

# “The Minister and Personal Insecurity”

by

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## THE MINISTER AND PERSONAL INSECURITY

Spiritually and emotionally healthy ministers operate from a base of personal security in relationship to God, to others, and to themselves. Properly developed, appropriately secure ministers will consistently provide more effective spiritual leadership than their insecure counterparts, and they will find greater levels of personal fulfillment and contentment in their calling. When leaders operate from a base of insecurity, relational challenges arise that threaten both personal and corporate success. A sound ministerial development plan will assess and reinforce the personal security of the minister in formation, or reformation, and insure that leadership does not flow from a base of personal insecurity.

Leadership expert John Maxwell affirms the critical nature of personal security for the would-be leader in his book, *21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*. He lists security as one of the twenty-one qualities every leader must possess or develop to be most effective, and emphatically states his view on the matter. “Insecure leaders are dangerous—to themselves, their followers, and the organizations they lead—because a leadership position amplifies personal flaws. Whatever negative baggage you have in life only gets more difficult to bear when you’re trying to lead others.”<sup>1</sup>

Research and writing on the specific topic of “security psychology” is relatively limited in scope. There are very few books wholly dedicated to the central theme of personal security, how to attain it, the psychological and social benefits of it, or the negative implications of operating out of a base of personal insecurity. A book entitled *The Tender Heart: Conquering Your Insecurity*, by psychologist Joseph Nowinski, bills itself as, “the first book to investigate

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<sup>1</sup>John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 121.

insecurity,” and it was not published until the year 2001. “Insecurity” as defined by Nowinski serves to effectively introduce the topic:

In this book the word *insecurity* has a particular meaning, and a particular cause. Insecurity refers to a profound sense of self-doubt—a deep feeling of uncertainty about our basic worth and our place in the world. Insecurity is associated with chronic self-consciousness, along with a chronic lack of confidence in ourselves and anxiety about relationships. The insecure man or woman lives in a constant fear of rejection and a deep uncertainty about whether his or her own feelings and desires are legitimate.<sup>2</sup>

Given this definition, it is apparent why a posture of insecurity is undesirable for a minister/leader, and one that begs for either preventative or remedial action.

Authors take different approaches when they address the topic of security in their writings. In the book *Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organizations*, author Janet Hagberg suggests that only the most secure leader will be able to practice the vulnerability required of them to most effectively “lead from the soul.”<sup>3</sup> Stanley Grenz and Roy Bell, co-authors of *Betrayal of Trust: Confronting and Preventing Clergy Sexual Misconduct*, address the security issue in terms of “low self-esteem and the need for approval,” and point out how these common insecurities found in ministers may pave the way for moral failure.<sup>4</sup> John Eldredge, a Christian family counselor and author of *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man’s Soul*, theorizes that male security accompanies the discovery of true masculinity. In Eldredge’s view, all men

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Nowinski, *The Tender Heart: Conquering Your Insecurity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 23.

<sup>3</sup> Janet O. Hagberg, *Real Power: Stages of Personal Power in Organizations* (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 2003), 282.

<sup>4</sup> Stanley J. Grenz and Roy D. Bell, *Betrayal of Trust: Confronting and Preventing Clergy Sexual Misconduct* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 51.

have a “wound,” which he claims is usually inflicted by their father. This wound causes us to relate out of a base of uncertainty or insecurity until the wound is uncovered and healed.<sup>5</sup>

Martin E.P. Seligman, former president of the American Psychological Association, is considered a leader in the study of self-esteem psychology. A key focus of his work has been upon the role of optimism vs. pessimism in predicting future individual success. His work, along with others, has given rise to the idea of “self-efficacy, the belief that one has mastery over the events of one’s life and can meet challenges as they come up.”<sup>6</sup> Self-efficacy and healthy self-image may imply personal security. However, Seligman has pointed out that high self-esteem alone does not guarantee social success. In one article, he vividly illustrated how high self-esteem must be incorporated with other developmental keys in order to create the kind of security that will breed healthy relationships and social functionality:

Traditional American child-rearing and individual responsibility has been replaced by a self-esteem movement. This movement tells parents and educators that their first duty is to make kids feel good about themselves. Kids are taught mantras like 'I am special,' and they believe them. Unfortunately it turns out that hit men, genocidal maniacs, gang leaders and violent kids often have high self-esteem, not low self-esteem. A recipe for their violence is a mean streak combined with an unwarranted sense of self-worth. When such a boy comes across a girl or parents or schoolmates who communicate to him that he is not all that worthy, he lashes out.<sup>7</sup>

Seligman’s observations demonstrate a link between self-esteem and security, but do not define them as one in the same. It is noteworthy that Seligman identified healthy relationships

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<sup>5</sup>John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man’s Soul* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 59-75.

