

ESTABLISHING TRUST

Part One By Steve McMichael

Trust is an essential element of ministry. Each week, we as ministers of the Gospel proclaim truths from the Bible, and people listen, believe and are helped. Many times in a month we see people individually who seek counsel from us. We speak to them, they act on our words and their lives are helped. Even the very offerings received at the church are an exercise of trust between congregations and their ministers. The great theologian George MacDonald said “to be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved.” So, how is your trust level with your church? Trust can be the make or break element in a ministry, so if you find yourself lacking, what do you do? People refuse to trust for many reasons, some legitimate, some not, but the result is the same: slow progress, frustrated relationships, and bitterness. Where does trust come from? How do you get it? How can you maintain it if it's lost or strengthen it if it is present? Let's take a look at this important commodity of trust.

In relationships trust comes from two basic sources: character and competence. People must believe that a person's character is good—that the person is good at heart and honest. People must also believe that the person is able to

do what they need in order to trust them. To trust a pilot, you must believe he is able to fly the air plane; solid character is a second consideration. When these two traits: character and competence are in place trust is easy.

So how do we build trust? Please remember that trust is built. It is not given. It is not a result of an anointing or even a speaking gift. People trust because they have

“To be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved.” - George MacDonald

heard something and seen the same thing that they heard. If you are new to an area (even up to two years) trust will be low due to lack of experience. If trust has been broken, it will have to be rebuilt. You as the minister determine if it will be rebuilt, the congregation decides how quickly. Move at their pace; it is their trust you are building. The first step in developing trust is to realize that it is our responsibility. Some pastors want to blame their congregations, but if there is no trust for good or bad reasons, the congregation will not change the circumstances. The leader will have to establish trust. That realization is the first step toward

building a solid trusting relationship with a church.

The second step is both painful and freeing. Evaluate yourself. How trustworthy are you? When Paul wrote to Timothy about the qualifications of leadership in 1 Timothy 3 he wrote about character issues: morality, truthfulness, controlling anger etc... There were few “skill qualifications” many more were “character qualifications”. It is important to note, don't evaluate yourself on intention. We all mean well, but what are you doing? Are you keeping your word? How's your temper? Look through the qualifications mentioned in 1 Timothy 3.

Find areas where your performance lately may be lacking and ask God to help you improve your actions in these areas. Remember trust is built on character seen, not character intended.

That is a good start to establishing trust based on character. Next time we will explore how to develop a stronger foundation of trust based on competence. Until then, keep building! ☂



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Secure Leadership

Part One By Walker Schurz

God created each of us in such a way so that our deepest needs can only be truly met by Him and within His plan for man. We were designed to worship, to have meaningful relationships, to have a sense of eternity and as well as many other heart-level desires. Before knowing Christ, many of us tried to find these needs met in places other than where God designed, resulting in frustration and pain.

Man was created by God to have a healthy sense of dignity and worth. He is the only one who can fulfill these needs of security. If our self-worth is not fully met in who God has made us as his child, man desperately searches for other places for security. Two inadequate, but typical paths are in what others say or think about us or in our performance. If we take these paths into ministry, we are doomed for frustration, injuring those we are to serve and not fully realizing the God-given mandate on our life.

God did not design ministry and service for our own needs to be met, but to help meet the needs of others. We can unknowingly abuse ministry because we are using it for a purpose that God did not intend for it to be used for.

Positions of leadership cause the cracks in our foundation to widen. The baggage that we carry in life grows heavier as our responsibilities increase. A healthy leader can recognize dysfunction and go to God for answers. Unfortunately, our personal insecurities blind us at times and we instead defend, deny or deflect these issues rather than getting Biblical solutions.

I so wish that what I am writing about came out of someone else's testimony, but unfortunately many of these symptoms came from my own life experience. I saw that others in the Bible struggled with some of these same issues. Many Biblical leaders grappled with insecurity – some overcame them and fulfilled

their call, while others allowed them to carry them down a negative spiral to destruction.

Let's look at some typical signs of insecurity in leaders and find God's answers.

1. Insecure Leaders have a misplaced idea of success and failure

The reality of ministry is that all success and fruitfulness comes from God, while much of the failure is a result of our mistakes and shortcomings. Even when doing everything right with proper motives, many times people will not respond and our efforts will not have the desired effect we hoped for in their lives. A leader who is secure in Christ can take the risk of getting out of the boat of their comfort zone, because they realize that failure is only an event, not who they are.

Leaders with identity problems never take the blame for negative results. It is always someone else's fault in their mind. Conversely, any degree of success must be because of their skillful application of wisdom and their leadership skill. Paul realized that what was happening through his ministry was entirely because of God.

And we'll all still be within the limits God sets as we proclaim the Message in countries beyond Corinth. But we have no intention of moving in on what others have done and taking credit for it. "If you want to claim credit, claim it for God." What you say about yourself means nothing in God's work. It's what God says about you that makes the difference.
2 Corinthians 10:16-18

What God does in our life is because of his grace that was given to us. This grace to minister was given to us, but not for our own benefit.

Continues on page three

AVOIDING THE DITCHES OF Pride & Inferiority

By Tony Cooke

Ministry is people business, and our effectiveness is largely dependent on how well we interact with and relate to people. The number one person we must deal with is our own self.

