



INSIGHTS AND INSPIRATION

—RECENT COMMENTARY BY LARRY C. SPEARS,
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My dictionary offers the following definitions for the words: Heart, Mind, and Spirit—

- Heart: regarded as the seat of emotions, personality, attributes.
- Mind: the thinking and perceiving part of consciousness.
- Spirit: a pervading animating principle, essential, or characteristic quality of life.

I believe that all three of these are important to understanding the essential nature of servant-leadership.

Standard practices are rapidly shifting toward the ideas put forward by Robert Greenleaf, Stephen Covey, Peter Senge, Max DePree, Margaret Wheatley, Ken Blanchard, and many others who suggest that there is a better way to lead and manage our organizations. Robert Greenleaf's writings on the subject of servant-leadership helped to get this movement started, and his views have had a profound and growing effect on many.

—From “Servant-Leadership: Heart, Mind, Spirit,” by Larry C. Spears,
Servant-Leadership: Heart, Mind, Spirit
(Shann Ferch and Larry C. Spears, Editors) Forthcoming in 2009

In preparing for today's program, I did a Google search of the words “servant-leader” and “Mennonite” and came across some fascinating articles. One in particular that caught my eye was titled, “Sting: A Servant-Leader.” In this short piece, the author commented upon an interview he had heard with the popular musician in which Sting said that he never thought he had



all the answers to make his music better, and that he routinely asked his band members for their own ideas.

Over the past twenty years, I have asked people to name servant-leaders, and I have almost never heard a rock musician mentioned. Robert Greenleaf said there were contemporary prophets speaking to us all the time, but that we tend not to be listening to them. I have been a fan of Sting's music for a very long time, and as a longtime listener, I tend to agree: Sting appears to be an inspiring example of a creative musician as involving servant-leader.

Max DePree's lovely companion books, *Leadership Is an Art* and *Leadership Jazz*, eloquently make the case for servant-leadership and the musician's life. So does a wonderful new book, *The Conductor as Leader*, by Ramona Wis.

—From “The Meaning & Practice of Servant-Leadership,”
a one-day program given by Larry C. Spears
to the Atlantic Coast Mennonite Conference,
New Holland, Pennsylvania, 2008

Servant leadership is fundamentally a philosophy for life and work. It starts with each individual but also has important applications for organizations.

The four Scanlon principles (Equity, Participation, Identity, and Competence) serve as the philosophical core for the Scanlon Plan—a particular means for companies to implement those principles. I believe that the place where servant-leadership and Scanlon principles come together is at the beginning—inside the heart-and-mind of each individual seeker who begins by asking him or herself questions like: “What is my greater purpose?” and “How can I better serve and lead others?” For some people and organiza-



tions, the answers to those questions have led them personally to servant-leadership, and corporately to become Scanlon companies.

—From “Servant-Leadership and Scanlon Principles,”
by Larry C. Spears,
Scanlon EPIC Leadership (Paul Davis and Larry C. Spears, Editors),
Scanlon Leadership Foundation/The Spears Center, 2008

I have come to believe that we should insist upon having choices and making decisions for ourselves, rather than having decisions forced upon us by others—no matter how well-intentioned. We should also become powerful advocates for allowing others to have those same rights. Yes, we live in an increasingly interdependent world, and we should take very seriously the careful balancing of personal choice with the greater social good. However, as Gordon Livingston says in his excellent book, *Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart: Thirty True Things You Need to Know Now*: “Nobody likes to be told what to do. It seems too obvious to mention, and yet look how much that passes for intimate communication involves admonitions and instructions.” This is another place where Robert Greenleaf’s ideas have great relevance—particularly around his encouragement of using persuasion as much as possible. Instead of telling others what to do, or what to think, I believe the world would be a better place if we saved our admonitions for ourselves and expected to persuade others (and to be persuaded in turn).

—From “Servant-Leadership,” a keynote presentation by Larry C. Spears to the Louisiana Office of Mental Health Conference, New Orleans, 2007

An essential connecting point between servant-leadership and Myers-Briggs work has to do with the notion that everyone should be accepted for who they are, and that all too often in the role of supervisors we make the mistake of trying to change others into our own image. I have had some direct experience with this over the years, both as the recipient of mostly well-meaning supervisors, and in my own well-intended advice to staff members whom I have supervised. In recent years, I am no longer comfortable with the thought of my encouraging others to change, and this growing aware-



ness has heightened my own sensitivity to those instances where others seek to change who I am. I am increasingly of the opinion that we are not only doing a disservice to others by not accepting them for exactly who they are now, but that we may even be doing harm to others, and to ourselves, through such practices. What passes today for standard management practices may someday be viewed as a kind of misuse of power toward others.

