The Principle of Fairness

"A workman may eat from the orchard he tends; anyone should be rewarded who protects another's interests." Proverbs 27:18

By John E. Schrock, Businessman

Underline the key concepts found in this principle.

"That's Fair," is a common expression used in business deals or any transaction. It is used when we consider something to be reasonable, just, of commonly good, such as a fair deal, a just and honest transaction, or a decision made according to the rule. Generally, the word fairness applies when there are differences of opinions or disagreements. When a settlement is made, it may not be exactly what either party wanted, but based upon the situation it will be considered fair.

We live in a world that is ruled by law or force. We try to set ourselves up in a power base position, so we have the power to control. Sometimes, we use the power of wealth to control others. This kind of leadership follows the concept: "He who has the gold makes the rules." But there is a better way which is the golden rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

In today's world we glorify winners. We are encouraged to go for it, even if it is at the expense of others. While personal achievement and satisfaction is important, we should not let our desires blind us to the value of fairness. Some people have the attitude of, "Whatever works for me is fair." But that is self-centered and destructive. It creates a lot of conflicts and is unfair. Being fair will encourage others to help us rather than stand in the way of our goals. By doing this, we can avoid unnecessary hurts and damaged feelings in others, but still achieve our goals. When our accomplishments are earned through fair dealings in wisdom and good judgment, few people will challenge our right to have the things we have. Plus a clear conscious will allow us to sleep better and live with less stress.

So how do we become fair? First, we must know what is morally correct. Fairness must be based on a standard of human rights or a system of laws used as a measuring stick. These laws and rights must be based on those endowed to us by our creator.

Second, in light of this, we must also develop a mindset of always considering other people's needs, their growth, and their maturity. What are their priorities, what do they really want, and what would they consider to be fair? By asking questions we discover where a person is at and we'll be better informed as to what will work and what won't.

Some people believe that everything is either right or wrong, but there are many good things in life that are neither right nor wrong. These are matters of fairness that should satisfy both parties. Yes, there are some absolute right and wrongs, but many conflicts can be negotiated by fairness.

Thirdly, we must always be open and honest. We cannot expect others to be open and honest with us if they doubt our integrity. The more people know and understand us and the other people involved in the decisions, the more likely we'll be considered fair. Be like the mother who had two sons and each son wanted the last piece of pie. She said, "We will split it. The one who cuts the pie will let the other choose which half he wants." You can't be fairer than that. It's not always easy to make fair judgments, because situations change. The rule of fairness is simple.

Ask yourself if you'd like to be in the other person's shoes. If the answer is in doubt, you should reconsider, even if the decision is in your power. Because if you'll put forth the effort to be fair, you'll feel good about yourself and others will feel good about you.

This principle is part of the one year character development program: Foundations For Achievement.

Discussion:

Which one of the three benefits work best for you?

Do you feel that you are appreciated as a person?

Name someone who you think is fair. What do you like about them?

Give two reasons why you think it pays to be fair.

Measuring up to the plumbline:

How well are you currently applying this principle in your life? (10 being highest, 1 being lowest) 

Can you see the value of raising your rating?

Thoughts to Ponder:

"Let's be fair..." is never appreciated more when it comes from someone who has the upper hand.

For more of these Principles and additional Resources visit www.lared.org

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