions of their day and held rather quirky personal beliefs. Yet, they were guided by their Spiritual Quotient and realized that we all are standing in a higher court than the physical one where we are judged today. It is the final verdict in that higher court that will really count.

Next month we will continue to look at the importance of spirituality...

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Greg has an extensive thirty-five years experience in public speaking and has spoken to hundreds of audiences worldwide. Greg has a Master of Arts degree in Leadership from Bellevue University, where he also has served as an adjunct professor teaching courses in business management and leadership since 2002. His first book, [52 Leadership Tips \(That Will Change How You Lead Others\)](#) was published in 2006 by WingSpan Press. His second book, [Making Life's Puzzle Pieces Fit](#) was published in March 2009. Both are available at amazon.com. Greg is also the president of [Leadership Excellence, Ltd](#) and a Managing Partner of the Leadership Management Institute. Leadership Excellence, Ltd. effectively builds individuals and organizations to reach their highest potential through enhanced productivity and personal development using a number of proven programs. He is also the president and founder of [weLEAD Incorporated](#).