

A Tradition of Biblical Leadership

by Thomas White

I began studying leadership as a teenager. Although I didn't know exactly what God wanted me to do with my life, I always knew that I wanted to lead. My dad subscribed to John Maxwell's leadership lessons, and I would listen to these as I drove down the road, in addition to reading any number of books that my father or I purchased on the subject. I still can't get Maxwell's simplistic definition of leadership out of my head — "Leadership is influence."

Now, I am privileged to serve at one of the premier Christian universities in the nation. Cedarville University glorifies God by equipping students through academic excellence with a Gospel purpose. More simply put, we train leaders. More precisely, we train leaders from a biblical worldview.



In our Student Life and Christian Ministries Division, we emphasize four core values that are foundational to biblical leadership: 1) **Love for God** 2) **Love for Others** 3) **Excellence in Effort**, and 4) **Integrity in Conduct**. Not only do we teach these principles, but we also give our students opportunities to implement them as they lead in our Student Government Association, various student organizations, student chaplaincies, resident assistant programs, and other opportunities on campus.

In our Academic Division, we equip the mind with knowledge to lead, making sure that leadership is consistently modeled in the classroom. In this magazine you will hear from just a few of our alumni and current faculty members. One of those is Lieutenant General (Ret.) Loren Reno '70, who serves as the Dean of our School of Business Administration. Gen. Reno assumed the Dean's role after retiring from service in the Air Force, which included work in the Pentagon. He has recently written an excellent book titled *Navigating Leadership: A Guide to Serving and Leading*. What you might not know is that he personally mentors students and staff members on a regular basis. Very few universities are so intentional about equipping the next generation that their credentialed deans and faculty members are personally investing their lives into students.

I am thrilled to report to you that Cedarville University does just that. We do not relegate student interaction to teaching assistants. To the contrary, our professors came to Cedarville University in order to proclaim their faith in Christ openly and to disciple students to glorify God.

I still read a great deal on leadership. Recently, a new book¹ was published that performed a sociological study on more than 500 of America's premier business, political, and nonprofit leaders. The study had many interesting findings, but two deserve mentioning.

First, all but 3 percent of the leaders assessed in this study graduated from college, but interestingly, the reputation or ranking of their alma maters was irrelevant. Attending an Ivy League institution had no distinguishable benefit. I've heard parents wonder aloud if their highly skilled son or daughter should pursue an Ivy League institution to achieve the best opportunities. That thinking may be a mistake. Students have less time with the highest credentialed professors at larger research institutions and may find themselves discouraged from being lost in the shuffle — an "average" student treated as a number among the many other numbers. I fear that happens at far too many large schools, which is another reason I am thankful that Cedarville remains a quality, mid-sized school where every student attends chapel together and is known by his or her name rather than by a number.

Second, the study revealed the importance of a liberal arts education. Even for those who desire to lead in non-liberal arts areas, a well-rounded education and the ability to think well and write well take on increased importance. Consider this quote from the study:

"A generalist mind-set, however, is essential for leadership, and promoting it is the mission of liberal arts schools, which seek to educate young people through interdisciplinary and adaptive learning" (pg. 49).

At Cedarville University, students receive a Bible minor and complete a core curriculum that equips them to write and think well. These skills provide the tools for future success.

As you read through the pages of this magazine, I ask that you pray for us. We desire not just to train leaders, but to train biblical leaders. We desire to train leaders who know serving God and serving others matters more than possessing power. We desire to train leaders who will work with the diligence of the ant and the persistence of the beaver when striving for godliness in the midst of the turbulent waters of trials that we all must face. We desire

to train leaders who will confront culture articulately with the love of Christ and the truths of Scripture wherever God may place them.

I am thankful for the men and women at Cedarville — past and present, some featured in this magazine and many more who could be — who have modeled these principles of biblical leadership for our students. Enjoy this issue of *Cedarville Magazine* as we explore the blessing of biblical leadership. 🙏

¹Lindsay, D. Michael. (2014). *View From the Top: An Inside Look at How People in Power See and Shape the World*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Thomas White became Cedarville's 10th President in 2013. He is the author and editor of numerous publications and is a contributor to the forthcoming Nelson's Annual Preacher's Sourcebook, Volume 4, set to be released November 2014. Follow 🐦 @DrThomasWhite
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