
FIVE MOMENTS OF TRUTH IN BECOMING A LEADER

By Dr. D.H. (Dee) Groberg

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Introduction:

Becoming a leader is not something that one can do overnight. It's a gradual developmental process similar to the growth of a tree. It's not like a float in a parade that is quickly put together with tinsel and crepe paper, then discarded and of no use the day after the parade. Leaders grow and develop by the choices they make. I would like to describe five choices that I believe lead to great leadership. I call them **Five Moments of Truth in Becoming a Leader**.

I first heard the term "moment of truth" referred to in a bull fight. It is the point when the matador is standing alone with the sword waiting for the final charge of the bull. How he performs at this moment determines the outcome and success of the bull fight. Another example of a moment of truth is in the movie, *Chariots of Fire*, when the runner, Harold Abrahams, is talking to his friend, Aubry, the night before his hundred meter race. He says,

"I'll raise my eyes and look down that corridor four feet wide with ten lonely seconds to justify my whole existence."

To him, that was a moment of truth.

There are three things that I would like to say about these Moments of Truth:

1. **They are sequential. That is, each one depends on the one before it. Unless you have passed Moment One, you don't have the opportunity to move to Moment Two, and so forth.**
2. **They are progressively more difficult. Not only is each dependent upon the previous one, each is progressively more challenging than the one before.**
3. **All of the 5 Moments are within an individual's Circle of Influence. No one else does or can determine the choice.**

Picture for a moment a person inside a camera. It's completely dark inside. Then the shutter clicks. When this happens, the person sees, for a brief moment, the light from the outside. Then the shutter closes again and it becomes dark again. The light from the outside represents the true possibilities of people in becoming the type of leaders to which they aspire. The challenge is to keep the shutter open; to be able to see clearly and continuously the vision of their full potential.

For each of these 5 Moments I will give a name, some examples, ideas on "how to" do it, and the results or effect each has on oneself and others.

Moment One: Discovering One's Core Principles and Values

Around the sixth century B.C., the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu talked about leadership. He said,

"The leader shows that style is no substitute for substance....that creating an impression is not more potent than acting from ones center."

Almost 2000 years ago, a Roman historian by the name of Plutarch researched the lives of great leaders in the Greek and Roman civilizations. In his book, *Plutarch's Lives*, he refers to Alexander

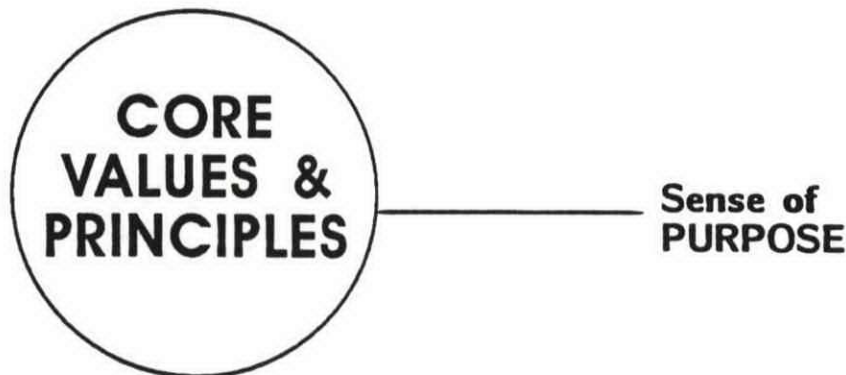
the Great, Pericles, Solon the Lawgiver, and so forth. Plutarch talks about a common quality in all great men. He described it as a **sense of destiny**. Shortly after the turn of this century, a man by the name of Napoleon Hill looked at great leaders of his day. Among the ones he talked with and surveyed were Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford and Charles Schwab. In trying to uncover the common traits of these leaders, Hill concluded that the common thread was that each had a **sense of mission**. In 1989, two professors of the Stanford Business School, Dr. James Collins and Dr. Jerry Porras, analyzed over 100 successful executives with whom they had observed and worked. Their conclusion reflected that the ingredients common to each were a **sense of purpose, mission, and vision**.

