A while ago someone suggested that "something along the lines of dealing with people" would be a useful topic. I've found a short book by John Maxwell (we worked through his book "The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership" previously) entitled "Relationships 101" (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003). This book deals with people skills, and will form the basis of this next series.

"Relationships 101" forms part of a series entitled REAL (Relationships, Equipping, Attitude and Leadership) and is based on various other books that Maxwell has written (a few sections might be slightly familiar from his 21 Laws). The book has eight chapters, divided into the following three sections:

1) The Nature of Relationships
2) The Building Blocks of Relationships
3) The Growth of Relationships

1. **Why Are Relationships Important to Success?**

"Relationships are the glue that holds team members together".

As is his style, Maxwell starts the chapter with an example. In this case it is Ronald Reagan, told by his chief of staff, Michael Deaver, who had worked with Reagan for many years, both as Governor of California and as President. Apparently, while very shy, Reagan had an incredible ability to connect with the people he met irrespective of their status. This was particularly true for the people who worked with him. Deaver tells the story of how he admired a small bronze lion that was presented to Reagan as a gift by a conservation group in 1975. Ten years later, when Deaver resigned from the service of (then President) Reagan, he was presented with the lion. Reagan had apparently spent some time trying to think of a suitable farewell gift, and had recalled their conversation from ten years earlier.

"Everyone liked being around Ronald Reagan because he loved people and connected with them. He understood that relationships were the glue that held his team members together - the more solid the relationships, the more cohesive his team".

Maxwell makes the point that all of us are involved in teams: in our families, work situations, possibly in sports teams or social clubs, etc. He then gives the following five indicators, which will help us to judge the strength of our relationships.

1) Respect

This is really the starting point of a good relationship. Maxwell notes that we should show respect to the people we meet before they have necessarily earned it, but that we should expect to earn it for ourselves.

2) Shared Experiences

Having laid a foundation of respect, relationships grow as we share in common experiences (particularly difficult ones). Maxwell quotes a sports coach, who was asked if he would be able to repeat a successful season the following year. His response was that it would be very difficult, because there was an annual turn-over of 25%-30% of the team, and hence many new players who did not share the team's common experiences.

3) Trust

Trust develops out of respect and shared experience. There can be no doubt that trust is essential for a good relationship. Maxwell quotes the Scottish pot, George MacDonald: "To be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved"!

4) Reciprocity

Good relationships require give-and-take. If one party is always giving and the other always receiving, the relationship will not last. A while back I circulated an extract from Lance Armstrong's second book, in which he described the way in which he spends time in the early part of the cycling season working for his
team mates, which helps to ensure their loyalty when he needs their support to win the Tour de France again and again.

5) Mutual Enjoyment

As relationships develop, people will enjoy each other's company. This helps to build positive experiences, even out of unpleasant situations.

Maxwell ends off with another quote:

"Few things will pay you bigger dividends than the time and trouble you take to understand people. Almost nothing will add more to your stature as an executive and a person. Nothing will give you greater satisfaction or bring you more happiness".

George Kienzle and Edward Dare (from Climbing the Executive Ladder)

Some things to think about:

"How are you doing when it comes to being relational? Do you spend a lot of time and energy building solid relationships, or are you so focused on results that you tend to overlook (or overrun) others?"

Do you know what motivates the members of your team? How can you help them to achieve their goals and desires?

What can you do to help make our "team" experience better and more enjoyable?

2. *What Do I Need to Know About Others?*

"People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care".

The ability to understand people can be a major success factor in every area of your life. In particular, it can have a huge impact on your communication with other people. Maxwell quotes David Burns, a professor of psychiatry: "The biggest mistake you can make in trying to talk convincingly is to put your highest priority on expressing your ideas and feelings. What most people really want is to be listened to, respected, and understood. The moment people see that they are being understood, they become more motivated to understand your point of view". In this way, understanding people is the key to motivating and influencing them in a positive way.

Why People Fail to Understand Others

Maxwell quotes a lawyer who ascribed half of all controversies and conflicts to a lack of understanding! If understanding is so important, why are people so bad at it?! Maxwell gives four possible reasons.

1) Fear

An initial lack of understanding can lead to fear, that feeds further misunderstanding, and so on, in an increasingly negative, downward spiral. This is often the case in employees' reactions to their leaders. Maxwell quotes President Harry Truman: "When we understand the other fellow's viewpoint - understand what he is trying to do - nine times out of ten he is trying to do right".

2) Self-Centredness

Most human beings are inclined to put their own interests ahead of others'. This is often (very!) evident in small children. The best antidote for self-centredness is to try to put oneself in the other person's position. Maxwell quotes a successful salesman, who, when losing at chess would walk around the table and look at the board from his opponent's side. Often he would discover the mistakes he had made in his game. He applied the same philosophy to his sales: trying to view the world from the customer's perspective.

