

CHALLENGERS TO HOPE 02: THERE IS NO SHORTCUT TO CREDIBILITY STUDY GUIDE

Read Luke 2.52. We find out that Jesus took a long time to grow up, we find eighteen years of his life summed up in one short verse. We find out that Jesus grew in four things: wisdom, stature, favour with God and favour with man. Today, I want to focus on this fourth element favour with man. Another word for favour with people is credibility. Jesus grew over many years in credibility. Not growing in credibility, and not realizing there are no shortcuts to credibility will always stop people walking in their dreams.

It is like the person who hops from church to church trying to get into a ministry. They never stay in one church long enough to develop the credibility to walk into the ministry they dream of doing. Jesus took eighteen years growing in credibility, and we think we can do it in a number of weeks!

You need to work on being credible – trustable and reliable – to other people. You must prove you have capability, skills, passion, character and the habits to help people. You do that consistently and you will develop credibility. You need to become a person other people can rely on to walk in your dreams. A lack of credibility is a huge barrier to you walking in your dreams and a huge challenge to even dreaming big!

Maybe you have made a mistake. Maybe you messed up a task, maybe you did something selfish and foolish – and you lost credibility with people, you lost your favour with people, you lost the trust. People thought “I cannot rely on you”. In that case, do not lose heart, credibility can not just be built, it can also be re-built.

What we are talking about today is such an important truth that you need to grasp this if you want in your dreams: you have to build credibility, and you have to work on building it all the time, and there is no short cut to gaining it. The favour of God could be on you, but if you have the favour of God and have grown in favour with God, but have not also grown in favour with man, you will not walk in your dreams.

If you want a new job, a promotion, a ministry, if you want to increase in your life, if you want to go forward, then you need favour with men. You need credibility. If you are in a job interview and the person does not think you are credible for doing the job, then no amount of anointing will open that door! If people do not think you are a credible preacher, you will not have crowds.

Now we are very spiritual people in the Tree of Life Family, we speak in tongues, we speak to mountains, we know a lot about spiritual forces like wisdom, stature, and favour with God. But we need to know that there is also something on the horizontal level called favour with men, and all of us need to develop and hold onto credibility to get new opportunities and to walk in our dreams.

There is no next level without growing in credibility. Right now, we have the number of people in the Tree we do because that is how many people think I have credibility as a spiritual leader. If I had more, more people would tell their friends, more people would come, some people would come back. For a church to grow, the leaders need to develop credibility. And for you to grow, you need to develop credibility. And it takes time.

YOU NEED TO DEVELOP CREDIBILITY TO WALK IN YOUR DREAMS. A lack of credibility will destroy your power to dream and your power to walk in your dreams. So, what happens next is that you need to learn how to build credibility.

Credibility is similar to a bank account; you need to keep putting in more than you are taking out. You take out credibility when you fail and are human and selfish, and you mess up, which we all do. You also withdraw from your credibility account if you do something strange, even if God led you to do it. So, because there are withdrawals being made, you need to consistently build your credibility.

You need to deliberately build your credibility; you need to be like Jesus and grow in favour with people. Now, you can go too far here and try and build a fake image rather than authentic credibility. Never forget about substance – that is what we are building, not image.

Imagine I decided to buy a driving instructor's car. I buy the car with the dual controls; I get a big sign that says "Ben's Driving School". That is the easy part – the real job is to develop credibility as a driving instructor. I am only as good as other people say I am. The only thing I can do is take the time to develop credibility.

When we plant a new Tree of Life Church in a new location, people come to the meetings to check us out. We have zero credibility with them. They maybe heard me on TV, but they have never seen me solve a problem. They do not know we are going to stay open, they have no idea if I can do the job and plant a healthy church, they have no idea I am going to come back next month or next week. They have seen other churches come and go, they have heard rumours, so we have to go and earn some credibility.

My driving instructor's car doesn't make me a driving instructor – I am not one until other people call me one. Until other people see me as one. And I would be the only person who can build my credibility. You cannot delegate this one! You cannot borrow credibility. You can a little bit, you can ask other people what this church is like or this business is like, but ultimately you need to establish it for yourself.

There are three main areas in which you need to develop credibility.

1. The Credibility of Capability
2. The Credibility of Compatibility
3. The Credibility of Character

The Credibility of Capability

This is the answer to the question – can you do the job you say you can do. Do you know what you are doing? Can you solve the problems that arise in your sphere of expertise? That is the first question I ask when I invite a guest speaker or appoint an elder, or a deacon – can they do the job, and can they do it well. This is the credibility of capability.

