

Preparing for Tough Times with Three Tough Questions

Dennis Peacocke • Adversity

<http://www.intheworkplace.com/apps/articles/default.asp?blogid=1935&view=post&articleid=55442&fldKeywords=&fldAuthor=&fldTopic=156>

Ultimately, managing our "business" is about managing ourselves, whether or not we actually own or oversee our place of employment. As we have all been told before, true freedom begins in godly self-government. While we cannot control many factors in life and in our external environment, we can control our reactions to them. In uncertain times like these it is wise to re-ground ourselves in these kind of "basics." Indeed, under pressure, the basics of truth that we know and have practised are what help to stabilize us and all those we influence. It therefore behooves us in both our personal and professional lives to be very clear on the truths upon which we rest our lives, our families, and our fortunes.

Ernest Hemmingway once opined that, "in a calm sea, every man is a captain." That phrase has stuck with me over the years because it so clearly expresses the idea that genuine pressure reveals where people and organizations really are. Similarly, knowing that cycles of pressure and uncertainty are the normal and expected realities facing us all, it is in times of relative peace that people, businesses, and nations should clarify and shore up the values and principles which have proven themselves in times of peace and times of pressure. In this sense, self-government and managing ourselves means living in the constant reality that what we practise in times of profit and certainty must be grounded sufficiently in God's truth to work in times of leanness and uncertainty. A "disciple" is a disciplined learner; a good manager is a self-conscious truth-practiser.

Living in reality means preparing for challenges and belt-tightening when expansion and profitability seem to extend out into the future indefinitely. Those who haven't prepared for 2003 in the hay-days of the latter half of the 1990s are now paying the price for their own ungoverned optimism. As the likelihood of war in Iraq increases, and the uncertainties of many economic indicators increase, it should serve as a sobering lesson to all of us. Life on a "fallen planet" is constantly cycling in and out of seasons of relative prosperity only to fall prey to the consequences of personal and social sin following prosperity's heels. This external fickleness should build within us a determination in God for internal "fixedness." That kind of stability or "fixedness" within us also produces stability around us. This kind of stability is the product of living in some "tough questions" in all seasons and cycles. Let us now look at some of those self-examining exercises that produce firm foundations in life.

Three Tough Questions that Stand Up to Tough Times

1. Question Number One: Am I "current" with God?

Being "current" with God means that we are living in fellowship and obedience to Him daily. We are not talking about "perfection" here. What we are talking about is a disciple's lifestyle of seeking to guard our thoughts, emotions, and actions and

constantly submitting them to the training process of God's Word being applied to real-life situations under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit. If indeed we are living in this kind of simple yet profound reality, habitual sins are being addressed, and deceptions and unrealistic expectations are being exposed and rejected. Being saved in Christ, and daily practising His lifestyle of disciplined reality, are not the same thing for the vast majority of believers. After thirty-plus years of pastoring I know this to be true.

2. Question Number Two: Am I diligently applying God's Word and principles to my ministry in the workplace?

As regular readers of this magazine know, "Christianity" that does not envelop the whole of our lives is not yet biblical Christianity. This is especially true of how we think and act at work, where we spend the majority of our energy, time, and ministry focus. The curse of Greek-thinking philosophy is the separation of "spirit and matter." The curse of this dualistic thinking in Christianity is the attempted separation of Christian beliefs in our so-called "church life" from the remainder of our "regular life," especially our ministry at work where we have the opportunity to know and influence so many others. The workplace is Christianity's greatest "fishing hole," and it is the place where believers can create investment capital and jobs. Someday Christian economics will profoundly influence the world. That reality is in its conception stage today but its infancy may not be many years in the future, especially in the so-called "Third World."

Put on your "magic glasses" and study the scriptures from a workplace, economic-principled, leadership perspective. A whole new world will unfold to you and continue to expand in depth, breadth, and power.

3. Question Number Three: Am I preparing to accept change and increased responsibility for people and things as God is growing me up?

".and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." Romans 8:17

To grow in Christ means that the depth of our relationship with Him is causing our influence with people to grow deeper and wider as a result. If our workplace ministry in God is motivated by the desire to simply "make more money," we are missing it tragically. The real issue is, how is my relationship with God serving people as it draws them to Him, and displays the effectiveness of His truth practically in the real world? Life in the marketplace is the believer's golden opportunity to "put up or shut up," or more precisely, to "grow up so that we can show up."

The worldwide revival that is being slowly awakened in the marketplace will be driven by believers who see God's strategic hand moving here. In regards to the world's worship of economic issues and personal lifestyle, God is basically saying: "Okay, if you insist on making economics and personal lifestyle your god, I will touch them both through judgment and by modeling My economic vision for the earth simultaneously." This is not a statement of "doom and gloom." It is a statement of God's ongoing love for the world by calling it out of unreality as He demonstrates the real thing through His people. If we don't get this, we don't yet understand the game.

The King and His Kingdom are coming to earth through His people, in a measure, before He returns in person.

Believers who are constantly preparing themselves for more responsibility in Christ will prosper in any economic cycle or climate. Their stability, decision-making, and principled lifestyles will make them lighthouses in turbulent seas. They will be real captains, to respond to Hemmingway's observation, because lighthouses were built for safe navigation in storms. Living in these three questions is putting boulders, cement, and re-bar into our foundations while it is at the same time cleaning our windows, and brightening the clarity and sweep of our beacon light. Good times or tough times, bring them on. We shine our best when people are asking for help.

By Dennis Peacocke. This article originally appeared in the March/April 2003 edition of Business Reform Magazine.