3) Failure to Appreciate Differences

Everyone has unique gifts and abilities. Recognising these and appreciating them can be very liberating. In particular, two people with different skills can complement each other very powerfully when they work together. One often sees this in marriages, where the two partners have complementary temperaments or
skills. In the tea room yesterday we were discussing corporal punishment at schools, and someone observed
that some children would be devastated by a caning, while others could be beaten regularly without it having
any effect, underscoring how different people are motivated in different ways.

4) Failure to Acknowledge Similarities

To understand how someone is feeling, imagine how you would feel in their situation. The chances are very
good that they are experiencing the same emotions.

Maxwell then turns to several common facts about people that are key to understanding them.

Things Everybody Needs to Understand About People

1) Everybody Wants to Be Somebody

"There isn't a person in the world who doesn't have the desire to be someone, to have significance. Even the
least ambitious and unassuming person wants to be regarded highly by others". Maxwell then recounts a
story from his school days when he was struck by the applause for the local high school's basketball team as
they ran out onto the court. He went home and told his father that he wanted to be a basketball player. Two
years later he had the opportunity to play on the same court and delighted in running onto the court in the
same way as the players he had seen before.

"Everybody wants to be somebody... If you treat every person you meet as if he or she were the most
important person in the world, you'll communicate that he or she is somebody - to you". Of course, the
respect needs to be genuine - people will rapidly sense that they are being manipulated otherwise.

2) Nobody Cares How Much You Know Until They Know How Much You Care

This can be very difficult, particularly when we are dealing with "difficult" people, or with people who have
hurt us. Our interactions with others have the potential to bring us our greatest joys and greatest sorrows.
"The challenge is to keep caring no matter what".

Maxwell quotes The Paradoxical Commandments by Dr. Kent M. Keith:

- People are illogical, unreasonable, and self-centred. Love them anyway.
- If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway.
- If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway.
- The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.
- Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway.
- The biggest men and women with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men and
  women with the smallest minds. Think big anyway.
- People favour underdogs but follow only top dogs. Fight for a few underdogs anyway.
- What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway.
- People really need help but may attack you if you do help them. Help people anyway.
- Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you have
  anyway.

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3) Everybody Needs Somebody

"Contrary to popular belief, there are no such things as self-made men and women. Everybody needs
friendship, encouragement and help". When they are working together, people can generally achieve far
more than they can alone, and will usually also find greater joy in the work.

Maxwell quotes one of my favourite Bible passages here:

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!

Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.

But how can one keep warm alone?

Though one may be overpowered,

two can defend themselves.

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NIV)

4) Everybody Can Be Somebody When Somebody Understands and Believes In Them

A small gesture of recognition can make a huge impact in someone's life. "Little things, done deliberately at the right time, can make a big difference". The Tomorrow's Professor mailing list had an article recently that focused on this subject: many students, when questioned about the incidents during their time at university that had had a great significance for them, often mentioned apparently insignificant interactions with their lecturers. In many cases, a simple word of encouragement, or recognition of an achievement had sparked something in these students that had played a significant part in determining the path of the rest of their lives. When I read the Tomorrow's Professor article I found it hugely challenging, but it is also an incredible privilege to be in a position to be able to have that kind of impact on other people.

5) Anybody Who Helps Somebody Influences a Lot of Bodies

It is often impossible to quantify the impact that our interactions with someone can have. "What you give to one person overflows into the lives of all the people that person impacts". While that can bring a great deal of satisfaction, which is a great reward in itself, it will often result in direct benefits from the grateful recipient.

Choose to Understand Others

"In the end, the ability to understand people is a choice. It's true that some people are born with great instincts that enable them to understand how others think and feel. But even if you aren't instinctively a people person, you can improve your ability to work with others. Every person is capable of having the ability to understand, motivate, and ultimately influence others".

Some things to think about:

Can you think of anyone who, through understanding you in some way, has had a major impact on your life? Would you say that you are "instinctively a people person" or not?

3. How Can I Encourage Others?

In the first two sessions we covered the first section of Maxwell's book, looking at the nature of relationships. The second section, which we start today, considers the building blocks of relationships.

"Believing in people before they have proved themselves is the key to motivating people to reach their potential".

