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Faith at work: how churches can better enable believers to integrate their personal faith in the workplace

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

FAITH AT WORK:
HOW CHURCHES CAN BETTER ENABLE BELIEVERS
TO INTEGRATE THEIR PERSONAL FAITH IN THE WORKPLACE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL UNIVERSITY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
STUART D. DUGAN

PORTLAND, OREGON

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ABSTRACT

This project addresses the need for churches to assist believers in integrating their faith in the workplace. The separation between faith and the commercial world is longstanding and the relationship between the two is often conflicted. Across America every day, countless Christians are faced with having to live a fragmented life, compartmentalizing their faith and religious practices from their work and careers. The commonly held belief that life is divided between sacred and secular results in an unhealthy disconnect and leaves the impression that secular work is inferior to sacred work.

The church is in the best position to correct this false understanding and enable believers to seamlessly integrate their Christian faith and work-week activities in a way that glorifies God, is fulfilling for the worker, builds up society as a whole and serves the Kingdom of God on earth. Yet too often the church has failed to respond to this need. This dissertation is written to undergird and equip the church to meet this challenge.

Chapter 1 sets the stage by presenting real-life scenarios illustrating the conflict and internal dissonance faced and states the problem being addressed. The research narrative describes my own transition from working in the advertising world into ministry and the settings where this research and applied theory were addressed most directly. Key terminology is defined and the scope and limitations are established.

Chapter 2 lays the foundation for an effective faith-at-work ministry. This is accomplished in three major categories: 1) Exegetic review of key biblical terms, 2) Theological study of vocation and call with particular focus given to naming and

community, and 3) An historical review of theological thought from the Reformation to the present day.

Even though a solid foundation for faith-at-work ministry can be laid, significant stumbling blocks exist. Chapter 3 confronts the philosophical premise that a sacred-secular divide does and should exist. Chapter 4 identifies five additional obstacles a church will likely face as it begins to develop a faith-at-work ministry. To develop effective faith-at-work ministries these stumbling blocks will need to be faced and overcome.

Chapter 5 presents research into what other churches are doing to address this need. Case studies are provided from churches across the country, representing various denominational ties and worship styles. Together they illustrate four successful approaches to faith-at-work ministry.

Finally, in chapter 6 I present my own experiential research and applied theology. Three diagrams are offered as a way to illustrate the common relationship between the church and business communities. A fourth diagram, the *Avodah* Model, is created as a new way of conceptualizing this relationship. The success and failures of this final phase of research are presented and critiqued. The chapter concludes with a vision of how an effective church-based faith-at-work ministry can transform ordinary work-place struggles into extraordinary building blocks for the Kingdom of God.

three essential components of an effective faith-at-work ministry and
recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Narrative

Riding the train into work Monday morning, Frank is thinking about the proposal he has to make today. He didn't sleep well last night and is concerned that if he doesn't do well he won't receive the promotion he has worked so hard to get. Across the aisle Jim's Blackberry reminds him that it's going to be a long day with one meeting after another. He promised his son he'd be there for his soccer game, but now he's not so sure he'll be able to make it, again.

Christy's stomach is in knots. Her boss is pressuring her to make some "gray area" compromises that go against her beliefs. She begins to wonder if she really is being "too narrow-minded" as her co-workers have accused.

Mark has to make a bid on a project and he knows that his main competitor is going to underbid just to get the contract. To give an honest bid will likely mean he won't get the job and as they say, "There's no prize for second place."

Kelly is stuck in a job she hates. It pays the bills, but if given the chance, she would change jobs as soon as possible.

Steve is a new Christian who is trying to figure out what his new faith means for his work in marketing and advertising. In an industry not known for its truth-telling, he struggles with his own conscience and what it means to live as a witness to Christ.

Kevin is a pilot. The long stretches of time when he is away from home and his family takes its toll and the temptation of one of the beautiful young flight attendants is starting to wear down his resolve to remain faithful. He knows he needs to avoid her, but his defenses are beginning to weaken.

Robert is just starting out in an architectural firm and knows that if he's going to be successful in a highly competitive industry he has to put in extra hours and work. His wife is pregnant and pressuring him to be home more. He's caught between providing *for* his family or being home *with* his family; he can't do both.

What do these people all have in common? They will all be in church next Sunday. The question is whether they get the spiritual direction they need. Will they get answers to the questions they ask and guidance for the struggles they face?

Every Sunday untold thousands of men and women, who will spend the bulk of their time and energy during the week engaged in some form of workplace activity, gather in churches across America to worship and be spiritually fed. Yet the messages they hear rarely address the issues faced in the workplace with direct real world application. The urgency of this need, and opportunity it provides, are expressed by others as well. Laura Nash and Scotty McLennan in, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, raise the alarm that,

If church professionals fail to detect and address deeply ingrained assumptions that are hostile to business or hopelessly devoid of practical implementation, they will engage in one of the largest acts of self-marginalization since their support of national prohibition. It is urgent that the new spiritual interest be understood both for its spiritual *potential* as well as its limits.¹

¹ Laura L. Nash and Scotty McLennan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday: The Challenge of Fusing Christian Values with Business Life*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), xxvii.

From the pulpit messages are proclaimed warning the people about the dangers of the world and the importance of guarding against secular influences in their life. Sermons espousing the importance of spending time with family may include the well-worn warning, “No one on their death bed ever said they wished they has spent more time at the office.” Pastors preach about the importance of tithing and giving financially to the church and its ministries, but then condemn the secular world’s values and systems that make earning the money possible. In churches every week across America, the opportunity presents itself to train, equip, encourage and mobilize Christians to make a positive impact for Christ in the workplace, but in most, nothing will be said from church leadership.

Yet, there is a hunger among men and women for biblical and spiritual guidance on how to integrate personal faith in their workplace. Trained Christians are needed to help navigate the complex multicultural, global-economic and legal constraints from a Scriptural and God-honoring perspective. In our rapidly changing world, leadership from the church is needed now more than ever.

At the end of the Tuesday Morning Men’s Bible Study one day, Scott² and Rick are saying goodbye when Scott remarks that he’s not looking forward to going to work that day.

“What’s wrong?” Rick asks.

“I’ve got to deal with an assistant whose work is just not up to par and I need to let her go.” Scott sighed, looking defeated. “The trouble is she’s a single mom and needs this job. We’ve just spent the last hour talking about caring for the poor and here I’m

² The following narrative is based on actual conversations, only the names and identifying references have been changed.

stuck not knowing quite what to do. For the sake of the business I need to fire her. But if I do, I know I'm going to be putting her out of work. With the current high unemployment rate it will be very difficult for her to get another job – especially one that will pay enough. If I keep her, my business suffers; if I let her go, she suffers. What am I supposed to do?"

Scott is a new Christian and eager to do things "God's way," but doesn't know quite what that means for this business decision. Scott and Rick are tapping into a dilemma faced by many in management positions at work.

Week after week countless men and women struggle to live out their faith with integrity at their places of employment. Take Sally for example. On Sunday she sat through a sermon that moved her to tears. The pastor spoke of people whose lives were changed because a woman had stepped out of her comfort zone to share about Jesus. Sally leaves worship inspired to make a difference at her own office the next day and hopes to lead someone to Christ. But while driving home alone reality sets in. Religious symbols in the office are strongly frowned upon and talking about faith during work hours is strictly forbidden. Frustrated, she reconciles herself to the fact that the sermon illustration doesn't match her life. Monday comes and she says nothing. Tuesday and Wednesday also pass and no word is shared. By Thursday, the vision from Sunday is forgotten and lost in the deadlines and paperwork. The next Sunday Sally will listen to the sermon, but with a more calloused heart.

These brief examples represent the broad and pervasive disconnect taking place between Christian faith and life in the workplace. What guidance are churches giving their members on how to integrate their faith and work in ways that are realistic and

effective? How is the church assisting those both in and outside of the church doors to adjust to global changes from a godly perspective? Where can Christians connect for mutual encouragement and guidance with others who also share a commitment to Christ and understand the demands of work? These are the types of questions the church needs to ask itself. The church is in a unique position to provide spiritual direction and guidance for its parishioners as they navigate the complex world of workplace dynamics from a Christian perspective. This project seeks to address these needs and provide constructive solutions to this pervasive problem.

This sentiment is voiced through many other people as well. The International Coalition of Workplace Ministries hosted a conference where almost 300 workplace leaders, workplace ministries representatives and pastors attended. The conference compiled a list of what they saw for the future of faith-at-work ministries. Among them, “We will begin to view churches as equipping centers that will support Christians in their workplace calling....We will begin to see a movement similar to Promise Keepers, with major events around the faith at work theme,” and “We will see prayer impact the workplace even more.” But to this pastor-author, the last statement stands out with stinging indictment and exhilarating motivation: “Pastors will be the last to embrace the movement, but will ultimately be responsible for the greatest influence once they do embrace it. It will be the breakthrough for which many pastors have been looking.”³ It is my desire that the research described in this paper will become part of this movement.

³ Os Hillman, “The Faith at Work Movement: Opening the 9 to 5 Window,” *FaithInTheWorkplace.com*, no. 9 (2004). <http://www.christianitytoday.com/workplace/articles/issue9-faithatwork.html> (accessed June 11, 2010).

Statement Of The Problem

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:17

Most Christians in America spend the predominant part of their lives in some form of work-related activity. Over the course of a working lifespan of nearly forty years, 48-50 weeks a year, 40-60 hours per week are spent in the workplace or engaged in occupational pursuits. This equates to 80,000-120,000 hours spent in the workplace. Outside of their own families, work is for many their single greatest form of activity. Work-related responsibilities are the primary source of income and livelihood and for many it is also a major source of one's identity.

Yet research indicates that, "Americans hate their jobs more than ever before in the past twenty years, with fewer than half saying they are satisfied." This statistic is strongest among workers under the age of twenty-five, with workers age 45 to 54 reporting the second highest rate of dissatisfaction. Perhaps most alarming is that, "Overall, dissatisfaction has spread among all workers, regardless of age, income or residence."⁴ This negative perception is evident by the frequent use of the phrase describing work as a "necessary evil" and where taking early retirement is considered by many to be the measure of true success.

The church reinforces this negative attitude by asserting that work in the world is a secular activity and therefore secondary to spiritual pursuits. However, the Bible is clear that work is a divinely created activity intended for human enrichment. Work is to be an expression of worship and service to God. The workplace is one of the greatest

⁴ "Americans Hate Their Jobs More Than Ever," *msnbc Business* (2007). <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17348695/> (accessed June 10, 2010).

contact areas believers have with non-Christians and provides countless opportunities to impact people's lives, and the world, for Christ. Far from being a necessary evil, work's purpose is to be a privilege and blessing.

This study addresses this deficit in applied faith and work integration by asking the question: how can churches better enable their members to bring Christ into their business and help promote the presence of the Kingdom of God in the workplace? This project proceeds on the convictions that Christ's presence in the workplace, lived out through his people, can dramatically shape business practices and change the dynamics within the work context as well as have a positive impact on the wider world.

While many Christians often feel a profound disconnect between their faith and respective professions, the church is often ill equipped to provide meaningful integration of the Christian faith and the marketplace. There is a critical need for pastors and other spiritual leaders to offer quality guidance that leads to healthy faith and work integration in the lives of their congregants. Laura Nash and Scotty McLennan, in *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, note the rapid increase in interest in spirituality in business books and conferences, and the noticeable absence of a specifically Christian presence.

