

Why Lucifer's Lie May Be Blocking Your Growth

Most people have a desire to grow, but very few know how to do it. Growth requires change, and most people are change resistant. Growth occurs best when people are part of a community. This is because relationships force us to change things about ourselves that simply don't work in real life. Relationships also provide us with the opportunity to move toward healing, wholeness and maturity.

We have a certain way we like to see ourselves and like others to see us. But that way doesn't always jibe with how others experience us. This incongruity could be described as a blind spot, or it could be a more menacing manifestation of self-delusion. Either way, we don't have the capacity to see things about ourselves the way others close to us do. And sometimes the things they see in us that we don't see in ourselves are detrimental to relationships.

This tendency, if we are not in strong relationships, causes us to create either grandiose perceptions or demoralizing devaluations of ourselves. These skewed perceptions create a chasm between others and us that prevents connectivity and promotes chaos. Only relationship can bridge the chasm. Healthy relationships can deflate any fanciful fantasies we have about ourselves and provide objective insights to help move us toward maturity. Healthy relationships can also provide the encouragement we need to overcome our insecurities and bolster the self-confidence we require to address our greatest fears.

Maturity is driven by self-awareness and requires accurate self-perception, authenticity and the humility to make the necessary changes to engage effectively in community. In short, maturity is measured by how well we relate to others.

The unfortunate reality is that most people don't build deep relationships in which they seek honest feedback from others, nor do they move constructively into difficult relationships with the intention to change themselves for the better. More often than not, conflict-laden relationships are exacerbated by image control on the part of one or both parties. When this posturing takes place, it's usually accompanied by elaborate attempts to bring about change in the other person, with very little personal introspection. These attempts can range from simple deflection to outright demands and manipulation. Each is intended to avoid the painful process of taking personal responsibility for making the changes necessary to move toward deeper, more mature relationships.

Posturing, self-protection and self-promotion are all toxic for relationships. They preclude authenticity, which is the ability to embrace ourselves as we are in our entirety. It's the capacity to understand and leverage our strengths, being honest about our shortcomings and the willingness to be transparent about both with others. Authenticity and transparency have tremendous power in promoting healthy relationships. But both require us to be deeply connected in community.

Understand the Luciferian Lie

Relationship catalyzes growth.

When we aren't moving into healthy relationships, we can fall prey to self-deception and the mistaken notion that we can make life work on our own. This is the great Luciferian lie. Allow me to wax philosophical for a moment.

Scripture tells the story of the creation of humankind. The first chapters of Genesis tell us God created the heavens and the earth and everything within them. Then he created man. But it was not good for man to be alone, so God made them male and female, as the pinnacle of His creative process. And He placed

man and woman together in the Garden of Eden to enjoy each other's company, appreciate their relationship with Him and relish in the vast resources at their fingertips. God's intent was for them to flourish and experience a satisfying and fulfilling existence in community. Man and woman lived in a relationship with each other and with God that was pure and unadulterated. Their intimate community suffered no pretense. They were fully exposed and fully known to each other and lived in harmony with creation. It was, in a word, paradise.

But then something went horribly wrong. Lucifer appeared in the form of a serpent and enticed the woman. He questioned God's design for humans and His desire for humankind's fulfillment. The sly serpent suggested God was withholding something good to which they were entitled. The fact was that God had provided them with everything they needed to experience the fullness of creation. But the one thing He had instructed them not to do was to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. His intent was not to deprive them but to protect them. They already and only knew everything that was good. Their lives were idyllic. What benefit could there possibly be in knowing evil? But the serpent was persuasive. Eating from this tree, he assured the woman, would make her like God Himself. She wouldn't have to be in relationship with God. She could be "god." And it would be her expanded knowledge that would allow her to morph into the divine.

It was a lie. Eve was deceived. Adam remained silent. Though he had been the one who had firsthand knowledge of God's instructions, he, too, fell prey to the appealing proposition. Instead of stepping into the light and addressing the lie, he remained in the shadows and succumbed to the temptation of self-aggrandizement. Rather than remaining in a trusting relationship with the one who had given them life, Adam and Eve chose instead to take the path of self-promotion. They attempted to elevate both their knowledge and position by

circumventing relationship. In doing so, they killed community and forfeited paradise. When the relationship was ruptured, Eden was lost.

Within this narrative is a principle that speaks to the very core of human nature. Within each one of us is an innate desire to move toward enlightenment. The lie, however, is that humans can attain enlightenment outside of community. This belief in the human capacity to move toward self-fulfillment outside of relationship is the hallmark of Luciferianism. Many are misled to believe independence is the hallmark of maturity. It's not. Maturity means we live well with others in healthy, interdependent relationships.

