



THE PRACTICES OF A HEALTHY LEADER

Episode Six: Authenticity vs. Image Management

EPISODE SUMMARY

Leadership requires trust, and trust requires truth. But telling the truth is not the same thing as telling everyone everything.

Image management begins when leaders feel the need to control how others perceive them. We cannot admit that we do not know. We hide mistakes. We minimize bad news. We pretend to be more confident than we really are. But there is an opposite danger as well: turning “authenticity” into indiscriminate disclosure and expecting the people we lead to carry emotional weight that does not belong to them.

Healthy leadership rejects both extremes. **Leadership is stewardship, which means telling the truth in the right way, to the right people, at the right time.** The goal is wholeness: becoming the same person inside and outside the room.

REFLECTION

Think about the last time you were asked something you did not know. How comfortable were you saying, “I don't know”? What did you feel the need to protect?

Where are you most tempted to manage other people's perception of you: competence, confidence, spirituality, success, emotional stability, or something else?

Brad and Rick distinguish between authenticity and full disclosure. Are you more likely to withhold what people legitimately need to know or disclose things they should not have to carry?

Who currently gets the real version of you? Who knows your fears, struggles, disappointments, temptations, and weaknesses without needing you to perform for them?

Rick argues that performers eventually become lonely and isolated. Where has protecting your image made genuine connection more difficult?



THE PRACTICE GUIDE

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HONESTY AND HONOR

You do not need everyone to have full access to you. But someone must know you. Identify a small, trusted group of people with whom you can practice appropriate vulnerability. These might be close friends, elders, board members, or another trusted group who can receive your honesty without needing you to lead them in that moment.

Practice honesty in three areas:

1) Sadness

What are you grieving? What has disappointed you? What loss or sadness have you been carrying without naming?

2) Struggle

Where is life difficult right now? Where are you uncertain, frustrated, anxious, or simply having a hard time?

3) Sin

Where are you fighting temptation? Where have envy, jealousy, lust, pride, anger, insecurity, or another pattern begun gaining ground?

But don't stop with honesty.

After each person has shared, practice honor. Speak to one another about where you see God's grace, goodness, growth, and glory being expressed in their lives.

Honesty keeps us from pretending everything is okay. Honor keeps our failures from becoming the whole story.

We need both.

Remember: You do not earn trust by appearing invulnerable. You earn trust when people discover that the person leading the room is the same person who exists outside the room.