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EDUCATE – ENGAGE – CONNECT

Christian Education Department Monthly Newsletter

Here are the Top 10 Religion Stories of 2010:

1. A proposal to build an Islamic center and mosque near ground zero leads to a national debate on religious freedom as the 9/11 anniversary approaches. Public opinion and outcry over the mosque reached a peak when a pastor of a small Florida church threatened to burn a Quran in protest, a bravado that fueled fears of international backlash against the United States until the pastor backed down.
2. The catastrophic earthquake in Haiti sparks international relief efforts from varied faith-based groups. Efforts from Idaho Southern Baptists lead to child-smuggling accusations, and leader Laura Silsby is imprisoned for four months.
3. Pope Benedict XVI is accused of delaying church action against pedophile priests in the U.S. and other countries while he led the Vatican office in charge of discipline from 1981 to 2005; several bishops resign.
4. The rise of the tea party movement. Mormon Glenn Beck pushes a Washington rally. Midterm election results are mixed. A tea party candidate who loses, Delaware candidate Christine O'Donnell, was pilloried for responding to critics with an ad that stated, "I am not a witch."
5. President Obama signs the health care reform bill for which many faith-based groups labored. Catholic bishops voice a strong opposition to the bill because of the belief that it provides funding for abortions.
6. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) votes for the fourth time to lift the ban on non-celibate gay clergy and succeeds. The Episcopal Church is asked by the Archbishop of Canterbury to take a lesser role in the Anglican Communion after a lesbian assistant bishop is ordained.
7. Churches and ministries continue to struggle during the economic slump: the Crystal Cathedral declares bankruptcy; the Lutheran publishing house, Augsburg Fortress, drops its pension plan; Focus on the Family cuts 110 employees; and the Seventh-day Adventist publishing arm removes top executives.

8. Several suicides are attributed to bullying of homosexual students, including a New Jersey college student whose roommate allegedly video taped him during a sexual encounter. Several religious voices take part in the “It Gets Better” YouTube video project to encourage gay youth not to succumb to depression or suicide.

9. The U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey released by the Pew Forum reveals that atheists, agnostics, Jews and Mormons are the most knowledgeable when it comes to general religion questions.

10. The U.S. Supreme Court convenes for the first time ever without a Protestant member (six Catholics and three Jews). The court hears arguments in the case of the Kansas church that loudly protests at the funerals of servicemen; the decision is expected in spring 2011.

“What Millennials want in Leaders”

The Millennials were born between 1980 and 2000. Listed below are the four major leadership foci among the Millennials:

1. **Mentoring.** This generation has great respect for those older than they are. Most of them have good relationships with their parents. They have learned from older people in their lives, and they don’t want to stop now. They want to be led and taught in their places of work, **in their churches** and in their families. They particularly want to learn from couples that have had long and successful marriages. Many Millennials see such examples as heroes to emulate.
2. **Gentle spirit.** This category is easier to describe by what Millennials do not want in leaders. Divisive, loud and acrimonious persons turn them off. They loathe politicians and political pundits who scream at each other. They are leaving churches to some extent because they see many Christian leaders as negative and prone to divisiveness. They are repulsed by business leaders with harsh and autocratic spirits.
3. **Transparency and authenticity.** Have you ever considered stopping and counting the number of times that Millennials used the word “real” to describe the leaders they want to follow? As one Millennial once said, their generation “can smell phony and pretentiousness a mile away.” They don’t want phony; they want authentic. They don’t want pretentious; they want transparent.
4. **Integrity.** The Millennials are weary of politicians who don’t keep promises. They are tired of Christian leaders who fail basic moral standards. They are fed up with business leaders who are more concerned about personal gain than serving others. They want leaders with integrity.

Looking for a few good leaders – The Millennial generation has much to offer. As a whole, they desire to serve others. Most of them are very family oriented. And they really want to listen and learn from others. Indeed they are looking for a few good leaders to follow. When they find them, they will follow with commitment and enthusiasm. There is great hope in the Millennials. I see promise in many of them. And I found among a hunger to learn from leaders they respect. May we who have come before them be that type of leader! The largest generation in America is watching us closely.

Vibrant leadership essential to reaching those who are lost, disinterested

Recent reports seem to indicate that Christianity is waning in the United States. Many news outlets have quoted information from “What Millennials want in leaders.” – those born between 1980 and 2000 – and the fact that most American Millennials say they don’t pray regularly and few read their Bibles or other religious texts. Many don’t attend church on a weekly basis.

Author Christine Wicker cites a number of sources while arguing that younger Christians in America are on their collective way out of church:

- A study from UCLA found that only 29% of college students are still involved in church activities by their junior year.
- Youth specialist Mark Matlock finds, “Depending on whose number you use, 58 to 84% of graduating youth from church youth groups are returning.”

Pastors and leaders can either run for the hills or lead their churches to counter such numbers. Turning these trends around will require churches to transform their communities with the gospel of Jesus Christ. These transformational churches will require vibrant leaders who understand vision and purpose. Who does this look like?

