



## When I Respect and Value Others, I Respect and Value Myself



**Jack Lannom**

Award Winning Author,  
Leadership and  
Learning Expert,  
International Speaker,  
Founder of the People  
First® Movement,  
CEO of People First®  
International

Not too long ago I was visiting my stepdaughter in Saint Louis, Missouri, and I struck up a conversation with a man who was cutting the grass outside her building. It was nothing profound; I asked him questions about where he was from and about his family ... just getting to know the human being. He told me how much he loves his family and how hard he works to support them.

To look at us, we couldn't have been more different: I was dressed in a crisp business suit and had just stepped out of an air-conditioned car; he was dressed in jeans, and his shirt had become soaked through with sweat as he toiled in the hot summer sun. But I focused on what we had in common: our love for our families and for the area we live in. He is an honorable man doing an honorable job, and as we talked, his face just lit up; you could tell that he deeply enjoyed our time together. I thoroughly enjoyed engaging with my new friend ... in no small measure because I know that when I value and respect someone, it always edifies that person and contributes to them being more engaged in their work. And that edifies me!

My wife, Debbie, and I will celebrate our 20th wedding anniversary this year. When we were first dating and I would engage in animated conversations with restaurant servers or valet attendants, Debbie often asked me, "How is it that you like someone that quickly? You tell them you like them ... and you *mean* it! You've never met that man before; you don't even know who he is!"

I would promptly reply, "But I do know who they are. They are human beings! They are members of the human family. I know from my consulting work how often these folks are on the receiving end of harsh, unkind words, simply because some customers believe that 'service personnel' are somehow inferior. I want to *bless* these men and women, not curse them! And when I bless someone else, I am blessing myself, because I'm blessing the image that's in both of us. It is my moral responsibility to do that."

Back in those days, Debbie would give me a blank look ... and perhaps at this moment you are also. Let me explain.

My faith teaches me that every human being is made in the image of God. That knowledge creates the foundation for everything that takes place between us interpersonally. Since you and I share the same divine image, when I make it a point to honor you and you honor me in return, we are honoring ourselves at the same time. That's because you and I are one with each other in the essence of sharing the same human nature. When I engaged with the man who was mowing the lawn, I was doing nothing more—and nothing less—than talking to my brother. He is a member of my family, the royal human family, and I was simply loving on my brother.

There is a oneness in humanity that I'm afraid is overlooked far too often. I am convinced that the root cause of so many of our interpersonal, generational, and interracial conflicts is that too many of us don't realize that when we treat a person *without* dignity, respect, and honor, we are diminishing our own value at the same time. If I treat another person as if they don't have worth and value, since I am of that same nature, I am behaving as if I have no worth or value either! To borrow a term from a logic text book ... we are all members of the same "set"; if I devalue or diminish the set, I am devaluing and diminishing myself.

When you are in the presence of another human being, you have been given a great opportunity to treat them with dignity, respect, and honor. In doing so, you are not only honoring them, but yourself and God as well. You are not only validating their worth, but your own.

When I stopped to talk to the man who was cutting the grass, I was operating from self-worth ... and so was he. We engaged in a reciprocity of treating each other with dignity, honor, and respect. If I don't have the confidence of self-worth, I can't give anything away, because I fear that I have lost something of myself ... that I am somehow diminished. But when I operate from the confident platform of my inherent self-worth as a human being, made in the image of God, I am free to honor and strengthen others, which also honors me!

Let's consider the union of marriage to further expand this idea. Many of us recited some version of the following promise on our wedding day: "I take you to be my wife (or husband) ... to have and to hold from this day forward—for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish—until we are parted by death." The time-honored teaching on marriage is that when a man and woman come together, they are united; the two become one flesh.

Since this is true, when the husband loves his wife, he is at the same time loving himself, because he is loving his own flesh. In the same way, if the wife respects her husband, she is simultaneously honoring herself.

