

Fran and Jesus on the Job – Compassion for a Lazy Worker

Presented by Mary Lowman

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Day One

Getting along with coworkers is not always the easiest thing to do, is it? I'm exploring our story of Fran and Jesus on the Job, as Fran runs into a problem with one of her coworkers. I continue these episodes because many of you have told me they really help you to understand that Jesus is with you all day on your job, and you've been practicing his presence better as a result.

On this particular day Fran is rushing to get a proposal finished for an early meeting tomorrow with a new prospect. She thinks, "I'll be glad when this is finished; Marilyn made a few more changes. Now I've got to get Joyce to make the changes and reprint it. I just dread even approaching Joyce. She has such a rotten attitude. When you ask her to do anything, she's as sour as a lemon, she's lazy, and her work is poor."

She can hear the quiet voice of Jesus say: "Yes, she presents a challenge for you, doesn't she?"

"Well, challenge is a nice way to put it. She drives me crazy! After all, she is the assistant for the department. It's her job to help us with these projects. But she acts like she's doing you a favor when she does her job. I just can't stand people with lazy attitudes." Fran expresses her feelings.

"Fran," Jesus quietly responds, "don't forget, no one is in your life by accident."

Fran stops in her tracks to ponder that thought. "No one is in my life by accident? Yeah, but..." Fran pauses. "You mean, Lord, you have purposely allowed Joyce into my life? You want to cause me grief and frustration? What good does Joyce do me?" Fran's self-centered thoughts are showing.

Again, she can hear Jesus say, "You may not think Joyce is doing you any good, but have you forgotten I often work in you through other people? And besides, Joyce needs you in her life."

Fran really doesn't want to hear that. She knows she should be compassionate and caring toward Joyce, but that's just asking too much. "Look, Lord, all Joyce has to do is what she's paid to do. I'm not supposed to baby her when she's so lazy, am I?"

"No, not baby her, but love her," Jesus responds. "You know, I love her—just as much as I love you."

Fran wrinkles her nose. Not exactly what she wanted to hear.

Day Two

What does it mean to show compassion to someone who irritates you? Fran is running into that problem at work, as we continue our story of Fran and Jesus on the Job. This ongoing story is told to remind all of us that Jesus is with us at all times, and we need to be aware of his presence. It truly makes a difference, as Fran has learned many times.

Today Fran is rushing to get a proposal revised and her assistant, Joyce, tends to be lazy and less than helpful. Expecting a negative reaction, Fran heaves a sigh and heads to Joyce's desk. "Joyce, here are the last changes to the Walton proposal. Please make those changes and reprint it for me. I'll need it before you leave today if you don't mind," Fran says, trying to sound pleasant.

"If I don't mind?" Joyce replies. "Well, I do mind. It's 4:00, and I leave here at 4:30. Why'd you wait so late to give it to me?" Joyce snatches it from Fran's hand as she slowly puts down the magazine she was reading.

"Joyce, I just got the changes from Marilyn. You know it has to be done today. Sorry, but that's the way it is," Fran says with irritation in her voice.

Jesus nudges Fran. "Remember, sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness." Jesus brings a verse from Proverbs to her mind.

"But, Lord," she replies, "all I'm asking is for her to do her job. If she'd get busy, she could have it done pretty fast. I just don't feel like babying her; she doesn't deserve it."

"If you run on your feelings, Fran," Jesus reminds her, "you'll never be able to be a consistently compassionate person because you won't always feel like it."

Fran turns to Joyce again, and with great effort says, "Look, Joyce, I know it's late; I wish I could have gotten it to you sooner. But I really would appreciate your help. I don't think you'll have to work much past 4:30. I'll be in my office if you have any questions."

"Much better," Jesus whispers to Fran.

She says, "Well, I said it through clenched teeth."

"That's okay," he replies, "you showed some compassion instead of showing your irritation."

"Well," she whispers back, "I would never have done it if you hadn't been here."

"That's the whole idea, Fran," Jesus says to her. "That's why I'm with you all the time—to give you the power to do what you could never do by yourself."

Joyce's voice almost startles Fran. "Okay, well, yeah—okay, I'll try to get it done." Fran can see a slight change in her attitude.

"Thanks, Joyce," she says.

Day Three

If you've ever had difficulty with a lazy co-worker, you'll relate to this Fran and Jesus story. Fran is dealing with an assistant who is very lazy, and Fran finds it hard to like her. Jesus has been helping her learn how to deal with this coworker named Joyce.

On the way home from work this day, after a confrontation with Joyce, Fran says to Jesus, "Lord, I could see a slight change in Joyce after I tried to find the right words to motivate her. Thanks for bringing that verse from Proverbs to my mind about choosing my words carefully. But really, I shouldn't have to baby her just to get her to do her work. Nobody babies me."

"Well, nobody babies you, that's true, but you do have someone to help you," Jesus reminds her. "You see, Fran, you have to keep remembering Joyce doesn't have my presence with her like you do. Have you ever thought about what her life must be like? Do you know her at all?"

