

The Power of the Other

By Dr. Henry Cloud

Dr. Cloud combines the depth of his knowledge about human physiology and psychology and his years of consultation to create a powerful book on the importance of developing quality relationships. He uses the Second Law of Thermodynamics from the field of Physics as a great analogy for what happens to us when we fail to develop and sustain healthy relationships: all closed systems devolve into chaos.

The book begins as he describes four different types of relational connections we can create. He talks in terms of a mental map with four corners each representing one of the relational styles:

Corner 1: Disconnected or No Connection

Corner 2: The Bad Connection

Corner 3: The Pseudo-Good Connection

Corner 4: True Connection

After describing the four corners, the balance of the book uses the analogy of what is necessary to have a healthy body: proper diet and functioning immune system. He talks about the things that are included in a healthy relational diet and the things that are necessary to help us fight off unhealthy relationships.

Activity: Let's begin to process this deep and rich resource, but before we start, let me ask you to establish a relationship baseline. List a few important relationships you have that could be improved.

Chapter 1: The Neglected Truth

A. Our focus here will be on how and why some people are able to surpass limits. In my work with executives and high-performance organizations, this is the issue we address, in one of two forms. The first form involves some *known* limit my clients are experiencing: a pattern, an obstacle, a leadership dilemma or challenge, a conflict with a person, a weakness, or problem—something they know is getting in the way. The second form is just the desire to get better, to grow past a current level, to have or do *more*: more potential, more profits, more horsepower, more fun, more meaning, more love, more joy... And here's the good news: it's not a mystery. We know how it happens, Better yet, you can learn how. (Pages 1-2)

Question: Is there a “known limit” that is keeping you personally or your church professionally from moving forward? If so, what is it—or what are they?

Q: Are you satisfied with the status quo, or do you have a genuine desire to “just get better” “to have more...?” Why?

- B. After giving a powerful personal illustration of how relationships can motivate us to do more than we ever thought we could do, he makes this statement: “For centuries, philosophers, psychologists, theologians, and spiritual thinkers have struggled with something called the mind-body problem, the fact that the *invisible* has a real effect on the *visible*, and vice versa. But however we explain these mechanisms, the neglected truth is that the visible attributes of relationship, the **connection** between people, have real, tangible, and measurable power.

Ask many people about their greatest accomplishments and challenges they were able to overcome, and you will find one thing in common: **there was someone on the other end who made it possible.** [Our Trinitarian Theology tells us that even God doesn't function alone, but exists in a relational unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.] This book represents a major shift in the conversation on leadership, growth, and high performance. I want to shift the conversation from a focus only on *you* (i.e. here is how you can develop yourself) to a recognition that *your own performance is either improved or diminished by the other people in your scenario.*

You don't have a choice about whether or not others have power in your life. They do. But you do have a choice as to what kind of power others are going to have. You can't master people, but you can become a master at choosing and dealing with people. (Pages 6-10)

It is worth noting that God in the flesh, Jesus of Nazareth, lived in community and built significant relationships.

Activity: As a pastor or church leader, you should be aware that *you* cannot do it alone—no matter how hard you pray and how hard you work. But have you taken time to reflect on important relationships past and present that helped or hindered you in significant ways. Take a few minutes and list the names of those individuals below.

*Some of those who helped me or
are helping me today are:*

*Some of those who hindered me or
are hindering me today are:*

Chapter 2: The Science of Connection

- A. The chapter opens with another personal illustration. This one was from his college days when his perspective of the work of a psychologist was forever changed. The professor summarized a major research project and stated, “What actually brings about change in people, and the cure, is the relationship between the psychologist and the client.” Cloud's immediate response was, “That's all there is? I'm just a 'rent-a-friend'?” With further study and reflection, he came to realize that although the research results were actually 100% true, they were also 100% not true. Science confirms that getting to the next level is 100%

dependent on relationship. But...the relationship must be the right *kind* of relationship.
(Pages 11-13)

Activity: Take a few minutes and review your lists above in light of Cloud's statement that the *right kind of relationships* are what makes us better. He's not saying we can't and don't learn how "not to do things" from some individuals, but as he will discuss in the pages ahead, if we are going to get to "the next level" we will need to develop healthy relationships.

- Do you have more in your right column than the left column?
- What are some things you can do to change that ratio?

B. In a section he titles *The Geometry of Relationships* he discusses research by Daniel Siegel in which Siegel describes the **triangle** of well-being. The three components are our brain/body (the physical), our relational connections, and our minds (psychological—emotions, thought processes, and memory). Cloud summarizes the section in which he wades deeply into the science behind the research as follows: "to get to the next level of performance, you certainly do have to think differently, but to think differently, you have to have a different mind, and your brain has to fire differently. To develop these differences in your mind [psychologically] and brain [physiologically], the equipment in which thoughts and feelings and behaviors are embodied, you need to connect [relationally] in ways that rewire you."
(Pages 14-20)

Q: Are there particular Bible verses that pop into your mind as you think about the geometry of Relationships?

Q: Stop for a minute and reflect on the complexity and interdependence of human life. As a Christian leader who believes that we were created in the image and likeness of a triune incomprehensible God, how does this scientific reality reinforce your faith?

C. After a short section entitled *Change Demystified* in which he gives an illustration from his consulting experience that demonstrates the positive impact of applying the principles he will be discussing in the book, the chapter concludes with a section labeled *Powerful Findings*. In this section he outlines the rest of the book and whets our appetite by listing a few of the variables where healthy relational connections have both qualitative and quantitative effects:

- How long you live
- Whether you reach or don't reach your goals
- Whether or not you close the sale
- How much money you make
- How well your kids do in school
- How much you trust people
- How you cope with stress and failure
- What kind of mood you're in
- How much physical pain you experience
- How and what you think

Q: Put a check mark next to the above variables that you would like to see impacted in your life? For the sake of these changes, (remember this is only a small sampling of the areas that

can be positively impacted) are you willing to invest time and energy in learning and applying the principles Cloud is about to discuss?