This is true because there is a one-flesh union; whatever the one spouse does to strengthen the other's well-being strengthens that one-flesh union. On the contrary, if the husband disparages or dishonors his wife, he is disparaging and dishonoring himself. Consequently, he is damaging the marital union because the organic metaphor of "one flesh" signifies the highest form of intimacy conceivable, by means of an interpenetration



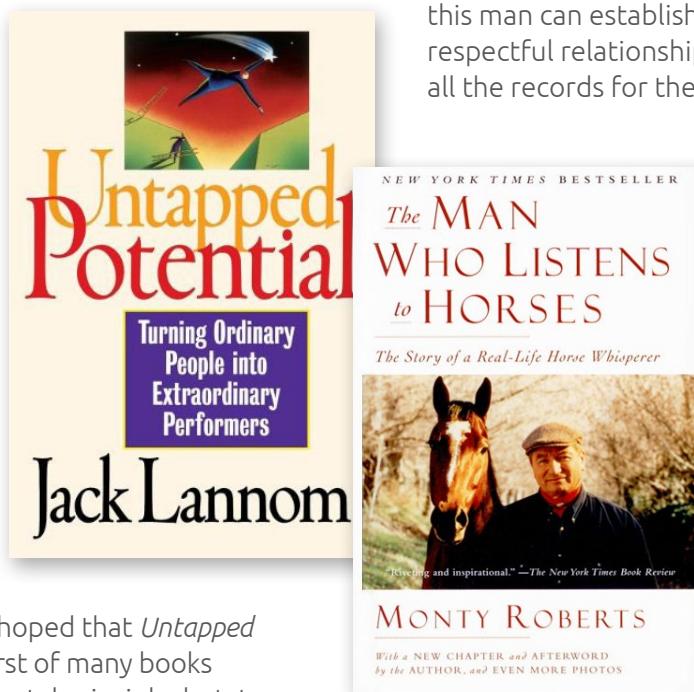
PEOPLE FIRST®

of minds, souls, and bodies. So because of the one-flesh union, when a man hurts his wife in any manner, this means that he is at the same time hurting himself. In other words, this mistreatment by the husband will simultaneously diminish the well-being of both the wife *and* the husband.

When I was first exposed to this concept—that I was honoring myself by honoring others—I remember thinking that this is the most profound teaching I had ever heard with regard to enhancing the quality of *every* interpersonal interaction. When I was in college, none of my courses in psychology, sociology, or the humanities breathed one syllable of this idea! And it changed my life forever.

I wrote a book that developed this philosophy in 1997, titled *Untapped Potential*. The publisher, Thomas Nelson Inc., has a proud, 200-year history as one of the largest publishers of inspirational material in the world. My editor told me that Nelson had never before published a book about motivation and business development in which the author predicated his or her theory for sustainable success on a definition of what it means to be human. At the time, I hoped that *Untapped Potential* would be the first of many books establishing this fundamental principle, but, to the best of my knowledge, it remains unique in defining the inherent dignity and worth of men and women as the basis for cultural health and organizational development.

I have been researching best business practices for forty years. Most members of our People First International board and staff hold advanced business degrees; several are PhDs. Yet with all our studies on motivational strategies, would you believe that none of us has ever attended a lecture proclaiming the unparalleled value of people? Oh sure, people mention “the greatness of humanity”



and drop clichés about “People are our greatest asset” in passing. But *no one* on our team ever sat in a class or picked up a leadership book that began with a definition of what it means to be human as the axiom for human engagement.

Monty Roberts became famous for his book, *The Man Who Listens to Horses*, in which he contends that you don’t have to “break” a horse in order to ride the horse. He asserts that when you honor the spirit of a horse, the horse trusts you and allows you to “join up” with him, creating a partnership between man and beast that is based on respecting the horse’s spirit.

The traditional equestrian method of breaking the horse—that is, breaking the horse’s spirit until it submits to the rider—takes weeks. I’ve watched a video of Monty Roberts working with a wild stallion and riding it within 30 minutes. If this man can establish such an honoring and respectful relationship with a horse, breaking all the records for the time it takes to get on a wild horse and ride it, how much more should we respect the spirit of those creatures with whom we share such exceptional value as human beings? If horses respond so favorably to that dignified treatment of their spirit, how would it work if we treated human beings, who have far greater

worth—immeasurable, inestimable, incalculable worth, because they are made in the image of God—in this same way? Moreover, as exalted persons, would we not create the greatest, human-to-human “join up” imaginable?

We at People First International are encouraging people to think differently about themselves in terms of what it means to be human. When you and I fully embrace the profound meaning and significance of men and women being made in the image of God, we begin to think differently about

---

ourselves ... and about others. And our thinking is critically important, because our beliefs precede our behavior. The foundation for strong, trust-based relationships starts with what we believe about people; our beliefs will determine *everything* about how we behave with others. Quite simply, you can't impart what you don't possess.

