

## Valuing the People You Lead

As a ministry or church grows larger its leaders must work harder to be approachable, accessible and personal. As tasks multiply it is easy to become less people focused and more project focused. Soon people will begin to have a portrait of us much like some people think of God in the Old Testament--unapproachable, inaccessible, and impersonal.

Tucked away in the Old Testament book of Exodus is a poignant illustration that paints a very different picture of God. It is a picture of a very personal God who puts a high premium on people. In this passage, God builds into the regular priestly duties a constant reminder that ministry is about people. These two verses serves as a compelling example of how God wants us to view those we shepherd in ministry.

*"Whenever Aaron enters the Holy Place, he will bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart on the breastpiece of decision as a continuing memorial before the Lord. [30] Also put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron's heart whenever he enters the presence of the Lord. Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the Lord."*  
Exodus 28:29-30 (NIV)

Every time Aaron went to perform his priestly duties, he was reminded of God's heart for the people of Israel. Each gem in the four rows of stones represented a different tribe of Israel. Every man, every woman, every boy and every girl was represented in those stones. There wasn't one person in all of Israel that God didn't love or care about. And God wanted Aaron to authentically love and care for the flock.

God wanted the people to be on Aaron's heart. Ultimately, ministry is not about projects or activities, it is about people. This seems painfully obvious, and yet we consistently lose perspective. It was possible for Aaron to carry these stones on the breastpiece but yet his own heart be far from the people. It was possible for him to carry out his priestly duties and yet be relationally distant from the very people he was called to serve. The same can be true of us. What do you do in ministry to keep people front and center?

Listen to the emotion and passion Paul had for those he led.

*"It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me."* Philip. 1:7 (NIV)

*"I have you in my heart"*. Let those words sink in. Would the team you lead say that they are on your heart?

When life and ministry moves too fast, one of the casualties is personal attention of those on our team. Without even being aware of it, our mindset toward people can slowly begin to change. Even the people on our team can begin to be viewed as tools

we utilize to accomplish our ministry task. They can become those we minister through instead of those we minister to.

Ministry that is Christ-honoring is never accomplished at the expense of those on our team. There are some symptoms or indicators that this may be an area you need to work on.

### **People could be feeling less valued if you are . . .**

- *Skimming relationally*  
If you are not authentically experiencing biblical community and personally enjoying life-giving relationships, your own heart will become hard toward others.
- *Spiritually drained*  
When your own soul is healthy and replenished, your heart will be soft towards people. But, when you are empty and have nothing to give, people become a nuisance.
- *Always in a hurry*  
Do you walk fast everywhere you go? Even when you do stop to talk to people, do they sense that you are rushed looking past them? Hurry is the archenemy of intimacy and deep relationship.
- *Never engaging their personal life*  
When was the last time you just sat down with somebody on your team and asked “How are you doing, really?”, and then took time to really listen. Try just asking someone you lead how you can pray for them personally.
- *Not praying for them*  
As Aaron went in before the Lord, he carried the names of the people he was responsible for. It is our job in ministry to carry the names of those we are responsible for before the Lord. Praying for them helps keep them on your heart.

Have you ever thought about this question, “if Jesus were to physically come to your church or ministry, what do you think he would want to see?” Would it be our buildings, our strategic plan, our financial report, or the song selection for our weekend service? I think we are given a clue to the answer in I Thessalonians 2.

*“After all, what gives us hope and joy, and what is our proud reward and crown? It is you! Yes, you will bring us much joy as we stand together before our Lord Jesus when he comes back again. [20] For you are our pride and joy.” 1 Thes. 2:19-20 (NLT)*

What would God want to see? Our people. Those precious people he has entrusted to us.

**Discussion Questions...**

What makes you feel valued? What is your love language?  
What can you do to communicate value to those around you?