

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People – Bible Study on Christian Leadership

Creating a framework for long-term effectiveness as a Christian leader

SALT – 07/05/2015 – “What I think” Matters

Table group discussion:

What is a habit?

What distinguishes between good habits and bad habits?

Introduction:

Steven Covey wrote the book “*Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*” as part of his dissertation project back in the 1970s. He researched the previous 200 years of self-help literature, looking for trends that would correlate to effective leaders from all walks of life. He found that during the first 150 years, the literature stressed **personal responsibility** and **character**. But in the last 50 years, emphasis shifted to **success** and **image**. While the literature emphasis shifted, he found that the truly great leaders, the ones that stood the test of time, still built their lives around character and personal responsibility.

In writing the title of the book he chose to identify habits that made people *effective*, not just successful or influential. Many influential or successful people lack character or personal responsibility, and it shows in the broken relationships they leave in their wake. He chose to use the word “*effective*” to identify leaders who built strong, lasting relationships that were mutually beneficial and productive.

While not written as a “Christian” book, many of the characteristics he identifies in effective people are distinctly Biblical, if not derived directly from scripture. I had the privilege to take an excellent 4-day class based upon Covey’s book. I, and several others, were struck by the strong parallels between what he taught and Biblical principles dealing with relationships. When I mentioned it to the instructor during the first break, she said that she and her husband had actually developed a Bible study built around Covey’s book and presented it to their Adult Bible Class. This study is partially based upon their notes.

Two key words in the title bear some explanation - Seven **Habits** of Highly **Effective** People

HABITS

Share some thoughts from your discussion at the opening:

What is a habit?

What distinguishes between good habits and bad habits?

How important are habits in my personal development?

*Sow a **thought**, and you reap an **act**;
Sow an **act**, and you reap a **habit**;
Sow a **habit**, and you reap a **character**;
Sow a **character**, and you reap a **destiny**.*

- Samuel Smiles

Illustration: A Tree



Seeds – **Thoughts**



Roots – **Habits**, Trunk – **Character**, Leaves – **Results**

My thoughts germinate into actions that lead to habits. Those habits feed my character, which manifests itself in the results that people see. Strong healthy roots produce a strong healthy tree that can stand the test of time. Likewise – Consistent thoughts, actions, and behaviors, develop into habits, and make me more effective!

By “thoughts”, I am not referring to those things that pop into my head, uninvited and sometimes unwelcome. Rather I am speaking of that which I choose to think, or more precisely “how I choose to think.” Some call this my “World-View” or “Paradigm”, the mental framework around which I build my life and interpret the world around me.

Everyone has a world-view whether or not we recognize it. Unless I am intentional about building my world-view, others will build it for me. Because “how I think” will determine the habits I build into my life, I need to decide upon what foundation I will build my world-view, and what values will shape it. As a Christian, I need to start with the Word of God, and I need to diligently examine every thought I have to ensure that it is consistent with God’s thoughts:

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 - *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and **we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.***

It is critical that I develop an **Intentionally Biblical World-View**. If I am not intentional in doing so, by osmosis I will develop a *worldly* world-view because I am relentlessly barraged by the world’s values in every sector of my life. If I do not take those thoughts captive, I will soon begin living as if they are true, even when they are contrary to God’s thoughts.

The Bible is filled with God’s thoughts, thoughts that will be helpful to anyone that applies them. However, if I really want to understand them and make them my own, I need to have a relationship with God, which He makes possible by the saving work of Jesus, and He develops through the sanctifying work of His Holy Spirit. I could learn a lot from the Bible without that relationship, but I would miss the most important parts, not to mention the very purpose for which I was created – fellowship with my creator.

In **John 15:5-8**, Jesus says,

*“I am the vine; you are the branches. If **you remain in me** and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

If I want to be *effective* (“bear much fruit”) I must remain rooted in Jesus and in His word.

James 2:17 - *In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and **I will show you my faith by my deeds.***

In the same way, my faith, built upon my world-view, is reflected in my deeds (habits).

Earlier in the book of James (1:22), he says,

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

What I know (**knowledge**) is not as important as what I do with what I know (**wisdom - effectiveness**). If I develop habits that are contrary to what I know from scripture, I will deceive myself into thinking I am more spiritual than I am. An old Ozark saying goes, "What you are speaks so loud I can't hear what you say."

***Philippians 4:8-9** - Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

My thoughts are the foundation or basis of what I become. Over time my thoughts form my habits, and my habits eventually form me. This leads us into examining the next title word.

EFFECTIVE - What does it mean and not mean?

Effectiveness does not mean how successful I am at getting my way, or accomplishing my goals. Rather, it has everything to do with relationships. Covey's use of the word implies fruitful relationships with those around me, relationships that are mutually beneficial and cause me to grow.

As a Christian, the most important relationship is with my creator. As mentioned above, that is the purpose for which I was made, and the internal drive hard-wired into me. Blaise Pascal wrote that we are all created with a God-shaped void in our hearts ...

"What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself." [Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), Pensees #425] (section VII: Morality and Doctrine ref 425)

Therefore, my effectiveness as a Christian begins with my relationship with God, that I have accepted His invitation into the relationship and I am intentionally building my life around that relationship. If that is the case, I will form more effective relationships with those in the world around me, because my world-view will be based upon the truth of Him who created the world.

As Christians we can equate *effectiveness* with **abundant life**.

John 10:10b (NASB)

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

So, if my goal is to become more effective as a human being, a Christian, and a leader, that begins with a right relationship to God, which educates my thoughts, which form the foundation of all I do. Habits of effectiveness begin within myself, growing from the inside and then manifest in the relationships in which I participate. As I become more effective, my relationships become more effective and fulfilling, including family, work, school, neighborhood, and within the church. So to improve those relationships, I first need to change **my** thoughts, actions and habits to those that promote effectiveness in me.

Because my thoughts matter, let's spend some time talking about World-Views or Paradigms. My world-view, or paradigm is the framework through which I view the world and the basis upon which I make decisions. My world-view is shaped by the ideas I have come to accept as truth, the ideas that make the most sense given the experiences and knowledge I have accumulated in life.

The accuracy of my world-view depends upon the sources of knowledge I draw upon and the degree to which I actively think about the ideas presented to me. If I mindlessly accept ideas from whatever source is the most commanding, I will adopt a world-view that is shaped to conform to that source's agenda. On the other hand, if I continually evaluate the ideas presented to me in light of what I already know to be true, and the consequences those ideas produce, I will build a world-view that becomes more accurate with time, one that more consistently produces favorable consequences

Table Group discussion: (We will share some of these at the end of class)

What elements or ideas do you think are important in a world-view? In other words, what questions does my world-view need to answer?

The "Sermon on the Mount" (**Matthew 5-7**) records some of Jesus' key teachings on integrating God's truth into my life. In **Matthew 5:21-30**, Jesus states that wrong thoughts are actually the beginning of sin (hateful anger = murder, lust = adultery), because they build the bad habits that lead to sinful acts.

Matthew 7:15-20 speaks about the importance of evaluating ideas presented to us, and how to distinguish lies from truth:

¹⁵ "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Matthew 7:24-27 speaks about the ability of truth to protect us through the storms of life.

²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

In our next lesson, we will discuss how we intentionally build a fully-integrated world-view (paradigm) based upon the truth of God's Word.

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People – Bible Study on Christian Leadership

Creating a framework for long-term effectiveness as a Christian leader

SALT – 07/12/2015 – Build Upon The Rock

Matthew 7:24-25

²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house **on the rock**. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."

Table group discussion:

As we learned last lesson, character grows out of the habits I acquire, especially the mental and emotional habits, and that habits form when I repeatedly make the same decisions about how I do something. I make decisions based upon what I feel to be in my best interest at the time, so it matters not just "what I think", but "how I think". "How I think", my **World-View** or **Paradigm**, includes those ideas that I believe to be truth.

My effectiveness in life will be directly related to the degree to which my world-view accurately represents reality. If parts of my world-view do not represent reality, I will make decisions that do not get the results I am seeking, and may damage me, and those with whom I relate.

So, my world view must be based upon truth, the way things really are. We are continually barraged with a cacophony of "truth-claims" that compete for our attention and affection.

With this in mind, discuss:

What are some characteristics of truth?

How can I recognize truth?

How can I decide the truthfulness of various "truth claims"?

How do I decide which sources to listen to? Or do I try to listen to all of them?

In this lesson, we will discuss how we intentionally build a fully-integrated world-view (paradigm) based upon the truth of God's Word.