Honoring others is such a *huge* concept, yet all too often we fail to recognize how integral our belief in the dignity and worth of people is to the success or failure of our personal and professional relationships. If we dishonor someone else, we will simultaneously begin to reap what we've sown. There's a payday for our beliefs! There are all types of consequences which are instantly set into motion that we are not aware of; as we hit the kill switch on someone else's human spirit, we diminish our own human spirit also.

If we don't grasp that truth, we are not living in integrity. The Latin root of our word *integrity* means "wholeness." If you truly understand and believe that human beings are made in the image of God, where is the wholeness between your lips and your life if you dishonor others? There is no wholeness; there is only misalignment. You are living a compromised life because there is no integrity! You are dishonoring yourself, devaluing yourself, disrespecting yourself, and vitiating your own value when you dishonor others. You are contributing to your own diminished sense of self, no matter how unwittingly. How can I devalue you and *not* lose a part of myself? I am weakening the union that makes us both strong.

If I am thinking in my heart that I hate someone, I am doing violence to myself. I once heard a man say that unforgiveness is like drinking poison and waiting for your enemy to die. That's exactly right! When I love you, I am loving myself; if I hate you, I am destroying myself. Love edifies the lover, but hate destroys the hater.

So how do you and I go about communicating to others that we value and respect them? One very simple yet immediately noticeable way to do this is in the way we make eye contact. The eyes are the manifestation of value. When you look into

another human being's eyes, if you are looking at that person through the lens of belief in his or her dignity, worth, and potential and your face is just glowing with that belief, that person is going to value themselves to the same degree that you are honoring them with your eyes ... before you've even said a word! It all begins with the eyes.

Some people have the gift of communicating value with their expressions. Their faces light up, and there is nothing critical, condescending, or condemning in their eyes ... only honor for the other human being. Their eyes are happy to meet you. You and I like those people right away when we meet them, don't we? There is an emotional spillover effect, which is defined as how one person's emotional state can powerfully influence and impact the feelings of those around them in a very positive way.

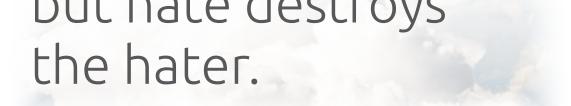
When that spillover occurs instantaneously between two people, there is no work we can't accomplish! When we come together in common belief, we are much stronger and so

much more profitable. When you and I are united in the belief that we have the opportunity to contribute to each other's lives for the mutual benefit of one another, the potential for profitable outcomes is staggering! *This* is the starting point for extraordinary results and the epicenter of outstanding outcomes.

There are three channels in which we all communicate: verbal, para-verbal (our tone of voice), and non-verbal (our body language). As I've said, our belief precedes our behavior. When you intentionally want to convey that you value other people, it starts with the understanding that everyone is made in the image of God. Then, as you think about how you can demonstrate this belief, you use your words, your tone of voice, and your body language to make that statement.

Strive to be intensely personal. When you meet someone, be conscious of how to send out signals that you value them through all three channels of communication. You want those three channels—your words, your tone, and your posture—to be congruent, so that you communicate one honoring, invigorating message that practically

## Love edifies the lover, but hate destroys the hater.



shouts, "I value you!" Make it a habit to practice that kind of communication and to make every encounter a close encounter of the personal kind, not the impersonal kind.

I have conducted more customer service training courses than I can remember, and I long ago lost count of the men and women who told me that they were never taught these things! They might have been directed to make eye contact with the customer, but it was never explained *why*. And today's popular culture teaches us to wear masks constructed of beauty, brains, brawn, and bucks; the exalted dignity and worth of others is not even mentioned. We're not taught how to communicate honor and respect to others.

Everywhere we go, in schools, in business, even in houses of worship, we are told that we should work to gain self-worth. It's all about *winning*, we are told, and "*winning*" consists of outperforming and out-acquiring others. This teaching does not produce authentic human beings! Those men and women who understand the innate dignity and worth of human beings understand that if they don't operate from a secure foundation of self-worth, they will never arrive at it. Each one of us is either working *from* self-worth in our lives ... or we're working *for* it. No matter how much you do or how much you buy, you can't add to the inestimable, immeasurable, and incalculable value of your divine image. You can't make yourself more human than the humanity you received at conception!

