

Don't Quit Your Day Job (God @ Work): HR

Reconnect – April 18, 2010

Text: I Thessalonians 2:4-8;

Key Thought: God measures our success at work by the impact we have on those around us.

For we speak as messengers who have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to please God, not people. He is the one who examines the motives of our hearts. Never once did we try to win you with flattery, as you very well know. And God is our witness that we were not just pretending to be your friends so you would give us money! As for praise, we have never asked for it from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we certainly had a right to make some demands of you, but we were as gentle among you as a mother feeding and caring for her own children. We loved you so much that we gave you not only God's Good News but our own lives, too. I Thessalonians 2:4-8, NLT

Pre-Intro: "She Works Hard For The Money" (Donna Summer)

Intro: Get your "game face" on

- It's the hockey playoffs – and even if the refs are making bad calls on the Canadiens, it's still a good time to be a fan
- The playoffs are a completely different brand of hockey – more intense, every play, every bounce of the puck matters and the players take their games up another level
- In sports, they talk about when you're preparing to play a big game – they talk about "getting your game face on" – readying yourself, getting in the right frame of mind, getting psyched up – you're not going to be who you normally are, you're going to be who you need to be to get the job done
- "Getting your game face on"

Work: a different face required?

- Sometimes it feels like that when you're getting ready to go out the door to work, doesn't it?
- It might be a conflict with a coworker – or a very demanding job – or a feeling that unless you're someone different, someone more intense, more demanding, more "on", you're not going to be successful
- Sometimes it's a toxic work environment – other times it's the pressure of having to perform – or the stress that comes with a lack of job security and seeing your coworkers as the competition
- And you feel the need to "get your game face on"
- To do what you have to do in order to be successful, in order to make it through another day
- If you need to run over someone else, you will – if you need to make tough choices, you will – if you need to do certain things or cut corners that you would never do in any other area of your life – you will – or at least, you'll feel like you have to
- And at the end of the day, "it's just business" – you did what you had to do, for you and your family
- But does it really have to be like that? In order to "Git Er Done", do you have to become someone else? Someone that you leave in the car or on the bus when you get home?
- Some would say, "yes, absolutely" – it's too important to not do whatever is necessary – the job is too important, what's riding on it is too important – it's sink or swim and there's no way around it – it is what it is, it is what it has to be
- And if you can't do it, for whatever reason – then get out of the way

- Ever worked somewhere like that? Ever felt like you had to be that person?
- There are some who put on that “game face” and make no apologies for it – there are others who keep it on hand, ready to put on if needed – and there are others who feel guilty for not putting it on like they think they should
- And it’s very easy to think – to *know* – that, especially in the private sector, it’s all about the results – everything else quickly falls by the wayside
- No-one wants to admit it like that – but get someone in an honest moment, and the truth is still that often the best way to climb the corporate ladder is to step on the backs of others to reach the rungs

A better way?

- I believe that there is a better way – not because it might be trendy, or postmodern, or where the workplace is going – I believe that there is a better way because I believe that having God in the centre of your life can make a positive impact in every area of your life – your work life included – maybe even *especially* included
- It’s a way that values people instead of using them or treating them like an asset or a dollar sign – customers, suppliers, coworkers, staff, bosses, contractors, everyone you might come in contact with – and there’s a clue to what it might look like in the reminiscing of the Apostle Paul

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The “system”:

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- Seems to start off with a contradiction – valuing people ISN’T at the top of the list – instead, it’s pleasing God – and seeing him as the boss, the supervisor, the evaluator, the mentor

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- What follows is a rejection of so many ways that do work – and work really well – at least, they get the results we feel we need
 - Flattery - “winning friends and influencing people” – networking – keeping a good set of contacts – knowing all the right people
 - Pretense for profit – we’ve never seen THAT before in religion, have we?!?
 - Praise – earn their respect, or even if you don’t, demand it of those under you as befitting you
- All of them, rejected out of hand

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- “Mom’s management strategy”? For real?
- Sacrifice and service? Putting them ahead of yourself?
- That’s what Paul says that he and his “management group” did when they were in Thessalonica
- Nothing held back – everything on the table – who they were was who they were, living their lives out loud and without regret, without compromise – remaining true to who they knew they could be, who they were confident that they were becoming

Stock answer: it’s easy for YOU to say, NOW –

- These are the books, the management strategies, models, that get written AFTER the person has become a success – and it’s as much wishing as remembering, isn’t it?
- Easy to talk about “doing it the right way” when you’re already on top and everyone has to humour you – even if you didn’t do it “the right way” every time on your way to the top
- Selective recall is such a beautiful thing
- But when Paul is writing this, success is anything but assured – it’s way too early to tell – and he’s brutally honest about it
- The letters to the Thessalonians are seen as some of his earliest to his churches that we have records of – his “way” is still not set in stone – but they refer again and again to work – hard work – but also a heart within that work

What if...?

- Working is about more than money – it’s actually about people – a fundamental change of perspective, to go from being a shark to being a dolphin (just as tough, but smart and playful, too)
- Everyone matters – whether they make \$10 an hour or \$1000 an hour?
- People are the most valuable thing you will run into on the job (CS Lewis quote – no ordinary people?)

quote from *The Weight of Glory*, by C.S. Lewis...

There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations--these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit--immortal horrors or everlasting splendours... Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses.

- We have different priorities – we have to – and yet, I believe that with God’s help we can succeed at the same time, as a demonstration of the difference that God can make in our lives – as a “testimony” of what God does in us and can do with us
- Is it more difficult? Yes – but we are building a different sort of foundation, a different sort of building to get to our destination
- Without people in our lives, we are missing the point – we are surrounded by people and people ARE the point – they are the ones that ultimately matter – not money, not numbers, not anything else
- So what kind of impact are you making? And what is most important for you at work right now?

How to get there?

The travelling light material: forgiveness, generosity, sincerity, simplicity, gratitude

- Asking instead of telling
- Taking an interest – really, instead of just because it’s necessary
- Sincere gratitude and heartfelt praise – again, not just to check it off on a box
- Refusing to choose short-term gain over long-term success –
- Keeping your own limitations and failings in mind
- Choosing the harder way and matching it with your work level
- Resist the temptation to just keep the shark on a leash – or keep the mask in your pocket as a backup

PS: resisting a different kind of mask

- The “I’m perfect, I’m a Christian” mask – where you can’t be honest with anyone – instead of a shark, where at least the teeth aren’t apologized for, you’re something else altogether
- Masks are not the answer here – letting out your inside is – having the courage to be a work in progress, to admit mistakes, to be able to laugh at yourself first, not last,

Key Thought:

God measures our success at work by the impact we have on those around us.

[Jesus said,] “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money”

(Luke 16:13, NLT)

Conclusion:

- HR – what they do – they exist to bring in the best people, and then support them whatever way they can – they are on your side – are you on the side of the people you work with?
- A reworking of priorities – what does it need to look like in your life and mine?
- How do we rework our priorities? How do we take inventory first?
- Your faith does not have to be left at the door to work – you don't have to lead a compartmentalized life – and in fact, it's impossible – you have to choose who you will be, and it's all you
- Dofasco – “Our product is steel. Our strength is people” – played on the drive home when I lived in Toronto – not so that people would buy steel, but so that their employees would be reinforced as to their value – compare to Stelco, crosstown rival in Hamilton steel industry
- Dofasco isn't unionized and is profitable – the diametric opposite to Stelco – and they take care of their people – on the 50 best employer lists
- People first can work – especially when God is in the mix, because he will make his strength available – he is the one with a stake in you and your success

Response: notepads