Transformational leaders let God shape their churches. As Christ is formed in individuals, the same Christ is formed in a church. Vibrant leaders realize that the transformational church is Christ presented to the surrounding community. These leaders tend to be focused on the mission of God for the church.

“Busyness” is not the domain of vibrant leaders of transformational churches because “busy work” is not the work of the Kingdom. Instead, these effective leaders focus their agenda on the multiplicative work of God’s Kingdom. It is an agenda based on the core belief that God compels His people to be on mission.

The vibrant leadership in these churches realize that leadership comes from more than one person. It is a “leadershift” from **me to we.** They forsake the need to get all the credit and choose to empower others. It is a transformational shift in which the leader relinquishes his/her own domain for the working of God in the world.

Churches increasingly embrace Web and technology

A study released in early 2006 by Facts and Trends magazine revealed that more than half of Protestant churches (53 percent) at that time didn’t maintain websites.

What a difference a few years can make. In September 2010, the new data reveal much has changed since those earlier studies as Protestant churches are now overwhelmingly taking advantage of the tools offered by the technology revolution. The 2010 study, found that 78 percent of churches today maintain websites, a 70 percent increase since the 2006 study:

Ministers in 79 percent of large churches and 36 percent of smaller churches reported in the 2005 study that building and maintaining a church website would be an important part of their church’s work in the next five years. Five years later, 100 percent of the churches with more than 500 in average worship attendance have websites and 53 percent of churches with fewer than 50 in worship also maintain websites.

“Website creation and upkeep that require no technical experience have made it easy for many churches to begin maintaining websites.” And with the cost of maintaining a website starting under \$150 a year, it’s no wonder so many churches are taking advantage of the communication opportunities a website offers.

Location, like size, reveals differences in whether a church maintains a website. Suburban churches are most likely to maintain websites, with 91 percent reporting they do. Eighty-seven percent of large-city churches, 82 percent of small-city churches, and 63 percent of rural churches report maintaining a site. The Internet today is an integral part of most workplaces, including churches.

Today many churches are pushing in the right direction when it comes to leveraging technology to accomplish their ministry goals and objectives. I encourage you to visit Ministry Links on our National website at: www.houseofgodclg.org

Leadership 101: Integrity

There are various factors that affect a leader's performance and the effect that these factors play in becoming a successful leader. Qualities of leadership include:

- Humor, perspective, and flexibility.
- Focus on the achievement of goals that produce results.
- Comprehension of what power and authority are.
- To communicate, listen and persuade.
- Knows when to take risk.
- Stamina, energy, tenacity, courage, enthusiasm.
- Builds morale and can motivate.
- Can form or build a coalition.
- Is willing to learn
- Possesses intelligence, wisdom, and judgment.
- Possesses their own vision
- Has self-knowledge and confidence.
- Integrity, character, and honesty.

Of all the qualities a leader must possess, integrity may be the most important one of them all.

Integrity is defined by Webster's as a firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values (**INCORRUPTIBILITY**), an unimpaired condition (**SOUNDNESS**), and the quality or state of being complete or undivided (**COMPLETENESS**.) Types: integrity of character, professional integrity. Synonyms: Honesty & Unity.

Integrity involves the three R's: Respect for self; Respect for others; and Responsibility for all your actions.

There is a common theme among experts who have studied or written about modern leadership. That all leaders must act with integrity at all times. The first reason for acting with integrity is that the laity or members are constantly observing the lead figure.

A leader is the role model by which the group that they command is most influenced. Eventually this will lead to a molding or modeling of the group's behavior. This is why a leader must have and maintain the highest standard of character and integrity. Integrity of one's character will consist of honor, virtue, allegiance, and subordination. Without

integrity the leader can never garner the respect and confidence of others within the church organization.

Individual integrity is never easy, and is never suppose to be. At most it may be the most difficult of all personal qualities to hold intact because of its complicated nature and the multiplicity of it dimensions.

One part of integrity is virtue, this can be considered the courage that a leader must possess as part of their integrity. This represents one's "bravery" and the endurance required to stand up against something that is deemed to be wrong, unjust, corrupt, or dangerous.

"No one can be happy who has been thrust outside the pale of truth. And there are two ways that one can be removed from this realm: by lying, or by being lied to."

Seneca

Roman philosopher and writer

How does someone develop integrity as part of his or her character? Where does integrity come from? The quality of integrity is not a trait that we are born with; rather it is "learned" as we go through life. Not all (great) leaders come from backgrounds that would indicate their level of integrity either, instead, during the process of learning, integrity of the individual is developed. As with fingerprints, no two people have the exact value system that we live by. But, no two people have the same level of integrity even though we share common ideologies. So how does someone live by a code of conduct and standards? How does a sense of obligation develop towards others, the community, community groups, the church ministry, and our country develop?

