

## Practical Proverbial, from Jesus, 2 April 2016...words for a friend

*He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Mark 16, verse 15.*

The Mexican proverb is right: if you want to hear God laugh tell Him your plans. I wanted to stay away from this blog for a month, but a few hours after I posted that, I learned of something that made for a better pause.

A friend of mine died this morning. A few of you knew Troy Roseberry, most liked him, and some knew him well while others not so much. Troy was my first NCOIC when I went to sea 30 years ago; that's 'NCO in Charge' for those of you not familiar with the military. He was the crew chief on my first watch crew. He was the man who trained me how to use the reconnaissance positions that we each worked at the very height of the big bad Cold War. He was a mentor and a friend. Troy was only a staff sergeant when I met him (I was a lowly airman first class; E-3), and I didn't know him for more than a year or so before he PCS'd (permanent change of station) to a new duty assignment. That was around 1988 or so, and I didn't hear from Troy for another twenty-two years until we reconnected over Facebook around 2010.

That was about the time when my sins came home to roost. So as to stop talking about me, let me jump to the punchline:

Troy helped save my life.

He did so by sharing Jesus with me on a day when I seriously thought about killing myself. I couldn't take the hurt I had caused because I had strayed. My wife had left me and I was crushed, without my guiding star. My kids detested me. The woman with whom I had cheated had shown she was neither angelic nor sweet, just another tortured sinner who abandoned the man she'd promised to cherish. Many of my friends wanted nothing to do with me, not even many of the leaders of my church. I felt so low that I wanted to die, to make all the hurt stop. It was more than I could bear until I read an online message from Troy.

He reached out and reminded me that Jesus was still there with me, crying with me, aching to help me. He said "grab your arms around yourself and squeeze tight. That's what it feels like when Jesus is holding on to you like He is right now." He shared how He had come to follow the Lord after he had absorbed his own body-blows in life, and how his sweet wife, Ruby, had been a lighthouse in the storms for him. How they had built a life of faith together despite troubles, changes, and cancer.

It gave me hope when I thought hope wasn't possible for me. It gave me strength to get through those days. It helped me to honestly face what I'd done, to turn from it and repent, to begin to make amends the best I could. Over the next few weeks, we talked a lot more, and he was both friendly and honest, more like a big brother than a former comrade in arms. My friend didn't have to reach out and share like he did, but he did it anyway because that's the kind of man he was. Because that was the kind of faith that lived inside his heart now that he'd come to know and love Jesus.

Today, Troy's in heaven.

I've grown accustomed to sharing politics and proverbial's with him, and we'll have to put those on hold for now. Where Troy is, such silly things no longer matter. Those of us left behind in this hard world know what it means to have to struggle, but Troy has now blissfully forgotten all that. When I heard the news I broke down

crying because it hurts to know someone you care for has died. Yeah, I know that he's at peace, and the cancer that killed him never really defeated him, and that he's a whole man again who I'll see in a few short years when I, too, pass from this world. But it still hurts. I haven't seen the man in most of those thirty years; his family is the group who is hurting today, so please pray for them earnestly as they adjust, remember, and celebrate while grieving.

But circle back, then, to that thing Troy said to me: grab your arms around yourself right now and give yourself a hug. That's Jesus hugging you tightly while you go through every day here, especially on the tough ones. Jesus comforted Troy in his final days here. Jesus gave him courage to live well and die strong. Jesus welcomed Troy home a few hours ago. Jesus waits to do the same for you and for me. In a time when I had let Satan cloud my vision, Troy cut through the fog for me and reminded me that eternity matters most. Today he very much knows why.

I'm sure my friend had other plans for life, and I'm betting God had a belly laugh about them. The crazy wonderful thing is that, today, my good friend and mentor is laughing along with that same God Almighty. I'm thankful for that and look forward to the day when I can laugh right along with them.

Fair winds and following seas, my friend. Thank you. I thank God for you.

*Lord Jesus, thank You for my friend, Troy. Thank You for welcoming him home. Guide, preserve, and strengthen his wife and family, and keep their eyes focused on You.*

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## Practical Proverbial, 8 July 2016, Conflict Management

*Conflict Management.*

*"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Matthew 18: 15-17.*

Hello my friend. It's good to be back to share a few thoughts with you. For the next few months, I'd like to give you a look-see ahead into a project God put on my heart. Awhile back He inspired me to learn how to be a speaker in ways that will work for His kingdom. Specifically, He put the thought in my brain to teach people to manage God's way.