Deciding and writing down one's core principles and values is the first Moment of Truth. As such, it is the easiest to do. And yet, my observation in working with people throughout the world is that perhaps not one in a hundred people have done it--not one in a hundred really comes to grips with what they really believe and what principles they choose to govern their lives. For a leader, deciding core principles and values is an essential step. As James Callaghan, former Prime Minister of Britain put it,

"In my judgment, a leader should have a core philosophy and belief against which he can judge the important issues as they arise. Unless he has that bedrock to fall back on, the unexpected storms that blow up will toss him about like a cork. Without such a foundation, a leader may be able to survive, but he won't be a leader in the sense that I use the term."

How does one develop a core set of values and principles? The key is to do deep introspection, and write out a personal mission statement. For a mission statement to be effective in one's life it must be **read regularly**.

The primary result of developing a core set of values and principles is that it gives one a sense of **purpose** and meaning.



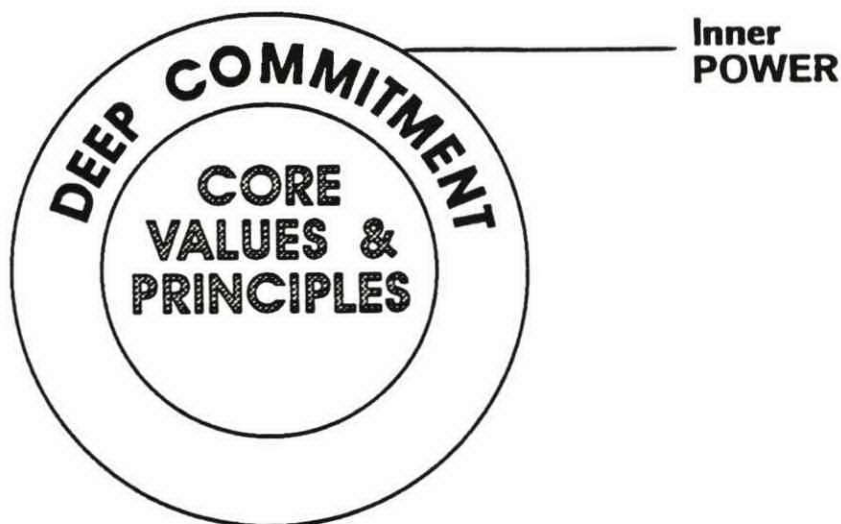
Moment Two: Making a Deep Commitment to one's Core Principles and Values

A recent poll said that one of the most serious problems in America today is the gap between what we believe and our commitment to those beliefs. A deep commitment to one's core Principles and Values is the second Moment of Truth. If reactivity is defined as responding based on the feelings at the moment, then I would like to redefine the concept in this way: If we build our emotions into our core values, then we can and will respond based on our feelings because they will be the same as our core values.

When the heroin, Joan of Arc, was confronted with a difficult military challenge, none of her men in arms believed that it was possible to achieve the objective. She told her general in chief that she personally would lead the attack. The general responded, "Not a man will follow you." Her response was, "I will not look back to see if anyone is following me." This is an example of the type of commitment that I am talking about here.

How does one develop commitment? I believe the key is to commit before the event. Don't wait until you are in a situation to make a decision on how you are going to act. Decide before hand, based on your values. Make a mental decision by picturing yourself in the situation. You're much more likely to respond based on values in the real situation when you have done it first in your mind.

The result of a deep commitment is an inner **power**. This power comes not from the core principles and values alone but from the strength of the commitment to them.



