

THE WEIGHT AND WORTH OF LEADERSHIP

DALLAS BATEMAN

UTAH VALLEY UNIVERSITY

When we imagine leadership, the figures that spring to mind are often bold, intelligent, and powerful: attributes that carry an exhilarating, almost euphoric appeal. This idealized vision, however, often neglects the heavy price a leader must pay. Beyond the prestige lies a profound responsibility: the constant burden of being in charge. This can range from a group of people, whether it's a family, a community, or an entire country. Bearing this weight requires a certain kind of strength—not always physical, but invariably mental and emotional.

The continuous work of problem-solving and decision-making is taxing. It can leave a person with the deep fatigue felt after an intense marathon or a prolonged conflict. Over time, this stress can be debilitating, which is why a strong leader must possess a truly strong mind. They must have a mental toughness required to handle unrelenting pressure, stress, and criticism. Military and intelligence behavior expert Chase Hughes provides insight here, suggesting that true confidence is the willingness to be socially “injured”—not the absence of fear, but the permission to fail or be judged.¹ At times, leaders must bear the brunt of ridicule and harsh judgment, even standing alone if necessary.

While mental toughness is crucial, so is emotional resilience. It's a misconception that strong leaders are unemotional. On the contrary, they experience many emotions but master how to control and express them

¹ Hughes, Chase. “How to Instantly Appear Confident in Any Situation,” n.d. https://www.youtube.com/shorts/23sD_vxQzaM

properly. Though no one is perfect, resilience is the capacity to stumble and immediately get back up, using the pain as fuel for growth.

Hand-in-hand with emotional resilience is emotional intelligence: the ability to effectively connect and communicate with others. A leader needs genuine empathy for the people they serve. Instead of viewing followers as people to be controlled, a leader should have compassion for their loyalty. Leaders, I believe, are held to a higher standard of responsibility than any other person. They are called to a duty of service and example. The focus is not on the self, but on the individuals they lead. This level of selfless duty would be impossible if the leader were cold-hearted or indifferent to their counterparts.

Ultimately, leadership is a mandate to serve those within one's sphere of influence. This heavy responsibility cannot be executed without error. It is vital for a leader to know their own weaknesses, possess the humility to admit them, and take responsibility for continuous self-improvement.

While this demanding portrait might sound grim, it is precisely what makes the experience so profoundly worthwhile. Leadership offers the opportunity to embrace life in its fullest meaning—to experience deep connection, challenging emotion, and significant consequences. Perhaps this is why it is so highly regarded: because of the unparalleled depth of the experience one gets to embrace.