



Depth Perception™

Commentary from Design For Ministry™
Los Angeles - Milwaukee - Philadelphia - Tampa

Greater Good 30 September 2005

In an annual report to his congregation, the Rev. Paul Swartz of Carmel, IN, wrote these profound words about change:

"The real reason change implementation is so difficult is that people tend to pursue their own agenda regardless of the effect on everyone else's agenda. To be even more blunt, most people are just too selfish to see the greater good possible by individual sacrifice of position, influence or power."

Truly it is a rare thing for someone to voluntarily walk away from something they love because of a greater good they love even more. Rarer still is the person for whom this is a lifetime habit.

I recall admiring some Mennonite Church leaders who walked away from their positions in order to make it possible to form a new Mennonite denomination where once there were two. Some of these folks were in their late 50's – certain only that uncertainty lay before them as they sought work elsewhere.

This example stands in contrast to the many strategic planning sessions I've led where people are so committed to say their piece that they forsake the peace found in loving the development of something larger than oneself.

Ironically, such persons demand change selfishly and end up blocking the very change they seek. They complain that no one is listening to their issues at the precise moment their words are being written on newsprint in order to become part of an organization's blueprint! They do the very things they complain that others do – expecting to have their way, to control their circumstance, and to protect whatever turf they conquer.

Woe to us when such people lead. For in a flash everything seems better. But as soon as the new thing runs its course, it becomes something to enforce rather than discard. The selfish leader shifts from hero to scapegoat.

– mark l. vincent