Moment Three: Aligning Behavior and Actions to One's Deep Commitment to Core Values

Once when Mohandas Gandhi was speaking in England, he held a group of people spellbound for several hours, speaking without explicit preparation, without notes, and in a relatively uncomfortable environment. The crowd was enthralled with what he had to say. Reporters were there, and afterwards tried to talk with Gandhi to understand how he was able to speak so convincingly without notes or preparation. Unable to get to Gandhi because of the crowd, the reporters spoke to Gandhi's secretary, Mahadev Desai, about this remarkable man. Desai replied to their questions,

"What Gandhi thinks, what he feels, what he says, and what he does are all the same. He does not need notes."

He was all lined up, and at one with himself.

The great German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, described it this way:

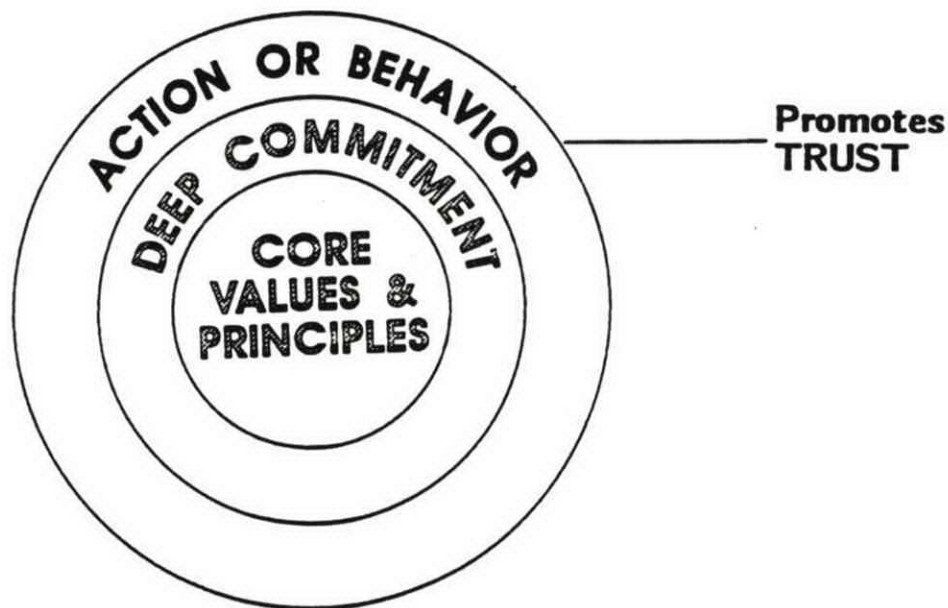
"We may lie with our lips but we tell the truth with the face we make when we lie."

Again in the movie, *Chariots of Fire*, the Scottish runner, Eric Liddell demonstrates this integrity when he finds that his race (the hundred meter dash) is on Sunday. Being true to his values, he refuses to run on the Sabbath. Even when the Prince of Wales, the future King of England, tries to persuade him otherwise, he refuses saying that even though he loves his country, he cannot sacrifice his personal integrity. Finally another runner steps in and allows Liddell to take his place, but in a much longer race. One of the Olympic committee members describes the situation saying that it was a good thing Liddell had stuck to his convictions because as a true man of principle and a true athlete, his speed was a mere extension of his life force, of who he is.

That's the way it is with everyone. We all act from our core. For each of us our behavior is a mere reflection of who we really are at our core.

How do you consistently line your actions up with your core values? I believe it is only by constant effort; by getting up whenever we fall; by constantly reviewing and committing to one's values, and deciding first in our minds how we are going to behave.

The result of this consistency, this inner integrity, is **trust**. The first two Moments are private. Nobody sees them. They are within a person. But they are reflected in the Third Moment through behavior. People sense when a person is acting out of deeper values. Because of the trust that this alignment promotes, people are willing to follow that type of a person. Without it they feel manipulated and only follow grudgingly, if at all.