—From “Myers-Briggs and Servant-Leadership,”
by Ralph Lewis and Larry C. Spears,
The International Journal of Servant-Leadership, 2008

One important aspect of the Religious Society of Friends is the nurturance of seekers. Greenleaf addressed modern-day seekers in this way when he wrote: “There is a theory of prophecy which holds that prophetic voices of great clarity, and with a quality of insight equal to that of any age, are speaking cogently all the time.” I believe that Greenleaf continues to speak to all of us with power and clarity through his encouraging challenge to each of us to be both servant and leader.

—From “Robert K. Greenleaf and Servant-Leadership,”
by Larry C. Spears,
Spark (New York Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends),
March 2008

So, how does one proceed from intention to practice as a servant-leader? Greenleaf left a clue in the name he first used for the fledgling non-profit organization that he founded in 1964: The Center for Applied Ethics. Evidently, in some way or at some level, he viewed ethics, or moral reasoning, as a compass or pathway for effective leadership and a better world. According to ethicists, sound moral reasoning requires a holistic approach—that is, an appraisal of three distinct dimensions—motives, means, and ends. Motives are about intentions: “why” we do something. Means are about methods: “how” we do it. And Ends are about outcomes: “what” we are trying to accomplish. “It can also lead to insights about how



these dimensions relate to one another, as well as to the specific work that servant-leaders are called to do and live out in each domain.

—From “Holistic Servant-Leadership,”
by George SanFacon and Larry C. Spears,
Servant-Leader Essay Series, The Spears Center, 2008

I recently had the distinct privilege of visiting the Philadelphia Freedom Schools (PFS), where I learned about a significant and inspiring program underway to encourage young people in their understanding of servant-leadership, and to live their lives as exemplary servant-leaders.

“It always begins with a vision,” said Sedrick Miles, Philadelphia Freedom Schools Manager. “For a great institution like Philadelphia Freedom Schools, any worthwhile contribution to the collective vision of the community must be equal to the legacy passed down from servant-leaders who came before us.”

The PFS program was inspired by the historic mobilizing efforts organized by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in Mississippi during the summer of 1964. The original Mississippi Freedom Schools of the 1960s served as inspiration in the creation of Philadelphia Freedom Schools.

—From “Philadelphia Freedom Schools Foster Servant-Leadership,”
by Larry C. Spears, *Servant-Leader News*, The Spears Center,
March 2008

I believe that we are here to care for and to love one another. I believe that my spirit is inextricably linked to the act of serving others. How I choose to serve others is expressed in a myriad of conventional and unconventional forms. I define religion as the act of rebinding: ourselves, ourselves to others, and ourselves to the universe. I strive to live my life as an inspired servant-leader, by which I mean that I seek to be someone who helps to build a shared sense of community and encourages institutions to serve the common good. I have a deep commitment to honesty, fair treatment, and justice. I believe in the importance of asking questions of others, and espe-



cially of myself. I am hopeful of finding meaningful answers to some of my remaining questions, but I am increasingly at peace with the belief that there are some answers that I may simply never find. I am a seeker.

—From “The Seeker’s Journey,” by John Izzo and Larry C. Spears,
The International Journal of Servant-Leadership, 2008

The OnTarget Board Member: 8 Indisputable Behaviors is aligned with the Policy Governance Model created by Dr. John Carver, who, like Robert K. Greenleaf before him, is a revolutionary of the very best kind. The Policy Governance Model has provided the means for trustees to live out Greenleaf’s challenge to boards to act as both servant and leader. The time has come to raise awareness and practices of both servant-leadership and the Policy Governance Model in tandem with one another, rather than as separate ideas. In so doing, we may yet succeed in transforming the hearts and minds of individuals, institutions, and society.

—From Foreword by Larry C. Spears,
The OnTarget Board Member (M. Conduff, C. Gabanna, C. Raso),
OnTarget Books, 2007