

OUR SOULS AT WORK

HOW GREAT LEADERS LIVE THEIR
FAITH IN THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE

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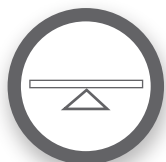
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OUR SOULS AT WORK

FOREWORD

BY DAVE GIBBONS

FOREWORD

It was the day of my mother's funeral; the day every child dreads and has nightmares about. It actually happened. As a second-year university student, I received a phone call that my mom was killed in a hit-and-run accident.

In the memorial service, I sat in disbelief as the room filled with family and friends. My father did not attend because he had recently finalized the divorce and remarried. It would have been awkward for him. It was my sister, my brother, and myself on the front row looking at my mom lying in a casket. The moment was surreal, accentuated by utter terror that Mom was gone. My mother had worked and sacrificed so much for us. She once said, "The only reason I live is for you children." Since the divorce, Mom's life had spiraled out of control. Her American dream had become a living nightmare. The house, swimming pool, new cars, boats, and trips didn't mean much to her after she and dad went their separate ways.

In the midst of the pain and what seemed to be a funeral service in slow motion, I felt I heard God saying to me, "Dave, on this earth there are things that are temporal and things that are eternal. The things that you desire don't mean much in light of eternity. I want you to give yourself completely to me and focus your life to serve me."

I translated that to mean God wanted me to go into ministry. This would be full surrender! In my mind, full surrender was full-time dedication to serving God as a pastor in a church not in a "secular" business in the world. Reluctantly, and with great resignation, I told God, "Okay, I will do it." At that moment, my journey to understanding what God meant had begun, while at the same time, an inner sense that I had a calling to business grew. I tried to quiet the conviction, but a deep inner conflict kept growing. I didn't know what to do with these seemingly incongruous feelings. How could I serve God fully other than as a minister? I buried this calling to business as a "worldly" or "secular" desire that I had to squash in order to stay obedient to what I thought was the true calling of full-time ministry. The spiritual leaders in my life told me that this ministerial calling was the highest and truest calling of all.

The Great Divide

Now, almost thirty years later, I think I have a fuller understanding of what God was trying to say to me as a young, passionate activist. The spiritual context I grew up in was a black and white environment. In an age of relativism, clear black and white posturing—theologically or politically—was common. The gravitational pull to simplicity and dogmatism seemed reactionary to what many feared was “liberalism” or “secularism” creeping into the church. Absolutes and clear lines of distinction were craved by a generation whose tenets of faith were being challenged by society.

The tone of spiritual conversation frequently drew upon war metaphors. While I know this is how Paul spoke in the New Testament, there are other metaphors of love and community that are also used. Again, not to condemn this generation’s pursuit of Jesus, but I believe this is how the current rhetoric was shaped when it came to being fully surrendered to Jesus. In fact, I remember asking the senior minister one time, “Is everything so black and white in the Bible?” He said, “Yes.”

What does this mean to those who are called to serve God outside of the church, or other than as traditional ministers?

Quite frankly, there was a difference for us between those who gave up all to go into “full-time ministry” and those who simply provided support to us in “full-time ministry.” The secular and the sacred were distinct categories. Moreover, faith and work, while discussed, never really converged. Unfortunately, those who had regular nine-to-five jobs weren’t really doing sacred work unless they served in the church. Is it any wonder that those who are not pastors only feel appreciated for their financial gifts and not for who they are as people?

In the global shifting that is going on today, the concerns are commonly economic and political in nature. However, the biggest concern should be the underutilization of the human resources in our midst, those who comprise the church we go to every Sunday. There is a need for the priesthood, the body of Christ to

arise. The normal every day businessperson, mother, student, worker need to see themselves at the frontline of what God is doing in the world. They should not be simply following the pastors; they are the ones called to lead.

The truth is that faith and work do intersect. In fact, all is sacred to God. Paul says, “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31 ESV). The highest calling is not being a pastor but becoming all God called you to be, namely a person who glorifies God in all you do.

The word *glory* conveys the idea of beauty. So as we do good work that reflects God’s character graciously, purely, morally, ethically, creatively, and excellently, we unleash his beauty. People see God. Our work is a way to worship God. It has intrinsic value and can demonstrate God’s character when we do *good* work. Faith and work are to be seamless. Work is an expression of our life in Christ. Separating the two is like separating *being* from *doing*. How do you know who you are *being* without considering what you are *doing*—or the fruit you are producing your life?

I am genuinely thrilled about the wisdom made available in this book, *Our Souls at Work*. A new priesthood is rising up that must understand who they really are and who they are called to become. This book will provide needed guidance and an astute perspective into how the Kingdom of God can be made relevant to all people at all times in all places. My hope is this book will catalyze the new prophets that aren’t just concerned about a single bottom line, but rather a *multiple* bottom line. It’s a group who doesn’t only want to make a profit, but aims to make a difference! It’s a wave of global leaders who aren’t going to let pastors have all the fun. It’s a growing movement of zealots who see themselves on the front lines of God’s campaign, no longer confined to warming the bench on Sunday mornings. This is a generation of leaders who know they’re called to do more than give money, but everything they have. They are not going to miss out on one of the greatest moments in history to be alive!

My prayer, as you read this book, is that the Holy Spirit will give you a clear vision of who you are as a passionate worshipper unleashing the beauty of God in all that you do at work, at home, in the church, and in the world at large. You can't separate what you do from who you are. Your work *is* your worship. So worship God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Unleash his beauty beyond the four walls of your church and into all of the domains you serve in the world.



OUR SOULS AT WORK

INTRODUCTION

BY MARK L RUSSELL

INTRODUCTION

From Mumbai to Manhattan, from Bangkok to Boise, and from Athens to Atlanta, every morning people wake up and go to work. Likewise, all over the world people use their weekends to worship God. Very rarely is there a connection between these two activities, producing an enormous gap between our work and our worship. This book is about bridging that gap.

If you're like me, when something hurts you cannot stop thinking about it. When times are tough, it's difficult to think about anything other than the present challenge. Right now, the economy is posing an enormous challenge for many people around the world. Questions abound. What happened that caused this crisis? Where is it going? What is it doing? What will our collective future be like?