Let's take a moment to understand the underlined terms above. **Intentionality** is a function of my *will*. If you remember, when we spoke about the triune nature of man, that the soul was the seat of *mind*, *will*, and *emotions*, and basically represents "who I am". Intentionality is the exercise of my *will* to take an action that I think (in my *mind*) and feel (*emotionally*) to be the best course of action in the present circumstances (as I understand the circumstances). So intentionality engages my entire soul. It is not an act of whimsy, but involves a calculated decision designed to accomplish a desirable end-result.

To better understand the term "**fully-integrated**", think of the opposite. When I say that something has *dis-integrated*, I mean that it has fallen apart. The pieces that formerly comprised it are no longer connected or working together, so that it is no longer what it once was. To be fully integrated, all of the pieces must: (1) be there, (2) be correctly connected to each other, (3) functioning properly, and (4) interacting effectively.

For example, I may have all of the parts of a computer in a box, but unless they are connected to each other in the correct arrangement, and each part is performing the function for which it was designed, and they are coordinated in their actions, I don't have a computer. I have a disintegrated computer. It is not effective, at least not as a computer (maybe as a doorstop).

So when I speak of a *fully-integrated world-view*, It must have the following characteristics:

1. All of the pieces are there – it must address all of the important questions in life.
2. It must be internally consistent (all of the pieces correctly connected). – all of the “truths” must tie together in a way that support each other.
3. All of the “truths” must always be true.
4. The entire collection of “truths” must accurately reflect reality.

When something is fully-integrated, it has *integrity* and can be trusted.

An important characteristic of truth is that “*Truth Stays True!*” In other words, truth is not dependent upon where I am in time or space - it is *always* true ... *everywhere!* In science, a truth is called a “*Law*”. Before it is proven to always hold true, it is merely a “*theory*” or “*hypothesis*”.

So one way I can filter truth claims is by testing if there are times or situations when they are no longer true, when decisions based upon them do not produce the desired results. When I make a decision based upon a faulty truth claim, I make a mistake, I do not get the desired result. If I am hardheaded, and insist on only learning from my own mistakes, it will be a long and costly process. It is far wiser to learn from the mistakes of others, and wiser yet to let someone wiser than myself teach me, someone I have come to trust as wise and honest, someone who cares about my welfare.

The illustration on the third page shows the Paradigm-Building Cycle, consisting of the following steps:

Perception (Thought) – What I believe to be true,

Action – I take a calculated action that my paradigm (world-view) predicts will produce a desired result,

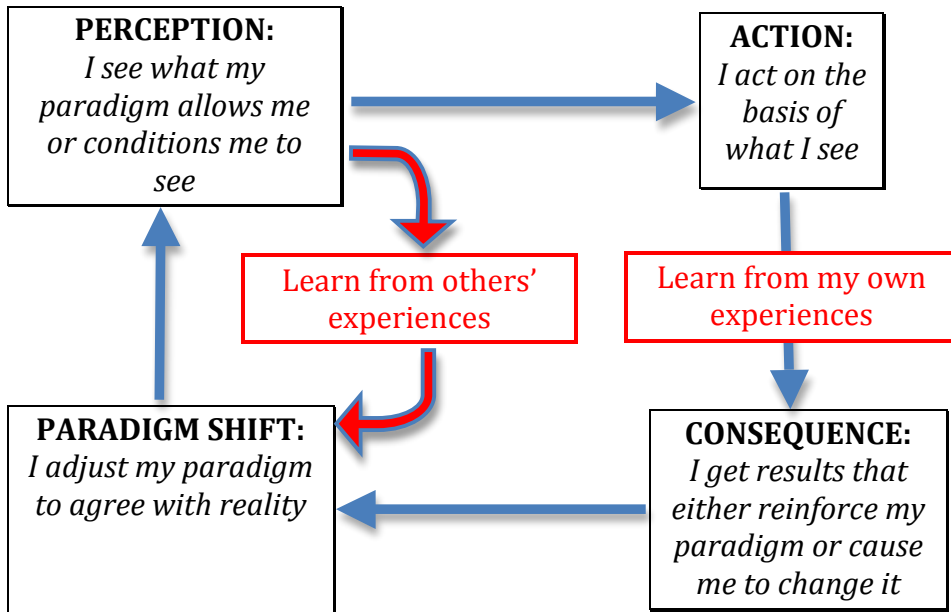
Consequence – my action produces a result which may or may not be the desired result,

Evaluation – I analyze why my action did or did not produce the desired result, and modify my perception accordingly

There is a way to “short-cut” the process, by considering the results of others’ decisions in relevant situations, and that may involve either witnessing the results myself, or allowing them to teach me what they have already learned, so I profit from their *wisdom*.

I believe that the Bible is a trustworthy source of God’s wisdom, the God who made me and knows me, the God who made all of creation and knows how it works. I believe that He wrote the Bible in a way that shows me the results of doing things the right way and the wrong way, through the lives of the people in its pages. I believe He gifted the human writers of scripture with wisdom beyond their experiences. I believe I can save myself a lot of trouble and sorrow by listening to His wisdom in the pages of scripture.

The matrix on page four list the books of the Bible, showing which address 12 key categories of questions that an adequate world-view must answer. The matrix was compiled from the book referenced below it (with minor modifications). While it is not exhaustive (many of the books address categories not indicated) it shows the major emphases of each book, and can guide you when searching for God’s wisdom on a particular question.



Categories of World-View (Paradigm) Subjects Presented in Scripture

Bible Division	Bible Book	Emphasized Categories											
		Nature of God	Creation	Sovereignty and Providence	Faith and Reason	Revelation and Authority	Humanity	Rebellion and Sin	Covenant and Redemption	Community and Church	Discipleship	Ethics and Morality	Time and Eternity
Law	Genesis	Gen	Gen				Gen	Gen	Gen				
	Exodus			Ex		Ex							
	Leviticus	Lev						Lev	Lev		Lev		
	Numbers			Num				Num	Num				
	Deuteronomy												
History	Joshua			Jsh					Jsh		Jsh		
	Judges							Jdg	Jdg				
	Ruth			Ru					Ru				
	1 Samuel						1Sa				1Sa		
	2 Samuel							2Sa					
	1 Kings						1Ki	1Ki				1Ki	
	2 Kings						2Ki					2Ki	
	1 Chronicles							1Ch					
	2 Chronicles								2Ch			2Ch	
	Ezra			Ezr					Ezr		Ezr		
	Nehemiah			Neh					Neh	Neh			
Esther			Es								Es		
Wisdom	Job	Job		Job							Job		
	Psalms	Ps	Ps	Ps	Ps	Ps	Ps	Ps	Ps	Ps	Ps	Ps	Ps
	Proverbs			Pr								Pr	
	Ecclesiastes	Ecc					Ecc						
	Song of Songs						Ss					Ss	
Prophets	Isaiah							Isa	Isa				Isa
	Jeremiah						Jer	Jer	Jer				
	Lamentations			Lam				Lam					
	Ezekiel	Eze							Eze				Eze
	Daniel			Dan							Dan	Dan	
	Hosea							Hos	Hos				
	Joel							Joel	Joel				
	Amos							Am				Am	
	Obadiah			Ob						Ob			
	Jonah	Jna		Jna									
	Micah							Mic	Mic				Mic
	Nahum			Nah						Nah			
	Habakkuk	Hab		Hab								Hab	
	Zephaniah							Zep	Zep				
	Haggai								Hag	Hag			
Zechariah			Zec						Zec				
Malachi								Mal			Mal		
Gospels	Matthew	Mat		Mat	Mat	Mat	Mat	Mat	Mat	Mat	Mat	Mat	Mat
	Mark								Mk		Mk		
	Luke							Lu				Lu	
	John		Jn						Jn		Jn		Jn
History	Acts			Act					Act	Act			
Letters	Romans	Rom	Rom	Rom	Rom	Rom	Rom	Rom	Rom	Rom	Rom	Rom	Rom
	1 Corinthians									1Co	1Co	1Co	
	2 Corinthians					2Co				2Co		2Co	
	Galatians					Gal			Gal			Gal	
	Ephesians			Eph		Eph				Eph			Eph
	Philippians								Phi	Phi	Phi		
	Colossians	Col				Col			Col				
	1 Thessalonians									1Th		1Th	1Th
	2 Thessalonians									2Th		2Th	2Th
	1 Timothy									1Tm	1Tm	1Tm	
	2 Timothy					2Tm							2Tm
	Titus									Ti	Ti	Ti	
	Philemon								Phm			Phm	
	Hebrews					Heb			Heb	Heb			
	James									Ja		Ja	
	1 Peter			1Pe					1Pe			1Pe	
	2 Peter					2Pe						2Pe	
	1 John				1Jn				1Jn			1Jn	
	2 John										2Jn	2Jn	
3 John													
Jude						Ju					Ju		
Revelation	Revelation							Rev			Rev	Rev	

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People – Bible Study on Christian Leadership

Creating a framework for long-term effectiveness as a Christian leader

SALT – 07/12/2015 – Growing My Paradigm

Opening: Young Albert

Young Albert was a quiet boy. "Perhaps too quiet", thought Hermann and Pauline. He spoke hardly at all until age 3. They might have thought him slow, but there was something else evident. When he did speak, he'd say the most unusual things. At age 2, Pauline promised him a surprise. Albert was elated, thinking she was bringing him some new fascinating toy. But when his mother presented him with his new baby sister Maja, all Albert could do is stare quizzically. Finally he responded, "where are the wheels?"

