

# Are We Willing to Focus on Others?

*“Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them,  
for this is the Law and the prophets.”*

Matthew 7:12

All human beings have a desire to connect with other people. It doesn't matter how young or old, introverted or extraverted, rich or poor, learned or uneducated they happen to be. We are social creatures, designed for relationships. Our motivation may be love or loneliness, the need for acceptance, or the need for fulfillment. It may simply be the desire to succeed. Whatever the reason, we are all motivated to experience life in community, not in isolation. This requires us to connect with others.

So how do we do it? How does a leader connect with other people? The simple answer is to stop thinking about ourselves and our own agenda and begin focusing on others. This is why the “connection question” is so important. In order to increase your ability to connect with people, we will examine six people principles that answer the connection question: “Are we willing to focus on others?”

## 1. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle: The Entire Population—With One Small Exception—Is Made Up of Others.

Albert Einstein said, *“A person first starts to live when he can live outside of himself.”* Most people, including leaders, have a difficult time living outside of their own little world. Christian leaders can hide behind the excuse that they are “doing God’s work” so it must be more important than anything else. Unfortunately, this can be a disguise for selfishness. The fact is we are concerned about it because it is what WE are doing at the moment. In order to break out of that mold, leaders must collect three tools:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ – The ability to see the big picture, beyond your own self-interests.
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ – The stable condition that comes with experience, wisdom and selflessness.
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ – The willingness to steward the well-being of a person, task or group.

### **Biblical Case Study: Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian Empire (Daniel 4:1-37)**

A classic illustration of a leader who failed to practice this principle is King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. After his armies captured the citizens of Israel, this king selected the best young Israelite men and began pressuring them to submit to whatever he wanted. In fact, the entire Babylonian population became arrogant and presumptuous. They ruled that portion of the world for many years. King Nebuchadnezzar proved himself to be one of the most arrogant leaders in history. God had to deal with him in a most unusual way: God drove him from his position and into the wilderness to live like an animal. He remained there until he fully recognized God as the supreme ruler of the world. He had to learn submission, relinquish control and become teachable. By Daniel 4:36-37, King Nebuchadnezzar was a different leader. Note how he developed a big picture perspective:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ Words – He expressed appreciation and blessing for God’s grace and mercy.
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ Perspective – He acknowledged he didn’t know it all and listened to others.
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ Heart – He expressed humility regarding his own importance and power.

**Discussion:** Do I have a hard time putting others first?

## 2. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle: **Instead of Putting Others in Their Place, We Must Put Ourselves in Their Place.**

Success can bring many things: power, privilege, fame and wealth. Sadly, as many leaders rise in their position, they become forgetful of the place they came from. As we travel the world, our EQUIP team has observed that many leaders abuse those under them. Leadership becomes a power trip. Often the greater the poverty in a country the greater the abuse. This is not the biblical model for leadership.

Jesus, the Ultimate Leader, was born in a stable. He never felt He was too important to serve the poor or disabled. In fact, He often ate meals with the lowest people of society. Although He is the Perfect Leader, His goal was not to put people in their place, reminding them of how imperfect they were. It was quite the opposite. He put Himself in their place. He walked where they walked, interacted in their everyday language and suffered what they suffered (Hebrews 4:15). Why do leaders today fail to practice this? It's simple. We naturally do not see ourselves and others from the same perspective. And, when we fail to see things from the perspective of others, we fail in our relationships.

### **Biblical Case Study: Abigail and David's Army (I Samuel 25:18-35)**

We've already noticed in our last session that Nabal and his wife Abigail handled relationships in a completely different fashion. Notice how Abigail chose to respond to David and his army, after Nabal offended David and endangered his entire family. She possessed a leader's perspective:

- a. A Leader's Head: She \_\_\_\_\_ people.  
Abigail knew how to appeal to David in order to accomplish her goal.
- b. A Leader's Heart: She \_\_\_\_\_ people.  
Abigail assumed the role of a servant, submitting to both David and her husband.
- c. A Leader's Hand: She \_\_\_\_\_ people.  
Abigail gave David and his men what they needed. She added value to them, saving her own life.

### **How to Practice the Exchange Principle:**

1. Leave "your place" and visit "their place" in order to see their \_\_\_\_\_.  
The best way to keep from stepping on people's toes is to put yourself in their shoes.
2. Check your \_\_\_\_\_.  
When you don't want to change, you look for differences in others; when you're willing to change, you look for similarities.
3. Ask others what they would do in your \_\_\_\_\_.  
The key with this principle is empathy. Sometimes it's best to simply ask others what they think.

**Discussion:** Do I work to see things from other people's point of view?

## 3. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle: **Each Person We Meet Has the Potential to Teach Us Something.**

Effective leaders never stop growing. Whether we continue learning or not has less to do with who is teaching us and more to do with how teachable we are. We can learn from anyone, good or bad. The fact is we can learn things in unlikely places and from unlikely people. However, only a teachable spirit will allow us to capitalize on this reality.

**Biblical Case Study: Naaman and His Servant (II Kings 5:1-14)**

Naaman was a great military leader during his day. He had won the respect of his king. Sadly, he suffered from the dreaded disease of leprosy. When he learned about the prophet Elisha, he decided to go and inquire of him to see if he could heal him. He was disappointed when he arrived. Rather than an impressive meeting with the prophet, Naaman received instructions from a household servant. He struggled with his pride. He had faulty expectations. He wasn't teachable. Much like many leaders today...

