

Merging Work and Worship

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At age 55, Bill is praying about his next career move.

For 13 years, he has been the administrator for a Christian organization. But due to changes in leadership, Bill is about to be downsized.

Bill is fully sold out to the Lord and to His purposes. He has always had a love for computers and often fixes his friends' at no charge. Now he wonders: Should I stay in full-time vocational Christian ministry, or should I pursue a new career in computer training and service?

Even after he decided to go to school so he could become a certified computer tech, he found himself struggling with his decision. Guilt came upon him.

He thought, *Why would the Lord allow me to follow such a course of work as this? It isn't a very "Christian" field.*

Bill is like so many people I encounter in the workplace today that have a difficult time connecting their work to their faith. They often place a spiritual hierarchy on the type of work they do, feeling that secular work has less spiritual value.

Rare is the person I meet who sees their work as a calling from God. Yet, the Scripture tells us that is exactly how we are to view our work:

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col. 3:23-25, VERSION).

Sacred Versus Secular

I was visiting a friend in Detroit a few years ago when a man introduced himself as "Dr. Glover, a servant of Jesus Christ, masquerading as a dentist."

We both laughed and acknowledged his understanding of his calling to be a dentist. However, we both agreed his first calling was to be a disciple of Jesus, then he was called to his profession.

Most of us men place so much emphasis on our workplace identity that we often fail to view it as a spiritual work before God, especially if our work is in the secular realm. So how did we get to this place? Why do we have a difficult time viewing our work as a calling? Os Guinness, in his book, *The Call*, gives us some insights into this area.

In 312 A.D., during the early reformation period, the Catholic church elevated the spiritual at the expense of the secular, creating a dualism (two worlds) of belief.

This belief said the spiritual had greater value than the secular. This is where the term, "full-time Christian work" was introduced.

Then, in 1650, Protestants contributed to the problem by creating another form of dualism: They elevated the secular at the expense of the spiritual. It severed the secular from the spiritual altogether and reduced vocation to an alternative word for work.

The result of these two major changes has led to the separation of church and state and the sacred versus secular view of work and calling. The challenge is to remember that God calls us first to Himself and then to do everything for Him.

What would happen if everything we are, everything we do and everything we have is lived for God? Could it be that there is no greater adventure?

Viewing Work As A Ministry

In the movie, *Chariots of Fire*, the Olympic runner, Eric Liddel, understood this concept. "When I run I feel His pleasure," he said.

God calls us to see our *work* as *worship* to Him. Both words in the Old Testament come from the same Hebrew word, *avodah*. If you are in the workplace, your mission field is as great as any mission field in the world.

Jesus is our primary model to understand that our work is a calling from God. God placed His Son in a carpenter shop as a young man until the age of 30. A carpenter shop!

Jesus saw His work with an overriding ministry objective to it. He did not view his work as secular, but a sacred calling from God because the Hebrews saw all of life as sacred.

It wasn't until years later that God launched him into a different type of workplace calling.

It is interesting to note that of Jesus' 132 public appearances, 122 were in the workplace. He called 12 other men out of the workplace to join Him, and, He used many of His analogies from workplace situations to demonstrate spiritual principles.

Jesus Had A Specific Job To Do

Christ said, "I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave Me to do" (John 17:4). God gives each of us a work to do that flows from our relationship with our Heavenly Father through Jesus.

That work is designed to meet the needs of mankind. This is why God gives each person unique skills and abilities. So, we need to avoid giving a spiritual hierarchy to what we do for a living.

If we are fulfilling the work God has called us to perform, then we are fulfilling a great spiritual service unto God and He is well pleased with us. "May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us--yes, establish the work of our hands" (Psalm 90:17).

An Inventor Transforms An Economy

George Washington Carver understood his calling from God was his work.

He was born during the height of slavery in the U.S. He lost his mother to slave traders. If there was ever a man who deserved to be a victim to his circumstances, it was he.

But God had a plan for his life. He came to faith in Christ as a young boy, and although God gave Carver an inventive mind, he would gain his education under great adversity. Eventually, Carver would become an inventor and have his own laboratory where he would spend time with God early in the morning.

The southern agricultural economy was in a shambles after hundreds of years of planting cotton. The land was no longer fertile. Carver was seeking to provide an alternative crop for the farmers.

Under this disaster's crushing weight, Carver beseeched God, "Mr. Creator, why did You make the peanut?" Many years later, he shared that God led him back to his laboratory and worked with him to discover some 300 marketable products from the peanut.

Likewise, from the sweet potato he made more than 100 discoveries. Economists and agriculturists agree that Carver contributed more than any other individual to rejuvenate the Southern economy.

Do you see your vocation and your calling as one? What one thing could you do today that would help you see everything you do as an opportunity to glorify God? Friend, God has called you and I to see our work as a calling from God. He wants to reveal His presence where you spend up to 70 percent of your time--at work. Start today to view your work in a different light. You might just transform an entire economy when you do.

Os Hillman is president of Marketplace Leaders (marketplaceleaders.org), an organization that helps men and women identify and fulfill their God-given calling by applying biblical faith to their life and work. His email address is os@marketplaceleaders.org.