When he was 5 years old and sick in bed, Hermann brought Albert a device that did stir his intellect. It was the first time he had seen a magnetic compass. He lay there shaking and twisting the odd contraption, certain he could fool it into pointing off in a new direction. But try as he might, the compass needle would always find its way back to pointing in the direction of magnetic north. "A wonder," he thought. The invisible force that guided the compass needle was evidence to Albert that there was more to our world than meets the eye. There was "something behind things, something deeply hidden."

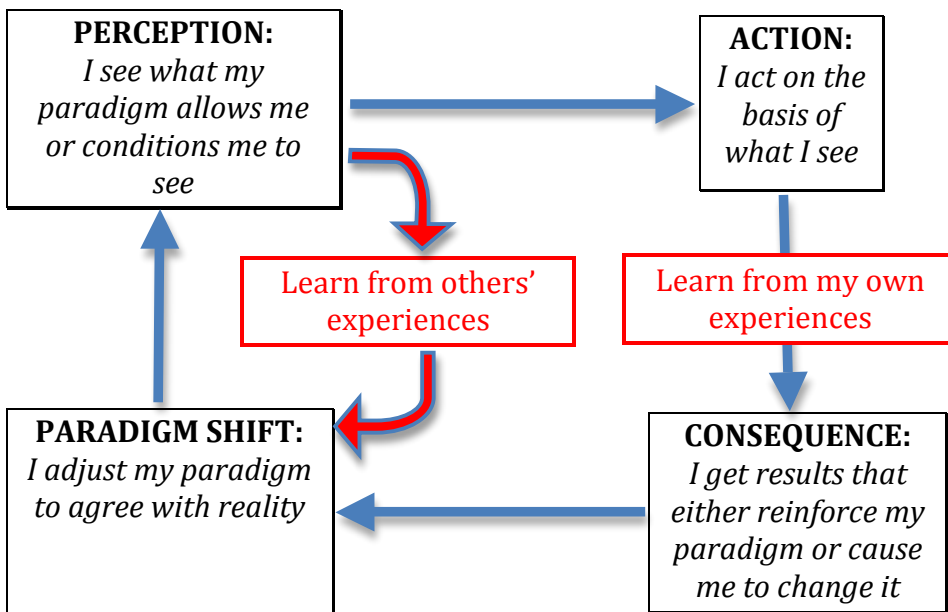
So began Albert Einstein's journey down a road of exploration that he would follow the rest of his life. "I have no special gift," he would say, "I am only passionately curious."

<http://www.johnshepler.com/articles/einstein.html> *Einstein's Compass: This gift may have launched the genius of Albert Einstein*, By: John Shepler, accessed 02/27/2014

Table Group Discussion:

Can you think of a time when you, like Albert, began to see there was "something behind things"?

In the last lesson we talked about how I go about correcting my perceptions so that my world-view or paradigm more accurately reflects reality. But there is another important aspect of building an effective world-view, and we hinted at it last time. If you remember the graphic we used:



We saw there were two different ways I can learn: from my own experiences, or from the experiences and wisdom of others. The second way is the way of maturity.

Maturity is a continuum, a steady progression or growth from one stage to another. Just as in my physical development, I mature spiritually, and my position in that maturity spectrum affects the way I see things. There are essentially three identifiable stages of how I view my world:

Dependence – Paradigm of “**YOU**” (“*I need you to do everything for me.*”)

Physical Example: Infant (passively receive from others)

Spiritual Example: New believer who has not learned to feed themselves, but eagerly consumes the teaching given them.

1 Peter 2:2 *Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,*

Independence – Paradigm of “**ME**” (“*I am the center of my universe. My needs are important.*”)

Physical Example: **Adolescent / Teenager** (actively pursue what **I** want)

Spiritual Example: Spiritual young men and women who dig into God’s Word to feed themselves, so they will become strong and able to stand independently in the world.

Interdependence – Paradigm of “**WE**” (“*I chose to be here and place my efforts here with others*”)

Physical Example: **Mature Adult** (derive meaning in relating to and meeting the needs of others)

Spiritual Example: Spiritual mothers and fathers who draw near to God and draw others to Him as well. They feed and encourage others.

1 John 2:12-14

*12 I am writing to you, dear **children**, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.*

*13 I am writing to you, **fathers**, because you know him who is from the beginning.*

*I am writing to you, **young men**, because you have overcome the evil one.*

*14 I write to you, dear **children**, because you know the Father.*

*I write to you, **fathers**, because you know him who is from the beginning.*

*I write to you, **young men**, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

Discussion Questions

What kinds of experiences move us from one level to the next? (Physically, Spiritually)

What are some challenges moving from one level to the next? (Physically, Spiritually)

What are the benefits of moving from one level to the next? (Physically, Spiritually)

Covey's Seven Habits move me along the Maturity Continuum

Habit 1 - Choice - I choose to intentionally build character by practicing good habits (discipline)

Hebrews 12:11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Habit 2 - Vision - I see that my life can have meaning. I can add something to this world

Romans 8:37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Habit 3 - Integrity and Execution - I form convictions and become committed to my vision

Romans 12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Habit 4 - Mutual Respect - I treat others the way I want to be treated (The Golden Rule)

Matthew 7:12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Habit 5 - Mutual Understanding - I listen with the intent of understanding others

Romans 12:14-16 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Habit 6 - Creative Cooperation - I look for "win-win" solutions in life rather than competing for "limited resources"

Ephesians 4:16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Habit 7 - Renewal - I continually re-examine my choices and perspectives, to ensure that I am growing in the right direction (Covey calls it, "sharpening the saw")

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Maturing involves gaining wisdom, knowing how to use what I know to build meaningful and effective relationships. I do not have enough time to make all of the mistakes, and I might not survive the consequences of some of them, so it is wiser to learn from the wisdom of others. It is faster, less destructive, less painful and leaves fewer scars! Wisdom does not come automatically, but by intentional focus on gaining from the wisdom (and sometimes the foolishness) of others.

***Wisdom comes with age ...
... but sometimes, age travels alone!***

Maturing involves building Godly character when I pursue truth (God), and then build my life on his principles. Character is who I am when I think no one is watching. Character is a fully integrated world-view based upon God's wisdom. As we learned earlier, what I think matters!

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Character is the root of effectiveness, the ability to build and sustain mutually beneficial relationships.

Maturity also involves building competence, the skills, knowledge, experience and resulting insights that allow me to function effectively in the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual realms. Competence without character is dangerous, or at best, useless, as Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 13.

Discussion:

What are some attributes of Godly character?

Why are they helpful?

How do I gain them?

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People – Bible Study on Christian Leadership

Creating a framework for long-term effectiveness as a Christian leader

SALT – 07/26/2015 – It's My Move!

*But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then **choose** for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.*

(Joshua 24:15)

Principles are natural laws, expressions of truth. They exist whether I like it or not. Principles are:

- Universal
- Timeless
- Objective
- At work whether I understand them or not

Principles control how things happen in the world. Nothing happens in violation of the principles governing reality.

Discussion:

What are some principles at work in the natural world?

What are some spiritual principles?

What happens when I do not pay attention to these principles, or I reject them?

What Happens if I so not correctly understand a principle?

Habit 1 in Covey's book is **CHOICE**. The underlying principle is:

I am free to choose and I am responsible for my choices.

This principle is not commonly accepted in today's world. So many believe they are merely a product of their genetics and their environment. They assume no responsibility for the things they do, blaming everyone and everything else for their failures. What kind of world has that world-view created?

The fact is: I cannot control much of what happens to me, nor can I control the genetic traits I inherited. However, I can control what I do with those, and how I choose to live.

