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Celebrating
Leadership
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Dream Only Great Dreams:



"In truth, we're not all going to be president or a senator or a CEO. But we all can reach out and engage and embrace and make a difference. We change the world one person at a time, and it begins with each of us here and now."

- Paul Trible



An Interview with Paul Trible

feature story minimum

IIIIIIIIIIIII by Laurel Harper IIIIIIIIIIII

Paul Trible epitomizes the extraordinary leadership capabilities and commitment to public service that Omicron Delta Kappa strives to instill in all members. Elected to the U.S. Congress at age 29, he served as Virginia's representative for three terms. Then he became the U.S. Senator from the commonwealth of Virginia at age 35.

"I worked hard, hope I made a contribution and it was an extraordinary honor and pleasure to serve my country," he says of his years in Washington.

But after 12 years in government, Trible wanted to spend more time with his family and turn his attention to other public service outlets.

Education was chief among them. He spent a year as a teaching fellow in Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Then, in 1996, he took on his current role — president of Christopher Newport University — where he is credited with leading the transformation of the former two-year college to one of the finest preeminent liberal arts universities in the nation.

Trible came to the public service sector well prepared. He began with a Bachelor of Arts in history earned at Hampden-Sydney College, where he ran for and earned a seat on the student senate. He then went on to Washington and Lee University for a juris doctorate. During this time, he served on the school's prestigious Law Review.

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Both experiences taught him the value of leadership, honor and civic engagement, Trible says. "There was an expectation that we would become good citizens and leaders. Those qualities have defined my life."

"You're going to give your life to something," he told The Circle in a recent interview, "but what will it be? Pursuit of fame? Pursuit of power? Pursuit of wealth? None of those things matter at the end of our lives.

"Rather, choose to live a life of significance, meaning and consequence. Lead, engage, serve, contribute and make the world a better place."

Trible believes that should be the mantra driving young people today, more than ever.

"America is in desperate need for more of our best and brightest to enter public service. These are obviously very dangerous times that require leadership, courage and sacrifice," he explains. "Public service is difficult, demanding and very often a thankless enterprise. But there is nothing more noble or necessary."

Any new crop of great leaders should be prepared to be back up their talents and ability to inspire with determination and persistence, he advises.

"I always remember Winston Churchill, in the dark days of WWII, encouraging his nation to 'Never, never, never give up.'That's important for every leader to remember. Leadership requires discipline and hard work, teamwork and courage."

It also requires a solid commitment to excellence and to leading a good life, he adds. And it requires being able to dream great dreams and then work hard to achieve them.

"We must have a vision that will inspire us, a powerful purpose that will get us up in the morning and keep us sprinting through

the day," he says. "Great dreams have power and consequence. We shouldn't waste our lives on modest dreams. Dream large and make life a great adventure.

"In truth, we're not all going to be president or a senator or a CEO. But we all can reach out and engage and embrace and make a difference. We change the world one person at a time, and it begins with each of us here and now."

Trible learned the importance of tackling big issues step by step from his greatest inspiration —his wife, Rosemary. A former television talk show host, she now devotes her life to advocating for sexual assault victims and human rights.

Trible tells of how Rosemary spent a week in Calcutta working with Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Charity, not long before Mother Teresa died. During the day the sisters would go out into the streets to find the sick and dying and bring them back to the mission where they could minister to them.

"Rosemary was overwhelmed by the death and despair she encountered. She asked Mother Teresa how she could do this kind of work every day," Trible recalls. "Mother Teresa replied, 'God doesn't call on us to be successful, he calls on us to be faithful.'

"And when Rosemary asked how she, too, could make a difference, Mother Teresa looked her in the eye and said, 'Go home to America and start with what's directly in front of your eyes. That is how we change the world.'

"That's what I try to keep in mind," Trible says. "The future of this world is not going to be shaped by great nations or powerful parliaments or mighty armies, as important as they all are. It's going to be shaped by people like you and me who are willing to reach out and change the world, one person at a time.

"That's what life and leadership are all about." 🛛