

A Matter of Trust

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Command Chaplain

Tomorrow is our base's change of command. When Colonel Wingard took command two years ago, he had a decidedly different leadership style from his predecessor. While the previous CO was a very hands-on manager, Colonel Wingard's approach was more relaxed.

Each person has his own style of leadership. Where one person may be very active in all of the details of the events taking place, another may choose not to be involved in the details at all, unless needed. One person doesn't care about the organization more than the other. They simply express it in different ways.

A few years ago, I had someone on my Chapel Council from whom I usually found myself on the opposing side of issues. It seemed as if we never agreed on how anything was to be done. He finally came up to me and said that if I wanted to replace him on the Chapel Council, he understood. He knew that he could be difficult to deal with. I told him I had no intentions of replacing him whatsoever. I told him that the reason he and I usually disagreed is because each of us cared about the Chapel very much. We simply didn't always agree with the way the program was to be run. Once he understood that we each wanted the same things, he tried to see things from my perspective and we began working together on issues, finding common ground and compromises.

There were other people in the chapel that cared just as much as the other person did, but they had a different way of expressing that. Some of them donated money or bought items for the chapel. Others volunteered their services and time. All of them cared, but showed it differently.

Colonel Wingard had cared a great deal for the base and its programs, but his personality and leadership style allows him to express it differently than other leaders. He cares for the programs, but trusts his leaders to carry out his "Commander's Intent" with little direction or correction. He offers correction when necessary, or guides people in different directions when he feels they are headed down the wrong path. Basically, he allows his people to do their jobs the way they feel most comfortable without giving them unwanted advice or direction.

When someone uses this style of leadership, inevitably someone will make a mistake. When they do, they are generally asked what they learned from it and allowed to take corrective action. Hopefully, the error won't be repeated.

God uses the same approach with us. He allows us to live our lives according to our own desires. It isn't that He doesn't care. He cares very much. He simply trusts us to make responsible decisions, always available to offer direction or correction when it is needed or desired. When we fail, God uses our mistakes to teach us and set us on the right path again, hoping we won't make the same mistake in the future.

I have enjoyed the freedom to manage the Command Religious Program. Colonel Wingard has allowed me to do so with his complete trust and confidence. He has cared about the program and he trusted me to care for it, too.

Semper Fi in the Lord and I hope to see you in church on Sunday.