Excerpt from *The Prince* by Niccolo Machiavelli, 1532

Machiavelli observed politics as they were actually practiced and wrote *The Prince* as a practical guidebook for a despot to gain favor and to set forth the techniques by which a prince might be able to unite all of Italy. Like other humanists, Machiavelli had read widely and incorporated many examples from the classics into his writing. *Answer the following questions while you read.*

1. How closely should a prince adhere to the moral teachings of the church?
2. What attitudes regarding human nature are revealed in this passage?
3. Write down 5 characteristics a politician should have, according to Machiavelli.

It is a good thing to be considered generous. But if liberality is not openly displayed for all to see, no one will ever hear about it, and under these circumstances a person would soon become known as a miser. For this reason many men who wish to earn a reputation for liberality depend upon lavish displays or costly shows which are easily seen. If a prince does this, he is likely to spend most of his money on display, and if he wishes to keep his reputation for liberality he will have to impose heavy taxes, and do everything possible to obtain more funds. This course of action will make his subjects begin to hate him; they will not even respect him because he will be poor. His liberality will have injured many and benefited only a few. So many of his subjects will grow angry with him that his position will be endangered by any little incident. If he recognizes this fact and tries to spend less money, people will notice the change and accuse him of being a miser.

Is it better to be loved more than feared or feared more than loved? Ideally, one ought to be both feared and loved, but it is difficult for the two sentiments to go together. If one of the two must be sacrificed, it is much safer to be feared than loved. In general men are ungrateful, dishonest, cowardly, and covetous. As long as you help them, they will do your bidding. They will offer you their blood, their goods, their lives, and their children when it appears that you will not need to take them up on the offer. But when you try to collect, they often go back on their word. If a prince has relied solely on the good faith of others, he will be ruined. Men are less afraid to offend a prince they love than one they fear.

I conclude, therefore, with regard to being feared or loved that men have control of their love but the prince controls fear. The wise prince will rely on what he can control and not on what is in the control of others. He must he careful, however, not to make men hate him.

Everyone knows that it is a good thing for a prince to keep his word and live a faithful life. The history of our own times shows, however, that those princes who have done great things have had little regard for keeping faith.

A successful prince must imitate both the fox and the lion, for the lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. He must, therefore, be at the same time a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten off wolves. Those who wish to be only lions do not understand this important fact. A prince ought not to keep his word when doing so would go against his best interest, and when the reasons which originally motivated him no longer exist. If men were all good, this rule would not be a sound one. But because they are bad and would not honor their word to the prince, he is not bound to keep faith with them.

It is not at all necessary for a prince to have all the good qualities which I have named, but it is necessary to seem to have them. I will even go so far as to say that to actually have these qualities and to be guided by them always is dangerous, but to appear to possess them is useful. Thus it is well to seem merciful, faithful, sincere, religious, and also to be so. But a prince must always be ready to embrace the opposite qualities if the occasion demands it New princes particularly are unable to live by these fine qualities. They are often obliged, in order to maintain their position, to act against faith, against charity, against humanity, and against religion. A prince must be ready to shift with the wind as the ups and downs of fortune dictate. He should not deviate from what is good if he can avoid it, but he should be ready and able to do evil when it is necessary.

I conclude, then, that if fortune varies and men remain fixed in their ways, they will be successful so long as these ways fit the circumstances of the moment, but when the times call for other tactics they will fail. I certainly think that it is better to be impetuous than cautious, for fortune is a woman, and it is necessary, if you wish to master her, to conquer her by force. It can be seen that she lets herself be overcome by the bold rather than by those who proceed coldly, And therefore, like a woman, she is always a friend to the young, because they are less cautious, more fierce, and master her with greater audacity.