

Transforming the Culture from Within

Mark Earley • Work As Ministry

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BreakPoint with Charles Colson

November 27, 2002

Note: Chuck Colson is out of town. This commentary was delivered by Prison Fellowship president Mark Earley.

When Mary was sixteen and getting ready to go to Harvard, she wanted to study business. She also wanted to serve Jesus. Torn by what she saw as conflicting desires, she marched into the office of her Presbyterian pastor in Salinas, California, and presented her career dilemma.

"I love God," she told him. "And I love business. So I'll probably just go work in a church or be a missionary, right?" Wrong, her pastor said: "Christians are needed in the corporate world, too."

That truth-that she could use her talents for God in the secular sphere-set Mary free. She tackled a joint major in economics and religion at Harvard and wrote her senior thesis on social investing-the concept of using one's money to address ethical concerns, such as helping the poor or boycotting pornography.

Now Mary speaks at Christian conferences around the country about the importance of connecting fiscal concerns with eternal ones. And she has opportunities to talk with investors about the true foundation for ethical values-a loving God.

"I can actually bring people into the Kingdom," Mary says. "This work, which I originally saw as so counter to Christ-what an incredible way to share Christ with others" it has become.

Mary is one of hundreds of young people interviewed by Colleen Carroll, author of a new book from Loyola Press, *The New Faithful: Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy*. Carroll received a Phillips Foundation journalism fellowship to document the growing grassroots movement among the young. She traveled the country talking to young adults like Mary, who are struggling to integrate their Christian faith and secular work.

That integration is a struggle for Americans of all ages. Surveys cited in *The New Faithful* found that between 48 and 70 percent of American workers discuss their faith on the job, and 55 percent pray for guidance in their careers. Yet many Americans, and many Christians, feel like Mary once did-torn between the sacred and the secular, unsure that they can serve God in their chosen professions.

Fortunately, the young Christians interviewed in *The New Faithful* disagree. Many are intentionally gravitating toward secular schools and positions of cultural influence. Once there, they are working to spread the faith, renew the Church, and raise up the true, the good, and the beautiful in every profession. These new faithful are not content with compartmentalized Christianity. They want their faith to infuse everything they do-including what they do at work.

Carroll interviewed young adults championing pro-life and pro-family legislation on Capitol Hill, writing screenplays with a Christian worldview in Hollywood, and starting Bible studies with colleagues in newsrooms and hospitals across the country. Rather than scaring these young believers away, secular pursuits-like entertainment, journalism, law, medicine, and politics-are increasingly attracting young Christians who want their faith to touch every part of culture.

The New Faithful contains stories that offer hope and valuable lessons about on-the-job discipleship. And don't forget to pray for young Christians like Mary. We need more Christians like her who will work in every profession to bring the transforming power of the gospel to bear on all of culture and to lead others into the Kingdom.

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