

## You Need A Confidant

Rev. Dean Bucalos

Mission Behind Bars and Beyond

NBA Incubate Partner

April 2019



One of the hardest lessons learned as a founder of a non-profit corporation, is that you are not in this alone. Only to be followed by the second hardest lesson: it's not about you. Whether the non-profit flourishes or simply slips into oblivion has more to do with God's time and the actual need addressed by the non-profit. Sometimes, God's time and the actual need don't conform with your thoughts and desires.

So, how do you shake the notion that you are not alone in this? Oh, you may have one or two co-founders who join you in the start-up and you will have gathered

together interested board members, but none of them are with you at night when you are thinking about next steps or what needs to be done or from where the next dollar to support this ministry or program is going to come. What I have discovered is that everyone in this work needs a confidant. Someone they can talk to and with whom they can share their greatest fears and wildest dreams. Someone to whom they can gripe and complain without being judged or evaluated. Someone with whom they can celebrate successes and shed tears of disappointment.

That's a lot to ask of one person. So, in my ministry, I have found two people. And I recommend this model to everyone involved in non-profit work. The first person is my spouse, Anne. She is a great listener, supporter and gentle critic. She knows me better than anyone and at once can be honest and frank and loving. When I'm down, I know I can confide in her without being judged. And when things are going well, she is there to celebrate with me and affirm the hard work to which I have devoted my life. Frankly, without Anne's support and backing and encouragement, Mission Behind Bars and Beyond would not have survived the lean years and tough times that were its beginning. Without Anne's willingness to encourage me to shift vocational gears

without the guarantee of a livable wage, Mission Behind Bars and Beyond would simply have been another good idea. And without Anne’s continuing reminder that this ministry’s success or failure is not a reflection of who I am as person, I would not have been able to press on and persevere.

But I mentioned that I found two people. The second is my spiritual director. I realized early on that if my marriage was going to survive and flourish as it has for over 40 years, I couldn’t just bring all my woes and worries home and dump them on the floor and expect Anne to listen to every doubt or complaint or frustration. There is a limit as to what one can endure! But with my spiritual director, that door is always open. With no investment in a final product or project, my spiritual director has walked alongside me as a deep listener and trusted guide. He knows me and he knows God. He can gently put me back on track. He can quietly point out a path I might consider following. He can point me to scripture that will provide solace and hope and direction. And our monthly holy conversations are confidential and non-judgmental. What I cannot share with Anne, I can share with Paul. When my burdens are overloaded, Paul offers a sacred safety valve. And he keeps me honest—with myself, with my calling and with God who has brought me to the ministry to which I have devoted my life.

So, find these confidants and your ministry and your life will be that much richer. Both Anne and Paul simply, gently and lovingly remind me that it’s not about me and that I am not in this alone. For this, and so much more, I give thanks.

---

*The NBA incubates new ministries, supporting social entrepreneurs of faith who are serving their communities in a variety of innovative ways and empowering these Disciples-led health and social service projects to focus on growth, impact, and sustainability. Learn more at [nbacares.org/incubate](https://nbacares.org/incubate)*