For many of us, the economic downturn at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century came out of nowhere and left us wondering what was going on. As we have dug up answers, we haven't always liked what we have found. Stories of exploitation and greed have been uncovered, causing a lot of us to conclude that business is dirty—or at best, a necessary evil. Talk of business in a positive light by spiritually minded people has become rare indeed. Little is known or discussed regarding how we should relate our weekend faith with our daily work lives.

Churches have not been overly helpful in bringing faith to the work-world for a few reasons. In the early 90s, it became widely acknowledged among clergy that the primary reason people criticized and avoided church was that they felt churches just wanted their money. This was based in no small part on the several famous televangelist embezzlement schemes of the 1980s. Images of Tammy Faye Baker's mascara running down her face haunted people. "Churches are after my money," they thought. Not wanting to hinder church attendance, churches avoided the topic of finances, and by correlation, issues surrounding business and the workplace. Churches were not too concerned about avoiding such topics since they were never particularly comfortable addressing them in the first place.

One reason for this original lack of comfort is that many clergy have never worked in the marketplace and feel ill at ease or even intimidated discussing it. Subconsciously or intentionally they avoid any direct teaching and conversation on business matters, preferring to speak and teach on what they know best.

There are other clergy who once worked in the marketplace, but felt God had called them out of the marketplace into strictly church-related ministry—therefore their priority and attention is directed solely at “church-related ministry.”

While God undoubtedly does call numerous people to leave their marketplace work, the subtle impression (and sometimes not-so-subtle teaching) presented by many of these clergy is that working in the church is spiritually superior to working in the marketplace. As a result, generally speaking, churches have not helped their members to understand the relevance of faith in regards to their work, something most people spend the majority of their waking hours doing.

Even with the surge in interest around the global economy, the silence of the church has been deafening. However, this is a strategic opportunity for us all to step back and look more closely at our work through the filter of our faith. The good news is that many people have done this through the years and we have the opportunity to build on their experiences.

In February 2007, my brother Jeff was a first-year student in the Yale University School of Management (SOM). The Yale SOM Christian Fellowship approached Professor David W. Miller, the Executive Director of the Yale Center for Faith & Culture at Yale Divinity School, and teacher of a popular course, “Business Ethics: Succeeding without Selling Your Soul,” comprised of both SOM and Divinity School Students. Though now on the faculty of Princeton University, Miller served as an advisor and mentor to the SOM Christian Fellowship group and, drawing on his network of CEO friends, helped them put together a conference called “Believers in Business.” Initially, the conference was intended for MBA students from Yale, but soon it attracted nationwide interest and MBA students from around the country attended. I was, at the time, a PhD student at Asbury Seminary, working

on a dissertation focused on business from a theological and missional perspective. I traveled up to the conference and was one of the few non-MBA students there.

Great speakers and business executives like Steve Reinemund, Dennis Pember-ton, Ken Eldred, Mo Anderson, Steve Lynn, David Miller, and others gave the sixty or so of us in the room a lifetime's worth of wisdom and knowledge in a weekend. As I reflected on the weekend, I felt there had to be a way to get the wisdom from that room into the hearts and minds of working people everywhere. The desire to spread their experiences and perspectives led to the development of this book.

In 2008 and 2009, the conference was similarly stellar, with all-star lists of speakers who contributed more knowledge and understanding based on years of real life experience in the trenches of the global marketplace. The speakers from those three conferences form the bulk of those whose insights are included in this book.

There are several others who were not present at the conference, but who were asked to submit some of their story as a leader of faith in the global marketplace. It was surprising to me how responsive some of the busiest executives in the world were to our invitation. They took time out of their busy schedules and formulated a contribution for one reason only: so that others could learn how relevant faith is to everything that we do.¹

And faith is relevant to everything we do, whether we are at church, work, or home! There is a genuine hunger deep in our souls to know that everything we do has purpose and meaning. This is manifest everywhere, whether in a slum in Nairobi or a gathering of high-level executives on Wall Street. Through the years I have noticed that people's questions and search for meaning have centered on certain topics such as calling, stewardship, success, money, etc.

¹ All of the contributors have graciously foregone any royalties in order that the aggregate total can be donated to the annual Believers in Business Conference.

We have organized the book around these prevalent themes, with the contributors bringing their own insight and experiences to bear on selected issues. This book is not a collection of solutions as much as it is stories and points to consider. The book's purpose is to be immediately practical by stimulating thought and conversation, not by providing simplistic answers to complex topics.

This book can be read cover to cover or in bits and pieces, jumping back and forth. To get the most out of it, talk about what you are reading with other like-minded sojourners, debate with the contributors, and most importantly, apply what you learn because there is nothing better than living a life of faith in Christ everywhere all of the time.

Here's to learning to live our faith in all we do.



CHAPTER ONE

CALLING



“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’ ”

Genesis 1:28

Calling is a complex and confusing topic for most people. As an ordained minister, I have been introduced on more than one occasion as someone who has a special call from God. While I do think I have a special call from God, I do not view a “special call” as synonymous with ordained ministry, which is the unfortunate implication of the introduction.

In the church, we have been conditioned to accept certain things; one of those is that clergy, church staff, missionaries, and those types of people have callings from God. Frequently this “call” from God takes these people out of the marketplace and into “ministry.”

However, I have a long list of friends who say they have been called by God to leave the church and go back to work in the marketplace. Could that possibly be correct? Could God really call people to work in a mundane, “non-ministry-related” job? Isn’t a call from God reserved for something more holy and higher than that?

As one who has been a pastor, a missionary, a seminary professor, and an entrepreneur, I can attest that it’s all pretty mundane a lot of the time. I have come to believe that my “ministry” is wherever God “calls” me at any point in time. One thing I know for sure is that God calls us to many different places—and that he is calling us *all* to follow him wherever we are.

