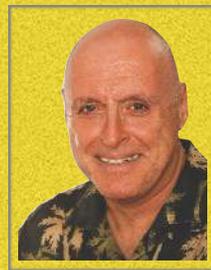


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



596 “Part of the Problem”

Lately, it seems that lots of people are yakking at each other, not listening much, and telling other people that they are “part of the problem.” I’m Jerry Roberts and today, and let’s nibble on that, next, on The Extra Point.

In the last week I’ve seen a flurry of negative Facebook posts from people whose opinions I’ve come to respect and value over the years. People who seemed to share common values, and who displayed the ability to carry on civil conversations and reason things out.

They might not always reach an agreement with someone, but they disagreed in a manner that was not disagreeable. There was no name calling or trying to position someone in a negative light.

However, in the last few days I’ve seen that civil behavior evaporate. Tempers are short and people who once would never think of dismissing someone’s opinions, now routinely tell others that “you’re part of the problem.”

I thought to myself, “why can’t people just learn to talk with each other and, even better, to listen?”

That’s when I picked up my copy of Dale Carnegie’s *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. What can we learn? How will it help us in the workplace, at home, with our friends, and with social media?

In chapter 1 Carnegie advises, “If you want to gather honey, don’t kick over the beehive.” What does that mean? To start with, it hurts our cause if we criticize, condemn, or complain.

Criticism makes people what? Defensive and resentful. When you say, “You’re part of the problem,” you’re condemning not just their ideas but them. That’s personal. How are you ever going to win someone over to your side if you do that?

You might say, “But it makes me feel good when I slam someone.” Maybe so, but it’s not good for understanding and gaining their willingness to consider your viewpoint.

If somebody has a different opinion than we have, it’s much smarter to learn where they’re coming from and why. In the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey told us “seek first to understand, then be understood.”

If we get into a beef with someone at work we can give a much better response if we understand their position — and have the mindset, “This is a decent human being, we just see things differently.”

If you put me on the defensive it forces me to justify my position and likely attack yours. Once the defensive walls go up, you’re not going to reach me with anything you say. In these situations people are not acting from a position of logic, but instead from pride and emotion. Trust me, that’s not a productive place to be operating from.

Whatever our disagreements are over — racial issues, GovGuam actions and inactions, or when-if-how we’ll play baseball in 2020, all this applies.

I want to talk, understand, reason, and keep the dialogue respectful so that together we can find solutions. Oh, you too? Then, neither of us are going to be “a part of the problem.”

That’s The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I’m Jerry Roberts.

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