

Teamwork Training, Week 5, 3/12/11

Intro

— Pastor Paine

Can anybody tell what the weak link is?

(Holds up a bundle of linked paper clips)

You can't really tell by looking at them. You have to do a stress test. Who wants to do a stress test?

(Passing around some paper clip chains)

Does anyone think there's any other way to test?

(One of the chains break) The green one!

Sometimes you've got to test things out. Does anybody have a singer on their team? Carlton? (I think that was pure delegation.) Carlton, sing a verse of Amazing Grace for us.

(Carlton sings the first two words, off-key.)

How about another team? Bill and Mike?

(Bill and Mike sing passably well.)

What do you think? American Idol material? How many of you think that you could represent your team by singing?

(A few hands.)

I'm going to give you a list of numbers to add, without paper and without a calculator.

1 + 10 + 15 + 20 + 11 + 25 + 6 + 51 + 13 + 24

You're going too fast!

Okay, we're starting over.

$1 + 10 + 15 + 20 + 11 + 25 + 6 + 51 + 13 + 24 + 48$

Is anyone still with me? What do you have, Jay?

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Did anybody else have it? Who was the strong link in the chain?

That exercise was meant to point out that if you're putting together a team, and someone is a weak link on your team, that doesn't make them a bad person. Some of you think, "If I have to identify one of my teammates as a weak link, that's like putting them down as a person." It's counter to Christian thinking, right? We all have value, right?

You don't always know what your weak link is until you start working together. But if you identify a weak link on your team, you owe it to that person to help them find a fit. We did an exercise with addition, and with singing, and with looking at links in a chain. You can't always know in advance. What team would I be a weak link on?

- Computers
- Singing
- Basketball

Okay, we can stop there. But even though I wouldn't be an asset on those teams, it doesn't mean I'm worthless. So remember your responsibility as team leaders:

1. To the team, to make sure you have the right people
2. To the individual who might be a weak link, to help them find their fit

The Law Of The Chain

— Rod Williams

I had to step back and really evaluate myself about the law of the chain. How many of you have ever been in a situation where you were the weak link? It's pretty much unanimous. I've been a weak link at certain jobs in my life. I've been on teams where I was the newbie and didn't have a clue about the job. There were times when I was a weak link because it wasn't my niche, and I got an attitude. I was like a fish out of water; I didn't like the job; I didn't want to be there. They even sent me to school, but I didn't want it. Being in the military, you just don't walk off the job; you deal with it.

Let's look at our papers.

Journey Thoughts

* 1. Not everyone **will** take the journey with you. **Choice**

It's not likely, when you're starting a journey, that everybody will be on-board with you.

* 2. Not everyone **should** take the journey with you. **Ability**

What happens if someone is on the journey with you, and that person has another agenda?

* 3. Not everyone **can** take the journey with you. **Potential**

Tell me some characteristics of a weak team-member:

- Doesn't appear on time
- Lack of knowledge of the material
- Complacency
- Lost and confused
- Lack of interest
- Lack of focus
- Can't keep up
- Bad attitude

Tell me some things you felt at the times you were a weak link:

- Frustration
- Low self-esteem
- Shame
- No confidence
- Negativity
- Inadequacy

Sometimes it's not so much that you're no good, but that everyone else is better. I want us to talk about these things so that we can have compassion on others.

Characteristics of a Weaker Team Member

- Unable to **keep pace** with the other team members.
- Unable to **grow** in their area of responsibility.
- Unable to see the **big picture**.
- Unable to fulfill the **expectations** given to them.
- Unwilling to work on their personal **weaknesses**
- Unwilling to work with other **team members**

There have been times when I've been a weak team member, and I was asked to do something else.

Let's look at the equations that John Maxwell provided for us.

$$10 + 10 + 10 + 10 + 10 + 10 = 60 \text{ Average}$$

$$10 + 10 + 10 + 10 + 10 + 5 = 55 \text{ Average — Reduced team effectiveness by 10\%}$$

$$10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 = 1,000,000$$

$$10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10 \times 5 = 500,000 \text{ — Reduced team effectiveness by 50\%}$$

Until the “weak link” situation is corrected:

- The stronger members will **identify** the weaker one.
- The stronger members will have to **help** the weaker one.
- The stronger members will become **less** effective.
- The stronger members will **resent** the weaker one.
- The stronger members will **question** the leader's discernment and courage.
- The weaker members will take more **time** than the stronger ones.
- The weaker members will want to hold on to their **position**.
- The weaker members will **control** the relationship.

Examples

(First illustration)

We have a picture here of a chain holding up a 5,000 pound weight. We have people here saying, “We should have replaced that weak link last week after the inspection.”

(Next illustration)

This is a picture of a track team. There’s a guy in back saying,

Hey, wait up!

His teammates are saying,

You should have spent more time in practice!

When is the coach going to get rid of him?

The guy in back is saying,

I don’t want to be here. What will track do for me?

If the coach is discerning, what should he do about this?

Counsel him

The stronger links have to spend more time with the weaker one. And you have the stronger members resenting the weaker one. Finally, you see the guy in back saying,

My dad wanted me to do this.

That was his whole reason.

Look at what the coach is thinking:

Another race lost because of this kid!