Chapter 3: The Four Corners of Connection

A. In this chapter, Cloud discusses how we are *always* seeking connection, but sometimes it is the wrong kind of relationship and what we need to do when we acknowledge that reality. He opens with a great analogy of switching your cell phone off of airplane mode after you've landed and having to wait for the phone to make connection with a local network. He points out that if your phone can't find the right connection, you end up with an electronic calendar, camera, and repository of previous communications, BUT nothing new can be received and no updates can be made. He states, in like manner humans are fueled from the outside. We need connection, and our systems are always searching for connections. (Pages 27-30)

Activity: Reflect on Cloud's analogy and on this familiar John Donne's poem:

No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thy friend's
Or of thine own were:
Any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind,
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.

On a scale of one to 10 with ten being the best, how well connected are you in the following areas:

To God

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Your Spouse

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Your Family

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Your Church

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Your Neighbors

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Your Co-workers

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Your Supervisor

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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B. In a section entitled *The Possibilities of Where You Are*, Cloud states, “there are only *four possibilities of connection* that you can be in at any given time. It is the premise of this book, and science and experience agree, that figuring out where you are is one of the most important things you can do for yourself. While there are four different kinds of connectedness—four possible corners of our relational space—only one of them will help you thrive. The other three corners will always diminish your performance and your well-being. Think of this dynamic as the geography of relationships, a map with four corners:

1. Disconnected, No Connection
2. The Bad Connection
3. The Pseudo-Good Connection
4. True Connection “ (page51)

Activity: Cloud has just made a pretty powerful statement: “there are only four possibilities of connection that you can be in at any given time.” As a pre-test, take a minute and put a number 1, 2, 3, or 4 next to the names you listed under section B of Chapter One and also next to the 1-10 scale categories in the previous section of this chapter.

C. Sometimes a person can be extroverted, even constantly around others, but *still* be disconnected. True connection always means being emotionally and functionally invested in other people, in a give-and-receive dynamic. Disconnected leaders tend to make decisions in isolation, either solely by the leaders or in organizational silos that they build or foster. This model of “closed system” leadership does exactly what all closed systems do: it gets worse over time.

If you want to find out if you are in a Corner One relationship, just ask the people in your life who depend on you. Ask them if they feel needed, valued, listened to, and taken into your confidence. In the ministry, we can get locked into a giving mode. It’s easier for us to help others than it is to ask or even allow them to help us—especially

emotionally. Ministry leadership roles can drive us into Corner One. How many times have you heard, or maybe even said, “it’s lonely at the top?” but leadership isn’t supposed to be lonely or isolated. When it is, something is wrong, and it CAN, and for you to be effective, it HAS TO BE fixed. If you find yourself in a situation where there is absolutely *nowhere* you can be vulnerable, nowhere you can connect to a network of people for energy, support, downloads, and the like, then something is really wrong.

Cloud worked with Bill Hybels for several years doing leadership retreats with high-performing leaders from both the business and nonprofit worlds. He developed a questionnaire to see how their leadership world functioned. I’ll ask you to answer the three questions he included in the book.

1. Do you have someone where you can be 100% honest and vulnerable? Someone you can tell what you are going through in your leadership role, where you can be totally honest about struggles, conflicts, needs, weaknesses, etc.?
 Yes
 No
2. Do you have anyone or any group of people who is totally committed to your growth and well-being as a leader? The very role of that relationship is just to develop and help you?
 Yes
 No
3. Have you experienced anything in the last year that you would say has gotten to the point of “clinical proportions?” Burnout, loss of energy, difficulty getting motivated, concentration or focus problems, anxiety or stress, depression, an addiction or other habit, sleep problems, etc.
 Yes
 No

You might be surprised, but 80% of high-performing leaders said “No” to questions one and two and “Yes” to question three! (Pages 32-38) A passage of scripture came to my mind as I read this section. It is recorded in Luke 23:28-31 and the context is as Jesus was being led to the cross: “Jesus, turning to them, said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!’ Then they will begin ‘to say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!”’ ***For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?***” (Emphasis added)

Activity: I’m going to pause for a private “altar call” and suggest that you talk to two or three people that you view as close friends. Ask them, “Do you feel needed, valued, listened to, and taken into my confidence?”

Activity: From their responses, honestly evaluate whether you currently fall into the camp with 80% of the high performing leaders Cloud surveyed. If you do, make a commitment and initiate specific actions today that will get you out of your Corner One existence. Heartland Church Network is passionate about getting pastors and

church leaders in small groups where they can develop healthy corner four relationships. We call them Connect Groups. Give our office a call and we will help you get connected.

- D. At some point, for most people, Corner One gives way to Corner Number Two: *the Bad Connection*. It's as if our "connection chip" decides that a bad connection is better than no connection. Cloud notes that a Corner Two Connection is not necessarily one we have with a bad or abusive person, although that may be the case. Instead, it is a connection, preoccupation, or pull toward a person who has the effect of making us feel bad or "not good enough" in some way. These people have the power to make us feel bad. The connection produces anxiety, fear, guilt, shame, bad feelings, or a sense of inferiority.

However, sometimes we don't even need another person to experience the feeling of "not-being-good-enough." That happens when our primary connection is with an internal judge who has lived inside our head for a long time—perhaps someone from our formative years or a significant other from our past. By comparing our self to some unrealistic, nonexistent standard, we always feel like a failure. (Pages 39-44)

Activity: List people who have had the power to produce anxiety, fear, guilt, shame, or inferiority in your life.

Q: Are there some standards that have been established in your life that are difficult if not impossible to achieve? If so, list them and then prayerfully reflect on who or how each specific standard was established. Also, consider what scripture says about you and your relationship with God in these critical areas.

Q: Do you find yourself connecting more to a person in a movie, TV series, or book than you are to a real person? Or are you more connect to a pet than people?

- E. As Cloud introduces us to Corner Three Connections he begins by stating, "Let's face it. No one wants to feel isolated, alone, or inadequate. Those are all pretty unpleasant feelings, so at some point, our connection-seeking chip is going to say, 'Enough of this. I want to feel good.' So it finds something to connect to that feels good. The problem is that painkillers do not really cure the disease. Cloud lists some of the common 'painkillers:' an affair; addictions; an attachment to promotions, awards, or positive results; food; sex; the latest gadget, flattery, etc. The problem with "painkillers" is that they don't last."