Curiously, mainstream Christianity (until recently the religion of choice for the majority of Americans) is notably absent on the new road to Canterbury...It is fair to say that undisguised emphasis on Jesus has *not* achieved a significant connection with the management culture of mainstream corporate America...Baby boomers who cannot find any meaningful message on economic life in the church of their childhood look elsewhere to feed their spiritual hunger. Even business people of deep Christian faith find it difficult to understand what Christianity has to say to their professional concerns.⁵

It is therefore imperative for church leadership to equip Christians to live out their faith in their workplace. This project addresses this void by examining the expressed

⁵ Nash and McLennan, xxv.

needs of Christians in the workplace and providing practical and theologically sound solutions to the issues raised. Spiritual matters are not just relegated to the church; neither are spiritual lessons learned solely in Bible studies and home small groups. It is my firm belief that it is *in* the workplace that Christ also does his transforming work on the hearts and souls of his people. When proper attention is given, the workplace itself becomes an avenue by which grace is both sought and experienced and where faithful trust is fostered and strengthened.

This paper argues that Christians will feel more fulfilled in their work as they begin to view their businesses and occupations as “platforms for ministry.” The sought-after outcome is that Christians will understand that there are no “secular vocations” when they decide to pursue a given career path to the glory of God. When people combine their unique occupational skills, contacts, resources, and experiences with other Christians who share a similar vision, God’s Kingdom will be incarnated.

Research Narrative

The seeds for this project were planted more than three decades ago and have been growing ever since. My own struggle with integrating faith and work began first while working as a counselor and later in advertising. Now as a pastor the lessons learned in those early years in “secular work” are at the core of my proposed solution to this pervasive problem of integrating faith and work. I am “Steve” in the narrative above.

Immediately after graduating from college I began working as a counselor at a residential treatment center for troubled adolescents. As “low man on the totem pole,” the job required working nights and weekends. One unforeseen and ultimately destructive

factor was the spiritual toll it took on me, since I was no longer able to reconnect regularly with my church family who met during the times I was at work. As a result of the isolation my enthusiasm and performance suffered and within a year I resigned in the face of being fired.

I next found my niche at a young multimedia advertising company in Portland, Oregon. As the company quickly grew, so did my duties and many aspects of the work were very rewarding. I was attracted to this company in part because the owner was a Christian and an elder in his church. Early on I suggested that we start our staff meetings with prayer for the day's work and was told "We don't do that here." I was puzzled, but accepted this workplace "truth" and never again raised the subject.

I had a lot of natural talent for the business and quickly learned many new skills and acquired new responsibilities. I was single, had my sports car, lived just above the Willamette River and had a lifestyle I enjoyed. Still, an internal debate within me continued to rage and an unsettling sense of God's call continued to nag at my soul. New questions and struggles arose as I sought to be faithful to Christ and successful in the advertising business. A life-defining moment came one day during lunch when the owner told me that if I intended to continue on my career path there, I would have to be willing to dedicate nights and weekends to the company as the client and job required. I did not want to repeat the consequences of the career choice from my previous employment. Even more so, I wrestled with the ultimate value of my life's work. I wanted my talents and energies to go to something more substantive than simply enabling one company to make more money than another. I wanted my life legacy to have greater value than being an "ad man." I felt a "higher" calling for my career, so after much thought I went back to

the president to say that I was not willing to meet those expectations and soon after tendered my resignation.

With little more than the need to quiet the inner debate, I applied for and was accepted into Fuller Theological Seminary. I did not know where it would lead but trusted that God would reveal the path my life's work was to follow. My personal journey eventually led me through seminary and into the ministry, but those initial experiences in the business world forever shaped my perspective on my role as a pastor.

The varied course of my pastoral career has provided a diverse backdrop against which this project was formed. The churches I have served include an affluent professional community in Southern California, followed by a small "tourist" town on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State. The next leg of the journey took me to an historic suburban community outside of Philadelphia where great emphasis was placed on climbing the corporate ladder in major firms located in New York City, Princeton and Philadelphia. I then returned to the Pacific Northwest and pastored a medium-sized congregation in a growing technology-oriented small town in the Pacific Northwest. After seven years there I moved to Sitka, Alaska where I served as campus pastor on a mission college. Financial issues at the college necessitated another move two years later which took me to a large and highly affluent church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Six years after that I again returned to the Northwest and currently serve a middle-class community in a suburban town near Olympia, Washington where many members of the congregation are teachers, government employees, office workers and members of the military.

Each community has been unique in its own right and each person I served expressed distinct challenges and rewards in his or her work. Yet these cross-country experiences confirm there are more similarities than differences. Regardless of the demographics of ministry within the United States, I have found that the needs, desires, and hopes for one's life at work are remarkably similar. The job titles may change, but the pressure to meet deadlines and sales quotas does not. The pay scale may differ, but the conflicts with bosses and the frustrations with grating personalities are voiced the same way. Trying to find a balance between work and family is a concern of those wearing business suits and coveralls alike.

Throughout my twenty-five years of pastoral ministry I have sought ways to help parishioners deal with their own struggles and answer the questions of faith as it relates to the workplace. This search reached its apex while serving as Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida during the years 2000-2006. One of the specialized ministry areas under my direction was the men's ministries program. In this group I found many men who were deeply committed to Christ and highly successful in their various areas of business. Yet when questions of faith and work were raised, they were ill equipped, and often unable, to provide satisfying answers. In this setting the questions became most acute. It was there that this specific doctoral ministry emphasis began. My goal was to bring Christian spiritual formation into business leadership to better enable the people I served in Fort Lauderdale to effectively and successfully apply their Christian faith in their regular jobs and employment.

As director of the men's ministry program, I regularly met for Bible study with men who would then head off to their respective jobs. Every week I was privy to their

concerns, struggles, joys, hungers and questions. To better equip myself for the task of helping these church members integrate their faith in their workplace I eagerly sought out resources to help integrate the Christian faith with the realities of the modern work world. In searching for teaching materials that would help in these areas, I soon discovered that few resources on this subject were available. To my greater surprise was the lack of interest expressed in the broader church community towards the faith and work topic. When I approached a senior editor of a major Christian publishing company with my idea of writing resources to address this need, the response I received was “Why would anyone want that?” More recently, the interest in faith-at-work ministry has taken a foothold, but the resources targeting church leadership to assist in equipping laity in the workforce for marketplace ministry remains scarce. In many ways, this movement is still in its infancy.

It is my desire to add my voice to the increasing conversation on how churches can better equip their members to be ambassadors for Christ in their workplace and to make a positive impact for the Kingdom of God on earth in the commercial world today. The goal is to help transform the workplace into one that is meaningful to the employee, profitable to the employer and beneficial to the world and society at large.

To assist in this process of growth and maturation a common language base and an agreement of terminology must first be established.

Defining the Terms

The first challenge one faces in developing a faith-at-work ministry is the glaring absence of clearly defined terminology. As Laura Nash and Scott McLennan conclude in *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, “the terrain we cover is notably short of common

definitions.”⁶ David Miller, in *God at Work*, summarizes the various names used to describe the efforts made to bring marketplace issues and religious teachings into conversation with each other. “Spirit and work,” “soul at work,” “spirituality and work,” “religion in the workplace,” and “faith in the workplace” are just a few examples.⁷

Spirituality is the preferred term for many specifically because of its ambiguous and indefinable nature. Miller highlights how this ambiguity enables each person to customize their own spiritual beliefs to fit their own personal preferences. “Indeed, this customization process results in a form of cafeteria spirituality in which seekers pick and choose what they find pleasing, utilitarian, and helpful, while discarding or ignoring the aspects of a religious tradition they find difficult, offensive, or not useful.”⁸

“Faith at work,” however, is the term frequently chosen in self-reference by people engaged in this movement.⁹ As Miller describes,

The businesspeople I surveyed for this study liked the open-ended nature and dual meaning of the term *faith at work*. The first meaning locates and legitimizes the spatial presence of faith in the work sphere in general and in the workplace in particular. The second meaning suggests a pneumatological dimension of the activity of God, where God is busy at work – that is, God is working.¹⁰

For the purposes of this study, *faith* is distinguished from *spirituality* in that it is anchored in the specific incarnation of Jesus Christ and adheres to what Nash and McLennan identify as the three essential elements lacking in most definitions of spirituality. Namely, 1) source narratives, 2) source disciplines and rituals through which

⁶ Nash and McLennan, xxix.

⁷ Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement*, 14.

⁸ Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement*, 17.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

people personally discover these truths and apply them to daily life, and 3) ethical rules and practices that followers believe are demanded by these understandings.¹¹

Additionally, the use of the word *faith* is chosen over *religion* due to the negative connotation this word currently carries. Ian Mitroff and Elizabeth Denton found in their study that “respondents generally differentiated strongly between religion and spirituality. They viewed religion as a highly inappropriate topic and form of expression in the workplace.”¹² Whereas spirituality was viewed as informal, personal, universal, nondenominational, and broadly inclusive and tolerant, religion was perceived as formal, organized, dogmatic, intolerant and divisive.¹³ It is recognized, however, that these perceptions are often based upon limited understanding. Disciplined faith communities reflect a “binding together” (*religio*) of believers committed to common spiritual pursuits. These religious faith communities often include theological teachings that emphasize ethical concerns, social justice, service and self-sacrifice in contrast to the often inward-focused and narcissistic nature of some forms of modern spirituality.¹⁴

Of the three terms often used interchangeably, spirituality, religion and faith, I have chosen to emphasize the third: *faith*. Faith, too, is admittedly highly subjective. It can refer to a persons’ own individual belief system and it can be used to refer to a set of objective affirmations of religious truth (i.e. statement of faith). Miller, among many others, prefers the use of the word faith because it “...has both mediating and overarching

¹¹ Nash and McLennan, xxix.

¹² Ian I. Mitroff and Elizabeth A. Denton, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America: A Hard Look at Spirituality, Religion, and Values in the Workplace*, Warren Bennis Signature Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), xvi.

¹³ Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement*, 16.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

possibilities, thus transcending the tired debate of religion versus spirituality.”¹⁵ Millers’ work provides helpful guidance in this discussion: “Indeed, from a Christian perspective, faith is often defined as “being sure of that which we hope for and certain of that which we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1). Thus, the term faith recognizes the generalities and openness of spirituality and at the same time includes the particularities of the more codified and institutionalized nature of religion.”¹⁶ Faith, then, becomes the personal application of a person’s belief structure. It is communal and objective in that it stems from the teachings of the organized church and it is individual and subjective as those beliefs get interpreted and applied by each believer.

The terminology used for work also varies. Labor, job, employment, vocation, and occupation, among others, are used interchangeably. Technical differences exist between these terms, however for the purpose of this project the term work will be used in its most inclusive and general way. Miroslav Volf in his comprehensive study, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*, defines *work* this way:

Work is honest, purposeful, and methodologically specified social activity whose primary goal is the creation of products or states of affairs that can satisfy the needs of working individuals or their co-creatures, or (if primarily an end in itself) activity that is necessary in order for acting individuals to satisfy their needs apart from the need for the activity itself.¹⁷

In terms of *work* and the *workplace*, author David Miller offers a more practical definition:

Work is somehow distinct from leisure, play, and hobbies, though to an observer they often may be hard to distinguish. Similarly, the boundary

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Miller, 18.