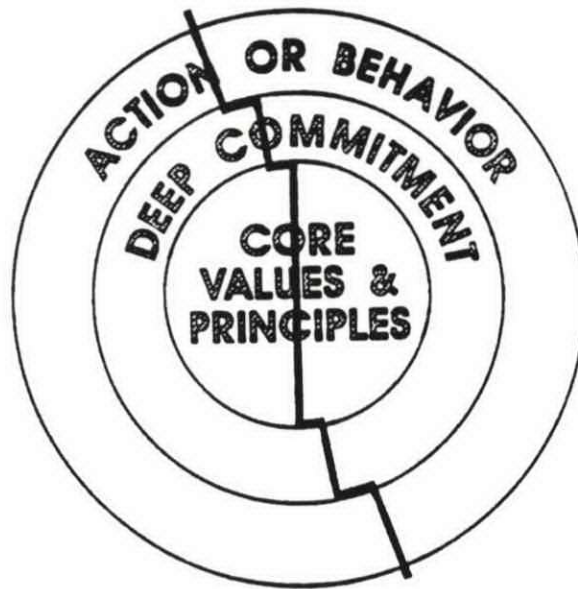


People don't follow a leader only because of what he does or says at the moment. They follow him because of what he has done and said in the past and because of what they believe he will do and say in the future. His power to lead is much deeper than his actions. It's in his being--what he is.

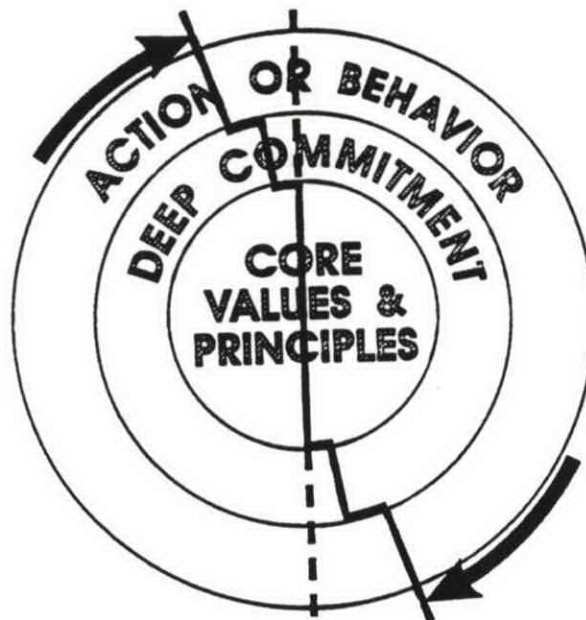
By acting consistently upon values and principles to which he is deeply committed, a leader generates trust in his followers. The foundation of great leadership is in the being--the inner self.

Moment Four: Self-Correcting When Out of Line

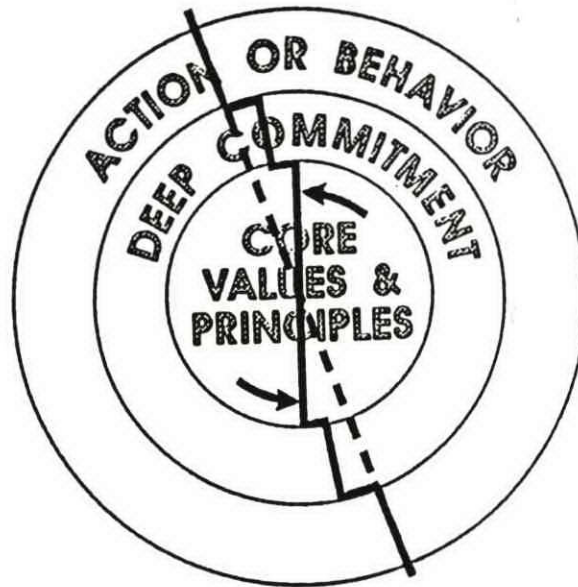
It's almost impossible for people to consistently align their behavior with their commitment to their core values. Often they are off just a little in their commitment. When this happens they may become even further off in their behavior. They experience a feeling of being misaligned. The language we use reflects this. When a person's behavior and commitment are not lined up with his values, we say that he is "crooked", "twisted", "out of line", needs to "straighten up".



