

# Are We Prepared for Relationships?

*“And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye?”*

Matthew 7:3-4

As faith-based leaders who desire to lead in a way that pleases God, we cannot separate healthy leadership from healthy relationships. Relationships are the currency of God’s Kingdom. In this notebook, (*Winning with People*) you will study several “people principles” that have helped leaders connect with people over the centuries. We believe they are timeless and universal. Beginning in this lesson, we will study biblical examples of each principle.

Let’s begin with the “Readiness Question,” Are we prepared for relationships? Many Christian leaders catch a vision and jump immediately into fulfilling that vision, without considering how to profile it for others. They fail to spend time and energy on how to enlist other people in the vision. Consequently, many leaders diminish their results, failing to include others by failing to use good people skills. Let’s examine these principles.

## 1. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle: Who We Are Determines How We See Others.

This is where the relationship journey begins. Leaders must understand that their perspective on people is determined by who they are themselves. More than any other factor, predisposition toward others impacts how they turn out as people and how our relationship will be with them.

A traveler nearing a city asked an old man seated by the road, “What are people like in this city?” The old man replied, “What were they like where you came from?” “Horrible,” the traveler reported. “They were mean, untrustworthy, and detestable in all respects.” The old man just smiled and said, “Ah, you will find them the same in the city ahead.”

Soon after, another traveler stopped to inquire about the people in the city. Again the old man asked him about the people where he was from. “They were honest, industrious, and friendly,” came the reply. The old man responded, “That’s exactly how you’ll find the people here.”

The old man was very wise. He knew that the way people see others is a reflection of themselves.

- If I am a \_\_\_\_\_ person, I will see others as \_\_\_\_\_.
- If I am a \_\_\_\_\_ person, I will see others as \_\_\_\_\_.
- If I am a \_\_\_\_\_ person, I will see others as \_\_\_\_\_.

### Biblical Case Study: Nabal and Abigail (I Samuel 25:1-42)

As David and his men prepared to pass through Nabal’s property, David sent a few men ahead to ask Nabal if he could spare anything, such as food, wool or drinks. This was a fair question. David was known as the protector of the land, the one who had defeated Goliath and the Philistines, and was anointed by Samuel as the future king. Despite all this, Nabal refused. Although he was a wealthy man, he refused to give them anything and insulted them as he sent them away. Why did he treat a man like David this way?

### Nabal's Failure:

Nabal may have had no idea what he was really doing. His self-awareness was low. He was so caught up in his own little world; his leadership skills were almost non-existent. Look at his symptoms:

1. He grew wealthy and satisfied; he didn't think he needed to build relationships (v.2).
2. He became selfish and distrustful of others (v.3).
3. He neither gave nor received encouragement; he was numb to good attitudes (v.6).
4. He forgot how others had blessed him in the past; he only counted losses (v.7-8).
5. He belittled people and forgot their names; his insecurity prevented generosity (v.10).
6. He saw no reason to help others; he suffered from self-centered motives (v.11).
7. He was only interested in building his own "kingdom"—not God's Kingdom (v.11).

### Abigail's Success:

Nabal's wife, Abigail, heard about this mistreatment, and she knew David would retaliate. She approached relationships completely opposite of her husband. She ran toward David and won him over, so that he didn't react to Nabal's foolishness. David left in peace. Abigail displayed these characteristics:

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|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Risky initiative        | 6. Generous spirit     |
| 2. Emotional security      | 7. Forthright approach |
| 3. Genuine humility        | 8. Quick wit           |
| 4. Personal responsibility | 9. Eternal perspective |
| 5. Selfless attitude       | 10. Kind affirmation   |

**Discussion:** Are you a negative or positive person? What is your perception of others?

## 2. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle: The First Person We Must Examine Is Ourselves.

Coping with difficult people is always a problem, especially if the difficult person happens to be you. When leaders fail to practice the "Mirror Principle," they sabotage their own work and don't even know it. Before healthy leaders decide to act, they take a hard look at their own life. They take care of their blind spots and character flaws, knowing that people will reflect their leadership. This is simply "self leadership."

### Biblical Case Study: David (II Samuel 11-12)

Many consider King David as the greatest king in the history of Israel. Jesus was even called "the Son of David." However, David failed to practice the "Mirror Principle" (II Samuel 11). Neglect became sin, which multiplied into more sin, affecting Bathsheba and Uriah. Adultery led to deception, which led to the murder of Uriah. Sadly, David still was blind to his need for repentance. David required someone from his inner-circle, the prophet Nathan, to confront him and lead him out of his mess (II Samuel 12). By watching David's failure (II Samuel 11) we notice five common abuses of power that leaders face today:

- Drifting away from those disciplines we still demand in others (v.1).
- Believing that others owe us, we shamelessly use them (v.2-3).
- Attempting to fix things up rather than make things right (v.6).
- Refusing to accept the fact we could be blindly out of God's will (v.11).
- Believing that people in our way are expendable (v.14).

### The Mirror Test

People who are unaware of who they are and what they do, often damage relationships. Consider the following truths that every leader must understand:

1. The first person I must \_\_\_\_\_ is myself (self-awareness).
2. The first person I must get \_\_\_\_\_ with is myself (self-image).