In the first recorded talk between God and humans, God called human beings to steward the earth’s resources. Things have developed since that first conversation and contemporary work, though it certainly does not always reflect God’s



will and purposes, is still a divinely appointed process through which we fulfill that first calling. Business, far from being a necessary evil, is a vital part of God's mission in the world and is holy ground for those who follow Christ. We just need to recognize it as such.

In this chapter you will read from seasoned executives and business people, who in large part had to develop their own understanding of what is meant by "calling," and through their walk with Christ, have come to realize that business is indeed a worthy call.

DENNIS BAKKE on THE PURPOSE OF SECULAR WORK

What is the purpose of our daily work?

For those of us who are followers of Christ, we know our purpose is to be holy and glorify God. Many of us interpret "glorifying God" as making known his Kingdom and his ways. So how does our workplace fit into such a purpose? Should our workplace be our primary mission field where we seek, through word and deed, to carry out the Great Commission? Is it simply a means to provide for our families and earn enough extra to support our church, missions, and parachurch organizations? Or could it be secular work, even for-profit business, is the principle mission of ministry to which God calls many of us?

I have had the wonderful opportunity over the last twenty-five years to undertake various types of work. Which one do you think was most important to God?

- Nine years coaching youth league football
- The Mustard Seed Foundation—cumulative giving to Christian ministries and scholarships around the world exceeding \$80 million
- Ten years as Sunday school teacher, head of missions, and chairman of deacons in our local church



- Twenty years leading a for-profit company (AES Corporation) that served the energy needs of more than 100 million people in thirty-one countries
- Leading a secular nonprofit (Imagine Schools) that operates seventy-three charter schools educating 35,000 students annually—the largest such organization in the nation

Which of these works is most important in God's perspective? Which is most consistent with serving God? Which best served my neighbor as myself?

When I left graduate school for government work in Washington, DC, thirty-nine years ago, my own understanding of work was to earn a living so I could give as much money and time as possible to the church and Christian ministry-related organizations. My high school math teacher exemplified this perspective. In my senior year, she asked me, "Dennis, what are you going to do with your life?" Like any high school senior, I didn't know and gave her the safest answer, "I really don't know, but I am planning to go to college." She had an agenda and replied, "I have some advice for you. Both your older brother, Ray, and your younger brother, Lowel, are committed to be pastors. Someone needs to support them."

She almost perfectly reflected my understanding of the vocational hierarchy available to Christians. The first priority, of course, was to be a missionary to Africa; second, a pastor; third—if you could do neither of those things—you might work for a Christian organization or school; fourth, some kind of service profession such as a doctor, social worker, or advocate. If, however, you weren't spiritual or gifted enough, you could go into business to support those at the top of God's pyramid. While few of us admit to the existence of any such hierarchy, it still seems very much alive in our churches and Christian schools.

Early in the 1980s, my wife and I joined a small group in our local church. One topic we studied was what the Bible said about work and the organizations in which we worked. This was timely for me. I found that God had a very different



perspective than what I'd been previously taught. I learned that Genesis tells us God gave us a job even before he gave us a family. We were created in the image of God to be co-creators with him. That's how we glorify him. And that work was to be sublime, joyous, and sacred. Garden work, where we managed or had dominion over creation, was to be our primary mission when the world was still perfect.

What happened in the Garden? Man messed up God's work plan. Sin entered the world and work got harder, but it is not cursed. If anyone thinks work is cursed, they won't have the right attitude. Christ came to redeem work in us. By implication, it seems to me that we who are redeemed are supposed to be co-redeemers of work, to make our ordinary secular work as close as possible to the purposeful, joyous work that God gave us in the Garden, knowing that the redeeming process will not be complete until Christ returns.

Most of the work carried out by biblical heroes was secular:

- Noah was a shipbuilder, a zookeeper, and a cruise-line captain;
- Abraham was a real estate developer;
- Esther was a pageant winner so she could enter a harem before she became a queen;
- Daniel went to Harvard, the King's college, and became president of Iraq.

Most of us are called to secular workplaces, not primarily as evangelists or disciples, but like these folks in the Bible, our job is to serve the ordinary needs of society as well as our own. Our work is to serve others and along the way our own needs will be met. That's what the great commandment says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind" . . . and . . . 'Love [serve] your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

Joseph is an Old Testament prototype of Christ. God called Joseph to serve as the Chief Operating Officer of Cairo, Incorporated. In Joseph's secular working role, he probably saved thousands of people from starving to death, only a few of



which were family members or followers of Yahweh. He was called to help feed the people, not make them disciples.

What does the New Testament say? Jesus spent eighty-five percent of his working life as a carpenter. The root word for carpenter is *tekton*, which has similar roots to the word “technology.” Since there was very little wood in the area, Jesus was probably not a builder of cabinets or other wood products. Research has found the city of Sepphoris was being built around that time, and that Jesus and Joseph likely had jobs as stone masons building homes and other structures for the Greeks and Romans, not necessarily Jewish folks. Jesus probably spent most of his work life as a secular builder in a for-profit business. That is the model most of us should be following.

HOWARD DAHL on THE SACRED / SECULAR DICHOTOMY

When we started Concord in 1977, I wrote my vision for the business. (See Purpose Statement on pages 28-29)

A few points were central to the vision. There was to be no sacred/secular dichotomy. It is important to see all of life as sacred, every detail. My father deeply influenced this viewpoint. He looked at all employees as being of equal value to a company and lived that out in his business practice. There are no small people. We’ve worked hard to make sure that all of our people are treated as equal members of the company.

Honoring the belief that everyone is of equal value is part of the ongoing conversation I have with our employees. I do a quarterly employee breakfast or lunch where I treat our staff as members of the board of directors. I update them on what’s going on in the company, field their questions and listen to their input. Any employee that wants to talk to me personally can. We’re small so this is easier to



do than in a huge company. We've had a lot of meaningful conversations, and, over the years, many professions of faith.

We also have a lot of employee development programs focused on wellness. Last year, we brought in a nutritional coach to meet with employees individually. It's important to focus on the well-being of our people. If there's one thing that has governed our business, it's the Golden Rule, "Do to others what you would have them do to you."

