

mental
optional
practical } → Reasons

Why Are We Afraid To Lead

Every man dies; not every man really lives.

- William Wallace

dem →

This week I saw fear in the face of a young leader. He reminded me of my own fear at a similar age. His body language revealed the tension experienced when we are forced to choose between being a "conformist" or a "non-conformist," what Chris Guillebeau describes in "The Art of Conformity" (the source for our opening quote).

People
Idolatry
Prison of
Popularity

"Unreasonable," "unrealistic," and "impractical" are all words used to marginalize a person or idea that fails to conform with conventionally expected standards. My response is that the world needs more people who fail to conform and refuse to settle."

1) Fail To Conform
or 2) Refuse To Settle

The Art of Non-Conformity, Chris Guillebeau"

My memories of that period in my life, the chronic insecurity, anxiety, pressure, and stress each creating emotional confusion and psychic struggle, these were all present in the face of this young leader just as they had been in me at the same age.

Much of my confusion and struggle were the result of leadership. I pursued and received too much at an early age with too little understanding of the how and why of leadership.

How → Charac
Why → moti

I consider myself lucky to have had friends and mentors who helped me navigate this tumultuous period in my life otherwise the failures would have snuffed out any desire to lead.

Whether your fear of leadership is learned from experience like me, or you are one of those people who intuitively knew what I had to learn, I write to convince everyone of the necessity to overcome our fear of leadership, because this world needs right motivated and effective leaders now more than ever.

Motive

Character

We All
Come To
Fear Leaders
Eventually!

Fear is the Reason We Prefer Someone Else Lead

But he said, "O my Lord, please send someone else."

Moses (Exodus 4:13 NRSV)

Charlton Heston makes Moses familiar every Easter when "The 10 Commandments" is aired. Reading Exodus on which the movie is based it becomes apparent few leaders have their journey of leadership made more transparent than Moses.

Bible A leadership Book

-Lincoln

Moses starts quick, full of ambition to make a difference only to fail hard. Decades later when asked to lead again, we discover fear has changed him. Time and suffering has made him more cautious as he responds by saying, "O my Lord, please send someone else."

The Majority

Fear is the reason most of us would prefer for someone else to lead. Unfortunately, when we give into fear the quantity and quality of leaders is negatively affected, and this effect will have economic, political, and social consequences. Those consequences can be seen today in the economic inequality, political polarization, and societal unrest born out of our inability to unify behind solutions rather than fighting over differences.

We need more leaders. We need effective leaders. For this to happen both individuals and organizations must understand 1) "The Emotional Reasons for Our Fear," 2) The Factual Reasons for Our Fear, and then learn 3) How to Overcome our Fear.

The Emotional Reasons for Our Fear

Nothing discloses real character like the use of power. It is easy for the weak to be gentle. Most people can bear adversity. But if you wish to know what a man really is, give him power. This is the supreme test. It is the glory of Lincoln that, having almost absolute power, he never abused it, except on the side of mercy.

[The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll, Volume 3](#)

Bias

Civil War

Everyone will learn to fear leadership. The majority fear it immediately, while the ambitious take a little longer.

The majority of us understand, either consciously or unconsciously, that leadership tests character. Fearing this test of character will reveal our inadequacy we resist, avoid, and decline any opportunity to lead.

① ② ③

Those ambitious enough to pursue leadership are rarely aware of the impending character test. We learn fear late. Entering leadership at a young age with the hope of making a difference, our superficial understanding of the character required leaves us ill-equipped for the price we will be asked to pay. We are unprepared for the fiery testing experienced by all who enter the crucible of leadership. The resulting pain teaches us a fear so permanent many of us lose our desire to lead.

Wow!

Fear of leadership comes to everyone; the only question is whether it arrives early or late. This makes overcoming fear essential work for any individual or organization interested in leadership development.

Future Generations of leaders cannot be developed unless we create cultures that help developing leaders ① understand ② manage ③ survive — FEAR!

The Factual Reasons for Our Fear

We are leading in an Age of Distrust. Each one of us has fears. Christopher Ingram, reporting on the Chapman University Survey on American Fears for the [Washington Post in 2014](#) ranked those fears as follows.

1. Public Speaking *wow*
 2. Heights *— kills*
 3. Bugs, Snakes, other Animals
 4. Drowning
 5. Blood/Needles *— Vaccine ☹️*
 6. Claustrophobia
 7. Flying
 8. Strangers
 9. Zombies *— what!!!*
 10. Darkness
 11. Clowns
 12. Ghosts
- zombies, Clowns, Ghosts → Supernatural*

Public Speaking is the number one fear of Americans. Public speaking is leadership. When an individual speaks to an audience he or she is leading. Add to public speaking the many other aspects of leadership, and it is easy to understand why so few want to lead. The vulnerability and responsibility of leadership creates such a staggering amount of fear those who choose to lead are rare.

This fear of leadership is extraordinary in ordinary times. During a crisis like say a global pandemic this fear increases exponentially. As a result, fewer and fewer people want to lead. Those with the passion, skill, and talent to lead choose only the safest options. They choose careers out of the spotlight, which are often more financially lucrative, and carry the additional benefit of being free from the criticism of the crowd.