This fourth Moment of Truth is the moment of becoming. What people choose to do when their behavior is not consistent with their core values determine what they will become. At this point almost everyone feels pressure to "straighten up", to "get back in line".



This is the moment of becoming because if we do not respond quickly and straighten our behavior to line up with our core values then our core values may gradually change to line up with our behavior. And we become someone different.



And what's wrong with that? Is that not integrity? No. Not at all. There are two problems. First, if we change our values because of our behavior, then we essentially have no values. We may behave in any way we feel at the moment, and then change the values to correspond. It's like having no anchor, like being driven by the winds and the waves and the influences around us. We have what are known as "situational ethics".

Second, if we have thought out our original principles and values so that they are based on timeless truths, and then changed them, we would then have a dysfunctional core. It would be an incorrect map and would not lead us where we want to go.

But what effect does admitting we are wrong and self-correcting have on trust? If we straighten our behavior to match our core values (in other words, self-correct) it usually increases trust rather than diminish it. An example will illustrate this.

My daughter, Tanya, had always been a good student. One day she came home from college with tears in her eyes because she had received a "C"--in bowling, no less! She explained that she had not done very well and that none of the class had done very well. As a result, towards the end of the semester, the instructor asked each of them to go out on their own and bowl three games, keep track of the scores and turn them in. He promised he would weigh their grade heavily by these three games. Tanya went with a couple of friends and bowled the three games. But she falsified the scores. If she hit one pin she recorded five. If she hit five pins she put down eight, and so forth. The other students did the same. They even hinted that the instructor expected them to alter the scores and, because everyone else was doing it, if they didn't they would be unjustly punished. Then, as they were leaving the bowling alley, Tanya said that she felt that it just wasn't right. Even if the teacher expected it, even if all the other students did it, it was not consistent with her values.

So, she returned to the bowling alley, paid the money again, and bowled three more games. As she related the story to me, she said, "I did worse than I did the first time!" But she reported the true scores and, as a result she received a "C". I told her that in my opinion that was the highest grade she had ever got--the "C" above high "A", a "C" for courage--courage to stick up for her personal values. And what happened to my trust in her? It soared.

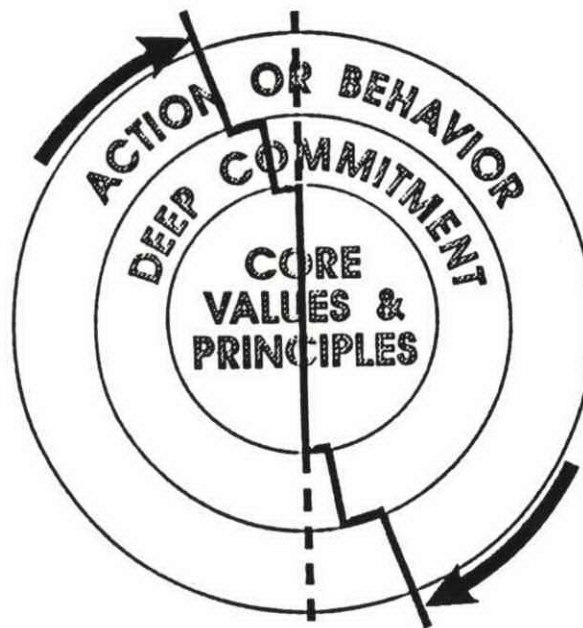
The runner, Eric Liddell referred to earlier, ran in the quarter mile race--a race four times as long as the one for which he had trained. At one point he was pushed and fell down, but he got up and still won the race. He self-corrected. One of the coaches there described it as, "...not the prettiest race, but certainly the bravest."

It takes courage to be loyal to what you believe and to self-correct when you are wrong. Because it is difficult it offers an opportunity for greatness.