<sup>6</sup>Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995), 89.

<sup>7</sup>Martin E.P. Seligman, “The American Way of Blame” *American Psychological Association Monitor Online* vol. 29, no. 7 (July 1998) [online journal article] <http://www.apa.org/monitor/jul98/pc.html>, accessed 3/26/2005.

with family, school, and community as tempering agents to exaggerated self-esteem, and keys to creating a truly secure adolescence.<sup>8</sup> A proper understanding of God and His role in our lives would be another worthy addition to this list of tempering relationships.

There seems to be general agreement about the benefits of personal security when it comes to social performance and achievement. However, for some people personal security is an elusive state that is neither attainable nor desirable. Alan Watts wrote *The Wisdom of Insecurity* in the 1950's before "pop psychology" had fully "popped." Though he held a Master's Degree in Theology from Sudbury-Western Theological Seminary, Watts did not approach the topic of security from a purely Christian perspective. A former Anglican priest, Watts left his wife and the church in 1941 to become a Western interpreter of Zen Buddhism and other Eastern thought. He attempted to fill the spiritual void in the West that was left by the proliferation of modernism, the scientific method, and "God is dead" theology. Unfortunately, Watts chose to fill the spiritual vacuum with Eastern philosophy intermingled with psychedelic drug use. Timothy Leary, a promoter of the religious and psychological value of LSD use during that time, was a friend and colleague who wrote forwards to some of Watts' books.<sup>9</sup>

As the title *The Wisdom of Insecurity* infers, Watts asserted that man's highest achievement is his quest for God and wisdom; and the discovery journey is enhanced by insecurity and the dependence it forces. In his view, insecurity creates a hunger that serves as a catalyst for faith and pursuit of God. Watts wrote, "But it has been possible to make the insecurity of human life supportable by belief in unchanging things beyond the reach of calamity—in God, in man's

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Alan Watts, *An Interactive Experience of the Story and Life Works of Alan Watts* [web page], <http://www.alanwatts.com/library1.html>, accessed 3/26/2005.

immortal soul, and in the government of the universe by eternal laws of right.”<sup>10</sup> Eastern thought and drugs aside, Watts reached back to his Christian orthodoxy and presented a rational argument for faith in general. If there is any wisdom or beauty to insecurity, it is when it becomes a catalyst that draws a person toward faith and security, the sort of which is discovered only in the living God!

The Psalmist analogized man’s quest for security in the midst of insecurity by likening it to the drive experienced by a thirsty deer in search of water. “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God. When can I go and meet with God?” (Ps. 42:1-2 NIV)<sup>11</sup> A reading of the entire Psalm reveals a musician’s desperate search for security. He had an intense spiritual need to know that God was listening to him, and then rejoiced in the discovery that He was. As a result, the songwriter was more secure.

Helen Keller, a renowned figure from American history, spoke to the elusive nature of security in her writings. Keller’s life spanned the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and she distinguished herself as a remarkable, high-achiever. Most noteworthy of all, her accomplishments were realized after a childhood illness robbed her of the benefits of physical sight, hearing, and even speech in the early years of her life. Despite these major obstacles, Ms. Keller was trained to read, write, and communicate in ways superior to many of us who face no substantial disabilities of any kind. If anyone had an excuse to crumble under the weight of insecurity, it would be someone like Ms. Keller. Her life story, recorded in print millions of times, was also depicted in the renowned 1960 film entitled, *The Miracle Worker*. Helen Keller expressed herself on the topic of security in this way: “Security is mostly a superstition. It does

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<sup>10</sup>Alan Watts, *The Wisdom of Insecurity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1951), 15.

