



solutions that transform

November 1, 2006

Gleanings

Gerald R. Chester, Ph.D.



Strategies@Work
Solutions That Transform LLC

Services

Consulting
Strategic Planning
Executive Coaching
Training
Investment Advice

Web Site

www.StrategiesWork.com

Email

info@StrategiesWork.com

Phone Number

972 473-8655



Firing Your Friend

One of the hardest challenges in life is telling a good friend that he needs to find another job. I recently had to do this. As a member of the board of a not-for-profit corporation for more than a decade, I had grown close to the president, who was also one of the founders. In many ways the president had performed admirably for more than ten years in building the organization. In recent years, however, the organization's growth had reached a plateau. Efforts by the board to move forward under the president's leadership were fruitless. The board reached the conclusion that although the president had done a commendable job in building the organization to this point, he lacked the skills to take the organization to the next level. The board determined that for the good of the organization the president must be replaced. How do you tell a long-time friend, who has poured his heart into an organization that it is time for him to go?

Anyone in management either has already faced or will face the dilemma of balancing personal relationships against the good of the organization. This is one of the most challenging aspects of management.

The conundrum begs the question, why did God create reality this way? It is so much easier when the good of the organization and personal relationships don't collide. But we have a Creator who is full of enigmas such as the doctrine of the Trinity—one God in three Persons. And the reality that He is a sovereign God who controls the universe but yet holds man responsible. Or how about Jesus being fully God and fully man? These are just a few examples of the paradoxes systemic in creation.

Clearly these are paradoxes for humans—but not for God. This illustrates that God's created beings cannot fully comprehend Him. Therefore we must let God be God and be content that He designed His universe so that we can only see "through a glass darkly," as the apostle Paul wrote in First Corinthians 13:12 (KJV).

Given our inherent limitations, we must accept reality and learn to live according to the principles that God reveals to us. There are three basic principles that should be applied to firing a friend. First, managers must wisely steward their organizations. Second, managers must seek to pastor their workers. And third, the proper balance of the first two principles is that the good of the whole must trump the good of the individual. This latter principle is clearly seen in Jesus's death on the cross. He sacrificed His life so that His followers could live. His personal interests were subordinated to the good of the whole.

Applying these principles to the matter at hand suggests that the prime consideration for the governance of any organization is the good of the organization. That is, management should be about making choices based on the long-term objectives of the organization—assuming that the objectives of the organization are aligned with the purposes of God.

There must also be consideration for individuals. God created each person for a reason. One of the objectives of management should be to help each person discern his or her God-given purpose and to equip them to do it. Accordingly, management should seek to place people in the organization in positions where they can fulfill the call and purpose of God for their lives. If the organization does not have an appropriate position for an individual, the person should be released to find his or her place in God's design.

One of the wonders of a God who is intentional and strategic is that there is a place for everyone! The greatest gift that one person can give another is to help that person find his or her divinely ordained place. God's creation is designed to be win-win, because God works all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

As difficult as it may be, firing a friend is not necessarily a bad thing. It is a good thing if the manager has discerned the will of God for the organization, because then it means that God wants the released person somewhere else for some other purpose.

We humans often find it difficult to view reality from God's perspective. Hence, we view termination as a negative event. It takes great maturity to understand that if management properly discerned the termination, then God is revealing His will for both the released person and the organization. We must humble ourselves, ask for ears to hear what God is saying, and have the courage to obey even if we personally don't like the results. In a very real sense, this can be a test concerning our level of trust in God. And we must be able to trust Him with the results when it becomes necessary to fire a friend.