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My worldview is based upon my fundamental belief in a universe in which order exists. This order began when God created our universe and is continual and infinite. In nearly five decades, many forces, the most important being my spiritual journey, study of the Bible, and the following of the teachings of Jesus Christ, have continued to shape my worldview. The world is inherently "good" though flawed, and we are continually seeking to reconcile forces of good and bad. I believe that the God of the universe desires good things for us. This is not to say difficult things will not occur; in fact, difficulties occur as a natural part of life. They are opportunities for us to learn and grow on many levels—mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

My moral framework is shaped by my belief in Christ and Christian ideals of behavior: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The parables in the New Testament were an integral part of my upbringing. Those stories helped to mold the person I am today and are my compass when I must decide how I should interact with others. The fifth chapter of the Book of Matthew contains a passage referred to as "The Beatitudes." These verses were familiar reading during my formative years, and even though I can no longer recite them word-for-word, the lessons in them are forever etched into my memory. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." (Matthew 5: 3, 9. King James Version). I was taught not only the Golden Rule—Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," (Matthew 7:12) but also that justice is blind and all men (pluralistic, men and women) are created equal. My religious background then became an overtone for my family's emphasis on our obligations as American citizens. "Battle Hymn of the Republic" was an appropriate choice of music for both of my grandfathers' funeral services. This sense of duty was passed on to me. This is akin to John Rawls "justice as fairness" theory and applying a "veil of ignorance" when making decisions (Johnson, 2009, p. 147). Today, I embrace

these beliefs, values, and ideals. They are indeed the moral compass that directs me when I question my actions.

Experience has been a kind teacher. Through the ebbs and flow of the tides of life I have had multiple opportunities to act upon my beliefs. I have also used life's lessons as opportunities to revise and refine my beliefs and values system. As I have developed my own person code of ethics, certain elements have remained constant. These elements arise from that moral fiber, my moral framework. I identify with Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative (Johnson, 2009, p.141) and doing what's right no matter what the cost. My code involves treating people with respect and dignity, attempting to be more proactive and reactive, leaving a place better than I found it, striving for excellence and integrity, being truthful and honest, remaining committed to my spiritual journey, and finding balance in life.

I believe the objections I will encounter as a leader involving ethical decision making will involve the age-old question, where does one's rights end and another's begin? For example, when I encounter an educator whom I observe needs to make changes in his or her classroom, such as less lecturing and more hands-on project-based learning, and that teacher really does not want to make changes because, "I've been doing it this way for 22 years and my evaluations have always been satisfactory." I believe that teacher has an ethical obligation to strive to be better than they have previously been. When two teachers do not agree on a topic, I expect them to act professionally and to respect each other's differences, not to resort to not speaking to each other.

A situation regarding ethics in my present organization is the expenditure of federal funds. These funds are highly regulated under state and federal agencies, and schools have an obligation to spend these funds based upon their intended purpose. School leaders sometimes

want to "fudge" the purposes for which they are spending the money so they can spend it on items the school district should be funding. This is called "supplementing versus supplanting" and school districts are ethically (not to mention, legally) responsible for following these guidelines. Other situations would involve the equitable distribution of resources for classrooms. Should equal dollar amounts prevail, or should resources be prioritized by need or by importance of goals and school improvement?

I also feel another obstacle I will face will be when others fail to treat one another with mutual respect. Since the axiom of the Golden Rule is of primary importance to me, I expect others to behave similarly. This applies whether these relationships are peer to peer, teacher to student, student to student, or staff to parent.

The shadow side of leadership as discussed by author Craig Johnson (2009) also presents possible obstacles to overcome and sources of objections. These shadows described by Johnson (2009) include the shadow of power, the shadow of privilege, the shadow of mismanaged information, the shadow of inconsistency, the shadow of misplaced and broken loyalties, and the shadow of irresponsibility. The actions of leaders are always scrutinized by others in an organization, and often these reactions are rendered into nothing more than scuttlebutt in the break area of the workplace, especially when the behaviors are unethical. The damage, however, has been done, and the tone has been established.

The way to mitigate these and other obstacles is to keep checkpoints close at hand. For me, knowledge is power. I will continue to read and study the ethics of leadership, for I believe the benefit will carry over from my professional life into both my personal and spiritual life. The Golden Rule will continue to guide my behaviors as will the Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi:

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow

love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is

despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. O

Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to

be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we

receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born

to eternal life. Amen." (Catholic Community Forum, n.d.)

One of the qualities I possess and which I have earned through trial and error is long-

suffering and self-control. I have learned to be reflective and less reactive in situations that do

not constitute an emergency. I keep a metal cutout of the word "Relax" on my office wall. This

reminds me to "look before I leap."

Ethical Leadership

The same moral framework that guides my personal decisions also guides my

professional decisions. Although a separate facet of life, the erosion of ethical principle in one's

professional life begins to erode the foundation of one's personal life. They are woven together.

Therefore, it is necessary for me to stay committed to my value and belief systems to become the

best leader I can possibly be. As a leader I am responsible for modeling the behaviors I want to

see in other people. I approach my duties as a leader as I would other areas of my life. I work to

continually improve my knowledge base, my skill level, and my leadership behaviors. In the

process, my goal is to gain wisdom and understanding. I hope to encourage others in their life's

work and journey. I attempt to approach all facets of my life with excellence and integrity. This

is not to say that I regularly fall short of that goal; nonetheless, it is the maxim I live by.

Ethical Decision-Making

I have read several ethical decision-making models and cannot say that I would prescribe to one in particular. One particular theme throughout the models resonates with me—that it is important to identify the issue, decide who "owns" the issue, gather as many relevant facts as possible about the issue, consider if the outcome of the decision would be fair, just, and equitable, apply empathy, make the decision, and then later reflect upon and evaluate the outcome of the decision. Kidder's ethical checkpoints (Johnson, 2009) most appealed to my own approach to decision-making. Kidder's steps include recognizing that there is a problem, determining the actors or what parties are responsible for solving the problem, gathering relevant facts, testing for right-versus-wrong issues as well as right-versus-right values, applying the ethical standards and perspectives, looking for a third way, making the decision, and revisiting the decision.

I believe there is much to gain by examining many models of ethical decision-making. By looking closely at other theories, I can draw from an added depth to my decision-making skills. I know dilemmas will appear throughout my life and career. I hope to prepare myself accordingly, pray for Divine Guidance, and then make the best decisions I can.

My approach to leadership and decision-making best supports my organization by providing them with a moral and ethical employee that intends to make decisions and to act in the best interests of students, teachers, the school, and the community at large. My life's mission is to make the world a better place, even if it is only in my little corner.

References

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