Examples:

Poker player

Joni Earickson Tada

Victor Frankel said, "When we can no longer change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."

Life is a series of choices. Those choices determine who I become. So, I have control over my destiny, but to know how to control it, I need to understand the underlying principles, so that I make choices that move me in the direction I desire. In other words: My world-view must accurately reflect reality; My faith must be based upon truth.

John 3:1-21

¹ Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

³ Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

⁴ "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

⁵ Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

⁹ "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰ "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? ¹¹ Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹² I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. ¹⁴ Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

The first birth ("born of water") was not my choice, however, the second birth ("born of... the Spirit") is a choice I make. Nicodemus came to Jesus because he was convinced that Jesus had come from God. His world-view was accurate in that respect. Jesus challenges him to go a step further and allow God's Holy Spirit to re-educate the rest of his world-view (be born of the Spirit), so that he will choose to follow Jesus (the truth).

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is **confidence** in what we hope for and **assurance** about what we do not see.

In life, I can choose to be reactive, only moving and making choices when confronted with some conflict or difficulty. However, that places me in high-stress mode all of the time. On the other hand, I can choose to be proactive, making decisions ahead of time (convictions) how I will respond to challenges and difficulties. That places me much more in control of my destiny.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and **self-control**.

All of the fruit will help me make better choices, but let's look at the one called "forbearance", translated in some versions as "patience".

I can also choose to pause before I act or react to a situation, and use that pause to think about the principles at work in the situation and what consequences might occur as a result of my actions. (Soda Can Illustration)

That pause gives me the “freedom to choose” my response. Otherwise, I react as I have been conditioned to react, which may be counterproductive. During that “freedom to choose space” I can use four human endowments to help me make a better choice:

1.) Self-awareness – I need to examine my feelings, motives, intentions, and behaviors. I need to remember who I am:

***Genesis 1:26** Then God said, “Let us make mankind in **our image**, in **our likeness**, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”*

And who I am becoming:

***John 14:12** Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do **even greater things** than these, because I am going to the Father.*

2.) Imagination – Visualize a better way to respond.

***Luke 6:31** Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

3.) Conscience – Knowledge of right and wrong, awareness of how my actions might affect my relationship with God and with others.

***Psalms 46:10** Be still, and know that I am God*

***James 1:19-20** My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be **quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry**, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.*

***Psalms 111:10** The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.*

4.) Independent Will – I am independent of external forces. I can choose how I will respond!

***John 9:1-3** As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”*

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

A leader is a “Transition Person”, one who shows others a better way for them to follow. By going first into this new territory I can show others how much more effective it is, and remove from them the “fear of the unknown”. That is the essence of leadership!

Jesus was the ultimate Transition Person, leading us back into a relationship with God.

***John 1:1-5, 9-13** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

...

*The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, **he gave the right to become children of God** — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.*

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People – Bible Study on Christian Leadership

Creating a framework for long-term effectiveness as a Christian leader

SALT – 08/02/2015 – “Begin With the End in Mind”

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”
“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.
“I don’t much care where–” said Alice.
“Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat.
“–so long as I get SOMEWHERE,” Alice added as an explanation.
“Oh, you’re sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only walk long enough.”

- from *Alice in Wonderland*

Group Discussion:

Can you relate to Alice? Have you had times in your life (or are you now), where you just felt (or feel) like you were not accomplishing anything meaningful, when you had no clear direction in life?

Last lesson, we looked at Covey’s 1st Habit of Highly Effective People – **“CHOICE”**. The underlying principle was, **“I am free to choose and I am responsible for my choices.”**

This Lesson looks at Covey’s 2nd Habit of Highly Effective People - **“VISION”**. The underlying principle is **“Begin with the end in mind”**. It goes beyond goal-setting, because it begins with purpose, *a desire to become someone or something*. As described in Rick Warren’s popular book, *The Purpose-Driven Life*, it is life with a clear picture of where I am going, a *VISION*, so that my life becomes one of *DESIGN* - not *DEFAULT*.

Some summarize the above exchange between Alice and the Cheshire Cat as, **“If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will get you there.”**, or as Zig Ziglar said, **“If you aim at nothing, you’ll hit it every time.”**

Like any effective organization, an individual who intends to be effective will operate from:

A Personal **VISION Statement** – *“Who do I intend to **become**?” (Meaning)*

A Personal **MISSION Statement** – *“What do I intend to **accomplish**?” (Purpose), and*

A Personal **VALUES Statement** – *“What are the **principles** that guide and constrain how I do that?” (Conviction)*

These are fundamental components of my World-View. As a believer, they frame my process of *Sanctification*:

“Becoming in practice, what I am already in position”.

While we will discuss each of these statements individually, they are so intimately woven together that I will find it helpful to build them concurrently, refining them each as I flesh-out the details of the others.

VALUES STATEMENT:

We will start our discussion here, since my values underpin both who I intend to become and what I intend to accomplish. Values form the convictions that both guide and constrain my thoughts, words, and deeds. As a believer, many of my values are likely to spring from God’s word, but must become my words in order for them to be meaningful and effective.

The values I choose must apply across all aspects of my life. Or as we discussed before, my world-view must be integrated. If I have different values at work, at home, at church, and out in the community, I will suffer from dis-integration, and my life will not be sustainable.

I must avoid just listing the things I won't do – that's reactive and negative. Rather, my values should comprise active commitments to think and act in ways that make my relationships with God and others more effective.

1 Corinthians 13 might be a good starting point in building a Personal Values Statement. Many other scripture passages are also helpful, specifically those that speak of my relationship with God and others. Examples include:

1 Kings 3:5-15 - Solomon Asks for Wisdom

Proverbs and Ecclesiastes – Wisdom Literature

Matthew 5-7 – The “Sermon on the Mount”

Various parables and teachings by Jesus:

Matthew 13; 18-20; 21:28-23:39; 25 – Various parables and teachings by Jesus

Mark 4:1-34; 9:42-10:31, 41-44; 12 – Various parables and teachings by Jesus

Luke 6:17-49; 8:1-25; 10:25-17:10; 17:20-29; 19:11-27; 20:1-21:4; 22:24-30

John 13:1-17 – Jesus example of Servant Leadership when he washed the Disciple's feet

John 17 – Jesus' prayer for his Disciples and those who would follow them (Us!)

Group Discussion:

From what you know of scripture, what would be some good values to include in your Personal Values Statement?

VISION STATEMENT:

The answer to the question “*Who do I intend to **become**?*” is shaped by the following facts:

- I **am** created in God's image. (*Genesis 1:26*)
Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, ...
- As a believer, I **am** righteous in God's eyes, because (*Galatians 3:6-27*)
⁶ So also Abraham “believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. ...
⁹ So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. ...
²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.
- I **am** redeemed by Christ's sacrifice on my behalf (*Colossians 1:21-23*)
²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation ...
- As a believer, I **am** endowed with the same power that raised Jesus from the dead (*Luke 24:49, Ephesians 1:19-23, John 14:12*)
Luke 24:49 - I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.
Ephesians 1:19-23 - ... That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ...
John 14:12 - Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

Group Discussion:

In light of the facts above, and the given definition of sanctification, what might be some worthwhile things to include in a Personal Vision Statement?

MISSION STATEMENT:

As Christ-Followers, we are called to live intentionally. We are to live with a mission. Before Jesus ascended back into heaven after his Resurrection, he missioned His followers:

***Acts 1:8** - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

***Matthew 28:18-20** - "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Paul admonishes us:

***Romans 12:1** - Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

Other passages that address intentionality/missionality include:

***Matthew 6:33** - But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

***Matthew 7:24-25** - Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.*

***Matthew 7:12** - So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*

***Philippians 3:14** - I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

***John 16:33** - I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*

The value of having a personal mission statement is that it helps me make those hard decisions about how I use the resources I have at hand (time, money, skills, physical and emotional energy, passions, relationships, etc.). When I have a clearly defined mission, many choices are quickly eliminated. Those that move me in the direction of my mission become more obvious.

As we discussed last time, having a mission statement allows me to be proactive, not reactive, because I have a defined direction in life. I can think through the consequences of my actions ahead of time and choose behaviors that will move me toward my mission and becoming who I intend to be.

