

Discovering the Real Me

Student Textbook #11
Developing Leadership Skills

For teenagers 16 to 17 years of age

The Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace is an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

Published in the United States of America by:
Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace/Universal Peace Federation
155 White Plains Road, Suite 222
Tarrytown, NY 10591
Telephone: 914-631-1331; Fax: 914-631-1308

Copyright © 2006 by Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace

All rights reserved. Except for use in reviews, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical or otherwise, without the prior written consent of the publisher. Copyright on chapters noted at the end of each chapter.

Production by the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace/Universal Peace Federation

ISBN 1-930549-33-4

Contents

Preface	xi
Chapter 1	
You Are the Leader!	1
Chapter 2	
Leading Your Life Responsibly.....	7
Chapter 3	
Taking the Lead in Understanding Each Other	17
Chapter 4	
Relationship Skills.....	25
Chapter 5	
Playing the Romantic Lead in Your Life.....	35
Chapter 6	
Should You Have Sex Before Marriage?.....	43
Chapter 7	
Preparation for a Successful Marriage	51
Chapter 8	
The Single Parent Family	57
Chapter 9	
Respect and Tolerance.....	65

Chapter 10

Money, Money..... 73

Chapter 11

A Leader Lives Altruistically 79

Chapter 12

Leading a Noble Life..... 85

Chapter 13

Citizenship—Leadership by the People 91

Chapter 14

Leadership 97

Chapter 15

Leading the Natural World 105

Chapter 16

Moral Leadership: Looking to Philosophy and Religion..... 111

Chapter 17

Becoming Leaders in a Diverse World..... 119

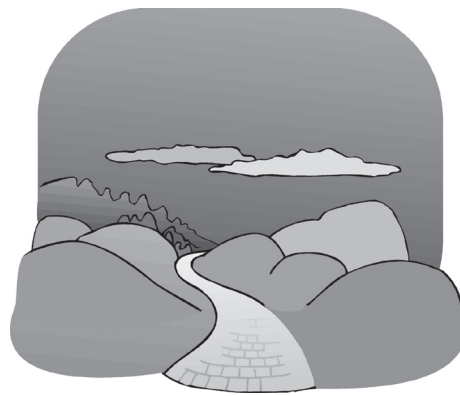
Glossary 125

Chapter 1

You Are the Leader!

A leader must learn to make good decisions. That is same for the leader of a country, a corporation, or a family. We are the leaders of our own lives. We actively shape our future by the decisions we make now. The seeds of tomorrow are planted by the choices we make today.

It is exciting! You will decide your own destiny. You are in charge of your own future. You alone are the leader on your own life path.



Of course, we are all strongly influenced by our environment. We are born into a particular family and grow up in a particular society with particular values.

Yet, although such things may limit our options in life, we are not completely bound by them. As human beings, we have the freedom to weigh our options and to choose among them. We possess creativity and imagination, which enable us to respond to situations in different ways. We can change our circumstances by the decisions we make.

Each decision we make alters us in some way. Therefore making good decisions is important. For instance, if we face an obstacle and decide to give up, it becomes easier to do the same thing the next time, until it becomes a habit to give up. We can end up convincing ourselves that we are totally helpless and incompetent. On the other hand, if we decide to face down and overcome some challenge, we develop the confidence to do so again—and again. As this becomes our habit, we end up with a strong character and willpower. Making the right decisions makes us into good leaders of our lives.

A Tough but Good Decision

President Abraham Lincoln had a tough decision to make. He had to decide whether he should free the slaves.

Of course, we know nowadays that slavery is wrong. People did not always know this, though. In the past, some people thought slavery was good.

In the early 1860s, the United States was in a civil war, North against South. Most Northern states did not have slavery. The Southern states did have slavery. The North wanted one country, one Union, even if some states had slavery. The South wanted their own separate country, with slavery as the norm.

