

**Article: “Leadership: It’s Worth Thinking About”**  
**By Nelson Searcy**  
**(reprinted with permission from SmartLeadership.com)**

SmartLeaders invest time in thinking deeply. To think deeply requires that leaders develop the habit of calling their mind into action. SmartLeaders think deeply about seven big ideas.

SmartLeaders invest time in thinking deeply. To think deeply requires that leaders develop the habit of calling their mind into action. Like a child at play, the mind will at first resist the call to think deeply, but over time -- as the habit is developed -- the mind will look forward to the intense engagement of deep thinking. Likewise, deep thought requires time -- time for focused thinking, time for thoughts to stew and develop and time to record and classify.

Often deep thought is wasted on matters of a trivial nature, therefore, SmartLeaders make a conscious effort to focus their thinking around seven BIG ideas. SmartLeaders think deeply about:

**1. Integrity.**

Integrity is one of the most important personal issues anyone can think about. Integrity is the core of who you are, and all true leadership flows out of integrity. As you think deeply about your level of integrity, ask the following questions:

- What is the next step in my character development?
- Are there clear cracks in my integrity that need to be repaired?
- What are my positive character traits and how can I increase them?
- What character traits do other successful leaders possess?

**2. Leadership.**

SmartLeaders are continually reflecting on leadership ideals, examining them from their various sides. One SmartLeader I know collects definitions of leadership and frequently ponders the various aspects of each. Begin to develop the habit of thinking not only about the leadership of others, but where you are as a leader. Ask yourself:

- Am I growing as a leader?
- Is my influence moving people in a positive or negative direction?
- Who is influencing me?
- What are the leadership dynamics I encounter at work, home, play, etc.?
- What did I learn about leadership today?
- What are my biggest leadership challenges?

### **3. Behavior.**

SmartLeaders are students of behavior. Behavior is the study of why people act the way they do. SmartLeaders work to understand their own behavior and the behavior of others. Look for the drivers and motivators behind your actions and the actions of others. Continually examine which behaviors will allow you to pursue excellence.

Ask:

What are the systemic causes behind my behavior and the behavior of others?

What behaviors do I need to change or develop?

How does my attitude effect the behavior of others?

How do other people effect my behavior?

### **4. The Future.**

While no one can accurately predict the future, SmartLeaders do spend time thinking about what will happen next. Crystal balls are unnecessary for SmartLeaders who recognize trends and think through the implications of current ideas. SmartLeaders plot possible future scenarios and develop strategies for each. Realizing that tomorrow determines today, ask:

What ideas and trends are driving the future?

What are the possible scenarios of my future?

How will what I'm doing right now effect my future?

Where do I want to be in 5, 10, 15, 25 years?

How is society changing?

### **5. Personal Growth.**

Personal growth occurs when you grow emotionally, spiritually and intellectually. The leader who stops growing will soon not have to worry about leading. There is a direct connection between influence and personal growth -- both grow together. SmartLeaders think deeply about their personal growth by asking:

What steps to I need to take today to grow?

What is my plan for personal growth?

Do I surround myself with people who pull me up or push me down?

Who can I help grow? And how?

### **6. Communication.**

Communication is a problem for most people. Yet, if you cannot clearly communicate you cannot effectively lead because there is little influence without great communication. Thinking about how to clearly communicate and developing a process to find out if someone heard what you think you said is extremely important. SmartLeaders work to become great communicators and they spend time thinking about how to increase their communication effectiveness by asking:

How can I most effectively communicate my ideas?

What methods of communication appeal to me? To those around me?

How many different ways can I communicate the same idea?

What do effective communicators have in common?

What is my most effective means of communication? My least?  
How often should I communicate goals, vision and ideas?

## **7. Wisdom.**

Wisdom are those pearls of thought that have stood the test of time and translation and continually prove to be true and right. Wisdom is more than a pragmatic answer to an immediate problem. Instead, wisdom is eternal truth that is applicable to temporal issues. Realizing the value of true wisdom, SmartLeaders serve as collectors and connoisseurs of wisdom. When wisdom is discovered it is pondered, polished, practiced and promoted.

Wise leaders ask:

- What does the Bible say about this issue?
- What have others said about the issue I am facing?
- What is the eternal perspective on this situation?
- What quote, story, proverb did I hear recently that I need to think through and apply?

Investing time in thinking deeply around these seven areas will reap great dividends. A large part of leading is learning how to think well. Centering your thinking around these ideas and working to apply what you learn, will allow for greater success in every area of life. As you think, you must develop a system of thinking that works for you, many SmartLeaders have found it helpful to:

- a. find a quiet place that you consistently use as a place to think.
- b. use pencil and paper to record and direct your thoughts.
- c. discover creative ways to express your thoughts (pictures, words, colors, etc.)
- d. set aside a definite amount of time for intense thinking.

Work to develop a habit of thinking deeply on a regular basis -- 30 minutes three times a week is a good start. As you set aside a specific amount of time to think, be aware that even though you conclude a session of deep thinking, your mind will not stop. Give your mind permission to continue to work on a problem or process and you may find the answer waiting on you the next time you arrive at your thinking place.

Between periods of intense thinking, work to collect and classify information around these seven big ideas. As you scan magazines, read books, listen to speeches, etc. look for information related to integrity, leadership, behavior, the future, communication and wisdom. There is a correlation between information input and thought output.

Thinking time is never wasted time. It stretches you and allows you to grow. Very few people take time to think. SmartLeaders not only take time to think, but they focus their thoughts around seven BIG ideas. Thinking deeply will allow you to grow deep, stand tall and lead well.

**Reprinted with Permission. For reprint information contact  
[www.SmartLeadership.com](http://www.SmartLeadership.com)**

