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Shady Shores Baptist Church

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From The Pastor's Heart . . .

As most of you know, I did not become a pastor until I was 35. I worked in purchasing and accounting for over 17 years. My last job, before being called to my first church was with a company that made instrument systems that tested raw cotton fibers. It was one of only 2 companies in the world that did this. Of course both companies claimed that the other company stole their idea.

By the time I started to work, Mr. Witts had passed away. His wife and daughter ran the company. I was hired to do the accounting for the company. Mrs. Witts was something of a trial to get along with, but I got along with her quite well. She and I would eat our lunch at our desks and work on the latest Sunday edition of the New York Times crossword puzzle. Periodically, we would share answers to the puzzles. One time, I had found the answer to one of the clues. I don't remember what the question was, but I told Mrs. Witts that the answer was...Arturoto Scanini. Mrs. Witts had season passes to the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and was raised on classical music. You can imagine the ribbing I received as the answer was actually Arturo Toscanini. As a matter of fact, that Christmas she gave me a paperback crossword puzzle dictionary and on the inside flap was To: Arturoto Scanini. I ran across the following article about Toscanini. You may be like me and are more country than rock and roll but classical music doesn't register on your music scale. But persevere through to the end of the story.

Arturo Toscanini Demanded Excellence From the Symphony Orchestra

One of history's greatest musical conductors was Arturo Toscanini. Born in Parma, Italy, in 1867, Toscanini died in his sleep in New York City in 1957. For years he conducted the National Broadcasting Company's Symphony Orchestra in New York City's Carnegie Hall. The last time he conducted there he was eighty-seven years old. Those who played for Toscanini say he was a terrible taskmaster in rehearsals. Often those rehearsals were battlegrounds between the maestro and his orchestra. He could be ruthless in the verbal tortures he heaped upon some unfortunate musician, but at the same time he could be as gentle as a grandfather. Once in a rehearsal a member of the orchestra was performing poorly in a solo passage. The white-maned Toscanini rapped his baton for silence. Placing one hand on his hip, he touched the end of his nose with the baton. The orchestra knew from experience that a terrible storm was about to break upon the poor soloist. An ominous silence filled the room as Toscanini called the player by name. Looking kindly at the trembling musician for a few minutes, Toscanini then asked pleasantly, "Tell me, please, when were you born?" When the question was answered, the maestro then asked, "And in what month?" When he learned the month of the man's birth, all wondered what was coming next.

“And on what day of the month were you born?” Toscanini queried. Now completely unnerved by Toscanini’s gentle inquisition, the poor musician answered, “I think it was a Tuesday, Maestro.” Suddenly all of Toscanini’s fury was unleashed, and he shouted at the quivering musician, “That was a black day for music!” He then raised his baton in the air, struck the downbeat, and the orchestra began to play as though nothing had happened. In a moment they arrived at the dreaded solo passage where the small mistake had infuriated Toscanini, but this time the soloist played his part without a bobble. Stopping the orchestra, the maestro looked at the white-faced soloist and said: “So! So!” With his hand he threw a kiss to the musician he had verbally crucified and then sweetly said: “So you are not stupid. You can play well. Now I am happy. You are happy. Beethoven is happy!” On another occasion, Toscanini was rehearsing his orchestra, and he wanted the piece of music played perfectly. But it was obvious that the orchestra was not giving its best. Laying down his baton, Toscanini said quietly: “Gentlemen, God has told me how he wants this piece of music played and you are hindering God.” - J. B. Fowler, {Basic Bible Sermons on Philippians }(Nashville: Broadman Press, 1991) 61-62

God has given to us His best; can we give Him less than our best?

See you Sunday: Looking Up, Reaching Out, Going Forward.

From My Heart To Yours,

Bro. Bob

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