

Insights on Power, Character and the Ministry

The Lost Art of Integrity

A few years ago some colleagues and I hosted a series of one-day conferences for Christian leaders at a well-known London conference centre. The first two were a great success. A list of well-known speakers and a topical subject seemed to be the winning formula. Around 1,500 leaders attended each conference. The third was at the same place with the same formula, except for one change – the subject. We had decided, as conference organisers, that one of the most pressing needs among leaders was the development of integrity. We set the topic and posted the invitations, but when the day came, only 150 delegates attended. When we went on to hold a fourth conference on another topical subject, however, there was a huge turn out. Integrity seems to be a thorny subject for leaders!

Power and Integrity

Character and integrity are the great safeguards and health-giving boundaries to the use of power and authority. World history cries out with horrific stories when character and integrity are absent. Millions have lost their lives over the centuries thanks to unscrupulous leaders. Thank God for his church where peace reigns and where leaders demonstrate leadership integrity that should be the envy of the world. Like a light in the darkness Christian leadership points the way to the correct use of power for the world.

Probably one of the biggest problems with the use of power is that many

Christian leaders have not considered their power motif or level of integrity, and many have held back from the process of personal growth that leads to inner security and peace. When Jesus said *'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid'* (John 14:27) he was speaking of a deep-rooted, heart–mind dynamic that is the envy of the world. Leaders' often work out their role with an insecurity that impedes their proper and effective use of power and authority, and colours their leadership. If we can sort out a disintegrated belief system, then leadership from the place of peace will flourish. We can preach 'peace', but living with it is harder to do. Our belief systems and lifestyles need to become an integrated whole.

This may be an uncomfortable topic for you as you read it and you may already have decided that I make too many generalisations with my use of 'many'. However, my perspectives come from much research and from years of working on myself and with other leaders in searching for a better personal perspective. I have always been impressed with the way that Jesus was able to handle his critics. There was not a hint of insecurity to be found when mocked and accused. It seems as though he was so fully aware of who he was and of his standing with his Father that no amount of name calling or false accusations could convince him otherwise: 'Do what you like to me and say what you like, I am still the Son of God.' For me, Jesus is our model of Christian maturity and peace.

Maturity, Peace and Inner Security

Christ likeness is maturity, bringing an inner security that acknowledges that we cannot reach any higher than 'sonship'. Acceptance of ourselves with all our strengths and weaknesses, in the knowledge that we are his, and through Christ made acceptable to him, is a route to deep security and

peace from which may spring true altruistic leadership and use of power. This can lead to a healthy, safe self-evaluation that can enhance our leadership skills and use of the power and authority that such roles engender.

I am unconvinced that our growth in maturity leads to a total sense of security or that we can ever feel totally secure in this world. However, we can make significant life changing and peace-bringing advances in this area.

The following exercise requires a good deal of honesty and courage to reflect. It is a little self-test but BEWARE! Self-tests are not the final word on you and cannot see into your inner being. At best, they are helpful indicators.

I have designed this test, which I call the 'I' Test, as a simple procedure to help you discover the measure of insecurity that you may experience with your role. You can beat the test and get around it. You can argue with its scientific value and point to its flaws, of which I am sure there are many. Or, you can take it honestly, and use the information for personal growth. Few of us will have a zero score. A high percentage does not indicate that you are unfit to lead; the test simply acknowledges feelings of insecurity that you can work on for the future.

The 'I' Test

Place a tick to the left of the statements in this list that are true, regardless of how strongly so. Do the test quickly without dwelling on any question for very long.

1. I need to be loved by everyone
2. I need to please the people
3. I need not to be discovered for who I really am
4. If only they knew what went on in my mind
5. I need to be the best
6. I need to be seen
7. I need to be heard
8. I need to have attention
9. I need to have the biggest church
10. I need the best income
11. I need to pretend
12. I need to do it all myself
13. I am uncomfortable if someone questions my motives
14. I frequently feel attacked by the people
15. I wish people would take notice of what I say

16. I feel vulnerable
17. I am in pain
18. I must protect myself
19. I must make them see my strengths
20. I must make them see what I know
21. I must be seen to be mature
22. I must be more mature than they are
23. I must know more than they do
24. I must be an expert
25. No one listens to me
26. No one knows who I really am
27. No one cares for me
28. No one understands me
29. No one can help me
30. I am not sure that I am intelligent enough

31. I am not sure that I know enough

32. I am not sure that I believe what I say

33. I am not sure that I say what I believe

Now add up the number of statements that are true for you and multiply by three for your 'I' percentage. The higher your percentage, the greater your feelings of insecurity are likely to be.

For the truly brave: ask a trusted other, spouse, friend, etc., to mark this test from their perspective of 'you' and discuss your findings together.

Reflection

Whatever your score, make a list of the statements that reflect some of your insecurity, think through the causes, and reflect on what might help you to change this feeling.

If you know, either with the help of the 'I' Test or from general self-awareness, that you suffer from medium to high levels of insecurity, then you may want to opt for a period of professional counselling and reflection to enable you to grow in security. You will discover later in "Freedom to Lead" that I believe that counselling is a tool for the wise. Obtaining professional help to enable us to reflect on our lives is a mature thing to do and I strongly encourage Christian leaders to opt for regular periods of counselling as a commitment to personal growth.

The Best Leadership Power Motif

The desire to see God's church built up needs to be the central driving force behind Christian leadership. It is a desire to engage in the ministry in such a way that God receives the glory and the church is equipped. This represents freedom from the fear and insecurity that makes many leadership decisions self-focused, and enables the leader to look outwards. Consider the following passages:

This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority – the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down. (2 Corinthians 13:10)

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11–13)

Good Christian leadership, then, requires an empowering mentality along with good character. Christian ministers are people who have been awarded levels of responsibility that contain a measure of power and authority. Ministers often stand at the front of the church building and participate in the conducting of worship. They often lead groups and act as chairpersons of meetings. They are seen in the public eye to be in authority and are considered by the community to be respectable figures. The power and authority they have, which could lead them into potentially abusive situations, may be put to good use in the church and community. They may use their position to bless the church and enable people to mature in their walk with God. They may be effective in making changes in the local community that will benefit all through escaping the self-focused agenda.

This article was posted by [Colin Buckland](#), Chief Executive of *Claybury International*.