



Minding the Gap - August 2015

A Faith and Work Publication

Welcome to Minding the Gap, a monthly thought about faith in the workplace!

“Competition – ‘It’s About Me’ vs. ‘It’s About You’ “

The story is told about the little boy who was sitting on his grandpa's lap when he asked, "Grandpa, when did we begin competing?" (This kid was very advanced). Grandpa replies: "It all began at the very beginning of creation when the first people were playing in the field. They were having a wonderful time throwing and hitting a ball - running, catching, diving and rolling in the lush grass. Then someone suggested that they begin **keeping score**, and that was the beginning of competition." I think it might also very well have been the start of argument, deception, lying, exaggeration and the general promotion of self.

While I believe competition can be helpful and yes, necessary, it also contains the ability to be very addictive - tearing at the fabric of what God created us for - a sense of well-being and wholeness through relationships. That's the reason for the above tagline "It's about me vs. it's about you". Whether these words are ever spoken or not, I'm convinced the first part of it reveals a very prevalent attitude for most folk at work. Thus, the writing of Paul in Romans 12:1-4 presents a very challenging but confirming statement for Christians - you and me. Verse 2 states: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed** by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect.". With **transformed minds**, our purpose shifts from one of justifying self-centered actions, to one of bringing full and good life to others.

Think about the people at work who you most enjoy - why? My guess is, there is something about the dynamic between you that is very satisfying, such as: feeling important and enjoyed; sensing they truly are listening to your ideas; believing they really do care

about you; knowing they are committed to a purpose greater than themselves, etc. Because of God's abiding presence with us, our minds may be transformed in a manner that we find ourselves moving from self-centered to othercentered - not because of what you might gain from such a movement, but due to the simple delight of who they are - all their abilities and disabilities. With such an orientation, we begin to delight in them as God delights in us.

Paul's admonition in Romans 12:3 - "...not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to, but to think with sober judgment..." is very challenging but of critical importance for each of us. It reminds me of a statement made by a coworker speaking to a colleague with whom he was struggling. He said, "Joe, you may be smarter than any one of us, but you're not smarter than all of us together!" What a confirmation of Paul's words.

Thinking, decisions and accomplishments, which are clearly the result of a group or community of people, may initially be experienced as a threat to our value or significance. Or, they don't provide us with the initial *rush* of "I did that!" but in the longer context, "at night when we put our head down on the pillow", there comes to us a deeper, truer sense of goodness and well-being. Although I'm slow to admit that this "transformed mind" wasn't as prevalent in my work-life as I would like, where and when it existed, these times are remembered and cherished.

Blessings to all of you in your world of work!
- Jim Grubs

Incarnation Lutheran Church, 4880 Hodgson Road, Shoreview, MN 55126