



PUT YOUR SPIRITUALITY TO WORK

Conversation Starters for the Workplace

1.15 FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Imagine what your workplace would be like if it fostered service, sacrifice, balance, good order, endurance, attentive regard, sharing, kept promises, courageous respect for others, and a check on the appetite for excess.

HAVE YOU ever noticed that sometimes your parents can be a great resource of ideas for your work, especially in ways you least expect? We experienced this when William's mother recently sent us an article entitled "Finding Spirituality in the Workplace." It was written by a Jesuit priest named William Byron, and published in the Texas Catholic (USA) magazine.

As we read the article, we were delighted to find that Father Byron had so beautifully articulated how expressions of the basic human values we've been writing about can be applied in our work. We also enjoyed seeing how he used a teaching from the New Testament of the Bible in a way that all cultures could apply in their work:

Who would not like to possess and experience the following characteristics where they work: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control? These qualities are what St. Paul identifies in Galatians 5:23 as the "fruit" of the Spirit, evidence that the Holy Spirit is present within a human person. Paul wanted his Galatian friends to have guidelines for maintaining the right balance between matter and Spirit in their worldly pursuits.

The idea is not to try to bring these qualities *into* the workplace – as if we were inserting a new "ingredient" into the soup of work. Rather, we agree with Father Byron that these fruits of the Spirit are *present within us* – so the idea is to embody these inner qualities, and our spirituality, making them the *source* from which we work. Then, the "right balance" is automatic: the fruits of the Spirit naturally result in the fruits of our work.

So why aren't these types of spiritual qualities focused on more openly in our workplaces? Father Byron gives us some insight:

I suspect the reason why these nine virtues so often fail to become adopted as workplace enhancing characteristics is that they are all too casually dismissed as "religious" and thus seen as irrelevant to everyday workplace life.

We too have found that even very spiritual people sometimes view the idea of "religion" in the workplace with scepticism – seeing religion as a set of beliefs and rituals that separate people rather than bring them together. But we have found that *spirituality* is the *inclusive*,

unifying factor underlying all religions and spiritual paths. From a *spiritual* point of view, the fruits of the Spirit can be embraced in the workplace without being dismissed as “religious.” Father Byron provocatively adds:

To say “this cannot be so” is to concede that there is no place for the Spirit of God in the material world created by God. These nine principles deserve, indeed demand, attention in our day. What have we, and our workplace world, come to if there is no room within for the Creator of both?

So how do these fruits of the Spirit translate to practical results at work? Father Byron comments on this as well:

Contrary to what popular culture would have you believe, love is service and sacrifice. Joy is balance at the centre of the soul. Peace is good order. Patience is the ability to endure whatever comes. Kindness is attentive regard for the other. Generosity is the habitual disposition to share. Faithfulness is a promise kept. Gentleness is courageous respect for others. Self-control is a voluntary check on the appetite for excess.

Imagine what your workplace would be like if it fostered service, sacrifice, balance, good order, endurance, attentive regard, sharing, kept promises, courageous respect for others, and a check on the appetite for excess. Sound like a good formula for success? It certainly matches our dozens of years of personal work experience, as well as the learning of organisational experts worldwide.

Father Byron inspires us by closing with these words:

Once assimilated, these values become contagious. They transform persons, and persons thus transformed can change the workplace without preaching, proselytising or arguing, but just by being their transformed selves.

So, ask yourself: *Which one or two of the nine virtues Father Byron mentioned – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control – do you most naturally bring to your work? What results do you experience when you operate from these qualities?*

This article is an excerpt from the book, *Put Your Spirituality to Work: The Basics*. To download the full book of articles, as well as additional book chapters, articles, workbooks, and research on the subject of “spirituality and human values for leadership and work”, visit our website: www.globaldharma.org