Project and team management is what I do for a living, and I'm passionate about doing it well. The longer you live as a Christian the more you see how the Bible is both God's word and handbook for our lives. It's the instruction manual for the human race. Since this is so, and since work is so much of a part of our living, the Lord impressed on me that I should do my part to help folks understand how the Bible is also the best practical instruction manual for how we should interact on the job. To this end, I'm looking into ways to do help build this message, this blog being one of them. Going forward, look for weekly updates on various Bible verses and subjects related to how we can manage God's way. As in all things, the first, best way to undertake any effort is to pray. I've been praying on this concept and ask you to do the same for me.

And after we have begun in prayer, let's continue in action.

Last year, I managed a large project in Minnesota. One day, our team was discussing Christian faith and the workplace. Someone remarked that it was against client (and EEOC) policy to proselytize in the workplace. We all agreed, and then I said that, despite this, you could (and should) still work applying Christian principles especially at work. We argued some, and then I brought up Matthew 18, specifically the verses above. I remarked how it had been our team's policy, from myself on down, to resolve conflict by going to the source and trying to work out problems before they escalate.

That isn't my bright idea: it's Jesus'. It's Matthew 18. The first step to resolving any conflict is to go to the person with whom you're in conflict. You go in private because you stand a better chance of resolving an issue amicably if it's done in private. If the issue can't be resolved in private, then you go to the next level; a manager or supervisor. If that still doesn't resolve the issue, you have the option of taking deeper action, perhaps making a policy change, or escalating the issue higher up the management chain.

Isn't that what Matthew 18 is telling us to do?

Confronting conflict takes courage...and faith. Speaking, then acting, to build peace is God's courageous way. You need courage to face up to someone who may be accusing you, who is doing or saying things that are adversarial to you. You need faith to know that you're doing the right thing, especially since you know that the other party may resist; they may have reason to. You need God for any real peace.

In our workplaces, in our homes, in our personal lives, and in the areas where those things intersect, we need to live out Matthew 18 all the time. We all know that our world is full of chaos, full of hatred and disorder. I wonder how much of that chaos we could calm if only we would first go to those opposing us and speak love with them. This isn't some Pollyanna, Loretta Lynch kind of 'big group hug.' This is going to those with whom we have conflict and speaking with them in ways to resolve the conflict. It's showing that you seek real justice for the issues in contention. It's an act of caring about something more than just ourselves. Not to build a cease-fire or détente, but to resolve – finish, end, conclude – that conflict in ways that build God's peace.

That first step is, as they say, a doozy. It means conceiving mercy; it means giving grace. Taking that first step, whether in your cubicle or in your living room, means listening, considering, giving. We all fail at doing that; we are each a work in progress. Considering the other guy's position positions us to move forward and begin to resolve what violence transpires between us. If we remember that we 'get to' enact Matthew 18, perhaps we can resolve conflict so that we don't 'have to' do so later in ways that are much greater.

This is how we manage God's way.

For more reading: James 1:19, Ephesians 4: 31-32, Colossians 3:13, Hebrews 12: 14-15, Proverbs 15:1, Proverbs 16:7, Leviticus 19:18, Luke 17:4.

*Lord, thank You for Your commanding advice on how to resolve conflict. Help me to live this out where I am today.*

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## Practical Proverbial, 18 July 2016. This week's topic: conflict and soft words

### Conflict Management.

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4: 31-32. AND A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15:1.

So let's do some confessing, here: I'm guilty of completely violating these verses. I stink on ice at keeping them. In this political year, with so many things being said, I find myself constantly debating people online. Sure, I justify my arguments with saying "I'm standing up for what I believe" or something like that. In my mind, I think I'm doing some kind of good by sharing my (usually) polarized opinions. The world is a better place, you know, because Dave Terry shared his opinions on Mrs. Clinton, events in the Middle East, the Federal deficit and any other range of issues. Sure; whatever.

In the end, it isn't kind. It's unkind. It isn't tenderhearted: it's mean. And while I forgive anyone who's wronged me, all too often that isn't the vibe I exude. More often than not, I probably look like a jerk.