Writing a Personal Mission Statement might seem a daunting task, but the following plan can guide you in constructing a useful one:

1. Identify 7 **key roles** (relationships) in your life.
2. For each one of the 7 roles, identify a **key person**, someone that might be called upon to give a tribute to you at your 80th Birthday.
3. For each of the 7, write the tribute you would like them to honestly say about your influence in their lives – **your legacy**.
4. For each one, define **2-3 things you could do** to help them honestly state those legacies.
5. Formulate those in light of the 4 human endowments we discussed in the previous lesson on CHOICE (Self-Awareness, Imagination, Conscience, and Independent Will).
6. Reflect upon 4-5 people who have positively influenced you, and record the **qualities and attributes** that you admire most in them.
7. When you have reflected on the thoughts and activities above, sit down and **write for 5 minutes straight**. Do not over-organize it, but let it be a free-flowing 1st draft mission statement.

8. Refine and revise your statement until you are satisfied that it adequately defines your mission in life:

It expresses **principles** of effectiveness that produce “quality of life” results.

It provides **purpose** and **direction**.

It **challenges and inspires** you.

It incorporates your **values and visions** in the goals you have set.

It addresses your most important **roles and responsibilities**.

It represents **the best within you**.

Group Discussion:

What might be some worthwhile things to address in your Personal Mission Statements?

In the video that accompanied the course I took on Covey’s book, he stated that he had boiled his Personal Mission Statement down to three words. As far as I know, he never shared what it was before he died, but in light of the things he taught, I wonder if it might have been the Latin phrase “*Soli Deo Gloria*” (“*Glory to God alone*”, or “*All for the Glory of God!*”).

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People – Bible Study on Christian Leadership

Creating a framework for long-term effectiveness as a Christian leader

SALT – 08/09/2015 – “Put First Things First”

Opening Exercise: Jar of Rocks - Can you get all of the rocks in the jar and close the lid?

What did it take to get all of the rocks into the jar?

Why did it work better that way?

Just as with the jar of rocks, life is more effective when we handle the “big” things first. Throughout this series we have seen a cycle that can be labeled “SEE – DO – GET”. What I SEE (my world-view or paradigm) influences what I DO. What I DO influences the results I GET. When what I expect to get from what I do does not match up with what I actually get, it indicates a possible flaw in my world-view. So I then adjust my world-view to more accurately reflect reality, until my expectations match actual consequences.

This lesson is based upon Steven Covey’s 3rd Habit of Highly Effective People – The Habit of Integrity and Execution. The underlying principle is, “**Effectiveness requires the integrity to act upon my priorities.**” In other words, I need to put 1st things 1st!

With respect to what I **SEE**, my world view has to distinguish between what is important and what is not. An ineffective perspective is to do the most **urgent** things first. An effective perspective is to do the most **important** things first. But how do I tell the difference? We will talk about that more in a little bit.

In the **DO** part of the cycle, I focus on those things that are truly important, and eliminate the demands that are not important no matter how urgent they seem to be. I discipline myself to regularly evaluate and re-evaluate, planning on a weekly basis and a daily basis. What is important may change with time, for a number of reasons. So it requires that I pay attention and regularly re-evaluate priorities.

What I **GET** from this will include:

- Increased organization and productivity
- Fewer crises
- A reputation for “follow-through”
- More life-balance and peace-of-mind

That is the crux of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 6:25-34

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

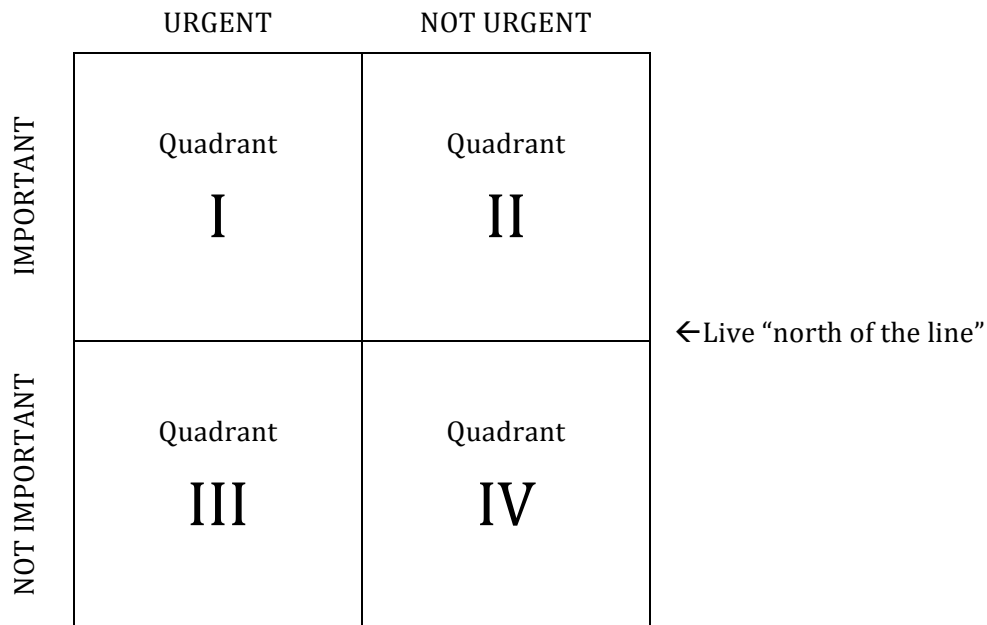
Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

This topic gets into the difference between effectiveness and efficiency. “*Efficiency*” means that I get a lot accomplished in as little time as possible. “*Effectiveness*” means that I get the most important things accomplished first, the things that will have the biggest impact on meeting my priorities, the things that produce and maintain effective relationships. I can be very efficient, but if all I am doing is checking items off an un-prioritized to-do list, my impact will not be as great as when I focus on that which is truly important.

One way to think about it is like the difference between being regulated by a clock or a compass. A clock tells me how fast I am going. I am sometimes like the Navy jet pilot lost over the Pacific Ocean, who radioed, “*I don’t know where I am or where I’m going ... but I’m making record time getting there!*” On the other hand, a compass tells me what direction I am going. It doesn’t matter how fast (efficient) I am if I am not headed in the right direction.

	Efficiency	Effectiveness
Style	“Time Management” <i>by the clock</i>	“Relationship Management” <i>by the “compass”</i>
Priorities	Schedules	Relationships
Activities	Urgent things	Important things

Covey introduced the four-quadrant “Time/Relationship Matrix”, shown below:



An **Urgent** activity is one that requires immediate response. Our world is full of “urgent” demands:

“Act Now!” - “Limited-time offer!” - “You don’t want to miss this opportunity!”

But so many of them have nothing to do with what is really important in life. People often place urgent demands on us, because they *want* something, not necessarily *need* it. Even if they *need* it, I need to ask myself, “Is it my responsibility to do it on their time-line, or even to do it at all?”

An **Important** activity is one that represents my values, vision and mission. These are the activities that build the important relationships in life, the activities that move me in the direction of my values, vision, and mission.

Class Activity:

Go up to the board, and write down at least one activity in its appropriate quadrant.

A good approach to life, one that will decrease stress and adds meaning to life, is to try and live in *Quadrant II* most of the time. Important things will generally become more urgent with age (e.g., bills, assignments from the boss, health concerns, chores, etc). If I make it a priority to take care of those activities in a timely manner, they never become urgent, and I will deal with less stress than if I procrastinate, and put them off.

The Time/Relationship matrix has great application in managing my life, making it more effective and less stressful. But it is often difficult to decide what really is important in life. Many unimportant things are good things, in and of themselves, but as the old truism says, “The **good** is sometimes the worst enemy of the **best!**” If I have defined my values, vision and mission, as we discussed in the last lesson, it will be much easier to decide what falls “north of the line” in Quadrants I and II.

Let’s look at some scriptures that illustrate the difference between *urgent* and *important*:

Luke 10:25-37 - The Parable of the Good Samaritan

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii[c] and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Discussion:

Why do you think the Priest and the Levite passed by on the other side of the road? Do you think urgency might have played a role? Why or why not? What other reasons might they have had?

Why did the Samaritan stop and help the man? Did he have nothing as urgent as the Priest and the Levite? Why was he willing to “interrupt” his schedule and invest his wealth to help the man?

How about the original question from the teacher of the law? How does the question reveal something about his values, vision and mission?

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13 – “The Love Chapter”

Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you the most excellent way.

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Discussion:

This passage follows on the heels of Paul’s teaching on spiritual gifts and their misunderstanding in the Corinthian Church. Some were creating distinctions on which gifts were more important (and hence more prestigious than others). So Paul ends chapter 12 with the segue, “*Now eagerly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you **the most excellent way.***” See if you can distinguish why I have underlined some of the words in the chapter with a single line and why some of them are underlined with a double line. The scripture below may provide a clue.