This process of integrity begins when we are very young, usually taught by our parents, grandparents, neighbors, teachers, and other children whom we may have contact with. This process can also be taught by reading or by the watching of certain television programming. The process by which we develop integrity is also dependent upon our reception senses as well. How many times have we heard of families who were the cornerstone of integrity and wholesome living in the community, only to have a child who turned out to be the complete opposite, otherwise known as "the demon seed?" In defense of that example the reverse can be true as well, there have been some who come from families that have lacked integrity only to have a child who possesses a high level of integrity. While this does not happen often, it does happen.

Development of integrity depends solely upon the moral fabric of the individual.

There are four ingredients that make up the foundation for someone's integrity. Without these factors joining combining together either the individual's foundation will be weak or it will eventually crumble and disintegrate. These ingredients include:

1. **Receptive Ability:** Can the leader listen to other's ideas or directions? Failure as a leader occurs when one acts as an authoritarian leader. This person dominates and to a certain extent possesses a certain degree of arrogance that is above the norm.
2. **Flexibility:** Are you, the leader a risk taker? Can you think outside the box? Do you have an active imagination that allows for alternative ways or ideas to be used in accomplishing the ministry mission or goals?
3. **Humility:** Can the leader put the organizations concerns ahead of your personnel interest? Or does the leader put a premium on their personnel image (glitter & gold syndrome), and do they remember where they come from? If title, image, and being the center of attention appeal more to you, than humility is one quality they do not possess.
4. **Compassion:** Can the leader bring himself or herself to reconcile a difference with a member of the congregation, community, or church? Can they be nice to fellow co-laborers and express compassion and mercy to the people to whom we provide service or minister to?

But what does integrity really mean? Integrity is:

Self-respect: The leader must first start by liking him or herself. If they are unhappy with who they are, they will be unable to show someone under their command compassion or understanding. Having self-respect for yourself will be noticed by those around you and will be appreciated. The perception of you (as a leader) can always be enhanced, updated and improved. It will all depend upon factors such as willingness, motivation, and career goals that you wish to accomplish.

Loyalty to the ministry's vision and mission: As a leader you must first realize that without loyalty to the ministry and its mission your performance cannot make the ministry fully successful. Great strategy and innovation is not a guarantee for success, the core to success is the parishioner, and if you are not willing to commit yourself to the ministry then you are a glitch in the system. The ranks of successful companies are filled with hardworking, dedicated, skilled, honest and faithful leaders like you.

Honesty to yourself and others: Leaders must always conduct themselves with the utmost of honesty at all times. The Laity look up to the leader as an example of leadership and guidance. One way to ensure that your integrity as a leader is intact is to always tell the truth. By telling the truth you will never have to worry about being caught up in a lie or trying to remember just what you had said. Lying will only lower yourself worth in the mind of the laity, superiors, or worst yet the public. Sometimes telling the truth will not make people happy, or make you the winner of a popularity contest. In some cases you may suffer from "loss of grace" for telling the truth, or for standing up for what is right. But as an adult we find out that this is life, and you can't please everyone all the time. But being caught in a lie means there will be a much greater need for damage control in the end.

" To educate a man in mind but not in morals is to educate a menace to society."
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Theodore Roosevelt

"Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful." Samuel Johnson

Integrity is the foundation of character. And character development is one of the most important activities you can engage in. Working on your character means disciplining yourself to do more and more of those things that a thoroughly honest person would do, under all circumstances.

To be impeccably honest with others, you must first be impeccably honest with yourself. You must be true to yourself. You must be true to the very best that is in you, to the very best that you know. Only a person who is living consistent with his or her highest values and virtues is really living a life of integrity. And when you commit to living this kind of life, you will find yourself continually raising your own standards, continually refining your definition of integrity and honesty.

One of the most respected characteristics of a person is that of character or integrity. The person of integrity is honest and consistent. This is the person who is reliable and trustworthy. The character of the person of integrity usually affords them a good name among his or her peers and he or she is known as one who is principled in their dealings with others.

Integrity. It is more than simple honesty. It's the key to success. A person with integrity has the -- often rare -- ability to pull everything together, to make it all happen no matter how challenging the circumstances.

Drawing on experiences from his work with Fortune 500 companies, nonprofits, and individual leaders, **Dr. Henry Cloud**, a clinical psychologist and nationally syndicated radio host, shows how our character can keep us from achieving all we want to (or could) be.

In *Integrity*, **Dr. Cloud** explores the six qualities of character that define integrity. He uses stories from well-known business leaders like Michael Dell to illustrate each of these qualities. He shows us how people with integrity:

- Are able to connect with others and build trust
- Are oriented toward reality
- Finish well
- Embrace the negative
- Are oriented toward increase
- Have an understanding of the transcendent

Success is not related to only talent or brains. There are a lot of bright, talented people who are never successful. And the most successful are not only the ones with the most talent. The real factor, Cloud demonstrates, is the makeup of the person. All of us can grow in the kinds of real character that bring about fruitful relationships and achievement of purpose, mission, and goals. Integrity is not something that you either have or don't, but instead is an exciting growth path that all of us can engage in and enjoy.