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By Ken Korkow

## 'COWBOY LOGIC' ABOUT CALVES – AND PEOPLE

Even though I have spent many years in the business world, some of my greatest, most profound lessons about life – and work – have come from my time as a “cowboy,” spent on a family ranch in South Dakota, U.S.A. For instance, I have learned a lot about relationships with people while working with young cows – and observing other people working with them.

Experience have taught me that in working calves, there are three places to be:

1. When working with calves, most people not familiar with them do not want to get to close. So they stick a hand out and try to make the calf do what they want from an arm's distance away. But the calf kicks and often, at the apex of the kick, strikes the person in the leg. Bottom line: minimum accomplished, and maximum pain.
2. A few people actually charge the calf. They get one hand on the ear, and the other hand on the tail. They put their clean blue jeans up close and personal to the calf's unclean hind end. Bottom line: the calf still kicks, but they are so close it does not hurt. And usually they can get the calf to go where they want it to go.
3. The other alternative to do is stay out of the pen and away from the calves entirely. Bottom line: The person does not get hurt, and their clean jeans do not get dirty. But no work is accomplished.

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My cowboy experience has also shown me how working with people is a lot like working with calves. If you are not willing to get very close and personal, you might as well stay out of the relationship.

We often become frustrated with what people do. We wonder why are they doing this – or that? Without being willing to go deeper in relationships with them, getting below the surface to uncover the relevant issues, we will never get the answers. This is why, if we desire to build meaningful relationships with people, approaches #1 and #3 will not work. We must get close – and must risk getting dirty. This applies to employers and their employees; business and professional people engaging with their colleagues at work, and even in interactions with customers and suppliers.

We see in the life of Jesus Christ that He made the decision not to focus on large crowds or confine His attention to people with influence and affluence. Instead, He went extremely deep – the equivalent of a 3½ -year camping trip – with a handful of unlikely individuals, men He chose to become His disciples. No staying an arm's length away; no hiding out. Neither was an option. Everything in their relationship was open and transparent.

But we cannot go deep with everyone. We have neither the time nor the energy. And we cannot invest in every good opportunity that presents itself. We must follow God's leading, starting with our relationship with God. In Mark 12:30, Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." This is the foundation for all other relationships.

In the next verse, Mark 12:31, Jesus cited the next relationship priority: "Love your neighbor as yourself." This includes our spouse, family, people where we work, friends, even people who live in our neighborhood. The order of priority Jesus gave

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is important, because we cannot truly love our “neighbor” – whoever that might be – without first loving God as fully and deeply as we can.

Then, even in the workplace, we can carry out the final instructions Jesus gave His followers in His last moments on earth. We can “make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). We can only do this if we’re willing to get close, and risk getting dirty.

*Ken Korkow lives in Omaha, Nebraska, U.S.A., where he serves as an area director for CBMC. This is adapted from his “Fax of Life” column. Used with permission.*

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## Reflection/Discussion Question

1. Have you ever been on a ranch or a farm, and interacted with the animals? If you were asked to approach a calf, which approach do you think you would take?
2. Mr. Korkow observes that in working with calves – and with people – it is necessary to get close, and be willing to get dirty. What is your reaction to this?
3. Why do you think willingness to get close to people can be so difficult? What has been your experience in doing this?
4. It is stated that the key to developing deep, meaningful relationships with people is first having a deep, meaningful relationship with God. Do you agree? Explain your answer.

**NOTE:** If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

*Proverbs 12:26, 17:17, 27:9-10; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8,11-12; 2 Timothy 2:2*

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