<sup>11</sup>All Scripture references are quoted from the *Holy Bible, New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984).

not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.”<sup>12</sup>

At first glance, Ms. Keller’s suggestion that security is virtually unattainable might appear to contradict the notion that personal security is a prerequisite to success and achievement. However, a close examination of Helen Keller’s life and testimony provides context for her statement, revealing that only through her discovery of inner strength and security did she emerge from her dark and silent world to become one of America’s most miraculous and memorable characters. In short, she overcame insecurity.

Ms. Keller’s autobiography provides ample support for the idea that she became adventurous only after she became secure in her relationships with self, God and others. Keller wrote, “Is it not true, then, that my life with all its limitations touches at many points the life of the World Beautiful? Everything has its wonders, even darkness and silence, and I learn, whatever state I may be in, therein to be content.”<sup>13</sup>

Helen Keller could easily have been imprisoned by more than just blindness or deafness. She could have been locked in the prison of insecurity that can accompany severe disabilities, but with the help of God and others around her, she fought her way to freedom. Every honest person will confess to periodic feelings of insecurity, and it is recognized as a universal reality. As part of the human condition, everyone falls victim to it in various circumstances. This is

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<sup>12</sup> *Famous Quotes and Famous Sayings Website* [web page]  
<http://home.att.net/~quotesabout/helenkeller.html> (1994-2004), accessed 3/25/2005.

<sup>13</sup> Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 98.

undoubtedly part of what Helen Keller was saying when she described security as being an elusive “superstition.”<sup>14</sup>

Biblical characters were certainly not immune to bouts with insecurity. When God called Moses to lead Israel, he was so overtaken by insecurity over his oratory skills, or perceived lack thereof, that he tried to defer leadership to someone else. “O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue. O Lord, please send someone else to do it.” (Exod. 4:10 & 14)

When God summoned Gideon to become a judge over Israel, Gideon’s family background, as well as his own position within that family, became a point of insecurity. “‘But Lord,’ Gideon asked, ‘How can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.’” (Judg. 6:13)

Even the apostle Paul expressed feelings of inadequacy as a handler of the message of Christ by asking, “And who is equal to such a task?” (2 Cor. 3:16).

Perhaps the most vivid biblical example of insecurity is found in the life of King Saul as recorded in 1 Samuel. Due largely to insecurity, Saul became paranoid, abandoned his trusted relationship with David, threatened David’s life, consulted with a witch for guidance instead of with God, and failed the people of Israel by leading them into near destruction. Saul’s failure to deal with insecurity, amidst other spiritual and emotional issues, ultimately led him to take his own life on a field of battle. Insecurity is an intermittent, but common struggle for everyone. However, Saul’s insecurity reached what Joseph Nowinski would describe as dysfunctional:

If insecurity is to some extent unavoidable, then the key question becomes this: at what point does insecurity become dysfunctional? I believe that when insecurity is so intense and lasting that it seriously undermines our self-esteem and interferes with our ability to enjoy

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 68.



life, to build and to keep satisfying relationships, and to achieve our career potential, it is dysfunctional.<sup>15</sup>

Given that insight, it is understandable why a minister cannot be expected to lead a church or ministry from the context of “dysfunctional insecurity,” if it can be done effectively at all.

Recognizing insecurity in ourselves can be challenging, but we certainly seem to be able to identify it in those around us. Reference to the insecurities of others is common in day-to-day conversation. You know the setting, because you have been there. Break time conversation on the job commences around the water cooler in the office, and frustrations are vented concerning the behavior of a boss or fellow-worker. It is amazing how during the course of one coffee break, we can form an ad hoc psychological evaluation team, identify the presenting issues, assess the root causes of the problem, and propose a treatment plan to remedy it. Of course, our plan rarely progresses outside the break room, or even past the corner where the water cooler is located. It tends to remain in the realm of nothing more than gossip.

Nonetheless, in our work as a lay psychologist, it is uncanny how often our common sense psychology leads us to attribute the undesirable behavior of others to personal battles with insecurity. Our words may say something like, “What a bully that guy is!” or “Wow, did you see his hackles raise when anyone else presented a different point of view?” What we are really saying is, “That person is insecure.”

There is actually clinical support for the laymen’s common sense view of insecurity. Psychologist and researcher, Daniel Goleman, addresses the matter in terms of “emotional intelligence” in his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. In Goleman’s view, “emotional intelligence” is more important to success in life than a person’s IQ.

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<sup>15</sup>Nowinski, 27.

