

Motivating a Baseball Pitcher

There are all kinds of theories about how to motivate people.

Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Don Sutton hadn't won a game in eight weeks. A critical member of the press was suggesting that he be dropped from the starting rotation. The future looked bleak, and Sutton felt terrible.

Then, before a game, Dodgers manager Walter Alston tapped him on the shoulder. "I'd like to speak with you, Don," he said. Sutton prepared himself for the worst.

"Don," said Alston, "I know how the past couple of months have been for you. Everyone's wondering whether we can make it to the playoffs. You know there's a lot of pressure ... I've had to make a decision."

Sutton had visions of being taken off the mound.

But Alston continued, "If the Dodgers are going to win this year" – he said as he looked Sutton in the eyes – "they're going to win with Don Sutton pitching. Come what may, you're staying in the starting job. That's all I wanted to say."

Sutton's losing streak lasted two more weeks, but because of his manager's encouragement, he felt different about it. Something in him was turning around. He found himself pitching the best ball of his career.

In the National League pennant drive, he won 13 games out of 14, primarily because Alston believed in Sutton's capabilities and built his confidence with a message of trust and assurance.

Motivation can be accomplished through guilt, through fear, through shame. But these were not the methods employed by Jesus. He motivated people through communicating hope and encouragement.

Consider what Jesus was saying to His followers – a motley crew of farmers and fishermen and tax collectors and housewives in a tiny and remote village in an obscure part of the world – and He was telling them, "You are the light of the world." Only Jesus could see that through them, God would indeed change the world.

Now do you want to hear something really absurd? So can we.

(more)



We can change the worlds of the people who come to us with a variety of needs, people who are urgently seeking hope and encouragement. We can change the world one resident at a time, one associate at a time.

That's what He is calling us to do.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In that same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter