



## Minding the Gap – July 2017

A Faith and Work Publication

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

### "Making Room for the Spirit"

In his gospel, Matthew records a teaching of Jesus which I believe can have significant impact for the furthering our Creator's purpose within our employment settings. Matthew gives account of Jesus saying: *"Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me."*(Matt. 10:40)

I believe Jesus is talking about the idea of making room for the Spirit of God to influence the **minds** and **hearts** of people we encounter. In one respect, Jesus is saying you don't need to specifically name Him in order for another to be drawn closer to God, or for his teachings to be effective. In noticing or paying attention to seemingly small, but for others significant things, something happens here through the workings of God's Spirit to enliven an individual's spirit to the principles and ways of the Creator. Your seemingly insignificant actions work in a manner which bring others **"home to where they belong"** - to the conditions or settings originally intended by God. They speak very authoritatively - making an impression on others - leading them to believe: "I need to draw closer to what this person thinks and how s/he acts".

In Luke 16:10 when Jesus is recorded as saying, "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful in much", he's pointing to seemingly small things we do such as: noticing another and their joy; acknowledging their pain or sorrow; speaking with an honest but kind heart; showing grace even when it seems to contradict policy or some particular expected behavior; giving credence to someone's ideas rather than countering it with your own.

Writer Henri Nouwen has spoken about this idea of making room for the Spirit when he writes about moving from "**hostility to hospitality**". I thought this was especially apropos for our work environments where hostility, envy, jealousy can dominate relationships. Nouwen says: "Hospitality, therefore, means primarily the creation of a **free space** where the (*other*) can enter and become a friend instead of an (*adversary*). Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place. It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines." This then creates the space in which the Spirit of God acts.

In closing, Nouwen writes with a very **balancing** and important statement pertinent to our work settings: "When we want to be really hospitable we not only have to receive others, but also to **confront** them by an unambiguous presence, not hiding ourselves behind neutrality but showing our ideas, opinions and life style clearly and distinctly." To this balancing perspective, one statement I will never forget is from a woman who we had to let go from our organization when she said: "Jim, I've never been fired by kinder boss". Oh yes, I did like that...but at the same time I had to wonder how many times she'd been "fired" before?! Blessings.

- Jim Grubs

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