

BLOG – AUGUST 1, 2012

There's No "I" in Team (Ain't No "We" Either)

Discussion

One of the biggest challenges I had growing from a young child into a teen, and then into an adult, was learning to drop the "I" out of my sentences. I wonder if you've ever had the same problem? "I did this", or "I did that", or "I'm in charge of this or that", were all common phrases of mine in my younger days. Even today, I have to watch myself—it's so easy to do. Created as individuals, we are pushed to grow up and be able to "do" and care for ourselves, and yet also live and work within a community environment—it's also a team thing, like it or not.

Learning teamwork may not have been easy, but it was a familiar lesson for me as the oldest of eleven children; and it was a lesson reinforced in my high school days playing baseball and running track. Years back, I really got a chuckle out of that old commercial where the coach is telling the team "There's no 'I' in team"; and the response from his egotistical star player was "There ain't no 'we' either". Learning that what we accomplish in this life is the result of many people's efforts—and not just our own—can be challenging, if not impossible, particularly if our ego is getting in the way.

Frank Leahy, a former football coach of the University of Notre Dame, once told his team, "Egotism is the anesthetic that dulls the pain of stupidity". Put quite simply, allowing our egos to get in the way of sound judgment can cause us to make bad decisions, and perhaps even fail. I see being humble, or having humility, as the counter to a giant ego. But even then, we have to be careful. I remember an anonymous quote in college that has stuck with me all these years, "the moment you realize you have humility, you've lost it".

It seems as if it is a constant struggle between working hard to achieve, to do, to minister, to "be all you can be" in this very competitive world—and yet doing it in a humble and selfless way that gives God the glory and not ourselves; i.e., to do it in a way that lifts the group and not the individual. "Edification" is a nice churchy word that means "to build up the body"; and this is, after all, our mandate today as followers of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-16: "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." [NIV]

We are called to be a people unified and working as a single body to the glory of God, with Christ as our head. Each of us, whether in the workplace or at home, has a responsibility to "do all that you do to the glory of God" and to work as a unit, a family, and a team—no "we" or "I", just Christ working through us as a single body. I have to constantly remember to "check my ego at the door"; and every time I do, without exception, it is Christ who shines through.

How about you? Is life about what you want to do, or is it about what Christ needs to be accomplished today? Are you following Him and seeking His kingdom first? I pray that you are, because I know from personal experience that when we put Christ first, nothing else—including our ego—matters nearly as much.

What a blessing serving in His Kingdom with you!

In Christ, Wes