¹⁷ Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit : Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 10-11.

between the spaces in which we work and in which we rest – the workplace and the home – is increasingly blurred...I shall define work as paid employment.¹⁸

Therefore, *Faith-at-Work* is the phrase primarily used throughout this dissertation to refer to the broad activity of efforts to integrate personal faith convictions in the workplace. It represents the process of incorporating spiritual beliefs and gainful employment. *Faith* refers to an active application of Christian belief in one's life. In the context of this project, it is the effort exerted to incarnate Christ's presence in the place of employment.

“Faith-at-work ministry,” then, refers to the efforts made by churches to intentionally integrate the Christian faith in the contemporary workplace. “Marketplace ministry” is another term frequently used in literature to describe the same activity, however “faith at work” offers the most comprehensive term to describe the movement.”¹⁹ This dissertation uses both interchangeably for ease of reading.

Scope and Limitations

The primary location for the research and application of theories developed is First Presbyterian Church, Fort Lauderdale, with an occasional reference or example from a different setting. First Presbyterian Church has approximately 2800 members, and includes many who are successful in all levels of business. The church is growing both in numbers and in spiritual depth. First Presbyterian is situated in downtown Fort Lauderdale, Florida and enjoys a positive and active role in the community. By virtue of my work with the men's ministries, the majority of people who participated in this

¹⁸ David W. Miller, “The Sunday-Monday Gap: Called to Pew or Profit?” in *Living Out Our Callings in the Workplace* (Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN: 2005), 1.

¹⁹ David W. Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement*, 15.

project are male. However, women also participated in the mid-week classes and the corporate consultant experiences described below.

It is important to note that the research base for this study is skewed in the direction of predominantly Caucasian, upper middle class, well-educated and successful businessmen. Due to the severe limitation of this narrow demographic additional studies to investigate these issues as they pertain to other gender, economic, and cultural contexts is highly recommended.

In addition it is important to recognize that the issues raised in this dissertation are also found in all of the major religions of the world. David Miller, in his book *God at Work*, observes that the faith-at-work movement is highly diverse and has its counterparts in all major religions of the world including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and non-institutionalized forms of spirituality.²⁰ The scope of this study, however, is limited to Christianity and more specifically to Protestant Christianity in the United States in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries.

To embark on a specifically Christian view of faith and work integration a thorough exegetical, theological and historical foundation needs to be laid. Chapter two is designed to provide this groundwork.

²⁰ Ibid., 4.

CHAPTER 2

A RATIONALE FOR FAITH-AT-WORK INTEGRATION

By neglecting to close the Sunday-Monday gap, churches across America are missing an opportunity to make a significant impact upon their members, communities, culture and even the world. In order for the missional church¹ to adequately fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) to “Go out into all the world” with the gospel, and to fulfill Jesus’ injunction, “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8), the church needs to include the marketplace and business community on the map. In the past, the American church has considered foreign soil to be the primary focus for mission enterprises, but for many in church leadership today the foreign territory is the modern business world. If the 21st century church is going to be truly effective in its apostolic leadership,² then the boardroom, office cubicle and manufacturing floor must also receive the church’s attention. The parishioners who sit in the pews each Sunday and spend the major part of the rest of the week in the workforce are the missionaries ready to be deployed into service. The problem is that they don’t know it and the church isn’t telling them.

Kenneth Boa and Gail Burnett, in *Wisdom at Work*, sense this urgency and see the potential impact of Christians in the workplace.

We Americans work like horses, work like dogs, and work like slaves. We work our fingers to the bone, keep our noses to the grindstone, and put our

¹ For a thorough discussion of this topic I refer the reader to project coordinator and editor, Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998).

² Ibid.

shoulders to the wheel. We pound away, plug along, and buckle down until we are overdriven, over-tasked, overtaxed, and overburdened. For our arduous, onerous, and wearisome labors we receive hard-fought, hard-earned dollars - our reward for giving the sweat of our brow, the might and main, tooth and nail, heart and soul. We leave work fatigued, bone weary, worn out, used up, pooped, bushed, frazzled, spent, exhausted, and just plum tuckered out.

That we have many negative terms relating to our work is hardly surprising. Few people express real satisfaction with their jobs, regardless of their careers or professions. But because most of us will spend more than 100,000 hours in the workplace, it is in our best interest to examine work issues through the lens of God's Word.³

An employee spends approximately 63 percent of his waking hours at work or on work-related activities and these are among the best hours of the day and most productive years in one's life.⁴ Therefore the need for Christian instruction and guidance to integrate one's faith in the workplace becomes unavoidable. Even secular research recognizes the need for spiritual integration in the marketplace. O'Neil, Grant, and Stephens, in "Spirituality in the Workplace: New Empirical Directions in the Study of the Sacred," write.

We believe that the workplace is one of the most important settings in which people come together daily to accomplish what they cannot do on their own, that is, to realize their full potential as human beings. For organizations to erect walls in the way of everyday spiritual development goes against the grain of deep human needs and puts an intolerable burden on individuals. Unless organizations become more spiritual, the fragmentation and ambivalence felt by individuals cannot be repaired.⁵

Despite this admission of the overwhelming need for the workplace organizations to "become more spiritual" the religious organization (the church) that is in the best position

³ Kenneth Boa and Gail Burnett, *Wisdom at Work* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2000), 9.

⁴ Robert Mattox, *The Christian Employee* (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1978), 9.

⁵ Kathleen O'Neil Don Grant, Laura Stephens, "Spirituality in the Workplace: New Empirical Directions in the Study of the Sacred," *Sociology of Religion* 65:3, no. (2004).

to make these changes has often failed to respond. The church has not adequately prepared its people to integrate their faith in the workplace. Doug Sherman, author of *Your Work Matters to God*, states, “Our surveys reveal that 90 to 97 percent of Christians have never been trained to apply biblical faith to their work life.”⁶ Os Hillman confirms this report:

Surveys reveal that more than 90% of church members do not feel they are being equipped by the church to apply their biblical faith in their daily work life. As a result, they are ineffective for Christ at their places of employment, which allows the culture to continue to take away spiritual ground from the kingdom of God.⁷

Not only are individuals negatively impacted by this lack of training, so is the church at large. It has been my experience that most often the focus of faith-at-work research and resources is dedicated to how to use one’s faith to help them be more successful in his or her job setting. This is not enough. Sherman and Hillman are right in asserting that individual Christians also have a responsibility for their work to benefit God’s work in the world today.

Author David W. Miller, PhD, is executive director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture at Yale Divinity School and assistant professor of business ethics. He describes his experience:

Before being a scholar, I was a senior executive in the banking world; I was one of those people living in a compartmentalized life and finding it unsatisfactory. I go to church and then go to work, and wondered how I could bring those two aspects together. Both my faith and work were important. And my faith gave me guidance on how to be ethical, how to find purpose in my work and how to serve in a spiritual aspect. I started

⁶ Hillman, “The Faith at Work Movement: Opening the 9 to 5 Window,” 4.

⁷ Os Hillman, *The 9 to 5 Window* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2005), 12-13.

speaking to people both inside and outside of work, and I found out others had the same questions about how faith fit into their work life.⁸

Miroslav Volf describes this need as a “general crisis of work.” He observes, “It frequently surfaces in the negative attitude of workers toward their work. Many people are deeply dissatisfied with the kind of work they are doing...More serious than subjective negative feelings about work is the *objective* crisis of work.”⁹

But there is hope. The entire faith-at-work movement is gaining speed and public awareness. Over a decade ago, M. Conlin in the cover story for the November, 1999, edition of *Business Week* forecasted the growing presence of spiritual efforts in the workplace. In “A spiritual revival is sweeping across Corporate America,” Conlin writes, “Perhaps the largest driver of this trend is the mounting evidence that spiritually-minded programs in the workplace not only soothe workers’ psyches but also deliver improved productivity.”¹⁰ In 2001, George Barna and Mark Hatch made the assessment that “Workplace ministry will be one of the core future innovations in church ministry.”¹¹ In *The Christian Employee*, Robert Mattox describes the office as the Christian’s “Last Frontier.”¹² Billy Graham said, “I believe one of the next great moves of God is going to be through the believers in the workplace.”¹³ This trend continues to the present. Henry Blackaby, author of *Experiencing God*, meets regularly with CEOs of Fortune 500

⁸ Religious Rights, *Incentive*, ed. Maya Dollarhide, <A href=<http://0-search.ebscohost.com/catalog.georgefox.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=26395715&site=ehost-live&scope=site>>Religious Rights..

⁹ Volf, 35.

¹⁰ M Conlin, “Religion in the Workplace: The Growing Presence of Spirituality in Corporate America,” *Business Week*, 1 November 1999.

¹¹ George Barna and Mark Hatch, *Boiling Point: Monitoring Cultural Shifts in the 21st Century* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2001), 253.

¹² Mattox, vii.

¹³ Hillman, “The Faith at Work Movement: Opening the 9 to 5 Window.”

companies to discuss what it means to bring Christ into the corporate environment. He said, “I’ve never seen the activity of God this deeply in the business community as I do right now.”¹⁴ Hillman also cites George Barna in his book, *Boiling Point*, who says:

“Workplace ministry will be one of the core future innovations in the church ministry.”¹⁵

Laura Nash, in “A Spiritual Audit of Business” highlights the surprising change that has taken place in the field of faith and business integration within the current decade:

What a sea change! Ten years ago a book on spirituality in business would generally be regarded as a lunatic undertaking by a fringe group of superstitious crystal tappers. Today there is widespread interest in the notion that spirituality can be a desired and effective force in daily life, including today’s business environment. More than a fad, the current spirituality market flies in the face of the earlier predictions that modern society would become fully secularized, with science and technology - the very stuff of the new economy - being the primary carriers of secularism. Instead, intuitive, nonrational ways of knowing have taken business science by storm to form a new cognitive framework for decision-making.... But to many people, the current spirituality in business movement is a serious attempt to bring their deepest convictions to and through the way things work in business.¹⁶

Since that time the faith-at-work movement has grown exponentially and new books and websites on the subject now seem to appear almost daily. In *The 9 to 5 Window*, written in 2005, Os Hillman noted “Fourteen years ago, I could identify only 25 to 50 national or international non-profit workplace ministries; today there are more than 900. In 2004, an International Faith and Work Directory featured more than 1,400 listings of ministries, businesses and churches that have a focus on integrating faith and work.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ George Barna and Mark Hatch, *Boiling Point: Monitoring Cultural Shifts in the 21st Century*, (Ventura, CA: Regal books, 2001), 253.

¹⁶ Laura L. Nash, “A Spiritual Audit of Business,” in *Business, Religion, and Spirituality*, ed. Oliver F. Williams (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 53.

¹⁷ Hillman, *The 9 to 5 Window*, 85.

Larry Julian, author of *God is My CEO*, says, “I am seeking more ways to bring my Christian faith into the corporate world where I have spent much of my life. There is an openness that has not been there before.” Evidence supporting his claim can be found in the number of Christian affinity groups that have been formed within the last decade. The Coca-Cola Christian Fellowship was formed in 2001, with 275 people attending the first meeting at their world headquarters in Atlanta. In the same city, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) launched the first government-approved Christian association. Similar groups have been formed at American Airlines, Intel, Texas Instruments, and Sears.¹⁸

The High Calling, a subsidiary of *Christianity Today*, is an online newsletter devoted entirely to faith and workplace integration. In the article, “Finding God in What You Do,” Drew Dyck states, “We think it’s time to start talking about honoring God in our businesses. This means we focus on the value of the business itself and the way we conduct our business.” Ken Eldred exemplifies this approach. He is an entrepreneur, philanthropist and ministry pioneer whose passion is to connect work and faith. He, too, struggles with inadequate support from the church. For over twenty years, Eldred served as founder and CEO of Inmac. He also co-founded Ariba Technologies and has participated in business ventures in the U.S., Europe, China, and India. Eldred has developed a “kingdom entrepreneurship” model, which encourages Christian businesspeople to spread the gospel by starting for-profit businesses in the U.S. and abroad. Even though his own story is unique, the questions he asks and frustrations he expresses are echoed by many. In an interview with Dyck he reports, “It’s not that people

¹⁸ Hillman, “The Faith at Work Movement: Opening the 9 to 5 Window.”

[in the church] talk negatively about business; *they just don't talk about it at all*. So it's assumed that it's not something that's important to God.”¹⁹ Pastors and churches, by neglecting to address the subject of faith and work, communicate a message nonetheless. By their silence, the conclusion that faith and work are to be kept separated is communicated loudly and clearly. “Like Ken Eldred, we find ourselves asking, ‘I don't know how to bring Christ into this business. How do I do that?’”²⁰ This question is echoed many times over across our nation.

The answer to the question, “How do I do that?” is difficult to find. An effective faith-at-work ministry is much more complex than simply applying Bible verses to business settings. Building a cohesive argument for faith and work integration first requires that a solid biblical and theological foundation be laid.

Biblical and Theological Foundations

To adequately construct an effective faith-at-work ministry, a theological study of the nature of work, vocation and call must first be done. Volf recognizes this same need:

Given the paramount importance of work in both liberal and socialist economic and social theory, it is remarkable that in our world dominated by work a serious crisis in work had to strike before church bodies paid much attention to the problem of human work. *Theologians are to blame for the former negligence. Amazingly little theological reflection has taken place in the past about an activity that takes up so much of our time*. The number of pages theologians have devoted to the question of transubstantiation – which does or does not take place on Sunday – for instance, would, I suspect, far exceed the number of pages devoted to work that fills our lives Monday through Saturday.²¹

¹⁹ Finding God in What You Do, ed. Drew Dyck, in the www.FaithInTheWorkplace.com, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/workplace/articles/interviews/keneldred.html> (accessed June 2, 2009). (Italics mine.)

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Volf, 69. (Italics mine.)

In order for the faith-at-work movement to be truly transformational on a large scale, pastors and congregants alike must engage in deeper biblical, theological, philosophical and cultural study. A prerequisite to this discussion is to establish a common understanding of key vocabulary.

Reviewing Key Biblical Terms

Just as the words used to describe faith and work are difficult to define, so are the words used by churches to address the issue. Faith at Work, Marketplace Ministry, and Workplace Ministry are all used by various authors, organizations and churches to express similar efforts. Work is so commonplace that few of us spend time pondering its purpose. For many people, work is simply a given, an inseparable component of both individual and community responsibility. But work is important – to individuals, society and God.

It is imperative that the modern student of faith-at-work dynamics be aware of the ancient understandings and cultural and linguistic distinctions. Scripture, and not just the English dictionary, must inform our definitions. The etymology of key words in their language of origin rather than just an English translation needs to be examined in order to gain insight into their full meaning.

The English language contains scores of words to describe various aspects of work as a verb, such as *accomplish, produce, construct, administer, design, serve, develop, craft, oversee, supervise, fix, build, toil*, etc. Additionally, “work” is used as a noun to describe a person’s job, occupation, or place of employment. In contrast, Hebrew and Greek languages employ fewer words to describe the various aspects of work, yet still provide important insights and instructions for the modern believer.

It is significant that *avodah*, and its root, *avad*, are used nearly 450 times throughout the Old Testament and are typically translated as work, worship and service. Larry Peabody, in *Job-Shadowing Daniel*, concisely highlights this fact. “The Lord God took man and put him in the Garden of Eden to **work** (*avad*) it and take care of it” (Genesis 2:15). “When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will **worship** (*avad*) God on this mountain” (Exodus 3:12). “Six days you shall labor and do all your **work** (*avad*)” (Exodus 20:9). “Let my people go, so they may **worship** (*avad*) me” (Exodus 8:1). “I am giving you the **service** (*avodah*) of the priesthood as a gift” (Numbers 18:7). “Fear the Lord your God, **serve** (*avad*) him only and take your oaths in his name” (Deuteronomy 6:13; quoted by Jesus in Mathew 4:10 after the devil asked for his worship).²² The relationship of these three, worship and work and service, is best understood, according to Peabody, when the believer offers up his or her worship *and* work in service to God.²³

Four Hebrew and two Greek words provide the essentials for this discussion.²⁴ In the Hebrew language two terms carry negative connotations while two others describe work in a more positive light. All four words, as will be seen, are critical in a proper understanding of the role of work in God’s plan.

The first two Hebrew words, *avodah* and *amal* can be found in Deuteronomy 26:6-7 (NIV), “The Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, and imposed hard labor (*avodah*) on us. Then we cried to the Lord the God of our Fathers, and the LORD heard

²² Larry Peabody, *Job-Shadowing Daniel* (Denver, CO: Outskirts Press, Inc., 2010), 159.

²³ *Ibid.*, 160.

²⁴ For a thorough review of the biblical marketplace I refer the reader to Timothy Liu, Gordon Preece, and Wong Siew Li, “Marketplace Ministry: Occasional Paper No. 40 [S.L.]” in *Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization*, ed. David Claydon (Pattaya, Thailand: 2005), 8.

our voice and saw our affliction and our toil (*amal*) and our oppression.” *Avodah* specifically refers to service or labor that is imposed or forced on a people group, typically slaves. *Amal* means “heavy toil; labor that is associated with anguish or involves suffering.”²⁵ Both of these words convey not only physical labor but labor in the harshest of terms.

Two more Hebrew terms couch work in a more positive context. *Asah* refers to work that makes, produces, builds, or creates something. *Asah* means, “to take action; to accomplish; to bring forth.” The word is also used for the people’s response to God’s commands, and it applies specifically to *all* his acts and actions. *Masseh* (derived from *asah*) refers to the finished product of the worker, that is, to his achievements. *Melakah*, a synonym of *masseh*, is probably the Hebrew word closest in meaning to the English words *job*, *occupation*, and *vocation*.²⁶ There are several other Hebrew words for work, but these four – *amal*, *avodah*, *asah* and *masseh* – are the most frequently used words for work in the Old Testament.

The two Greek words used most frequently in the New Testament to denote various aspects of work are *kopiao* and *ergon* (and their various forms). Like their Hebrew counterparts, they describe work in both negative and positive terms. *Kopiao* means “hard labor; weariness; toil.” It comes from the root word *kopos*, which means “trouble and misery.” In the LXX the Hebrew word *amal* is translated *kopiao* and is used to describe work that is painful. *Kopiao* describes the type of work that most of us strive

²⁵ Boa and Burnett. 14.

²⁶ Ibid.

to avoid.²⁷ The second primary Greek word is the noun *ergon*, which means a “deed, action, achievement, work, thing, matter” as well as its verb form *ergazomai*, which means “to labor, be active, bring about.”²⁸ Boa and Burnett add to this definition, “business activities that are directed toward a goal.”²⁹ *Ergon*’s meaning most closely parallels the Hebrew words *asah* and *masseh* and is used most often in the positive sense. For example, *ergon* is used in the LXX to describe the work of the divine Creator (Genesis 2:2f.) as well as describing a person’s accomplishment of a task laid on him or her by God (cf. Genesis 2:15). “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”³⁰

In the Bible, *ergon* is used in both positive and negative contexts and thus can cause confusion regarding the spiritual nature of employment and labor. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*³¹ points out that when applied to human efforts, *ergon* expresses three theological ideas. First, in most places where the word group appears it has a positive meaning, namely, the purpose of describing a person’s completion of a task assigned by God (cf. Genesis 2:15). Second, *ergon* takes on a negative tone when it is associated with the Fall and the consequence of sin. Here, *ergon* characterizes work as trouble, a burden and a curse (cf. Genesis 3:17ff; 4:12; 5:29; Deuteronomy 26:6). The third use of *ergon* in the LXX has the meaning of “a bad, reprehensible deed, which brings separation from God.” It is not a specific act that brings

²⁷ Colin Brown, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1999), Vol 3. 1147-1152.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1147.

²⁹ Boa and Burnett, 15.

³⁰ Brown.

³¹ For an exhaustive study of the various words used in scripture to describe “work” I recommend, Brown, 1147-59.

separation, but rather the ongoing sinful nature of our actions that result in separation.³² Isaiah 59:6b provides a prime example, “Their deeds are evil deeds, and acts of violence are in their hands.”

Given these three conflicting uses of the same word, it is easy to understand the confusion and conflict between the worlds of faith and work in people’s minds. For the believer is work a “necessary evil” or a “divine gift?” The short answer is *yes*. It is exactly this commingling of positive and negative traits and experiences that help the modern Christian in the workforce navigate the often-contradictory forces involved. Rather than being a weakness, this seeming contradiction can become a strength when the power of the Holy Spirit is applied.

For example, from the meaning of *ergon* we know that work is to be a creative outlet of one’s personality and resources and is in partnership with God’s continued re-creative work on earth. Even when it is in line with God’s present activity it will still require energy to be spent. No one should balk at the thought that godly work will at times be exhausting, frustrating or difficult. From the definitions of *kopiao*, *amal* and *abodah*, some types of work will involve suffering or anguish. When *asah* and *ergon* are used together they describe a form of work that is God driven and yet involves suffering in the process. A simplistic view might surmise that these conflicting aspects of work are part of the sinful nature that must be conquered, but a deeper examination of the whole of Scripture reveals that, surprisingly, these “negative” aspects also become valuable instruments of God for eternal good.

Richard Beaton and Linda Wagener, in “Building Healthy Organizations in which People Can Flourish,” point out, “A biblical understanding of the human person teaches

³² Ibid., 1148ff.

that people have tremendous capacity for good and evil. It also suggests that people need to be developed, that we need accountability, and that we need challenge and adversity in order to grow.”³³ Adversity is not often listed among desirable working conditions, but God, who desires each person to become mature, complete and whole, does not hesitate to include adversity, challenge and hardship in our life experience. Therefore it is consistent that we will find in the Bible both pleasant and unpleasant words to describe work.

Even this cursory examination of work reveals much. Work is both a blessed part of the divinely created human nature as well as consequence of sin. Work was included both inside and outside the gate to the Garden of Eden. “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (Genesis 2:15). “To Adam he said...cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life” (Genesis 3:17). In Genesis 3:17-19, God curses the ground, and we humans must now earn our bread by the sweat of our brows. It is both a painful consequence of disobedience as well as a life-enriching opportunity to participate with God in the constant re-creation of our world. Theologian Francis Schussler Fiorenza elaborates on this perspective when he writes, “Even in this passage, work in itself is not seen as a punishment or a curse. Instead, the hardship and difficulty that accompanies work is the result of sin. The lack of proportion between human effort and success does not come from creation, nor was it originally intended by God. Rather, it comes from

³³ Richard Beaton, and Linda Wagener, “Building Healthy Organizations in Which People Can Flourish,” *Theology, News and Notes* 57, no. 1 (2010): 12-13.

human sin.”³⁴ Admittedly, the distinction between the painful nature of work as punishment or as a consequence of sin is a subtle one and does not necessarily relieve the suffering.

