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Gleanings

Spiritual Warfare in the Workplace



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Ever been on a business trip and been surprised by unexpected circumstances, for example, travel delays, health issues, lost items such as money or credit cards, problems at home, miscommunication with clients or customers, or computer glitches? If you travel enough, you will encounter these types of issues.

The pedestrian response is that these are just random events because there's no rational explanation in the tangible realm. One might trivialize the significance of such events by attributing them to misfortune or bad luck.

Could there be an explanation, however, beyond the tangible realm? In my experience, it is rare that people look for causes of seemingly random events beyond the tangible realm.

But in a universe brought into existence by a sovereign intentional Creator, there are no random events. Note Proverbs 16:33 (NIV):

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

The act of casting lots was the ancient version of flipping a coin. But in the above text, King Solomon clearly notes that even what is apparently random to man is never random to God. For God to be truly sovereign, it must be this way because he can never be caught off guard or surprised. From God's perspective, there can be no random events.

Granted the universe is governed by principles or natural laws defined by the Creator. And it seems that most events are governed by natural law. But from time to time, there seem to be exceptions that are perhaps best explained by divine intervention.

For a sovereign God to maintain control over a universe that is in rebellion against him, he must maintain the prerogative to intervene in the natural realm. This means events that defy natural or rational explanation might be explained by spiritual causes. Some examples of events found in Scripture that defy natural explanation are raising the dead, turning water into wine, instantaneously multiplying food, calming storms, healing the sick, and casting out demons.

Furthermore Scripture reveals that there is a cosmic battle between good and evil that is being fought in the natural and spiritual realms. The battle is ultimately between God and Satan—both spirit beings. In this battle, there is an interaction between the two realms. This is often referred to as "spiritual warfare."

Spiritual warfare is the battle between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:10–13). In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul states that this war involves humans:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the

powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:10–12 NIV)

This raises the question of whether or not events that humans might label as random might actually be caused by spiritual warfare.

On a recent trip, I experienced unexpected, seemingly random events. The purpose of my trip was to consult, coach, and train in biblical principles of personal and organizational behavior. In the midst of my work, five potentially disruptive and distracting events occurred. Could my experience





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have been spiritual warfare? Consider what happened.

- On the second day of the trip, I received a text from my wife that her mother (age 89) was taken by ambulance to a hospital. (Just two months prior, the same situation occurred when I was on another trip.) This required my wife and her sister to assist their father (age 90) with some challenging medical decisions with little input from me.
- On the third day, I conducted a strategic planning session for an organization. This was my second planning session with this group. Since the first planning session in 2010, the organization has made significant positive changes. The 2013 session went very well; I was pleased and very satisfied with the result. While visiting with another client later that afternoon, I noticed that my money clip was not in my pocket. (On trips I normally carry my cash in a money clip in the front pocket of my pants.) I had made scores of trips to various parts of the world and had never lost my money clip. I retraced my steps that day, but to no avail. There was no hole in my pocket. I could not see how the money clip could come out of my pocket without me taking it out.
- The fourth day, I was scheduled for morning meetings and a seminar in the afternoon and evening. It was going to be a full day. I awoke early in the morning to the sensation of a spinning room. I could hardly get up. I canceled my morning meetings and went back to sleep. Finally, around 9:00 a.m., I was able to get up and move around. WebMD (an app on my iPad) diagnosed my condition as symptomatic of an inner ear infection. One of the treatments was to move around, which I did, but slowly. Gradually my condition improved. I was able to present the afternoon seminar, but I was still weak.
- Then on the fifth day, I drove to and from my morning meeting in my first blizzard ever—nearly whiteout conditions with winds approaching hurricane strength. It was a very tense drive since I was in a small rental car (a Prius) and the typical vehicles in the area were large trucks and SUVs. My clients tried to set my mind at ease by sharing that this type of storm was rare. I was not comforted.
- Daysix was a travel day. I had to drive approximately 180 miles to the airport on icy roads in my small rental car. Since I rarely drive this distance on icy roads, this was a stressful situation.

While walking through these various events, the risk for distraction was high. To succumb to distraction would impair my ability to deliver excellent value to those I served. Each day as the distractions mounted, I consciously prayed for the grace to stay focused. And each day, I asked the Lord to help me see what was really going on, that is, what spiritual reality was at work behind the physical realm that I experienced.

If you agree with my view that God is sovereign, intentional, and strategic, then these events were not random. Furthermore, if I was doing the will of God according to the ways of God, then perhaps Satan and his minions had something to do with these events.

If Satan's agenda is to seek to disrupt the rule and reign of God in the universe and Satan's resources are limited, then one would expect Satan to deploy his resources strategically. The best way for him to accomplish his agenda is to attack anyone seeking alignment with the will and ways of God. If I was engaged in activities that pleased the Lord and therefore did not please Satan, then perhaps my work drew some of his attention.

Spiritual warfare is not often associated with the workplace. For most of us, it is difficult to see spiritual reality in our work. But if God is Lord of all, he is Lord of the workplace. This makes the workplace a battlefield on which Satan opposes God. Demonic resistance in the workplace should then be expected.

Remember there are no random events. When difficult circumstances occur that defy natural explanation, consider the possibility of spiritual warfare. In such cases, your work may have attracted attention from Satan and his forces. If so, consider it a compliment and an indication that you are seeking alignment with the will and ways of God.

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