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How To Become Authentic Leaders Full Of Integrity

When we hear the word "hypocrite" today, we often associate it with a politician caught in a scandal, or some powerful figure like a producer or preacher exposed by the "Me Too" movement.

The origins of the word are actually from the Greek Theatre. "Hypocrite" meant "an actor" or "a stage player." In the theatre, actors and actresses wore masks and eventually toward the end of the play they would remove the mask and expose who they really were.

In the midst of a culture that is decaying, rocked by current sexual harassment scandals and the absence of healthy families, there is cry deep down in people for authenticity and integrity. The greatest apologetic (defense of the Gospel) for the 21st Century is God's people living authentic lives of integrity before a watching world.

There are important traits that all Godly leaders possess such as faith and love, but the most important traits for any leader are integrity and authenticity. We must remember that we reproduce who we really are. We may teach what we know, but we always impart who we are.

This is why being authentic, not hypocritical, is probably one of the most important traits for a leader. The most important quality of a leader's life is not about what they are like behind the pulpit, but what they are like in real life. Two of the best things that

can be written on a leader's epitaph is that they loved God, and that those who knew them the best loved and admired them the most. This is the fruit of a life of authenticity.

While there is no such thing as perfect leaders, God has called them to have integrity and be authentic. Integrity has to do with holding to strong moral and ethical principles in God that engender trust from the people around you. Authenticity has to do with living in a state of agreement with what we believe and how we live. It is a genuineness both inside and out, private as well as public. This was part of Jesus' great impact.

John 1:14 MSG *The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous* ***inside and out, true from start to finish.***

Authentic leaders face struggles and testing, but their faith, character, and core vision remains intact. The way they live their lives backs up what they proclaim. They don't abandon what God has shown them in the day of trial. That is what makes them authentic and possess integrity.

Real integrity and authenticity in leadership will result in those who know you the best loving and admiring you the most.

Success doesn't reveal a leader's authenticity and integrity as much as testing does. I read a great book on leadership years ago, *The Making of a Leader* by Robert Clinton, in which he looked at about 1000 leaders mentioned in the Bible. Only 30% of them finished well. Their authenticity and integrity was revealed over the long haul as they faced and overcame difficulties while living out their beliefs. The other 70% didn't maintain integrity.

The fruit of leaders' lives should confirm what they teach

Jesus tells us that the fruit of leaders' lives is the most accurate indicator of their authenticity. *Matthew 7:15-16 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. (16) "****You will know them by their fruits.***

Paul says similar things when he contrasted false apostles in Corinth who were trying to discredit him. He appealed to the church based on the fruit of his own life that they had personally witnessed (2 Cor 10-11). He makes a similar appeal to the Thessalonians

about knowing the lives of those who lead them (1 Thes 5:12-13). He also tells Timothy to "show yourself an example" as he "prescribes and teaches things" (1 Tim 4:11-12).

This is one of the challenges with the online world. There has never been a time in which teachings and ideas from both good and bad leaders is accessible to so many. The reach is far beyond people "personally knowing their lives " (1 Thes 5:12-13). With over 550 million Christian based web and blog sites along with an unknown greater number of Christian social media sites, both good and bad leaders are speaking to many. We have an internet smorgasbord of just about any kind of theology coming from people that are often unknown. Even the "friends" that post online only offer projections of themselves rather than the reality of who they actually are.

The fruit of leaders' lives should confirm their ideas. Unfortunately there is little chance to "know" them in the online world.

This is why leaders should have some place of real relational life among God's people where their theories are practiced and observed. Just because one can preach or write well doesn't mean they are living well!

Things to pursue in order to live lives of integrity and authenticity

- **Cultivate a real life with God engaging the Spiritual disciplines of private prayer, Bible reading, study, etc.** A leader's first state of integrity is in their private life before God.
- **Walk in real relationships in which you are open and honest.** Walking a life of transparency with others is what the Bible speaks of as "walking in the light" (1 Jn 1:1-9, Jas 5:16 etc.). This includes fellow Christians and fellow team members (Eph 5:21). It also includes those "over you in the Lord" (1 Thes 5:12, Heb 13:17 etc.). Leader's need to be honest and real. Admit your shortcomings. People think more highly of this type of honesty than false pretenses. Don't hide things. We have an important saying, "Every pastor needs a real pastor."
- **Always do what is right in a way to honor God, not please people**. Sometimes it means not doing the popular thing or the thing people like. Being a people-pleaser will lead you away from being a God-pleaser.
- **Be responsible.** Follow through on promises and take responsibility for those you are unable to keep. Don't put stuff off or make excuses. Follow through on your promises or quickly let people know when you are unable to. If this happens

frequently, you are probably making too many promises to look good in front of others.

- **Have a right perspective of yourself and others**. This is what the Bible calls humility. You don't overestimate yourself based on pride or narcissism, and don't underestimate yourself based on false humility. Realize your sense of worth comes from God alone and you live as a servant of His by serving others. This enables you to be real and not behind some masks to impress others. Being authentic means being ourselves.
  Romans 12:3-5 *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone who is among you not to think more highly of yourself than what one ought to think, but to think sensibly, as God has apportioned a measure of faith to each one. (4) For just as in one body we have many members, but all the members do not have the same function, (5) in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.*
- **Resist comparisons, and be comfortable with who you are and who you aren't.**
  Galatians 6:2-5 *You obey the law of Christ when you offer each other a helping hand. (3**) If you think you are better than others, when you really aren't, you are wrong.** (4) Do your own work well, and then you will have something to be proud of**. But don't compare yourself with others.** (5) We each must carry our own load.*
- **Be the CEO of your own life as you follow Jesus**. Take responsibility for your attitudes and actions. Don't blame others for your weaknesses and sin. Face up to them and repent when needed.
- **Hold God's standards in a way that causes you to "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness."**
  1 Timothy 4:7-8 *But keep away from those godless legends, which are not worth telling. Keep yourself in training for a godly life (NASV "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness). (8) Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is valuable in every way, because it promises life both for the present and for the future.*

Doug Kreighbaum
dkreighbaum@gmail.com
www.c2cfamily.org
www.dougkreighbaum.com