To develop this sort of credibility, you have to get good at what you do. Develop the soft skills of communication, organization and leadership. Develop the hard skills specific to your role and dream. Get the education you need, do not put it off another moment. Get the experience any way you can. Get the qualifications you need to be credible. I have a master's degree in biblical languages, which gives me a credibility when I talk about the Greek and Hebrew that I would not have otherwise.

You also need to develop the habits that make you fit for the part. If you want to be a policeman, you should lose the belly and start running and working out. You need to be athletic for that role. Different roles need certain habits.

Last week, I told you that one of the reasons that you are given your dream in micro-form is that you are building favour and credibility with God. You gain favour with God and then He increases what you have. God will not give you responsibility you cannot handle, so stop pushing the doors and rather spend the energy digging deep and being faithful where you are. But another reason why you are given the micro-form from God is to enable you to develop credibility with people.

Now when it comes to how capable you are, you never stop growing. Not ever. I press pause on life a lot and learn new things. There is always more to learn. You never know it all. In some fields, what was cutting edge 5 years ago is now outdated. If you could do a good job yesterday, you might have honour, appreciation and gratitude, but credibility is always based on today.

You also need to realize that good friendship is not enough for credibility. You do not hire friends – if you have done my leadership training module from Gates of the City, this is step 2 – respected fruitfulness, which is a higher step than step 1 which is liked friendship. To influence people and grow you need more than friendship, you need to be able to do the job.

I do not know what your dream is, but I know that whatever it is – you need to learn how to get good at it, and you should start today.

Your dream is to build houses – do something to learn how to build houses

Your dream is to build churches – do something to learn how to build churches

Your dream is to be a lawyer – learn something about law!

Your dream is to make food we all love to eat – learn something!

You want to lead a Bible study – study the Bible.

YOU NEED TO LEARN AND REFINE YOUR SKILLS! Develop capability and you will develop credibility.

2. The Credibility of Compatibility

Yes, it is important we can do the job and that gives us credibility. But another dimension of credibility is can you work in the team. You may not want the most gifted programmer, or surgeon, or salesman, if he messes up your team all the time and cannot work with others. You need to develop an attitude that makes you likeable. People go to churches with people they like, people work in places they like – so you need to work on being compatible with people. Now you cannot make everyone like you, haters are in fact going to hate from time to time, but you can develop a likeability that helps in most situations.

There are two main keys: firstly, be positive and encouraging, the second develop good manners. That is not difficult.

I don't want to explore this too much today, I want to focus on CHARACTER, but think about the following, because these are attitudes:

- Do you come across as discouraging or encouraging? You walk up to someone and you are always complaining and discouraging, they do not want to spend more time with you. They are not going to put you in a position to spend more time with them.
- Thing about the people you like to be around – are they confident or whinging? Are they encouraging or discouraging, are they successful and easy going or is everything going to send them off the handle?

I have several people who want to be my advisors. One of the things that happens is that people come to me, and they are immensely proud that they are a realist. They are not realists; they are negative people. If you notice, the leadership team at the Tree is made up of positive people. We are not the realists we are the dreamers. If you are not a dreamer, you will not fit in that well. We can read a newspaper headline about an economic downturn and not cry and not whine. We follow Philippians 4.8.

You manage your moods, you smile, you say hello first, you value people. Those are personality traits that will easily help you be more compatible with everyone.

I will give you one more very important helper to developing this kind of positive personality – this is one I don't always get right. If I am over-worked, under-slept, and not resting enough – my personality changes – you don't get the best me. I am not as motivating and can be ratty and fed up. So, I must make the choice to rest and recharge my batteries. Some of you need to rest more, and do the world a favour!

Develop being compatible with people around you and you will develop credibility with them.

3. The Credibility of Character

I know a pastor who got up one Sunday morning and was preaching about character. He said "if your employer is making you do things that violate your conscience, then go to work tomorrow and quit". There was a man who heard that word and did it. He quit work on Monday. He wrote the pastor a letter. Here is that letter:

Dear Pastor, Three Sundays ago, my wife and I visited Champions Centre for the very first time. After you had given your message, you spoke out a word, that if anyone was in a job in which it caused them to lie, they needed to quit immediately and specifically to go in and resign on Monday morning. Well, that word was for me! For the last six months, I have been struggling over the lying I was doing in order to sell advertising for my company. Primarily, I did not believe in the program at all. Being afraid to quit, with only 200 dollars in my account, a wife, and two kids to support, I went and quit my job on Monday. Immediately, I went to look for a new job. The first week, I applied for 14 jobs and had seven interviews. All I got was four hours of work in a warehouse with a temp job company. But that earned us enough money to keep going on for the next week. Week two, I put in seven resumes, had three interviews, and worked one day in a sausage factory for another temp job company. That again earned us enough money to keep going on for the next week. The following Wednesday, I landed a new job. Not any job, but one that was beyond what I could have hoped for. Instead of straight commission, I received a salary plus commission. I was offered medical benefits, retirement, and projected earnings of almost twice the amount I was previously earning. Plus, a nice trip to Florida for training! I just wanted to let

you know, because I thought God should get all the glory, for He is faithful to His Word.

