



Family Values

Virtue Realities

Diligence

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When a company considers a merger with or purchase of another company, it conducts what is known as due diligence. This process involves an exhaustive investigation of all aspects of the other company to ensure that everything is in order and that there are no surprises. The purpose is to minimize risk and to confirm that the company is and does what it claims. If done right, such a review is disciplined, determined, deliberate and detailed - all of which are elements of diligence.

Diligence in the Bible has similar components. Prior to entry into the Promised Land, Moses strongly urges the Israelites to diligently follow the rules that God had given them. He suggests that their steadfast observance of these statutes *“will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people.’”* Their obedience to these laws will testify to the nations that they have a just and readily accessible God. Moses encourages the people to *“take care and watch yourselves closely”* so that they do not forget what they have seen, but rather pass it on to their children. He cautions them against taking God’s statutes for granted or becoming too complacent. (Deut. 4:5-10)

In a reference reminiscent of Aesop’s Fable about the Ant and the Grasshopper, the writer of Proverbs points to the ant as a model of industriousness. We read: *“Go to the ant, you lazybones; consider its ways, and be wise. Without having any chief or officer or ruler, it prepares its food in summer and gathers its sustenance in harvest.”* (Proverbs 6:6-8) Like the ant, God expects us to exercise discipline, be conscientious and be prepared. We are accountable for our behavior.

Paul sees diligence as an essential quality of leadership. In Romans, he describes the differing gifts based on the grace given to each member in the Body of Christ. These gifts include: *“prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.”* (Romans 12:6-8) At the same time, he advocates diligence for all later in the chapter, even though he does not use the actual word. He writes: *“Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in*

spirit, serve the Lord.” (Romans 12:11) In other words, be steadfast and faithful. Don’t give in to indifference.

The above attentiveness and enthusiasm to serve the Lord is all the more important given what we are up against on a daily basis. Peter reminds us to *“discipline yourselves, keep alert”* because *“like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.”* (1 Peter 5:8) A rather vivid image! We are continuously stalked by our own grandiosity, self-delusions, hardness of heart and the quest for a quick fix. When we become smug and take God’s grace for granted, we risk being taken hostage by our vulnerabilities and shortcomings. The irony is that we are led to believe that everything is just fine. On the other hand, when we stay tuned in to all that God has done on our behalf, grow in our relationship to God and one another through the Spirit, and practice what we preach, then we demonstrate Christian due diligence.

The following are ways to practice diligence:

- 1. Develop spiritual discipline.** Set aside regular times for meditation, prayer, study of scripture and personal reflection.
- 2. Hold yourself accountable.** Follow through on your commitments. Be dependable and on time.
- 3. Be vigilant.** Recognize when you are vulnerable and at risk. Take care of yourself and seek support.
- 4. Accept your imperfections.** See them as openings for God’s grace.
- 5. Stay focused on the goal.** Direct your energy toward showing God’s love to the world.

Affirmation: Today I will watch and pray!

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