Corners One and Two are downers, but Corner Three lets the good times roll. The leader who is experiencing Corner Three connections is on an endorphin high. There are a thousand ways we humans have come up with to self-medicate, but they are all ultimately a trap of our own devising and lead to diminishing performance.

The chapter closes with a section Cloud dubs *The Three-Corner Roundabout*. In it he likens our vacillation between Corners One, Two, and Three Connections to a traffic

roundabout. His point is that an occasional extra loop through a roundabout is pretty harmless; however, a life of running in circles in our relationships can create in us an attitude of desperation—“Is there anywhere else I can go? And if there is how do I get there? (Pages 44-50)

Q: What are some of your “painkillers?” If you struggle to list any, ask the people around you who know you well.

Chapter 4: Go to Corner Four

- A. In the simplest terms, a real connection is one in which you can be your whole self, the real, authentic you, a relationship to which you can bring your heart, mind, soul, and passion. Both parties to the relationship are wholly present, known, understood, and mutually invested. What each truly thinks, feels, believes, fears, and needs can be shared safely.

The concept of the true self versus the false self is an old construct in the field of psychology, meaning, exactly what it says. The true self is who you really are, and the false self is the mask that we put on to protect ourselves. Often a leader feels like their responsibilities prohibit them from letting down their mask. A critical question for a leader is this: Where can I go without the mask? All great leaders need to be able to address their constituents with confidence and the courage of their convictions, but those same leaders need a safe place to nurse their wounds, to be restored, and to let down their guard and be real. (Pages 52-55)

Q: As a leader in the church these challenges are magnified. How often and in what ways do you feel like you and your family live in a glass house?

Q: List below the people connections you have where you can “let down your mask.”

- B. Henry tells the story of a consultation he had with a renowned heart surgeon who was also the head of a famous medical system. In their first meeting the doctor told him of several Corner Three relationships he had experienced over a number of years that involved extramarital affairs. They had come to light, his wife had moved out, and his partners were threatening him with business consequences. The doctor had sought out Henry to get his advice on the plan he had developed. After listening to the plan the doctor asked, “So what do you think?” Henry responded, “Want the truth?” When the doctor responded in the affirmative, Henry stated, “I think you are headed for another heart attack, to use your language.”

Henry went on to point out that everything in the doctor’s plan depended on his own ability. His ability to express strength and nothing about how he will build strength. It was as if a car runs out of gas in the middle of nowhere, and the remedy is for the car to fill itself up with gas. Henry asked him if he had become a great surgeon on his own, and then went on to describe what Four Corner Relationships will do to help us build

strength. Before the end of the consultation, the doctor left with a very different plan—one that involved “others.”

Q: Think about the last major challenge you faced. Did you try to solve it yourself, or did others help you get through the challenge?

- C. Cloud continues the story about the doctor as he wrote, “One year later, the doctor and I spoke again. When he had first come to visit me, I had put together a very different kind of plan than his, one that focused on building Corner Four connections, and he had followed it with gusto. As a result, he was able to get his career and his marriage back to health. The Doctor admitted he had been relying on self-medicating patterns of behaviors. He had also come to realize that other top achievers also struggle with the same issues. A third piece was that his recovery required accountability. Cloud quotes the doctor on this issue: “The big problem with people like me is that we think we’re gladiators. We can fight our way through anything and just never will give up. But when it comes to our needs, vulnerabilities, or weaknesses, that’s where the gladiator mentality falls short. We can’t do it alone.” (Pages 63-64)

Q: As the rest of the book will reveal, there are several aspects to Corner Four relationships. Here he lists three: awareness of self-medicating patterns, we are not alone in our struggles, and accountability is required. On these three issues, where do you stand today?

- D. There is no such thing as a self-made man or woman. Every great leader has opened up to someone who could meet a need, whatever that need might have been. The range of human needs is broad, but *the way to meet those needs is very narrow*: it involves humbly and honestly embracing the need and reaching out to the “power of the other.” There is no other way. In the more than twenty-five years I’ve been working with high-powered CEOs and other top performers, one characteristic stands out: the leaders who accomplish the most, thrive the most, overcome the most are *not afraid to say they need help*. He makes a very profound statement as he wraps up this chapter: “trying to think of ways to get someone to see their need for help is not something I want to do anymore. I want to spend my time with those who want it. Why? Because they are the only ones who will grow, who will get better. Be one of those! Humble yourself. Head to Corner Four and seek someone who can meet the need that you have.” (Pages 66-68)

Q: Why do you think people are reluctant to ask for help?

Q: As you look at your personal disciple making efforts, how much time do you spend on trying to get someone to see their need for help? From our Christian perspective, isn’t that the role of the Holy Spirit?

Action: As a pastor and ministry leader, take time to re-think your priorities as it relates to disciple making. How can you find more time to invest in those who are willing to open themselves up to your investment in their lives and move beyond those who have demonstrated and unwillingness listen to the counsel of others?

Chapter 5: The Fuel for High Performance

- A. Henry opens the chapter by sharing a particularly devastating business mistake he made. Then he stated, “All I could think was, *What an idiot I’ve been! How could I have let this happen?*” He continues his story by telling us, “Then it got even worse. The phone rang. I didn’t feel like answering it, but I thought I’d better see who it was. This was before caller ID. When I picked it up, I instantly regretted it, as I recognized the voice. It was my main business mentor, one of the most influential people in my life. My heart sank. Here I was in the middle of the biggest failure I had ever had, and Superman happens to call.” After reluctantly telling his mentor the entire story of his business failure, Henry heard “Superman” say, “Well, we’ve all been there.” In the next several paragraphs, Cloud describes how his mentor’s comments suddenly changed his perspective and improved his mental state, and then he talked about the physiological process that takes place in our brain that caused his sudden shift in attitude. His summary statement is, “*Nothing* about the situation had changed. Except one thing: I had tapped into the power of the other. After our talk, I had energy and the courage to get to work. Relationship, the connection between people, not only enhances our mental functioning, but actually works to *impart* it, to *provide* it.” (Pages 69-74)

Q: Think about some of the most challenging or demoralizing times in your life. How quickly did you rebound? In those times when you had quicker bounce back, who was there to help you through the process?

