

LESSON 6-1: Healthy Communication

Earning Respect

“It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it.” - Warren Buffett

“We all require and want respect, man or woman, black or white. It’s our basic human right.” - Aretha Franklin

WELCOME & PRAYER

KICK OFF QUESTION

- How have leaders you have worked for or with earned your respect? How have they lost it?

PRIMARY SCRIPTURES

“And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching. Teach the truth so that your teaching can’t be criticized. Then those who oppose us will be ashamed and have nothing bad to say about us.” (Titus 2:7-8a)

Discussion Question:

- How do the characteristics of the leaders you identified in the Kick Off Question compare with the scripture above?

CONCEPTS TO UNDERSTAND

During this lesson series we will be tackling the subject of communication. Healthy communication is critical for any business, organization, or family to succeed. The goal of this Healthy Communication Series is to create an environment that promotes meaningful dialogue, some of which will be difficult and have long-lasting ramifications. Healthy dialogue in an organization includes two-way communication, respect for differing opinions, and a willingness to see things from another person’s perspective.

Here are some examples of real-life situations where healthy dialogue can have a long-term impact on your life:

- It is annual review time at work, and you talk to your boss about a promotion. You think you are ready, but your boss does not agree.
- You are in a meeting with five coworkers trying to pick a new marketing strategy because your company is not meeting its current sales goals. Your team is on the hot-seat to come up with a new idea.
- Your monthly credit card statement comes in the mail. As you open it, you notice a large purchase that you were not aware of that you feel is a waste of money, so you approach your spouse to discuss.

Learning how to create healthy dialogue in these kinds of situations and many others is critical for your professional future, as well as that of your family. The first step in creating meaningful dialogue starts with earning the respect of others.

Earning respect involves:

1. Creating and maintaining trust
2. Doing the right thing
3. Sacrificing personal interests

Creating and maintaining trust. Trust is earned over time but can evaporate in an instant. The honest leader tells the truth even when it reflects poorly on themselves. The reality is most everyone around you already knows the truth. Anything you do to deflect responsibility to others will undermine your influence as a leader.

Doing the right thing. Actions speak louder than words. A leader must utilize the same moral compass regardless of circumstance. It may sound oversimplified, but important decisions become much easier when leaders simply focus on doing the right thing, regardless of the outcome. Do not be afraid of making the right decision.

Sacrificing personal interests. We all know what it is like to work for a “Me-First” leader. They take all the credit, shoulder no blame, and act in a way that shows their main priority is their own advancement. However, an inspiring “We-First” leader puts the interest of others above their own interests. Here are some litmus tests that can help us discern whether someone is a “Me-First” or “We-First” leader:

- When important decisions are made, are the leader’s interests given priority over others?
- Is the leader growing and developing other people? Or are their efforts just being used to make the leader look better?
- Will they listen to others? Are they willing to change their mind?
- Do they take all the credit when things go well but blame others when things go poorly?

Note: Individuals who have the best knowledge to evaluate the questions above are people who work for or under them. Many times, leaders can present a false “We-First” impression to their managers when, in reality, they are quite the opposite.

EXERCISE

In the exercise below, compare and contrast a “Me-First” vs “We-First” leader that you know or have met. Think of a real-life example for each and answer the questions below:

We-First Leader

What was it about this person that made them trustworthy? How did they demonstrate trust?	
Describe a time when they made the right decision in the midst of difficult circumstances. What impact did this decision have on their reputation?	
How did they continuously demonstrate that the interests of others were more important than their own?	

Me-First Leader

What did this person do to foster an environment of distrust?	
Describe a time when they made a poor decision in the midst of difficult circumstances. What impact did this decision have on their reputation?	
How did they demonstrate that their own personal interests were more important than those of the people around them?	

Discussion Questions

1. Describe a situation where a leader did or did not take responsibility for an outcome that reflected poorly on them. How did they describe their role in the outcome? Did they try to blame someone else?
2. How do you respond to the success of your peers? Is your initial reaction to be jealous? Can you genuinely enjoy and celebrate their accomplishments? Why or why not?
3. Think of a time in your life when you achieved success. How did the people around you react? Did their reaction have anything to do with them perceiving you as a “Me-First” or “We-First” person?
4. What specific changes do you need to make to gain influence with your co-workers or at home? What are the benefits of making these changes?

TAKE ACTION

- One thing for certain: over the course of the next several days you will say or do something that you regret. The next time this happens, look for opportunities to simply say, “I am sorry.” Do not offer excuses or blame others. Own the problem and seek forgiveness.

CLOSING PRAYER

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Crucial Conversations -Tools for Talking when the Stakes are High* by Patterson, Grenny, McMillan and Switzler
- [YouTube Video](#) of Simon Sinek interview on CBS This Morning discussing his book *Servant Leadership, Why Leaders Eat Last*