DAVID MILLER on THE THEOLOGY OF WORK

One of my favorite quotes from Martin Luther King, Jr. is, "If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, 'Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.'" It's not necessarily what we do, but how we do it. There are redemptive purposes in knowledge worker jobs, skilled labor, and unskilled labor. A few points about the theology of work:

- **We are co-creators with God.** Think of it as a partnership. Don't forget that God is the managing partner, and we are the junior partners, but we co-create with God. The work is not done.
- **To work is part of humanity.** It is part of human anthropology and the doctrine of humanity. It is part of who we are and what we were created to do. I have yet to see someone who has stopped working, in the paid work sense, and after the first ninety days of playing unlimited golf and tennis, doesn't miss some aspect of the work, if they haven't found new co-creative activities to put their work skills into.



HOWARD DAHL Purpose Statement

Goals for Concord, Inc.

(1) Defined company purpose.

Too often there exists the sad situation in which people do not mesh their personal life's goals with their vocational activities. There is often a confusion between function and goals resulting in a situation in which people enjoy what they are doing, but are unsure of its connection with their purpose for living. There also exists a common fallacy that one cannot have mixed motives when engaging in business (i.e., altruistic and profit-oriented). A classic case of this would be Rudolph Diesel who designed his famous engine because of a passionate desire to see socio-economic justice. Indeed, a person who has such a dream is far often more highly motivated than one who does not. It is a tragic commentary on the status of much of American free-enterprise that a monolithic *raison d'être* seems to be prevalent, viz. money. Be that as it may, Concord, Inc. is being established with some very clear objectives. These objectives are reflective of one person's interpretation of what a Christian's goals should be in the business world.

Personal goals to be reflected in Concord, Inc.

- (A) Believing that we are put on this earth not by some sort of cosmic capriciousness, but rather for a purpose ordained by God, it is my desire that Concord might serve as a vehicle to enhance that purpose.
- (B) A "successful" life would be one in which the most glory is brought to God. Therefore, one should be continually shrouded with the passion to bring maximum glory to God.
- (C) There is no question that there is an immeasurable amount of injustice in the world, and that it brings glory to God wherever justice reigns.
- (D) One thought that permeates the whole of Scripture is that God is especially concerned with the plight of the poor, the oppressed, the downtrodden, the "have nots" of this world. A corollary thought is that the "haves" are going to be held especially accountable for what they do in relationship to the "have nots."
- (E) There is a great amount of physical, intellectual, and spiritual poverty in much of the Third World.
- (F) American Christians have the resources to do something significant to abet the removal of much of this poverty.

G) Concord is thus being established for the purpose of helping to facilitate the growth of the Third World countries; a growth to be reflected intellectually, physically, and spiritually.

(II) Means to accomplish company purpose

The name Concord has been chosen because it reflects the company goals of reaching mutual agreement with the national leadership and farmers in a country before a project is begun.

- (A) Development of a farm tractor geared to the subsistence farmer in the Third World.
- (B) With the tractor, providing a "comprehensive" agricultural technology package geared toward the present situation in which the farmers find themselves.
- (C) Establishment of the Concord Foundation which will receive 10% of the pre-tax profits of Concord, Inc. The money will in turn be given to assist the needy people in their development.
- (D) Careful analysis of the markets on a country-by-country basis after which a decision is to be made as to the most strategic method to penetrate each market.
- (E) Working in close relationship with Christian missions, foundations, UNIDO, AID, and other relevant organizations.
- (F) Involving many individuals in an advisory role who have expertise and share the goals of the company.
- (G) Attempt to begin first manufacturing facility overseas..

5-year plan

1. August 1, 1977-December 31, 1977
Develop 1 prototype by March 1, 1978.
Test prototype between March and August.
2. January 1, 1978-December 31, 1978
Build 50-100 tractors to be shipped in a comprehensive machinery package to 1 or 2 locations.
3. January 1, 1979-December 31, 1979
Set up manufacturing facility in Asia, Africa, or Latin America.
Set up CPS type project in one country carefully selected.
- January 1, 1980-December 31, 1981
Set up second manufacturing facility and second comprehensive program.

- **There is a time and a season for everything.** (Ecclesiastes) Let us not forget that sometimes work is hard, boring, and monotonous; and sometimes work is easy, joyous, and invigorating. God can be present in both scenarios, if we remember to invite God in. You may be called, for a season, to be in a place that is pretty crummy, and there you are meant to be salt and light for a time. Work honorably and in a God-pleasing way. Hopefully, God will bless you then with a season where work is invigorating and stimulating, where you feel God's creative juices coming out of your fingertips.
- **Sometimes we are rewarded for our work and acknowledged publicly, and other times we are not.** Just as Jesus taught us to pray very privately, and not to show off and brag in front of others, I think we ought to continue to do our work well whether we are rewarded financially and verbally in public or not. Two things matter: both what we do and how we do it. Some jobs are obviously making this creation into a better place, with a more obvious relationship to the coming kingdom of God. In other jobs, it is harder to make that connection. But God can be present in both.
- **Work is both a means and an end to honor God and serve our neighbor.** Work is a form of worshipping God and serving neighbor, pulling together both the vertical and horizontal axis. If we hold this together, we can avoid the extreme of demonizing work on one hand or idolizing it on the other. That's the essence of the Jewish word *Avodah*, and the reason I gave The Avodah Institute that name. The root word for *Avodah* is translated in the Hebrew Scriptures differently, based on the context, it can mean "work," "worship," and "service." Whatever our places and kinds of work may be, our work matters deeply to God. We have a calling right in front of us.