***Galatians 5:22-23** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

***Matthew 6:19-21** “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Live North of the Line!

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People – Bible Study on Christian Leadership

Creating a framework for long-term effectiveness as a Christian leader

SALT – 08/16/2015 – Think ‘Win-Win’

Opening Discussion Question:

Do you think of life as a competition for limited resources, or as a game in which everyone can win? Explain your answer.

Even though it was in the second grade, I still remember the first time my teacher posed a question to us involving situational ethics. The scenario was:

You are in a life raft in the middle of the ocean. Your ship has sunk, and you were able to grab enough food and water for 10 people for a week. The problem is, that there are 12 people on the raft. She listed the people, and their attributes such as age, gender, occupation, education, etc., and then she asked, “Who are you going to throw from the boat?”

I have thought about that scenario many times over the years, and came to the conclusion that she asked the wrong question. Of course it was a setup to help erode traditional Judeo-Christian values in favor of moral relativism and Malthusian population control, so the point was that someone would have to die for the greater good. But it totally ignored the possibility that if everyone consumed a little less than normal, there would be plenty for everyone.

Up until now in this series we have been talking about habits that give us “**personal victory**”, issues of dependence and independence. With Habit 4, we are moving into the realm of interdependence, which is an issue of “**public victory**”. Habit 4 is the habit of making decisions to seek mutual benefit in our relationships. The first three habits help me gain confidence and security so I will be comfortable “*letting others in*”, and will be “*emotionally free*” to focus on others.

Exodus 20:1-17 (The Ten Commandments)

And God spoke all these words:

- (I) “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. “You shall have no other gods before me.*
- (II) “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*
- (III) “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.*
- (IV) “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*
- (V) “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.*
- (VI) “You shall not murder.*
- (VII) “You shall not commit adultery.*
- (VIII) “You shall not steal.*
- (IX) “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.*
- (X) “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”*

The Ten Commandments are all about relationships. The first four address my relationship with God, the other six address my relationships with others.

When questioned about which was the greatest commandment, Jesus summed it up this way:

Matthew 22:34-40 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.**"

Mark 12:28-34 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' **There is no commandment greater than these.**"

"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is **more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.**"

When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Again, both of these commands relate to relationships, first my relationship with God, and then my relationship with others.

My relationship with God empowers effective relationship with others,

and

Effective relationship with others (Fruit of the Spirit) demonstrates my relationship with God!

John 13:12-13 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

John 13:17 This is my command: Love each other.

John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

So much of the dominant world-view today is based upon the paradigm that there are only so many resources to go around, and if you don't get your share someone else will get it, and you will lose out. It drives nearly all of the world's economic systems. But we serve a God not of *shortage*, but a God of *abundance*.

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. ("abundantly" in some translations (ASV, ESV, KJV, NASB, NKJV, RSV)

Way back in second grade I remember being taught about Malthus' ideas on population control - that war, famine and disease are useful in that they prevent unchecked population growth that would overtax limited resources. I remember the dire predictions that if world population ever reached 4 billion, there would be total economic collapse and severe shortages of everything we need to survive. What that paradigm missed is that if resources are distributed equitably, in a way that increases individual productivity, there will be more for everyone. That is the essence of "Community".

Discussion:

Listed below are six possible Paradigms (World-views) concerning Human Interaction. List some examples or scenarios from current or historic events, personal experiences, anecdotes, books or movies that illustrate each paradigm.

1. **Win-Lose** - Domination - like sports competitions; "You have to lose for me to win". "Winner takes all" (Hunger Games mentality)
2. **Lose-Win** - Giving in (subjection) – not having the courage to try because "I can't win, so why try". (Fatalism)
3. **Lose-Lose** - War and other destructive conflicts - "I may not win, but you won't either". (Second Strike Capability – "Mutually guaranteed destruction" as during the Cold War)
4. **Win Only** - Selfishness – I don't care about the effect of my actions on others, so long as I win.
5. **Win-Win** - Striking a deal that is *mutually beneficial*.
6. **Win-Win or No Deal** - This is the highest form of Win-Win paradigm. "I will do nothing unless both of us come out better in the deal".

The first four paradigms are "*shortage*" paradigms, based upon the premise that there are not enough resources to go around. While competition has its place, when it becomes the prime motivation in my life, it wreaks havoc. The world is devastated by the three major results of sin: Self Centeredness (paradigms 1,3,4), Self Reliance (paradigm 4), and Self Condemnation (paradigm 2). All of which focus on self. But God calls me out of that to be focused upon Him and upon others.

Because we serve a God of abundance, we are uniquely equipped to adopt a Win-Win paradigm. Jesus taught us to pursue Win-Win interactions when He said,

"Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:39, and Mark 12:33),

and when He taught,

"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

Love is the epitome of Win-Win thinking.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

I can seek God's help in creating WIN-WIN solutions; because He is the God of abundance, I can PRAY ABUNDANCE (love) into relationships.

John 14:12-14 *Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*

God is Love (**1 John 4:8**) so if I pray love into any relationship, I am truly praying for something in His name. This is the foundation of the Body of Christ, the Church,

Ephesians 4:15-16 *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, **grows and builds itself up in love**, as each part does its work.*

Around the time of Ronald Reagan's funeral, someone noted that a key to his success had been that he never let an adversary become an enemy. That was so well exemplified in the close relationship that developed between him and Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev. Living that way is not easy, it takes an inner strength that is rare. Someone else shed light on it when he said of Reagan, that, "He was comfortable in his own skin". In other words, he was sufficiently confident of himself, that he did not feel threatened by someone else's perception of him.

As a Christ-Follower, I am the beloved child of the very God who spoke the universe into existence, and sustains it to this very day. I am precious to Him, and He delights over me. I am righteous before Him because I am covered in the righteousness of Christ Jesus. If I can wrap my head around all of that, I should be "comfortable in my own skin", and it should empower me to share the loving mercy and grace given me with those to whom I relate.

I have the power (in Christ) to transform my world!

Ephesians 1:19b-21 *That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.*

Discussion:

Think about some of the scenarios we identified as examples of paradigms 1-4. Can you think of principles from God's Word that one might apply to change them into Win-Win Scenarios? The scripture passages below might be a good starting point.

Romans 12:19-21 *Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Proverbs 25:21-22 *If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.*

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People – Bible Study on Christian Leadership

Creating a framework for long-term effectiveness as a Christian leader

SALT – 08/23/2015 – “Seek First To Understand, Then To Be Understood”

Discussion:

How do you feel about the statement below?

“The greatest, deepest need of the human heart is to be understood.”

Review:

Steven Covey’s Seven Habits of Highly Effective People – People who were known for building lasting and mutually beneficial relationships.

It all begins with how I think. **Principle:** What I think matters. My *world-view* (or *paradigm*) determines how I see God, the world, and those around me, which determines the decisions I make. My decisions have consequences that depend upon how accurately my world-view reflects reality. If I get undesirable consequences, I need to modify my world-view.

So far, we have looked at four of the Habits that Covey identifies:

Habit 1 - Choice - I choose to intentionally build character by practicing good habits (discipline)

Principle: I am free to choose, and I am responsible for the decisions I make.

Hebrews 12:11 *No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*

Habit 2 - Vision - I see that my life can have meaning. I can add something to this world

Principle: I need to begin with the end in mind.

Romans 8:37 *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

Habit 3 - Integrity and Execution - I form convictions and become committed to my vision

Principle: Put first things first.

Romans 12:12 *Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*

Habit 4 - Mutual Respect - I treat others the way I want to be treated (The Golden Rule)

Principle: Pursue Win-Win solutions in relationships (Love)

Matthew 7:12 *So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*

The first three habits were about experiencing Private Victory. Habit 4 began addressing Public Victory. The first three put me into position that I may feel confident and safe to invite others into my circle of influence. Habits 4, 5 and 6 address making those relationships more effective (more loving).

This lesson addresses Covey’s 5th Habit of highly effective people:

Habit 5 - Mutual Understanding - I listen with the intent of understanding others

It’s all about listening with a virtuous heart, a heart that sincerely desires the best for myself, and others.

Principle: Seek First To Understand, Then To Be Understood

I need to listen with intent to understand - with my ears, my eyes, and my heart.

Proverbs 18:13 *To answer before listening – that is folly and shame.*

The Situation:

We each bring into a relationship, very different perspectives, built upon the teaching we have received, our experiences, and our unique personality.

The Problems:

I **assume** that I understand other people, when I do not.

I tend to listen with the intent to **reply** rather than with the intent to **understand**.