“Academic intelligence has little to do with emotional life. The brightest among us can founder on the shoals of unbridled passions and unruly impulses; people with high IQs can be stunningly poor pilots of their private lives.”<sup>16</sup>

Goleman draws extensively upon brain and behavioral research to show how some very bright people flounder through life while other moderately intelligent folks do amazingly well. Much of his research deals with formation issues, particularly during the earliest stages of life. Goleman cites the work of T. Berry Brazelton of the National Center for Clinical Infant Programs and his work entitled, *Heart Start: The Emotional Foundations of School Readiness*. According to Brazelton, a child’s readiness for formal schooling depends far more upon emotional and social preparedness than academic acumen, a process he has affectionately dubbed “Heart Start” in contrast to the more academic “Head Start.”<sup>17</sup>

A report from the National Center for Clinical Infant Programs makes the point that school success is not predicted by a child’s fund of facts or a precocious ability to read so much as by emotional and social measures: being self-assured and interested; knowing what kind of behavior is expected and how to rein in the impulse to misbehave; being able to wait, to follow directions, and to turn to teachers for help; and expressing needs while getting along with other children.<sup>18</sup>

The connection of Brazelton’s work to the notion of personal security is apparent. As implied by the study, healthy boundaries and relationships are the fodder for personal security in an infant, and a promise of their future success. In related work, Brazelton also identifies seven key ingredients in a child’s capacity to learn: (1) Confidence, (2) Curiosity, (3) Intentionality, (4)

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<sup>16</sup>Goleman, 34.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 192-94.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 193.

Self-Control, (5) Relatedness, (6) Capacity to communicate, and (7) Cooperativeness.<sup>19</sup>

Brazelton's seven keys to a child's learning capacity can also be applied as keys to their sense of general personal security. These factors contribute to the promise of future emotional, social, and spiritual success. They are the very qualities found lacking in the insecure person.

Brazelton's list, which is used to identify children-of-promise, also parallels the qualities that recruiters search for in the identification of the most promising, emerging adult leaders. What team leader would not want to select team members who possess those engaging qualities? Perhaps the only person who would not is the insecure leader. This is an accurate assessment according to John Maxwell, who addresses this point in his book *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork*:

I believe that insecurity, rather than poor judgment or lack of intelligence, most often causes leaders to surround themselves with weak people. As I stated in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, only secure leaders give power to others. That is the Law of Empowerment. On the other hand, insecure leaders usually fail to build teams because of one of two reasons: Either they want to maintain control over everything for which they are responsible, or they fear being replaced by someone more capable. In either case, leaders who fail to promote teamwork undermine their own potential and erode the best efforts of the people with whom they work.<sup>20</sup>

Ministers are called upon to be team leaders in various settings, and insecurity can become a significant hindrance to that critical role. Patrick Lencioni has authored a best-selling book entitled *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* in which he identifies the absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 194.

<sup>20</sup>John Maxwell, *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 6-7.

results as the five nemeses to success within the most artfully constructed teams.<sup>21</sup> Any one, or all, of these impediments could conceivably be traced to the dysfunctional insecurity of a team leader or one of the team members. Acting out as an insecure team member may not only sabotage a team, but the organization as a whole can be placed at risk.

When Richard Nixon faced the stresses of the Watergate Scandal during his early 1970's presidency, the lifetime accumulation of Nixon's personal insecurities manifested with a vengeance. President Nixon not only began to exhibit bizarre personal behaviors centered on distrust and paranoia, but in the process he placed his cabinet and an entire nation at risk. Stories are told of how he held late night conversations with oil paintings of past presidents that adorn White House walls. Erwin Hargrove is a political science professor at Vanderbilt University and author of the book, *President as Leader*. In the year 2000 Hargrove appeared as a guest panelist at a University of Illinois conference on, "Personal Ethics and Political Leadership." He reflected upon Nixon's politics and ethics by saying, "While Nixon was a skilled politician, his personal insecurity eventually became clear to the public through his actions."<sup>22</sup> Nixon's insecurities became the undoing of his presidency, and America was shaken.

Anecdotally speaking, it seems that ministers are particularly prone to struggles with insecurity. As previously stated, all people will face the challenge of insecurity in certain moments. However, the battle with insecurity is too widespread, and too constant, for too many ministers. This is odd, because ministers are some of the most capable and gifted professionals to be found in any field of endeavor. Ministers should be brimming with confidence, particularly

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<sup>21</sup>Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 187-190.