Would you act this way at work? More and more employers surf employees' social media sites. Would you want your employer to see things you've written online? Would I want my employer to see what I post to others? More importantly, would I want them to see HOW I interact with others? It might not paint a flattering picture, especially when I work in a career where managing people. I wonder how many jobs I've silently lost when I applied online and then lost out because when an interested employer was turned off by my contentious social media posts.

We don't have to wonder what Jesus would think. He telegraphed his thoughts in His words above. Last time, we talked about how to resolve conflict by going to the person with whom you're in conflict. In these verses above, we're told a few of the characteristics of how we should talk when we're doing that.

We're to put off bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander and malice; whew! If I do that, what else would I share on Facebook? No matter, that's what we're to do if we want to bridge the gap between our neighbor and ourselves. Even if we've been wronged, even if we are the one who has wronged another, no matter the circumstances, we are to put off the fruit emotions of evil and display the behaviors of Christ.

Why are we supposed to interact in this way? The quick answer is "because Jesus says so." In reality, that's all we need to know. In further reality, He tells us to be kind and forgiving and caring because 'a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.' The words He inspired into Solomon aren't much different from those He inspired into Paul, are they? How many times have strong arguments ended when one of the arguers simply lowered the tone of their voice? That isn't a coincidence. God doesn't tell us to do things that lead us further into sin. When He tells us to forgive, speak kindness, and act out in goodness, it's because they are the best and right ways to interact.

Be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving; be these things because that's how Jesus is with us. Be these things and still be strong. Acting in soft ways doesn't mean someone is weak or spineless. If you think about it, it takes a strong person to actively put aside raw negativity and let God re-make how we react. Indeed, it takes a backbone to stand up for Jesus when so much of the world stands against Him. The trick becomes standing up and standing firm while not letting our standing get in the way of His message. In doing that, His directions to speak softly and be kind are the best ones with which to lead the way. After all, it's better to be able to cop to being overly kind than to have to admit you're a jerk.

This is how we manage God's way.

For more reading: James 1:19, Colossians 3:13, Hebrews 12: 14-15, Proverbs 15:1, Proverbs 16:7, Leviticus 19:18, Luke 17:4.

*Lord, thank You for Your commanding advice on how to resolve conflict. Help me to live this out where I am today.*

## Practical Proverbial, 29 July 2016. This week's topic: forgiving grudges

*Conflict Management.*

*Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. Leviticus 19:18.*

My second job was working as a desk clerk at a small Indiana State Park hotel near Mitchell. That was where I met Dan (name changed). Dan was a bright, talented guy a few years older than myself. He knew everything there was to know about the hotel, had taught himself how to do the night auditing tasks, and was kind and helpful to customers. Dan also knew how to hold a grudge better than anyone I had met up to that point.

The world was set against Dan; you could ask him and he'd tell you. He remembered everything anyone else on staff had said to him, especially any comments that were critical or confrontational. During off hours, Dan worked at a local thrift shop for reasons only he knew. Then he would come to work at the Inn and talk smack behind the desk.

It always baffled me why Dan wanted to even work at the Inn. If things were so bad, if people hated him so much, why put up with it? There were other jobs to be had; why not leave with your dignity intact and go get one? Yet Dan stayed long past the time I left. I don't know where he is now.

Or there is Rudie (name also changed). A few years ago, my customer, Rudie, was a woman in southern Minnesota who was, in my opinion, the most experienced and talented person in her division yet she wasn't in management, wasn't placed in charge of anything, and didn't lead anything (though she obviously wanted to). Her attitude was terrible, and she spent part of each day regaling my team and I with stories of how so & so had passed her over, or this person or that person had made a bad decision that caused havoc for the company. Did Rudie ever consider that she had been passed over because it was easier to get along with a honey badger than it was to get along with her? I was thankful when I moved to a new position.

Have you ever worked with someone like Dan or Rudie? Yesterday, my daily Bible devotion quoted Matthew 18:21, where Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive his brother who sins against him. "Up to seven times," asks Peter. "No," replies Jesus, "over seventy times seven times." It's a rhetorical way of saying "forgive unconditionally and unendingly." Jesus said that because He knew Leviticus 19:18, where He directed God's people to not hold grudges.