Exercise:

Pair off. Each person take a piece of paper, and don't look at the other person's answers, until I tell you.

Round One:

On your paper, write down as many single words to define the word TRUST. The goal here is quantity, not quality. Write as many as come to mind until I say stop.

Before you see your partner's words, take a guess at how many words on your list will be on their list, and write that number on your list.

Now share your lists with each other, and mark the words that you both have on your list. Write that number below your guess.

How did you do?

Round Two:

This time, agree upon a word to define and then, do the same exercise. I will tell you when to start and stop.

How did you do this time after agreeing on a word to define?

Share: What did you learn from this exercise?

Words have more meaning than just that given in the dictionary. Words can carry emotions that come from the experiences in our lives. Unless I learn to listen with *my ears, my eyes, and my heart*, I may miss those subtle nuances of meaning that the other person attaches to the words, both the words they speak, and the words I speak.

When I listen with my ears, I need to listen to more than just the words that are said. I need to listen for verbal clues that may reveal emotions, tensions, anger, excitement, passion, futility, or any other indications that the words are carrying more meaning than their definitions. Those clues may come in the form of pauses, voice inflections, a crack in the voice, or changes in volume or cadence.

When I listen, with my eyes, I may pick-up on body language that reveals some emotion that a particular word or expression is carrying with the other person. Good eye contact allows me to pick up clues from their eyes or other facial expressions. Sometimes these clues also help me see if they are accurately tracking the words I say.

When I listen with my heart, I may pick up feelings that the words and all of the above non-verbal cues evoke. When I know a person well I can often tell that something deeper is going on than just the words that are being said, and I then need to enter into their emotional sphere and strive to see things from their perspective.

Effective communication requires an environment of TRUST. I cannot expect someone to open up to me if they do not trust me. Neither will I tend to be as open with someone I do not trust.

When someone is opening up concerning a problem they are experiencing, I must resist the urge to just fix things. That is especially common in marriage relationships. The wife just wants to be heard, and often resolves an issue

simply by talking about it. If the husband short-cuts the process by offering “fixes” she feels unheard and misunderstood. Again, I must listen to understand, not just listen to reply.

I must cultivate the good communication habit of pausing before I reply in conversation. As we discussed in an earlier lesson, that pause, or “**psychological air**” gives me time to defuse any emotional reaction and frame my reply more appropriately (like letting the carbonation settle before opening a shaken soda can!). It also lets the other person know I have been listening and am thinking about what they have said, not just what I am going to say. It is being proactive rather than reactive.

James 1:19 *My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be **quick to listen**, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ...*

Some response techniques are less effective than others in showing the other person that I am hearing what they say. These so-called “autobiographical responses” mirror their words back from **MY** perspective, rather than from theirs

Advising –I offer what **I** would feel in their situation, and how **I** might deal with the problem if it were up to **me**.

Probing –I ask questions from **my** frame of reference rather than theirs.

Interpreting –I explain how **I** see the situation given my experience, and what meaning **I** attach to it.

Evaluating – I **judge** them and the thoughts they have expressed, either agreeing or disagreeing

These approaches devalue the other person and their feelings, and communicate that I am more interested in my thoughts than theirs.

I need to practice “empathetic listening”, the art of entering into their emotional sphere and trying to see and feel from their perspective. That communicates I sincerely desire to understand them and that I am making effort in that direction.

Romans 12:15 *Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.*

John 11:33 *When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.*

Sincerity is a prerequisite for trust. Others must be convinced that my concern for them is real. There are some interesting theories on the origin of the word “sincere”. One of those is that it is derived from the Latin **sine** = without, **cera** = wax. Supposedly, dishonest sculptors in Rome or Greece would cover flaws in their work with wax to deceive the viewer or buyer. A sculpture **sine cera** (without wax) meant that no attempt was made to disguise any flaws.

So let me be “without wax” as I listen to others, listening to truly understand them, before I expect them to understand me.

I also must cultivate the habit of listening to God’s word to understand. Many times Jesus and the Apostles and Prophets begin a revelation with the command to “listen”. On the mountain, when Peter, James, and John saw Jesus transfigured before them, Peter immediately began to tell Jesus what should be done. God had a different agenda on that day:

Matthew 17:5 *While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. **Listen** to him!”*

Mark 9:7 *Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. **Listen** to him!”*

Luke 9:35 *A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; **listen** to him.”*

And Jesus commended Martha’s sister Mary for her wisdom in listening to Him, rather than being consumed in “serving” Him:

Luke 10:39, 42 ³⁹*She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet **listening** to what he said. ...*

⁴²*... Mary has chosen what is **better**, and it will not be taken away from her.”*

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People – Bible Study on Christian Leadership

Creating a framework for long-term effectiveness as a Christian leader

SALT – 08/30/2015 – “Synergy – When the Whole is Greater Than the Sum of the Parts”

***Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*

We are going to begin today with a lesson in Materials Science, specifically one class of materials.

Composite Material: a material made from two or more constituent materials with significantly different physical or chemical properties that, when combined, produce a material with characteristics different from the individual components. The individual components remain separate and distinct within the finished structure, but form an overall structure that is better than the sum of the individual components. The new material may be preferred because they are stronger, lighter, or less expensive when compared to traditional materials.

Concrete – aggregate (gravel, sand) and cement

reinforced concrete – steel bars within concrete

Fiberglass (glass fibers in a plastic resin) also “*carbon-fiber composites*”

Plastics “creep” under load, the fibers prevent that

Plywood is a composite of composites

(wood itself is a composite – cellulose fibers in resin matrix)

Metal alloys (on a microscopic scale) e.g. pure gold versus 18K gold

Composites are not pure materials, but mixtures that take advantage of the best qualities of each component material. The weakness of one material is overcome by the strength of another. This is very much like God’s design for the church.

***1 Corinthians 12:12-31** Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.*

Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

And yet I will show you the most excellent way.

There is no church more dead than one in which everyone is a clone of everyone else - a mono-cultural church. No one can learn from any one else since they all know (and don't know) the same things. There is only one perspective on everything, so no one can gain new insight from anyone else. Where one is weak, they all are weak, and what strengths they do have are either underappreciated or in constant competition.

Diversity in a church is vital (life giving), because there is a constant exchange between the members, encouraging each other in their strengths and supporting each other when they are weak.

But diversity can also create challenges in a church for the very same reason. As we discussed in our previous lesson, unless I seek to understand before I seek to be understood, I will find myself in constant conflict with others, especially those different from me in some way. On the other hand, if I proactively seek to understand others, and learn to appreciate their unique perspectives, I will gain new insights that I would have never seen on my own. I will grow.

Another benefit I gain from seeking to understand others is that their differences may compensate for my weaknesses. By working together with the same mission and vision, obstacles that were once "show stoppers" become new opportunities for growth as I learn new ways around, over or through them.

Discussion:

Was there ever a time when you gained a whole new perspective on a problem from someone?

Was that person very much like you, or different in a significant way?

If different, did the difference make you hesitant to seek their perspective?

How did you overcome that hesitancy?

I believe that God brings people together in fellowship with great intention. I believe He puts each of us in community with others that have very different life experiences, training and personalities. I believe He does that so that we will form stronger communities that more effectively reflect His nature. Each of us bears an image of Christ from a different perspective. No one of us reflects His entire nature, but together, we come closer to reflecting the glory of God to the world around us.

How do we then become a cohesive body instead of a writhing mass of conflict and confusion. Paul gives a hint in the passage above from 1 Corinthians 12. Verse 31 ends this way:

"And yet I will show you the most excellent way."

A segue into chapter 13 - "The Love Chapter". Jesus told us that the world would recognize that we are His followers if we displayed love for one another (*John 13:35*). In that way we will reflect the unity that the Triune God displays. Love is the glue that holds us together so that we become stronger than the sum of each of us.

Ephesians 4:11-16 *So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his 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.*

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

When I intentionally seek to understand others who are different, and choose to value their perspectives and insights, I am often refreshed by the exchange, and discover that our differences are relatively minor compared to that which we share in common. But the differences are often a source of delight as they offer fresh opportunities for conversation and sharing. And in the process I often find a new friend who helps me overcome a sticking point in my walk with Jesus. I often see a glimpse of Jesus from an entirely new perspective that increases my faith.

Getting back to our Material Science lesson, composite materials are a wonderful analogy for the church. Some of us may be like grains of gravel that can support a tremendous amount of pressure individually, but are not stable enough to stay together when put under greater pressures. Like loose gravel we tend to scatter. Thankfully, others of us are more like the cement, that while not as strong under pressure, are good at holding things together so the gravel grains don't scatter. The gravel grain believers take the pressure, protecting the cement that holds them together so their joint strength can be multiplied.

