

Accountability in the Pulpit

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The following is a free adaptation of Eric Scalise's *excellent* article, "Accountability in the Pulpit: Where are the Truth-Tellers?", in *Christian Counseling Connection*, vol 19, issue 4, p.14. (This is a publication of the American Association of Christian Counselors, of which I am a member. See AACC.net.)

Considering relational dynamics that come into play for people of faith, the relational nuances can easily become blurred, confusing and even hurtful or abusive--on both sides of the pulpit.

Sadly, thousands within the body of Christ have been wounded by ministry leaders who are controllers, manipulators, narcissists and, in more extreme cases, abusers and cult leaders. Following are indicators of dysfunctional and unbalanced leadership within any organization.

- A proud, demanding, impatient leadership style -- lacking in compassion.
- Overt and subtle criticism of subordinates -- especially in the presence of others -- done

in order to boost a sense of prestige or self-importance.

- Excessive micromanagement.
- A sense of superiority and entitlement.
- Focus on and celebration of quantitative growth over qualitative growth.
- The authority of the leader is seldom challenged. Most disagreements, and even simple questions, are not received well.
- A distorted hypersensitivity when someone leaves the church or organization.
- Secrecy, excessive control, and lack of real accountability, often encompassing financial decision-making.
- Messages of guilt and shame wrapped in spiritual language.
- Biblical principles are wrested from their context and used to justify unhealthy practices.

Scalise challenges leaders to have people in their lives, who will speak the truth to them. "We all need people who have the freedom -- because they have received our personal invitation -- to be completely honest and open with anything they are seeing or hearing... to tell us in love we are straying from the path, tarnishing the character of Christ, or moving in pride, fear or personal deception."

He observes, after consulting with 100s of pastors and ministry leaders for over 30 years, that the most consistent factors leading to the unhealthy orientation described above are:

1. Misunderstood and broken God-identity.
2. Deep-rooted insecurity.
3. Absence of accountability.

Scalise concludes, "Good leaders produce followers and great leaders produce other leaders, but the greatest of leaders are the ones who are secure enough in their relationship with God that they can become followers once again."

Categories: **Leadership**, **Spiritual Life**