<sup>22</sup>Koeneman, Scott, "Personal Ethics and Political Leadership" *University of Illinois Institute of Government and Public Affairs Conference Highlights* (February 2000) [web page] <http://www.igpa.uiuc.edu/events/confHighlights/feb2000/default.htm>, accessed 3/25/2005.

since they perceive themselves to be fulfilling a divine calling and have vast spiritual resources at their disposal. Most ministers could be described in varying degrees as leaders who are caring, compassionate, multi-talented, visionary, articulate, influential, passionate, well trained, and sensitive. Yes, very sensitive.

Ironically, these strengths and characteristics of the average minister may be the very reasons why they fall victim to insecurity. According to Joseph Nowinski, interpersonal sensitivity is the seedbed for insecurity:

Sensitivity is part of our temperament. People are born with a degree of sensitivity that they carry with them throughout their lives. Insecurity is the result of subjecting an innately sensitive person to abuse, rejection, or traumatic loss. The age at which these things happen, as well as how severe they are and how long they go on, is what determines how insecure a sensitive person will become.<sup>23</sup>

People who answer the call to pastoral ministry typically do so out of a heart of love, compassion, and desire to help others. Words like empathetic, attached, transparent, idealistic, emotionally sensitive, peaceful, and even romantic are synonyms for “pastoral care.” Church members commonly applaud these traits as those they love most about their pastor, which only encourages greater emphasis and expression of the traits in the minister’s behavior. Interestingly enough, Nowinski uses these exact “pastoral” terms to define the “sensitivity” that can lead to insecurity.<sup>24</sup> “What other people think,” becomes the pastor’s filter for decision-making, and a minister becomes someone he vowed he would never become, a man-pleaser instead of a God-pleaser. Danger can lurk behind strength, and interpersonal sensitivity is no exception. When

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<sup>23</sup>Nowinski, 89.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 52-57.

sensitivity becomes disproportionate, it develops into the weakness of insecurity in the minister's life. Left unchecked, that insecurity can become dysfunctional.

When insecurity becomes dysfunctional, what are the resulting symptoms? John Maxwell answers that question from a leadership perspective by suggesting that insecure leaders share at least four common traits. "They don't provide security for others; they take more from people than they give; they continually limit their best people; and they continually limit the organization."<sup>25</sup>

In the book, *Search for Significance*, author Robert S. McGee looks at insecurity through what he calls "God's eyes." He suggests that insecurity creates a "performance trap," which turns people into "approval addicts." The teeth of the trap include symptoms such as perfectionism, avoidance of risks, anger, resentment, pride, depression, low motivation, sexual dysfunction, chemical dependency, success identity, and hopelessness.<sup>26</sup> The approval addiction includes some of the same symptoms as the performance trap, but added to the mix are manipulation, codependency, avoidance of people, control, repeating of negative messages, and hypersensitivity.<sup>27</sup> Any one of these symptoms becomes an obvious impediment to successful relationships and effective ministry. In combination they can be both personally and corporately crippling.

A particular Assemblies of God minister developed a reputation for being a very difficult pastor to work with. This was an irony, because he was unusually gifted. The sermons he

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<sup>25</sup>Maxwell, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, 121-122.

<sup>26</sup>Robert S. McGee, *The Search for Significance* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2003), 29-40.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 53-62.

produced were written and delivered with excellence. He had a rich singing voice and a healthy knowledge of music, both of which served him well in ministry. His administrative prowess placed him head and shoulders above many peers, a fact that was clearly evident in his service to both the local church and in the broader denominational organization.

However, associate pastors were challenged in serving this senior leader. The list of “former” staff members grew long. Certain church members were fiercely loyal and remained under his leadership for many years, although the list of “former” church members grew multiplied times longer than the list of former associates. As a result, the church he led never grew, and even declined in attendance. Over time, peers found it difficult to serve alongside him in projects or as fellow committee members. Though he seemed to have the experience and credentials to serve larger churches than the one he had settled into, pulpit committees avoided his resume’ once they checked on references. Amidst his remarkable talents and abilities, he demonstrated a consistent pattern of insecure behaviors, such as control, low self-esteem, avoidance, and unhealthy addictions to the work of ministry. He was an insecure leader.

