



Routine or Rigid?

Most of us have routines. They help us stay organized and get important things done. If there are children in our lives, routines help those children feel secure and safe. However, when we follow routines no matter what just because it is comfortable, because we are focused only on our own needs, feel threatened, or because we are not willing to consider other options, following a routine can leave us rigid and inflexible. Unlike a routine which helps us accomplish something, being rigid can box us in and limit our options. It is worse when ideology and our identity or ego are involved. Too often, ideology and ego take over, and when there is a difficult problem that urgently needs to be solved, the real problem gets lost in ideological disputes or personality clashes. When people become rigid, they tend to have blinders on which keep them from seeing the real issues involved. Ideological blinders can also cause us to always use the same approach to problems whether the approach is appropriate or not, and even when that approach has been tried and failed in the past. Rigid people often do not ask all the questions that must be asked to understand the real problem they face, and understanding the problem is necessary before problem solving is possible. Too often ideology and ego feed the delusion that 'our way is the only way' and even if our approach has failed, we think it will suddenly work this time. (Don't forget, trying the same thing over and over and expecting a different result is one definition of insanity!) Staying on such a rigid path can be both self-destructive and destroy that which our ideology calls us to save. When a person is rigid, it is easy for them to believe that, the problem will be fixed if 'everyone else will just do it the way 'I' want it done.

The only way to exit such a rigid path is to take several steps back, and seek a fresh understanding of the situation rather than just rehashing current assumptions. One of the hardest parts is being honest about your own assumptions and biases and trying to set them aside so you can look at the situation with an open mind. Ask questions of the people directly involved and affected by the situation. Then, join with everyone and think outside the box. Look for options – all options. Though differences cannot be ignored, everyone needs to look for common ground not differences. What is needed are solutions that will work for everyone involved; not for one party at the expense of others. Always keep looking for the missing pieces and consider the situation from the point of view of people other than yourself. Do not forget that even our best efforts must always be open to future review and evaluation because the situation will change over time. Since all people are made in the image of God we are all far more alike than we think. People are far more likely not to succumb to the fears and self-interests that can make them rigid when they are able to follow the routines of life peacefully alongside friends and neighbors.

This week pray for:

- The continuing plight of refugees and other displaced persons
- People living with war; those who see violence as the only way to solve problems



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