

# 10 Relationship Essentials Wise Leaders Do Every Day

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The quality and enduring nature of your relationships will make or break your leadership. That axiom is true in every arena of leadership but especially so in the church. When coaching a leader who's in a difficult situation, I ask them a blunt question. "Do they like you?" The response is usually a startled, "What? What do you mean?" "I mean, do the people you work with like you?"

That may seem overly simplistic to what is likely a complicated situation, but the answer has a significant influence on the outcome. If the people you work with like you, the potential to work out the conflict or get through a difficult circumstance is high. If they don't, you are traveling uphill for sure.

An important question is how much do you invest in relationships? It's like putting money in the bank. The more you have invested, the greater the returns, and over time it's compounding in your favor. In contrast, if you relationally make more withdrawals than contributions, over time, the people you work with won't want to work with you.

Whether you are naturally good with people or need to work at it, it's often the absence of basics that take a leader out. When you're on the run and under pressure, it's easy to cut corners and skip over the oil that keeps relationships running smoothly. Here's some really good news, those relational basics take very little time.

## 10 Relationship Essentials:

### **1) Treat people with respect.**

To communicate and demonstrate value to another human being is a great honor paid to them. It's a truly moving moment for them that is remembered for a long time. And while one day they may have forgotten the specifics, they'll never forget how you made them feel. When it's tough to see the value in someone, look at them as you imagine Jesus would. Their value will jump out at you.

### **2) Express appreciation.**

It takes a couple of seconds to say thank you and less than a minute to express sincere appreciation. I'm not suggesting it's a race to see how fast you can say thank you, but merely that you have time. Me too. If I don't express appreciation, it's because I was too focused on a task and not enough on the people working on it with me.

### **3) Encourage often and generously.**

You can't encourage people too much; you just can't. If you're like me, you might say you don't need a ton of appreciation or encouragement, but let's be honest, doesn't it feel good when it comes your way? The truth is we all need it, and it's equally important that we give it often. The single most important factor in encouraging someone is to make it sincere.

### **4) Give the benefit of the doubt.**

Giving the benefit of the doubt is needed the most with the people you are closest to and those you work with the most. If someone says something that really bugged you, or you received an email that caught you off guard, or someone made a decision you disagree with, extend grace. Don't let it fester; assume the best and talk with them. It's almost always better than it appears.

### **5) Look for the best in every person.**

If you look for the best in every person, you will find it. There is something special inside every person, and as a spiritual leader, it's part of your responsibility to help them discover it and use it for the greater good of others.

It's true that some people can make this challenging, but you can make it productive. And if they genuinely are difficult, extend grace. A good starting place with a difficult person is to learn a little of their story. That often helps adjust your perspective and gives you insight.

### **6) Practice kindness naturally**

Kindness is a commonly overlooked essential in leadership. We tend to focus more on things like tough-minded decision-making, strategy, and bold vision. That's good and necessary, but kindness is an essential human quality that allows trust, connection, and genuine exchange to take place.

Wise leaders know that kindness brings peace and joy into pressure-filled situations. Kindness embraces three crucial elements; genuine humility, a desire to serve others, and personal contentment.

### **7) Listen well.**

There are few things in the nature of human interaction that esteem others more than listening. Listening communicates value, respect, and love. The speed of culture, social media, and lack of connection, in general, has hurt the ability, even desire to fully listen at a heart level. If you fall into that trap, it will hurt your leadership. Listening at a heart level means to focus entirely on the person, their good is your intent, and your responses reflect that you understand.

## **8) Live with a generous spirit.**

Leaders who possess a generous spirit tend to lead larger than those who do not. There is something about the disposition to give rather than hold back that is compelling and inviting. Generosity is often financial, but there is so much more to it, such as giving your time, words of affirmation, sharing ideas, helping to solve one of their problems, and demonstrating love.

## **9) Own your mistakes.**

People do not respect and eventually stop following leaders who don't own and take responsibility for their mistakes. We all experience failures, setbacks, mistakes, and decisions that didn't turn out well. If you make a mess, clean it up. Don't back the bus up over someone else; just own the situation, learn from it, and move forward. Those you lead will trust and respect you for it.

## **10) Genuinely care about people.**

*People don't care how much you know till they know how much you care. -John Maxwell*

There are very few leaders that don't care about people, but it's easy to forget to show that you care when you are under pressure and have so much to do. You can't learn to care, but you can ask God to help you care. Through prayer, God can increase your empathy, compassion, and general desire for others to thrive. Care is rarely felt at high speed; you have to slow down to find someone's heartfelt need.