Think about it. We were each born into a family. Our family was the community in which we learned how to relate to others. Each interaction with our parents and siblings shaped us. To a great extent, our values, beliefs and behaviors were forged by our early interactions with our family. As we grew older, our circle of friends and acquaintances also grew. And every encounter helped crystalize what we believed to be true about ourselves, the world in general and others. We grew because of relationships. And if we want to continue to grow, it will be because of relationships.

Create Value Through Relationships

Business—and ministry—is also about relationships. Relationship, through which those who have a need are linked with those who can supply, is an exchange of value that benefits both parties. In fact, relationships are the very foundation of business. And healthy relationships are always at the center of thriving businesses. I would go so far as to say that good business is never about simply making money. It's really about building relationships and making a difference in peoples' lives. The better you build relationships and the more value you create for others in those relationships, the more money you will make. The more

personally you connect with others, the more your business will flourish and the more your ministry will impact others.

I call it “relationomics.” Now don’t go look it up; we made up that term! But relationomics, as we define it, is the study of the observable impact relationships have on economic activity. It’s an assessment of the value created by relationships as opposed to simply a fiscal transactional analysis. In the marketplace, a significant causal correlation exists between the strength of the relationship and the flow of resources. The stronger and healthier the relationship, the more productive and profitable the transactions between those parties tend to be.

On a personal level, if you want to be your best self, you need someone else speaking into your world through relationship. For an athlete to fulfill her potential, she needs a relationship with a coach. For a student to maximize learning, he must have a relationship with a teacher or tutor. If you want to grow in your professional life, you’d best engage with a mentor. For us to move toward maturity, we need deep, healthy relationships with family and friends. We all need others to speak truth into our world. We may very well be the best person in the room, but we won’t be our best self if we don’t have others who are encouraging, challenging and sharpening us.

Engender a Spirit of Ownership

Thriving organizations are powered by people. And transformational organizations serve people well, both internally and externally. The healthier the relationships between these people, the more impactful the organization will be. While this may seem like common sense, I can assure you it is not common practice in many settings.

Unfortunately, few organizations promote healthy relationships. Some assume most people know how to build

healthy relationships. For others, healthy relationships fall far behind other priorities on the scorecard. Culture is simply not a primary focus. Many organizations and ministries invest far more time, energy and resources in promoting programs and services than in helping their people connect deeply and meaningfully. As a result, relationships languish, ministry suffers and conflict abounds.

Impact players are those who understand the power of unity and how to move teams beyond petty drama to conflict resolution. They understand the necessity of being able to both receive and provide strong developmental feedback. They have mastered the art of coaching conversations, expressing concern when appropriate and effectively confronting damaging behavior before it sours the culture. Impact players engender a spirit of ownership and accountability, where everyone takes pride in and assumes personal responsibility for the outcomes. They know that people and organizations flourish in relationally rich environments. And impact players seek to create a culture of accountability that inspires everyone to bring their best self to the table.

Commit to a Relational Culture

In the end, you can have all the money you've ever desired, a successful career and good physical health. But without loving, healthy relationships, life will feel incomplete. Life and leadership are not solo sports. The next time you find yourself scrolling through Facebook instead of being present at the table, stop and engage with those around you. If you're considering staying late once again at the office instead of being home for dinner with the family or getting together with friends, then stop and reconsider. If you begin to treat people as assets to the organization rather than valued individuals who are worthy of your time and attention, then reassess your leadership. If you find yourself hiring with little commitment to the long-term growth and development of team members, then revamp the system. If you begin to feel as

though leadership is a lonely endeavor, then slow down and spend more time cultivating connectedness with others.

Commit yourself to creating a culture in which there is a strong commitment to relational integrity. Become a value creator, intent on not only bringing your best to every endeavor but also insisting that everyone else do the same. Intercept entropy early. Become a ninja of conflict resolution. Lead beyond self and love deeply. Create a safe environment in which people can be themselves and find the resources they need to accelerate personal growth and professional development.

Relationships can be complicated. But, in the end, relationship catalyzes growth. The good life is built on good relationships. Personal happiness and fulfillment are found in maturing relationships. And thriving businesses—and ministries—are powered by relationships. {eoa}

Randy Ross is founder and CEO (chief enthusiasm officer) of Remarkable!. He is a corporate advisor and coach, keynote speaker and author of Remarkable! and Relationomics: Business Powered by Relationships, from which this article is drawn. Learn more at

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