

How This ‘Undercover Boss’ Learned to Face the Impossible

He didn’t know how he could stomach an entire day of it.

The sight, the stench and of course the smell all sickened him as he considered the day that lay ahead.

But the Lord had given him clear instructions on being a servant leader, one who puts his employees first. And long before *Undercover Boss* convinced him to record the show’s very first episode, Larry O’Donnell, then president and COO of the world’s largest waste management company, was riding garbage trucks with his team, doing his best to absorb the realities of their tasks.

But cleaning out porta-potties? “When they told me about that, I thought, *Oh, now this is going to be a very long day*. I just can’t imagine doing all that,” O’Donnell tells host Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of the *Greenelines* podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network.

“And as it turned out, that was my favorite job that I had on the show,” O’Donnell says. “And how could that be? It was all about the guy I worked with. His name’s Fred; I still talk to him on the phone.”

O’Donnell says Fred brought something unique to work every day that made all the difference: A sense of joy and contentment. “He was just such a happy guy in what he did. Because he showed up at work that way every day, it infected everyone around him. And so he made my job so much fun. In fact, I was laughing the entire time I was on that job, all day.”

O’Donnell says *Undercover Boss* filmed their work at the

Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, a huge annual event. And before they realized it, he says, “we had this huge crowd watching us work. And they thought it was a comedy routine ... they were all laughing at us. And it was just this joy and contentment that Fred had.”

But hidden behind Fred’s positive attitude lay a secret that the reality show clipped from the final footage. God revealed it when O’Donnell asked Fred to share the source of his joy.

“Fred, tell me where you get all that joy that you have that’s just coming out of you—tell me. You’ve got to be a Christian.”

O’Donnell continues, “And he said, ‘You are absolutely right brother. And I knew you are too.’ And we hugged. And then we went on about our work the rest of the day.”

✖ That exchange may not have made the show, but it made O’Donnell’s day—and helped him continue his work in helping turn his company around. His new book, *Management Waste*, details some of the principles for both leaders and followers he learned along the way.

For more of Larry O’Donnell’s wisdom on how your faith can impact your work, listen to the entire episode of *Greenelines* here, and be sure to subscribe to *Greenelines* on your favorite platform for more inspiring stories like this one. {eo}

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