Maxwell makes the point that everyone enjoys being encouraged. It can be a major motivator for people to achieve their best and get enjoy from those achievements. To be an encourager it is essential to have faith in people, but that is a rare thing these days. Accordingly, Maxwell kicks off by looking at four facts about faith:

1) Most People Don't Have Faith in Themselves
Maxwell quotes a cartoon where the main character (a newspaper editor) is playing in a baseball game and one of his teammates encourages him to have faith in his ability to throw a "curve ball". The editor replies, "It's easy for him to say. When it comes to believing in myself, I'm an agnostic"! While most people wouldn't put it quite that bluntly, it is true that many people expect to fail, focus on the obstacles and difficulties before them, and have a negative approach to life. However, Maxwell ascribes the real reasons for failure in most cases to a lack of self-belief. "With a little faith in themselves, people can do miraculous things".

2) Most People Don't Have Someone Who Has Faith in Them

Modern society tends to isolate people, and many of the traditional support systems (such as the extended family) have been eroded away. For example, Bill Glass cites a statistic that 90% of prisoners when growing up were told by their parents "They're going to put you in jail". A friend of mine tells the story of how, as a rebellious teenager, his headmaster called him out in front of the entire school and told him that he would never amount to anything in life but would end up in the gutter. If the people who are closest to us don't believe in us, the chances of our believing in ourselves is slim.

3) Most People Can Tell When Someone Else Has Faith In Them

People can usually tell when an expression of faith is sincere, and will react positively to genuine encouragement. (Conversely, empty platitudes are usually ineffective). Maxwell makes the point that encouragement is not for people to think highly of you as an encourager, but for them to think more highly of themselves.

4) Most People Will Do Anything to Live Up to Your Faith in Them

"People rise or fall to meet your level of expectations for them. If you express scepticism and doubt in others, they will return your lack of confidence with mediocrity. But if you believe in them and expect them to do well, they will go the extra mile trying to do their best".

So then, how can we become more effective encouragers, and increase our ability to believe in others. Maxwell offers seven suggestions, forming an acrostic from BELIEVE:

B)elieve in them before they succeed
It's easy to believe in someone who has demonstrated their ability. The challenge is to put your faith in someone who is untested. "But that is the key in motivating people to reach their potential. You have to believe in them first, before they become successful, and sometimes even before you can persuade them to believe in themselves".

E) emphasize their strengths
Some people believe that they should point out other people's weaknesses and try to help them to address these. Maxwell disagrees, and suggests focusing on people's strengths. If someone believes that they have what it takes to accomplish some task, they are more likely to succeed than if they are focusing on addressing their perceived weaknesses. Praise for positive abilities and skills should be both public and private.

L)ist their past achievements
Helping people to recall their past successes can be a great source of encouragement. Many people lack the ability to recall their past achievements, or may not be able to see the link between a past achievement and the current task.

I)nstill confidence when they fail
Many people give up at the first failure. Encouragement at this critical point can make a huge difference. A good way of handling this is to tell of your own past failures. Often people won't realise that you have also made mistakes and had failures, but have managed to move on beyond them. This can be a huge source of encouragement.

E)xperience some wins together
Assisting people to successfully complete a challenging task can be a huge boost to their belief in their own ability. Help people to achieve small successes and you build their ability to conquer larger problems. Both their confidence levels and their skills are boosted in this way.
Maxwell describes a laboratory experiment where rats were dropped into jars of water. If the jar was left in darkness the rat would swim for just over three minutes and then give up and drown. If there was a ray of light shining into the jar the rats could keep swimming for 36 hours! That's a powerful illustration of the power of hope. If we "cast a vision... and paint a picture of their future success" for people it will give them a great source of encouragement and motivation.

Konrad Adenaur said "We all live under the same sky, but we don't all have the same horizon". Encouraging people to stretch themselves and expand their horizons will help them to move on to a new level of effectiveness and achievement.

Maxwell ends by noting that this involves an element of risk, but that helping people to fulfil their potential is worth it.

"To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end of life". Robert Louis Stevenson

Some things to think about:
Who have been the main sources of encouragement in your life? What experiences caused these people to have such a place in your life?
Do you see yourself as encourager? How can you improve your ability to encourage others?

4. How Can I Connect with People?

This week we consider part two of the second section (the building blocks of relationships) of Maxwell's book "Relationships 101".

"Always remember, the heart comes before the head".

Maxwell introduces this chapter (which is closely based on Law 10 of his 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership) with a description of Elizabeth Dole's public speaking ability, or, to be more accurate, her ability to "connect" with large groups of people (Elizabeth Dole is the wife of Bob Dole, a conservative American politician who ran for president in 1996). Apparently, she has the ability to make everyone listening to her feel that they are friends, even when speaking on television without the benefit of personal presence. In stark contrast, Bob Dole came across as "stern and distant" during his presidential campaign. Many US presidents have come to power after demonstrating their ability to connect with the people (Maxwell cites Kennedy, Reagan and Clinton as particular examples). Needless to say, Bob Dole was not elected, but after the election he appeared on a TV talk show and came across as "relaxed, approachable, and able to make fun of himself. And he was a hit with the audience. He had finally connected."

