Personal Before Business Before Pleasure.
(October 15, 2026)

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up."
(Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

For years, I ran meetings at church assuming people came prepared. I sent out agendas and asked them to pray through the items before gathering…and I thought that was enough. I was very wrong!

What I was missing was the personal connection (the relational half of the wake). So, I have now tried to add a personal component to all meetings. It's not just "business before pleasure," it's now "personal before business before pleasure." Connect first…and then move into the work.

People will often bring up different topics of concern with me. Typically, people will jump right into the business regarding the topic (ie. asking for advice, discussing a complaint, seeking confirmation, or offering criticism). And as I have so often done, I answer their thoughts with my thoughts (because thoughts are meant to be challenged) only to find out later that they didn't feel heard, considered, or understood.

And the reason they don't feel heard is because they were actually trying to share feelings, but they were expressing them in the form of thoughts. And so now, as I do in formal meetings, I try to make space in every conversation (or at least be alert to the need or desire of the other person) to connect with empathy before moving into the business of the discussion. If it even sounds like they are trying to share personal feelings, I will stop the business part of the conversation to acknowledge those feelings.

People often jump into business, task-oriented, or content conversations without having thought through the relational, emotional, or process components of the situation. But then, in the midst of the conversation, unspoken feelings will leak into the discussion. These feelings are a sign that at least one person in the conversation is becoming dysregulated. If these feelings and emotions go unacknowledged or ignored, they will produce a disconnection between the people in the discussion. And this disconnection will eventually sabotage the work.

Therefore, if you remember only one thing from these weekly messages, let it be this…
CONNECT FIRST.

When working with or talking to another person, the relationship is more important than the work.
If you notice that you are losing connection in the middle of a conversation or task,
pause to acknowledge or address the disconnect so you don't lose each other along the way.

The old mantra was to place "business before pleasure."
But when working as a team, there will be no pleasure without people.
Teamwork requires a new mantra: "Personal before Business before Pleasure."