

The Challenge

This is a short chapter, but the topic is *huge!* This is going to be long so if you want the gist of it, read the first four paragraphs. It almost seems in the first example that Dale is saying that competition between people is what makes a difference in getting them to do what we want - in the example he gave, that was to be more productive. That's not what he's saying at all. The rest of the chapter hammers at something that is far more crucial to understand, no matter what you do for a living, and no matter where you work.

The desire to overcome our fears, to excel, to make a difference, to feel important, to prove our worth, to express ourselves, is so core to who we are as human beings that we'd be foolish to ignore it when we ask other people to change their behavior and their patterns of life. And that's what we're asking people to do. We say to them, "You are where you are in life because of every choice you've ever made. Those choices brought you to this place. You made the best choices you could with the information you had at the time. Now you have new information. If you want to be someplace different five years from now, then you're going to have to change the way you think, and the way you do things."

Now, why should they buy into that? Or more specifically, why should they do what we're suggesting instead of something else? Dale hits it right on the head when he qualifies what it takes to get people to motivate themselves. "If the work was *exciting and interesting*, the worker looked forward to doing it and was motivated to do a good job."

Is what you are currently doing "exciting and interesting?" Well, that depends. On what? On your attitude. On your ability to dream and to imagine. There are no boring and tedious jobs for a person with vision. You have to understand what you do in the context of the needs of your family, your community, and your world. How does what you do contribute to the whole?

The problem in today's world is that we are disconnected and isolated. We have no context for what we do. We have allowed ourselves to be made into cogs in an assembly line where we only do this one small thing. After a while we forget why we do it, and how it fits into the big picture. The puzzle pieces no longer make a coherent whole. When that happens, hope begins to die because all we're left with is 3 square meals and a floor to sweep. There is no reason to get up in the morning with excitement about the day ahead.

For most people, their work environment discourages the big picture. It demands that they look at their own desk, worry about their own job, and don't ask questions about how everything fits together. That's the boss's job, or the corporation's job. Except the boss or mahogany row hasn't got a clue how it all fits together any more. They're too busy trying to keep it all afloat or making themselves look good. They haven't got the time or the energy to give us direction and a vision to pursue as well.

That's what we do for a living. We develop leaders, not bosses, coaches not supervisors. We do it by teaching people how to weave a dream, a tapestry of a unified and purposeful life. We are in the business of piecing people back together who have been drawn and quartered by their current way of life. What we have, and what we teach, is so extraordinary that most people go into shock when we present them with it. They haven't heard this kind of talk, this kind of hope, this kind of vision come out of anyone's mouth for years. They thought it was lost to them.

All of a sudden they run into a group of people with a positive attitude toward life, a direction and purpose that is nothing short of inspirational. They want it soooo bad. But they have become desensitized. They are cynical. They are disbelieving. They are hopeless. We need to develop the skill of inspiring hope in other people - and *trust*. We can't just talk a good game. We've got to *live* it. And we've got to be able to describe it in a way they can relate to. Remember yesterday's lesson? We need to be able to give word pictures and examples that help these people visualize what life can be like. They think they are risking something. We know they're not. We have to be able to bridge that gap with our words and our actions.

Let me tell you about a scientific study that was conducted a number of years ago. It's called *Learned Helplessness*. A group of dogs was given electric shocks at random. There was no lesson to be learned, no food to be gotten, no escape from the shocks. The shocks just came and there was nothing the dog could do to stop them. What the dogs learned was that they were helpless. So they just laid down and whimpered. They gave up. They lost hope. That sounds way too familiar. Is that how it is where you work?

Then they took these same dogs into another room where as soon as they stepped out of the box, the shocks would stop. The dogs just laid there in the box and whimpered. They never tried to get out. Other dogs who hadn't "learned helplessness" quickly learned to get out of the box to stop the shocks. So what's the lesson for us?

We encounter people every day who, like these dogs, are learning helplessness, losing hope, losing their capacity to dream. Everything they've tried has failed. They get nailed no matter what they do. When we present them with the Gospel, they want to believe, and to hope, and to change - but in their mind is an Eeyore type of conversation: "It won't help. It may work for you but it won't work for me. I just can't change. It's too much work. I just want to lay down and... whimper." We are looking for folks who are already positive and upbeat, outgoing and self-confident.

But in my experience, when I think I've found one, what I discover is that they are putting up a great front. Inside they are just as terrified, angry, and frustrated as the others. They mistrust, disbelieve, and reject every offer of help just so they can avoid one more betrayal, one more disappointment, one more failure. When I present the Gospel, all they see is work or boredom. They don't understand the context. They can't see the big picture. It's my job to educate them and open their horizons. I've got to dream build with them and educate them about just how big this really is - and how important.

In this chapter of Dale's book, we find the one thing that we need to be able to give people: hope. We need to be able to paint a picture for them, and to rekindle the flame of passion that has been untended for so long. They want to believe. They really do. But they just can't without some help. We need to take time to love them, to care for them, to nurture them, and to show them that we and the church can be trusted. How we do that is with sincerity, conviction, compassion, and a living example. We need to let them know where they fit in the big picture too. They want to belong to something bigger than themselves where they can realize their sense of importance and worth. We need to let them know they can have all that and more.

If we're not good with words, we need to get good. I'll tell you from my own personal experience that I had no eloquence in my written or verbal skills until I had something to say that I felt passionate about. You can ask my old English teachers in high school and college. When I came back from military service, *then* I had a whole lot to say and I began to craft my language into an assault weapon.

Get passionate about what you're doing. Get passionate about people and what they are suffering. We're not out there to resurrect the dead. That's God's job. We're out there to revive the faint of heart. Bring your smelling salts. Wake them up! Show them the way out. You'll change their life! And in doing that your life will change too.