After many years of skirting the issue, circumstances finally brought it to bear in the form of an interpersonal conflict with a fellow minister. At the end of his emotional rope, he looked to a trusted friend for an objective opinion. Given the open door, the friend communicated honestly about the patterns of insecurity he had observed in his buddy over the years. The insecure minister began to weep. Through tears he said, “I know it’s true, and I even know where it all originated. Ever since I can remember, I have wanted to hear my father tell me that I am doing a good job. To this day, he has never uttered those words to me about anything I have ever done. I have spent a lifetime trying to gain my father’s approval, and have never received it.” Here was a man whose natural, inborn sensitivity to his father had led him to become dysfunctionally

insecure. The affects had been severe for him, as well as for those who worked and lived around him.

As a counselor, Joseph Nowinski focuses on the subject of insecurity and outlines the symptoms in a straightforward, clinical fashion born out of his professional experience. Insecure people are self-conscious, always seeing themselves with a critical eye. They are easily wounded, and once wounded they have a hard time healing. Insecurity breeds a lack of confidence, and any existing confidence is easily shaken. Insecure individuals create high expectations for themselves and others, expectations that are often unspoken. Insecure people have a hard time accepting normal human flaws and faults, both in themselves and others.<sup>28</sup>

As the average person considers the topic of insecurity, a normal question arises. “How do I measure my own level of insecurity?” Nowinski has designed three sets of survey questions that can help put a person on the road to answering that question. The three instruments are referred to as: (1) Insecurity Inventory, (2) Causes-of-Insecurity Inventory, and (3) Interpersonal Sensitivity Inventory.<sup>29</sup> All three instruments are included as appendices to this presentation. They were designed as tools to help a person discover something of themselves as it relates to the existence of insecurity, its causes, and the level of sensitivity that might suggest a proclivity toward becoming a dysfunctionally insecure person. Perhaps the best purpose served by the inventories they tend to jumpstart discussion of topics that are typically avoided.

Once the topic of insecurity is introduced to our thinking, other personality profiles and inventory tools are also available that can provide additional insight to our temperament and relational styles. These would include tools such as the *Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator*; Janet

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<sup>28</sup>Nowinski, 103-107.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 24-26, 30-32, 38-39.



Hagberg's *Personal Power Profile*, and/or *Spiritual Life Inventory*; the *Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis Test*; and the widely used *DISC Test and Profile*. These instruments are most effective when administered and interpreted by someone who is trained in the use of the respective tool so that they can provide interpretive data and insight to the results.

When insecurity indicators begin to surface, healthy ministerial support systems are characterized by an atmosphere of openness and honesty that allow a minister to pursue help and wise counsel, without fear of repudiation for doing so. Leaders of the Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God have attempted to model this attitude both personally and corporately. They have cooperated to help make counseling resources more accessible. The Network spends thousands of dollars each year on counseling assistance for ministers. They also facilitate the Northwest Counselors Network, a coalition of trained Christian counselors who affiliate in one way or another with the Assemblies of God fellowship in the Northwest. Educational cohorts are operated in various geographic areas around the Network, and leaders are taught valuable principles about team leadership and group dynamics. Many of the concepts the minister is exposed to in cohort settings are tools that would reinforce the security of the leader.

Preventative measures to curb dysfunctional sensitivity in ministers are always preferable to remedial steps. However, ministerial credentials are issued to people of all ages, many of whom have already developed deeply ingrained life patterns, to include insecurities. For this reason another question is posed. "Is it possible to migrate from the platform of dysfunctional security if I am operating from there?"

The answer is an emphatic, "Yes." There is a road to be traveled from insecurity to confidence. Nowinski states it this way:

Although the temperaments we are born with, including how interpersonally sensitive we are, are probably not very changeable, insecurity is something that a person can work to overcome. That's because while sensitivity is something we are born with and will have forever, insecurity is learned. And what can be learned can be unlearned.<sup>30</sup>

Thorough consideration of the steps necessary to turn insecurity into confidence demand more space than the remainder of this work allows. Multiplied volumes of "self-help" literature have been produced to assist people with this and other similar issues, but we will reference only two authors.

