

A Credible Identity

For I know where I came from and where I am going . . . I am not alone. The Father who sent me is with me.

John 8:14, 16

There is nothing more attractive than a confident leader. “I know who I am, I know where I’m going, and I know how to get there,” are statements that exude certainty and vision. But the most critical issue for confident leaders is whether or not they have the right to be confident. Do they have credibility? Credibility is related not to the amount of confidence one exudes but to one’s past résumé of achievements. Credibility answers the question, “What is the caliber of the people who have already placed their trust in you?”

By the eighth chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus had fed thousands, healed multitudes, taught the scholars, and forgiven sinners. Still the Pharisees were compelled to challenge the credibility of Jesus. Fully aware of the agenda of the lawyers he was facing, Jesus nevertheless stated that he was sent by the Father and that the Father stood with him in his claims. He used language that forced them to make a choice about him.

The words Jesus spoke resonated with some and offended others. But they all understood him. Jesus knew that regardless of his resume, regardless of his Father’s support, some would be dead set on opposing him.

Interestingly, Jesus did not focus long on those who rejected his call to redemption. Instead, he turned to those who did believe and encouraged them: “Jesus said to the people who believed in him, ‘You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’” (v. 31).

Jesus' dialogue with the Pharisees served not simply to defend his credibility, though he was impressively successful in doing so. His statements primarily called some to saving faith. He then encouraged them to press on toward the freedom that comes from being pulled out from under the condemnation of the law that they knew so well. Jesus never allowed personal pride to interfere with the redemption of one heart. He never allowed the defense of his reputation to take precedence over his overall purpose: to bring sinners home.

Confidence and credibility are useful tools to have in carrying out leadership functions. They certainly affect our effectiveness in guiding people to Jesus. But they must be driven by a passion for others to experience spiritual freedom in Jesus Christ. Jesus calls us to be completely available for his service in this grand purpose.