

IT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE LONELY AT THE TOP

By Rick Boxx

A common refrain I hear from many CEOs and business and professional leaders is, "It's lonely at the top." Business owners and top executives often find themselves having to make difficult decisions they are not comfortable sharing with their team members. This is why in 1945, U.S. President Harry S. Truman had a sign made for his desk that read, "The Buck Stops Here." He knew that for key decisions the ultimate responsibility was his alone.

Unless they can find a group of peers they trust and in whom they can confide, or pay for a business coach or consultant, many CEOs often end up making decisions in isolation. Sometimes this can be successful, but it also can lead to poor decision-making due to a lack of wise counsel and accountability.

In terms of striving to effectively represent Jesus Christ in the marketplace, being "*ambassadors for Christ*" as 2 Corinthians 5:20 states it, seeking and being willing to listen to wise counsel is essential. Christianity was not designed for lone rangers, people who isolate themselves during times of crisis.

As we might expect, the Bible has much to say about this. Here are some examples:

Two or more, better than one. Just as lifting or carrying a heavy load is easier with someone to help rather than trying to carry it alone, decision-making and managing heavy responsibilities can be easier when we can share them. *"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken"* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

Being with others can dispel loneliness. Feelings of loneliness in the executive suite sometimes are inevitable. However, having someone to meet with in confidence, perhaps a small group of peers who understand the pressures of leading a business or organization, can be invaluable and a source of much-needed support. The Bible admonishes us to, *"Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another"* (Hebrews 10:24).

Seek out like-minded individuals. For many years CBMC has been intentional to establish peer affinity groups to assist people in overcoming the "lonely at the top" dilemma that many in the workplace face every day. Connect3 teams, Young Professionals and Trusted Advisor Forums are among the groups available for building beneficial peer relationships.

We find this practice often implemented in the Scriptures. When the early Church was growing rapidly, mature spiritual leaders were needed to ensure this growth was consistent with what Jesus had taught. Some leaders like the apostle Paul and his mentor, Barnabas, were appointed to work together in this important ministry. *"The Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'.... [They] went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus...[where] they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper"* (Acts 13:2-5).

Whether you're a CEO or a business leader, being involved in a group of like-minded leaders can help overcome loneliness and making poor decisions.

© 2025, Unconventional Business Network. Adapted with permission from “UBN Integrity Moments”, a commentary on faith at work issues. Visit www.unconventionalbusiness.org. UBN is a faith at work ministry serving the international small business community.

CBMC INTERNATIONAL: Christopher Simpson, President - csimpson@cbmcint.org

P.O. Box 17376 ▪ Tucson, Arizona 85731 ▪ U.S.A.

TEL.: 520-334-1114 ▪ E-MAIL: mmanna@cbmcint.org

Web site: www.cbmcint.org Please direct any requests or change of address to: jmarple@cbmcint.org

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever had the “it’s lonely at the top” experience? Perhaps you are experiencing it right now. Describe what that is like for you.
2. What are some of the pitfalls of refusing to align with one or more people with whom you can share the burdens of leadership, including making difficult decisions?
3. Think of a time when you were able to share a burden with someone else, whether carrying a physical load or being able to openly share about challenges you were facing. What was that like for you?
4. How can you find like-minded individuals in whom you can confide, without selecting people you know will simply agree with whatever you want to do?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages: Proverbs 27:7; Matthew 18:19-20; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Galatians 6:2

Challenge for This Week

Regardless of your level of responsibility, whether you are a CEO or business owner, a lower-level executive or manager, or member of a team, you must make important decisions. Having someone – or a small group – in whom you can talk in confidence can help to ensure those decisions are the best ones.

If you are not already in a peer group at present, pray about how you might form one or become part of one that has already been established. If you are involved with CBMC, ask about resources it has available for meeting this need.