

KIRBSTONES

ALONG THE NARROW WAY

curb-stone (kürb'stön') - *noun* - one of the stones or a range of stones forming a curb, as along a sidewalk or roadway. Historically, the curbstones were placed vertically along the edges of the roadbed and the paving material was backfilled against the row of curbstones. The curbstones served ⁽¹⁾to hold the material in the roadbed, ⁽²⁾to prevent the scattering of the material along the edges, and ⁽³⁾to define the road itself from all the adjoining areas.

¹³ "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT.
¹⁴ BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT." - MATTHEW 7:13-14 - NIV

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Coaching athletes, leaders, and entrepreneurs involves a strategy for getting at the issues. Internal concerns and apprehensions may be buried from immediate view. These could have them stuck in an unfortunate place...a place where they cannot maximize their potential. The same is true of organizations...like denominations and local congregations.

In a worst-case scenario churches may be stuck in a place where they cannot move forward. Reviewing our coaching history of elite athletes, high-potential corner office leaders, or successful entrepreneurs, we know much of their success—or *stumbling*—is impacted by *two powerful factors*.

The *first* factor is what people assume is true about their current contexts, their experiences, and their families. Persons often project their personal assumptions on friends, neighbors, and others, whom they encounter.

When we are not clear about who we are as individuals, and when we do not have a true picture of *the other*, false assumptions lead to ruin between individuals and within organizations. This is common within corporations, non-profits, and congregations. Often, *a deep-seated lack of trust is the root of this disease*. Within the Church universal we may see this lack of trust in the Holy Spirit, when we rely *only* on our own human competences.

The *second* of these factors is what people believe about themselves, their abilities, and their potential. Initially, individuals and organizations may feel stuck because of lack of support and/or recognition for successful past work. And, often, poor self-esteem can drive this to the point of a *what's-the-use* attitude. Individuals and organizations can lose their critical edge, abandon their vision/mission, or—in *some of the worst cases*—shrink to the point that they may not continue in their previous roles. In 1 Samuel God's power was clearly not assumed in this story of David.

33 Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth."

1 Samuel 17:33 — NIV

Additionally, these two factors are often mixed, switched, or combined, and the injurious impact *false assumptions* and *limiting beliefs* have on individuals, small groups, and entire congregations can be devastating.

How do these false assumptions and limiting beliefs cripple individuals, as well as organizations, snatching their self-esteem and paralyzing them into a frozen state of inaction?

In some cases we have found that defeat will trigger either of these factors. Some have suggested that disappointments in rapid succession can lead to a similar state of mind. Also, we can experience breakdowns in a variety of areas of our lives that will contribute to our being stuck in neutral, possibly unsure of our direction forward or what to do next.

How do we let go of this? How do we move ahead? Why is this so difficult? Within the context of the local church, once we have allowed the negative self-talk, the lack of direct communication, and feelings of *what's-the-use* to creep in, there are two specific things at work.

Try to imagine a paratrooper, who is properly equipped and trained to jump out of an airplane. The best analogy is that the parachute has two cords. If one does not function, there is a back-up that will release the parachute so that a jumper will glide safely to the ground.

In the church we can always access two cords. I wrote about the first one in a late summer column: *Trust in God*. When we fail to trust, we lose our focus, abandoning the God factor. Yes, I have seen this even in the local church!

The second one is from a more recent column: *Go and make disciples*. To thrive, we must be actively fulfilling our individual and collective roles in the Great Commission. *Trust and go!*

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Robert Wingfield Kirby III, D.Min.