



Minding the Gap - July 2015

A Faith and Work Publication

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

“Working With ‘Non-Believers’ “

Throughout history, there is the "theme" of sacred and secular. However, there have, and continue to be, a stream of people (among them Francis of Assisi) who say "Given the belief that God created all there is and God is sovereign; then, there can be no sacred and secular - all is sacred". This is a very inclusive perspective, and a great challenge to a believer's often assumed "we-they" posture where the Believer takes on the role of the "defender" of God and "guardian" against the ways of the evil world out there.

In Scripture ([Mk.9:38-41](#)), we find the account of Jesus' disciple, John, taking on the "we-they" posture when he tells of attempting to stop others who are "healing in Jesus' name", but not being one of their troupe. However, Jesus "reframes" the "we-they" perspective by saying that if "they" are doing acts representing His principles or values then "they" are good and shouldn't be hindered even though *they may not be of our particular "troupe"*.

This account along with Paul's teachings in 1 & 2 Corinthians provides some good perspective with regard to our relationship with others whom we might view as the "they" or "nonbelievers". Foremost he advises, exit the "we-they" paradigm, and then work and live in an embracing, *BUT discerning/wise manner* with others. Key to this posture is, as Paul says in [2 Corinthians 6:14-18](#), "Do not be mismatched...". Another understanding of "mismatched" is the biblical concept of "yoked" where one is "unilaterally tied" (committed) to another. For us as Christians, we are "yoked" only to Jesus and his manner of serving those around him ([Matt 11:29](#)).

So, what is this discerning or wise manner in which we work and live with our coworkers - believers or non-believers? It is, in a manner where 'unconditional love' reigns in the midst of prudent/wise thinking and courageous actions which pay close attention to the avoidance of harming customers, deceiving constituents, misleading employees, abusing coworkers, polluting the environment, etc. All of which violate the principles and sacred nature of God's Kingdom.

As one author stated: "...we must be careful to not turn Paul's words into an us-versus-them mentality against nonbelievers. Paul knew as well as anyone that believers fall far short of the values and purposes of God. We should be careful not to be unequally yoked, even with Christians whose conduct would pull us away from the yoke of Christ. Even more, we need to receive Christ's grace every day so that being yoked with us doesn't cause someone else to be pulled away from working according to Christ's ways and purposes."(Theology of Work Project - author unknown)

Blessings to all as you walk and work among the "wheat and the weeds"!
- Jim Grubs

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