

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
December 2, 2018
Spiritual Ponderings
Five Dysfunctions of a Team

Last October, I attended the Amazing Parish Conference. The goal of the people putting on this conference was to “give busy pastors and their teams the tools they need to transform their parishes—moving from maintenance mode to mission communities that are truly alive!” The “Amazing Parish” organization takes the works of business consultant Patrick Lencioni as the foundation for the model. Patrick Lencioni, founder and president of The Table Group, a management and consulting firm. He is also the author of the bestselling book: *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*. In this book he lays out what he feels are the five major issues and problems that prevent leadership teams from being their best.

Over the next few months, I plan to introduce many aspects of the Amazing Parish program at St. Joseph and therefore, I thought it would be good to share with you some of the insights that I have gained from attending the conference and from reading *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*. I believe that these reflections will also be helpful to non-St. Joseph parishioners who regularly read my writings because most, if not all of us, find ourselves on different teams and the advice Patrick Lencioni gives will be helpful in dealing with the other people on your team and in making your teams more productive.

DYSFUNCTION #1: THE ABSENCE OF TRUST

Mr. Lencioni begins talking about this dysfunction by pointing out the importance of trust. He writes “Trust lies at the heart of a functioning cohesive team. Without it teamwork is all but impossible.” He then goes onto define trust as “In the context of building a team, trust is the confidence among team members that their peers’ intentions are good, and that there is no reason to be protective or careful around the group. In essence, teammates must get comfortable with being vulnerable with one another.”

Mr. Lencioni points out that being vulnerable and trusting others is not always easy. “Achieving vulnerability—based trust is difficult because in the course of career advancement and education, most successful people learn to be competitive with their peers, and protective of their reputations. It is a challenge for them to turn those instincts off for the good of the team, but that is exactly what is required of them.”

Three suggestions that Patrick Lencioni recommends for building trust are simple things but they require people to be vulnerable. In other words, it requires people to take risk. It should be easier to take risks in a Church setting than in the business world but I know that this not always the case and that is sad.

The first thing Patrick Lencioni suggests to build trust is that a group needs to stress confidentiality and to define exactly what confidentiality is. For the most part, it should mean that what is said in the group is not shared with anyone outside the group with out permission of the person who shared the story in the first place. I think people should also be clear that the exception to this rule is when keeping something secret could lead to someone being harmed.

The second thing that Patrick Lencioni suggests to teams in order to build trust is for members to be aware of that human behavior tends to excuse one’s personal behavior by blaming it own our circumstances and by blaming another person’s actions on evil intentions. For example, you may say to yourself, “that I had to cut that person off, because I need to get to work on time,” but simply assume that the other person cut you off because they are evil, or that they are bad drivers. The truth of the matter is that when most people hurt us, they do so more from a mindset than neglect.

The third and final thing Patrick Lencioni suggests teams take time to tell each other their personal stories. The bond between people strengthens the more that they know about each other. He suggests that members take time going around the room and telling each other something interesting about them.

I want to end today’s reflection on the first dysfunction and ask you to reflect on how much you trust God and if any of the three suggestions that Patrick Lencioni provides for teams to build trust, will help you build trust with God.

Three Things That You Should Know About Me:

Patrick Lencioni believes that it is very important for teams to work well, team members need to be vulnerable with each other. Therefore, at the end of these reflections, I am going to include three things about myself that I think will help you understand me better as a person.

1. My facial expression does not always accurately portray my inner feelings. I have experienced many people coming up to me and asking me “what is wrong you are not smiling?” while I have been having the time of my life and I think that I have a big smile on my face. So, I hope the more people get to know me, the more they understand that my facial expressions do not always reveal my inner feelings.
2. It takes time for to process things. Sometimes I upset people because I am one of the persons who often needs to process things before, I will make a decision.
3. I try to manage people the way that I would want to be managed so I try not to reprimand people in public, I assume that often the things that went wrong were done on accident, and I like to allow people to save face. This often makes it look like I have not addressed an issue when I have in fact did.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

December 9, 2018

Spiritual Ponderings

Five Dysfunctions of a Team.

As we enter into the second week of December, we continue our look at Mr. Lencioni’s book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* and how it can help us develop healthy relationships with others. I still believe that these reflections will also be helpful to non-St. Joseph parishioners who regularly read my writings because most, if not all of us, find ourselves on different teams and the advice Patrick Lencioni gives will be helpful in dealing with the other people on your team and in making your teams more productive.

