

Everyone Is Insecure

I used to think there were some really secure people around. You know, the ones we envy because they are so confident and at ease in every situation. It's not so! I can hardly believe I lived under that illusion for so many decades! Everyone is insecure.

This bubble was burst for me one day when I was with one of those confident, strong-personality types. I saw his demeanor change and his discomfort pop through for just a few seconds when I introduced him to another friend who was somewhat his (and my) senior in years and leadership stature. My immediate reaction was disappointment – I wouldn't have thought it of him! But after just a little reflection it was a refreshing thing to consider! In that moment he had become "real" to me.

According to Random House, a facade is "a false or superficial appearance, often designed to give a favorable impression." Sort of like a quick sand-and-paint job to cover up years of battle scars on our airplane. Hmmm – I think this fits where we're going here!

We all care about what others think of us. Each has fears and insecurities that we try to cover with the appearance of strength. We are such complex beings that we don't even know ourselves fully, which creates even more discomfort. Sorry – no exceptions!

Many professionally competent people are justifiably confident, but that's not to be confused with personal security. In fact professional confidence can help cover our personal insecurity.

Christians are among the worst when it comes to utilizing facades. Worship form, "ministry" and quoting a scripture for every situation are among the potential false fronts that can help us appear "spiritual." Through them we compensate for our perceived inadequacies to help us feel more confident around others.

Another way Christians express insecurity is in how we hold the things we believe to be "truth." Much pain is caused in the church, and many are driven away from God because the personal insecurities of Christians caused them to be narrow and dogmatic in the way they expressed their beliefs.

It is sometimes true that the more assertive we act, the less secure we *actually* are. Some of the strongest, most dominating people I have seen over the years were, deep down inside, the most insecure individuals I have known. They used the facade of confidence and control to cover their feelings of inferiority. You've seen that too and many of us have practiced it in some measure.

Our need to complain to others about a former employer, church, mission board, spouse or - - - may reveal a lack of confidence about our own conduct. The same applies to present situations. A constant flow of accusations may indicate a need to convince ourselves as much as others!

When my twin brother Karl and I were paying our way through college by buying government surplus, wrecked aircraft scrap, and melting it down, we had to determine if certain parts were aluminum or magnesium. If they were mag, and we mixed them with the aluminum, we decreased the value of our aluminum ingots. We had a simple "acid

test." We would scrape the surface of the metal and pour a little vinegar on it. If it sort of boiled, it was mag. If not, it was probably aluminum.

Here's an acid test to check if the confidence we portray is for real, or a facade. If it lifts us above others; creates a wall to protect us from vulnerability to them; and/or seems to sanction our controlling them, it has the marks of a facade. If our strength enables us to be transparent, and if it empowers us to serve others without needing to control them and without expectation of return, it suggests genuineness.

When you are tempted to envy those apparently super-confident people – don't. They may be living under an illusion about themselves, but you don't need to. They have weakness just like us. When they discover that, and especially when they can acknowledge it to others, they will take a giant stride toward true strength.

One of the greatest services we can render is to relate to one another in a way that allows us to be honest about our insecurities!

Born in 1940, Ken Stoltzfus has worked as a pilot, ordained Christian minister, businessman, missionary to Africa and writer. This is #3 in his series "The View from up Life's Path," and is one of many short articles that can be found at www.John2031.com.

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