

BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

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In studying leaders from various walks of life, varying occupations, and periods in history, one common characteristic weaves itself throughout their lives. That character trait is compassion. George Washington had it. Abraham Lincoln had it. Sir Winston Churchill had it. Mother Teresa had it. Melvin Jones had it. Someone once said that no one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.

I am convinced that leadership is not about time management or managerial skills, but leadership is about getting along with people. Therefore, it is confusing when we make a distinction between the person who has been placed in charge and the ones who are demonstrating real leadership. If the person “in charge” does not show concern for those under his or her “control” then the output is less than optimum because the motivation to do a good job is only from fear or promise of reward. This fact is most important when we are dealing with a volunteer organization or volunteers. To reach one’s potential, there must be present a strong positive motivation to succeed. Any organization that cares about its people will care about the people they serve. Unfortunately the reverse is also true. As Lions we must care for our members as much as we care for those we serve.

A true leader will demonstrate personal integrity, accountability, compassion, a desire to see others reach their potential, and a belief that the task at hand is worth the effort being put forth. Author Max De Pree in talking about accountability states that volunteers working in “nonprofit groups labor long and hard with very little thanks or recognition, sustained only by their conviction that what they are doing is the right thing”. Therefore, a leader must also be an encourager.

As we think about membership, retention of members, and new club growth within our organization, we must look at our individual and collective leadership. The following questions demand an honest answer. Am I sensitive to the needs of others? Do I have affection for people? Is there authenticity to my life? Am I an enthusiastic encourager? Do I demonstrate real love in my dealings with others? How do I measure success? The answers to these questions will have a great impact on the membership growth and retention of our club members. By working on our individual attitudes to be able to answer all the questions with a “yes”, we will begin to measure success by changed lives and not monies raised. Lions Club is an acronym for me. It simply means **Loving Individuals Offering Needed Services - Changing Lives Unloading Burdens**.

We must remind ourselves why we joined our Lions club, and daily ask ourselves, “Have I earned the right to wear the Lions pin?”. The mission statement of Lions Clubs International, “To create and foster a spirit of understanding among all people for humanitarian needs by providing voluntary services through community involvement and international cooperation”, is meaningless if there is no one to place it in action. It requires Lions. It needs you and me. It also needs others who are willing to serve with enthusiasm, compassion and love. *“And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love”*.