DYSFUNCTION 2: FEAR OF CONFLICT

Patrick Lencioni starts off this chapter, talking about this dysfunction with a surprising statement that I had to read twice to make sure I truly understood what it was that he was trying to say. “All great relationships, the ones that last over time, require productive conflict in order to grow. This is true in marriage, parenthood, friendship, and certainly business.”

The more and more I pondered that statement the more the validity of the statement began to assert itself. Dr. Gottmann who is considered an expert in relationships, makes the bold statement that it is not how much a couple argues that matters but HOW they argue that really matters. He encourages couples to argue with one another in a respectful way so that they can discover the answer or the best way to do something instead of spending time suffering from hurt feelings.

Patrick Lencioni makes an important distinction about conflicts in this chapter: “It is important to distinguish productive ideological conflict from destructive fighting and interpersonal politics. Ideological conflicts are limited to concepts and ideas and avoids personality-focused, mean-spirited attacks... But teams that engage in productive conflict know that the only purpose is to produce the best possible solution in the shortest amount of time. They discuss and resolve issues more quickly and completely than others, and they emerge from heated debates with no residual feelings or collateral damage, but with an eagerness and readiness to take on the next important issue.”

I would tell people that I am interested in dialogue but I am not interested in conflict. For me dialogue means searching for the right answer or solution to a problem and conflict means turning the search for truth into a competition where people have to be right.

“Teams that engage in productive conflict know that the only purpose is to produce the best possible solution in the shortest period of time. They discuss and resolve issues more quickly and completely than others, and they emerge from heated debates with no residual feelings or collateral damage, but with an eagerness and readiness take on the next important task,” according to Patrick Lencioni.

How does a team handle conflict in a healthy way? First, teams must acknowledge that conflict can be healthy. People should not be afraid of new ideas or being challenged.

The second thing a team should do in order to get better at conflict is to look for it. Patrick Lencioni uses the term “mining”. He feels that team members should be able to challenge each other to speak up when they disagree. Teams need to create an environment where no one is put down for raising a question.

The third thing a team could do to get better at conflict is for team members to give each other real-time permission to present ideas, even if these ideas challenge them or the status quo. I think verbalizing this at the beginning of a meeting or the beginning of a specific topic can help with this also. Team members need to realize that they will only succeed as much as the team succeeds and if the team fail then they fail.

I would add a fourth thing to his list and that would team members need to realize that their identity as individuals comes from God not from worldly success.

Three Things That You Should Know About Me:

Patrick Lencioni believes that it is very important for teams to work well, team members need to be vulnerable with each other. Therefore at the end of these reflections, I am going to include three things about myself that I think will help you understand me better as a person.

1. There were many times, when I was growing up that people picked on me and played tricks on me in grade school and in high school and therefore I am reluctant to do something new in front of a large crowd for fear of it turning out to be a big joke on me. Every year, though I feel like I get better at being more adventuresome.
2. I do not like to be micromanaged and therefore I do not like to micro-manage others. I do not like to give people the power to make decisions and then make the decisions myself or overrule them. For example, if I tell someone that they are in charge of the flowers in the sanctuary, I will not then go out and force them to buy what I want.
3. Sometimes, I feel that I do not always shift mental gears quick enough. On any given weekend, I could celebrate a wedding, a death, etc. Sometimes I feel like I let people down because I might be sad at a joyful event because I am still thinking about the sorrowful event. This also happens when someone tells me something pretty serious that I cannot share with anyone else because of confidentiality or the seal of the confessional ; I can then spend my time thinking about him or her and not be present in the present.

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
December 16, 2018
Spiritual Ponderings
Five Dysfunctions of a Team.

As we enter into the third week of December, we continue our look at Mr. Lencioni’s book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* and how it can help us develop healthy relationships with others. I still believe that these reflections will also be helpful to non-St. Joseph parishioners who regularly read my writings because most, if not all of us, find ourselves on different teams and the advice Patrick Lencioni gives will be helpful in dealing with the other people on your team and in making your teams more productive.

DYSFUNCTION 3: LACK OF COMMITMENT

“In the context of team, commitment is a function of two things: clarity and buy-in,” according to Mr. Lencioni. According to Patrick Lencioni the “greatest causes of the lack of commitment are the desire for consensus and the need for certainty.” We can sometimes get too caught up as leaders in wanting to “sell” our idea that we forget to allow

others to express their ideas. When we do this, we may not only miss out on a better idea, but also people find it hard to commit to the idea. The desire for certainty can also cause problems because people may want to “hedge their bets” and therefore don’t go all in. We already know that this is against the Gospel where Jesus demands that we follow Him completely.

