

# **A PREZ RELEASE** **from AGTS**

*(Monthly commentary from the President of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary)*

**MAY 2002**

## **Keeping the Plain Things – The Main Things**

It's tough being a leader these days. In both the corporate and ecclesiastical world disgust with leadership is mounting to ever higher levels. The Enron debacle testifies to how uncritiqued influence in corporate life can create a virtual reality where accounting procedures, akin to a carnival shell game, are called standard operating procedures.

Regardless of theological differences between Protestants and Catholics, the Catholic Church has arguably been a significant social institution in American life. Yet the current crisis facing the U.S. Conference of Bishops is not only about the abuse of young people by priests, but also about a growing perception that doubts this body of leaders has the desire or capability to act with integrity.

FBI leaders now must defend the handling of pre 9-11 information that allegedly was systematically marginalized. Reasonable explanations for decisions on how this information was handled no longer finds a hearing in the post 9-11 context.

Living in a world where changing cultural realities already encourages cynicism toward all corporate leadership, only heightens the leadership woes that have surfaced in recent months. I'm glad I don't have to answer for Enron, the Catholic Church nor the FBI. However, the idea that I am exempt from the rising tide of cynicism toward organizational leadership would be naive indeed. Church leaders are held to incredibly high standards by their publics and there is no way to wiggle out of the spotlight.

While current events create a volatile context for church leaders and we can fully expect the spirit of cynicism to remain present, it isn't as if this is a new challenge to Christian leaders. Former U. S. Senate Chaplain Richard Halverson put it succinctly when he said; "if you expect to be paid attention to, back it up with your life. Let your walk correspond to your talk. Many so-called Christians listen too little, talk too much and live lives that contradict what they say. Their actions betray Christ and alienate those to whom they speak."

Business ethics is becoming big business. Corporations are slowly realizing integrity does count. However, for Christian leaders, the necessity of integrity is not merely adhering to a set of corporate policies that guide business transactions in a just manner. Integrity is central to Christian leadership because our actions are a visible testimony to Jesus Christ who we declare as Lord of our lives. That visible expression of the consequences of a redemptive encounter with

Jesus Christ must be understandable and clear to all observers 24/7/365. To offer anything less than integrity in our daily business and relational encounters will be to cast shadows on the gospel of Jesus Christ. **If our actions are compromised our proclamation will be neutralized. This is not an era to have either our actions or our verbal testimony to Jesus Christ in question.** Integrity is in short supply in our world and people have an instinctive sense for when it is present or not. **As Christian leaders it's our time to shine** – “we are therefore Christ’s ambassadors as though God were making His appeal through us.” (II Cor. 5:20)

References: Illustrations [www.preachingtoday.com](http://www.preachingtoday.com)

Byron D. Klaus, President  
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary