



Family Values

Virtue Realities

Resourcefulness

Bruce Strade, Director of Congregational Research, Lutheran Community Services Northwest

One way of looking at resourcefulness is “resource full.” This perspective recognizes that we all have God-given gifts, some of which we may take for granted or fail to appreciate as useful or of value. Yet it suggests that we have available adequate resources to face, with God’s help, whatever life throws our way. When we join forces with other people, our strengths become even stronger. Such connections are part of being resourceful. They are part of God’s grace in action.

Resourcefulness is built into God’s creative process. In the beginning God created order out of chaos. He separated light from darkness, the waters from the dry land, day from night. God called forth vegetation from the land, populated the sea, created birds of every kind and asked the earth to “*bring forth living creatures of every kind.*” Finally, “*God created humankind in his image, . . . male and female he created them.*” (Gen. 1:24,27) He blessed them and put them in charge. Everything was good. Unfortunately from our point of view it was not enough. We want more. The human condition is such that we fixate on what is not there rather than appreciate all that is there. We fail to recognize that we are blessed with enough.

Stories abound in the Bible about instances in which a little goes a long way. A creditor threatens to enslave the children of a widow who owns nothing but a small jar of oil. Elisha tells her to borrow empty vessels from neighbors and fill them from her jar of oil. She has enough to fill all the vessels, which she then sells to pay her debt with money left over to live on. A miracle? No doubt, but also creative use of the resources available. (2 Kings 4:1-8)

A similar situation happens in the New Testament but on a much larger scale. Jesus withdraws to a deserted place, but the crowds follow him. It is late and the disciples encourage Jesus to dismiss the people so that they could go into the villages to buy food. Jesus nixes that idea and instead tells them to give the people something to eat. They reply, “*We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.*” Not only was that enough to feed 5,000 men, not including women and children, but also 12 baskets full of leftovers. Solely a miracle? Or is it possible that what made it miraculous was people pooling their resources together and

finding more than enough? (Matt. 14:13-21) Compare the accounts of this only miracle included in all four Gospels. (Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15) On another occasion, Jesus emphasizes that faith the size of a mustard seed can move mountains. (Matt. 17:20)

Jesus admires resourcefulness. In the Parable of Talents the master gives more to the two who doubled their talents. He takes the one talent away from the slave who squanders it and throws him into outer darkness. (Matt. 25:14-30) Jesus is also impressed with the ingenuity of the men who opened a hole in the roof and lowered a paralyzed man. “*When he saw their faith, he said, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven you.’*” Then to prove that he has authority to forgive sins, he commands the man to “*stand up and take your bed and go to your home,*” which he does to everyone’s amazement. (Luke 5:17-26) Jesus praises the creative use of talents and gifts and recognizes them as a reflection of faith. We need to take seriously Peter’s injunction: “*Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you have received.*” (1 Peter 4:10) That’s resourcefulness at its best. That, in contemporary talk, is “asset-based” thinking.

The following are ways to practice resourcefulness:

- 1. Inventory your resources.** Take exhaustive stock of what God has given you, including possessions, physical prowess, mental and emotional abilities, disposition, relationships, etc.
- 2. Recognize the gifts of others.** Look for strengths and build on them, especially your children.
- 3. Combine your gifts with others.** Explore how connecting gifts through relationships can produce a greater good.
- 4. Find value in what others overlook.** Broaden your understanding of recycling, “*so that nothing may be lost.*” (John 6:12)
- 5. See prayer as a resource.** Ask, seek, knock and go where it takes you.

Affirmation: I am blessed with enough!

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Portland Office
605 S.E. 39th Avenue, Portland, OR 97214
503-231-7480 • www.lcsnw.org