



Minding the Gap - July 2014

A Faith and Work Publication

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

"Having an Attitude of Gratitude"

After recently reading a devotion based on a passage in Paul's letter to the church in Rome, I am reminded of the strategic importance of "having an attitude of gratitude". Paul makes the statement, "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."(Romans 7:15). Believe it or not, at work as well as in many other life situations, the truth of this passage repeats itself again and again. You and I experience the fact that it is defensiveness or mean-spiritedness which can drive our activity or interaction. It seems to be so, as one person said, "negativity unites people much more quickly than love". The "we-they" posture, which pits me against you or us against them, is one that exists all too often at work - a very protective but diminishing posture. Sadly, it is an attitude which serves the ego, but not the soul.

I remember a work situation from a number of years ago in which a senior leader seemed to diminish or severely critique the work of his direct reports. Their ideas and efforts seldom met with his approval or support, and the eventual result was what might be called "corporate depression". It evolved (or "dissolved") to a point where a principal engineer became so frustrated that he went to this leader saying, "You may be smarter than any one of us, but you're not smarter than all of us put together". The leader never listened and unfortunately lost his position.

I cannot help but wonder what might have happened if this senior leader had adopted the posture of "having an attitude of gratitude". From our faith perspective it would be to emulate the example of Jesus. That is to say, to see benefit or possibility in the contribution of the co-worker, affirming the ideas given or the work done. It is essentially acting-out what the Spirit of God said about Jesus..."This is my son, the Beloved, with

whom I am well pleased."(Matt 3:17). Yes, it is so pleasing to see how this brings deep satisfaction to our souls while surprisingly giving credence to our egos.

Let me conclude by summarizing a story from the book *Tattoos on the Heart*. It has to do with Fr. Greg Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries. Fr. "G" as he is known, served in LA County (considered the "gang capital" of the U.S. w/ 1,100 gangs & 86,000 members), and brought rival gang leaders together to work and care for one another. He tells the incident of walking past Junior's apartment (a 40 yr.old gang member and hopeless alcoholic). Boyle writes: "One day as I'm walking past, lost in my own thoughts, I fail to see him (Junior). Then after I had gone beyond his apartment and the alley, Junior, screams full-throttle, "LOVE YOU G-DOG." Boyle continues, "I'm always startled by the ready way folks and homies tell you that they love you...In the barrio, people tell you. I retrace my steps and am now standing under his windowsill, looking up. 'Thank you, Junior. That was a very nice thing to say.'" So, if "the attitude of gratitude" can happen there in a LA County barrio, then surely it can happen with us at work...Think about how you might carry such a posture to others!

Blessings to you in your work,

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