



## Minding the Gap – February 2019

A Faith and Work Publication

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

### Nostalgia and Remembering

I began my employment with Reell Precision Manufacturing at a time when the company was flourishing. We designed and produced excellent products; we had strong net profits; co-workers enjoyed benefits that typically exceeded industry standards; and the leadership was clear and intentional about its purpose. However, as is true with all organizations, we eventually encountered times of difficulty - mostly financial but one very significant crisis around leadership. We had to do pay cuts four times - the most significant one when we had about 250 co-workers on the payroll. Shortly after I left the company, it encountered a combined financial and leadership crisis that very nearly forced Reell into bankruptcy - causing a first-ever employment layoffs and dismissal of its top leadership.

One of the on-going characteristics of these times of challenge whether it be financial or issues of leadership was the presence of co-workers who longed for the 'good ol' days'. Ever-present were statements around "why can't we do it like we used to do it?"(whatever the 'IT' may have been) Or, "Leadership doesn't care about us the way they used to." Etc., etc.... Yes, this is the danger or burden of **nostalgia!**

The problem with **nostalgia** is that it tends to **remember** only the positive dimensions of a past event or period of time. It freezes or encapsulates the past in a manner, which robs people of remembering - and hopefully learning from - the pain and heartache of past times. As Mark Hanson, former presiding bishop of the ELCA, recently observed, "*Nostalgia is an escape from the current situation in all its hardship.*" Nostalgia is not necessarily bad because within those nostalgic memories are the 'kernels' (principles, values, virtues, practices, etc.) which have brought, or can bring, your organization back to a healthy and flourishing state. The **key** is taking time and discipline to ask yourself or another: "What made those times so good?"; "What was our purpose and what were the principles, values and practices which brought a sense of energy and hope?"

Scripture calls us again and again to **remember**, but not in a strictly nostalgic manner. There really is an almost endless list of passages, which direct us to remember: "**Remember** the teaching of my servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him." (Mal. 4:4); "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in **remembrance** of me." (Lk 22:19) and "O my people, **remember** now..." (Micah 6:5). **Remember** in the biblical perspective tells us to pause quietly and think deeply - to reflect on the principles and virtues which are crucial at the time or event we're remembering. It challenges us to go beyond the 'sweet memories' to the **values**, which lie beneath those memories.

I am remembering Mark Hanson's conviction on the current purpose of his life is to be 'next to' his wife (who is suffering from dementia) as her memory for the past. What a beautiful purpose! So too, in our 'stations' at work, this is the challenge we face...to serve as a '**memory**', and subsequent reminder of the principles and practices of our organization, which bring hope, energy and even a bit of the kingdom of God to our working colleagues.

Blessings, Jim Grubs

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