

Horizontal Love

By Justin J. Agolia

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In the late 80's, my father was asked to work at a large corporation, specifically the government division. He was Chief of Procurement and oversaw about 2,000+ employees. I can remember how much he loved the challenges of the job, but I also remember the hardship he felt when he was asked to lay off several of his employees due to budgetary cuts. This was such a painful thing for him because he really cared for his team. He worried not only how his decision affected the individual, but their families as well. He took a personal interest in each person, even when he couldn't meet with each individual daily. There is one occasion that truly demonstrated his concern for people.

Dad was at work when he received the call that one of the machinists had been seriously injured and was rushed immediately to the hospital. Apparently, a steel rod went directly through his body, penetrating his critical organs.

My dad stopped everything he was doing and, without delay, went down to the hospital to be with him. When he arrived at the hospital, he found the machinist's wife in the emergency room frantically worried about the outcome of her husband's life. To add to her concerns, the doctors didn't give her much hope that he would live to tell his story.

My father waited with the wife for over 11 hours until her husband was no longer in critical condition, and thankfully, the machinist survived the tragedy.

Later on, the wife and machinist contacted my father. They both shared how shocked they were that a VP would come down to the hospital and show such concern for him, a plant worker, an everyday person. The wife also

expressed how comforting it was that he stayed with her during that stressful waiting period.

For my dad, it wasn't out of the ordinary. It was his love for that man and concern for his family that demonstrated my father's intense compassion and love for others. This couple was so taken by his actions that they had to personally thank him.

I heard that story years after the event took place. Dad was never one to tell about the things he did, but when I did hear the story, I, too, was stunned. At the same token, I was also very proud at how my father loved others in an extra-ordinary way.

That story spoke to me in a way that no leadership book, no management manual, nor any graduate-level class could ever drive home the axiom: you can't ask a person for their hand, until you have their heart.

Thought:

Dad, you not only taught me the importance of having a vertical relationship, but you modeled to me the value of simply loving others. I guess in one way, you showed me the cross, one line passing through another. You lived a life of vertical devotion to the Lord, intersected by horizontal love for others.