

MONDAY MANNA

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OVERCOMING WHAT GOES ON 'BEHIND THE CURTAIN'

By Ken Korkow

Many years ago, I toured a meat packing facility. After seeing for the first time how hotdogs were made, it was more than a year before I could eat another one. It is interesting to learn what really goes on behind the scenes with things we are very familiar with, and then see how we react.

Having served in the military, been actively involved in church and parachurch leadership, and participating in a variety of community and professional organisations, I have had the "opportunity" to observe firsthand what goes on "behind the curtain," to borrow from the iconic scene in the classic film, "The Wizard of Oz." Once the curtain is pulled back, literally or figuratively, it is easy to become cynical, sarcastic, or even distant, trying to disassociate ourselves from what we have seen.

What do all those organisations have in common? Behind the metaphorical curtain, they are all directed by people – imperfect, often terribly flawed people. People who can discourage, disillusion, even betray our trust and commitment to them and the organisation's mission. Why then do I remain engaged? Why do I continue to be so involved with many entities, despite their imperfections and shortcomings?

My answer is a very simple one. I have been able to see behind the one "curtain" that really counts. Not the present things that can annoy and frustrate us. But the one that matters for all of eternity.

One verse from the Bible in particular speaks to this eternal perspective and has captured my attention: *"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever"* (Hebrews 6:19-20). This reminds me to keep looking ahead to an exciting, promised future rather than dwelling on the negatives we inevitably encounter over the course of everyday life and work.

What about you? Are you tired of "politics," whether it is in government, where you work, or in community or faith-based organisations you are a part of? How do we keep from getting caught up in the downsides of the behind-the-curtain behaviours and actions we see every day? I have found this happens only when I read, meditate on and marinate in the Word of God, and keep my focus on His complete and perfect sovereign control. Then I can surrender to *"not my will, but Yours be done,"* as Jesus Himself prayed in Luke 22:42.

Trusting that God knows best and will always do what is right, regardless of the circumstances I find myself in, my job simply becomes one of doing the next-one-thing that His Spirit prompts. When I forget, or refuse to do that, that is when I end up in the ditch very quickly. Overwhelmed by problems, concerns and fear.

We find many passages in the Scriptures to encourage us to do this. Here are a few of them:

Look in the right direction. *"Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth"* (Colossians 3:2).

Choose the right model to follow. *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will"* (Romans 12:2).

Pursue right thinking. *"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things"* (Philippians 4:8).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

Have you ever had an opportunity to take a look "behind the curtain," and did not like what you saw? Describe what that was like – and how you reacted.

Can you think of a time when someone might have gotten a glimpse behind your own "curtain" and was hurt or disappointed? If you care to, explain what that situation was. How did you feel at that moment?

What does it mean to have and maintain an eternal perspective, rather than having our thoughts and actions governed by worries and frustrations about things in the present that are only temporary?

How can a person keep such a positive, optimistic attitude – especially if we find ourselves immersed in a sea of negativity and discouragement? Are there any specific things you do – or could do – to keep such a focus? Explain your answer.

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:

Psalm 145:17-20

2 Corinthians 5:17

Romans 6:4,11-13

Galatians 2:20

Ephesians 4:22-24