What a character. Instantly, this man has credibility. He listened at church, he worked hard to provide for his family, he would not lie, and he developed credibility. This is the highest form of credibility – not just capability, not just personality, but your character, your moral strength. A strong morality makes us very credible. This character credibility overrides all the others. You might be the best at the job, but if you are not honest, not loyal, not faithful, then you lack character, and cannot be relied on, and will never develop a favour with men.

You know sometimes when I preach SUCCESS, PROSPERITY, ABUNDANCE – they are all in the Bible – sometimes people say “that’s worldly” – you have not been listening closely enough. The heart of it is always character.

Read Joshua I.8. You can be rich without God, you can be successful in the sense of you have achieved a few goals without God, but you cannot have true life in abundance without God. God has given all of us a way of having not just success, but good success. You meditate and declare God’s Word. Not just the healing Scriptures, not just the prosperity Scriptures, but the ones on character and behaviour and living for God. All Joshua had was the Law of Moses, which is mainly standard of behaviour. And meditating on that enabled him to be successful.

I want you to be a success. I want you to win in life – but above everything else in the world, I want you to develop character. I would rather you quit your job tomorrow than make a million by lying and stealing. The world will put income about truth, but God never does.

Now when you start doing things God’s way you develop true credibility and true influence with others. This is the highest level of character. Staying married in tough times, being sexually pure and faithful, being a good mum and dad, helping people who hurt, handling your money responsibly, not being addicted to a plant or grain, being honest at work, smiling in tough times. All of this is vital.

At this stage, someone will tell me I need to preach grace or that I do not understand grace. I understand grace. I understand righteousness. I understand that your spirit is utterly perfect, but you have to realize the world does not understand righteousness. It cannot see your spirit; it is a carnal world. It cannot see how righteous you are unless you submit to that righteousness and let it flow out of you and influence your decisions and build some credibility. That is character, and that is true influence and true discipleship.

David had a character issue. He slept with another man’s wife. Then got her pregnant. Then in a fit of terror, he murdered the other man to avoid exposing his sin. That’s terrible character. That is not someone you want as your king. That person has no favour with people. If I told you about a pastor who did that, you would not want to be in his church.

The greatest danger to character is satan will tell you the same thing he tells you about the micro-form – that it does not matter. No one is looking, no one is paying attention, no one is there, just do what you want. No one is looking David, everyone is away at war, it will be our little secret, it doesn’t matter. But it does matter, because you cannot turn sin off and on – it takes hold of you and starts to control you.

David thought he had got away with it. But then God sent Nathan to speak to him. Why did God do this? Because David had lost his credibility, in the main area people lose their credibility – in the area of character. We think how we behave in private does not matter, but it does. David lost his favour with God, lost his credibility, God no longer felt He could trust David, and now the people in the kingdom were no longer trusting David. They are seeing David's behaviour shift and although they had no idea of the whole story, they could tell David was off. They knew something was wrong.

So, God initiated a plan – not to embarrass David, not to expose him, not to attack him, but to restore his credibility with God and man.

You see step one to restoring any lost credibility is to stop the denial and deception accompanying it. You see one of the worst problems with a lost credibility is an inability to see it. Nathan is a genius, he tells David the story of man with a little lamb, and it was his only lamb, and how a rich man steals it, kills it and roasts it.

David thinks it's a true story and says this is unjust, this is bullying, this is horrific, selfish behaviour, and while his mind is open to that concept – Nathan boldly says, "YOU ARE THE MAN!" It is a slap in the face, and David takes it well – and now David must choose between being proud or humble. That is the choice that we must make to restore lost credibility – keep going down the wrong path or say sorry, admit we missed it and start to rebuild credibility.

It is amazing how blind people can be to character – I have had people literally high on drugs – call me believing God has led them to correct me about my doctrine. Yes, I am open to learning more about doctrine, but if you have no credibility, I am not interested in learning from you. That is how credibility works!

