

February 27 2019

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Date: 26 February 2019

Preacher: Steve Jeffrey

[0 : 00] Well, it's great to be with you tonight and to continue to teach. I want to do a bit of a video. I've been told that I am more friendly on video than I am in person. So we'll continue that on. It's encouraging me about my gifts and where I'm best suited, I think. That's all it was. See, on one level, I feel like I could finish it there, where we are, talking about geese or goose.

But there is more to advance on this. Really what I just spoke about there, just very, very quickly in five minutes, is really a culture shaper.

That's what that is. I've just given you an introduction to something that is a culture shaper for us at St. Paul's. Something that is primarily a pushback against Western culture.

[1 : 08] And that is, you are not valued based on what you produce. Which is one of the major arguments for euthanasia nowadays.

One of the big supports of euthanasia. If you no longer enjoy your life and you can no longer produce anything, then you're a drain on society. And therefore, we should get rid of you.

That's a Western philosophical thought. So, one of the things that we want to develop more at St. Paul's is a culture that says people over productivity.

We care about people. We labor in order to reach people. And yet, the way we reach people matters. The way we treat people. The way we love people in the process matters.

So, I want to talk about teams, ministry teams. I talked about my own joy of being part of a team here at St. Paul's. I really do have a heart for those who don't exist in a team ministry or don't have a healthy team ministry.

[2 : 12] Which, as it turns out, from conversations with Dyson leaders recently, is that is a vast majority. One of our regional bishops says he spends most of his time dealing with team conflicts within churches.

Teams aren't built overnight. It takes a long time to develop a group of individuals into a team. It's much more difficult to know exactly what you need to do to take a group of individuals and turn them into a team.

And most of us sitting here tonight are in a team of some description at St. Paul's. There are many factors that play part in this complex process of team building.

But there are two main foundations. I'll spend a fair bit of time on the first one and very quickly on the second one. Two main foundations that need to be laid before there's any resemblance of being a functional, gospel-centered Christian team.

And the first foundation is stability. It's helpful for a foundation. I like the rectory over there. Every team member is wondering about the answers to three major questions.

[3 : 38] They don't know it, but they've got them subconsciously down there. They're deep questions. Number one, can I trust you? Number two, do you care about me?

Number three, are you committed to this? Are you committed to this team? Are you committed to what this team is seeking to do? Can I trust you? Do you care about me? Are you committed to this? No one wants to be part of a team in which they can't trust the leader or the other members of the team.

They feel that they're not cared for or they know the other members aren't committed to each other or, in fact, to a goal. So, in order to build stability, you need to show your team your answer to all those three questions is yes, yes, yes.

Without you doing that, you won't build a team, a stable team. And we answer yes, yes, yes to each one of those questions in every decision we make.

Every decision either reinforces or undermines one of those yeses. So, the first one is trust.

[4 : 59] Can I trust you? Can I trust you as a team member? Can I trust you as a team leader? If people like you, they might listen to you. But if they trust you, they will partner with you and will potentially even follow you.

You need to show yourself to be a person worthy of trust in order for people to trust you. You signal that trustworthiness or your lack of it in everything you do, every decision you make.

Now, this probably all seems really obvious. Of course, we need to trust each other to be a healthy team. But the truth is, most teams that function together don't actually trust each other because they focus on the wrong kind of trust.

For example, if you say you want the team to arrive on time, you're the leader of the team, you want the team to be prepared, then you, the leader, have to arrive on time and you have to be prepared. If the vast majority of time you arrive, when you say you will, the team will know that they can trust you in that sense.

[6 : 21] And it's called predictive trust. People know you. They know what you do. They know how you behave.

They can predict your behavior. It's predictive trust. And predictive trust is a great help when working with a team. You say what you're going to do and they can predict you're going to follow through with it.

But predictive trust is, if you like, the entry point of trust. It's not the kind of trust that you need to build the foundations of a great team.