Grudges create division and conflict. In your workplace, grudges are usually the elephant in the room. They create attitudes like Dan's and Rudie's, cementing obstacles which prevent people from fulfilling their potential and rising above. Grudges lead to revenge, and revenge never ends well for anyone involved. True, it feels deceptively sweet there in the moment, yet invariably revenge feels empty and hollow to the person on Godly conscience. After we've sought it, we're smaller, lesser than we were before even if appearances transmit otherwise.

The better path is to walk the path of forgiveness, loving other people – even those who hold grudges, even grudges against us – as we would love ourselves. When the hard-to-engage person brings up the past, listen, and forgive, and seek points in the conversation to help them move forward. Sometimes the person may not see the effects of their resentment; yes, sometimes they require rebuke (but be careful and loving with that;

how would you react if someone rebuked you about your sore spot?). Other times, the best path may be to encourage them in other ways. In whatever we do, the goal is to bring that person back into the fold, to remind them that we love and forgive because Christ loves and forgives us. That goes for the workplace as much as it does at home.

This is how we manage God's way.

For more reading: James 1:19, Colossians 3:13, Hebrews 12: 14-15, Proverbs 15:1, Proverbs 16:7, Luke 17:4.

*Lord Jesus, help me to help others let go of grudges. Teach me to not hold them myself, to trust You to help me let go. Then help me to model that for those around me. Thank You for Your forgiveness.*

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## Practical Proverbial, 12 August 2016. This week's topic: delegation

### *Delegation*

*Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word. Acts 6, verses 3-4.*

Today is a milestone at the house here in Paris. Today my wife started her first paying job in several years. For a few months now she's been looking for a position in which to both serve others and earn extra money. Today she began in one.

Today, also, my manager (a company vice president) delegated several tasks to me. All summer I've been working from home and, to be honest with you, I wanted more work. I've been in-between long-term projects, so I've been helping others (remotely) on theirs. Today, my boss gave me that work.

Have you ever considered that it's a Godly thing for us to delegate things to each other? In fact, have you considered that God WANTS us to delegate?

Recall the story of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, who saw that his son-in-law was overworked and stressed. In Exodus 18, Jethro tells Moses "look, brah, appoint a few guys to help you out on this and God will bless the work of all of you."

Recall Luke chapter 9, in which Jesus sends His twelve disciples out to minister in His name. He told them "get up and go now, just as you are, and preach Me wherever you go." And they did it. Successfully, even.

Recall Acts chapter 6 in Jesus has gone to heaven and the Disciples are discussing how to actively care for the growing number of believers. They decide to appoint seven men to help with the hands-on aspects of caring for the hundreds of new believers in and around Jerusalem.

Recall that the Apostle Paul taught numerous acolytes to preach and teach the name of Jesus as he moved through his missionary journeys. Rick Warren points out that, in 2 Timothy 4, Paul talks about men with whom he has served and ministered and various good and bad things they have done.

Get the picture? Simon and Garfunkel were wrong: I am not a rock and I am not an island. If I'm anything, I'm an island in an archipelago, one of many, and one who makes up part of God's larger whole. I can't do everything by myself and God isn't asking me to. What He does ask is that we, first, rely primarily on Him and then, second, delegate what we can't or shouldn't handle. We're supposed to prayerfully take EVERYTHING to Him and ask for His involvement. If you think about it, He's involved anyway so why wouldn't we?

Then, He asks us to use our talents and involve others. Friends, family, employees, superiors, even strangers: we are to wisely delegate tasks so that we can turn our focus onto doing our work at hand the best we can. . God gives us each other so that we can support each other and that, in doing so, His glory may increase in ways it couldn't if we simply kept it to ourselves.

Today my wife and I each got the chance to do that, with each of us serving in roles through work delegated to us. It worked for Moses, Jesus and the Disciples. Chances are it'll work fine for us as well.

This is how we manage God's way.

For more reading: Exodus 18: 19-23, Luke 9: 1-6; 2 Timothy 4: 10-13.

*Lord Jesus, help us to each delegate work to others. I know I can't do everything on my own, so teach me to delegate meaningful work to others, and to empower them to do that work in Your Name. Thank You for making us unique in this way.*

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