There are two words that have been the foundation for all my leadership courses for the past forty years; those words are **human spirit**. That is our starting point, because this is the most profitable teaching I can offer my clients.

Our *People First Strategic Leadership* program begins with our "Human Value Declaration," which establishes our philosophical foundation for *People First*—that is, our belief about the exalted

dignity, worth, and potential of all people. If businesses don't start with this foundation, they are not teaching their purpose partners (I prefer the phrase "purpose partners" to the impersonal word "employees") to be profitable human beings. And how can unprofitable human beings possibly contribute to your organization's profitability?

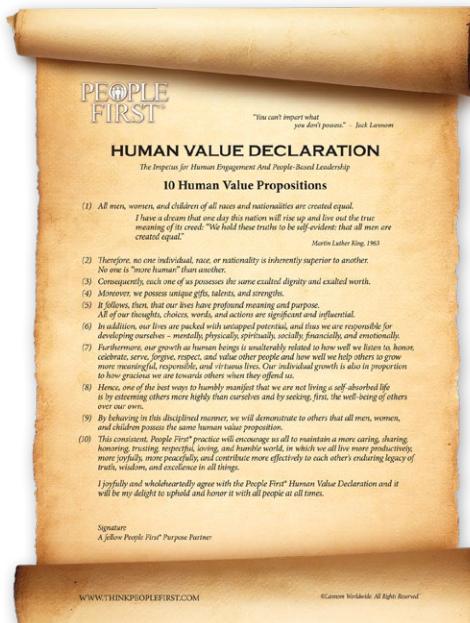
I hear business leaders and consultants talk about "value added"—value-added products and value-added ideas for your customers. But we're not adding value if we don't add value to that which is the most valuable commodity on the planet—the human spirit. We talk about the end state we want, and we may talk about some of the means, but no one gets to the source of sustainable profitability: value *recognition*.

The other day I glanced over at a trailer truck on the highway; there was a large sign on the driver's door that said, "Our most valuable resource sits here." That company *gets it*! But so many don't ... and I want to walk up to business leaders and tell them—in a humble, encouraging way—that they could be so much more successful if they would adopt this mindset of respecting and valuing others. You don't have to add value; begin to teach everyone in your company about the immeasurable greatness of the human spirits that are already there, the men and women working in your organization.

Recognize *the* value that produces all of the other value-added products and services, which is the value of the human spirit.

When we don't teach this kind of thinking, we're doing a disservice to everyone in our organization. We *must* learn to recognize the value that has been given to every man, woman, and child as their birthright. You could take all the money that's ever been made in all this world throughout history, and one human soul is worth infinitely more than all that!

Teach people to recognize their inherent value. We must teach our children, our friends, and our purpose partners to recognize God-given value;



tell them, "You don't have to work for it, you already *have* it!" If you look to your education, your bank account, or your accomplishments, you are doing nothing more than putting on a mask. These trophies are nothing more than pretentious, impoverished window dressing.

I frequently go to the gym to work out. I recognize that the men and women there are focused on their training and maximizing their workout time, but I have to say that a great many of them are little more than hard-bodied zombies. They are *so* focused on what their bodies look like in the mirrors that they make no eye contact, they don't say "Hello," there is absolutely nothing personal about their existence. It's as if they have been given a "human spirit-ectomy"—they act as if their soul has been surgically removed. They have become prisoners of their own self-importance; they give every appearance that the only one they value is themselves. Our lives could be so much richer, so much more fulfilling and complete, if we would lift our heads and look with understanding and appreciation at the wonderful humanity that surrounds us.

Imagine that you put a small ceramic bowl into your friend's hand. He has no idea what you've

given him—he thinks it's no more than a "nice" knick-knack. Since your friend has no knowledge of what it is, what he's holding has no value for him; he holds the bowl casually in the flat of his palm. Then you explain, "What you're holding in your hand is an original piece of Phoenician pottery. It's worth \$50,000." Immediately your friend cradles the artifact carefully in both hands; he seems almost hasty in his desire to hand it back to you. "Here, you hold it," he says. "I had no idea it was so valuable!"

Nothing about the object changed in that moment, but your friend's estimation of its value changed dramatically as he gained knowledge of it. As he began to think differently about the artifact, he began to treat it differently. Instead of holding it carelessly, he suddenly treated it with great care.

We need to create a cadre of leaders who understand the inestimable value of people, so that they will think differently about the people who work for them and supply that same knowledge to those who work with them, so that everyone in the organization begins to think differently about themselves and about the value of their coworkers and their customers.