The coach isn’t thinking about the other members on the team; he’s just thinking about the race that they lost because of this one weak link.

(Pointing at the next illustration)

Now we go take this same kid and put him on the football team. Now he's doing well, even though he's only a freshman. What's happening here?

He's found his niche.

If you have a weak link on your team, it's your responsibility to counsel with that person, and help him find his niche.

How can we strengthen a weak link?

- Encouragement
- Training
- Counseling
- Suggest different areas
- Find out their interest
- Give them books to read
- Positive motivation
- Be honest with them
- Challenge them
- Reposition them on the team
- Give them an ultimatum
- Spend time with them

Someone who is a weak link in one area can be a star somewhere else. If you don't handle a weak link correctly, you may come to a point in your life when you run into that person again, and guess what? That weak link is the boss. Has that ever happened to anyone?

(lots of hands)

That's life. So you come to that person and they say, "I remember you." You play like you have amnesia. How many of you like to deal with people like you've been dealt with?

Let's look at the positive side.

(Writing on the board)

Weak link feelings and emotions

What are some feelings and emotions that you've had when you've been the weak link?

- Embarrassed
- Overwhelmed
- Frustrated
- Stressed
- Denial
- Angry
- Inadequacy
- Awkward
- Defensive
- Looking for a way out
- Pride
- Incompetency

When preparing for this lesson, a lot of the other laws came into effect:

Questions and Answers

What if the weak link has been identified, and the team leader just looks the other way? What should I do as a team member?

— Pastor Paine

Is the next person in the chain of command aware of the situation?

That would be the owner. Yes, he is aware.

Does it affect the team?

Not very often, but it does.

Sometimes you can't force a change from your position. Perhaps the most realistic way to create positive change is to ask that person what they like or don't like, and help them find a better fit for themselves. Possibly, that's a win-win scenario. It may be that the owner wants it a certain way, and you aren't going to change it.

As Christians, how do you view a weak link? Not in a work environment, but in the body of Christ. I looked in the scriptures about "weak" because I was struggling with this concept.

I think that when we look at Apostle Paul's words about the body of Christ, it's more like a mis-match than a mis-fit. If they're a weak link *here*, then where would they be a *strong* link? Everybody is a "10" somewhere.

When I was a singing major, my voice was changing. The conductor recognized what was causing me to be a weak link, so he talked to me about it. He took me out of the performances, but let me continue to attend practices.

You said that the weak link tries to hold on to their position. Why is that, and how can we overcome it?

— Rod Williams

It's a matter of pride. In the military, if you're a weak link, it's looked at like you're not doing your job.

It could also be a matter of not wanting to let other people down. You don't want anybody else to fail.

Sometimes it's a matter of getting paid. You don't want to lose your job.

In my last job, I was the weak link. In the twilight of my career, I was the weak link. I said to my chief, "Any time you want me to go back to the fleet, I'm ready." He laughed and I laughed with him, but the reality was, I didn't want to be there.

Pastor Paine: In your experience in the ministry, when you found yourself being the weak link, how did you feel, and how did you overcome that?

— Pastor Paine

If we can really embrace the teaching that the goal is more important than the role, that the mission is more important than any of us, we can admit that we're the weak link and find an area where we can work more effectively. We joke about me being a bad singer, but I used to sing with the group. One day Pastor Davis said, "Why don't you smile more? Stay up there with the group, but just . . . move less air." And it wasn't long before I realized that I would be more of an asset to the team in a different area.

In his book, Richard Stanley said that for years, he coordinated events as the senior pastor. He realized that he wasn't good at it, and he finally said to the board, "I'm not very good at coordinating events." And everybody broke out in laughter. He wasn't expecting that type of response, but he said, "Would anybody else like to step up and do that?" And everyone was relieved that he had finally stepped down from that responsibility.

Pastor Paine: From a team-member point of view, I'm almost always on a team where I can't afford to have a bad attitude toward the weaker links on my team. How do you handle that, in order to support the mission?

One of the big things is, you have to be honest about it. A pessimist is a person who thinks they're going to get mugged every day. An optimist is someone who thinks they'll never get mugged. And a realist is an optimist who got mugged. If we're honest and realistic about where we're at, you don't want to continue in . . . you've heard that insanity is doing the same thing and expecting different results. Your responsibility as a team member is to approach that person and say, "This is not your area of strength. Let me help you find your area."

— Rod Williams

A lot of times, the temperament of the leader can make a big difference. I'm working with Pastor Paine in this training, and he's a good storyteller, but that's not my strength. He's not going to change me, and I'm not going to change him, but he realized my strengths and my niche. We realize that the overall mission is to provide quality training for the team.

I like Pastor Paine's breadcrumb approach of self-discovery. If you're dealing with someone who has a strong personality, you tend to leave a trail of clues.

How do you deal with someone who has "filled in the gap and made up the hedge" in an area where they're not really very good at it, but everyone thinks they are.

I think that the best approach is to help that person find where they can really excel. If you really believe in the law of the niche, then what you're doing is to help that person find a job where they can really excel. I've done jobs that I've been bad at, and I've done jobs that I've been good at. This isn't about putting someone down; it's about helping them find where they can excel.