

If God Were My Boss

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If God were a human boss, I would have quit years ago. It's hard to work for someone who keeps me in the dark for months—even years—at a time. God expects me to be always “at the ready” to do his bidding, like the servants awaiting their master's return (Lk 12:35-40). God demands all that I have; furthermore, I had better show a return on my talents and gifts (Mt 25:14-29). God asks me to do things I don't understand—only to change his mind at the last minute; recall the incident with Abraham and his beloved Isaac (Gen 22:1-14). God also seems to contradict himself. He first implies that those who are not against me are really *for* me (Lk. 9:50) and next, that those who are not with me are *against* me (Lk 11:23). God demands unwavering loyalty and blind obedience, and Lot's wife reminds me of what can happen when I do not comply (Gen 19:15-26). But then—most incredible of all—God hears his dying Son's last wish and extends forgiveness and love to those who killed Jesus: “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do” (Jn 23:34).

Yet sometimes I think that God is the best boss of all, encouraging me to take care of myself, to take time off when the workaholic in me insists this is impossible. God reminds me that we are in this together—I don't have to do it all. When the load I'm carrying seems too heavy, I'm usually insisting on carrying it alone. God reminds me not to worry so much. When I make mistakes or mess up, God says, “Forget about it. You are forgiven.” Often I'm much harder on myself than God.

God is a demanding boss, however, and often expects more of me than I think possible. He asks me to let go of my anger and my hurt at real and imagined offenses. God also asks me to put aside my anxiety about my “image”—what people think of me. Rather than listen to those who unreasonably criticize and tear down, I am to remain firm as I seek the common good, as I seek God's will.

At one time I was active in resisting the buildup of nuclear armaments in our country. With others, I participated in acts of civil disobedience, risking arrest and time in jail. Some people had lengthy court trials and called in all kinds of expert witnesses. At one trial, a priest gave expert testimony on the will of God. This caused me to laugh then, and the memory; continues to bring a smile to my lips. The very idea! Someone can be an “expert” on the will of God!

All my adult life I have struggled to know God's will and to follow it. I have sought spiritual guidance, read many books, and studied to become a spiritual guide. Even so, I still find God's will elusive, and growing older hasn't made it any easier to discern it. I have been obsessed with trying to know what God wants of me, and although it may be a magnificent obsession, obsession it is.

For so long I wanted to know *exactly* what God's will was, and I sought assurance that I was doing the right thing, making the right choices. I now realize that more is involved than making the right "big" decisions, although that is important. Following God's will is something that has to be lived—everyday—in an atmosphere of uncertainty, in not knowing but trusting anyway. It isn't enough to choose to follow God once and for all. I must make this choice each day. In addition, I must examine these choices each day to see where I have gone wrong or have made a mistake.

In my early twenties, I came upon a simple prayer formula that helped me in my quest to know and follow God's will: "God, grant that I might do today all that you would have me do." Praying this daily helped me let go of my concern about doing enough and doing the right thing. It allowed me simply to do what needed to be done each day.

Last year during Lent I focused on the words of Saint Alphonsus Liguori that are prayed at the end of each of his Stations of the Cross: "Grant that I may love you always, then do with me as you will." This prayer, this attitude, has become part of my prayer life and part of me. If all I do each day is love God with all my being, I will somehow stumble onto God's will.

Trying to discern and follow God's will continues to be a mystery for me, but it is also a tremendous adventure. I never know exactly what lies around the bend, how I will be challenged, how I will be stretched as a person. This adventure waits for me each morning—to be lived one day at a time.