Left to their own devices, many people will have difficulty negotiating this contradictory path. For the church to overlook this vital aspect of a person’s life severely handicaps the believer from being able to transform their occupation from an obligatory necessity of life into an eternally praiseworthy expression of talent and ability. Most people are not trained to think theologically and the church is in the unique position to provide this instruction. The next step, logically, is to help guide the parishioner from an understanding of work in the abstract to a theological understanding of their own work and applied in their own vocation.

Theology of Work and Vocation

The term, “theology of work,” according to Miroslav Volf, is a relatively recent one appearing for the first time in the early 1950’s. It emerged “to express an important shift in the theological approach to the problem of work.”³⁵ To use a workplace metaphor: in order for a skyscraper to stand tall and be able to withstand the external forces pressing against it, an equally strong and secure foundation must first be poured. “Digging down” is a necessary prerequisite to “building up.” The tedious work of laying the foundation is absolutely crucial for the successful completion of the more visible and glamorous building above. Similarly, in order for faith-at-work resources to be truly effective and beneficial, the required theological foundation must first be laid.

³⁴ Francis Schussler Fiorenza, “Work and Critical Theology,” in *A Matter of Dignity: Inquiries into the Humanization of Work*, ed. W.J. and John Houck Heisler (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), 30.

³⁵ Volf, 71.

Due to the negative *abodah* and *amal* nature of work, many people, including those in churches, interpret their own work (or at least the role of work in society) as a punishment, or a necessary evil in life. People learn to make up excuses to avoid it, invent labor saving devices to ease the burden from it and seek to retire early from it. In short, work is frequently perceived in its most negative light. This is unfortunate since it was initially given by God to be a means of participating with God in God's creative and salvific work.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) recognized early in his life that one's work, no matter how nominal, becomes an offering of highest regard when touched by the Spirit. Luther wrote that "insignificant, distasteful, and despised duties" such as changing diapers and laboring at a trade, when transformed in the Spirit became "adorned with divine approval as the costliest gold and jewels."³⁶

Although many people may consider the necessity of work to be a curse, it is an integral component of the overarching call to be God's people and to do God's work in God's world. The psalmist understands that the people's labor is a mark of their special and responsible relation to God:

You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You made him ruler over the works of your hands;
you put everything under his feet:
all flocks and herds,
and the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air,
and the fish of the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas. (Psalm 8:5-8)

³⁶ Martin Luther, *The Estate of Marriage (1522)*, Luther's Works, vol. 45 (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962), 39.

In Scripture work is never considered an individual matter. From the “Report of the Special Committee on the Church, the Christian, and Work,” published by the Presbyterian Church (USA), work is best understood as an integral component of the larger society. It is impossible for Christians to separate their discussion of work from the broader discussion of the local and even global community.³⁷ In 2 Thessalonians 3:8-12, Paul criticizes the people for their idleness and gives the admonition, “Anyone unwilling to work, should not eat.” This argument has become the so-called “golden rule of work.”³⁸ Paul exhorts Christians to command the respect of outsiders and to be independent by learning to work with their hands (1 Thessalonians 4:11). In Ephesians, former thieves are exhorted to “work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy” (Ephesians 4:28). These two passages are indicative of many others that reinforce the communal responsibility of the worker to be engaged in active labor that provides for their own needs as well as the needs of others. These insights begin to provide part of the foundational work necessary for faith-at-work resources to have a significant impact.

There are numerous words used in both the work and religion worlds, but two that most vividly exemplify the problem are *vocation* and *call*. In modern society we often hear these two terms used in very different contexts. But as will be seen, vocation and call emerge from a common source. Just as worship and work share a common linguistic root, call and vocation share a common divine voice. A brief overview of the “calling”

³⁷ For further discussion see “Report of the Special Committee on the Church, the Christian, and Work,” *Minutes of the General Assembly, UPCUSA, Part 1* (1967).

³⁸ Fiorenza, 33.

aspect of God provides a rough framework upon which a solid and fruitful theology and application of faith and work integration can be built.

Call and Vocation

To be successful in faith-at-work ministries, a theology of work must include three components: first, a biblical understanding of call and how it relates to one's vocation, second, the importance of having authority and influence over one's work environment, as evidenced in the "naming" action of God given to Adam. Third, the role of the church as community in providing a living voice to the presence of Christ and the encouragement needed to persevere under difficult circumstances.

The first of three essential elements for a successful faith-at-work ministry program is a biblical understanding of "call" and its relationship to "vocation." It is essential that the purpose of vocation and our understanding of God's call upon our lives be examined in order to fulfill the goal of aligning one's productive time and energies with serving God and being a good steward of God's resources. A working knowledge of vocation is so vital to this study that its etymology and historical perspective of how we arrived at where we are today deserves special attention.

Down through history the understanding of *call* and *vocation* has changed. In this section the modern understanding of these terms will be placed in contrast to their original meaning, and then the attention will focus on the terms' origins and trace their development to our modern day. We will look at the biblical foundation and theological understanding of call and vocation as presented in both the Old and New Testaments. The theological understanding of these terms as understood down through history will be

reviewed with particular attention focused on the Reformation and John Calvin in particular. Contemporary voices will then be added to the discussion to help grasp the theological significance of vocation in the twenty-first century. Finally, this section will conclude with observations, reflections, and recommendations for churches to be able to better equip their members to fulfill their own vocational call and achieve greater satisfaction in their career. The insights gained become foundational for critiquing current faith-at-work resources as well as the development of the teaching materials discussed in chapter six.

Vocation and call are often understood to have two very different meanings but this distinction has been the fabrication of society through history. The irony is that *both* words, *vocation* and *call*, come from the Latin root, *vocare* which means literally, “to call.”³⁹ As originally understood, one’s vocation *is* their call.

Call

In the Old Testament we encounter God as a “calling God.” From the opening lines of Genesis we hear God simply speaking the universe into existence (Genesis 1:3). God calls Moses out of the desert to become the future leader of the exodus (Exodus 3:4), and God calls his people out of Egypt and out of slavery (Exodus 12:41) with the promise of freedom and a new land flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3:8). Centuries later he

³⁹ Fil Anderson, Robert A. Fryling, Craig M. Glass and Stephen W. Smith, *Work: Transformation of a Man's Heart*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 23.

once again calls the Israelites out of captivity in Babylon and back into freedom and fulfillment (Isaiah 40:28; see 48:12-20).⁴⁰

God's covenantal call is upon groups, nations, individuals and upon creation itself. It is the call out of chaos into order, out of slavery and bondage into freedom and out of brokenness into wholeness. God's claim upon his people, recorded in Exodus 20:1-20, sets a model for his claim upon all his children. Roy Lewis describes this as "the national vocation of Israel."⁴¹ Lewis points out that even though Scripture reveals that the people of Israel strayed from their half of the covenant many times, God continued to call them back into relationship with God and each other for God's divine purpose.

It is important to note that Scripture also indicates that God does not limit himself to only those who believe in him to do his work. For example, in light of this study's emphasis on work and faith integration, it is interesting to note that God also called the unbelieving Cyrus into divine service. We read in Isaiah 45 that Cyrus was anointed to do God's work, even though he did not acknowledge God.⁴² It is sobering to know that God anoints unbelievers to do Kingdom work. "It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it...I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness...I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me...so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me" (Isa. 45). Does God raise up secular businesses to take the lead in caring for the poor and needy when the church has fallen short? As Jeff Lincicome asks in his dissertation on wealthy Christians, "Are Bill Gates and Warren Buffet and Angelina/Brad Pitt the

⁴⁰ Donald W. Shriver Jr., *Vocation* (Presbyterian Church (USA), 1990), Paper prepared for PC (USA) study.

⁴¹ Roy Lewis, *Choosing Your Career, Finding Your Vocation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 40.

⁴² Also see Isaiah 44:28.

modern Cyrus? Is God raising up people to care for the needs of the world in a way the church should be doing but is not?”⁴³ The Bible makes it clear that if God’s people are unwilling or unable to do God’s work, God sees to it that the work still gets done. Therefore, we must always be careful not to criticize any non-Christian people who clearly are doing God’s work.

In the New Testament we again encounter God, through Jesus Christ, *calling* for action and response from his creation. In the Gospels we read where Jesus calls twelve ordinary men to follow him as his disciples. He speaks the winds and waves into submission. In the Great Commission Jesus extends to all believers the call to “Go and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁴ As the story of the early church unfolds in Acts and the Epistles, we see this call take shape as the Good News is extended to all people of all nations and at all levels of society. Shriver writes, “To answer the call of God in Jesus Christ is to join the company of other people; and the ‘progressive’ nature of this call is unfolded as apostles and other new Christians have their sights raised, again and again, to see all humans as potential members of the new called out community” (See Matthew 15:21-28; 28:19, Luke 19:9, 23:43, Acts 2:39, 9:1-22, 10:1-11;18).⁴⁵

This pattern of God calling ordinary people from “secular” occupations into “spiritual” service also continues into the New Testament. Jesus was trained and worked as a carpenter, an ordinary laborer, until beginning his three years of public ministry. “Is

⁴³ Jeffrey T. Lincicome and George Fox University, “Wealth and Discipleship in Affluent America” (2007).

⁴⁴ Matthew 28:19.

⁴⁵ Shriver, Jr., 9.

this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary?” asked the crowd.⁴⁶ Those years when Jesus worked as a carpenter were formative and purposeful.

The gospel writers felt it important to include the occupations of some of the men Jesus called to be his disciples. Simon Peter and his brother Andrew were professional fishermen, as were James and John.⁴⁷ Matthew was a tax collector.⁴⁸ Even though Luke was not called as one of the original twelve disciples, we know he was a physician. We know little else of these persons—their ages, families, or physical appearance – but we do know what they did for a living.

God calls some people *out* of the workplace and *into* ministry, and God also calls some people *out* of the professional religious life and *into* the workplace. This is seen in the Rabbi Saul’s life in the New Testament. After Saul’s dramatic encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, he began a new life as Paul, now a tent-maker, and used his business as a platform for ministry. Paul devoted much of his time to tent making, not only to support his ministerial enterprises but also to enable him to be engaged in the broader marketplace. Paul argues that for the sake of freedom and autonomy, he provided his own principle means of livelihood through his trade.⁴⁹

We see, therefore, that God is actively engaged with humanity drawing them into relationship with God’s self as well as interrelationship with other human beings and creation itself. It is a divine summons to action. God’s call is to both faith *and* work.

⁴⁶ Mark 6:3.

⁴⁷ Matthew 4:18-22.

⁴⁸ Matthew 9:9.

⁴⁹ 2 Thessalonians 3:8.