When I learn to appreciate the different roles we each play in the church, and the wonderful synergy that brings, I can take great encouragement that in His wisdom, God has formed the church as wonderfully as he has formed my body (see Psalms 139:13-18)

Romans 12:3-8 ³For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

God has placed so many wonderful examples of this type of synergy in His creation. Biologists call it symbiosis, and nature is full of simply marvelous examples.

All green plants have special organelles in their cells, called chloroplasts. These small bodies contain the chlorophyll that gives the plants their green color, but also convert the energy of sunlight into energy the plant can use to make sugars to feed its cells. In recent years, it has become clear that these chloroplasts are very similar to blue-green algae, a bacteria species that contain chlorophyll and live freely in bodies of water, and many other moist environments. It appears that at some point, God placed blue green algae into the plant cells, where, in exchange for a protective environment, they provide food for the plant (and ultimately for us).

Also in recent years biologists have discovered a very similar situation in the deep ocean rifts where the tectonic plates are moving apart. Hot water springs emerge near the rifts, belching water that would be poisonous to most living species because of the intense heat (up to 300 Centigrade) and very high concentration of hydrogen sulfide, the poisonous gas that gives rotten eggs their odor. Yet growing upon these springs is a diverse community of organisms including tube-worms, clams, shrimp-like creatures and others. There is no sun shining at those depths, which presented a dilemma when they were first discovered in the late 1970s. The question arose of how could a healthy community with such diversity exist in total isolation from any source of sunlight, which was the ultimate source of life energy for all other known communities.

Upon closer examination, they discovered that the hot poisonous waters were teaming with bacteria that "breathed in" hydrogen sulfide, and gained energy by converting it to sulfate by combining it with oxygen from the water. In the process they produced sugars and other nutrients. This reaction formed the basic source of energy for these isolated communities. But the question still remained as to how the other species, which superficially looked like normal species, could survive the poisonous nature of the hydrogen sulfide.

In examining these animals, they found that the cells in their gills contained the sulfide-oxidizing bacteria in a symbiotic relationship that performed the same function as the chloroplasts in plant cells. They took this normally poisonous gas, converted it into a harmless substance, and in the process used the energy to produce nutrients for the larger organism's cells.

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People – Bible Study on Christian Leadership

Creating a framework for long-term effectiveness as a Christian leader

SALT – 09/06/2015 – “Sharpening the Saw - The Habit of Personal Renewal”

Group Discussion:

In the facilities management business, there are two basic philosophies about maintenance. The first is that you install a piece of equipment and then run it until it fails, and then fix or replace it. The second is that you periodically take the equipment out of service and perform “preventative maintenance” on it to prolong its life. Discuss among your group the relative merits and shortcomings of these two philosophies.

Review: Effective Christian Leadership based on *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Steven Covey)

What I think matters. My world-view (how I see God, the world, and those around me) determines my decisions. The consequences of my decisions reflect the accuracy of my world-view.

So far, we have looked at six of the Habits that Covey identified:

Habit 1 - Choice - I choose to proactively build character by practicing good habits (discipline)

Principle: I am free to choose, and I am responsible for the decisions I make.

Hebrews 12:11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Habit 2 - Vision - I see that my life can have meaning. I can add something to this world.

Principle: I need to begin with the end in mind.

Romans 8:37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Habit 3 - Integrity and Execution - I form convictions and become committed to my vision

Principle: Put first things first.

Romans 12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Habit 4 - Mutual Respect - I treat others the way I want to be treated (The Golden Rule)

Principle: I pursue win-win solutions in relationships (Love)

Matthew 7:12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Habit 5 - Mutual Understanding - I listen with intent to understand - with my ears, eyes, and heart.

Principle: Seek first to understand, then to be understood

Proverbs 18:13 To answer before listening – that is folly and shame.

Habit 6 - Synergy - I value the diversity that God has built into the Church

Principle: The Whole is Greater Than the Sum of the Parts

Romans 12:6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

The first three habits were about experiencing Private Victory. Habit 4 began addressing Public Victory. The first three put me into position that I may feel confident and safe to invite others into my circle of influence. Habits 4, 5 and 6 address making those relationships more effective (more loving).

This lesson addresses Covey’s 7th Habit - “Sharpening the Saw” – Personal Renewal. The guiding principle is that by *proactively renewing myself*, I maintain my ability to effectively practice the first six habits.

There are four aspects of my existence, and I need to continually renew myself in each of them to adequately maintain my effectiveness. Renewal involves:

Physical: Healthy diet, exercise, and adequate rest and relaxation

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Social/Emotional: Meaningful connections with others, serving others

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Mental: Learning, reading, writing, and teaching

Romans 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Spiritual: Fellowship with God and others, building my world-view upon His Word, and Worship

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Effective living involves a balance between serving ("Production" in Covey's terminology) and maintaining my ability to serve ("Production Capacity" in Covey's terminology).

If I neglect this renewal, my body becomes weak, my mind becomes mechanical, my emotions become raw, my spirit becomes insensitive, and I become selfish. In contrast with the first six habits:

1. I begin to feel I have no control and become reactive instead of proactive.
2. I careen through life in a fatigued state with little or no sense of purpose.
3. I waste time and energy on unimportant things, reacting to whatever seems most urgent at the time.
4. I feel besieged and assume a defensive posture in my relationships.
5. I adopt a jaded view of others, that they just don't understand me.
6. I feel threatened by others' differences.

On the other hand, the first six habits relate to renewal in the following ways:

1. Renewal is my responsibility, only I can make that decision and I will reap the consequences of my decision.
2. Continual renewal is a proactive strategy to achieve effectiveness in my relationships and service to God and others – keeping the end in mind.
3. Continual renewal is important enough to prioritize so I have the strength to persevere. Otherwise it becomes easy to fall prey to the urgent "darts" of the enemy.
4. Renewing (strengthening and encouraging) myself will reinforce my desire and ability to strengthen and encourage others. It is healthy love of self that makes it easier to love others and pursue win-win solutions.
5. Continual renewal will build an accurate self-image (humility) into my world-view that is based upon God's view of me rather than my perception of how others view me. That will make it easier to grant others the grace they need to see Christ in me.
6. The humility that comes from continual renewal will allow me to see how others' strengths can bolster my weaknesses, and where I can minister to their weaknesses through the strengths and gifts God has given me.

The Bible addresses spiritual renewal in many places. The scriptures below are a few examples:

Ephesians 6:10-18 Finally, **be strong** in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be **able to stand** your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be **alert** and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you **rest**. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find **rest** for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Psalms 91:1 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will **rest** in the shadow of the Almighty.

Proverbs 19:23 The fear of the Lord leads to life; then one **rests** content, untouched by trouble.

Psalms 51:10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and **renew** a steadfast spirit within me.

Isaiah 40:28-31 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

He gives **strength** to the weary and increases the **power** of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will **renew** their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 55:1-3 Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be **filled**.

Psalms 107:8-9 Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he **satisfies** the thirsty and **fills** the hungry with good things.

John 4:14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

John 6:35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

John 7: 37-38 On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, **rivers of living water will flow from within them**.

Revelation 21:6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

1 Corinthians 1:3-4 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of **compassion** and the God of all **comfort**, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

Matthew 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be **comforted**.

Possibly one of the more famous scriptures that addresses renewal is Psalm 23.

Psalm 23:1-6 *The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.*

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

It is a wonderful picture of the loving care given by the Good Shepherd to all the sheep who follow Him and look to Him for their needs. Continually meditating on such promises is an excellent way to experience renewal and encouragement. John records Jesus reminding His disciples that those that remain (or abide) in Him will be fruitful and enjoy every good thing from His hand.

John 15:1-8 *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes (or cleans) so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

If I take Him at His word, and remain in Him, the fruit of my life will reflect His character,

Galatians 5:22-23a *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

and I will accurately bear His image to a world in desperate need of the light He has to offer. No law (or principle) will be able to stand against me.

Against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:23b)

I will become salt in the world (**Matthew 5:13**) that creates a thirst for the righteousness of God, a thirst that will be satisfied (**Matthew 5:6**). And I will become a wellspring of living water that will quench their intense spiritual thirst with the water that Christ Himself makes to flow from within me.

John 4:14 *but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

John 7:37-38 *On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."*

I will be a light (**Matthew 5:14**) that can **lead** them from the darkness that oppresses them.

I will become an effective Christian leader.

2 Corinthians 3:18 *And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*