

Pk's Perspectives... The "Worship Zone"

My friend Hugh is a lawyer. More accurately, my friend makes his living practicing law. My friend Hugh is also a follower of Jesus Christ and very active in his church, teaching Sunday School and serving his church in the Deacon Ministry. It was a regular occurrence that fellow church members would stop Hugh in the church hallway while he was on his way to teach SS or attend the worship service and ask him for legal advice. This really bothered my friend; he came to talk to me about it because I was his pastor at the time.

It wasn't that my friend was averse to helping people...Hugh is a generous guy. He performed more than his fair share of pro bono work. He was glad to have a quick chat in the bank lobby or over lunch or on the telephone and offer his best wisdom on whatever issue was percolating. But Hugh didn't want to be a lawyer at church. He wanted to be a worshipper...one member among many. Not to mention that being waylaid on the way to, say, teach his Sunday School class was an incredible distraction. My friend came up with a strategy to hopefully put an end to the Sunday morning "free legal advice" situation.

When approached in the parking lot/hallway/vestibule by someone leading with "Hey, Hugh - can I ask you a quick question about probating wills/disputed property lines/scheduled closing/etc.", my friend started responding, "You can ask but you need to know that if I answer your question, I'm going into the office tomorrow and I'll have to bill you for the consult at the going rate of \$100 an hour, an hour being the minimum billing time." After a dramatic pause to let that information sink in, my friend would then say that he would gladly discuss the matter at another time - at no charge - just not at church on Sunday. Some people got offended. Most understood. And people stopped asking my friend to pull out his lawyer's wig at church!

I'm fairly certain that my friend Hugh is not the only person that has experienced this kind of thing while at church. I think the majority of people want to leave their "work hats" at home when they go to worship. School teachers probably don't want to have parent conferences in the church lobby. Coaches probably don't want to dissect the reasons for losing the big game on Friday night while surrounded by a gaggle of Sunday morning coaches. Civic leaders aren't hoping to deal with citizen complaints when they enter the church. Contractors aren't comfortable with giving you a "ballpark quote" in the foyer. Law enforcement personnel don't come to church to hear about more effective ways to police the community.

Listen, I'm guilty of the very thing that aggravated my friend Hugh. I see someone and remember that I had meant to call him or her about a matter but never got around to it. The person is right in front of me; I'll just ask them about it right now. Without realizing it, I'm distracting this person from worship because I didn't make time to give them a call during the week. So this is an area where I try to be more conscientious.

Think of church as a "worship zone." We leave our work hats at the door. When we're gathered on Sunday & Wednesday, we want to go overboard in encouraging our fellow members to focus on our amazing heavenly Father. Which would include not asking fellow members to mix work and worship. Cya, Pk.