

Dealing with Challenging People

How do you deal with challenging people in the workplace?

This is what FOX 5 News Anchor, Russ Spencer, shared his thoughts on – and more – during the latest BELIEVES session on Tuesday, August 9, 2016, entitled “Dealing with Challenging People.”



“I come with deep humility this morning,” Spencer said as he began his remarks.

From there the remarks and discussion flowed very easily and with a personal feel sensed by all.

One thing Spencer shared in about the formation of his own faith is the reminder he receives often when reading or reflecting on Ecclesiastes – one of his favorite books in the Bible – that all is temporary. However, that doesn’t mean there’s no meaning.

“There’s nothing new, but being present – with family, friends, and others – is key.”

Spencer also commented about one of the most impactful books he read in life that shaped his faith – The Seven Storey Mountain by Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk.

One of the things Spencer said he took away from reading the book was how Merton wrote that to be a saint meant to be one’s self.

He added, “He went on to say ‘God will make you what you want, and He intended ... all you have to do is desire it.’”



After spending the early part of the session reflecting on his personal faith journey, Spencer shifted the discussion to the workplace and dealing with challenging people.

Some of the key tenets of the reflections that he shared with the audience included:

- When working with difficult people, we should look at ourselves first.
- If you find yourself in a situation that’s toxic – get out of it.
- You never know what’s going on with someone unless you ask.
- We spend so much time in work relationships, that we should treat those relationships as much as appropriate like family – all while staying true to ourselves.

Eric Maust, VP of Business Banking for JPMorgan Chase Bank, then opened up the questions by asking, “You seem to be driven by curiosity. How do you discern whether it’s curiosity or something else?”

Spencer responded, "I think God made it clear of the calling with our daughter, Ella. My wife and I decided with six kids it's the focus we should have, especially with Ella."

He also added, "I am on the Board of Ministers at the Monastery in Conyers. One day I was having lunch with Abbott Francis Michael. He told me one time he had a young person come and say, 'I don't believe in God,' and the Abbott responded to the young man, 'Sometimes I don't either.' For the Abbott to be so candid to share this is amazing. It takes the pressure off."

"In the journey with Ella, there are so many miracles that happen every day that you would have to be blind to not see there is something divine going on. The revelation for me of parenthood is when kids pop out they have a personality that's unique already, so that takes the pressure off."



With the focus on his family and daughter, Susan O'Dwyer, Director of Business Development at Habif, Arogeti & Wynne, asked, "How has the journey with Ella affected you?"

"I think it helped me to have compassion and aware for others," said Spencer. "I think I am more inclined now to give people a break – or I try to."

CTK Parishioner Charles Jones closed out the questions asking Spencer what impact his time in Central and South America had on his faith.

"I had gone to a wedding in 1988. In six weeks, I quit my job as an anchor in Scranton. I was 28. My dad thought I had lost my mind. It was a great experience – an eye-opening experience," recalled Spencer.

Spencer got to see government that really doesn't work while in Central America, including when the president stole to fund a private island.

Spencer also wound up meeting his wife in Guatemala – she taught in the class next door to the one he taught in.

"My wife and I taught in Guatemala," shared Spencer. "It was a beautiful country. The Mayans originally had their own indigenous faith. It's neat to travel around the world and see the joy people experience in receiving the Eucharist."

With the session coming to a close, the audience was appreciative of the personal feel of the session, and Spencer said, "Atlanta's been good to me and my family the last 25 years."