Who would choose the leadership spotlight when there is so little trust in our institutions

[according to Gallup](#) where they rank them from most to least trusted:

1. **Small Business - 75%**
 2. The Military - 72% — *unsurprising*
 3. The Medical System - 51% — *Has Pandemic Changed*
 4. The Police - 48% — *Has 2020 changed*
 5. Church or Organized Religion - 42% — *Higher than would have thought*
 6. The Public Schools - 41%
 7. The Supreme Court - 40% — *increasing*
 8. The Presidency - 39% — *will 2021 change this*
 9. Banks - 38%
 10. Large Technology Companies - 32%
 11. Organized Labor - 31%
 12. Newspapers - 24% — *increasing*
 13. The Criminal Justice System - 24% — *increasing*
 14. Big Business - 19%
 15. Television News - 18%
 16. Congress - 13%
- unsurprising*

These percentages represent the people who have a "Great deal/Quite a lot" of confidence in the institution. What does this mean? Unless you are a Small Business, Military, or Medical System leader more than 50% of the people are looking at you with some level of distrust.

That means at least 1 in 2 are a bit leery about you, your motives, your purpose, and your value.

No wonder so many people choose to work behind the scenes, especially outside the spotlight of public service where the compensation typically falls far short of what many would consider necessary to endure the expected criticism and skepticism.

Proof this expected criticism and skepticism is not unfounded can be seen in the approval ratings for the presidency and congress being 38% and 21% respectively (the elections of 2021 have changed these numbers, but 38% and 21% are more reflective of the trend of the last decade than the numbers from the first 3 months of 2021).

The picture I want to paint is one that will help us understand why we and others might not want to lead. At the same time, we should consider history, the countless occasions of fear, threat, and crisis met by men and women of courage who rose to the occasion instead of shrinking from the moment.

Know Your Fear to Conquer Your Fear

- Face Them

Emotional
Intellectual
Spiritual

Honesty

We cannot overcome our fears unless we identify them. There are 10 fears we must conquer in order to overcome our fear of leading.

1. **Fear of Embarrassment** – Everyone cares what people think of them. We fear leadership because it increases the possibility we will be embarrassed.
2. **Fear of Failure** – Everyone wants to succeed. We fear leadership because it increases the possibility we will fail.
3. **Fear of Change** – Everyone is insecure. One way we manage our insecurities is by seeking control. We fear leadership because it increases the possibility of change occurring in our lives which means a loss of control.

4. **Fear of Regret** – We all experience FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). We fear leadership because leadership requires sacrifice. Our concern is these sacrifices will result in missed opportunities and a life of regret over what might have been.
5. **Fear of Criticism** – We fear leadership because it increases the number of people who will have an opinion about our lives. When these opinions become criticism, we lose the freedom to live our lives as we desire. *Freedom*
6. **Fear of Exposure** – Everyone has weaknesses because weakness is part of the human condition. We fear leadership because our weaknesses will be put on public display to a world social media shows us is filled with cruel and vicious people. *Exposure*
7. **Fear of Shame** – We fear leadership because we have seen people publicly punished and humiliated for their personal flaws, failures, and mistakes. → *We Don't Want Weak*
8. **Fear of Rejection** – The majority of us already feel unattractive, unworthy, and inadequate. Why would we want to become leaders where we can discover additional reasons for these negative feelings? *3 Forces Undermine Trust, Security, Confidence*
9. **Fear of Loneliness** – Life is difficult enough to live without entering leadership where we increase our chances of [not being liked] and [experiencing greater loneliness].
10. **Fear of Vulnerability** – We fear leadership because of reasons 1-9 and how they make our life more vulnerable and unprotected.

Overcome Your Emotional Roadblocks

These
 These 10 fears of leadership can be overcome if we eliminate the 4 emotional roadblocks. These 4 emotional roadblocks keep us from developing the type of internal

security capable of helping us develop the emotional strength to overcome and withstand the 10 fears everyone must conquer in order to lead.

- Unworthiness:** At some point in our lives, we will all experience feelings of unworthiness. This emotional roadblock is overcome by finding a consistent source and set of relationships to help us find forgiveness. [God For Me]
|
What About You?
- Inadequacy:** Everyone feels inadequate at some point which is why we must find a consistent source of confidence and set of empowering relationships. ① Make Us Secure ② Make Us Better
- Criticism:** Criticism is debilitating because it effectively undermines our sense of self, our security about who we are and why we are here. Removing this emotional roadblock requires that we develop a sense of self and security independent of the opinions of people. — Key!!!
- Irrelevance:** Feeling insignificant is common to the human condition. Some people feel it every day while others experience it occasionally, but what both have in common is the feeling being diminished by some type of failure. Resilience is the answer to irrelevance, increasing our capacity to get back up after we have been knocked down. of produces Pain, Suffering, how

There is a great deal more to be said about this subject, but in the interest of brevity let's make a couple of closing points.

Winston Churchill once said something to the effect that, "Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all the others." While this quote has a complicated history, its truth is evident.

No one can write an article or book, create a podcast or movie capable of doing the work we must do to overcome our fear, and as long as we refuse to deal with our fears, the fear of leadership is the least of our problems, we will struggle to live an inspired life.

Ultimately, each one of us must do the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical work to tackle our fears just to live, and once tackled we will find a serendipity in the reduction of our daily fears, which is we will no longer fear leadership as we currently do.

"Turning Points" are those moments when we decide to break free from our fears, overcome our emotional roadblocks and live in true not manufactured freedom, which is a life unhindered by what people think of us.

Do this and we will no longer fear life or leadership!