

LEADERlife

Due to technical difficulties, we are unable to provide the audio recording of this program. With this in mind, we have provided the following expanded version of the listening guide to help keep continuity in the series, *LeaderLife*.

Credibility

In this series, we are examining the qualities and skills of leadership. Leadership is important and applicable to everyone because *everybody leads somebody, sometime*.

Leadership is influence.

Leadership has as much to do with relationships as it does roles and responsibilities.

Today, I want to address one quality of leadership, one ability that stands above the rest.

For background, let's go back to the book of Exodus. In this book of the Old Testament, we meet Moses at a time and place where vision impacted and changed the course and direction of his life. In Exodus 3, in particular, we see Moses' life impacted by a life-changing perspective—a vision that would shape his life and the life of his followers. Every discussion on *leadership* always includes a sidebar on *vision*. Vision is vital as we discussed last week.

Where there is no vision, the people perish...
—Proverbs 29:18 KJV

Let's look at this same verse in the English Standard Version of the Bible:

Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.
—Proverbs 29:18 ESV

"Dissatisfaction and discouragement are not caused by the absence of things, but the absence of vision."

In Exodus 4, we visit a different issue in the life of Moses: *Who's going to believe me?*

Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'" —Exodus 4:1 ESV

[Paraphrase] "I can say I am a leader or have come to lead, but who will believe me? What will make me have the influence, authority and power to lead?"

The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. But the LORD said to Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand—"that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

—Exodus 4:2 ESV



God used a tool, a staff, something that symbolized who Moses was, what Moses was and all Moses would become in God's plan.

God said, "Put it down... pick it up by the tail!" [paraphrased]

The point is not that you have to be a snake handler to be believable! The point is that God uses the things that are often overlooked by others to become the things that confirm your **credibility**.

The greatest credibility does not come from who you are; it comes through God's grace working in you to make you a person of character.

Character is something that is forged over time and through experience. It does not come through a degree, but can be developed by degree.

Almost every week, I deal with the awful, painful and disappointing reality of people who forfeit their leadership because of credibility issues.

What is credibility? Simply defined, it is the quality of being trusted or believed in.

"Consultants have credibility because they are not dumb enough to work at your company." —Scott Adams

"For every credibility gap there is a gullibility gap."
—Richard Cobden

"To be persuasive, we must be believable; to be believable, we must be credible; to be credible, we must be truthful."
—Edward R. Murrow

"Credibility is like virginity. Once you lose it, you can never get it back." —Unknown

If leadership is influence, then credibility gives your influence authority. People can believe, trust and follow you!

Back to Moses... Moses started in Egypt—Prince. He then "blew it" in Egypt—Fugitive. He then met God and grew into a leader—Shepherd. It was in this role he learned the daily chores of leading, feeding and caring for sheep. Only God knew that one day this "flock" would be a nation of people.

God uses common things, little things, daily things to shape the life and character of a leader who would influence the future of a nation.

Moses had a problem, though. He didn't think he had the skills to be a leader! But God saw his character.

But Moses said to the LORD, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak." But he said, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." —Exodus 4:10-13 ESV

So great was Moses' persistence that God was "ticked" at him.

Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, "Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite?... He shall speak for you to the people..." —Exodus 4:14, 16 ESV

Whether you are a husband, father, president or worker in an organization, credibility is your greatest asset in influencing others.

"Credibility is your credit line to the future and your account balance in the present."

Are you C-R-E-D-I-B-L-E?

Consistency. Trust is the foundation of leadership. If people believe you, they "buy in" and follow you.

"To be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved."
—George MacDonald

Trust is not built where there are credibility gaps. Erratic behavior does not build followers.

You need to say what you mean and mean what you say.

Steadfast... consistent... etc., are starting points to credibility.

Responsiveness. Non-responsive leaders quickly frustrate followers. I'm not talking about impulsive actions simply for the sake of action, but understanding the need to act.

When dealing with others, seek *first* to understand and *secondly* to be understood. Understand there are things you don't know and things you don't see. There are factors that can help to make you wise and successful. Presumption will destroy your credibility.

Excellence. Do you set a standard of expectation for response of others by your own example?

Your credibility is built in direct proportion to the quality of your own efforts.

In days of renewal and rebuilding, don't despise the day of small things! (Zechariah 4:10)

One day the animals and the insects decided to have a football game. One team was bigger, but the other team had more. As the first half went along, the animals were scoring at will. Every time they got the ball they would run it, hop it or move it in for a touchdown. Then came the second half...

First play: The squirrel runs the ball up the middle. WAP!!—tackled for a five-yard loss.

The insects go back to the huddle cheering and congratulating each other. "Who made that tackle?" asked the ant. "I did," said the centipede.

Second play: The fox runs the ball up the middle. WHOMP!!—tackled for another five-yard loss.

Back in the huddle the flea asked, "Who made that great stop?" "I did," said the centipede.

Third play: The rabbit tries a hop and sweep, led by the groundhog throwing the lead blocks. SMACK!!—centipede tackles him for a 10-yard loss.

Back in the huddle, the gnat asked the centipede, "Where were you in the first half?" The centipede replied, "Puttin' on my shoes!"

Decisiveness.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. —James 1:5-6 ESV

Are you willing to take responsibility for the necessary actions? Rather than passing the blame, are you responsible to share the blame and spread the credit?

"The more you are willing to accept responsibility for your actions, the more credibility you will have."

Be-Lame!

Blame . . .
Never affirms, it assaults.
Never restores, it wounds.
Never solves, it complicates.
Never unites, it separates.
Never smiles, it frowns.
Never forgives, it rejects.
Never forgets, it remembers.
Never builds, it destroys.

Integrity.

Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.
—Proverbs 10:9 ESV

"Once you give up on integrity, the rest is a piece of cake." —J.R. Ewing (villain in the television show, *Dallas*)

Integrity is who you are inwardly—in the dark. *Credibility* is what you are outwardly with others.

"Nothing compensates for lack of moral authority. No amount of communication skills, wealth, accomplishment, education, talent, or position can make up for a lack of moral authority. We all know plenty of people who have those qualities, but who exercise no influence over us whatsoever. Why? Because there is a contradiction between what they claim to be and what we perceive them to be." —Andy Stanley

Benefits. Others experience the value and benefit of your leadership. Do you add value to others or do you simply advance for yourself?

Leaders gain credibility through sacrifice that benefits those who follow. Do you make personal sacrifices for something you truly believe in? Life investment adds impact to your authority.

"Now there's very little sense of sacrifice, of having to defer gratification. It's more about getting something for themselves." —David Callahan

"Men are alike in their promises. It is only in their deeds that they differ." —Moliere

Love. Love is valuing others, their needs and their concerns. Love is the most attractive fuel for credibility.

"Children will forget what you say but never forget how you make them feel."

When you give people time, you show people love. You can't control how much time you have, but you can control how you use it.

Endurance. Don't give up or give in too quickly!

Tenacity is a huge investment in credibility. You've got to admit, Moses didn't quit even though Pharaoh dug in and the people weren't sure they wanted to move out.

As we come to the close today, I'll ask the question again:
Are You Credible?

"What we do on some great occasion will probably depend on what we already are; and what we are will be the result of previous years of self-discipline."
—H.P. Liddon

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold. —Proverbs 22:1 ESV

Credibility.

Don't leave home without it!