Lincoln was not sure the nation would accept the freeing of the slaves. Northerners would fight to keep the country together—for the Union—but Lincoln wasn't sure they would fight to free slaves. Lincoln had an election coming up, which he thought he might lose. Plus, the war was not going well for the Northern side.

Yet Lincoln decided to do what was morally right. He freed the slaves. It was a revolutionary decision. The Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, declared the slaves to be “forever free.” Rallies and riots broke out against Lincoln in the North because of this decision.

Yet because of this decision, former slaves entered the Union army in large numbers and helped to win the war. Because of this decision, many righteous people in other countries began to support the North instead of the South, because they too were against slavery. It could be said that this decision won the war.

Historians around the world consider Abraham Lincoln one of the greatest American presidents. Freeing the slaves is considered his most important single act. Lincoln himself said of his tough but good decision: “If my name ever goes down in history, it will be for this.”

Every decision has consequences. Whether we like it or not, we will experience the consequences of our decisions. We are free to choose what we will do or not do, but no one is free of the consequences of his or her decisions—we must take responsibility for our choices or actions. Thus, the freedom to make decisions and responsibility for the consequences of those decisions go hand in hand.

We are free to choose what we will do or not do, but we are not free to choose the consequences of our decisions.

Despite the fact that most people would agree that we are responsible for our decisions, many of us are surprisingly careless in deciding what to do and how to act. Should we be?

Every day of our lives we are involved in making decisions. Some are small while others are of vital importance. How do we make decisions? Is there always a right, or best, decision? What do we do if we realize we have made a mistake?



DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Take a moment to think back on some of the more important decisions you made in the past year. Write down about five or six of these decisions. Then think about how you came to those decisions. Do you recognize any of the approaches listed below?

- A *logical* decision. I collected, checked, and sorted out all the information available and then decided what would be best based on the facts.
- An *impulsive* decision. I didn't think about it much. I acted on impulse.
- An *emotional* decision. It was based on my feeling; what I wanted and what I felt attracted to.
- An *intuitive* decision. It was hard to explain, but I just felt inside that it was the thing I ought to do.
- An *emergency* decision. There was no time to agonize over it. The decision had to be made quickly.
- A *bitter* decision. I knew someone would be hurt, but it couldn't be avoided.
- A *responsive* decision. I was concerned about other people's opinions and how they would be affected, so I took account of their advice and suggestions.
- A *prayerful* decision. I didn't know what to do, so I prayed and asked God for his guidance.
- A *guided* decision. I felt I was out of my depth, so I asked someone I respected for advice.
- A *group* decision. I felt that we all needed to be involved and take responsibility for the outcome.
- A *rash* decision. I knew at the time that it was probably a mistake, but I neither had the time nor the inclination to think seriously about the consequences.
- A *default* decision. I did nothing and matters took their own course.

Which of the above do you think are the best ways to make decisions? Which ones are not good ways to make decisions?

Learning to make good decisions is essential if our life is to take the course we want it to. Our ultimate destiny is in our own hands. It will be the result of the many decisions we are making day

by day. We must learn to make good decisions and, when we make a bad one, do everything we can to admit our mistake and make up for it. This is how we become good leaders of our own lives.

The Pros and Cons Method

One excellent way to make certain decisions is to write down the Pros and Cons of any course of action, dividing a piece of paper in half and writing the Pros in one column and the Cons in the other.

If the Pros outweigh the Cons, either numerically or in importance, the action should be taken.

Tip: “It is the right and moral thing to do” outweighs almost all other considerations.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How much do decisions depend upon external circumstances and how much on our own will?

2. How much freedom do you have to make decisions?

3. What decisions are you free to make now that you were not free to make five years ago?

4. What kinds of decisions do you not yet have the freedom to make?

5. Are there some decisions in your life that you regret having made?

6. If so, why did you make those decisions?

7. Can you change the consequences of those decisions?

8. How would you go about trying to change the effects of a bad decision?

9. What have you learned from your past decisions, whether good or bad?