- B. Cloud opens the next section he titles *Refueling*, with the statement, “The energy derived from relationships isn’t something that’s easy to fully understand, even though it has become clear, through practical experience and neuroscience, that it has very real effects.” He points out that “in winning organizations [and your church is an organization], people seem to have more energy, and they certainly use it more productively. While the losers waste their energy on negative activities such as internal politics and resisting changes demanded by the marketplace.” But he goes on to point out that Corner Four relationships don’t have just happy thoughts and positive comments. He notes, “They *are* positive in their intent and their desired result, but sometimes there is a *lot* of negative stuff that is talked about. Corner Four people sometimes have to wake us up and be pretty tough. In Corner Four we care about each other *and* we say the truth.” (Pages 75-77)

Wisdom from the days of Solomon noted that “Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Proverbs 27:6). Paul exhorted the early church to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). And the beloved Apostle John described Jesus as one who was “full of grace and truth” and noted that “the law came through Moses, but grace and truth were realized [lived out] in Jesus Christ” (John 1:14, 17).

Q: How well does your church balance grace and truth particularly when you have to deal with difficult situations and people?

- C. Cloud points to another energy source: information and learning. He gives the illustration of the CEO of a huge organization that said he spent more than half his time *teaching leadership*.

Q: Who are some of the people who are fueling your development as a Christian leader?

Q: Are you surrounding yourself with people who fuel you relationally and intellectually or have you let the tyranny of the urgent, fear, or pride force you into trying to refuel yourself?

Activity: Describe the ministry network/cluster/connect group where you are regularly meeting with a group of peers for accountability, fellowship, life-long learning?

- D. Henry points out another source of energy and new information for leaders he calls listening tours. This requires a leader to structure intentional, interactive touchpoints with people in his organization. (Pages 81-82)

I have observed that because of the pace of life and the challenges of day-to-day ministry, church leaders can end up with compassion overload. Because of this, most ministers aren't looking for additional touchpoints. As a result, some of us can create a bubble world in which we become isolated and insulated from hearing needed feedback.

Activity: Describe the process you use to "stay in touch" with average church members.

- E. Cloud again shares an intensely personal experience after pointing out that there are different "brands" or "flavors" of energy. He summarizes by stating that "fuel that we get from Corner Four relationships, comes from many *different* dimensions of life." He mentions the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual areas before stating that "In most cases, no one relationship can supply our needs in all of these dimensions, though sometimes one is paramount." (Pages 82-85)

Activity: Take time to reflect on individuals who help you build energy in the following areas of life:

- Physical Health:
- Emotional Support:
- Intellectual Challenge:
- Spiritual Encouragement:

- F. Cloud closes the chapter with a section entitled *Early Warning Signs*. He includes some excellent questions to help us self-diagnose when we have slid into one of the unhealthy relational corners of life where energy will be sapped from us.

Corner One Question: Reminding us that “the ability to be alone, comfortably and contentedly, is an important step toward emotional maturity and health,” he tells us to check to make sure we are not heading into Corner One to avoid conflict and intimacy. If you are going for solitude, do you still have real, connecting, honest, and vulnerable Corner Four time with others?

Corner Two Questions: Are alarm bells going off in your head ringing, “You’re not good enough?” Is fear of disapproval or failure driving your actions?

Corner Three Questions: Are you trusting in anything to make you feel good that you would not want your spouse, partner, family, colleagues, or church to know about? Does what makes you feel good have a short shelf life? Does the source of feeling good require you to be something other than to be your authentic self? (Pages 85-87)

Chapter 6: Freedom and Control

- A. Henry, who initially went to college on a golf scholarship, uses golf great Jack Nicklaus as an illustration of someone who had unparalleled self-control which was demonstrated in his “will to win.” Cloud then states, *“I have never seen great performers who felt themselves to be out of control of their own performance, emotions, direction, purpose, decisions, beliefs, choices, or any other human faculties. They don’t blame others or external factors. Self-control is a big deal in human performance. Getting better depends upon it. You cannot get better if it’s not you who has to get better. You are the performer, period. You are the only thing you can control. Obviously you are not in control of the universe or other people, but you are always in control of yourself.”*

Having reminded us of the importance of self-control (after all it is one of the virtues listed in the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23), Cloud states, “On the one hand, I’m saying *you’re* totally in control of your performance, but on the other, I’m telling you that *other* people have power over your performance too. Which is it? Self-control or the power of others? The answer is yes. The truth is that, while our self-control and performance is totally in our control, it derives much of its sustenance from the power of our formative relationships. Yes, others, in the past and the present, help build our capacity for self-control. That is the paradox of performance. Self-control comes from practicing it, building it, and using it *in the context of Corner Four relationships.*” (Pages 90-93)

As Christian leaders, we are familiar with paradoxical realities: God is one/God is three; Jesus is 100% human/Jesus is 100% divine; God is transcendent/God is imminent; Our salvation is by faith alone/Our salvation is manifest by good works alone; God is absolutely sovereign/God has given us the freedom to choose; etc.

Q: How do you respond to Cloud’s contention that self-control falls into the paradoxical camp?

- B. This combination—being in control *and* being supported and respected in your choices even when the other person disagrees with you—is one of the most powerful elements of Corner Four relationships. The degree to which you are going to soar depends in part upon finding Corner Four partners, who empower your sense of self-control instead of trying to take it away or diminish it somehow. Self-control is built through several functions that others provide:
- Support
 - Growth
 - Respect
 - Accountability (pages 94-97)

Q: Other than God, who do you have who is giving you support and input while at the same time they are protecting your freedom and control?

Q: Cloud stated that “putting support, real freedom, delegation, and choices all together is a tough challenge for any leader and for most kinds of relationships.” (Page 98) How well do you balance these in your leadership role(s)?