When someone is willing to self-correct it offers **hope**. Everyone is struggling with their own actions, trying to line them up with what they really believe. It's the examples of those who self-correct that offer hope to everyone.

SELF-CORRECT

**Offers
HOPE**



And how does one self-correct? I don't know exactly how, but I believe the key is to do it fast; do it immediately after you realize you are in the wrong and inconsistent with your core values. If you wait you may begin to rationalize and to bend your commitment and your values to line up with your actions.

Moment Five: Allowing and Helping Others to Self-Correct

In his upcoming book, *Bonds of Anguish, Bonds of Love*, Terry Warner says,

"There are two ways of being a person. One is alienated, anxious and resentful; the second open, resonate, straightforward, and generally speaking, buoyant. The basic thing

to say about this second way of being a person is that when we live according to it, we care about other people, we are able to see them as they really are, rather than as helps or hindrances to the advancement of our interests. They, which is to say their feelings and hopes and needs, are real to us....Each of us chooses one or the other of these two very different ways of being and we make the choice from moment to moment by how we look upon and treat other people."

Caring about others releases their potential. This is partly because people don't care about how much you know until they know how much you care. Tom Watson of IBM put it this way,

"I believe that the difference between success and failure in an organization can very often be traced to the question of how well the organization brings out the great energies and talents of it's people."

It's this fifth Moment of Truth that brings out the energies and talents of people.

And how do you do it? How do you allow and help others to self-correct? I believe the key is in our attitudes. It is embodied in the following rule: Don't take offence and don't give offence. As Ken Keyes says,

"We make ourselves and others suffer as much when we take offence as when we give offence."

I have a friend who does my tax work. One day when I was at his home going over the numbers, the door bell rang. He went to the door. A young boy scout was standing there. "Hey, mister, do you want to buy a ticket to the Scout-a-rama?" he asked. "How much are they?" my friend asked. "It's one dollar, and that's good for the whole family." My friend bought one and we went back to work. Ten minutes later the door bell rang again and another boy scout stood at the door and asked, "Do you want to buy a ticket to the Scout-a-rama?". I was waiting to hear my friend say "Oh, I'm sorry. You came too late. I've already bought one." But instead, what I heard was, "Sure. How many do you need me to buy?" That's an example of caring rather than taking offense.

When we care about others and allow and help them to self-correct and grow, we give them **value**. It may be this very feeling of being valued that creates the environment that promotes growth in people.

**ALLOW/HELP OTHERS ————— Gives
VALUE**

Now we come to perhaps the most important question: Why would anyone do these things? Why would anyone want to pursue these Five Moments? If we do them because they work, the paradox is that then they probably won't work. I believe that the only valid reason to do them is because they are part of our nature, because we believe them, because it's us.

As D.H. Lawrence put it:

"Man should never do the thing that he believes to be wrong. Because if he does he will lose his singleness, wholeness, natural honor. If you want to do a thing, you've either got to believe, sincerely, that it is your true nature to do the thing or else you've got to let it alone."

Victor Frankl described it this way.

"Don't aim at success. The more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued. It must ensue. And it only does so as the unintended side effect of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself. You have to let it happen by not caring about it."

If you do it because it's your true nature, then the paradox is that it does work. Not always immediately, but over time. Immediately it often fails. And that's the final test. For example, my daughter got a "C" in bowling. Eric Liddell was not able to run in the race at first. And when he did run it was in a race four times longer than the one he trained for. Joan of Arc was burned at the stake. It was twenty four years later that she was canonized as a Saint. If one's motivation to do these things is not because they work, can one really do them? Is it just an image? Is it realistic to think of conforming one's life to a set of core principles and values? This is something each person must decide for himself.

Let's move back into the camera, again. We experience short flashes of insight and belief, but then it becomes dark again. When the light is not shining through, doubt creeps in. But, as Shakespeare said,

"Our doubts are traitors and make us lose the good we oft might gain by fearing to attempt."