Most people do not achieve consensus according to Patrick Lencioni is not because everyone could not agree on something because most people know that not everyone will agree on everything all the time. He suggests consensus fails when people do not feel like they were heard. “Great teams ensure that everyone’s ideas are genuinely considered which then creates a willingness to rally around whatever decision is ultimately made by the group,” according to Patrick Lencioni.

In regards to the need for certainty, Patrick Lencioni writes: “Great teams pride themselves on being able to unite behind decisions and commit to clear courses of action even when there is little assurance about whether the decision is correct. That’s because they understand the old military axiom that a decision is better than no decision. They also realize that it is better to make a decision boldly and be wrong—and then change direction with equal boldness—than it is to waffle.”

Patrick Lencioni recommends a few different ideas of how to overcome the dysfunction of a lack of commitment. The first is good communication. He recommends that teams are very clear as to how they are going to communicate the decisions that they are making. This is important to avoid fake news and gossip.

The second thing he recommends is setting of deadlines. He makes it clear that ambiguity is the enemy of efficiency.

The third recommendation is that the team take a close look at setting up contingency plans and talking about worst-case scenario upfront. This way no one feels like a plan is being forced upon them without every aspect of the plan having been thought out. “This usually allows them to reduce their fears by helping them realize that the costs of an incorrect decision are survivable, and far less damaging than they had imagine.

Spiritually speaking, I am reminded that nothing can paralyze our relationship with God more than fear. This is why, I believe, that the words “Be not afraid” are the most common phrase in the Bible. When I feel paralyze because I am afraid of making a mistake, I think of Thomas Merton’s prayer:

*My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. **Nor do I really know myself, and that I think I am following your will does not mean I am actually doing so. But I believe the desire to please you does in fact please you.** And I hope I have that desire in all I am doing. I hope I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you will never leave me to face my perils alone.*

Three Things That You Should Know About Me:

Patrick Lencioni believes that it is very important for teams to work well, team members need to be vulnerable with each other. Therefore at the end of these reflections, I am going to include three things about myself that I think will help you understand me better as a person.

1. I believe that goal of Church life is to lead people to heaven and not necessarily to make them happy.
2. I believe that I do not have all the answers and I appreciate good honest feedback.
3. I believe that following Jesus is not always the easiest path but it is the most rewarding.



Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
December 23, 2018
Spiritual Ponderings
Five Dysfunctions of a Team.

As we enter into the fourth week of December, we continue our look at Mr. Lencioni's book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* and how it can help us develop healthy relationships with others. I still believe that these reflections will also be helpful to non-St. Joseph parishioners who regularly read my writings because most, if not all of us, find ourselves on different teams and the advice Patrick Lencioni gives will be helpful in dealing with the other people on your team and in making your teams more productive.

DYSFUNCTION 4: Avoidance of Accountability

Patrick Lencioni defines "Accountability" as "In the context of teamwork, however, it refers specifically to the willingness of team members to call their peers on performance or behaviors that might hurt the team." What causes is "the unwillingness of team members to tolerate the interpersonal discomfort that accompanies calling a peer on his or her behavior and the more general tendency to avoid difficult conversations."

Accountability, I believe is a hard concept for Christians because we often confuse forgiving someone with letting them off the hook or with tolerating their bad behavior. Holding someone accountable though has more to do with loving the other person and wanting to help them improve than it does with pointing out other people's faults. Think of this way, a teacher is not loving her students if she never tells him or her that $2+2=4$ even though they keep saying $2+2=5$. Some people need to know that certain behaviors are not appropriate. The opposite of accountability then in this situation is enabling. Enabling is where we allow someone or tolerate someone doing a bad behavior because we do not to spend the time or energy of lovingly confronting them.

To hold someone accountable in a Christian way involves supporting the person if they attempt to improve. One of our teachers in the seminary would say "you can only confront as much as your willing to support." It also means that you have prayed over the situation and know that the behavior the person keeps doing is harmful and not simply annoying or the not the way you would handle it.

Holding people accountable as a team though is also not about throwing people under the bus because you realize that if your teammate fails your whole team fails. The best teams that I have been apart of have been teams in which people have been able to help each other grow and cover for each other when one makes a mistakes or is going through a hard time.

Patrick Lencioni recommends three ways for teams to overcome this problem. The first is to make sure goals and standards are clearly published so everyone can know them. "The enemy of accountability is ambiguity, and even when a team has initially committed to a plan or a set of behavioral standards, it is important to keep those agreements in the open so that no one can easily ignore them."