Q: Cloud closed the chapter by stating, “Keep in mind that Corner Four supporters don’t just give support willy-nilly. They support your choices but also hold you responsible for them.” (Page 101) In your church or ministry setting, who is holding you responsible for the decisions you make and the actions you take?

Chapter 7: Freedom Requires Responsibility

- A. This chapter picks up where the last one left off as Henry relates a personal illustration where he learned from his father that Corner Four relationships give us freedom, but also *they require us to take it and own it through responsibility*. Stating it in another way, Cloud writes, “The message of a Corner Four relationship is, ‘I cannot get you out of difficulties created by your choices, but I can require you to be responsible for them.’” (Pages 103-108)

From a theological perspective “we know that all things work together for good, to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28) However, Paul also tells us in I Corinthians 3 that God will test our works by fire (I Corinthians 3:9-15). We live in a culture where people demand the right to freedom of choice, but they don’t want anyone to hold them responsible for the consequences of their choices.

Q: How would you use both theology and the science of relationships to help someone understand the importance of holding each other responsible for our actions?

Q: What happens to a culture AND to a church, when accountability is removed?

- B. Corner Four accountability is a commitment to what is best at three levels: 1) all the individuals involved, 2) the relationship(s), and 3) the outcomes. There are some big factors in this kind of accountability that keep it from going the route of shame and push it forward to greater performance. The first is the clarity of agreed upon expectations—communicated and embraced by all. Second, the timing of those expectations is *early* and *continuous*. Clarity and consistency along with monitoring and adjusting, lead to real performance increase. (Pages 110-112)

Q: Describe a situation where these three levels were not present. What was the net result?

Q: If you have experienced a situation where all three were present and done well, describe that situation. What was the net result?

Activity: Choose one key relationship and discuss with those involved these three critical components.

- C. In a section he labels *Confrontation and Feedback*, Cloud notes that “in Corner One, there’s no feedback. In Corner Two, it makes you feel bad. In Corner Three, it’s dishonest, mostly flattery.” He then talks about healthy Corner Four feedback. First, the science of feedback tells us that it is *crucial* to performance. And the more immediate the better. The brain needs to know how it is doing in order to adjust and do better. Second, for feedback to be helpful, it has to be *helpful!* In Corner Four relationships you know that the person giving you feedback is *for* you and *with* you. That person is your *ally* and wants you to win. That means that good feedback can’t just be warm and fuzzy feelings, making each other feel good. It has to include constructive, reality-based feedback. You will *never* get to the next level if you can’t embrace feedback about your performance at the current level. (Pages 112-117)

Q: Have you ever had a working relationship where you consistently got feedback as just described?

Q: As a leader, are you providing healthy Corner Four feedback to those you are called to lead? Are you modeling a willingness to receive feedback?

- D. In the balance of the chapter, Cloud’s medical knowledge kicks in and he uses terms like amygdala and myelination to describe the technical aspects of human physiology—the science behind helpful feedback. In take home terms, he states that the brain needs a lot of love, safety, and good feelings to be able to handle and use negative inputs. The best ratio is six positive feedback messages for every negative message we send.

We also know that we learn best when we have to grapple with a problem ourselves. We remember about 10-20% of what we read or hear, but 80% of what we experience. I have stated that “true wisdom is learning from the mistakes and counsel of others.” Reality is that we learn best as we make our own mistakes.

Cloud debunks the old cliché “practice makes perfect” by stating that when we are doing something that is not helpful to us or to others, we need to know quickly—before it becomes a pattern. Therefore, “perfect practice’ makes perfect. And only through quality feedback will we know when we are practicing incorrectly.

Activity: Choose one important working relationship and begin to implement the feedback principles as described in this chapter. Put a reminder note on your calendar to review how you are doing.

Chapter 8: Defanging the Beast

- A. Henry returns to the illustration of a devastating business failure that he used to open chapter five and states, “What truly released me to be able to move forward and ultimately overcome the failure were the words, ‘Well, we’ve all been there.’ But why? Why were these five words the key that helped me not only recover, but get even better?” In a section he labels *Downward Spirals*, Cloud begins to discuss the why.

“As a psychologist I can tell you that when we are in the negative critical state, the brain, the mind, the spirit, and the soul are all in a downturn.” With the help of his business mentor, Cloud recognized that, “I didn’t have to fear failure anymore; I could see that never failing wasn’t the standard I should shoot for; the goal was to continue to go after things, to seek out opportunities, not to avoid them for fear of failure.” (Pages 129-130)

Q: As a leader, how “risk adverse” are you? When was the last time you led your church or ministry to try something new and it failed? How did that failure make you feel? What have you done to move past that failure? Or, if you haven’t moved past that failure, what do you need to do to get past it?

- B. For as long as humans have been around, we have struggled with an age-old issue: the dynamic tension between how things ought to be and how they really are. Where I want to be versus where I am. Here is the bottom line: *high performers resolve that tension in very, very different ways than the people they consistently outperform.* They are fueled by the possibility of getting better instead of defeated by the fact that they are not there yet. Again, though, it’s not just a matter of individual willpower. Research confirms that it is “otherpower,” if you will, that helps us to experience failure as a means of improvement.

“Two realities exist simultaneously: where we *are* at any given moment, and where we *want to be*. The space to be negotiated between these two states is the *gap*. We can’t avoid the gap, but we can decide how we’ll approach it. Do we use the gap as a guide for how to improve or as a judge of how much we’re failing?” (Pages 130-132)

Activity: List at least one personal *gap* you have in your life today:

Where I want to be—

Where I am—

Specific facts about “the gap” —

Activity: Now list at least one ministry *gap* that you are experiencing today:

Where I want to be—

Where I am—

Specific facts about “the gap” —

- C. In the heart of the chapter, Cloud uses the story of Pixar as an illustration of a business that has found success by dealing with *their gaps* in healthy Corner Four relational ways. One of the areas Cloud emphasizes relates to feedback. He points out that “some people have spent their whole lives submerged in Corner Three flattery. No one has ever told them that not every thought or idea they have is special, so when someone offers [critical] feedback, they experience it as harsh or as a sign of not being respected.” Pixar’s culture demands that people be able to tell each other that “the film sucks” but know that it isn’t personal and that everyone wants the same thing, to make the film better. In the previous discussion about feedback, Cloud pointed out that there is a right and a wrong way to give feedback, but here he emphasizes the other half of communication: *We need to say it well, and we need to hear it well*, even when it’s not said as well as it could be.” (Pages 133-138)

Activity: As I stated earlier, our ministry world is notorious for being feedback adverse. And it doesn’t help when those who are “most willing” to give it tend to be flame throwers. List some things you can do as a leader to improve both the telling and the hearing of feedback.