Vocation

Whereas the modern cultural understanding of vocation typically refers to one's occupation, trade, job, or profession, from a biblical perspective vocation represents a much larger measure of a person's life. At its fundamental core, *vocation* is a reflection of our relationship with God and our place in the world. It is far more than our occupation; it is a large part of our purpose and satisfaction as created beings.

James Fowler writes, "From the standpoint of the vocation, fulfillment, self-actualization, and excellence of being are by-products of covenant faithfulness and action in the service of God and the neighbor."⁵⁰ William Shakespeare approaches the same divine consequence of call, albeit from a far different perspective. In part one of Henry IV Shakespeare has Falstaff defend his disreputable practice of robbing travelers by protesting, "Why Hal, 'tis my vocation, Hal; 'tis no sin for a man to labor in his vocation" (1.2). While some may argue Falstaff's point, the essence of his self-defense is sound.

Casually understood, vocation is often used synonymously with "occupation" or "career" when talking about a person's job. This perception is vividly seen on a website advertising life insurance, "When underwriting your life insurance and determining if you are an acceptable risk for the company, an underwriter will take both your vocation and avocations into consideration. Your vocation is your job, and if you are in a dangerous vocation like construction or police work, you may be declined or charged an additional premium."⁵¹

⁵⁰ James Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 102.

⁵¹ Lifeinsurance.com, "Risk Criteria - Vocation and Avocation"
<http://lifeinsurance.lifetips.com/tip/149615/life-insurance-quotes/life-insurance-quotes/risk-criteria-vocation-and-avocation.html> (accessed November 23, 2009).

According to James Mead, this understanding has been reinforced by the American educational system. In the twentieth century it adopted the adjective “vocational” to describe a particular kind of training or career as an alternative to the traditional four-year college experience. “Vo-tech” became synonymous with hands-on labor associated with such forms of work as auto mechanics and computer repair.⁵²

At the other end of the spectrum, a person’s “call” frequently comes with religious or spiritual overtones and is often applied to someone who has been called into full-time Christian service or has been called to a particular church congregation. Rarely is this calling language heard when the laity speaks of their own careers or jobsites. In the church world one is “called” into ministry by some outside voice. In the business or secular world however, a person “decides what he wants to be when he grows up” and chooses his or her own vocation with the aid of a guidance counselor.

To reiterate, the common American culture, both inside and outside the church perceives call and vocation to be separate, yet for leaders in modern faith-at-work ministries it is important to remember that they both come from the same origin. *Vocare*, from which we get the word vocation, literally means, “to call.” As stated above, one’s vocation *is* their call. This insight becomes even more significant as the relationship between the two is examined more deeply.

⁵² James K. Mead, *The Divine Vocation: Reformed Theology's Conversation with the Call of God in the Biblical Traditions* (Northwestern College, 2003). Mead adds, “Beginning with the Smith- Hughes Act of 1917 and continuing in the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act (third phase in 1998), literally thousands of Vocational-Technical [or Vo Tech] Schools have been established in communities throughout the United States. (The Executive Summary of the “National Assessment of Vocational Education,” Interim Report to Congress [2002], p. 1.) The U.S. Department of Education reports: “Virtually every high school student takes at least one vocational education course, and one in four students takes three or more courses in a single program area. One-third of college students are involved in vocational programs, and as many as 40 million adults engage in short-term post-secondary occupational training.” (<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/CTE/index.html>.) Accessed on August 30, 2007.

James Mead, in his extensive essay, *The Divine Vocation: Reformed Theology's Conversation with the God of Call in the Biblical Traditions*, notes, "one of the most important facets of our study is the fact that the noun 'vocation' is intimately related to the verb 'to call.'"⁵³ In fact, there is a relational dynamic inherent in a person's vocation that is both divine and human. The meaning of vocation runs deeper than a job and involves listening for a calling voice outside of ourselves, intent on leading us to what is ours to do.⁵⁴ Miller defines call or calling in this way: "to urgently invite someone to accept responsibilities for a particular task, implying a new relationship to the one who does the calling."⁵⁵

Spread across the Bible, in the books of the law, history and poetry as well as the gospels and epistles, we see an unwavering theme of God calling his people into special service. It is their vocation to do so. It is not just a job; is a fulfillment of what they were created to do. It is part of the human-divine spark, the *imago dei* at work.

Drawing on the insights of *Vocation and Work: Challenges in the Workplace* (1990), the primary theme of biblical teaching on vocation, and fundamental to Jewish and Christian teaching, is the calling of people by God to a task greater than themselves that is human and divine, creative and nourishing, individual and corporate. It is this divine choosing of Israel, and then the Christian church, to be bound by a covenant with

⁵³ Ibid., 3. For further study see *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Douglas, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale Publishers, 1987).

⁵⁴ Anderson, 23.

⁵⁵ Miller, "The Sunday-Monday Gap: Called to Pew or Profit?" 2.

God that gives holy and sacred purpose to each person as he or she takes part in the common life. Work derives its value, significance, and purpose from this larger calling.⁵⁶

Ronald Reinhardt in *God and Our Daily Work* highlights God's initiative in the calling process, which we see exemplified throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Reinhardt writes, "In the Bible vocation is the action on God's initiative by which people are brought into union with their God. It is being called to a life's work with a provision, a talent, training, a capacity to do that work."⁵⁷

With this biblical understanding, a person's job, career, or profession becomes an expression of their response to God's call on their life. A job is more than just a means of earning an income; it is to be a meaningful application of life's skills, gifts, and abilities toward a greater common good. Douglas Meeks, writing in *God the Economist: the Doctrine of God and Political Economy*, emphasizes this divine connection:

Our view of work will not change significantly until we realize that work is not simply a commodity to be defined by workplace efficiency and distributed according to market values. Work has to do with livelihood, with inclusion in the community, and with a sense of personal dignity and well-being.⁵⁸

To paraphrase James 2:17, faith without deeds is dead, but faith *with* deeds is alive. Faith, when coupled with work that is God-honoring and Christ-glorifying, engages the heart, soul, mind and body, saves what is lost, mends what is broken, and heals what is sick. Faith, when accompanied by God-directed action, enhances the lives of others and

⁵⁶ *Vocation and Work: Challenges in the Workplace* (Louisville, KY: Committee on Social Witness Policy, Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.], 1990), 43.

⁵⁷ Ronald A. Reinhardt, "God and Our Daily Work," *Vanguard* (1988).

⁵⁸ M. Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 128.

energizes the one doing it. Fulfilling one's calling through vocational work reflects the very *imago dei* ingrained in every soul from the very beginning of creation.

In short, even though the words, *vocation* and *call* have the same origin, and thus originally carried equal weight of importance, they have over the years assumed different connotations and subsequently different values. Unfortunately, this hierarchical bias towards calling has yielded an unhealthy consequence in our modern society, which is reflected in the bifurcated, sacred-secular perception of faith and work. Even a superficial review of the biblical witness of God's actions and interactions with his people throughout history reveals that a person's call by God is upon their whole selves. Their lives are to be productive and helpful not only to the individual but to society at large. Significantly, the purpose of one's vocation is far greater than simply earning a living; it is the outward expression of every attribute, resource and opportunity given by God.

Some contemporary writers are beginning to bring the understanding of vocation and call back to its proper origin. Parker Palmer offers this corrective:

Today I understand vocation quite differently – not as a goal to be achieved but as a gift to be received. Discovering vocation does not mean scrambling toward some prize just beyond my reach but accepting the treasure of true self I already possess. Vocation does not come from a voice “out there” calling me to become something I am not. It comes from a voice “in here” calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God.⁵⁹

Frederick Buechner also recognizes the need for a person's work to also be an expression of their faith.

There are different kinds of voices calling you to different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than of Society say, or the Superego, or Self-Interest. By and large a good rule for

⁵⁹ Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 10.

finding out is this: the kind of work God usually calls you to do is work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world needs most to have done. *The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.*⁶⁰

To review, the first necessary component of an effective faith-at-work ministry is a biblical and theological understanding of work and worship, vocation and call. In the ancient Hebrew, *avodah* is the root word for work, worship and service and thus divinely link the three together. Properly understood, a person's work becomes one's daily offering of worship while employing his or her own gifts and talents in the pursuit of bettering oneself and society as a whole. Similarly, God's call to all people is to enter into a covenantal relationship with God for the collective purpose of building up the Kingdom of God in every aspect of life, including the workplace. When a truly biblical understanding is applied to the work context it is evident that work is intended to be a sacred and profitable experience for all parties involved, including the world.

A proper understanding of the biblical vocabulary pertaining to work, as well as comprehension of the theological nature of vocation, provide the groundwork and foundation for modern faith-at-work resources but these alone still prove inadequate to the task. From both a theological and practical perspective two more elements are needed: Naming and Community.

The Importance of Naming

The second essential element for fulfilling one's vocation is power and authority over one's own work environment. A healthy work environment is essential to living out

⁶⁰ Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 95.

one's vocation and a key component of that environment is the sense of control one feels over one's own situation. The World Health Organization (WHO) describes it this way:

A healthy job is likely to be one where the pressures on employees are appropriate in relation to their abilities and resources, to the amount of control they have over their work, and to the support they receive from people who matter to them. As health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity but a positive state of complete physical, mental and social well-being (WHO, 1986), a healthy working environment is one in which there is not only an absence of harmful conditions but an abundance of health-promoting ones.⁶¹

Stated another way, "Stress occurs in a wide range of work circumstances but is often made worse when employees feel they have little support from supervisors and colleagues, as well as little control over work processes."⁶² Many others also confirm these findings, including a report by CNN Health, which states,

Eric Endlich, Ph.D., a Massachusetts-based clinical psychologist who specializes in workplace health, says these factors can make people feel in control of their destiny, challenged but not stressed, and appreciated....Feeling a lack of control in the workplace or not enough support from a supervisor may lead to feelings of helplessness, says Endlich, which in turn can spiral into depression, "which is associated with lots of poor health outcomes [and] increased mortality rates from all causes," he says.⁶³

Grant, O' Neil and Stephens, in "Spirituality in the Workplace: New Empirical Directions in the Study of the Sacred," write,

We believe that the workplace is one of the most important settings in which people come together daily to accomplish what they cannot do on their own, that is, to realize their full potential as human beings. For organizations to erect walls in the way of everyday spiritual development goes against the grain of deep human needs and puts an intolerable burden

⁶¹ World Health Organization, "Stress at the Workplace" http://www.who.int/occupational_health/topics/stressatwp/en/ (accessed November 21, 2009).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Sarah Klein, "Workplace Health May Be Declining – What to Do," *CNN Health*, October 24, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/10/24/workplace.decline.sick/index.html> (accessed November 21, 2009).

on individuals. Unless organizations become more spiritual, the fragmentation and ambivalence felt by individuals cannot be repaired.⁶⁴

Biblically we see this exemplified in the opening pages of Genesis as Adam is given the task of naming the animals in the Garden of Eden. In Scripture human beings are pictured as God's coworkers (Genesis 2:15). The biblical creation account reveals that God understands the human need for influence and control over one's own circumstances when God instructed Adam to "name" his own environment.

In the ancient world a name was not just a label, but rather a statement about the very character of what was being named (1 Samuel 25:25). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* instructs, "It would be quite incorrect to say that in the OT a name was just an identity tag and no more. There, as in other ancient literature, the name of a person sometimes revealed his character, his personality, even his destiny. In fact, a person's name was often considered to be but an expression, indeed a revelation, of his true nature."⁶⁵ Therefore, biblically, a person's name carries theological and spiritual significance.

