

Way of Discipleship Small Groups

Leading: The character of a leader - integrity



Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



Opening question(s) (5 minutes)

What is integrity?



Understanding the information and optional front stage/ back stage exercise (20 or 45 minutes)

Share these thoughts in your own words or read them together:

Integrity is the soil of trust for any leader, whatever their context, or whoever their style. James Lawrence defines it as when the public and the private aspects of our lives are in line with each other so that our public habits are harmonious with our private values, what we do is consistent with what we say, and how we respond to things is in harmony with our genuine feelings.



If we have integrity we will be able to resist the temptation to use any position of influence to profit personally, or to fulfil our own unmet needs, or to hold on unnecessarily to power for our own benefit.

A sociologist called Goffmann in the 1960s described our public/private integrity like the theatre with “front stage” and “backstage” parts of our lives. Our front stage is the parts of us that others see, our “public performance”. This may vary according to whichever audience we have. Goffmann said that on the front stage we manage our behaviour to reduce the risks and threats we fear from other people – their disapproval, disagreement, or conflicts.

The backstage self is the version of ourselves we present to those we are comfortable with. Where we relax. Where we express the less than ideal stuff which cannot go on our front stage. It’s the place where we work through unresolved struggles and uncertainties, and, crucially, also where new possibilities can be worked through.

Integrity is having a healthy relationship between our front and back stages – because they are unavoidably connected.

Just as in a real play, what happens on one stage can dramatically (!) affect the other. When we face high pressures on the front stage, the back stage is needed as a place of relieving that pressure – for good or ill. On the other hand, if we are experiencing problems in our back stage we can try and compensate on our front. Perhaps we are not communicating at home, so we put in extra hours at work. Or maybe we preach great sermons, but our prayer life is non-existent.

Bill Hybels confessed, “The way I was doing the work of God was destroying the work of God in me.” David Watson once wrote, “Beware the danger of loving God’s work more than loving God Himself.” They both illustrated how unresolved tensions between front and back stage leads to a crumbling of integrity.

Simon Walker highlights three potential problems that can occur if there is disharmony between our front and back stages:

Leaking: Backstage discontent can leak onto our front stage. For example, resentment at being ignored expressed inappropriately through sermons or in reports.

Collapse: For example, the tensions of having to perform for too long on our front stage, without adequate rest and restoration, can lead to stress, depression, or breakdown.

Explosion: Unresolved issues in our backstage can suddenly erupt. For example, shouting at a colleague over a seemingly trivial incident.

Discuss: When do I most recognise the tension between my front and back stages?

Optional: Use the front/back stage exercise on the handout to reflect more on this question.

Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read Matthew 7: 17-20 in which Jesus describes integrity.

Discuss the Discovery Bible Study questions:

What does this passage teach me about God?

What does this passage teach me about people?

How does this passage call me to obey God?

What might I do in response to this this week?

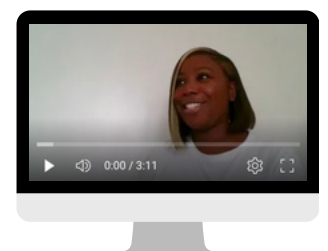


Seeing how it looks in real lives (10 minutes)

Watch the video at:

https://youtu.be/oOvdLqxJ_fY

What struck you as important in the video?



Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, "What might God be showing me and how might I respond?" They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, "Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?"



Group prayer (5 minutes)

Gracious Lord Jesus

Thank You that we can look to you as our perfect role model of integrity. As you lived and led amongst those who were constantly trying to make your words and motives mean other than you intended, you remained constant in being who you claimed to be and doing what you promised to do.

We pray Holy Spirit empowerment for this same consistency in personal character and leadership actions for our leaders today, for we believe the desire of each of them is to reflect Jesus in every aspect of their lives.

May our movement be filled with leaders whose genuine desire is to be true to who you have created them to be, celebrating and using their strengths for your purposes, and owning their weaknesses in honest humility – empowering the wisdom of others to speak into these, in order to grow.

Our leaders become highly visible representatives of our movement so we pray give them courage to genuinely reflect the characteristics of Christ through their words and actions at all times.

Thank You, Jesus for being absolutely who you claimed to be. Keep our leaders true to who they are in Christ, always.

Amen

From the Salvation Army





Leading: The character of a leader - integrity

Integrity is the soil of trust for any leader, whatever their context, or whoever their style. James Lawrence defines it as when the public and the private aspects of our lives are in line with each other so that our public habits are harmonious with our private values, what we do is consistent with what we say, and how we respond to things is in harmony with our genuine feelings. If we have integrity we will be able to resist the temptation to use any position of influence to profit personally, or to fulfil our own unmet needs, or to hold on unnecessarily to power for our own benefit.



A sociologist called Goffmann in the 1960s described our public/private integrity like the theatre with “front stage” and “backstage” parts of our lives. Our front stage is the parts of us that others see, our “public performance”. This may vary according to whichever audience we have. Goffmann said that on the front stage we manage our behaviour to reduce the risks and threats we fear from other people – their disapproval, disagreement, or conflicts.