- D. In a closing section labeled *Ways and Means*, Cloud summarizes his view of what has helped Pixar be successful:
- Everyone assumes that there will always be problems and that they will always be addressing them. Jesus reminded us that in this world we will have tribulation (John 16:33).
 - Ideas have no rank—in other words the boss doesn’t have a corner on good ideas. As Baptists, this is part of our doctrine of the Priesthood of All Believers.
 - They keep the goal in mind—to make a quality picture (ours is to make disciples for the glory of God)
 - They place equal emphasis on giving and getting feedback. He who has an ear to hear, let him hear (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13, 22)

One team Cloud worked with came up with the following guiding principles:

We engage in respectful, collaborative, *timely*, and complete dialogue. We clearly and directly convey ideas and share our points of view, while maintaining openness to different perspectives. We listen to, understand, and respectfully question to achieve clarity, in both message and mutual expectations. We openly discuss critical issues and deliver difficult messages with care. We commit to not leaving important things unsaid, and we avoid saying them to someone other than the person who should hear them.

He states that others have done it in other ways, and then lists the following examples:

- Focus on the problem, not the person.
- Let's love every idea for five minutes (or some amount of time—forty-five seconds?)
- Say it with respect, but say it all.
- Listen and think about it before negating or disagreeing.
- No zingers or over-the-line personal attacks.
- No back-channeling or side conversations.

Cloud closes the chapter by mentioning how Alan Mulally (legendary CEO who turned around Ford Motor Company) used twelve clear principles for working together. Mulally would often open a meeting by reading aloud his list of principles and then close the meeting by asking, "How did we do?"

Activity: After hearing what others are doing to develop healthier feedback, return to the activity under section C and rework your list.

Chapter 9: The Right Kind of Push

- A. Cloud reminds us that "If you continue doing the same thing, you're going to get the same results." This is the section where he refers to the second law of thermodynamics as a great metaphor to explain human performance and why sometimes we try to do the same thing while we expect different results. He explains, "Basically, the law states that in any [closed] system, there is a limited amount of energy, and over time this energy becomes less useful and more chaotic. As much as the system tries to keep order and make progress, inevitably the energy, and thus the quality of the system, grows more disordered. Despite one's best efforts, the system is running down, getting worse instead of better. So it goes with human performance. There are two ingredients essential for breaking out of the cycle of decline: *new sources of energy and intelligence*."

In personal relationships, these new sources of energy and intelligence might come from a therapist, a wise friend, a coach, a pastor, or a support group. But, ultimately to receive this influx of energy and intelligence, whether it is at the personal, the leadership team level, the church, or the family level, *you have to be open!* (Pages 145-147)

Q: What are some of the ways you open yourself up to fresh energy and intelligence in your personal life?

Q: As a leader, what are some of the ways you open yourself up to fresh energy and intelligence?

Activity: Check your answers to the previous two questions by asking key Corner Four Relationships to evaluate how open you are to their ideas and to being energized by your relationship with them.

- B. Cloud continues by talking about the kinds of relationships that add energy to our system. The first area mentioned he calls *Stretch*. He notes, "Frequently, we don't have a clue about the abilities and assets we possess." He continues by stating that Corner Four Relationships balance a couple of factors in getting us to set goals that stretch us.
- They will push you to go farther than you've gone in the past, encouraging you to develop new skills in order to reach the goal.
 - However, they will not stretch you to a point that will overwhelm you or take you backward.

They stretch but don't injure. Pointing again to the science of human relationships (Yerkes-Dodson law), he notes that *we need to be stimulated from an outside source in order to keep our system healthy and thriving.* He also points out that the healthiest kids come from environments that do two things: encourage them with warmth and give them high expectations. He closes the section by encouraging us to ask ourselves a series of questions that will help us determine if we have the right kinds of connections to help us get to the next level:

Q: Am I being appropriately *pushed* to be better, to be more?

Q: What specifically am I being *challenged* to do better?

Q: What specifically am I being *challenged* to do that is more than I'm doing now?

Q: Am I being pushed *past* my comfort zone?

Q: When I resist or struggle, how are these feelings *addressed*? Do others remain firm in my need to grow?

- C. Under a section he labels *10X Challenges*, Cloud points to the term BHAGs coined by Jim Collins: big hairy audacious goals. He suggests we should "*always work hard on something uncomfortably exciting.*" Henry then mentions Google's co-founder Larry Page's out of the box thinking. Henry points out that Page didn't develop the concept while "sitting on a stump in the woods being visited by a muse," but he got it from the *other*. At a summer training program in college, Page learned to develop "a healthy disregard for the impossible." Cloud summarizes the section by stating, "Give the brain a *specific*, but *BIG* problem to solve, and it will surprise you. Give people a chance and the tools to grow, and they will shine. *But only if the problem is big enough.* And then only if the process is fueled, monitored, and sustained by the other." (pages 152-154)

Q: What BHAG are you striving to achieve in your personal life?

Q: What BHAGs are you seeking to attain in your ministry setting?

D. Cloud describes some of the folks that we can encounter in the ministry world—those who passionately state that God can and will do great things, but they don't seem to be willing to pay the price of obedience. Henry writes, "Blind positive thinking, the research shows us, does not work, because when obviously positive thinkers encounter difficulties, they get discouraged and bottom out. Corner Four people not only help us believe that we *can* get there, but they also help us see that it is really, really going to be a *lot of work*, with lots of obstacles. Churches also have members who don't believe things can or should change in their church. For those, Cloud points out that people who possess a "growth mind-set" rather than a "fixed mind-set" are more likely to be able to achieve goals and improve. Then he talks about a third group who look at the world through a growth mind-set. *They believe that people can grow and change*. Science has shown us that we can and do change. We do get better, but *we tend to do it alongside people who believe that too and who are committed to helping us*. (Pages 155-157)

Q: With which of the three groups do you personally identify the most?

