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C. William Pollard

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LEADING WITH CONVICTION AND PURPOSE

COLLEGE CHURCH MEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST

HILTON HOTEL, LISLE, ILLINOIS

JANUARY 14, 1995

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THE SERVICEMASTER COMPANY
DOWNERS GROVE, ILLINOIS

We live in exiting times. We also live in a world of accelerated change. The changes in the politics and economies of what was the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and what is emerging in China have affected the lives of millions of people. Everywhere one looks, there is more freedom.

Yes, more freedom and certainly more choice and definitely more confusion. The restraints that suppressed the age-old conflicts of some people groups are no longer there. Both religious and cultural hatreds have come to the surface.

The infrastructures we have developed in the West to help guide the freedom of choice cannot be easily duplicated in societies that have grown up under central planning and control. Nor can these societies assimilate the inevitable excesses of freedom that we have allowed in the West, whether they be sexual liberties, drugs, violence, failures or poverty.

Last year Judy and I spent two weeks in Eastern Europe and Russia. I had the opportunity to work with young business people from Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, and Poland who are entrepreneurs in the true sense of the word and who were learning the joys and pains of growing their business, selling their products, and developing their markets. I was also able to review the progress of our ServiceMaster business in the city of Prague where in twelve short months we have established a

beach-head and are now providing our management services to seven hospitals with an excited team of Czech managers. I also spent time lecturing and listening to students in three of the major universities in Moscow and saw their excitement and desire to learn but was depressed with the conditions of runaway inflation, confiscatory taxation, crime, and deceit, which is much of their daily life. It is as close to anarchy as I care to come, and it is a society that seems void of responsibility. In response to a question regarding hope for the future, one student responded with a simple request: to live in a society where truth and disclosure were more common than lies, deceptions, and coverups.

Confusion and pessimism permeate our society. In a restructured, re-engineered world, many American workers are uncertain about the employment opportunities for the future. We have just experienced a major change in our government. For the first time in over 40 years, the Republicans are now in control of both the House and the Senate. They made a Contract With America, and our new Speaker of the House attempted to make his own personal contract with his publisher. We want universal access to health care, but nobody knows the cost or how we are going to finance it right. The enormity of the deficit means one thing for certain: the dollar bill in my hand today will be worth less, not more, in the future.

Laws and regulations continue to multiply in complexity, and we are bombarded on every side by news of variant human behavior patterns--some of which we are encouraged to accept, although we have been taught since our youth that they are wrong--among others, by the sheer volume of publicity given them, and seem to be more prevalent today than they were in the past. We view the tragedy of O. J. Simpson and his family on live television like it was a Monday night movie. We live in a society where people search for moral pluralism, and question whether there are any absolutes or any guidelines for life.

Some discuss our period of time not only in terms of the Post-Christian Era, but in terms of Post Modernism and Deconstructionism where everything is relative, even the meaning of words.

Hunter, the sociologist from the University of Virginia, in his recent book on conflicts in our society, calls it a time of cultural wars, where the most fundamental ideas about who we are and how to order our lives individually and together are now at odds. His conclusion is that the nub of the disagreement can be traced to a matter of ultimate moral authority. How are we to determine whether something is good or bad, right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable? The division or gap in our society, he concludes, is growing. People, living and working in the same community are, in fact, worlds apart.

But however you view or label this rapidity of change and choice and lack of predictability in the events that swirl around us, I would like to suggest that in this crucible of uncertainty there is great opportunity for positive direction, provided those of us who have been trained to think, lead--and lead with conviction of purpose.

But the free market system as we know it is morally neutral. It is indifferent to moral choices. It is blind to good and evil. It is materialistic, impersonal, and non-human. It can produce great human misery as well as great blessing. It has the potential to bankrupt the human soul. And many of us here are spending most of our waking hours working in the market place.

But where then do we get some direction for our lives? Is there an anchor in this wind and storm of change and choice? Are there any right answers? How do we

relate our life at work with our life at home? Is there any common link between my fellow neighbor and my children or my wife?

(STORY OF ANSWERING MACHINE)

Now as I ask these fundamental questions about leadership and the future, who are we and what do we want, I do so not as a philosopher, educator, or minister of the gospel, but simply as a businessman--a Christian businessman who is seeking to lead with my partner Carlos Cantu a fast-growing, dynamic service company that we call ServiceMaster--masters of service, serving the Master.

We have experienced rapid growth, doubling in size every three and a half years for the past twenty years with revenues in excess of four billion. We employ or manage over 200,000 people and our services are provided in the United States and twenty-five foreign countries. We are a public company, with our shares listed and traded on the New York Stock Exchange. Yes, I live in one of those pressure cooker environments, where earnings and profits must be reported quarter by quarter and where earnings and profits have always been up every quarter for the past 24 years. The shareholders Carlos and I are responsible to as leaders vote every day on our leadership. They have the choice to buy, hold, or sell their share of ownership.

