

# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 1655 Are You Visible Because You See the Invisible?

A quick story this morning about how a few kind words and a smile saved a life. I'm Jerry Roberts and that's next on the Extra Point.

I picked up on a story over the weekend, and I think it's worth sharing. It goes like this.

One day, many years ago, a young woman was working overtime at a large meat packing company.

Her duties had her spending a great deal of time in the company storage room, which was essentially a huge freezer with the temperature maintained at 28 degrees, four degrees below the actual freezing level. Anyone working in the room was required to wear a heavy jacket.

As she was ready to leave, she remembered that she had left something inside the room and went to retrieve it. She went inside and heard an unusual sound as the door closed behind her. She hurriedly grabbed what she was after and went to leave.

She turned the door knob but the door didn't open. She kept trying, but it was either now locked or jammed. She felt the cold from the room, as she was in her regular clothes, not bothering to put on the jacket because she would only be in the room for a few seconds.

She pushed the door, kicked it, but it didn't budge. She looked for a tool to use, but she found nothing. She shouted for help, but all the workers in that section were already gone.

Fifteen minutes had passed and the cold was causing her to shiver uncontrollably, and the dreaded thought crossed her mind of what would happen if she couldn't find a way out. Would her coworkers find her lifeless body when they came in the next morning.

Tears came down her cheeks as she cried, knowing how her family would get the news and the shock they would endure. Bill, her husband, would now raise Jenny, their two-

year-old, alone. The thought was unbearable. She kept trying the door in vain, as she felt the pain of the freezing temperature. Then she saw a blur of a figure through her tears. The door suddenly burst open, and a familiar person grabbed her and led her outside.

It was Jim, the company security guard, who put a jacket on her. As she began to recover, she asked him, "Why did you come, how did you know I was here?"

The guard replied, "I've been working here as a security guard for almost 35 years. Most people come to work in the morning, leave at quitting time and don't say a word to me. They treat me like I'm invisible. Not you. From the very beginning, you've always greeted me with a smile when the day starts, and a smile when you leave. You always ask how I am. I look forward to that. I don't think you've missed one day."

Still recovering, she said, "Yes, but how...?"

The guard interrupted her, "When I didn't get your goodbye tonight, I knew you were still inside, and I decided to see how you were doing."

The fact that she consistently made him feel visible and important, alerted him that he hadn't seen her leave the factory.

Is the story true? I don't know, but I have no doubt that scenarios like it have played out countless times — and the message is clear.

There are people in the workplace who feel invisible. They're likely introverted and don't stand out like some others. They don't bang their own drum, and may not receive much in the way of recognition.

When I talk about this topic in trainings, I see some people look away or look uneasy.

(Con't.)

I'm not sure if they feel they're among the invisible, or they feel guilty because they realize they've treated people as if they are invisible. It's a real issue, and managers need to be aware of it.

If you're a supervisor and you've got team members who fit this description, make a point to talk to them often. Call on them in meetings, include them in activities, and celebrate their successes — even the smallest of them.

You may not be able to reach everyone who is locked into this so-called invisibility, but it can mean the world for those you do.

Oh, and don't be surprised if you find that by making people feel more visible, that their job and the wellbeing of the organization becomes more important to them.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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