

## **Assertiveness at Work at Work**

So how in the world does “the meek shall inherit the earth” and “turn the other cheek” harmonize with assertiveness?

I suspect it all goes to what you are being assertive about. The story from my childhood that always comes to mind in this regard involves my father and some drinking buddies of his. One of the buddies worked for the largest employer in town and had tossed some equipment over the factory campus’ fence. He had retrieved it later and was showing it off to his friends, bragging about how he had taken it. My father, according to the story, upon being shown the equipment and how it had been obtained it, told his buddies that he would have bought it. That is a man confident enough in his values and himself that he would speak up and assert his values. It is not that he tried to change his buddies; he was just letting them know that that action was not his way.

Another story, told to me after my father had died, came from a family friend, much younger than my father. Through young adulthood he had little use for religion, prayer, or being good. He told me how on a fishing trip with my father and a number of other men, my father, among the most avid of the fishermen in the group, would not go out onto the lakes until after he had said his morning prayers and devotions. This was not the practice of the other men, but my father persevered in his practice. This so impressed the family friend that over the next several years, nudged on by the memory of my father’s insistence on saying his prayers at the start of the day, this man returned to the church and to the practice of prayer and efforts to lead a moral life.

A final story happened to me. I had found a wallet at the golf course where my father and most of my brothers played and hung out. I took it, without opening it, to the owner-manager in the bar. I just gave it to him and told him where I had found it and left. On the way out I overheard him let the other bar patrons know who my father was and that turning in a full wallet was typical of his honesty and that of his sons.

While these stories are not set in the workplace, they do capture the essentials of assertiveness in the workplace. My father knew what he considered right and wrong and was confident enough in his own person that he could share his opinions, even when those around him might differ with him. He knew what he would stand for and what he would not stand for. He expected respect but did not need it. He stood for what he saw as right and kept his self-respect. The respect of others came on his terms not necessarily on theirs. My father’s actions harmonized with and expressed his values including values of tack and courtesy. His key was to be assertive without being aggressive.

## **ASSERTIVENESS — A Faith Based Value at Work**

1. What does applying the faith-based value of assertiveness in your workplace mean to you? What do you think it would mean to those with whom you work? How does its meaning change for your different workplaces, for example, home or where you volunteer?
2. Why is it important to gain an understanding of assertiveness in the workplace and how to apply that understanding?
3. How do/could you apply the concept of assertiveness in your workplace(s)?
4. What would happen in your workplace if you took and actively applied the value of faith-based assertiveness in your workplace(s)? How would the workplace sound different? Look different? Feel different?
5. What first step are you willing to take this week?