Logically it follows that in Genesis we also see how giving a name to anyone or anything was tantamount to owning or controlling it (Genesis 1:5, 8, 10; 2:19-20). Gerhard Von Rad notes, "This naming is thus both an act of copying and an act of appropriative ordering, by which man intellectually objectifies the creatures for himself.... Let us remind ourselves once more that name-giving in the ancient Orient was primarily an exercise of sovereignty, of command." This understanding is reinforced in

⁶⁴ Grant, O'Neil and Stephens, "Spirituality in the Workplace: New Empirical Directions in the Study of the Sacred." 44.

⁶⁵ Geoffrey Bromiley, ed. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishers, 1986,) s.v., "Name," 481.

The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, “As the one who gives names to the stars, Yahweh is their Creator and Lord (Psalm 147:4); in the same way he calls Israel by name and makes him his possession (Isaiah 43:1; 63:19).⁶⁶

Therefore the moment God assigned to Adam (humankind) the task of naming his environment God gave humanity the essentials for a healthy work environment. James Mead’s writing is particularly insightful and instructive in this discussion. The significance of the first task given to Adam, that of naming his environment, helps inform a more complete understanding of work, vocation and call for us today. Mead returns to the creation account for guidance. “To understand vocation,” he writes, “we must begin where the biblical narrative begins, namely, with the creative act of God.”⁶⁷ He goes on to say,

For our purposes here, the significant point is Genesis One’s use of the verb “to call” whereby God names elements of his creation that only his sovereign power could have brought into being. For example, the Hebrew idiom of “*calling* the name of” is used on each of the first three “days” for the naming of basic structures of creation: light and darkness (1:5); sky (1:8); earth and seas (1:10).⁶⁸

In Genesis 2 the task of naming (literally “*calls* the name”) is given to Adam, here representative of humankind, first to the animals (2:19-20) and then the woman God created (2:23). Then, as Scripture continues, other acts of naming by humans occur: people (Eve, 3:20; Seth, 5:3; Noah, 5:29); cities (Enoch, 4:17; Babel, 11:9; Zoar, 19:22); even names for God (“God who sees,” Genesis 16:13; “The Ancient of Days,” Daniel

⁶⁶ Colin Brown, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1999), Vol 2. 649.

⁶⁷ Mead, 10.

⁶⁸ Mead offers the additional insight, “It has been noted in many places that the Hebrew verb for “create” (b ra’) is used in the Old Testament exclusively with God as the subject. Humans can therefore “make” things out of the elements God has already created, but only God can bring the elements into being.

7:9; “Everlasting Father,” Isaiah 9:6) to name just a few. Thus, although a few of the basic structures of creation are named by God, he leaves all the rest of the naming of creation to humankind. Since humankind reflects God’s image (Gen 1:27), our first assignment in Scripture is literally to call or name the other elements that surround us, repeating the activity that began with God’s naming of creation. From the very beginning God calls us as human beings to participate in this great, holy and sacred activity. To simply refer to this activity as a “job” demeans its theological significance.

Naming, from a theological perspective, is a far more significant activity than simply attaching a label for easy reference and identification. Naming, rather, is the position of power and authority God gives humanity over his environment. It is significant that God includes humanity in his creative work and gives men and women the role of assigning identity and worth to elements in the world. Francis Fiorenza develops this notion further when he states that human faculties are to be used in sustaining, cultivating, and nourishing the world. Creation is good and people are to keep it that way. Humanity has been given the title of steward and the task of nature’s management. This is part of our productive labor. Adam was commanded to fill the earth and subdue it and his task is twofold: to work the field and watch over it. Fiorenza writes:

Genesis does not have God create humans to take over drudgery. Adam is not placed in a field of a god so as to work for God. Instead, he is given his own field in which to work. Work belongs to human existence and is commanded by God...the ensuing chapters of Genesis describe the development of various trades and crafts and so depict culture and civilization as resulting from the creator’s basic command to work.⁶⁹

In the modern workplace this dynamic of naming takes shape as an employee is given authority and power over various aspects of his or her job responsibilities and work

⁶⁹ Fiorenza, 29.

environment. In organizational language, a person is empowered to make decisions on how best to solve a problem or accomplish a task. Giving employees the autonomy to work from home rather than waste time in a daily commute affirms the value of the individual and puts that employee in a position of authority over his or her day. Enabling the worker on the factory floor to stop the production line if a problem is spotted affirms the value of that individual human being. When a company recognizes and affirms their employees as human beings, complete with emotional, physical, relational, intellectual and spiritual needs, rather than simply as animated robots, that company creates an environment where the *imago dei* can be realized. The task of naming, given to Adam, was a gift of affirmation, influence and responsibility. If the modern workplace is to provide a setting where a person's vocation is exercised, it must also provide the opportunity for the person to exercise authority and influence over his or her own work responsibilities.

To join with God in naming is a gift and an essential component of each person's sense of value in their vocation. To be part of a purpose greater than one's self gives value to the labor done, no matter how menial it may be perceived. A true story by Karen Cross illustrates this point,

I'm a janitor at the church and its school, and my job can feel routine sometimes: change light bulbs, mop floors, empty garbage cans. I just wished I could do more. But what? Then, one day as I made my rounds it came to me: *You can pray.*

I went to the principal's office. I ran the duster over her photos and said, *Lord, please watch over Mrs. Gabby Biehl and her family.* I vacuumed the sixth-grade classroom. *Grant Mrs. Gibson the wisdom to teach these children well.* I went to the cafeteria to wipe tables. *Please fill these children with good food.* Next the church office, where I straightened the receptionist's area. *God, grant her the full-time work she needs.* Before I knew it my day was done.

The staff asked me why I seemed so rejuvenated. I told them about my daily prayers. Now I get prayer requests! My job feels so rewarding now. I'm not just working. I'm doing God's work, too.⁷⁰

The Bible's introduction of God as one who "names" lays the foundation for the human race as it continues the act of naming begun in the very opening sentences of Genesis. There is more significance to this assignment than God simply needing a little extra help to get the job done on time. Naming gives authority to the one giving the name as well as identity to what is being named. Naming the animals gave authority to Adam and identity to his environment. In short, it helped give Adam control and influence over his life and work environment – the same qualities identified by WHO as essential to a modern healthy work environment.

The first two essential elements of faith-at-work ministry, understanding one's call and naming (having authority and influence over one's environment), still requires a third component to be effective on a large scale and for the long-term. The final piece needed is the community of faith.

Vocation and the Role of the Church as Community

The third essential element of vocation is the role of community in implementing one's divine call. God is at work in people and through people, in the church and home as well as the marketplace. But people are not called to work in isolation from the rest of the body of Christ. This connection with brothers and sisters in Christ is a key component in God's work.

⁷⁰ Karen Cross, "On the Job," *Guideposts*, November, 2009.

Biblical support for this relational requirement in humanity is clear. We read that Adam is deemed incomplete without his “corresponding power” (Genesis 2:20). Even his idyllic life in the Garden of Eden lacked wholeness without human companionship. From then on a straight line can be drawn linking God’s covenants with groups of people: Adam and Eve, Noah and the world, Abraham and his family, David and the nation of Israel. Even Jesus’ “new covenant” is established with the church, the body of Christ. John 3:16 affirms that it is out of love for the whole world that God sent his Son. The Bible constantly affirms a corporate understating of our life on earth.

The people of God are called to be in relationship with the Lord and each other, thus fulfilling the Great Commandment.⁷¹ Christians are to be fully engaged in God’s divine activity on earth. When Jesus first sent his disciples out on their own to do ministry he sent them in pairs and, after they met with frustration and disappointment, he brought them back into the fold. When Jesus gave the assurance that, “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20), he wasn’t establishing a minimum quorum for his attendance. Rather, two or three is the minimum number of people it takes to form a relationship, a community. The church is the living body of Christ and when individual believers join together the presence and power of Christ is experienced.

Stanley Grenz and John Franke, in *Beyond Foundationalism*, recognize this theological aspect of the church as essential to our humanity:

The *imago dei* is ultimately human persons-in-loving-relationship...Only in relationship – as persons-in-community – are we able to reflect the fullness of the divine character. And because the company of Jesus’ disciples is called to be the divine image, the church is essentially a

⁷¹ Matthew 22:37-40.

community characterized by love, a people who reflect in relation to one another and to all creation the character of the Creator.⁷²

This assertion is echoed by theologian Ray Anderson, “The vocation or mission of the church is grounded in its nature as the community of the children of God, whose lives have ontological grounding in the very being of Christ.”⁷³ The church as the gathered community of Christ has a greater purpose than simply to reflect Christ’s spirit; it is to be actively engaged in doing Christ’s work in the world today. The church is the “incarnational community” and a “ministering community.” Anderson adds, “The community that exists as the life of the father to Son and Son to the Father, in the Spirit, is the community that becomes the reconciling community of salvation history.”⁷⁴ The church as a sacramental community, united by the Spirit, becomes the family of believers. “With God as our Father, we are sisters and brothers one to another” is a phrase often heard in worship.

This need for “family” is also reflected in the language used in the corporate world. “When you’re here, you’re family” is the tag line in commercials for a popular national restaurant chain. As one comedian asked, “Do you give your family a bill after every meal?” Businesses also often describe themselves as a “family” when hiring new employees. Nash and McLennan, in *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, however, identify the harmful impact of the modern American work culture upon our need for inter-personal relationships:

⁷² Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism*, (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2001), 228.

⁷³ Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 113.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

The most urgent problems of community that many businesspeople experience are right in the next cubicle. Overworked and constantly travelling, they become isolated from local civic needs, long-term friendships, and activities. Today's free-agent culture, unstable ownership structure, and widening income gap only exacerbate the businessperson's sense of isolation and shame."⁷⁵

Perhaps in an attempt to compensate for the isolation from outside relationships the workplace often creates, the use of "family" language frequently gets employed to describe the business or corporation. Nash and McLennan pinpoint this hypocrisy:

Business often celebrates community values in such self-interested terms as to render the notion absurd, contingent as it is on artificially constructed ownership patterns and economic strategies. One day you are going all out to interact with a dynamic team working on a new produce and the next day the company has pulled out of that business and the group disbands. Under such short-term condition, relationships are increasingly defined in a primarily contractual and inherently hierarchical way: shareholders, consumers, competitors, the employed and the unemployed, management, hourly workers, suppliers, distributors.⁷⁶

In light of this, the need for the church as a primary source of community becomes even more acute.

The full implication of call, naming and community becomes evident in the very name given for the church: *ekklesia* ("call out from"). The church is comprised of people called out from the masses to join together for the purpose of impacting the world for Christ. Infused with the power of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost the church becomes equipped to fulfill the Great Commission.

These same attributes of calling, naming and community are essential for faith-at-work resources to be successful. Without all three, efforts to impact the business world for Christ will be prone to failure. Possessing power over one's work environment

⁷⁵ Nash and McLennan, 28.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 28-29.