"Know her? Well, all I know is she's divorced, has a two-year-old boy, I think, and from what I hear, has a lot of financial problems." Fran tries to piece together what she does know about Joyce. "Someone told me she's in the bars a lot, looking for guys and getting drunk."

"You know, Fran, you have some things in common with Joyce. Why don't you get to know her better?" Jesus suggests.

"You mean because I'm a single mom, too? Yeah, but beyond that we certainly don't have anything in common. She's not my type, Jesus; I don't think so," Fran tries to dismiss the suggestion.

"She's my type, Fran, and she's not in your life by accident," Jesus repeats what he told her earlier.

"Okay, okay—so what do you want me to do?" Fran asks.

"First, I want you to pray for her every day. Then I suggest you invite her to lunch and just get to know her better," Jesus replies.

"Pray for her and invite her to lunch. Yeah, I guess I can do that," Fran agrees. "Can't say I want to, but since you suggested it, I will."

"You know, Fran, this gives you an opportunity to show compassion to a person who isn't exactly 'your type. That's what I would do," Jesus encourages Fran.

"Well, okay, I'll do my best, but you know I'll need your help because I don't feel like doing it," Fran confesses.

"I'll be right there with you. You can count on me," Jesus assures her.

And with that they pull in her driveway, and Fran puts on her "mother hat" to begin her second and most important job with her two children.

Day Four

Fran is learning from Jesus that she can show compassion toward people, even when she doesn't really like them. Fran's challenge from Jesus is to get to know Joyce, an assistant in her department who is negative and lazy. He has suggested she first pray for Joyce every day and then invite her to lunch.

It's the next day, and Fran did pray for Joyce before she left home and asked Jesus to help her see Joyce the way he sees her. As Fran arrives at the office, she looks for Joyce to invite her to lunch. Joyce gives Fran a sour look.

"You got more changes to that proposal?" she asks with irritation.

"No," Fran replies with a chuckle, "I just wanted to know if you're available for lunch, Joyce—my treat?"

The look on Joyce's face is a mixture of surprise and suspicion. "What's this all about?"

"Not about anything—just lunch," Fran responds. Joyce agrees, reluctantly, and they set up a time.

After her morning meeting, Fran walks out to Joyce's desk, and finds her talking on the phone to a friend. She hangs up, and they head next door to the coffee shop. As they sit down Joyce looks at Fran nervously and says, "You've had me worried all morning. I figure you're gonna chew me out about something."

Fran looks in her eyes and for the first time sees the fear and loneliness there. She says, "No, Joyce, honestly, no hidden agenda here. I just realized yesterday that you and I have worked together for six months but I really don't know you. I realized we have something in common. I'm a single mom, like you."

Joyce is still a little suspicious, but she starts to relax. "Yeah, I know. It's tough, isn't it? How do you manage with two kids? I can barely make it with one."

Fran replies, "Well, my kids are a little older, but I remember the terrible two's. Your son is two, right? What's his name?"

"Toby," Joyce's face lights up as she starts to talk about her son. "Yeah, he's a hand full, but he's so cute." She shows Fran a picture.

"Who keeps him while you work?" Fran asks.

"Day care center—very expensive. In fact, I'm behind in paying them. My ex hasn't paid any support in months," Joyce pours out her story to Fran. "I don't know what I'm going to do, Fran." Tears start down her cheek, and she quickly tries to hide them.

Fran thinks, "You're right, Lord, this woman needs a friend. She's not in my life by accident."

Day Five

Fran had lunch with Joyce, an assistant in her department, who is a single mom like Fran. Jesus has asked Fran to pray for Joyce and try to get to know her.

As they eat lunch, Joyce pours out her story of her ex-husband's negligence in paying child support and the day care center that is threatening to refuse to take her son because Joyce is behind in her payments. As Joyce brushes away tears, Fran says to her, "Oh, Joyce, I understand; there's nothing more important than your son and his care while you work. How much money do you owe the day care center?"

"I'm behind about \$400. And Fran, I just don't have any money," Joyce replies.

"What about your family?" Fran asks, "Can they help you?"

"Family? Are you kiddin'? My family..." her voice trails off. It's too painful for her to even talk about.

An idea occurs to Fran, and she says, "Look, Joyce, our church has a fund to help people who are in financial trouble. As a member, I can request help for you. Would it be okay if I request that they help you pay what you owe the day care center?"

Joyce looks at Fran in bewilderment. "You'd do that for me? But why?"

"Why? Just because you need help, and I want to help you. I'd pay it myself if I could. Now, I can't guarantee they'll do it, but at least I can ask. Okay?"

"Yeah, okay..." Joyce puts her head in her hands and sobs quietly.

Fran reaches across the table and takes her hand. "You know, Joyce, it's not an accident that I invited you to lunch today, is it? I believe it's God's way of showing you he loves you and is going to take care of you."

Joyce looks up. "I'm not sure I even believe there is a God, Fran, but I appreciate your help. Sorry I'm so emotional; it's just that...well, I've been so worried about Toby. You've at least given me some hope."

Well, Fran has discovered that Joyce is in her life so that she can show her the love of Jesus. Anybody in your life right now who needs some compassion and understanding? Remember, that person is not in your life by accident.