Closer to home, I think one can draw similar contrasts by looking at the public personas of Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki. While one comes across as the Grandfather of the Nation, the other comes across more as a stern lecturer!

"You first have to touch people's hearts before you ask them for a hand. That is the Law of Connection... You can't move people to action unless you first move them with emotion. The heart comes before the head".

Connect in Public and Private

While leaders need to connect publicly with large groups of people, the same thing needs to happen on a one-to-one basis between individuals. Maxwell tells how his staff used to groan when he would say "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care" because he quoted the saying so often, but it is true. "You develop credibility with people when you connect with them and show that you genuinely want to help them".
Connect with People One at a Time

Maxwell states that a key to connecting with groups of people is to see them as individuals. General Norman Schwarzkopf once said, "I have seen competent leaders who stood in front of a platoon and all they saw was a platoon. But great leaders stand in front of a platoon and see it as 44 individuals".

Put a "10" on Every Person's Head

"One of the best things you can do for people is to expect the best of them. I call it putting a '10' on everyone's head". Jaques Wiesel quoted a survey of 100 self-made millionaires which showed that they all, consistently only saw the good in other people. Encouraging and genuinely appreciating other people will help you connect with them.

Having a strong connection with people is particularly important when facing great challenges. Maxwell gives an example from the life of General Douglas MacArthur during World War I to emphasise this point.

In the workplace the results of strong connections between the leader and the employees will usually show up in the way in which the organisation works. Employees are likely to be loyal and hard-working in such an environment. As an example, Maxwell refers to Herb Kelleher, the CEO of the highly successful Southwest Airlines, who was adored by his employees, largely as a result of his informal, connecting style of leadership. In 1994 the employees took out a full-page advert in a national newspaper that said (among many other things) "Thanks, Herb... For being a friend, not just a boss".

Maxwell: "Don't ever underestimate the importance of building relational bridges between yourself and other around you".

One last quote (an old saying): "To lead yourself, use your head; to lead others use your heart".

Some things to think about:
Can you think of any leaders who have had the ability to touch your heart?
How good are you at "building relational bridges" with the people around you? How could you improve this ability?

5. How Can I Become a Better Listener?

This week we're on to part three of the second section (the building blocks of relationships) of Maxwell's book "Relationships 101".

"Treat every person as if he or she were the most important person in the world".

Maxwell kicks off with a series of quotes and jokes (and includes a lot of pertinent quotes throughout the chapter):

Edgar Watson Howe: "No man would listen to you talk if he didn't know it was his turn next"!

Lyndon B. Johnson: "You ain't learnin' nothin' when you're doin' all the talkin'".

Woodrow Wilson: "The ear of the leader must ring with the voices of the people".

These comments all point to the importance of listening for building and maintaining relationships.

Maxwell then sets the scene by considering the benefits that good listening skills can bring.

The Value of Listening

Listening Shows Respect

All too often people are trying to impress the other party in a conversation. Maxwell's advice is to be "impressed and interested, not impressive and interesting"! He quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Every man I meet is in some way my superior, and I can learn of him".

Listening Builds Relationships
Dale Carnegie: "You can make more friends in two weeks by becoming a good listener than you can in two years trying to get people interested in you". Being focussed on yourself is a certain turn-off in a relationship. David Schwarz: "Big people monopolize the listening. Small people monopolize the talking".

Listening Increases Knowledge

The ability to truly listen to other people is likely to bring a far greater understanding of the people you interact with, your work and workplace, and even yourself. Maxwell tells a story about a tennis pro who had a pupil who insisted on giving his own opinions of how he could improve his game. After a while the tennis pro simply began to agree with the pupil. Later he commented, "I learned a long time ago that it is a waste of time to try to sell real answers to anyone who just wants to buy echoes"!

A common danger in this regard is to assume that you know it all. One needs to accept that one is not an expert in all matters and be prepared to listen to others. "A deaf ear is sign of a closed mind".

Listening Generates Ideas

Maxwell tells of a company in the USA that owns a number of highly successful restaurant chains. Nearly 80% of the dishes on their menus have been suggested by employees of the company. If one is prepared to listen to other people you will be presented with plenty of ideas to consider. Even ideas that are not so good in themselves may be helpful in triggering other new thoughts in you.

Listening Builds Loyalty

If one doesn't take the time to listen to other people they will go in search of someone who will. This can lead to the breakdown of marriages, friendships, business partnerships, etc. Conversely, good listening skills will be attractive to other people and will engender loyalty in them.