Dwight L. Moody was simply being honest when he said, "I have more trouble with D.L. Moody than with any other man I know." In every issue in life, there are two extremes we must avoid - a ditch on either side of the road. When it comes to our ego, our sense of self, there is a ditch of pride on one side of the road and a ditch of inferiority on the other side. Our goal is to stay in the middle of the road! God's plan is that we live in and operate in godly boldness and humility. Pride is a perversion of boldness, and inferiority is a perversion of humility.

One survey indicated that 70% of pastors report having a lower self-esteem now than when they started out in the ministry. That's not good news for the person who goes into the ministry with an underlying agenda of "becoming" someone important. Criticisms, apathetic and uncooperative people, and less-than-desired results can all accentuate and heighten a pastor's sense of inferiority. Our ministries need to be an expression of the love of God, not an extension of our own unmet ego needs. The good news, though, is that we can truly base our identity on who we are in Christ, not based on our performance or the opinions of others. It was Eleanor Roosevelt who said, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." It is vital to keep in mind that when other people don't act right, when they are ugly or indifferent, it is typically a reflection of who they are, not a reflection of who you are. On the other end of the spectrum from inferiority is pride. What is interesting about pride is that it often has its roots in insecurity. People who are insecure will often take on a very prideful air in an attempt to overcompensate for their internal feeling of inferiority.

Regardless of its source, those who present themselves arrogantly with an attitude of haughtiness and superiority usually end up repelling the very people God has called them to reach. Benjamin Franklin observed, "He that falls in love with himself will

have no rivals." Someone else said, "Conceit is the only disease known to man that makes everyone sick except the one who has it." Moody also said, "God sends no one away empty except those who are full of themselves." Noah Webster, in his 1828 Dictionary of the English language, defined egotism as: "The practice of too frequently using the word 'I.' Hence, a speaking or writing much of one's self; self-praise; self-commendation; the act or practice of magnifying one's self; or making one's self of importance." He further added that an egotist is one who "makes himself the hero of every tale." It's been said that there are two types of people in life. One type walks into the room and says, "Here I am!" The other type of person walks into the room and says, "There you are!" The individual who is growing in personal wholeness knows who he is in Christ. He is not basing his sense of self-esteem on his performance or on the opinions of others, but upon God's acceptance and unconditional love. Thus, he can love and focus on others based on the love of God that's been shed abroad in his heart; he has an abundance and an overflow.

Cornel West said, "Humility means two things. One, a capacity for self-criticism. The second feature is allowing others to shine, affirming others, empowering and enabling others. Those who lack humility are dogmatic and egotistical. That masks a deep sense of insecurity. They feel the success of others is at the expense of their own fame and glory." As pastors, there are three dimensions of our leadership. First, there is a sense in which we are over the people. Second, there is a sense in which we are equal to the people. Third, there is a sense in which we are under the people. If we only have the sense in which we are over the people, we can easily become a dictator. If we only have the sense in which we are equal to the people, we may simply be just a "good ole' boy." If we only have the sense in which we are under the people, we will likely become a doormat that people walk on.

God's plan is that we stand properly in our place over the people; this enables us to take our position of responsibility and authority to truly lead them. Our

authority is tempered, though, by the sense in which we are equal to them. We realize that we are not superior and they are not inferior. God loves them just like He loves us, and Jesus shed His blood for them just as He did for us. Finally, our leadership and authority is further influenced by the fact that we have been sent to serve people, to elevate others. ☂



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Words to live by

"No one can make you feel inferior without your permission."

- Eleanor Roosevelt

"Some people dream of worthy accomplishments, while others stay awake and do them."

- Unknown

"Success is what you do for others."

- Danny Thomas

"You can't live a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you."

- John Wooden

"Rarely does a person succeed when he does not believe in himself."

- Herb True

From front page

Secure Leadership Part One

Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you. Ephesians 3:2

As we avoid pride we are positioned to receive more grace as James tells us it is given to the humble.

2. Insecure Leaders care greatly about the opinion of others

Since God is the only one who sees everything, we truly are playing our lives in front of the audience of ONE. Only His opinion is true because only His perspective is accurate. If a leader is consumed with pleasing people, he is plugged into the wrong source and will experience frustration.

Jesus made an amazing statement in John 5:41: **"Your approval or disapproval means nothing to me."** Because He was secure in His Father's love, He did not find it necessary for others to approve of Him. Kenneth Hagin said that a sign of true spiritual maturity is deadness to both censure and praise. It simply does not affect the secure leader.

Paul seemed to have this same perspective.

So look at Apollos and me as mere servants of Christ who have been put in charge of explaining God's secrets. Now, a person who is put in charge as a manager must be faithful. What about me? Have I been faithful? Well, it matters very little what you or anyone else thinks. I don't even trust my own judgment on this point. My conscience is clear, but that isn't what matters. It is the Lord Himself who will examine me and decide. 1 Corinthians 4:1-4

As we find our place more and more "in Him" we will find in less and less what others say about us. As we allow God's word to affect our heart, we will be more satisfied in our life and also see more lasting fruit in our ministry. ☂



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