By doubting, we betray ourselves. In doing anything that we feel we shouldn't do, we betray ourselves. And when we don't do something that we know we should do, we betray ourselves. We even betray ourselves with our feelings. This can be illustrated by the minister who saw a man sleeping in his congregation: He was very upset and sorely tempted to comment on the evils of sleeping in church. He almost said, "Why even come if you're just going to sleep." After the sermon the man's wife came up to the minister, commended him on the wonderful sermon, and said how much she and her husband loved him. She said that even though her husband was dying of cancer and could hardly stay awake because of the medication and treatment he was receiving, there was no place he would rather be than in church with this minister. The minister's feelings immediately changed. But his original feelings were false. The sleeping man had not made him angry and upset as he had thought. It was the minister who chose that emotional response.

Another story will help further illustrate the betraying nature of feelings. A woman at Heathrow Airport in London was waiting for a plane to fly back to America. She purchased a box of cookies and a book while waiting for her flight. With cookies sitting on the table next to her, she began reading her book. Suddenly a British gentleman sitting on the other side of the table reached over, opened up the cookies, took one out, and ate it. He smiled at her as he did it. The woman was horrified but didn't say anything. She just reached over, grabbed a cookie and ate it herself. The man smiled, reached over and took another cookie, and ate it. The woman, becoming very upset and angry (but not speaking), took another cookie and ate it.

And back and forth they went until all but one of the cookies were eaten. And then, as though to add insult to injury, the British gentleman took the last cookie, smiled, broke it in two and slid half of it over to her. After eating his half, the British gentleman got up, smiled again, bowed politely and walked off. By this time the woman was livid. But before she could confront the man or do anything else, her flight was called. She opened her carry-on bag to put the book away, and there in her bag she noticed her box of cookies. She had been eating his cookies! And, more importantly, she had been generating false feelings of anger, resentment, and accusation towards this man who himself had actually been experiencing what she thought she was experiencing. Yet, his reaction was not resentment, not anger, but pleasant sharing.

We create our own feelings and we often betray ourselves by creating counterfeit feelings. When we doubt that we can live according to our values--when something happens and we feel like reacting counter to what we believe inside--what do we do? Or more seriously, when we begin to convince ourselves and rationalize that we believe other than what we have said we believe, how do we straighten ourselves back up? I think there are two things we can do that will help to bring us back to reality.

First: Drop any resentment that we have towards anyone.

Second: Perform some unselfish act of kindness.

Another example from Joan of Arc puts all of this in perspective. When Joan was accused of witchcraft and asked to recant stories of the voices she had heard, she refused saying that even if she were under the Judgment and saw the fire before her, and even if she were in the flames she would not change what she had said. She was put to the stake and when the fire was brought to her she was given one last chance to recant. Looking down the centuries, she gave these immortal words:

"I know this now. Every man gives his life for what he believes. Every woman gives her life for what she believes. Sometimes people believe in little or nothing yet they give their lives to that little or nothing. One life is all we have and we live it as we believe in living it. And then it is gone. But to sacrifice what you are and live without belief, that's more terrible than dying. Even more terrible than dying young."

And at nineteen, this young peasant French girl gave her life rather than sacrifice her character. Even though few people are asked to sacrifice their lives for their character, character should have that much value to us.

Summary:

So, leadership is primarily an inner quality. It's the continuous surmounting of five moments of truth. Not just once, but again, and again, and again in an upward cycle. It's:

- 1. Deciding One's Core Principles and Values**
- 2. Making a Deep Commitment to one's Core Principles and Values**
- 3. Aligning Behavior and Actions to One's Deep Commitment to Core Principles and Values**
- 4. Self-Correcting When Out of Line**
- 5. Allowing and Helping Others to Self-Correct**

These five moments of truth are the basic elements that result in great leaders.

We are all in this world together. It's as though we're all in the same race with Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell. We are all both participants and spectators. We make mistakes and we fall along the way. And we hope others will allow us to get up, even help us to get up. At the same time, we need to allow and help others to get up, too.