Listening is a Great Way to Help Others and Yourself

This really builds on several of the points above. Listening to people will help them, but it will also help you (through improved information and understanding of people and situations).

How to Develop Listening Skills

Having provided a motivation for the importance of good listening skills, Maxwell provides nine practical tips.

1. Look at the Speaker

The starting point of good communication is to give the other person your undivided attention. Don't stare at your computer screen, papers, etc. If necessary, reschedule the meeting for a less busy time.

2. Don't Interrupt

This is irritating to almost anyone. Robert L. Montgomery: "It's just as rude to step on other people's ideas as it is to step on their toes"! Maxwell identifies three possible reasons for interrupting:

- i. Placing insufficient value on what the other person is saying
- ii. Trying to impress the other person with their insight
- iii. Excitement at the topic of the conversation

If you tend to interrupt people, examine your reasons, and use this to help you control the habit. Don't be put off by silent periods in a conversation. They give an opportunity to both participants for reflection on what has been said, and consideration of a proper response.

3. Focus on Understanding

People often forget the subject of a conversation very quickly (some university studies indicate that only 50% is recalled immediately and only 25% by the next day). Try to ensure that you have a good understanding of what is being discussed.

4. Determine the Need at the Moment

Try to assess what the other person is trying to get from the conversation. By putting yourself in their shoes you will improve your ability to understand them.

5. Check Your Emotions
Many people have "emotional baggage" which dictates their reactions to other people. If you find yourself losing control of your emotions in a conversation try to restrain yourself and ask yourself what is causing this reaction. At the very least, you should hear the other person out.

6. Suspend Your Judgement

Again, you should the full story from the other person before jumping into the conversation. Don't jump to conclusions.

7. Sum Up at Major Intervals

This is one of the key techniques of "active listening". John H. Melchinger: "Comment on what you hear, and individualize your comments... It will help you keep on track as a listener... the other speaker will know you are listening and may offer further information". At natural breaks in the conversation summarise your understanding of what the other person has said. This will help you to ensure that you are understanding, and will assure the other person that you are listening and endeavouring to truly understand them.

8. Ask Questions for Clarity

Maxwell notes that most good reporters are good listeners, and that is partly due to their ability to ask good questions. It's important not to question aggressively or confrontationally, but to gently try to ease out further details and clarification of what has been said. "If you show people how much you care and ask in a nonthreatening way, you'll be amazed by how much they'll tell you".

9. Always Make Listening Your Priority

Many leaders listen less and less as they ascend the corporate ladder. Apparently, Sam Walton (founder of the Wal-Mart - the biggest supermarket chain in the world) never lost the ability to listen to his employees. He once got his pilot to drop him off in the middle of Texas and then fly on to meet him 100 miles away so that he could ride in one of his delivery trucks and talk to the driver.

A closing quote: "Most people are able to hear, fewer are capable of really listening. However, it's never too late to become a good listener. It can change your life - and the lives of the people in your life".

Some things to think about:
Do you know any really good listeners? What is it that makes them so?
Would you say that you are a good listener? How could you improve your ability to listen?

6. How Can I Build Trust with Others?

This week we begin the third and final section of Maxwell's book "Relationships 101". This section covers the growth and development of relationships.

"When your words and actions match, people know they can trust you".

Maxwell opens with a lengthy quote from Stephen Covey's well-known book "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People", which underscores the importance of good character and the trust which this will instill in others. He cites a study of 1300 senior business executives in which 71% of the respondents stated that the most crucial factor in business success is integrity.

Integrity Is About the Small Things

"Integrity is important to building relationships. And it is the foundation upon which many other qualities for success are built, such as respect, dignity, and trust". Maxwell makes the point that many people believe that they can cut corners on small issues, and all will be well as long as they don't have any major moral collapses. However, integrity does not thrive in grey areas and semantic escape routes (consider Bill Clinton's attempts to define his escapades with Monica Lewinsky as anything but what they were, as a dramatic example of the latter). "Integrity commits itself to character over personal gain, to people over things, to service over power, to principle over convenience, to the long view over the immediate". Integrity is often most apparent when under pressure, and this is when the lessons learned and the character forged in
the small issues of life can ensure that one does the right thing: "Character isn't created in a crisis; it only comes to light!"

Integrity Is an Inside Job

People will often try to lay the responsibility for their character (or lack of it) on circumstances or upbringing, or other external factors. In contradicting this, Maxwell makes three points:

1) Integrity Is Not Determined By Circumstances

We are responsible for our choices - good or bad. This is often apparent in siblings who may grow up very differently. I'm sure all of us know families where brothers and sisters have followed radically different paths in life, despite the similarities of upbringing that they have shared.

