

Fortitude at Work at Work

I recall my father-in-law, in the months before he died, commenting, “Getting old is not for the weak.” Since then, as I and my peers have gotten older, I have heard variations of that sentiment many times. It takes courage, fortitude, to live on as our bodies fail.

On reflection, I think it may be more accurate to say that it takes fortitude to live, especially to live up to the values and teachings of our faith in everyday life. It is not the fortitude of facing death for our beliefs so much as the fortitude of overcoming constant, ongoing barriers to doing what is right and just throughout our daily activities at work and at home.

It is not often that we are called to risk our job for what is right as a friend of mine did a few years ago. He was hired by a board on a split vote. One day the swing voter on the board that hired him told him to hire an unqualified individual to a major job in the system. My friend refused even as the board member intimated that he would change his vote/support if the individual was not hired. The man was not hired and my friend was fired. It took fortitude to take the stand my friend took.

What is more common and, in my mind, more difficult is to stand firm against the daily on-going barriers to expressing the love that God has for us and for all his creatures. I think it takes fortitude to overcome my tendency to procrastinate starting tasks that I find difficult or require me to do things I don't like to do. Sometimes it is writing a piece; other times it is making a repair to the house or even cutting the grass.

It takes fortitude to say “No,” to a request that is out of line especially when it comes from a friend or a supervisor. It takes fortitude not to participate in gossip about a colleague; even more to make a favorable comment when others are denigrating the colleague or the supervisor.

It takes fortitude to show respect and courtesy in a workplace that has a culture of disrespect or lack of courtesy. It takes fortitude to patiently endure “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” that come our way each day and not pass them on to others.

It takes fortitude to work for the improvement of ourselves or families by going to school after work rather than “taking it easy.” It takes fortitude to put the common good before our personal agendas at work, at home, in our communities.

Above all it takes fortitude to be more than average in living our Christian faith, to demonstrate the nobleness of living as a Christian in today's world.

FORTITUDE — A Faith Based Value at Work

1. What does applying the faith-based value of fortitude 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 fortitude in the workplace and how to apply that understanding?
3. How do/could you apply the concept of fortitude in your workplace(s)?
4. What would happen in your workplace if you took and actively applied the value of faith-based fortitude 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?