- He wanted a quick fix.
- He expected special treatment.
- He held certain assumptions about a solution.
- He grew angry about perceived unfair treatment.
- He rejected the solution at first.

**How to Learn From Others**

It took another servant to convince Naaman to follow the instructions to wash in the Jordan River. When he did, he was completely healed. It pays to become teachable. Here are some suggestions for leaders today:

- Value \_\_\_\_\_.
- Identify People's Uniqueness and \_\_\_\_\_.
- Ask \_\_\_\_\_.

**Discussion:** Do I approach people with the desire to learn from them?

**4. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle:  
 People Are Interested in the Person Who Is Interested in Them.**

It has been said, "You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you." The idea is simple. If you want to connect with others, focus on them, not on yourself. This is what charisma is about.

This simple phrase should be a guide to all leaders: *People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.* This requires listening, outward focus, an inquiring mind and a desire to help people see how they add value to others.

**Biblical Case Study: Jonathan (I Samuel 18:1-4; 20:1-42)**

Jonathan and David's relationship in I Samuel is a vivid example of this kind of focus. Jonathan loved David as much as he loved himself (I Samuel 18:1). Jonathan was a partner to David, helping him to become king. Notice these characteristics that Jonathan possessed; they enabled him to connect with David:

1. Jonathan was \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_: He made time for David's needs (I Samuel 18:1-4). He was a person David could count on at any time (I Samuel 18:5-17).
2. Jonathan was \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_: He took risks in order to protect and ensure David's future (I Samuel 18:18-33). He was committed to do what was right, even if it hurt him (I Samuel 18:34-42).

**How to Build Your Charisma**

- Become genuinely interested in other people.
- Smile often.

- Remember that a person's name is important to them.
- Be a good listener.
- Sincerely make the other person feel important.

**Discussion:** Do I usually focus on others and their interests or my own?

### 5. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle: **Believing the Best in People Usually Brings the Best Out of People.**

People generally respond to the expectations they sense a leader has of them. In other words, they will live up to or down to the expectations they believe a leader has of them. This is why we must believe the best about everyone we lead. Leaders should put an imaginary number "10" on everyone's forehead. All people have potential and can become the person God intended them to be. It often takes a leader, however, to bring out the best in those people. Let's look at a biblical case study of this truth.

#### **Biblical Case Study: Barnabas and John Mark (Acts 15:36-39; II Timothy 4:11)**

Barnabas was such a leader in the New Testament. His name means: Son of Encouragement. He gave his money, his time, his encouragement and his belief to others even when those people showed little signs of great potential. For instance, John Mark was a young man who traveled with Paul and Barnabas on a mission trip. Due to fear and immaturity, John Mark quit and returned home. Paul refused to take him on another trip. He didn't want to give this man a second chance. Barnabas, however, saw potential and took John Mark under his wing until he flourished. Years later, Paul was in prison and realized the value of John Mark and even asked for him to be sent to the prison to help him (II Timothy 4:11).

#### **How was Barnabas able to do this?**

- He saw potential that others didn't see.
- He extended grace when others felt none was deserved.
- He found opportunities for people to experience results and success.

#### **Truths about the Number 10 Principle:**

- Our \_\_\_\_\_ in a few people should not stop us from believing in people.
- A trusting heart is emotionally \_\_\_\_\_. Don't become a distrustful leader.
- We behave in light of our \_\_\_\_\_. Cultivate a healthy faith and optimism in others.

*"Treat a man as he appears to be and you make him worse. But treat a man as if he already was what he potentially could be, and you make him what he should be."*

– Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

**Discussion:** Do I believe the best about others?

### 6. The \_\_\_\_\_ Principle: **Caring for People Must Precede Confronting People.**

Conflict and confrontation are part of the territory of leadership. Unfortunately, no one likes this part. Consequently, many leaders choose one of two poor reactions. One extreme is they flee from any sign of confrontation. They want to be liked so much; they cannot bear confronting someone and potentially making them angry. The other extreme is that leaders can become so resentful themselves at a person or situation that they eventually erupt, and the confrontation is neither healthy nor redemptive. Leaders must understand that conflict is neutral and inevitable. It can be a positive experience if love precedes the confrontation.

### **Biblical Case Study: Nathan and David (II Samuel 12)**

We learn from the prophet Nathan as he confronted King David after his sin with Bathsheba:

1. Nathan had been listening to God (v.1).
2. Nathan knew David's circumstances (v.1-6).
3. Nathan was objective in his perspective (v.7-8).
4. Nathan understood the root issues (v.9-12).
5. Nathan saw the ultimate cause and effect of David's sin (v.14).

#### A Roadmap for Healthy Confrontation

- Confront a person with care for that person.
- First seek understanding, not necessarily agreement.
- Agree on an action plan.

**Discussion:** Do I care enough to confront the right way?

### **Assessment and Application**

**Assessment:** Which of these connection principles do you practice best? Which one is your weakest?

**Application:** List a step you should take to improve in connecting with others.