John Maxwell makes three very simple suggestions for improving security: (1) Get to know yourself better, through the use of proven test instruments or the input of trusted friends. (2) Make sure to give away the credit to other team members for accomplishments. (3) Get help from a trained therapist for your own benefit, and the benefit of those you work with.<sup>31</sup>

Joseph Nowinski, a counselor who has dedicated himself to this particular arena of therapy, suggests the process requires four basic steps.<sup>32</sup> First, he suggests that the insecure person must work to change expectations for themselves and others. This is primarily an exercise of assuming people are trustworthy until they prove otherwise, rather than assuming they are not and looking for evidence to support that bias. Second, the insecure person must learn to unlock emotions. According to Nowinski, an honest effort to change expectations will quite naturally lead an insecure person to experience emotions that were otherwise blocked. Third, there needs to be a refurbished approach to interpersonal conflicts and differences. Though usually resentful and angry, dysfunctional insecurity often causes a person to retreat from conflict and internalize it

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 171.

<sup>31</sup>Maxwell, *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, 123-124.

<sup>32</sup>Nowinski, 171-188.

without truly resolving it. The insecure person must resist the fight or flight options, and deal with conflict more constructively. Fourth, Nowinski says listen, learn, and compromise. Listen to the criticism or disappointment, keeping it in perspective. Learn from the other party what they expect of you, such as an apology, or changed behavior. Then compromise, or assume a posture that will not create winners and losers. Offer solutions that are healthy for both parties.

In the final analysis, as followers of Christ we know wherein lay our greatest source of strength and confidence. We echo the words of the Apostle Paul, who amidst hints of insecurity, made a bold declaration about his security when he wrote, “And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.” (2 Tim. 1:11-12)

God provides perfect security.

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## APPENDIX I - INSECURITY INVENTORY

How insecure am I? This is a question most people would like an answer to. Since most of us can relate to the idea of being insecure sometimes, the biggest issue is just how much insecurity is an issue in our lives. You can begin to find the answer by assessing your own level of insecurity (or that of someone you love) as it is right now. To do this, complete the following questionnaire by checking off all statements that describe you (or your loved one).

- I often worry about my relationships.
- I do not like being in the spotlight socially.
- I often feel that others don't take me seriously.
- I am an exceptionally jealous person.
- I'm forever thinking that others are smarter, more attractive, or more interesting than me.
- I worry that my partner is going to leave me for someone else.
- I would describe myself as very self-conscious.
- I've been told that I'm thin-skinned, overly sensitive.
- I often seek other people's approval, even if I don't particularly respect them.
- I've been told by friends and partners that I expect too much from myself and others.
- If someone hurts my feelings I have a hard time letting go of it and tend to dwell on it for a long time.
- I am very hard on myself when I make a mistake.
- I often ask my partner for reassurance that she/he still loves me.
- I get either angry or depressed if someone I care about disappoints me.
- I cry easily.
- I am very sensitive to criticism.
- I worry about how I look.
- I have a hard time trusting my partner not to cheat on me.

\_\_\_ I have a strong desire to make amends whenever I do or say something that seems to hurt someone else.

\_\_\_ I'm more inclined to think too little than too much of myself.

\_\_\_ Sometimes I feel anxious for no apparent reason.

\_\_\_ I worry about being disapproved of.

\_\_\_ I've been told that I'm very defensive if I'm criticized even slightly.

\_\_\_ I have often felt let down by people, even the ones who love me.

\_\_\_ I secretly feel that I'm not smart enough or attractive enough.

\_\_\_ I sometimes worry that even my best friends don't really like me.

\_\_\_ Most of the time I would sooner give in than fight for what I want.

\_\_\_ My feelings are easily hurt.

\_\_\_ If I do something that gets my partner angry, I have a hard time getting it out of my mind.

\_\_\_ I often don't have confidence in the decisions I make.

\_\_\_ It really bothers me when I think someone doesn't like me.

\_\_\_ If someone hurts my feelings I am more likely to give them the cold shoulder than to confront them.

\_\_\_ I often make up excuses rather than just telling the truth.

\_\_\_ I worry more than most people about what other people think of me.

\_\_\_ I will do almost anything to avoid conflicts with others.

The more items you checked off, the more likely it is that the person you are rating—either yourself or someone you love—is insecure.

Drawn from the work of Joseph Nowinski, Ph.D., *The Tender Heart: Conquering Your Insecurity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 30-32.