The second way in which teams can help build accountability is to establish simple and regular progress reviews. Patrick Lencioni writes "A little structure goes a long way toward helping people take action that they might not otherwise be inclined to do." Spiritually speaking, I think this is why the Church recommends things like small prayer groups, spiritual direction, and regular celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The final way that Patrick Lencioni recommends team rewards. "By shifting rewards away from individual performance to team achievement, the team can create a culture of accountability." I think one of the problems in our world today is that our society tells us to look for individual rewards instead of team rewards.

In his presentations at the Amazing Parish Conference Patrick Lencioni continually talked about the need for people to come out of their silos and come together for the benefit of the parish and Church. What does this look like? This means we take a risk and learn about the different ministries going on in the parish. It means we take time to thank

those who are working (often behind the scenes) to make the parish better. I think it also means that we treat each other with respect.

Three Things That You Should Know About Me:

Patrick Lencioni believes that it is very important for teams to work well, team members need to be vulnerable with each other. Therefore at the end of these reflections, I am going to include three things about myself that I think will help you understand me better as a person.

1. I believe that God expects great things out of us and is continually calling us to grow.
2. I believe that you should only be willing to confront someone as much as you are willing to support them.
3. I believe the virtue is always in the middle of two vices. You can do something too much or too little. For example pride (vice)-humility(virtue)-Self-hate(vice).

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

December 30, 2018

Spiritual Ponderings

Five Dysfunctions of a Team.

As we enter into the last week of December, we continue our look at Mr. Lencioni's book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* and how it can help us develop healthy relationships with others. I still believe that these reflections will also be helpful to non-St. Joseph parishioners who regularly read my writings because most, if not all of us, find ourselves on different teams and the advice Patrick Lencioni gives will be helpful in dealing with the other people on your team and in making your teams more productive.

DYSFUNCTION 5: Inattention to Results.

Patrick Lencioni calls the last dysfunction the "ultimate dysfunction" as he explains: "The ultimate dysfunction of a team is the tendency of members to care about something other than the collective goals of the group."

There are many reasons why a person may happen. This may happen when someone on the team forgets that there is no "I" in "team" and instead of having the collective good in mind, they may have another personal goal in mind. Another reason people can give into the ultimate dysfunction by simply moving onto another task (or go onto put out another fire) without making sure the task is completed. If I am honest with myself, this one is one of my biggest flaws. I start off with great ideas and then I get pulled away to address something else and never get back to focusing on the first issue. Sometimes we can get focused on doing too much and make things more complicated than it needs to be. As a Church we must always remember that our goal is bringing people to Christ. If we are not doing this then we are not fulfilling our mission.

In order to overcome this dysfunction people, have to be willing to publicly declare their results and this is sometimes hard for Catholics because we associate talking about positive things going on in our community and groups as bragging and thus with the sin of pride. Speaking about the positive things going on in our community should be connected with humility and praising God.

More Thoughts

Patrick Lencioni concludes his book with the following:

As much information as is contained here, the reality remains that teamwork ultimately comes down to practicing a small set of principles over a long period of time. Success is not a matter of mastering subtle, sophisticated theory, but rather of embracing common sense with uncommon levels of discipline and persistence.

Ironically, teams succeed because they are exceedingly human. By acknowledging the imperfections of their humanity, members of functional teams overcome the natural tendencies that make trust, conflict, commitment, accountability, and a focus on results so elusive.

The Christian life is all about doing small things with great levels of discipline. For example, Catholics are called to pray every day. Praying every day is not hard but does require discipline. In addition, the Church is made up of human people who are imperfect and thus things do not always go the way they should. If businesses can succeed with imperfect people then the Church can succeed because we also have grace and the assurance from God that we will not fail.

Another section of his book that really stuck out to me:

A friend of mine, the founder of a company that grew to a billion dollars in annual revenue, best expressed the power of teamwork when he once told me, "If you could get all the people in an organization rowing in the same direction, you could dominate any industry, in any market against any competition, at any time."

According to Mathew Kelly of Dynamic Catholics, only 7% of Catholics are rowing the boat of the Church forward. What would happen if more people worked with the Church.

Three Things That You Should Know About Me:

Patrick Lencioni believes that it is very important for teams to work well, team members need to be vulnerable with each other. Therefore at the end of these reflections, I am going to include three things about myself that I think will help you understand me better as a person.

1. God's ways are not our ways and His ways are always better.
2. The Loudest one in the room is the weakest – being loud (and forceful) is not a demonstration of strength but rather of weakness.
3. Each argument needs to be evaluated on the merit of the argument and not on the person giving it. (A broken clock is right twice a day).