2) Integrity Is Not Based on Credentials

Too many people rely on their position in life or their title to determine how people will relate to them. Maxwell contrasts character and credentials as follows:

- "credentials are transient; character is permanent"
- "credentials [focus on] rights; character [focuses] on responsibilities"
- "credentials add value to only one person; character adds value to many people"
- "credentials look to past accomplishments; character builds a legacy for the future"
- "credentials often evoke jealousy...; character generates respect..."
- "credentials can only get you in the door; character keeps you there"

"No number of titles, degrees, offices, designations, wards, licenses, or other credentials can substitute for basic, honest integrity when it comes to the power of influencing others".

3) Integrity Is Not to Be Confused with Reputation

While a good reputation is a great asset, it is only a reflection of the true character of a person. D.L. Moody: "If I take care of my character, my reputation will take care of itself".

Integrity Is Your Best Friend

"Integrity... will never betray you or put you in a compromising position. It keeps your priorities right... When others criticize you unfairly, it helps you keep going [without retaliating]. And when others' criticism is valid, integrity helps you to accept what they say, learn from it and keep growing".

Maxwell illustrates this with the story of Abraham Lincoln, who had an appalling reputation, being accused of dishonesty, vulgarity, of being a "third-rate country lawyer", and being called the most dreadful names. A newspaper stated that he was "the craftiest and most dishonest politician that ever disgraced an office in America"! These accusations came from his opponents, but also from his own party and supporters and members of his cabinet. However, Lincoln never compromised his principles, and history has judged much more favourably than his contemporaries. Thomas Jefferson: "God grant that men of principle be our principal men".

Integrity Is Your Friends' Best Friend

If people trust your integrity they can trust you, without concern about your motives in your interactions with them.

Become a Person of Integrity

Maxwell gives three things that you can do to help you to be a person of integrity.

1) Commit Yourself to Honesty, Reliability, and Confidentiality

One needs to make a distinct, conscious decision to live a life of integrity. As already stated, when a crisis arises, it is too late to hope that one will act with integrity. "Choose today to live by a strict moral code, and determine to stick with it no matter what happens".

2) Decide Ahead of Time That You Don't Have a Price
Again, this is a matter of decision and preparation. The price may come in many forms: perhaps monetary, but power, pride, retaliation can all present rewards that can entice us to act rashly. Hansie Cronje provides a sad illustration of someone with a great deal of character, who failed this test.

3) Each Day, Do What You Should Before What You Want to Do

Above, Maxwell stated "character [focuses] on responsibilities". Attending to responsibilities before self-indulgence is another key test of integrity. William James: "Everybody ought to do at least two things each day that he hates to do, just for the practice"!

Acting with integrity can bring great freedom. Not only are you released from the potential of negative consequences of acting without integrity, but you are able to make a positive impact on the lives of people around you and enjoy their trust. The latter benefits form a great foundation for building strong, healthy relationships.

For me the following statement by Maxwell (already quoted above) sums this chapter up very powerfully:

"Integrity commits itself to character over personal gain,
  to people over things,
  to service over power,
  to principle over convenience,
  to the long view over the immediate".

Some things to think about:
Do you know anyone you would consider to be a model of integrity? Why?
Maxwell poses a number of questions in this chapter that provide a self-assessment of one's integrity. He suggests reflecting on the questions and taking one's time to answer them.

How well do I treat people if I gain nothing?
Am I the same person in the spotlight as I am when I'm alone?
Do I quickly admit wrongdoing without being pressed to do so?
Do I put people ahead of my personal agenda?
Do I have an unchanging standard for moral decisions, or do circumstances determine my choices?

7. What Is My Most Important Relationship?

We're currently in the third section of Maxwell's "Relationships 101", which covers the growth and development of relationships.

"Succeed at home, and all other relationships become easier".

Maxwell opens with some depressing statistics about the failure rates for families in the USA. A related statistic in the UK when I lived there in 1994/1995 was that the divorce rate was decreasing - apparently good news, until further investigation showed that in fact the reason was that with increasing numbers of people living together rather than getting married, the dissolution of their relationships were not being reported as "divorce statistics"! I suspect the SA statistics are not a lot better. A postgraduate student of ours told me that at her boarding school, she was the only student in the hostel whose parents were still living together.

