

18th March 2004

Dear Young People

I am often asked what is the single most important leadership trait. For me, the answer is easy. To be a great leader, you must be a man or woman of character. Here I define character as 1) being selfless 2) having great moral courage and 3) having a strong sense of integrity.

Traits such as virtue, intelligence, physical courage, persistence, flexibility, articulation, etc., are all gifts – if you are a Christian, these are all gifts from God. If you are not a Christian, these come from heredity. Character is not a gift. Character is a choice. Character is built by making the “right” decision time after time. You build a reservoir of character so that in the toughest of times, you are able to reach deep within yourself and draw upon this reservoir of character and succeed. Your victories will be sweet! Your victories will stand the test of time! Your victories will inspire others! When you are a leader, you are in the inspiration business. You inspire ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

A book that I would recommend highly is Michael Shaara’s “The Killer Angels”. While it is both inspiring and moving, one thing is for sure – you will never forget the beautiful prose of Shaara.

Semper Fidelis

Charles C. Krulak, General - USMC (Ret'd)
Chief Executive Officer