The backstage self is the version of ourselves we present to those we are comfortable with. Where we relax. Where we express the less than ideal stuff which cannot go on our front stage. It's the place where we work through unresolved struggles and uncertainties, and, crucially, also where new possibilities can be worked through.

Just as in a real play, what happens on one stage can dramatically (!) affect the other. When we face high pressures on the front stage, the back stage is needed as a place of relieving that pressure – for good or ill. On the other hand, if we are experiencing problems in our back stage we can try and compensate on our front. Perhaps we are not communicating at home, so we put in extra hours at work. Or maybe we preach great sermons, but our prayer life is non-existent.

Bill Hybels confessed, “The way I was doing the work of God was destroying the work of God in me.” David Watson once wrote, “Beware the danger of loving God's work more than loving God Himself.” They both illustrated how unresolved tensions between front and back stage leads to a crumbling of integrity. Simon Walker highlights three potential problems that can occur if there is disharmony between our front and back stages:

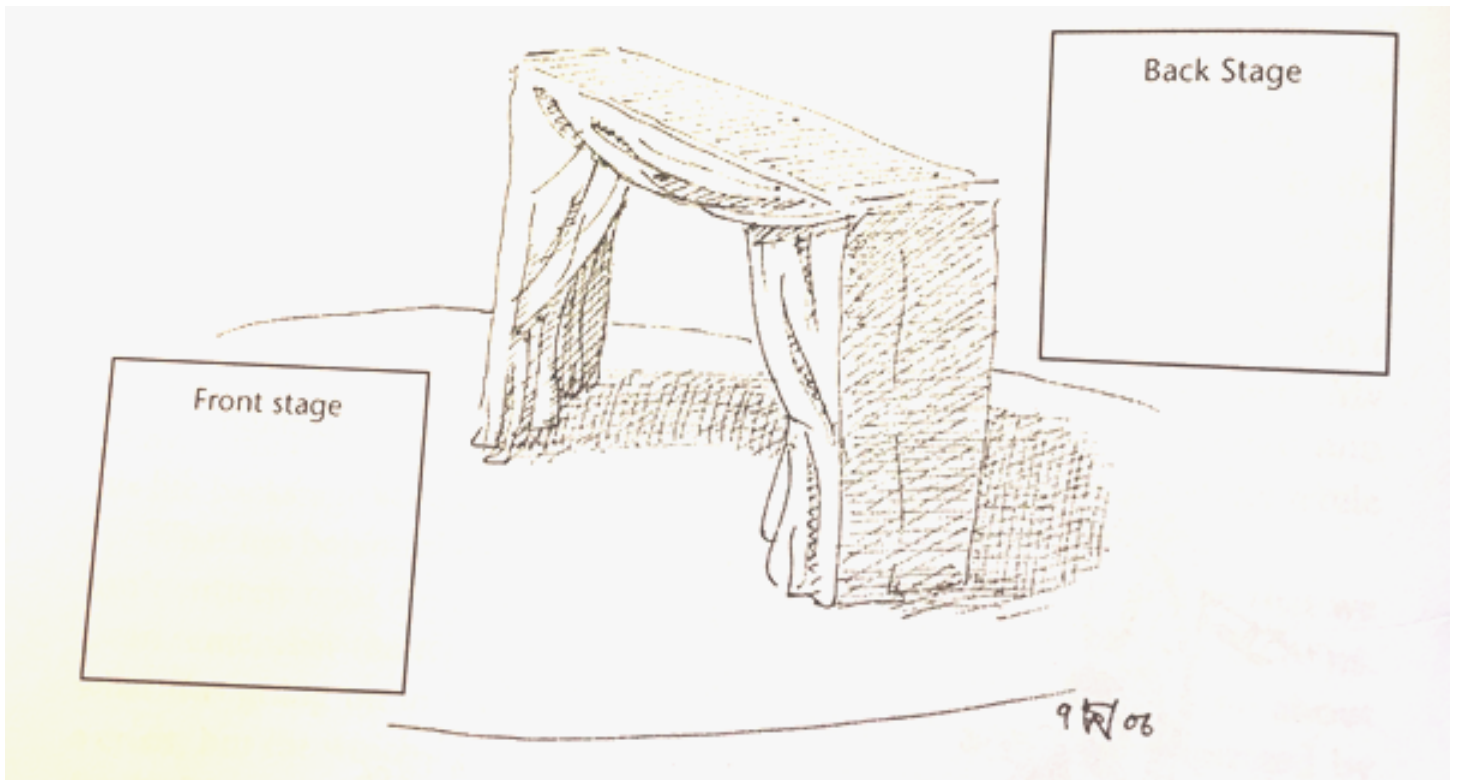
Leaking: Backstage discontent can leak onto our front stage. For example, resentment at being ignored expressed inappropriately through sermons or in reports.

Collapse: For example, the tensions of having to perform for too long on our front stage, without adequate rest and restoration, can lead to stress, depression, or breakdown.

Explosion: Unresolved issues in our backstage can suddenly erupt. For example, shouting at a colleague over a seemingly trivial incident.



FRONT STAGE BACK STAGE



What relationships, emotions, achievements or needs do you put front and back stage?

In what ways do you experience:

Leakage?
Explosion?
Collapse?

Who do you trust to take onto your back stage?