You need much more than that. Predictive trust is, if you like, permission to play kind of trust.

You don't even get to be on the field and play if you can't be predictive in your behavior. There is a deeper type of trust that's not less than, but it's so much more than predictive trust.

[7 : 24] You need the kind of trust that comes from being vulnerable with your team. Trust is built by vulnerability. It's where you can admit your mistakes and your weaknesses and be confident that people won't take advantage of it or think any less of you because of it.

One of the great leadership books on how to be a great organization is called The Advantage. It's written by the same guy who Paul and Rachel, Patrick Lencioni, they've got books from tonight.

So The Advantage, it's a great book. The main idea of the book is that organizational health, the way that people work together, trumps everything else in an organization.

So organizational health eats strategy and vision for breakfast is basically, it would be my subtitle.

And Lencioni says this about trust. When everyone on the team knows everyone else is vulnerable enough, that no one is going to hide his or her weaknesses or mistakes, they develop a deep and uncommon sense of trust.

They speak more freely and fearlessly with one another and don't waste time and energy putting on airs and pretending to be someone that they're not. Predictive trust is certainly necessary for you to work in a group competently.

[8 : 56] But being able to work in a team is so much more than just working in a group. To work in a team, you need to develop weakness-based trust, which is a kind of trust that can be built very quickly and is so much more powerful.

If you're the team leader, so if you're a team leader tonight, you're leading a group of other leaders, a group of other volunteers or members of the church, it starts with you.

Vulnerability starts with you. You need to go first. Admit you're human. Be courageous enough to be weak in front of your team, to be broken in front of your team.

If you don't do it, they never will because they never know whether you're going to leave them high and dry. They never know whether you're going to come back around somewhere and use your vulnerability in your face.

But if you can model it for them and make sure you encourage them when they do it rather than penalize them, this trust will grow rapidly as part of the group and it will begin to function as a team.

[10 : 19] Now, the beauty of it as Christians, and Lencioni is not a Christian, but the beauty of it as Christians is, well, we have, well, St. Paul's, we have this core value called humble authenticity, which is all about being real, genuine with our brokenness and our sinfulness.

The gospel is applicable and beautiful because the necessary precondition is that you and I are dysfunctional, horribly flawed failures, every single one of us.

Not one of your critics is correct. Not one of your critics is correct.

You are way worse than they think you are. And not one of your supporters is correct.

Because you're way worse than you think you are. That's the beauty of the gospel. And the gospel we proclaim here week after week tells us that.

[11 : 32] And so it should build a culture of acknowledging what we hold to be true. That's the first thing.

Trust. Second, care. People also want to know whether you care about them or whether you're just using them. It's not enough for you to care about them. They need to know that you actually do care.

Care is an action word. And there are lots of ways you can show people you care. You take the time to get to know the people on your team. You check in with them regularly to see how they're getting on as people, not just as members of the team.

You're generally thankful for the work that they do for the team. And you make sure that you tell them that you are thankful for the work that they do as part of the team. You say that you're sorry when you make a mistake.

You don't blame them for it. You take responsibility for it if you're the team leader. You listen to their ideas. You give careful feedback. You treat them as partners, not just as helpers. Filling a gap.

[12 : 30] All of these things will communicate that you, in fact, care about them, not just what they bring to the team. If you want to build a strong team, people have to know that you care about them and that others on the team care about them as well.

Of course, the stronger and deeper the relationships are between team members, the better the team actually functions. The quicker, the better decisions I think they are and the quicker decisions that they make, they'll deal with conflicts a whole lot easier.

They'll lead through crises together in a much more unified, stronger, clearer way. In fact, neuroscience tells us that our brains run on three things.

Oxygen, glucose and relationships. Now, I'm fully aware of this as a diabetic. When my sugars get low and I haven't got as much glucose running around in my brain, it's a nice feeling for a little while, but man, I cannot make a decision to save my life.