ED MEESE on OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

I have been in a lot of workplaces in my life. As a matter of fact, I consider it a great asset to have gained a variety of experiences. My wife looks at it a little differently: she says I apparently can't keep a job. Either way, three elements were essential to all of my professional opportunities:

1. Religion and faith have been important elements of every opportunity that I have had. It was God's blessing and God's plan that gave me opportunities to do many different things. With the exception of my first job, I have never had to look for a job. Something always came along, and I had to choose whether to take it or not. I approached each decision with a lot of prayer before choosing to move on to a new job or not.
2. Mentors and leaders have guided me along the way. My first real mentor was a student pastor who was studying for his PhD in the Yale Divinity School while I was an undergraduate. Besides working on his PhD, he was the student pastor for Yale's Lutheran Student Association. It was a great opportunity to learn from him. That was a very important facet of my undergraduate activities at Yale.
3. Reinforced relationships, as I call them, are important to me and will be particularly valuable as you go out into the business world. These are the relationships that encourage us as we work to live according to our beliefs, many of which will be in the workplace.



KEN ELDRED on THE “CALLING” MYTH

When it comes to business as usual, godly traits tend to be overlooked, and nothing seems absolute. Knowledge is increasing at such fantastic rates that we don't have time to learn it all. The world has brought us new thought processes, and because we often don't have time to stop and reflect, we automatically adopt them as our own. So it is with business and common conventions. We buy into them because we hear them over and over again, not because we have seen them proven true.

Churches don't necessarily teach the importance of business from a scriptural perspective, and so we end up operating on conventional wisdom. The idea of myths is not new. In the parable of the talents, the one who buried the talent did so operating under a myth. When the king called the man to account, he replied with a myth about God saying in essence: I knew you were a terrible tyrant reaping where you did not sow. (See Luke 19:20-21.) Myths can ruin your whole understanding of God and what you are called to do. There are a lot of myths that need busting. Here's one:

Committed Christians should go into ministry.

This is a serious issue for people. As a child, my parents dropped me off at church in the morning, and I walked home without going in. It didn't mean a lot to me then. As I grew up, church and the things of God continued to mean very little to me. By the time I got to business school, my whole objective there was to finish, not to reflect on any moral implications. I wasn't even thinking about God. When my wife and I got married, we had no relationship with the Lord whatsoever. After a series of crises in one year, however, God got our attention. We decided to move home to the West Coast. Back home, we thought we should give our children a chance to see what religious life was about, so they could make their own decision.



The plan was to visit my old Presbyterian church, my wife Roberta's Catholic church, and then to move on to various faiths. That should have given them enough to make up their own minds about the religious stuff. Well, we didn't get past my Presbyterian church.

One morning outside the church, I began arguing with God. "I'm not sure if I want to believe in you, and I don't understand what I need to do if I become a Christian. But, I have been listening to the pastor and I am certain if I become a Christian, you will send me off to the mission field first, and that mission field will put me into ministry somewhere, probably in great poverty." I was now five years into my business career, and I had no desire to go off to the mission field. I was in business, and I really wanted to do business. I argued, "Lord, that's not what I want to do." His comment to me was, "So what? What has that got to do with your decision for me?" I finally gave in, "Whatever you decide is okay with me." His response was a verse: "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4).

My desire was to be in business, so I made a request, "If you want me to be a pastor, then you will need to change the desires of my heart. I trust you, but I need you to do that for me." Not long after, I was waiting for the voice of God to again tell me where he wanted me to go. In the meantime, I was looking at ideas for possibly starting a business. A friend and I had just made a bid to buy a company and were badly beaten out of the deal. Back in my temporary office, he said he had a number of ideas for starting a business. Since I had nothing else to do that day, I encouraged him to lay them out. About halfway down the list of his business ideas, I heard a voice distinctly say, "*That's it.*" Immediately I wondered who was speaking? It wasn't my friend. He was in the middle of explaining yet another business idea he had. I sensed it was God talking to me. I stopped my would-be partner and asked him to back up. Dutifully, he began to go through the list again until I said, "That one! Tell me more about that one." God began to work with us.

Our business was to provide computer users in large corporations with all they needed to run their systems. In those days there was no store for that kind of



stuff. We focused on putting the concept together. Thirty years ago users bought computer accessories and supplies from the computer manufacturer. We saw an opportunity to by-pass that slow chain of purchasing and provide faster service and lower prices. We decided these sales would be too small to support a sales person, so we were going to build our computer supplies business by direct mail. Up until then, no one had sold anything by direct mail any more complicated than a pencil, let alone rather sophisticated computer-related products. Further, direct mail was considered to be notoriously slow. It was very unusual for a direct mail company to ship everything the same day, which we were going to do. There was no Federal Express. If you ordered something via direct mail, twelve weeks was a good delivery window; eight weeks was pretty good, and six weeks was unbelievable. To get an order to the customer the next day—*nobody* did that! We had decided computer customers wanted fast service and could not wait weeks, let alone days, for a shipment to arrive.

We had little money when we started the company. Daily sales were crucial for us. Since we shipped everything the same day, we had no backlog. Daily sales grew to \$1,600, then \$1,700, then to over \$2,000, then the company sales started to sink. With this growth, we were stretched cash-wise. I was up to my eyeballs financially and began to worry.

I talked to my wife about the sales decline and the doubts I was having about whether I should have even started the company in the first place. Perhaps I had misunderstood God's plan. Perhaps I was supposed to be a missionary after all. My wife's approach to the problem was simple: ask God to show us. Remembering that seven was the biblical number for completeness and perfection, she suggested we pray for a \$7,000 day. This was way beyond our best day ever in recorded sales. In fact, it was three times our highest single day's sales, but I agreed. She went further. Since one day could be a coincidence, she believed it would be best to pray for *three* \$7,000 days. I thought those numbers were nearly impossible and certainly outrageous. Not wanting to appear unspiritual, I agreed again. We decided to light a candle and keep it burning for ten days while we prayed for three \$7,000 days.



We prayed morning and night. For the first five days I was really worried. How could this possibly happen? Sales continued to drift downward. On the fifth or sixth day, I began to feel that if this wasn't where God wanted me. He had something better, and I began to feel hopeful. On the tenth day, which happened to be Sunday night, I got up from the prayer time, and said, "Roberta, I really believe God's going to give us a \$7,000 day." There was nothing in the numbers to give me any support, but somehow I knew what God was going to do. And she said, "You know, I feel the same way."

