

Leadership and Relationships: They Make Me or Break Me

Relationships are the Key to a Leader's Success

"Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23-24)

BIBLICAL
BASIS

Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God is built on relationships. While we embrace doctrine and theology, those issues are not the core of our Christian faith or our leadership. What separates us from all the religions of the world is this: our faith is built on relationships. When Jesus was asked to summarize the most important command, He responded, "You shall love the Lord your God...and you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39). He listed a vertical relationship and a horizontal relationship. In the passage above, Jesus teaches that an offended relationship is a spiritual issue and takes precedence over religious sacrifice. For Christian leaders, we cannot assume we are successful unless we master the art of leading healthy relationships.

A Relationship Survey

Let's begin this lesson with a quick survey on how you handle relationships.
Circle your answer.

QUESTION...	YES/NO
1. Do you feel anxious when a particular person has called and left a message?	Y / N
2. Have you recently been in a relationship that drains you of energy or enthusiasm?	Y / N
3. Is it difficult to name three friends with whom you can share your worst sins?	Y / N
4. Do you sometimes dread having to see a particular person in a social situation?	Y / N
5. Do you have several relationships in which you give more than you receive?	Y / N
6. Is it hard for you to put in the effort to maintain a close friendship?	Y / N
7. Is your creativity blocked from a preoccupation with unhealthy relationships?	Y / N
8. Do you become more self-critical and uncomfortable in the presence of people?	Y / N
9. Are you irritable because of unresolved frustrations with people?	Y / N
10. Do you have imaginary conversations with people, causing internal conflict?	Y / N

SCORING: Total the number of Y's you gave yourself. If you have seven or more of them, you are in need of raising your relationship quotient. You are experiencing high-maintenance relationships and the emotional expense can drain you of the energy you need to lead. You probably need more healthy relationships in your life.

The Power of Perspective

Your perspective as you enter a relationship will greatly impact how that relationship turns out. For instance, show me a person who sees themselves negatively, and I will show you a person who sees others in a negative way. We act as we see ourselves. In fact, it is impossible to consistently perform in a manner that is inconsistent with the way we see ourselves.

People who like themselves, tend to like others as well. Those who distrust themselves, also tend to distrust others as well. Jesus told us to "love our neighbor as we love ourselves" (Matthew 22:39). We are prone to do just that—we love others only so far as we love ourselves. Unfortunately, we don't see our distorted perspective, and we blame others for the negative feelings we have of ourselves. Jesus asked a good question when He said: "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye" (Matthew 7:3)?

Reflect on the following questions as we progress into this lesson:

- How do I see _____?
- How do _____ see me?
- How do I see _____?

The Role of Responsibility

Romans 12:18 tells us: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."

A paraphrase of that passage might be: Do the best you can to get along with everyone. But realize that once in a while you will have a relationship with a difficult person that may fall short of the ideal. The key is to make a decision to respond well.

The key to successful relationships is _____.

Leaders must affirm the following statements:

1. I am responsible for how I treat _____.
2. I am not responsible for how they treat _____.
3. I will take the high road and lead people well by _____, not reaction.
4. I must _____ myself and others the way God does.
5. I am _____ for how I respond to those who are difficult.

Take the High Road with People

Let's take a look at some of the people you will probably meet during your lifetime, and how you can best lead them. Leading well requires you to choose to take the high road and do what is right in each of these relationships.

1. _____ – This person constantly complains and gives unwanted advice.

Ways to Handle the Critic:

- Communicate your care by listening to them, but challenge them to offer solutions.
- Warn your top leaders of the poison they may spread through criticism.
- Ask the critic to be part of solving the problems they bring up.

**CHECK YOUR
HEART**

2. _____ – This person feels like the victim and swims in a pool of self-pity.

Ways to Handle the Martyr:

- ♦ Make them aware that moodiness is a choice.
- ♦ Teach them that a leader is responsible to be "up" for those they lead.
- ♦ Expose them to people with real problems, to give them perspective.
- ♦ Never reward self-pity.

