

By Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser

This article goes out to all of those young people who wish to be leaders. Probably everyone is going to say, "That's me. I want to be a leader: to have everyone look up to me, to be important, to be able to tell other people what they should do, to have others be envious of my position. Yep, I want to be a leader.

How can I do that?" To begin with, many people get leadership and politics mixed up. Being a leader is much different than being a politician. If you want all of those things described in the first paragraph, I suggest you try politics. But if you want to be a leader, it is going to be a long haul, and it won't be easy. Lots of people say they want to be leaders, but there are only a few who actually achieve this very special title. We often think we can read a book and it will give us all the answers. Not true! We can learn some concepts about what it takes to be a leader, but every situation is different, and the true leader must be able to take the concepts and apply them to the specific situation at hand. Therein lies the secret: Can you take what you know and apply it to whatever circumstances happen? As you can see, real leaders have to be very flexible.

The easiest part about leading is getting the job. Whether it's as a drumline captain, drum major, pompon captain, band president, or whatever, being elected or appointed to these positions carries with it a lot of excitement and roaring congratulations for the victory. Then the trouble starts! First of all, you are confronted with people who thought they should have received the position and didn't. Then you have all of their friends to contend with. Soon your own friends may begin to pull away and resent the position of authority you have attained. Are you prepared to handle this kind of damaging jealousy in your life? The "glory" will certainly not offset the hurt. Here is your first chance to show that you're a leader. Move forward knowing this is part of what every leader experiences. Chin up. Move forward!

Next, your "assigned authority" will diminish in effectiveness. You may delegate some things to be done only to find they were never carried through as per your orders. When you question the person about the lack of follow-through, you might well be told in no uncertain terms what you can do with your position, your authority, and your stupid assignment! Having a title doesn't make you a leader. With your hallowed title and a quarter, you can't even buy a coke! Your job is "to lead," not to be a dictator of unquestioned power. What you may find happening is a sense of feeling alone. It may seem that nobody understands your predicament and what you are going through. Talking to people about the situation won't make any difference, and it will be so tempting just to "cash it in." Let someone else do all the leadership stuff!

There is no question that the position of leader has been over-glamorized to the point of non-reality. Our society has given the impression that leaders are given special privileges, are exempt from many menial tasks, and are constantly in the spotlight of fame and fortune. Nothing could be further from the truth! Leadership involves giving. It is about doing for others. It is based on "we-us" being more important than "I-me." It is about wanting to be excellent regardless of the price.