

Daily View

"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today'" Hebrews 3:13

July 10, 2020

Initiative

One summer day, in 1966, I got fired. Now, my dad got fired by a church in 1958 because he stood his ground in the face of an assault on truth. I got fired for something much less notable.

I had gotten a job at a furniture manufacturer in Santa Ana. It paid \$1.85 an hour, which was well above the \$1.25 minimum wage at that time. It was a boring job, making dowels (wooden pegs) for 8 hours, but at almost \$2 an hour, I didn't mind. And, my hours were great: 7 AM to 3 PM. Getting off at 3 in the summer was great for an 18 year old. After work, I'd jump into my Firebird, tune my AM radio to KFWB, and off I'd go, with lots of sunlight left in the day. The song that reminds of that time is the Lovin' Spoonful's "Summer in the City," written by Jack Horak's namesake, John Sebastian.

I got fired after only a few weeks on the job. I had never been fired before (or since, so far). My boss told me that I wasn't showing enough initiative. That puzzled me. I said, "I thought I did everything I was supposed to do in my 8 hours." He said, "Yes, but you never worked any overtime."

He was right. I was making \$1.85 an hour and getting off at 3 in the afternoon. Why would I work overtime? I didn't want to work overtime. Turns out, it was a misunderstanding from the beginning because the company thought I was looking for a career at the furniture shop, but I just wanted a summer job.

As always, I learned something from the experience. First, it's not fun getting fired, regardless of the reason. Second, I thought long and hard about those words: "you didn't show enough initiative." It wasn't that I was lazy while on the job; it was that I didn't want to work more than the 8 hours. It made sense that if I had been seeking a career with the furniture company, I should have shown more initiative. I left with no hard feelings.

Years later, I began a sales career and you can't make it in that field without some initiative. Of the 21 men that began the job the same week I did, only myself and one other man were with the company at the end of the first year. The others were not necessarily lazy, but they lacked initiative. They

were not self-starters. They needed specific direction to succeed.

On Tuesday, Lexi talked about complacency. Not all who lack initiative are complacent but it's easy to fall into the trap of doing just the minimum, as I did at the furniture shop. All I had to do was show up, do my boring job and collect my \$1.85 x 8 hours. In sales, showing up wasn't enough. You have to take the initiative and do some things you don't want to

do — I hated making cold calls, for example, but I knew I had to do it to succeed. One saying I took to heart was this: *"successful people make a habit of doing things failures don't like to do."* Mottos like that motivated me to stay out of that dangerous "comfort zone." But it's called "comfort zone" for a reason. Christians can fall into that "comfort zone" because being a Christian can be... comfortable. OK, but if "comfort" means lazy or complacent then Jesus has a word for you: he calls those with a lack of initiative "lukewarm" (Revelation 3:15-17).

"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked."

That church settled in, got comfortable, thought they had all they needed — and became the poster child for complacent, smug, self-satisfied churches (and Christians) everywhere. And Jesus put

them on notice: change, or be fired. Revelation 3:18-19:

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

I don't want to get fired by Jesus. My aim is to show some initiative for the things of the Lord.



You see sculptures like this all along the St. Charles Bridge in Prague. These persecuted believers were not "lukewarm," needless to say.