



BPW International

President's Message for the International Candle Lighting Ceremony 2008

“The Price of Leadership”

Dear Presidents of BPW Affiliates and BPW members,

It is my pleasure to present to you my International Candle Lighting Ceremony Message for the year 2008, the last year of the triennium under the theme “New Dimensions of Leadership”. Many people want to take on leadership positions because they want the glamour, praise, fame and honor, but leadership has many other dimensions. As this is my third and last year as International President, I would like to bring to your attention to another dimension of leadership – that is “**THE PRICE OF LEADERSHIP**”.

If you want to be a **VISIONARY leader**, then you must be able to anticipate challenges ahead of other people. You should be able to introduce preventive measures in a timely manner. But before you dream that people would applaud you for your work, remember the story of Noah. Noah, who anticipated the great flood, was ridiculed by many people while he was building the Ark. He was not celebrated until after the flood waters came. In the same token, if you are truly ahead of your time, chances are many people would not yet understand the challenges and issues that you are trying to address. Until those challenges become apparent, you may be ridiculed and misunderstood.

If you want to be a **VICTORIOUS leader**, then you must learn to conquer defeat. Victory is achieved by those who persevere despite setbacks, but rarely by those who never experience setbacks. You have to dare to solve problems instead of ignoring them to avoid controversy. When a desirable win-win solution cannot be attained, you must be willing to accept both positive and negative consequences of your decision especially if the action taken is for the greater good in the long run. When you face a tough situation, count your blessings from those who continue to stand by you. Yet, you must realize that while everyone wants to be on the winning side, not everyone dares to engage in a dangerous battle. Out of fear, some may even distance themselves from you as far as possible. So you have to find enough strength to forgive those who promised to support you by their words but did not follow through by their deeds.

If you want to be a **leader who MAKES A DIFFERENCE** then you have to be resourceful even when you face limited resources. If you are discouraged because you do not have enough power, enough money or enough people to help you make a difference, remember this story of a farmer and a nobleman.

Decades ago, there was a farmer who saved a young boy's life. A noble man who was the boy's father wanted to reward the farmer with money, but the farmer would not accept it. So a noble man pledged instead to send the farmer's son to school to get the level of education enjoyed by his own son. This offer was accepted by the farmer. The farmer's son graduated from a medical school in United Kingdom and later invented a medicine. Years later, this medicine was used to save millions of lives, including the live of the nobleman's son. The name of the nobleman's son is Sir Winston Churchill. The name of the farmer's son is Sir Alexander Fleming. The medicine he invented is penicillin. And who do you think saved the world? For me, the credit would go to this farmer for his act of kindness and the noble man for providing a scholarship.

In reality, we always face limitations, one way or another. So if you want to make a difference, then don't use the lack of resources as an excuse for non-performance. You have to look for innovative ways to overcome those limitations.

If you want to be a good leader, you must be willing to pay the price of leadership. May the light from candles in this year's Candle Lighting Ceremony shine through and guide you to become a successful leader in your community, your country and even in the world!

Chonchanok Viravan
BPW International President
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