I would like to conclude with a poem on the following page that summarizes these Five Moments of Truth, especially the last two. It's called *The Race*.

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THE RACE

By Dr. D.H. Groberg

I

"Quit! Give up! You're beaten!"
They shout at me and plead.
"There's just too much against you now.
This time you can't succeed."

And as I start to hang my head
In front of failure's face,
My downward fall is broken by
The memory of a race.

And hope refills my weakened will
As I recall that scene:
For just the thought of that short race
Rejuvenates my being.

II

A children's race-young boys, young men
How I remember well.
Excitement, sure! But also fear:
It wasn't hard to tell.

They all lined up so full of hope
Each thought to win that race.
Or tie for first, or if not that,
At least take second place.

And fathers watched from off the side
Each cheering for his son.
And each boy hoped to show his dad
That he would be the one.

The whistle blew and off they went
Young hearts and hopes afire.
To win and be the hero there
Was each young boy's desire.

And one boy in particular
Whose dad was in the crowd
Was running in the lead and thought:
"My dad will be so proud!"

But as they speeded down the field
Across a shallow dip,
The little boy who thought to win
Lost his step and slipped.

Trying hard to catch himself
His hands flew out to brace,
And mid the laughter of the crowd
He fell flat on his face.

So down he fell and with him hope
-He couldn't win it now-
Embarrassed, sad, he only wished
To disappear somehow.

But as he fell his dad stood up
And showed his anxious face,
Which to the boy so clearly said:
"Get up and win the race."

He quickly rose, no damage done,
-Behind a bit, that's all-
And ran with all his mind and might
To make up for his fall.

So anxious to restore himself
-To catch up and to win-
His mind went faster than his legs:
He slipped and fell again!

He wished then he had quit before
With only one disgrace.
"I'm hopeless as a runner now;
I shouldn't try to race."

But in the laughing crowd he searched
And found his father's face;
That steady look which said again:
"Get up and win the race!"

So up he jumped to try again
-Ten yards behind the last-
"If I'm to gain those yards," he thought,
"I've got to move real fast."

Exerting everything he had
He regained eight or ten,
But trying so hard to catch the lead
He slipped and fell again!

Defeat! He lied there silently
-A tear dropped from his eye-
"There's no sense running anymore:
Three strikes: I'm out! Why try!"

The will to rise had disappeared:
All hope had fled away;
So far behind, so error prone;
A loser all the way.

"I've lost, so what's the use," he thought
"I'll live with my disgrace."
But then he thought about his dad
Who soon he'd have to face.

"Get up," an echo sounded low.
"Get up and take your place;
You were not meant for failure here.
Get up and win the race."

"With borrowed will get up," it said,
"You haven't lost at all.
For winning is no more than this:
To rise each time you fall."

So up he rose to run once more,
And with a new commit
He resolved that win or lose
At least he wouldn't quit.

So far behind the others now,
-The most he'd ever been-
Still he gave it all he had
And ran as though to win.

Three times he'd fallen, stumbling;
Three times he rose again;
Too far behind to hope to win
He still ran to the end.

They cheered the winning runner
As he crossed the line first place.
Head high, and proud, and happy;
No falling, no disgrace.

But when the fallen youngster
Crossed the line last place,
The crowd gave him the greater cheer,
For finishing the race.

And even though he came in last
With head bowed low, unproud,
You would have thought he'd won the race
To listen to the crowd.

And to his dad he sadly said,
"I didn't do too well."
"To me, you won," his father said.
"You rose each time you fell."

III

And now when things seem dark and hard
And difficult to face,
The memory of that little boy
Helps me in my race.

For all of life is like that race,
With ups and downs and all.
And all you have to do to win
Is rise each time you fall.

"Quit! Give up! You're beaten!"
They still shout in my face.
But another voice within me says:
"GET UP AND WIN THE RACE!"