



Accepting to Prepare for Desolation When in Consolation

With the pressures of the work environment, seeking to walk with Christ and let the Holy Spirit guide all one's work decisions can often be challenging. How can one seek to be a Business Executive Leading with Integrity, Entrusted Values, and Expectancy (BELIEVES) in the work environment?

How do we continuously invite God into _____ and find real joy – even if it's messy?"

The 2024 BELIEVES season continued exploring this overarching question on Tuesday, October 8th, with a fireside chat focused on "Accepting to Prepare for Desolation When in Consolation," prompted by reflections and thoughts from Jo Ann Herold, CEO and Founder of the Herold Consulting Group, and Author of "Living on a Smile-16 Ways to Live a Big Life and Lead with Love;" and Maggie DeCan, CEO and E.D. of the Children's Development Academy, Author, Speaker, Coach, and Consultant.



"We are parishioners at the Cathedral of Christ the King," Herold opened by saying. "Now I am Interim VP of Marketing and Communications at Georgia State University."

Previously, Herold shared, she was twice the Chief Marketing Officer at Honey Baked Ham, along with Interface also; and she's also been the VP of Marketing for Arby's. Now she's also on the Board of the Giving Kitchen, and Covenant House of Georgia.

DeCan, who serves on the Evangelical Committee at St. David's Episcopal Church in Roswell spoke next.

"Jo Ann and I are WBFs ("work best friends") from Honey Baked Ham," she said. "I had always been in retail, coming to Atlanta in the late 1980s after graduating from the University of Michigan. I left Honey Baked Ham in 2016, and for the last eight years have run the Children's Development Academy in Roswell."

The Children's Development Academy is a non-profit preschool providing high-quality learning programs to children whose families otherwise could not afford it, serving about 150 kids each day.

“Now I am rewiring after retiring at the end of this past week and launching my book.”

So, what does “Accepting to Prepare for Desolation When in Consolation” mean to Herold and DeCan, particularly when applied to the professional/work setting?

“There are joys and struggles in life and accepting that sometimes things aren’t always as they were planned,” Herold said when responding first.

In her third time at Honey Baked Ham, a new CEO came in and wanted a new person.

“I was really grieving a lot,” she shared when reflecting on that time. “I went through all stages of grief. But there was a blessing – it led to me retooling, including teaching at GSU, consulting, and more. It forced me to faith – probably more full faith.”

Herold said this experience really changed how she looked at life and turned to God.

“Then so many good things have come out of it,” she added. “I wouldn’t have left on my own.”

DeCan then answered.

“I have kind of a sad life,” DeCan began by saying. “My mother died when I was 10 months old; however, when I was 13, I learned she had taken her life. So, I went through thinking it was my fault. Then at 17, my dad died on Christmas Eve. So, I went way towards control – even memorizing the book on management and leadership, and executing by the book.”

She said all this worked for her – until it didn’t.

“Then my dog died at age 8,” she said. “I had expected it to live until age 12.”

She went on to say that she and her husband were also not supposed to have kids, but then they did.

“When we held Riley in our own arms, God said clearly as we talk here, ‘Your mother loved you this much, but I love you more.’ Once you have a child, you have a whole life, and you have to be more empathetic. So, I thought when I had felt in control that I was in consolation, when I really wasn’t.”

Herold was next asked about “Big D” decisions and “little d” decisions.

“‘Big D’s’ are new jobs, and sometimes it’s leaving a big job,” Herold responded. “At Interface, I was traveling a lot internationally. However, my daughter was going to school here. Ultimately, I decided I had to leave the job.”

For Herold, the thought of “little d’s” brought to mind when she began teaching undergrad at Georgia State University.

“It was really hard,” Herold said. “Students work a lot then come to class and they’re exhausted.”

Herold said she struggled in teaching the students in this situation, but then a professor friend told her to “teach to the bright light.”

“Things started to change.”

DeCan then spoke about “Big D” and “little d” decisions.

For her, ‘Big D’s’ have had to do with not having enough faith to pull the plug.

DeCan said, “At times I was staying in a toxic environment too long and thinking God will figure it out for me. So, my ‘Big D’s’ are probably not being proactive – putting money and things before God.”

As for ‘little d’s,’ DeCan said hers probably have to do with wishing she had been more empathetic with people.

DeCan recalled, “Chuck Bengochea wrote a quote – *You don’t know what you don’t know*,” noting it was something she always said. “He said it helped him a lot.”

Having shared what they had, how did DeCan and Herold indicate they knew if they were discerning correctly or doing it right?

“When I go on a walk and see feathers,” Herold told everyone. “Also, when I am doing something and it flows, I know it. So, when it is happening naturally, I can tell.”

Sharing a specific example, Herold said when she was in a role for three years, she always had a stomachache.

“So, I pay attention to this.”

DeCan then spoke to close out the remarks on the question, “I always have a safety blanket, but I also always try to practice that ‘prayer without ceasing.’ I have had so many left turns in life that I am always preparing for desolation – perhaps even too much – but I do think God wants us to dance.”