3. The first person to \_\_\_\_\_ me problems is myself (self-honesty).
4. The first person I must \_\_\_\_\_ is myself (self-improvement).
5. The first person that can make a \_\_\_\_\_ is myself (self-responsibility).
6. The first person I must \_\_\_\_\_ is myself (self-leadership).

The Apostle Paul wrote, *"You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things"* (Romans 2:1).

**Discussion:** Have I examined myself and taken responsibility for who I am?

### 3. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle: Hurting People Hurt People and Are Easily Hurt by Them.

This is one of the most important principles leaders must understand. It doesn't take a psychiatrist to see that many people are hurting today. So many people are lonely. They are damaged emotionally or physically, they are needy, and they are crying out to fill the vacuums they feel inside of them. Leaders understand that often when people attack or criticize them, they are really displaying their own hurt. Like a wild animal backed into a corner, they lash out in fear and anger over their own pain. Unfortunately, leaders are the ones who often get blamed for this pain since they are the ones responsible for the organization. Considers these four truths:

- There are many hurting people.
- Those hurting people often hurt people.
- Those hurting people are often hurt by people.
- Those hurting people often hurt themselves.

#### Biblical Case Study: King Saul (I Samuel 18:6-29)

King Saul recognized David as a mighty warrior, a valuable team member, an obedient servant, a favored man and an effective leader. He also saw David as a potential successor and threat. Things didn't get better when Saul heard the Israelite women comparing the two and David was seen as superior. Saul's insecurity and fear drove him to turn against David. He lost sight of what was best for the country. Notice Saul's symptoms:

- Suspicion (v.9)
- Attempted murder (v.11)
- Fear (v.12)
- Insecurity (v.15-16)
- Conspiracy (v.13, 17)

#### Dealing with Hurting People

1. Don't take it personally: Be \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Look beyond the person for the problem: Be \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Look behind the situation: Be \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Do not add to their hurt: Be \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Help them find help: Be \_\_\_\_\_.

**Discussion:** Have I been hurt by someone? Do I understand the hurt behind their action?

#### 4. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle:

**Never Use a Hammer to Swat a Fly Off of Someone's Head.**

One of the easiest traps for a leader to fall into is to exaggerate a situation. Because we are human, we can get caught up emotionally in our problems and overreact to them. You might call this swatting a fly with a hammer. Leaders must work hard to respond to situations and people with the appropriate emotion and resolve. Leaders who are steady, wise and objective win the trust of others. In fact, leaders who practice this steady behavior have a calming effect on followers. When leaders fail to practice this, they forfeit some of their influence. This is exactly what happened to King Rehoboam in the Old Testament.

**Biblical Case Study: 4 Examples of People in the Bible unnecessarily using “hammers” - overreacting!**

- Joseph's brothers in leaving him in a pit to die (Genesis 38:20-27)
- King David sent Uriah to the battlefield to die (II Samuel 11:14-27)
- Herod the King executing infant males (Matthew 2:1-18)
- Pilate executing an innocent defendant, Jesus (Matthew 27:11-26)

In order to respond with wisdom, try practicing the following principles:

- \_\_\_\_\_ – Don't jump to conclusions, but listen to gain a big picture perspective.
- \_\_\_\_\_ – When you act may be as important as taking the right action.
- \_\_\_\_\_ – People often respond to our attitudes more than our words.
- \_\_\_\_\_ – Make sure the problem and the reaction match.

**Discussion:** Would others say you overreact to small issues in your organization?

#### 5. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle:

**We Can Lift People Up or Take Them Down in Relationships.**

In every relationship we have, we are either adding value or consuming value. We are preoccupied with giving to others or receiving from others. For the leader, it is imperative that we add value to others. We must be consumed with giving and lifting others up. A noted psychologist said, *“The world is starving for appreciation. It is hungry for compliments. But somebody must start the ball rolling by speaking first.”* This is the job of the leader. Lift others up. Believe the best about them. Encourage and empower them.

**Biblical Case Study: Jonah and the People of Nineveh (Jonah 4:1-11)**

Jonah is a classic failure in this principle. While he did preach repentance to the people of Nineveh, he didn't do it from his heart. When God forgave their sin and didn't punish them, Jonah got angry. He wanted justice not mercy. He had no intention of making his ministry to Nineveh redemptive. When God told Jonah to minister to the people in that city, he turned and ran the other direction. Jonah teaches us the consequences of refusing to encourage, serve others and being consumed with one's own personal agenda. (Jonah 1):

- We miss the privilege of partnership with God (v.1-3).
- Our choice damages more people than we know (v.4).
- We become hardened and desensitized to the tragedies we cause (v.5-8).
- We lose both integrity and trust (v.9-10).

## Taking Others to a Higher Level

Leaders who take others to a higher level have some common characteristics:

- Leaders who lift others commit themselves to daily \_\_\_\_\_.
- Leaders who lift others know the small difference that separates hurting from \_\_\_\_\_.
- Leaders who lift others understand that life is not a \_\_\_\_\_. It all matters.

**Discussion:** Would others say that you lift them up or take them down?

### Assessment & Application

**Assessment:** Evaluate yourself: Are you weak in any of these five preparation areas? Which ones are your strongest and weakest areas?

**Application:** After reviewing the area where you most need to grow, list an action step or two that you could take to improve in this area.