E. To balance the BHAG approach, Cloud points out that Corner Four people don't expect you to know how to do it well before you do it. They know that each step is a step, and they don't expect you to know how to do it well before you do it. They are the relationships that are going to help you take small steps consistent with your vision and your stretch goals.

Q: As a leader ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I help others set small, achievable goals that are aligned with the big ones they have set?
- Do I help them monitor progress in ways that are helpful and specific?
- Do I value the small steps that they are making, or do I only praise the "home runs?"
- Do I celebrate the small wins?
- Am I helping them understand that to get better they have to develop an incremental, step-by-step process?
- Do I compare them only to an idealized pattern I have in my mind?
- Do I help them identify multiple options for achieving their goals, or do I communicate to them that it has to be my way or the highway?

Chapter 10: Bringing the Outside In

A. The chapter opens with a summary of what he has told us in the previous five chapters that make Corner Four relationships different:

- We have to first admit we need the help of others and that Corner Two and Corner Three relationships are unhealthy.
- We have to learn to balance self-control by making connections with others that fuel us.

- We have to make connections that provide freedom backed by accountability and consequences.
- We have to find relationships that permit learning and accept failures as the norm.
- We need others to help us balance big dreams with bite-sized steps.

Henry then introduces an additional component he calls “internalization.” It is the gradual process by which the patterns, tones, fueling, and cadences of our relationships become embedded in the internal structure of our minds, our psyche,” and I would add our souls. Former relationships and experiences do live inside us and do continue to affect us. How do we ensure that our lessons, experiences, and values get passed along without our having to be there each and every moment? Internalization! It always surprises people how much they can actually let go of if they know how to get it out of their own heads and into the heads of other people. (Pages 166-173)

Science again confirms what the wisdom writers knew 3,000 years ago: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6)

Q: If you are blessed with grandchildren, stop and take a hard look at their actions, attitudes, and articulations. My guess is you will find a lot of “you” in them. The question is, how many good vs bad habits did you transfer? What are the things that you got out of your own head and into their heads? If you don’t have children or grandchildren, look at the people you have been leading and see how much of you is reflected in them.

- B. If you were just forced to realize that the bad habits won, there is Good News. And in a section Cloud labels *Changing the Channel*, he tells us that science agrees with the message of the Gospel. “Neuroscience research shows that we can *rewire our brains*. Just because you had voices that diminished you doesn’t mean you can’t get new ones. Your brain is available for downloads and updates to its software, but just like your cell phone, *it has to be plugged into a good network, with unlimited data and no viruses.*” (Pages 173-177)

One of my favorite passages is Romans 12:1-2: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed **by the renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Again science confirms clear Biblical teaching.

Q: How good is the network you are using for “theological software” updates?

- C. Cloud introduces the closing section of the chapter by asking, “How do you stay on a well-balance Corner Four diet for the rest of your life?” His short answer is, “Learning doesn’t occur willy-nilly; it has to be structured well with a solid foundation.” Along with a few excellent illustrations, he provides the following summary statements: “I

learned that structure allows us to invest in the things that are important to us but don't exist inside of us yet. For those 'getting-better goals' we want to achieve—we have to create a space and routine for bringing them into existence. Throw the right information, the right kind of relationship, and the right experience into each dose and do it in a structured pattern, with enough dosage. If you do that, the results might amaze you.” (Pages 177-184)

Activity: Identify one specific area in your life, where you want and need to get to the next level. Cloud outlined the following eight connection qualities. What specific things will you need to do in each area to make it happen?

- Connections that fuel
- Connections that give freedom
- Connections that require responsibility
- Connections that defang failure and learning
- Connections that challenge and push
- Connections that build structure
- Connections that unite instead of divide
- Connections that are trustworthy

Chapter 11: The Bermuda Triangle of Relationships

- A. When I picked up the book and looked at the table of contents, I turned to this chapter and read it first. What I read filled my mind with a flood of memories—not good memories. I was reminded of the number one thing that I have been asked to do in my twenty-four plus years of serving as a Director of Missions. It has been to put on my “referee shirt” and help a church in a time of conflict. I wish this short, eleven page, chapter was required reading in every church’s new member class—probably wouldn’t hurt some of the long time members to be exposed to it either.

The previous chapters described the characteristics of healthy Corner Four relationships—the right kind of diet. This chapter focuses on what Cloud calls “the most pernicious of the ‘diseases’ that can afflict a Corner Four relationship: triangulation.” He further describes the disease by stating, “I was fascinated by the Bermuda Triangle as a kid. According to the legend, planes and ships were apt to disappear there. Corner Four relationships risk similar outcomes when communication goes into its own dark triangle. I’m talking about a situation in which A should be talking to B but is talking to C *about* B instead. Triangulation sets up something called the victim-persecutor-rescuer (VCR) triad, which I’m calling the Bermuda Triangle of relationships. It works like this. I’m bugged with you or disagree with you or don’t like the way you recently confronted me. I feel like the victim of something you did to me, and that makes you the persecutor. But instead of talking directly to you about what’s bothering me, I take my hurt feelings to a sympathetic third person, who becomes my ‘rescuer.’ I gripe about you, how mean, wrong, abusive, or attacking you were to do what you did or say what you said. I’m not talking to the rescuer for legitimate feedback about our conflict and for help resolving it. That would be a good motivation, but instead, I’m talking to the rescuer just to get

validation that I'm right and you're wrong. I want C's support for my side of the argument. It makes me feel better, bleeds off the pain, and helps me avoid talking directly to you." (Pages 185-186)

Q: Be honest with yourself, when is the last time you participated in a relational Bermuda Triangle?

Q: As a ministry leader, how often do you see triangulation taking place within your church. How often are you thrust into the C role? What is your typical response?

