



ARE YOU A “HIGH C” AT ROCK BOTTOM?

By Alfred Ells, M.C.

Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint, but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock.—1 Peter 5:2-3

If someone called you a “High C”, how would you take it?

In church leadership circles, the “C” stands for charisma, and you could take the pride in your label. “High C” leaders easily attract a following and grow a church because people are naturally drawn to their charm. Take a look at the heads of large churches and businesses—odds are they are “High C.”

In the psychology world, however, being a “High C” is not so flattering. In this case, “C” means control, and lots of it. These “High C’s” need to control every aspect of their lives, including other people.

Control seems to be part and parcel of human nature. It is nothing new; the Bible is full of stories of control and manipulation. In the book of Esther, the king’s minister Haman wheeled and dealt in his genocidal plot to exterminate the Jews and gain favor with the king, but an ironic twist of circumstances ultimately foiled his scheme. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob also demonstrated patterns of unhealthy, inter-familial deceit.

Despite our best intentions, there is probably a little “High C” in all of us. So, how do we lead without control? How do we uphold standards while being flexible to the Holy Spirit’s nudge? It is a fine balance, to be sure. Look over the following illustrations of what ungodly control looks like. If you see in yourself an unhealthy tendency towards “High C”, repent and ask God to not only forgive you but to cleanse you from the rooted fears empowering your control. (1 John 1:9)

HOW TO DEAL WITH “HIGH C” TENDENCIES

Understand how control works in your life. (Psalm 26:2, 1 Corinthians 11:28, 31-32)

indicates that successful leaders have strong opinions and are goal oriented. This can easily morph into controlling behavior when unchecked, and is one of the major ways that a leader sows seeds of failure into ministry. For example, a young pastor I know is so passionate about saving the lost and building his church that he ends up running roughshod over anyone who questions him. Those who question decisions are viewed as disloyal. Over time, his ministry may very well suffer because he has offended too many people.

Influence others, don't control them. (1 Peter 5:2-3)

The essence of leadership is the ability to motivate others to action. The key is to lead by example, not by demands and threats. Charles Stanley said that one of the major changes in his life was giving up the need to control everything—and everyone—in his ministry. Lectures instead of constructive criticism and public ridicule instead of respectful conversations are examples of control, not influence.

Exhibit Biblical self-control, not rigidity. (Proverbs 25:28)

Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 6:9). Godly self-control is exhibited means submission of worldly desires, reactions and circumstances to the control of the Holy Spirit, resulting in personal flexibility and a disinterest in controlling what others do. Rigid control of life, however, is not godly, but rather it is the result of internal fears that dictate the behavior. Rigidity is a refusal to allow God to work through the uncontrollable circumstances, situations and relationships of life to mold us in His image. A rigid self-controlling individual will ultimately control others because they are inflexible and unwilling to cooperate, coordinate or compromise with others.

Address the real problem instead of getting angry. (James 1:20)

"I get angry and impatient when things don't go my way," a good friend of mine told me. He heads a national ministry with nearly 500 staff and deals with problems daily. Reactions like his can be a defense against the perceived threat of being out of control. Anger provides a false sense of power to overcome fears and justify rash actions.

Set expectations instead of micromanaging.

Do not expect workers to lead themselves, or that the Holy Spirit will do it all. God has put people under your authority for you to lead them as He gives direction. Performance goals, clear expectations and regular check-ins are healthy ways to lead. Clearly outline the consequences of inappropriate behavior and poor performance, but do not nag. Detailing every move a staff member must make tells them that you do not trust them to take your direction. Give them the opportunity to perform, and guide them when they do not.

"HIGH C" RED FLAGS

- You blame and isolate a person when they do not do what you want.
- You expect others to listen to you first rather than you listening to them.
- You criticize and reject those who do not take your advice.
- You need to be right.
- You frequently use the phrase "God told me," or God showed me."
- You give gifts and favors with strings firmly attached.
- You are defensive when you communicate, making sure you are in the right.
- You get angry when people fall short of your expectations and demand that they change.
- You cast doubt on the faith of those who may leave your ministry.