I went to the office and first thing that morning we had a little business meeting. All four employees showed up. I said, "God is going to give us a \$7,000 day today." I wish I had a photograph of the look on their faces! One person's jaw was longer than normal, eyes were larger than normal, and I could practically read their thoughts, *"Where did I put my resumé? The boss has cracked!"*

The day started like any other. Usually incoming telephone orders were constant until about 11:30 a.m., dropping off over lunch, picking up around 2:00 pm and finally tailing off at 4:30 p.m., but this day, sales started about 8:30 in the morning, which was a little unusual. Incoming orders were constant, not overwhelming Nancy, my Customer Service Rep, but very steady—one right after the other.

About 2:00 p.m., Nancy came into my office, "Ken, we could have a \$5,000 day today!" She was really excited, and, in her excitement, she was going to let me off the hook. And I said, "No, it's a \$7,000 day. That's what we asked for." She looked at me, shook her head, and went away.

At 5:00 p.m. the phones finally stopped ringing with the last call coming from a firm in Hawaii. In those days, as a computer company, we did not actually have a computer. So, we tabulated our daily sales using a ten-key calculator and a piece of paper. We sat there, pretty excited, while Nancy, our sales representative cum accountant, zipped away on the ten-key. She went through the numbers twice, pulled up the total, and put her fingers on the two red numbers at the bottom—\$7,000!



I was absolutely over the moon, and called my wife, “Roberta, guess what?” She said, “I know, you had a \$7,000 day. Now come home the kids need you.” The next two Mondays, we had \$7,000 days, then business dropped to \$1,900 and then \$1,600. But I was the happiest man in town. I didn’t really care because I knew that I was right where God wanted me.

Incidentally, we found that our sales did drop only to come on stronger as the year unfolded in later months. These \$7,000 days stood out in our statistics as three very unusual beacons or spikes on the daily sales chart. These spikes were never repeated although the company grew to roughly \$400 million in sales per year.

Pastors are not the only serious Christians. Serious Christians are those who commit their lives to God whether in the ministry or at work. That has been my experience, and I pray that it is yours. Don’t ever let people say that there is a division between us or that one person’s work is nobler than another’s. I defy you to find one reference in Scripture that supports the idea that God is not interested in the work of business folks or that pastors are somehow closer to God because of their clerical vocation. Work in the secular world is just as important to God as being a pastor.

BONNIE WURZBACHER on BUSINESS AS A CALLING

For over twenty-five years I have worked for The Coca-Cola Company and am currently Senior Vice President of Global Customer Leadership. Paradoxically, my loving and faithful Christian parents, now deceased, would have been so disappointed in my career choice—at least initially. However, I don’t think they would be now. Allow me to explain.

As a young girl growing up in the Midwest, I was clearly drawn to business. Whether it was erecting lemonade stands, organizing and marketing neighbor-



hood puppet shows or dog walking services, entrepreneurship came naturally. I was good at it and enjoyed it, but had few, if any, role models in business and never really considered it as a career, much less a calling.

Thankfully, in my formative years, reverence and service to God and his Kingdom was lovingly ingrained in me by my family. I descend from a long and unbroken line of dedicated pastors, missionaries, doctors, and teachers. Following in the steps of my parents and grandparents, I was blessed to be educated at Wheaton College surrounded by many kindred “PKs” (pastors’ kids) and “MKs” (missionaries’ kids). The idea that one could serve God through a business career was inconceivable to me—and to my family.

Graduating from Wheaton with a degree in education, I immediately embarked on a career in service as an elementary school teacher in an economically disadvantaged community. The rewards of that work were increasingly dimmed by the absence of a meritocracy, the tyranny of tenure in the public school system, and the frustrating indifference of many of the students’ parents.

My search for a new career led me to a sales opportunity in the hospitality industry and shortly thereafter to Coca-Cola. Gradually, during that journey, I’ve come to learn that all believers are called to be in “full-time Christian work,” not just those in religious-oriented vocations. Indeed, I’ve studied, pondered, and received inspired mentoring on the meaning and aspects of a “calling” and how God can be glorified—and his Kingdom advanced—through our daily work.

BONNE and STEVE WURZBACHER on FRUITFUL WORK AS BOTH A BLESSING and EXPECTATION OF GOD

There are only two resources available to us for fulfilling God’s requirements:

- 1) the natural resources he has placed on the earth, and



- 2) the “intellectual capital” he has gifted to each of us.

God’s original purpose for us was twofold:

- 1) to “Be fruitful and multiply,” (Genesis 1:28 ESV), i.e., to develop the social world—to build families, churches, schools, cities, and the like.
- 2) to “fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28 ESV), i.e., harness the natural world—plant crops, construct buildings, invent, innovate, compose, and the like.

I believe he has called us to create God-honoring cultures and civilizations.

We continue God’s own creative work in this world by harnessing the power and developing the potential that God originally built into his creation. We are each called to be his representatives and stewards in this world, reflecting his holy and loving care for it.

**We don’t get meaning *from* our work;
we must bring meaning *to* our work.**

God needs his people in boardrooms and business offices, just as much as he does in churches, classrooms, and operating rooms.

Certainly there have been high profile disappointments in the business world recently. Enron, Adelphia, and other failed corporations remind us of our flawed condition and the potential for harm, yet, they also create a compelling case for the need of Christian ethics in business—and believers who understand how to glorify God in both the product and the process of their work.

Many Christians, seriously committed to their faith, struggle with the divide imposed by modern society between the sacred and secular spheres—our work being strictly imprisoned in the secular. God needs his people everywhere. All vocations, the business world included, can be practiced in ways that honor the



Lord and use our talents to serve him. Scripture commands us to be sent “into *the world*,” yet not be “of *the world*” (John 17:18, 16, emphasis mine).

