

Address This or Lose Your Strength

The common leadership counsel to focus on your strengths is wise, with one important caveat. Your weaknesses must be addressed and brought to an acceptable norm or they will overshadow your strengths. Yes, focus on your strengths, but your weaknesses cannot be so overwhelming as to debilitate your leadership credibility. In his book, *The Leadership Code*, Dave Ulrich challenges leaders to be at least average in key disciplines of leadership or their weakness will crush them. Yet many leaders choose to ignore their weaknesses completely for the following two reasons:

1. We think our strengths are stronger than they are.

One primary reason leaders ignore their weaknesses is they overestimate their strengths. Overestimating your strengths is often synonymous with underestimating your weaknesses. A leader who overestimates his/her own strengths can unwisely ignore his/her weaknesses. The leader can shrug off the need to address certain leadership deficiencies because the leader assumes, "but I am so very strong in this area." Having a higher view of oneself than one should always leads to foolish decision-making.

2. We hate to admit we are weak.

To address our weaknesses, we must first admit we have them, and we hate to admit we are weak. Pride keeps leaders from admitting their weaknesses and addressing them. Pride always hampers our effectiveness and our learning. But wise leaders admit their weaknesses, rely on others, and seek to grow and mature.

Of all leaders, Christian leaders should be the first to admit and address their weaknesses. Our faith is not for the strong, but for the weak. And we are all weak. We became Christians by recognizing our weakness, our inability to qualify ourselves to stand before God, and by relying on God for His mercy and grace. We continue in the faith by humbly depending on God's strength, not by standing in our own. We live as Christians by walking in community with others who hold us up, who encourage us, and by refusing to live independently from others.

The cross has already shown us to be weak. Therefore, we can freely admit our weaknesses and seek to grow.

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