American author Henry Cloud recounts, in one of his books, recounts an experiment that was done with monkeys to measure the effects of relationships on cortisol levels in their brains.

[13 : 53] Now, cortisol is a hormone closely associated with high stress levels. So in this experiment, they get a monkey, they jam him in a cage, and they expose the monkey to high levels of psychological stress.

They got loud music and flashing lights, and they go nuts. And the monkey went nuts. It freaked him out. And they measured the levels of stress hormones in the monkey's brain.

They recorded it, and then they did it again. And the only thing they did differently the second time was they got the monkey's mate, I'm assuming another monkey, and put him in the cage with the monkey, and did exactly the same thing.

And as soon as it was over, they measured the stress hormones in the monkey's brain, and they were exactly 50% less. That is, this pair of monkeys was twice as good at handling the stress as the monkey was by itself.

Monkeys' brains, and this is not a lecture in evolution. I'm not heading in that direction. But monkeys' brains, it seems, are designed to function in relationships.

[15 : 13] They are communal animals, and so are owls. Cloud concludes this. For research findings about the positive effects of supportive connections continue to pour in, and they are equally compelling and conclusive.

Our brains need positive relationships to grow and function well, whether for monkeys in a cage, financial wizards on Wall Street, or your own team members' relationship is the key to high performance.

Thirdly, commitment. People want to know if you're committed to this team, and what this team's trying to accomplish.

Not just that you're committed for now, but you're actually committed. What is it that you will give up for these people, to invest in these people that you're ministering with?

What will you miss out on for this, for them? How sick do you need to be in order to skip being with them? Because if they're going to come with you, if they're going to miss things, if they're going to give up things, if they're going to skip things, they want to know if you're willing to do the same.

[16:43] Now, there is a difference between being committed for now and being committed. When you're committed for now, what you're doing is you're still scanning the horizon for the better opportunity.

You're still scanning for the next step up, a bigger platform, a more prestigious position. You're not satisfied with where you are, and so you're not focused on what you are doing.

You might say that you're committed, but you're committed just for now. And if you're really committed to what you're doing, you'll invest yourself in it.

You'll plant yourself. You'll put your head down and get on with it. And so in order to build a team, which is every team member's responsibility, you need to show people that they can trust you to be real and to be vulnerable, that you care about them, and that you're committed to them.

If you do or say too many things that communicate that your answer to one of those questions is a no, you will never succeed in building a team or being part of a strong team, and you lose.

[18:10] You lose. Developing a culture of care, trust, and commitment takes a lot of time. It starts with the team leader, but it's the responsibility of every team member.

So speak honestly, share deeply, admit mistakes freely, ask for forgiveness quickly, and verbally reprimand those who ridicule an honest moment, or who break down a group's confidence, and spread information to people that they should not be spreading.

Which is not just bad information, but any information that they should not be spreading. It only takes one lapse to destroy months of work in this area.

Teams are built on stability. That's the first foundation. The second foundation for necessary to build teams is time. It takes a lot.

Cool. Thank you, Steve. Steve's obviously covered a lot there over the last few minutes. He has a very good reputation for packing a lot in in a short space of time. So I wanted to give people the opportunity to reflect a little bit and think back to what he was talking through.

[19:33] One, I guess the importance of people over productivity, and love as a real culture shaper. But two, the foundations in team building. The first foundation we talked about was stability. Who remembers the three parts to that?

Or at least one of them? Trust. Care. And commitment. Excellent. And the second foundation? It takes time.

Cool. So think through that. Have a quick chat to the person next to you, if you have any questions, or send them to my mobile phone, which the number I think will appear fairly shortly. And then I'll invite Steve up to answer your questions in the next 60 seconds or so.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. So we might just come back together now and see whether we have any questions. I don't have any SMSs, so I'm assuming that you're all going to put your hand up and ask questions.

[20:29] Any questions for Steve? Thoughts provoked? Was that a hand, Debbie?