DAVID MILLER on THE HUNGER FOR DISCUSSION of FAITH IN BUSINESS

It is fascinating that the corporate world is increasingly interested in faith at work. About twenty years ago when I was starting my career with IBM, if someone had asked me what I did last weekend, and I replied, “Wow! I heard a great sermon at church!” everyone would have run away and thought I was a religious zealot. But today when I go to a cocktail party in New York City, attend an event in Zurich, or travel anywhere in the world and am asked, “What line of work are you in?” I often say, somewhat mischievously, “Well, I’m in the God business.” Inevitably, that’s followed by silence. Then questioners ask, “What do you mean?” I tell them, “I used to be a partner at an investment bank, but now I think about God and the roles God and theology have in our daily work lives.” Usually there’s a little bit more silence, then one of two reactions: Either they quickly abandon me to grab a drink at the bar, or they start a conversation that often lasts the whole evening. The fascinating thing is eight out of ten people don’t run to the bar. They say, “Can I talk to you?”

People are trying to connect the dots between Sunday and Monday, or Saturday and Monday, based on what their Sabbath day is. And they’re trying to find other people who want to talk about that “work-worship gap.” There is a hunger for it among the different generations. The mere fact that Yale University recruited me to help establish, lead, and serve as executive director of the university’s Center for Faith & Culture, that people are reading my book *God at Work* and bringing me in to give talks and consultations around the country, and that Princeton University appointed me to its faculty to continue and expand that work, launching its new Faith & Work Initiative, are all extraordinary. These things would not have happened a few years ago.



I've done a lot of work with my friend John Tyson, the chairman of Tyson Foods, on how to become a faith-friendly company, which is different from a faith-based company. John recently gave the University of Arkansas significant endowment funding for a new center, which is called the John Tyson Faith and Spirituality in the Workplace Center. That business leaders like John Tyson would see the importance of faith at work, and that a public university would accept such a gift, is extraordinary. This "Faith at Work" movement is a movement, and it has gained intellectual and practical credibility.

Here's another example of the interest in overcoming the Work-Worship Gap. One of the prominent large Swiss banks invited me to give a talk on business ethics to a German-speaking group of successful businesswomen in a castle outside of Zurich, Switzerland. The group consisted of high net-worth individuals who were either business owners, heirs to great wealth, or senior executives who had made a lot of money. Half of the women were clients and the other half prospective clients. It was one of those gentle, low-key kinds of marketing events, and I was asked to talk about ethics in business. One of my Power-Point slides simply asked: "What is the source of your ethics?" I commented that the minute you open up the question of source, inevitably issues of the transcendent, the metaphysical, and God comes into play. I mentioned that most people's ethics are shaped by a variety of factors including parents, relatives, teachers, coaches, spiritual leaders, culture, upbringing, and traditions. Then I moved the conversation on to another topic. But guess what? During dinner, cocktail hour, and until about 2:00 a.m., I ended up talking with and answering questions from several conference attendees about God and Jesus. It was extraordinary. Of course, the setting was safe and the tone was one of respect and desire for personal growth.



DAVID MILLER on

THE RELEVANCE OF FAITH in THE MARKETPLACE

Once a month I lead a group in Greenwich, Connecticut, called the Greenwich Leadership Forum, or GLF. It was founded about five years ago by a few people, including Russell Reynolds, the founder of the prominent executive search firm of the same name. Russ and a few friends knew that Greenwich, the hedge fund capital of the world, is one of the wealthiest zip codes in the country. They thought if they could get people in Greenwich to care more about faith than golf, it could make a difference in the marketplace. When Russ and his friends asked me to set up a program around that, I declined because I'm not a big fan of programs. Eventually I agreed to set up a three-part pilot to see if people would be interested. I said, "If people come, fine, we will turn it into something, but let's not presume an outcome."

We decided to hold the meetings at 6:30 a.m. at the Indian Harbor Yacht Club. I nixed the idea of holding it at a church to avoid repelling people who aren't interested in church. I thought twelve or fifteen people might show up. Yet, in this supposedly spiritually arid place called Greenwich, the event produced thirty people. Astounding. We now have average attendance of over one hundred people per session, and over eight hundred people on our mailing list. Half of the time I invite CEOs and interview them doing my Oprah imitation. We talk about how they connect the dots between faith and work, how they deal with failure, temptation, struggle, and the plurality of worldviews. Other times, I teach from some story out of the previous week's *The Wall Street Journal*. We discuss whether there are resources in the Christian faith and explore teachings that offer a different perspective and worldview. GLF approaches these questions out of the Christian tradition, but people from any and no tradition are welcome to participate.

I always ask at the beginning of a session, "Who is here for the first time?" and invariably there are several newcomers who were invited by friends. It is all



spread by word of mouth. I explain that the Greenwich Leadership Forum is about answering this question: “What does the Bible, which everyone tries to follow on Sunday, have to do with the *Wall Street Journal* and Monday through Friday work life?” I hold a copy of the Bible in one hand and the *Wall Street Journal* in the other. For many people, the answer is “nothing.” They see themselves operating in two different worlds. But I argue just the opposite: your Sunday church world has everything to do with your rest-of-the-week world. If you read the Bible through the lens of the marketplace, you’ll be blown away by how much both testaments—the old Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament—have to say about your behavior in and attitude toward the marketplace and money. Jesus talked about money all the time—and not always in condemnatory tones. *The Wall Street Journal* does not need to be your marketplace bible; rather, God’s Bible ought to be where you seek guidance for marketplace parameters.

I would be selling you a bill of goods if I tried to say that the Bible was an easy how-to manual. It doesn’t say to just do steps one, two, three, and you’ll be rich and successful. It is a rich, textured, and living set of stories about the human condition, where wisdom oozes from almost every page. Both testaments are filled with inspiring stories of great men and women and many fallen heroes. Integrating faith and work can be a struggle; but the Bible contains all of the wisdom and the strength you need to recover from failure, prevent it in the future, and lead a life that is pleasing to God.

If you would have told me a few years ago that I would be standing in front of audiences around the world talking about God, faith and work, I would have said you were smoking something illegal. That wasn’t me. That wasn’t how I grew up. The Sunday mornings of my youth in New Jersey began with my devout, Methodist mother taking my older brother and me off to Sunday School while my genius father, who was a PhD research scientist for RCA, sat at home in his recliner chair listening to loud classical music and reading the Sunday *The New York Times* cover to cover. He had no time for organized religion. It intellectually was not up to snuff for him. He posed lots of hard questions: What about other religions? What about evil? What about illness? What about war? What about



pestilence? Because he couldn't answer them, he assumed that the proposition of God was false.

