

SOME WATER COOLER CONVERSATION

I had a great water cooler conversation on Monday. Usually, water cooler conversations happen in work environments amongst employees. My water cooler conversation happened to take place at a funeral home which can be a workplace for me at times. Prior to the funeral I was about to conduct I went to the water cooler to get a drink and met a ten-year-old boy already standing there. I asked him how the water was, and he told me it was not bad because the cooler was doing a good job of keeping it cold. When he finished drinking his water, he turned to me and said, "Well I better get back to my seat before it starts." Off he went. As I stood there sipping my water I had to agree with this young boy's assessment of the water.

After the funeral I went back to the water cooler to get another drink before we made our way to the cemetery. To my surprise I found the same young boy standing at the water cooler. I said to him, "The reason why I need to drink so much water is because I tend to drink more coffee than I should." He nodded and said, "My problem is I drink too much tea." Then he said something that caught me totally by surprise. He said, "I want to tell you what a good job you did up there." To receive a compliment like this from a ten-year-old boy caught me off guard. I had seen him during the service and at one point he was crying in his pew. Obviously, he was listening and taking it all in. I thanked him for the compliment, and we left the water cooler to make our way to the cemetery for the committal service.

At the cemetery, this same young boy placed a medal that had belonged to the deceased beside the urn. This young boy showed such a calm demeanor as he did this in his great grandfather's memory. After I completed the committal service, I went over to this young boy's parents and told them how their son complimented me earlier, and how impressed I am by him. The biggest smiles crossed the parents' faces when I said this. The father reached out and shook my hand, and the mother said to me, "Thank you for being such a good role model to him." Again, just like at the water cooler, I was not expecting to hear that. What started off as a simple conversation between two thirsty people at a water cooler turned into a series of uplifting compliments.

Some who are reading this message right now may be retired and no longer experience conversations around the water cooler. Others who are reading this may be working more from home now as a result of the pandemic and not at the office to have these kinds of conversations. We do not need a water cooler in order to strike up a conversation with somebody. Conversations require us to open our mouths and begin to speak. Unfortunately, not all conversations that take place lead to compliments. Sometimes the conversations we have with others can lead to other "C's" such as criticism or complaints. These kinds of conversations do not build us up, nor make us feel better. We need to understand the conversations we have can lead to rippling effects. Take for instance the conversation I had with this young boy. The conversation started with him offering me his opinion about the water. After the service the conversation continued about drinking water but then turned into a compliment. After the service at the cemetery, the compliment this young boy gave me turned into me complimenting his parents on what a fine job they have been doing in raising him. My compliment resulted in the father shaking my hand with respect, and the mother complimenting me for being a role model. One compliment resulted in a series of compliments. It shows the rippling effect that can happen with conversations. This same rippling effect also happens in conversations involving the other "C's", criticism or complaints. Haven't we all seen or experienced how one criticism or complaint that arises in a conversation, ripples and suddenly creates more and more of this kind of negativity. We see the same rippling effect happen when angry and hurtful comments are made in conversations as well.

This conversation with this young boy on Monday reminded me of the rippling effects of the words we choose to use in our conversations with others. I think we all need to be reminded of this truth. Every one of us need to be uplifted and encouraged through the course of a day or week. Proverbs reminds us how an encouraging word from somebody can do this for us:

**Worry weighs a person down; an encouraging word cheers a person up.
(Proverbs 12:25)**

There is nothing like receiving a compliment during a conversation to cheer and lift us up. This young boy's compliment lifted me up. My compliment to this boy's parents lifted them up at the cemetery. To receive the final compliment from the boy's mother was a real blessing. As my example shows, if we take the time to engage in conversations with others and **choose to add compliments along the way**, it will not only cheer up others but may lead to an unexpected blessing of cheer coming our way as well.

As I walked back to my car at the cemetery, I shook my head in amazement at all that had transpired. I could not help but wonder if God was smiling, and this boy's great-grandfather now in heaven was smiling too about the compliments that had been shared. I pray each one of us may experience a conversation where the rippling effects of some compliments we have made result in a blessing for us as well. It will leave us uplifted as it did for me leaving the cemetery.

Keep Safe and God Bless

Pastor Dean