No? That was a mic. Okay. You're loving. Very good. Sharing love. Sharing love. Sharing love. Sharing love. Sharing love. Sharing love. Sharing love. Sharing love.

What was that? Crystal clear? There's a question from the guy. I was actually running out of it.

I presume the amount of time is in the nature of the scene, the purpose of the scene, the purpose of the scene, the purpose of the scene, Yeah, absolutely.

Absolutely. The reality is to build a team does take time. One of the real blessings that we've had at St. Paul's is we've had team members on a staff team level who have hung around for a while and we've been able to build.

[21:48] Now, obviously, the team building's been happening as part of it, but the longer they've been there, the more the teamwork has happened and the quicker decisions get made and we flourish and we really do have a deep sense of commitment and connection with one another.

But that's a time factor. Trust takes a while. Trust is... So when I... For instance, I've been here for nearly 10 years now.

People trust me more now than when I first arrived. That's just... And that's partly by virtue of seeing my life over time, but also seeing the decisions that are made and how things are followed through and stuff like that.

That doesn't mean that everything's perfect or anything, but trust is something that's built over a long period of time. So I'm...

Trust can be lost, but there's a fair amount of trust in the bank account at the moment. So... And you don't want to squander that. The way that trust is built, though, is vulnerability.

[22 : 57] And I think this is a crucial thing. This is where... You know... It's unfortunate that in our society nowadays that Christian churches are not places where people think that I can trust.

That is horrendous because it's at the... Vulnerability is at the foundation of the gospel. The foundation of the... And that's where we get our vulnerability from is... The only way that I will ever stand up in front of a group of people or lead my team in such a way that I will confess an error or allow a weakness of mine to be explored is because ultimately your opinion, while I value, I don't live for you.

That is, while I might have your disapproval over here where I need to confess an error, I have an approval over here in Christ that I will never lose. So the more we focus on the gospel and find our assurance and our security in Christ, the more willing we will be vulnerable.

Those who are not vulnerable, my first port of call is where's your confidence? Where is your... Are you concerned about this person's approval or that person's approval?

Whereas in a Christian community, we've got... With the gospel, we've got the ultimate acceptance that can never fail. It's probably fair to say that the church is a place where everybody wants to be seen and made them and doing okay.

[24 : 29] I wonder... There's people that want to do their values because they want to be doing that kind of thing. Absolutely. Yeah, I think so.

And that's religion and that's works righteousness and legalism. But unfortunately, that is so close to our hearts that we have this inner nature to try and...

In fact, I'm going to be preaching on this on Sunday when it comes to confession. Self-atonement is so close to our hearts. We just love to atone for ourselves.

Even in our confession, we confess in a way that thinks that we can get God's favour. It's... Yeah. I've got a couple of questions here that have come in.

The first one's very related to what you've just been speaking about. But any suggestions if you're struggling to build trust with your team? And it's sometimes tricky to be vulnerable if you don't trust each other. Do you have any really practical suggestions as to how to build that trust and be vulnerable?

[25 : 25] If you're the team leader, there really... There is only one real source of vulnerability. And that is... Or the ability to be vulnerable and that is the gospel.

It really is... And I cannot dwell upon that enough. Put Bible passages on your computer screen, you know, wherever... On the dashboard of your car, wherever it is that you need to put them that remind you consistently that because of the Lord Jesus, what he has done for you, the Father, the God of this universe, says, My child.

That is a status that never changes. And until you dwell on that, you think about that, you ponder on that, you meditate on that, until it drops in the heart and gives you a security that is never-ending. That really is a solution. That's the first thing. So, the gospel is the solution. Secondly, go to people who you do know and start practicing vulnerability with them.

That is, long-term friends, long-term, you know, people who you suspect you've got a trusting relationship with and start practicing vulnerability.

[26 : 46] start talking about your deepest sins and issues of your heart, the things that you're wrestling with. Another question. If you have a team that isn't functioning well, do you think on all three elements, do you work on all three elements of stability or start with trust?

I would think that you need to start with, it depends what the issue is. I mean, if someone pulls you aside and your team's not working and say, well, I just can't trust you, that's probably an indication you need to work on that one.

But, certainly, the care, and of course, people might not trust you because you lack a commitment, it might just be what I think Lindsay only says you do, is you need to sit down and you need to have it out at times.

You need to just sort of throw everything out there in the air and go, what are the issues? How do you think we can go better? But, I would say, sit down with each member of the team individually and ask the question, how can I lead you better?

That's good advice. Another one, back to vulnerability. Sometimes being vulnerable can open you up to being walked over. Would you advise boundaries through vulnerability? Yeah, I would.

[28 : 03] There are some people who I won't be, I won't be specifically individually vulnerable with. So, for instance, I haven't got up in front of church ever and told you the blackness in my heart.

I've never, you know, I've never said, got up there and let me confess sins and here's the list and here's the really terrible stuff. That's reserved for four people in my life who I know are not going to pin me to a pegboard when I share that stuff with them.

I know they're going to pray for me, they love me, they're committed to me. So, four people in my life, I regularly keep accountable on that. So, there are varying levels of vulnerability. But I will share with the church that I'm not a perfect husband, I'm not a great dad, a whole range of things that I fail in.

I have, the thing that's amazed me in terms of the team at St. Paul's being with me for so long is that they've been with me for so long.

I think that's incredible. Like, anyone who's lasted 10 years with me because they've seen me change, they've seen the mistakes I've made, they've seen the things I've changed in, they've seen the failures, the faults, they've seen, you know, my incompetence and that sort of thing.

[29 : 25] And yet, they're still there. So, it's, there is a level, I think, of who you share what with, but you should know that.

Some people are chronic overshers and that's not particularly helpful. I guess the challenge for many people in that fear is how's the person going to reciprocate at the other end and the question along those lines, what if you're vulnerable and open with someone and they don't reciprocate or it ends up hurting you more?

Okay. The idea of vulnerability is they don't have to reciprocate. I don't think vulnerability on your behalf means they're going to reciprocate. So, for instance, one of the key things for me in raising my girls is that I, it's my job to lead them by being vulnerable to them.

I, I will endeavour in every instance to be the first person, if I've had a, you know, a bust up with them in some kind of way, I will endeavour to be the first person to speak to them about my failure. I won't wait for them. And while they might have been the ones who started it, continued it, and I came in at the last minute and, you know, did something I shouldn't have done and overreacted, I will apologise for my overreaction and sit down and often we tears and say, you know, I'm really deeply sorry for the hurt.

[30 : 47] That is, I'm vulnerable that moment. And what they do in the inevitably that moment is they come up, Daddy, it's a fine, you know, I forgive you. And it's like, but they haven't, they haven't shared their own failures at that point.

I think that's the, the idea, the deeper and more confident you are in the gospel, the more you are prepared to be vulnerable without it being reciprocated. I don't think it needs to be reciprocated. I've got one more question here, but are there any more questions from the floor first? And there's always a danger that people will hang you out to dry for it. There's always a danger of that, but God never will.

That's more precious. That's true. So, last question here. Face is an important concept to many Chinese people. If vulnerability is important to build up teams, then what would be your advice? Understand the gospel. That is, the idea of saving face is an anti-gospel cultural thing that needs to be reformed.

[31 : 48] That's all I can say. It is anti-gospel. it's not Christian. It's a cultural thing. And in a trans-cultural church, we are seeking to have our cultures reformed.

And that's a cultural practice. I think, I read this once, that it is normal to grow up in an Asian family and never have a parent say to you, I'm sorry.

I just feel for a whole generation of kids who have not experienced what it means to have a parent say, I'm sorry. The gospel changes that. The gospel leads us to repentance and confession. So it needs to be reformed. Thank you.