

## LEADING WITH PURPOSE

In classical Greek literature, faith is akin to fidelity, which signifies an honored agreement or bond of trust. Fidelity is faithful and lasting devotion to one's duties and obligations, sacred loyalty to one's commitments. Faith is that which binds people together to a special purpose, a larger story, which calls upon each person to risk and sacrifice on behalf of one's friends, community, organization or nation. Hope is an expectation of a future good mingled with the understanding that this good is never guaranteed and that the obstacles are many to its fulfillment. It is steadfast confidence mixed with a realistic sense of contingency. Hope is manifested in the tension between an inadequate or unacceptable today, where expectations are yet to be realized, and the anticipation of a better "tomorrow," when these expectations will be substantially fulfilled.

It is simply impossible to lead well over time without faith and hope.

Organizations and communities expect their leaders to take them somewhere, to have an end in mind, something of great value that is yet to be attained and worthy of the energy and commitment, even sacrifice of all. They expect leaders to have a profound sense of personal meaning, and so to make a meaningful difference in the life of the organization, its members and the world at larger. In other words, we expect leaders to infuse the organization with faith and hope; forward movement—momentum—tied to a sense of overarching purpose.

The research agrees, suggesting a positive correlation between a leader's effectiveness and his or her participation in a larger, meaningful story—a meta-narrative rich in faith and hope. Grounded in a larger, "master story" with explanatory power, the leader possesses the necessary contextual reference point from which to make sense of the past and present of the organization in light of its future, and so to the keep the community on course to fulfill its destiny, even in spite of discouragement and delay. As a result, leaders possessing faith and hope stand ready and able to infuse the community with a clear focus and an appropriate level of confidence as they proceed on the difficult journey to a better place.

The leader informed by faith acknowledges that there is an important story beyond their individual story to which they and others owe allegiance. Building on this fidelity, leaders set the moral trajectory of the organization by connecting its daily life to a larger, transcendent purpose, thereby fostering a collective sense of special purpose that propels the organization forward in pursuit of its "good."

Faithful leaders infuse the organization with a moral purpose, a good and compelling reason, the "why," which prompts others to sacrifice, collaborate and to go the proverbial "extra mile" in service of the organization's larger purpose. Informed by hope, leaders know that the journey, while difficult, is worth the effort, and that the best days of the organization are yet ahead.

Leaders informed by faith and hope, know who they are, why they are here, and where they are going.

They locate their lives in a larger story that is "going somewhere;" a story with a coherent narrative and forward movement. Leaders informed and shaped by this sense of larger purpose are capable of staying focused and staying the course each day and over the decades.

What is your larger story? Are you infusing your organization or community with faith and hope?