Maxwell argues for a holistic view of success that doesn't focus purely on work or career as the yardstick. Furthermore, he argues, success in one's home life can be an aid to success in other areas of one's life: "Building and maintaining strong families benefit us in every way, including in helping us become successful". He quotes Nick Stinnet (a "family-life expert"): "When you have a strong family life, you receive the message that you are loved, cared for and important. The positive intake of love, affection, and respect... gives you inner resources to deal with life more successfully".
Maxwell tells how, early in their marriage, he and his wife Margaret dealt with the fact that he would be travelling a lot by making a commitment that Margaret (and their children) would join him whenever possible, even if it was difficult to afford to do so. The result is that they have a wonderful collection of family memories of time spent in a wide range of exotic locations (even "on safari in South Africa"!). He makes the point that he doesn't want his family to think of him as a great leader, author or speaker, but as a great father/husband. (This reminds me of Stephen Covey's perspective-gaining exercise of visualising one's own funeral and what people would say in their eulogies).

Steps to Building a Strong Family

Maxwell makes the point that building a strong family requires a lot of hard work, and offers the following six guidelines.

1) Express Appreciation for Each Other

The home is often seen as a place to "blow off steam" after a day of having to be polite and friendly to clients, colleagues, students, etc. Rather, "[t]o build a strong family, you have to make your home a supportive environment".

2) Structure Your Lives to Spend Time Together

With today's busy lifestyles, the home is often the place where paths may occasionally cross (Maxwell describes it as being like a major highway intersection where family members shoot in and out in various different directions). Making time to spend with family members may require some creative thinking. Maxwell gives the example of how he used to drive his children to school in the morning so that he could spend some time with them. When scheduling his activities for the month ahead (as part of his regular organisational routine), the first entries in his diary are for family events: birthdays, his children's sporting events, joint outings and dinners. Once these are in place, he fits his work schedule around them. "I've found that if I don't strategically structure my life to spend time with my family, it won't happen".

3) Deal with Crisis in a Positive Way

All families will have difficulties and differences. What makes the difference between a success and a failure is how the problems are handled. Maxwell quotes M. Scott Peck, who points out that dealing with such problems make us better people: "Problems call forth our courage and wisdom... we grow mentally and spiritually... It is through the pain of confronting and resolving problems that we learn".

Maxwell offers a number of practical strategies for dealing with family problems:

   a) Attack the problem, never the person.
   b) Get all the facts.
   c) List all the options (this may seem very business-like, but why should one's family problems be tackled with less rigour than professional ones?).
   d) Choose the best solution (and make people the priority in deciding on what is "best").
   e) Look for the positives in the problem. As the quote from Peck above points out, at the least we should be able to grow through facing problems.
   f) Never withhold love. While one may be upset, frustrated, even angry, one should strive to love unconditionally.

4) Communicate Continually

Maxwell quotes an American study that showed that the average married couple spends about 37 minutes a week in "meaningful communication". He contrasts this with the daily television-viewing time, and draws the conclusion that it is no surprise that families are failing at unprecedented rates. Again, good communication requires effort. Maxwell offers the following practical ideas:

   a) Develop platforms for communication. This is related to point 2 above: be creative in setting aside time for communication. For example, make a lunch appointment with your spouse, drive your children to school or sports, take family walks together.
   b) Control communication killers. Beware of the television, the internet and the telephone - all of
these can become major distractions. One family I know doesn't own a television, and spending time with them is a real pleasure.

c) Encourage honesty and transparency in conversation. Encourage family members to share their thoughts and feelings, but be careful not to be critical.

d) Adopt a positive communication style. Analyse the way in which you communicate with your family (is it dictatorial, detached, judgmental?). Aim for a cooperative approach.

5) Share the Same Values

This applies particularly to one's interaction with one's children (hopefully you didn't marry someone with very different values!). Maxwell quotes an academic who points out that popular entertainment, advertising media and educational systems are in the business of pushing their values onto children, but that some modern parenting theories believe that parents shouldn't do so! Maxwell quotes a study of single-parent families that showed that children in those that enforced standards (even if the standards were not "positive") did better than those from homes where standards and values were not transmitted strongly.

Stephen Covey has written an entire book on this subject (The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families). One of the suggested exercises is for the family to develop a "mission statement", which clearly sets out the things that the family considers important. Some friends of mine have done this, involving their young daughter in the process, and have it to be a very beneficial exercise. Maxwell makes the point that one must be prepared to model and demonstrate the values for the rest of the family (particularly the children) if necessary. Inconsistencies between "talk" and "walk" are probably most easily spotted by family members!

6) Build Your Marriage

Many authors and teachers dealing with strengthening families have made the point that children get enormous security from a strong, loving relationship between their parents. Josh McDowell: "The greatest thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother".

Again, this requires effort and determination. "A common missing ingredient in many marriages is dedication to make things work. marriages may start because of love, but they finish because of commitment".

