**Why is it so important to be important?**

By Jack Dunigan

Sue and I participated in a pastor’s conference for a small fellowship of churches on the west coast. We had never been there and knew no one. During the first meeting, the leader asked us to turn and greet one another. The person in front of us turned and smiled. We asked their name. Their smile faded into a scowl, their chin lifted, and they spoke, “I am…” followed by their name and their all-important title.” After they turned back around, we wiped the condescension off our clothes and whispered to each other, “Well, she certainly is important.” Oddly, the arrangement of church furniture, the use of titles, and the places fought over inside church governments all point to the importance of being important.

On another occasion I was working as a conference coordinator for a mission organization. It was my job to put the pieces together for the week-long event. During the opening meeting, I left the platform after the introductory events and walked outside to check on the teen’s program in another building. Passing the covered porch at the entrance of the main building I saw a man pacing back and forth with a look of concern on his face.

“Everything okay?” I asked

“Yeah, I’ll be alright.”

“You sure? You look like something is bothering you.”

“Well, I was just wondering what it takes to be part of the big time?”

“The big time? What do you mean?”

He stopped pacing and motioned inside the building. “You know, like you and the others up there on that platform. The big time.”

I actually laughed out loud. “The big time? Let me assure you that it is not what you think and those guys are not who you think they are.”

The need to appear to be important has spawned all sorts of venues wherein importance can be displayed. From the gaudy sets of religious television programs to the proper seats in church buildings to the titles appended to names, rank is on display everywhere.

The “big time” as it was so colorfully put, holds great appeal to religious people. Actually, it appeals to just about everyone, and begs us to ask why this does not bother religious people.

Indeed, if I may shamelessly point to a passage in my book – Shadows at Moonrise Bay, a novel which illuminates the dynamics of important religious celebrities – I wrote this:

Roger Cromwell turned in his seat, lifted the bottle of water from the table next to his seat, unscrewed the lid, took a sip, stood and turned toward the podium. He picked up his Bible and its sheaf of notes just so, tucked them under his arm just so, turned just so, and walked to the podium just so.

Roger had acquired the affected style of a professional clergyman. Like many who had their own television broadcasts, they would rather have been performers but lacked either the talent or the nerve to make their mark in the world of entertainment. Roger had instead chosen the world of public ministry, in which he had learned how to walk, talk, and act in a manner that appealed and endeared him to a rather large segment of the generous religious public. Like his counterparts in entertainment, few people knew who he really was. Unlike them, he was unable to even appear to be a regular person subject to those passions and panics that made entertainers, well, entertaining. He had to be on all the time and, if he were to satisfy his audience and thus keep the money coming, he must be a spiritual giant--or at least appear to be one. It was an affectation the Reverend Roger Cromwell had learned early in his career and had employed consistently and masterfully.

It is the drive to be important that ever so subtly changes a person and alters the chemistry of a group. Pecking orders evolve, indeed have done so forever. The original twelve disciples struggled to know who was the “greatest.” If we are to believe Jesus’ answer, it is the least not the greatest but you wouldn’t know that from the way religious groups function.

Indeed, it’s the big time that drives religious leadership and keeps the religious faithful in their place. As much as it seems to keep order and organization recognizable, there is a downside.

A friend once said that “He who is all wrapped up in himself makes for a very small package.”

If being important is important to you then you must understand that importance is only important if other important people recognize just how important you really are.

So, the result is doing things that let people know of your importance. The focus then becomes you, your office, your title, your position, your, well, importance. And becoming offended at even paltry things comes so often and becomes so easy. The world and everyone in it then is compared to you and your place and position, self-exalted though it may be. I am not by any means limiting this to the Christian religion. It is endemic in the religious world. Religious people are, by virtue of their opinion of importance, the most readily and easily offended people in the world. And we all know that ready and easy offense comes from taking oneself too seriously.

H.F. Hanson wrote that:

“People that know they are important, Think about others. People that think they are important, Think about themselves.”

This really should bother religious people, but it doesn’t seem to.

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If you’ve just started reading my blog today, then you’ve jumped in in the middle of an ongoing series. I’ve been writing about things that don’t bother religious people… but probably should. This is number two in the series, [the beginning is here](https://jackdunigan.com/the-edifice-complex-things-that-dont-bother-religious-people-but-should). And, if you are even a little intrigued by the passage from Shadows at Moonrise Bay, You can get your copy on Amazon. [Kindle edition](http://www.amazon.com/Shadows-Moonrise-Bay-Jack-Dunigan-ebook/dp/B00HF9S768/ref%3Dsr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1412950129&sr=8-1&keywords=shadows+at+moonrise+bay) or [paperback edition.](http://www.amazon.com/Shadows-Moonrise-Bay-Jack-Dunigan/dp/1490314571/ref%3Dtmm_pap_title_0?ie=UTF8&qid=1412950129&sr=8-1)