### The inestimable value of people ...

in the workplace

Honoring others



Customer Service

in marriage



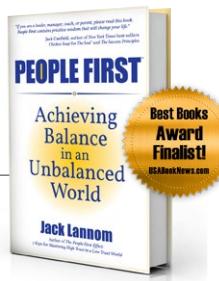
Every moment you have an encounter with another human being, you are experiencing a truly sacred moment. How can I say that? Because life itself is sacred! And I know from years of rich experience that when I live this way and go out of my way to honor as many people as I can and treat as many people as I can with dignity and respect, that's when I feel the best about myself. In bringing out the best in others, I'm bringing out the best in me!

A few years ago I was struck by the power of an adage from the ancient wisdom literature: "Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being." When I seek the well-being of others *first*, recognizing them as marvelous, miraculous human beings of inestimable worth—and when you in turn are seeking *my* well-being, putting me first as a valuable human being—that is not a path for personal growth and development, it is *the* path for the most profitable personal and professional growth and development possible!

How would it impact humanity if we were all taught to live this way? How would it impact

all of our lives and all of our relationships—families, businesses, communities, educational institutions, houses of worship, governments—if we actually believed this and lived accordingly? This is *the* foundation for civil and religious liberty. It eliminates all caste systems and all hierarchies of human relationships, like those you see in nations where there is a distinction between "high-born" and "low-born." Seeing man as the image of God is a great leveler of all humanity; it puts us all on the same plane.

Every time I make myself responsible to practice this philosophy, I remember that this is not a way to live, it's *the* way to live ... the *only* way to live if you want to live life at the most personable, purposeful, profitable, enriching, giving level possible! When you honor and respect others, you are honoring and respecting yourself ... and the return on the investment you make in others will consistently return to you ten-fold!



## Become a People First Certified Company

At People First International, we're nothing short of DRIVEN to bring about total transformation in the workplace. We're passionate about building a better world ... one person, one family, one organization at a time.

And we want you to be next!

Our diagnostic tools, coupled with our leadership training and certification, provides you with everything you need to enrich the spirit and increase the effectiveness of everyone in your organization.

There are no shortcuts here ... just real, solid progress and true transformation.

As you embrace the People First philosophy, you'll watch as your entire culture is revolutionized, becoming a wildly successful breeding ground for inspiration, innovation, and enthusiasm! Suddenly, your competitors begin to seem irrelevant—not even on the same playing field!

"My message to my Senior Team is that this has the potential to have the most transformational impact on our lives and our company that we will ever encounter, and will create a culture gap between MiTek and our nearest competitor that is so wide, it will be inconceivable to imagine them ever coming near to us culturally."

Thomas J. Manenti  
*Chairman and CEO*  
*MiTek Industries – A Berkshire Hathaway Company*  
*A People First Certified Company*

When you've completed your People First Certification, every person you and your Purpose Partners encounter will notice the difference and appreciate the change in attitude, in service, and in professionalism. People will want to know your secret. Tell them the secret is putting People First!

The BEST time to get People First Certified is NOW, BEFORE your competition does.



We Invite You to Join The Ranks of Our People First Certified Companies!



Balfour Beatty  
Construction

Boston Scientific



CITY  
*Finance*

ESSEX<sup>TM</sup>  
INDUSTRIES

Heritage<sup>TM</sup>  
PLUMBING  
HEATING • COOLING

IRON MOUNTAIN

STABILITY • INNOVATION  
J.L. WALLACE, INC.

Kimberly-Clark  
PROFESSIONAL<sup>®</sup>

MAINSCAPE<sup>®</sup>

Mercy<sup>TM</sup>

MiT  
MiTek<sup>®</sup>  
A BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY COMPANY

PALM  
PARTNERS  
RECOVERY CENTER  
Healing Mind, Body and Spirit

Prudential  
Florida Realty



WCI<sup>®</sup>  
*The Experience Is Everything.*

CONTACT US TODAY AND LET US GO TO WORK FOR YOU!

800.314.7605



[www.PeopleFirstInternational.com](http://www.PeopleFirstInternational.com) | [www.ThinkPeopleFirst.com](http://www.ThinkPeopleFirst.com)

©People First International. All rights reserved.

People First<sup>®</sup> and Purpose Partners<sup>®</sup> are Registered Trademarks of People First International.