

Recession Thoughts: Sacred Trust

In 2008 and 2009 we've watched a lot of bad stuff go down and a lot of it is derived directly from greed and irresponsibility. So I know I'm not the first, I'm not even the twenty-first [person to define leadership], but as I thought about it—and maybe this stems from the fact that I was a junior Naval officer in Vietnam in '66, and '67 and '68—but the way I'm thinking about it, trying to think about it, trying to help people think about it is, this phrase came into my mind: Leadership is—leadership of any kind, any person, any age, any level, any organization—leadership is literally a *sacred trust*.

You wouldn't argue about that if you were talking about me as a twenty-three-year-old Navy platoon commander in Vietnam. You wouldn't argue about that if you were talking about your seven-year-old daughter's second grade teacher. But in general, the decision to take on the role of leader is the decision to be responsible for the growth and development of your fellow human beings. And so I am more than willing to stand on the word in its truest sense—not necessarily a religious sense—of *sacred*. Leadership is a sacred trust.

Leadership is about helping people develop in ways that will cause their lives to be richer, better, etc. And I don't think we've— You know, leadership has become about shortcuts and about the quickest route to wealth. And I don't have a problem with getting wealthy, and I don't have any problem with shortcuts. But it really came to me when somebody was talking about one of our famous companies that was in trouble. And the headhunters were beginning to headhunt some of their better people and so on.

And I said to the reporter I was talking to, "If a guy running a 2,000-person division that is under complete frontal assault leaves that division for \$50,000 more or \$200,000 more a year to go to work for another company, as far as I'm concerned, he is a first class, unequivocal jerk. He's running the 2,000-person division. He has a responsibility to those people that can't be tossed out the window for a couple of hundred thousand bucks." And for better or for worse, that's what I think the job is [whether you're a] Cub Scout leader, Brownie leader, Girl Scout leader, fifth grade teacher, or person leading a 27-person accounting department, or a 27-table restaurant.