- B. Cloud states that triangulation is extremely destructive. "*Divisiveness is one of the most destructive forces in teams, companies, families, marriages, friendships, and any other relational system.*" And, I would add, the church IS a highly relational system. He states, "Like any cancer, unchecked, [triangulation] spreads and destroys more and more cells. Persons who use rescuers for validation seldom look at themselves and change. As a result, they repeat the same pattern over and over, destroying relationships, teams, and organizations."

Henry wrote, "As a person of faith, I'm often reminded of a certain stern passage in the New Testament (Titus 3:10-11). On the face of it, it sounds so harsh. It is speaking to the church community and says this: 'If people are causing divisions among you, give a first and second warning. After that, have nothing more to do with them. For people like that have turned away from the truth, and their own sins condemn them.' Seems pretty extreme, right? That's what I thought until I became a leadership consultant and spent a few decades working with teams and organizations. I learned something: *Divisive people cause more harm than whatever the good things they bring are worth.* The real issue is that people who habitually do this are *not* willing to look at themselves and try to resolve things. Instead, they prefer to get people to side with them and agree with them rather than create unity and resolution."

Cloud states, "One of the best organizational cultures I know is Ramsey Solutions, Dave Ramsey's company. The company has a 'no-gossip rule.' If someone is gossiping about someone instead of talking to that person directly to work it out, the gossiper is given a warning and is then fired if the warning is disregarded. Having that rule has made it more than OK for people to speak their minds; it's a necessity if they want to keep their jobs." (Pages 188-191)

Q: Who are some of the "divisive" people you have known? Can you say with Henry that they did more harm than good?

Q: What are you doing in your church / ministry to make sure that clear and open communication is taking place and that divisive people are identified and eliminated?

- C. In the closing section he titles *The Solution*, Henry lists six steps to stopping the infection caused by triangulation.

1. *Name the Problem*—talk about the disease of triangulation and its deadly impact.

2. *Establish a rule or a covenant with each other to help eliminate triangulation from your church / ministry.*
3. *You and all the other people in your church / ministry should agree that if someone does begin to gossip to you about someone else, you will decline to join in.*
4. *Be a good receiver of feedback.* If people know they can talk to us directly and we will not get defensive or overreact, they'll have less need to go talk to someone else *about us.*
5. *Build your skills*—listening, confrontation, conflict, negotiation, and conversational skills.
6. *Be wise*—every conversation about a third party is not divisive. Learn the difference! (Pages 191-195)

Q: Which of the six, can you honestly say are part of your church / ministry culture?

Q: What specific things can you do to begin to implement all six of these steps?

Chapter 12: Trust

- A. Cloud closes the previous chapter by stating, “So let’s talk to each other directly. To do that, we need another element in Corner Four relationships: trust.” Then he opens this chapter with a summary paragraph. “We’ve examined what it takes to become a high performer. First, other people have power in our life to greatly influence our performance. Second, that power can be positive or negative. Third, we can’t get to the next level without opening ourselves up to the positive power that others bring—we must be an open system. Fourth, in order to open up and receive, we must be vulnerable and willing to go into a place of need. Fifth, there are certain components that Corner Four relationships provide—fuel, self-control, responsibility and ownership, a realistic positivity about failure, stretches and pushes, steps, structure, and process.”

Henry then points out that as a consultant he has discovered that one size doesn’t fit all. However there are a handful of universal concepts and principles that apply to *every single individual or group*. **Trust** is one of those concepts, especially when it comes to tapping into the power of the other. Trust fuels investment of money, time, energy, and self. In the balance of the chapter he discusses five crucial ingredients that he believes will build trust: understanding, intent or motive, ability, character, and track record.” (Pages 195-199)

If this is an area where your church / ministry needs to grow, I would encourage you to read Steven Covey’s book *The Speed of Trust*—I have also done a discussion summary on it.

Q: You’ve seen Cloud’s list of trust building ingredients. What other elements have you found to be important or imperative?

B. Here is how Henry defines each of the five qualities.

- *Understanding*—We trust people who we know understand us, our context, our situation, our needs, what makes it work for us, and what makes it break down. Ask yourself, have I shown the people I want to have a Corner Four relationship with that I truly am listening, that I understand them?
- *Intent and Motive*—When we're looking to invest ourselves in a relationship, *neutrality is never enough*. We need the people we trust to be more than neutral. We need for them to be our allies, champions, and helpers!
- *Ability*—Someone may have remarkable compassion and empathy for you, and pure motives, but you can trust them only if they have the ability to do what you need done.
- *Character*—The higher you go in organizations, the more important questions of character and emotional intelligence become. Can you be trusted to do the right thing in the right way?
- *Track Record*—The best predictor of the future is the past, unless there is something new and different in the picture. If the track record has been poor, but you're thinking of trusting someone, have a very good reason.

Activity: Discuss each of these qualities at your next team meeting and ask who on your team excels at each of the specific qualities. Listen for areas where you are not mentioned and take note of ways to improve in that specific quality.

Conclusion: Nice Guys Don't Finish Last

Henry adds this chapter as a disclaimer. He wrote, "Often when I give a talk about how leadership, character, emotional intelligence, and relational issues affect results, I invariably get a question like this: 'You are saying that all of this relational ability is important for leadership and getting results, and being successful. But what about someone like Steve Jobs? He was very successful and known to be difficult to work with in some of these ways. How do you explain that?'" Henry emphatically states that it is a myth to think that something dysfunctional is contributing to success. He continues, "Mark my words: *Nice guys do not finish last, and jerks do not finish first. Great performers finish first, and if they are great and good people they do even better.*" In essence he is saying those type of people are successful in spite of their issues rather than because of their issues.

He closes the book with a series of questions:

- Q:** Are you lonely in Corner One?
- Q:** Are you feeling crappy in Corner Two?
- Q:** Are you experiencing a fleeting thrill in Corner Three?
- Q:** Are you feeling protected, advised, supported, and rewarded in Corner Four?
- Q:** Which corner are you in?
- Q:** Who is in that corner with you? (Pages 213-218)