As a kid, I was always asking myself: Who is right? Mom or Dad? In a way, it turns out they were both right: My dad was right to ask these hard questions, but he came to the wrong conclusions; and my mom was right to take Christianity at face value with a pure, child-like faith. If only we all had the faith of a child, even as we wrestle with life's toughest questions, the world might be a better place.

As I grew up, my "life question" revolved around blind faith versus intellectual discovery, the sacred versus the secular. As I got older, I reframed that question as: "What does my faith have to do with my work? Is faith just something I compartmentalize? Is it just a Sunday proposition?" If I really took my faith seriously and believed that God exists, and Jesus is who he said he is, then ought not my approach to work and leadership be different? Faith ought to impact everything I do Monday through Friday, not just when I have my Sabbath time.

After eight terrific and exciting years at IBM, I accepted a position in London as managing director of State Street Bank and Trust, and later went to work at Midland Bank PLC as part of its turnaround team for the securities service business. HSBC acquired Midland, and I stayed on to run HSBC's global custody and securities business. Finally, during the last couple of years that I worked in London, I was a partner in a small, private merchant banking firm doing cross-border mergers. Since I spoke German, my focus was the securities industry and our acquisitions in German-speaking countries. It was during this time that I gradually discerned a calling to study theology.

I wish I could tell you it was some dramatic event or life crisis that drove me to study the mystery of God. Truth be told, I loved my wife, I loved my job, I was making more money than I knew what to do with, and I was satisfied and fulfilled. Nevertheless, I discerned this tugging, this sort of whisper to study theology. After about eighteen months of discernment and some fits and starts, I finally concluded that, for whatever crazy reason, God was calling me to study



theology. So, at the partners meeting when it came time to discuss new business, I raised my hand and said, “I have discerned this calling to go study theology.” There was dead silence. You could have heard a pin drop. Jaws did drop. One of my partners said, “You think you’ve received a calling from God?” “Yes,” I replied, deeply embarrassed. Without skipping a beat, he said, “Hasn’t God ever heard of call-waiting?”

DAVID MILLER on CONNECTING FAITH and WORK

Soon after that my wife Karen, a highly successful lawyer turned law professor, and I returned to the States. I studied for several years in seminary, first for an MDiv and then a PhD in social ethics. As you’ve gathered by now, my passion is connecting faith and work. My personal mission statement is: How do we integrate the claims of our faith with the demands of our work? We work in a world and in a workplace that make demands on us that aren’t always aligned with the claims of the Gospel. The code of ethics on Wall Street is different from the code of ethics in the Bible. How do we integrate the claims of our faith with the demands of our work?

My friend Bob Buford wrote a *New York Times* best-seller entitled, *Halftime: Changing Your Game Plan from Success to Significance*. Now theologically, what is wrong with that title? Bob made a bundle of money with cable TV in Texas. In mid-life he experienced a tragedy and some profound, life-changing events. Since then, he has dedicated the second half of his life to strategic philanthropy and a lot of other extraordinary things. He’s a super guy.

His thesis in *Halftime* is once you have made your bundle, you should cash in, step out of the business world where you made your wealth and start finding significance in your life by getting involved in good works and noble projects. The



problem I have with that thesis is what about the first half of your life? Does that count for nothing other than to make money for later “giving back”?

In response, one of the books I am writing has the working title of *Full Time: Finding Significance in your Success*. I believe your whole work life, whether you are an analyst, an engineer, a secretary, or a CEO, is full-time and significant. We err if we think that work can only be a calling and fulfilling if it is really stimulating, or if we work only in order to later be a philanthropist. Look at the biblical stories on calling. In most of those narratives, people were called to things that were not fun, glorious, or glamorous. They were not called to things you would aspire to do. Callings can be tough, just like the workplace. Let’s embrace that and find God in the daily, the mundane, and the profane.

For example, God says to Moses, a convicted felon on the run: “I want you to pop back in and visit Pharaoh and tell him to free all the slaves.” That was not a pleasant calling.

Often we start our careers working those ludicrously long hours and doing meaningless tasks, or so they seem, as we develop our professional competence. That is the place for us to be the face of Christ. That is when we are tested, learn where the ethical boundaries are, learn how to say “no,” when to say “yes,” and perhaps how to suffer the consequences. Those are trying times but can also be times of calling. They equip us for later things that might seem bigger or more meaningful. It is in the trenches where a lot of the learning action is.

I do a lot of one-on-one consulting, counseling, coaching, and advising with CEOs and senior executives. Many of them will start the one-on-one relationship by saying, “Aw, Miller, I really envy you. You are in full-time Christian work.” And I reply, “Do you mind if I ask you a question? Are you baptized?” Most of them are. I continue, “Well, according to what I read in the Bible, you are in full-time Christian work, too!” Being a research analyst is full-time Christian work. So is being a ditch digger, or a CEO. It is all about where we are planted, and being faithful to your call there and beyond.



Now to be fair, in some fields it is a lot harder to make the connection between work and doing what is God-pleasing and honorable. There probably are some fields that people of faith ultimately should say, “That is just too toxic, too evil, too wrong, too bad, too much against my principles. I should not work in that environment.” But in general, I tend to stretch the boundary of where Christians ought to work. A Christian ought to work in as dangerous a place as possible, so long as you can protect yourself. If you don’t like how certain industries operate, get in them and try to change them. Maybe you’ll be there just for a season. Maybe you’ll work there for just a few years. It could be very difficult for you spiritually or ethically, but maybe you will begin to create change. You can protect, empower, and encourage others. You can make a difference.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran pastor, ethicist, and martyr who got involved in overthrowing Hitler, is my favorite theologian. He said, to paraphrase, “It is better to get your hands dirty in order to try to prevent evil and then to fall on the mercy of God for forgiveness than it is to sit on the sidelines and be proud of your clean hands.” That motivates me.





what's your calling?

**join the conversation at
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