

LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH FAILURE

By Ken Korkow

We had a major construction job at my family's ranch where we have established facilities for serving military veterans who have suffered serious injury – physical, mental, and emotional – in combat. The building required considerable repairs and we needed the work completed as soon as possible.

An individual came to discuss the project and said he would do it, so we awarded him the contract. Then he did not show when he had promised. I called him, and he gave me another date, assuring me he would be there as promised. But again, he did not show up. So, trying to be as patient and understanding as I could be, I called him again. He gave me another date for starting the work, assuring me that he would be there as promised. Amazingly, he failed to show up a third time. Strike three, you're out! I fired him and hired another company. Thankfully, the job is now completed.

Recently, to my great surprise, the guy I fired called me. He said he was going to make a significant donation to our work with combat veterans. I asked why. He said good work deserves support. What he said was nice to hear, but I decided to probe deeper with this contractor – I have learned time and again that God is always at work, even when we cannot understand what He is doing.

I would describe this fellow as tough as nails. However, he started to cry as he told me about his extremely serious, to-the-point-of-death health issues, as well as critical issues he was facing in his company. So, I decided to drive more than 50 miles to have a one-on-one, face-to-face meeting with him. I asked questions. Then I listened. I asked more questions. Then listened some more.

What this man told me was amazing. If anyone could get to heaven by doing good deeds, this guy would be it, because he has hired and developed many men through his construction business. For more than 50 years he has made significant and successful contributions to his community.

The truth is, however, that if "good" could get anyone to heaven, then Jesus Christ was a fool to willingly go to the cross and die for our sins. Romans 3:10 tells us, "There is no one righteous, not even one, there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God...there is no one who does good, not even one." But the good news is, "God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

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As I reviewed this encounter, which I considered a divine appointment, it occurred to me that it taught valuable lessons that could benefit every one of us:

- 1) In life and work, under-promise and over-perform.
- 2) If problems come up, be willing to deliver the bad news rather than to give no news at all.
- 3) Do not get over-committed.
- 4) Begin with the end in mind and follow through.
- 5) Perhaps most important: As followers of Jesus Christ, we represent Him, even to people who have disappointed us and even failed to keep their commitments. We may be the only 'Bible' others are reading. We should always be ready to live out and share God's Truth.

It was Jesus who said, "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil" (Matthew 5:37). It is difficult to get in trouble by following through on what we have promised to do.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How do you typically react when people fail to keep their promises or follow through on their commitments?
2. Has there ever been a time when you did not fulfill an important commitment you had made? How did you deal with that? How did the person or people you failed react?
3. The Bible teaches about *mercy* (not receiving what we deserve) and *grace* (receiving what we do not deserve). In living out our faith in the workplace, do mercy and grace have any place in our business dealings? If so, in what ways? How would they relate to a circumstance such as that described above, when a person fails to follow through on promises?
4. Which of the lessons learned cited at the end of this Monday Manna seem most significant or most important for you? Explain your answer.

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:
Proverbs 10:9, 11:3, 12:19, 20:25, 24:26; Matthew 5:36; James 5:12