KEY
POINTS

3. _____ – This person is always pessimistic and is a drain on the relationship.

Ways to Handle the Wet Blanket:

- ♦ Be honest with them.
- ♦ Don't expect them to change as long as they offer excuses.
- ♦ Point to past successes that they thought would fail.
- ♦ Don't let them dampen your enthusiasm.

4. _____ – This person rolls over others and enjoys intimidating people; they are aggressive and can be hostile.

Ways to Handle the Steamroller:

- ♦ Consider the influence they have before you act.
- ♦ Try to reason with them, and expose them to their insensitivity.
- ♦ Identify the issue they are pushing for or against.
- ♦ Take a stand when it clearly is an obvious right and wrong issue.

5. _____ – This person surrounds himself/herself with negative people; they gossip and spread rumors that poison.

Ways to Handle the Garbage Collector:

- ♦ Confront them with the people about whom they are talking.
- ♦ Challenge their statements with objective truth.
- ♦ Allow exposure to destroy their credibility.
- ♦ Expose them to the church leaders and warn of what's happening.

6. _____ – This person is unable to let go and trust both God and people. They have to be in control.

Ways to Handle the Control Freak:

- ♦ Do not give them highly visible positions of authority.
- ♦ Remind them of Scriptural commands to trust God and others.
- ♦ Communicate that control is a myth-no human is ever really in control of life.
- ♦ Review with them the many times God came through and provided for them in the past.

7. _____ – This person frustrates others by living in their own world, oblivious to the needs of others and the big picture.

KEY
POINTS

Ways to Handle the Maverick:

- Don't evaluate your leadership by the maverick's response.
- Don't put them into a team ministry position.
- Don't give them a leadership role until they can see beyond themselves.
- Discover what motivates them, and encourage them to see the bigger picture.

8. _____ – This person is irrepressibly two-faced and hypocritical; his/her message changes with the crowd.

Ways to Handle the Back Stabber:

- Meet with them and communicate your desire to trust them.
- Gently confront them with specific examples of their hypocrisy
- Involve others who have experienced their two-faced ways, for concrete evidence.
- Don't give them authority until you see them change their ways.

9. _____ – This person disengages and avoids contact.

Ways to Handle the Cold Shoulder:

- Don't reward childish behavior by running after them each time they distance themselves.
- Do meet with them and ask if you've done something to hurt them.
- Dig deep to discover the real issues that cause them to avoid you.
- Don't endorse them or their behavior.

10. _____ – This person builds steam and often erupts; they are explosive, unpredictable and unapproachable.

Ways to Handle the Volcano:

- Remove them from the crowd.
- Remain calm. Ask them to sit down.
- Ask them to repeat details to be clear on issues; remove hearsay and exaggeration.
- Give a soft, clear answer.
- Hold them accountable.

11. _____ – This person is constantly in need, but gives nothing back. They use people.

Ways to Handle the Sponge:

- Set limitations on your ability to help.
- Don't let them manipulate you or the situation.
- Require responsibility; challenge them that maturity means giving and receiving.
- Don't feel obligated or guilty by their demands.

12. _____ – This person keeps score on everything. They want to beat others and often feel that life is unfair.

Ways to Handle the Competitor:

- Remind them that a Christian's role is to "complete" others not to compete with others.
- Inform them of others who have lost more than they have.

- Let them know that keeping score will destine them to a life of misery.
- Join them in finding positive ways their competitive spirit can be used by God.

General Rules When Handling People

- a. Love them.
- b. Ask God for wisdom.
- c. Stay healthy yourself.
- d. Do not give special positions to help people get better.
- e. Be honest with God, yourself and them.
- f. Keep healthy people in leadership.

***ASSESSMENT:** Identify one person that has been difficult to lead. Do they fit into one of the descriptions above?*

**ACTION
PLAN**

***APPLICATION:** Write down a game plan on how you will deal with them.*