

Unfear Newsletter: The JAM-ing St. Francis

Dear Reader,

Each year, for our team retreat, we at Co-Creation Partners pause our busy lives and immerse ourselves in a philosophical tradition. This not only refreshes and renews our bodies, minds and spirits, but ultimately grants us new insight for our work. Our most recent retreat took us to Assisi, Italy, the old stomping grounds of the venerated St. Francis.

Three Ancient Vows for Modern Times

The Franciscan monks we met in Assisi all had tied three knots into their belts. They explained to us that each knot represented one of St. Francis' three core vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Poverty. Chastity. Obedience. Three things that inspire fear in most modern people. We work to avoid poverty. We, by and large, sneer at chastity. And many of us strive for individuality, and to break the rules in new and productive ways. But in our reflections and discussion with the monks, we realized that committing to a nuanced version of these vows can lead to an unfear life of Joy, Abundance, and Miracles, or "JAM" 😊.

As the monks explained to us, a vow of poverty does not require you to shed every worldly possession. Even the monks owned and used iPhones. It merely requires you to recognize that you can never truly own something. A piece of land we "own" will still exist when we are dead. Some things we "own" will perish before us. We merely have the opportunity to use these things for a period of time—sometimes long, sometimes short. When we recognize this, it allows us to enjoy our possessions while we can, without predicating our joy, sense of self, or state of mind on how much or how little we "own".

In terms of chastity, the monks explained that they took the vow to transcend what the Greeks called "Eros," i.e. a romantic, often egocentric love. Instead, they hoped to achieve "Agape," or divine love for all things animate and inanimate, an unselfish love that "seeketh not it's own, but gives itself indiscriminately". None of us want to quit romance yet, but we found a valuable lesson. We can access an abundance of love by shifting our focus from seeking love (and the attendant fear of not receiving it) to giving love to as many people as we can. As the old adage goes: you reap what you sow. If you put love into the world, it will come back to you manyfold.

Finally, obedience. Most people interpret this vow as obedience to an external power. As the monks explained, its just as important to have internal obedience. In other words, we vow to follow our truly inviolable core principles. In this obedience, lurks freedom. When you know what you stand for, what core principles you will always work to serve, then you can compromise and be flexible on everything else. You can hold the other things lightly, which makes it easier to collaborate and innovate with others. It helps you stay grounded and away from sweating the small stuff. Likewise, you avoid bending or compromising on what actually matters to chase clout.

Necessary, Possible, Impossible

St. Francis of Assisi said, "Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible." We have never come across a more succinct explanation of how to create miracles and change in our lives. Often, when we start a new project or career, we focus solely on the goal. When we do that, the gap between our current situation and what we aspire to seems insurmountable. Our fears lurk in that gap like so many wild animals and poisonous spiders in a dark forest. But when we follow the good saint's advice and focus on small, meaningful action, we find that our vision become tangible, and takes on a momentum of its own.

Worth thinking about

What are the stories we believe about what makes us worthy? Do we use possessions as markers of worth? Do we use expressions of love from others as a source of validation? A source of self-worth? What are our true, non-negotiable, core principles?

Take it to go

As you savor the joy and excitement of the season, carve out some time to reflect on the highs and lows (both personal and professional) of the past year. What makes the highs high and lows low? What stories are you telling yourself about the last year? Can you reframe these stories in a way that uncovers a path to greater Joy and Abundance?

Finally, what Miracles have you experienced this year?

Here's wishing you a holiday season of Joy, Abundance, and Miracles. JAM on modern pilgrims, JAM on 😊.

Questions?

Please contact us and schedule a call if you are interested in applying Unfear to improve your team and organizational culture and effectiveness. We'd love to hear from you.

[CONTACT US](#)

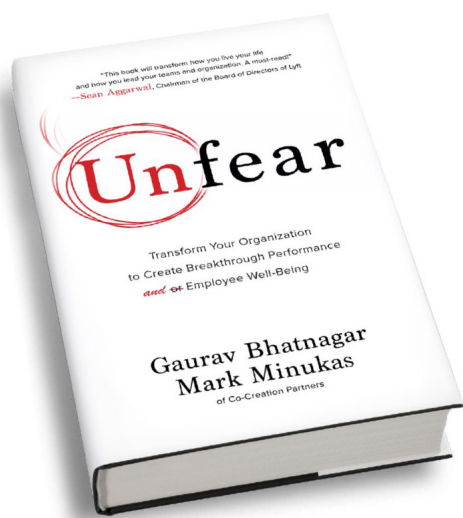


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