

HOW WE DO ANYTHING IS HOW WE DO EVERYTHING

By Jim Mathis

Recently I was honored to be asked to speak to a group of businessmen on the subject, “How we do anything is how we do everything.” This idea is closely connected with integrity. Integrity comes from the same root word as integer, which means “one” and “integrate” – meaning all together.

The thought is that we can observe one area of our life, or someone else’s for that matter, and translate that to other areas as well. For example, someone who dresses impeccably probably has a clean car and a clean house. Someone who offers to pay an invoice in cash because they think it would be a way for the business to avoid reporting the income would never be someone I would consider to be a partner in my business. An artistic person is quite likely to have well-coordinated furniture and walls painted in interesting colors. Basically, this is because how we do anything is how we do everything.

Employers find it revealing when they take potential employees out to lunch. They have the applicant drive to see what condition their car is in, then note how the prospective hire treats the server. They understand that individuals will treat clients no better than they treat a server at a restaurant – and will maintain company equipment no better than they do their own car. These are good tests because how we do anything is how we do everything.

We can also look at businesses through the same lens. If a business treats their employees unfairly, we can expect that it will have similar attitudes toward customers. On the other hand, if a business typically has employees that have been there for 20 or 30 years, we have reason to believe it is a good place to work – and thus, also a good company to do business with. I would not have confidence in a plumber or electrician who drives a dented and poorly maintained vehicle.

We can use this principle to examine ourselves. What bad habits do I have that spill onto other areas of my life? Conversely, we can examine the things we enjoy or are very skilled at doing to see what type of work fits us best. If we really enjoy budgeting or keeping track of our personal finances, we would likely be a good financial planner, accountant, or tax preparer. If we dislike having to deal with money, we would be unwise to apply for a job at a bank. But what does the Bible have to say about this?

Who we are inside shows through who we are on the outside. Some people try to deceive others, putting on appearances that do not represent who they truly are. But God holds us accountable for who we are and what we do. “All a man’s ways seem innocent to him, but

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motives are weighed by the Lord” (Proverbs 16:2). “All a man’s ways seem right to him, but the Lord weighs the heart” (Proverbs 21:2).

Our faith is revealed through our actions. It is one thing to say we believe in God, but it is something else to demonstrate that through the way we conduct ourselves at work. “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Corinthians 3:9). “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed...” (2 Timothy 2:15).

How we do anything is how we do everything. One measure of hypocrisy is claiming to be or to believe something contrary to who we genuinely are or believe. We cannot always judge by outward appearances, but eventually the true self will show through. “As a he thinks within his heart, so he is” (Psalm 23:7). “As water reflects the face, so the heart reflects the true man” (Proverbs 27:19).

© 2023. *Jim Mathis is a writer, photographer and small business owner in Overland Park, Kansas. His latest book is The Camel and the Needle, A Christian Looks at Wealth and Money. He formerly was executive director of CBMC in Kansas City, Missouri, U.S.A.*

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What is your first reaction to the statement, “How we do anything is how we do everything”? Can you think of any examples when you have seen that to be inaccurate?
2. Looking at your own life, how would people evaluate you based on the way you interact with other people, whether it is a server in a restaurant or those you work with every day?
3. How difficult do you think it is for some people attempting to represent themselves as being one way when in fact they are someone very different?
4. Why is it important, if at all, to consider that God judges us based not on how we appear on the outside, but according to our hearts – our motives? If you believe that, how does that understanding affect how you conduct yourself throughout the day?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:
1 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 4:23, 16:7, 22:11; Colossians 4:5-6; 1 Peter 3:15-16

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