But the measure of my success as a leader is not just in the value of our shares or in the profit we produce. It more importantly relates to the people I work with. The objectives of our company are simply stated: To Honor God In All We Do, To Help People Develop, To Pursue Excellence, and To Grow Profitably. The first two objectives are end goals. The second two are means goals. They do not mean that everything will be done right. We experience our share of mistakes. But because of a

and

stated standard and reason for the standard, we can't hide our mistakes. They are fleshed out in the open for correction and in some cases for forgiveness. We are not a "Christian company." Many of our officers are Christian, but we also have officers who are Muslim, Jewish, or no professed faith. We are sometimes criticized for mixing God and profit but seldom for our performance. These objectives place an obligation on those of us who profess faith in Jesus Christ to live our faith. Yes, not only to integrate our faith with our learning, but to integrate our faith with what we do - with our actions and work with others. It provides a wonderful opportunity for a Christian to lead. To lead by example and service. It has been an environment that for me is a constant reminder that my life is an open book.

As I reflect upon my journey, I left it thankful for the heritage of Christian parents and

As I have sought to lead with conviction and purpose in the marketplace, I am thankful for the heritage of Christian parents and for my starting point of a relationship with God that came over 45 years ago as a young boy by my mother's knee seeking to learn from her what must be done to know God. Although young and unsophisticated,

I was able to make a choice, take that first step of faith, to turn to God and accept His gift for me. Some use the scriptural term "born again" to refer to this point of commitment. It is a spiritual rebirth.

over the years my mother's life was an encouragement and I used it as a example to me she passed away God gave me a good long life

This work of Christ is available to all, but like any offer, it cannot become a completed transaction in the life of an individual unless there is a corresponding choice of acceptance and trust by that individual. When that choice is made, there is a hope not only for this life, but for an eternal life with God. It is a decision that goes beyond the fast pace of the world and involves the understanding that this life is only a process of becoming all God wants us to be. It is not a one-time choice but a continuing choice for God. It is a choice that should affect the way one lives.

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As so for me in my world--the marketplace--manipulation of people, insider trading, diluting of a service or product are not simply illegal or breaches of an agreement. They violate God's standard, which is a far more serious infraction. Involvement with my fellow employees cannot be limited to a transaction of wages paid for work done. Since each person has been created in God's image and has unique value and worth, I must take time to understand, to love, to serve that person with a clear objective of having the work environment become a positive influence in the process of his or her development.

It should also affect my relationship with my family. It is His standard that I love and cherish my wife. I am not the superior. She is not the subordinate. It is not my checkbook, my house, my way. We have become a partnership that is based upon mutual love and trust. Judy and I are committed to each other and must continue to work at the joining together of our separate and distinct personalities. It requires a constant attention to the smoothing of the rough edges. There is always a hope for something more in our marriage.

The single most important product of this love and hope is the children He has given us. Our role has been to provide a home for their development, spiritual nurture, and admonition. We are learning that this role changes with their growth and maturity. As our oldest daughter Julie and her husband Chris raise their own family, we have learned the joy of grandchildren and sharing as they develop and grow as a separate family unit. As our son Chip and his wife Carey have established their home and are experiencing the tensions of a change of career in leaving his profession of a practice in law to continue graduate school studies, there is a special role of extended love and providing a listening ear. As Brian and his wife Su are both developing their careers in the market, there is a need to counsel and support as they grow and seek balance in

their lives. Amy is our youngest; and as she and her husband Mark establish their home and he establishes his own business as a ServiceMaster franchisee, they need our support but not direction.

Although each child is different and our role has changed with their maturity, we have a continuing responsibility for their development and growth and for the acceptance and love for their choice of a life partner. They are all God's children as well as our children.

For me, there have been times of doubt and despair and especially through those difficult teenage years and sudden death of my father when I was 18. There followed the challenges of college and law school and seeking to establish a home and support a family and finance an education. There were those feelings of inadequacy and concerns about whether I measured up.

There was the drive for success which allowed my law profession to become a jealous mistress, only to be stopped by God's intervention with a serious health condition. This was followed by a dramatic change in my life. It meant leaving the practice of law and coming to serve as an administrator and faculty member at Wheaton College. It was during this phase of my life that God began to teach lessons of balance and spiritual maturity.

In 1977, my path took another turn as my task at Wheaton was over and I joined the management team at ServiceMaster. There I have had the opportunity to grow and develop as I have learned from my many colleagues including two close friends and mentors Ken Hansen and Ken Wessner, whose lives were a witness and example of the Lord they loved.

As you can see, my life has not been a simple, logical, predictable sequence of events. God has chosen many different people and circumstances to break, mold, and develop me, and the most exciting thing about the process is that it is continuing. There are not answers to every question. In fact, in this growing relationship with God there will always be some unknowns. But, as I continue to choose for Him, my faith grows.

In a pluralistic society and a world where there is the freedom to choose, not everyone will agree with my starting point or the need for a personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ, God's Son. But for me, this is where I get my direction -- my anchor in the wind of change and choice. God has made each of us with the freedom to choose. Who are we? And what do we want? His offer for a new beginning is available to all.

* * *

1/11/95