Maxwell closes the chapter by bringing us back to the point that success in marriage is a good foundation for success in life. He quotes Pat Riley (a successful American basketball coach): "Sustain a family life for a long period of time and you can sustain success for a long period of time. First things first. If your life is in order you can do whatever you want".

"For most people, a good family helps you know your purpose and develop your potential, and it helps you enjoy the journey along the way with an intensity that isn't possible otherwise".

Some things to think about:

Do you agree that success in the family can help build success in other areas of your life? Can you think of examples, or counter-examples?

What creative ways can you come up with to make time for your family, and for good communication with them?

8. How Can I Serve and Lead People at the Same Time?

This is the eighth and final chapter of John Maxwell's "Relationships 101".

"You've got to love your people more than your position".

Maxwell opens this chapter with an anecdote about Norman Schwarzkopf, when he was leading a battalion in the Vietnam war. He had been assigned to the First Battalion of the Sixth Infantry, who had such a bad reputation that they were known as the "worst of the sixth"! He turned the battalion around to the point where they were entrusted with a tough assignment to the Batangan Peninsula (Schwarzkopf described it as
"a horrible, malignant place"). It had been the site of many battles and was riddled with minefields and booby traps. Schwarzkopf instituted all possible measures to minimise casualties and made a point of flying in his personal helicopter to pick up any soldier who was wounded.

On one of these trips, while rescuing the injured soldier another man stepped on a landmine, and everyone suddenly realised that they were in the middle of a minefield. The second soldier was rolling around on the ground and Schwarzkopf realised that someone had to get to him to prevent him from detonating another mine. Schwarzkopf wrote, "I started through the minefield, one slow step at a time, staring at the ground, looking for telltale bumps or little prongs sticking up from the dirt. My knees were shaking so hard that each time I took a step, I had to grab my leg and steady it with both hands before I could take another... It seemed like a thousand years before I reached the kid."

Schwarzkopf managed to calm the soldier and his life was saved. Maxwell comments that his actions could be described as "heroism, courage or even foolhardiness", but that ultimately it was an attitude of servanthood: Schwarzkopf's leadership was demonstrated through his willingness to serve the soldier in need.

This story underlines the fact that servanthood is not something that is demonstrated in or called for from only those "at the bottom of the hierarchy", but is an attitude that is needed at all levels in an organisation. In fact, the converse is often true - we've all met people in relatively menial positions, who have appalling attitudes towards the people that they deal with: government/municipal workers who could not care less about the people in the queues in front of them, rude waiters in restaurants or shop assistants, etc. It is almost as easy to detect someone with a true servant's heart as it is to detect the lack of it. "The best leaders desire to serve others, not themselves".

Maxwell lists five qualities of servant leadership:

1) Putting Others Ahead of One's Own Agenda
A servant leader will put others first, ahead of their own desires.

2) Possessing the Confidence to Serve
Insecurity in a leader often leads to a positional view of leadership ("I'm the boss, so you'll do what I say"), which is opposed to the principle of servant leadership.

3) Initiating Service to Others
People are sometimes forced to serve others, or will leap in in an emergency, but a mark of a servant's heart is when someone initiates an act of service for someone else. "Great leaders see the need, seize the opportunity, and serve without expecting anything in return".

4) Lack of Position-Consciousness
"Servant leaders don't focus on rank or position". Schwarzkopf's stepping out into the minefield is a good illustration of this: many other military leaders would have ordered someone else to rescue the wounded soldier.

5) Motivation by Love
Concern for others, rather than a manipulative spirit or desire for self-promotion should be the motivation of any leader.

How to Become a Servant
Maxwell then lists some practical steps that one can take in order to develop as a servant leader.

1) Perform small acts
Don't expect to start by jumping into a minefield! Start small by looking for opportunities to help others in small ways. Start close to home before trying to save the world.

2) Learn to walk slowly through the crowd
This is a skill that Maxwell learned from his father. When at a large function or in a crowd, take time to interact with people and really connect with them. Find out what concerns them. If necessary, make notes
after the function, and follow up on the issues that you have uncovered.

3) Move into action

"Begin serving with your body, and your heart will eventually catch up"! Volunteer to assist a charity, or help in a community programme.

Wanting to be served, rather than to serve, is likely to lead a leader into trouble. Maxwell quotes Albert Schweitzer: "The ones... who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve".

And a closing quote from Maxwell himself:
"If you want to be successful on the highest level, be willing to serve on the lowest. That's the best way to build relationships".

Some things to think about:
Can you think of any leaders who have demonstrated servant leadership? What do you admire about them? Maxwell: "Where is your heart when it comes to serving others? Do you desire to become a leader for the perks and benefits? Or are you motivated by a desire to help others?"