## APPENDIX II – CAUSES-OF-INSECURITY INVENTORY

You can use the following questionnaire to evaluate *yourself*. Doing so will help you to understand better how insecurity might be a factor in your own personality. You can also use this material to begin to gain some insight into *someone you love* and into the dynamics of your *relationship*.

- One of my parents was physically ill or emotionally impaired (for example, depressed) on and off for much of my youth.
- I spent time in foster homes or an institution when I was a child or an adolescent.
- My family moved more than four times from the time I was born until I started high school.
- I have had my heart broken many times.
- As a child or teenager I had to leave old friends and make new ones several times.
- During my childhood I often had to face frightening situations alone.
- My mother was physically or verbally abusive to me.
- My father was physically or verbally abusive to me.
- I was often left alone as a child.
- I was placed in a full-time day care center before I was three years old.
- I was often left with babysitters before I started school.
- I had to change day care centers more than once before I started school.
- My mother was not an affectionate person.
- My father was not an affectionate person.
- When I was growing up my mother was often critical of me.
- When I was growing up my father was often critical of me.
- My parents fought a lot when I was a child.
- My parents divorced before I was ten years old.
- One of my parents died before I was ten years old.



- Both of my parents worked full-time from the time I was an infant.
- My mother was very impatient with me.
- My father was very impatient with me.
- Judging by the way she acted, I sometimes thought my mother regretted having me.
- I was hospitalized for longer than two weeks as the result of an illness or accident before the age of six.
- My father showed little interest in me when I was growing up.
- My mother showed little interest in me when I was growing up.
- I missed a lot of school as a result of sickness.
- I had a sibling or a good friend die when I was young.
- I was disciplined using corporal punishment.
- There was violence in my family when I was growing up.
- I was sexually abused by a family member as a child or adolescent.

The more items you checked off in the above list, the more vulnerable you could be to being insecure, simply because of the sheer number of separations and losses you've experienced.

Drawn from the work of Joseph Nowinski, Ph.D., *The Tender Heart: Conquering Your Insecurity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 24-25.

## APPENDIX III- INTERPERSONAL SENSITIVITY INVENTORY

Are you tenderhearted? Use the questionnaire below to help you to determine if you were born with the kind of disposition that would have predisposed you to becoming insecure, if you were exposed to repeated separations from those you were attached to, or if you experienced repeated rejection or abuse. Again, you can apply this questionnaire to yourself or to your partner in order to gain insight into yourself and your relationship. This questionnaire measures interpersonal sensitivity, which is the personal disposition that lies at the core of being a tenderhearted person.

- People who know me would say that I am a very sensitive person.
- One of my greatest pleasures in life is to make someone else happy.
- It upsets me deeply if someone I like is angry with me.
- People described me as a sensitive child.
- I am an emotional person.
- I feel guilty if I tell even a small lie.
- It bothers me deeply to hurt someone else's feelings.
- Others would describe me as a very sympathetic person.
- In relationships I am quick to compromise in order to resolve conflicts.
- I feel passionately about many things.
- Having to fight with someone gets me upset, even if I know I had no choice.
- It has always been easy for me to understand how another person is feeling.
- I have a strong urge to apologize and make up after an argument.
- It bothers me to hear a baby cry.
- I feel a strong connection with nature.
- I go out of my way to avoid hurting even an insect.
- I stay in touch with friends, even those that I rarely see.
- I would rather keep quiet than say something that would hurt someone else's feelings.

- My emotions are easily moved.
- I get very attached to my surroundings.
- I can easily be moved to tears by a sad movie, television show, or newspaper story.
- I am a sentimental person.
- I will go out of my way to avoid hurting someone else's feelings.
- People have described me as deep.
- I have fallen in love many times.
- At work I tend to make my office or work space a home away from home.
- I'm the kind of person who tends to get homesick.
- I have a hard time cleaning house and tend to hold on to things.
- At heart I'm more of a stay-at-home person than an adventurer.
- I have taken in stray animals more than once.
- I have been taken advantage of at times because of my good nature.

The more items you checked off the more prone you are to interpersonal sensitivity, which is the disposition that characterizes tenderheartedness and makes a person more vulnerable to feelings of insecurity.

Drawn from the work of Joseph Nowinski, Ph.D., *The Tender Heart: Conquering Your Insecurity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 57-59.