Whatever God has called you to do is something good, so to do it well, you need to be good, you need some character, some moral backbone. Doing what God has called you to do is hard work – and it will test your character at times. You will be tempted to take short cuts, to gossip, to push someone around, whatever. You need to learn how to take the moral high ground, to show love and to keep short accounts.

Whenever you make a choice of character, you are making the church to walk in your destiny, your dreams, your future. You are making a choice to prosper, to increase, to get better. When you choose character, you gain credibility with God and with men.

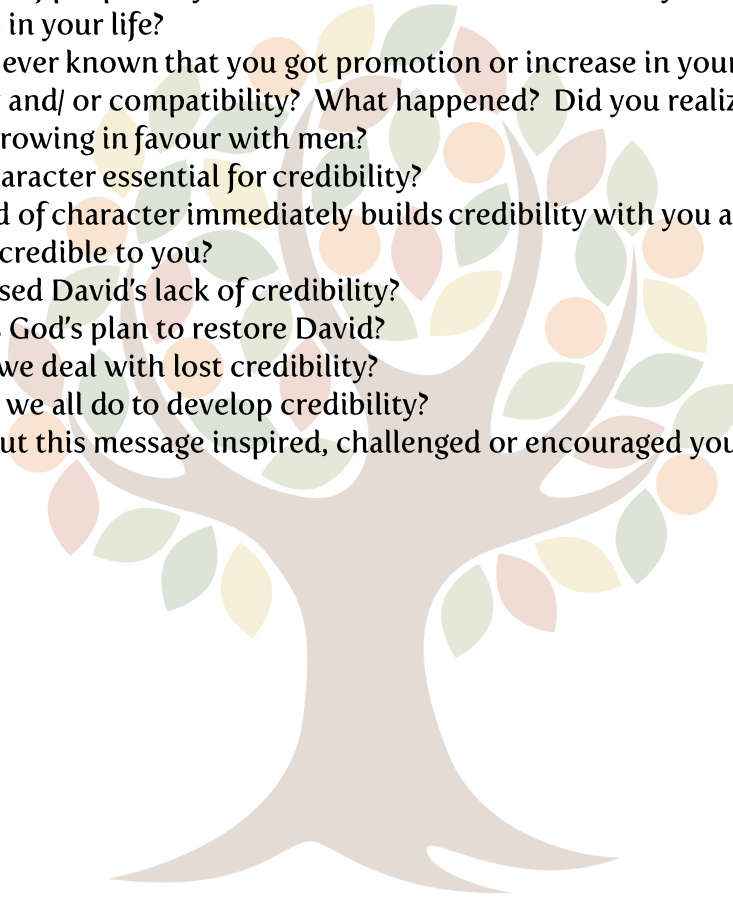
When David realized his character was a mess – that he was a destroyer, not a builder. That he was a divider, a ruiner of families, a killer of men, a hater – a selfish, sex-ruled, lust-filled, unloving, careless, out of control fool. He hit it face on, he did not try and deny it. He repented before God. He wrote Psalm 51 to repent.

Read Psalm 51:10-12. Now praying like this, and being honest and humble, did not instantly gain all of David's credibility back, but it started the journey, and eventually he did gain his credibility back. There are some people who have lost credibility and need it back to walk in their dreams, and you need to do this, you need to pray, you need to repent, you need to own your behaviour, you need to realize how far you are from where you should be, you need to realize that you need credibility.

And whether we have lost credibility or not, we all need to realize the importance of making deposits in our credibility bank account by developing capability, developing compatibility and developing our character.

CHALLENGERS TO HOPE 02: THERE IS NO SHORTCUT TO CREDIBILITY QUESTIONS

- I. What were the four things that Jesus grew in according to Luke 2.52?
2. Why is credibility so essential for us to walk in our dreams? What elements of your dream need you to possess some sort of credibility?
3. What are the three types of credibility we need to build?
4. What can you do this week to become more capable at your calling and dream? What soft skills can you develop? What hard skills can you learn better?
5. Why is it important we develop compatibility?
6. What kind of people do you like to be around and how can you develop those attributes in your life?
7. Have you ever known that you got promotion or increase in your life because of capability and/ or compatibility? What happened? Did you realize at the time that was you growing in favour with men?
8. Why is character essential for credibility?
9. What kind of character immediately builds credibility with you and makes someone credible to you?
10. What caused David's lack of credibility?
- II. What was God's plan to restore David?
12. How can we deal with lost credibility?
13. What can we all do to develop credibility?
14. What about this message inspired, challenged or encouraged you the most?



Tree of Life Church
where dreams come true