(naming) and having the support of the community to do so, but lacking God's direction (calling) may result in a sinful abuse of the power possessed. Convicted by God to make a difference in the marketplace (calling), and even encouraged by others to do so (community), but lacking the position or power to implement change (naming) the efforts exerted will ultimately prove fruitless. Knowing God's call and even being in a position of influence so as to implement the changes desired (naming), but working in isolation from the rest of the church community will over time result in discouragement and unfulfilled vision. All three, calling (a God-given sense of purpose and direction), naming (the power to influence one's own work environment) and community (the encouragement and support of the church body) are necessary for effective change to be far reaching and lasting.

A successful faith-at-work ministry requires a solid theological foundation, yet theology is always contextualized. With this biblical foundation in place we now examine the historical development of call and vocation to better understand how we got to where we are today. An historical review reveals that responsibility for present day misunderstandings rests on the shoulders of theologians and philosophers alike. Being aware of the historical antecedents of our present condition helps contemporary leaders to anticipate and respond to objections and resistances faced by those active in this ministry.

Historical Perspectives and Application of Vocation

The Reformation had a monumental impact on contemporary understandings of faith and work integration issues.⁷⁷ An historical perspective once again proves helpful in understanding and addressing our modern predicament. In a thorough treatise on marketplace ministry the Lausanne Committee for Whole World Evangelism highlights the significant contribution made by the Reformers:

Many Christians today cannot see how ‘unspiritual’ business can be a Christian calling. Given the bad press that many transnational business corporations get, and some may deserve, this attitude is understandable. Yet it is ultimately misguided, representing an amnesia about one of the Reformation’s great distinctives, the doctrine of the universal calling or vocation of all believers, in whatever biblically lawful places of service they find themselves, including business corporations.⁷⁸

Reformation

The Reformers understood the dual nature of vocation and call. There is both the general call applicable to all people and a special calling given to believers.⁷⁹ Paul Helm

⁷⁷ For concise summaries of the Reformed distinctive, see John H. Leith, *Basic Christian Doctrine* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 1-4. More thorough works include John H. Leith, *An Introduction to the Reformed Tradition: A Way of Being the Christian Community* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977) and Shirley C. Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994). Additionally, the Presbyterian Book of Order highlights the great themes of the Reformed tradition: “Central to this [Reformed] tradition is the affirmation of the majesty, holiness, and providence of God who creates, sustains, rules, and redeems the work in the freedom of sovereign righteousness and love. [In addition,]

1. The election of the people of God for service as well as for salvation;
2. Covenant life marked by a disciplined concern for order in the church according to the Word of God;
3. A faithful stewardship that shuns ostentation and seeks proper use of the gifts of God's creation;
4. The recognition of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny, which calls the people of God to work for the transformation of society by seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God.”

⁷⁸ Liu, Preece, and Siew Li, “Marketplace Ministry: Occasional Paper No. 40 [S.L],” 12-13.

⁷⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), Institutes, III.24.8.

defines this latter concept as “the voice of God impressing itself on the mind and the conscience as the truth of the biblical message of Jesus Christ.”⁸⁰

Prior to the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church taught that only those who directly worked for the church (priests, monks, nuns), were called by God to service.⁸¹ Martin Luther, however, ascribed a much greater value to work than had been the case previously. Luther proclaimed that any honest work that benefits the world is holy, sacred, incarnational, and sacramental; that all of life, not just the religious offices, constitutes the believers vocation. Volf, in developing what he describes as a new theology of work, recognized the significant contribution of Luther. “Luther links the daily work of every Christian inseparably with the center of Christian faith: for a Christian, work in every profession, and not only in ecclesiastical professions, rests on a divine calling.”⁸² Max Webber affirmed that Luther brought a fresh perspective to the notion of Christian vocation. He taught that one’s occupation in the world was not to be taken lightly, for doing the task well was the way to serve God and to give thanks for divine justification. This conviction provided motivation for high performance in one’s station in life, whether it be as a scholar, craftsperson, or laborer.⁸³ Calvin was in agreement, “A vocation is the principal part of human life and the part that means most to God.”⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Paul Helm, *The Callings: The Gospel in the World* (Edinburgh; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), xii.

⁸¹ John R. Walchenbach, “Vocation,” in *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 387.

⁸² Volf, 106.

⁸³ Williams, 6.

⁸⁴ John Calvin, *John Calvin: Treatises against the Anabaptists and against the Libertines*, trans., ed. B.W. Farley (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1988), 78.

God is the ultimate source for human life. When Jesus said, “I have come so that you might have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10), this was not just a life of mere subsistence but one able to be lived abundantly in every aspect of life including the workplace. Thus it is incumbent upon the missional church community to form the connective relationships and spiritual guidance for the faith-at-work process. The active role of the church in the congregant’s self-understanding of their work is fundamental to the success of the members’ own spiritual and vocational integration. True faith-at-work integration advances will not be made in isolation from the community of believers.

Calvin

John Calvin’s (1509-1564) writings are foundational to the Reformed perspective and deserve special attention. Calvin, considered the father of Reformed theology and the Presbyterian Church, taught that *every* person is called by God to their life’s work. Calvin believed that no matter what our occupation, we have been called by God to that work:

The Lord bids each one of us in all life’s actions to look to God’s calling. For God knows with what great restlessness human nature flames, with what fickleness it is borne hither and thither, how its ambition longs to embrace various things at once. Therefore, lest through our stupidity and rashness everything be turned topsy-turvy, God has appointed duties for every person in his or her particular way of life. And that no one may thoughtlessly transgress his or her limits, God has named these various kinds of living ‘callings.’⁸⁵

The writings of John Calvin helped shape the Reformation as a whole and our understanding of vocation in particular. In Book III of his *Institutes of the Christian*

⁸⁵ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.3.10.6.

Religion Calvin presented vocation as primarily a theological concept grounded in “the electing call of God through Jesus Christ.”⁸⁶

Luther and Calvin advocated for “the priesthood of all believers” in the church. This notion carries forward the idea that every person has a meaningful role to fulfill in society. As Alister McGrath states, Calvin “taught that the individual believer has a vocation to serve God in the world – in *every* sphere of human existence – lending a new dignity and meaning to ordinary work.”⁸⁷ According to John Calvin, every aspect of Jesus’ life was part of his work of redemption.⁸⁸ All of Jesus’ activity was in service to God and human beings. His vocation was his calling. His work, even when perceived to be in violation of the Pharisaical laws of his day, illustrated the broader truth of God’s redemptive purpose. Jesus’ healing on the Sabbath was criticized for being “work” when in fact he was engaged in the activity of liberating the people from bondage to sickness and disease just as God had liberated the Israelites from the bondage to slavery.

Significantly, “The freedom for which Christ liberates people is not a freedom *from* responsibility but rather a liberty *to* develop as a free and responsible adult.”⁸⁹ In other words, true freedom in Christ liberates humanity in order to be engaged in meaningful, creative and fulfilling work. This statement cannot be overemphasized in light of current society’s view of work as something to be avoided at all costs.

Tremendous amounts of creativity, energy and financial resources are devoted to

⁸⁶ Mead, 7. I refer the reader to these excellent resources: Lee Hardy, *The Fabric of This World : Inquiries into Calling, Career Choice, and the Design of Human Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: William. B. Eerdmans, 1990); Helm; Leith, *An Introduction to the Reformed Tradition: A Way of Being the Christian Community*; Leith, *Basic Christian Doctrine*; Paul Marshall and Glenn Tinder, “A Kind of Life Imposed on Man: Vocation and Social Order from Tyndale to Locke,” *The Journal of religion*. 78, no. 2 (1998).

⁸⁷ Alister McGrath, “Calvin and the Christian Calling,” *First Things* 94, no. June/July (1999).33.

⁸⁸ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 2.16.5.

⁸⁹ “Report of the Special Committee on the Church, the Christian, and Work.” 47.

developing more and more “labor saving devices.” The modern worker is tritely instructed to “work smarter, not harder.” Yet freedom in Christ is given so that everyone is freed up to pursue his or her calling and fulfill his or her life vocation. It is not the absence of work that provides *shalom*, rather the opposite is true: meaningful work provides the purpose and value to one’s life that results in *shalom*. “A liberated person finds satisfaction in employing his or her talents in the work of liberating others, so that they may do the same. It is a responsible freedom rooted in relationships restored to health, justification, and in willingness to learn from older covenant wisdom.”⁹⁰ Meeks adds to this idea: “The true worth of work will be revealed only at the end time with the utter defeat of sin and the realization of God’s glory in all things (Ephesians 1:3-23; Matthew 7:24-27; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10).”⁹¹ Calvin’s own words speak for themselves:

Therefore each individual has his own kind of living assigned to him by the Lord as a sort of sentry post so that he may not heedlessly wander throughout life....God calls people to every type of work, jobs some would consider “high” and jobs some would consider “low.” All work is blessed by God....No task will be so sordid and base, provided you obey your calling in it, that it will not shine and be reckoned very precious in God’s sight.⁹²

Additionally,

We know that people were created for the express purpose of being employed in labor of various kinds, and that no sacrifice is more pleasing to God than when every person applies diligently to his or her own calling,

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Meeks, 153.

⁹² Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.10.6.

and endeavors to live in such a manner as to contribute to the general advantage.⁹³

McGrath's treatise on Calvin's theology of work adds further helpful insights. Another development in Calvin's theology of work and vocation is his emphasis on the utility of callings. Calvin refers to the "advantage," "profit," "utility," and "fruit" of Christian works with the understanding that in this light ambition is not for worldly success but to fulfill the purpose for the calling in the first place. As McGrath states,

It is certain that a calling would never be approved by God that is not socially useful and that does not redound to the profit of all... Accompanying this awareness of usefulness is an emphasis on activity. Calvin stresses that the contemplative life is not better. He stresses that God is very active. God is 'not the vain, indolent, slumbering omnipotence which sophists feign, but vigilant, efficacious, energetic and ever active.' According to Calvin, God put us here to work and 'the nature of the kingdom of Christ is that it every day grows and improves.' And Calvin is clear that this activity is not restricted to the church or to pious duties, but encompasses the whole of creation.⁹⁴

Williams, in *Business, Religion, & Spirituality: a New Synthesis* contends that the flames of the Protestant work ethic were further fanned by John Calvin's view of salvation.⁹⁵ In Calvin's theology, God elects some to be saved and others to be damned, and one is powerless to affect the outcome of God's sovereign will. To help ease the anxiety of the people Reformed pastors preached that there were *signs* of election and that these signs were material success in one's business.

While one could not attain salvation by prudent management of a business enterprise, one could have some assurance that salvation was in line for a person if material prosperity prevailed. Thus everyone struggled to ensure

⁹³ John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke: Volume First; Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke: Volume Second* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 143.

⁹⁴ Alister McGrath. "Calvin and the Christian Calling." *First Things*, no. 94, June/July (1999): 33.

⁹⁵ Williams, 6-7.

that businesses were profitable, and this produced the driven quality in the “Protestant ethic.”

Although the pastors encouraged people to live frugally, to be austere, they were also counseling industriousness and persistence. This combination of advice enabled people to overcome their anxiety and also to accrue wealth. Since Calvinism taught that wealth would be an obstacle to holiness in that it led to pride and sensuality, this posed a problem. It was not long, therefore, before a new teaching emerged, to account for this condition. The doctrine of stewardship was developed; it taught that wealth was a trust and was to be used for the common good.⁹⁶

The Protestant Reformation as a whole and John Calvin in particular are instrumental in promoting the understanding that all work is a calling by God. Therefore, a person glorifies God when he or she works diligently and joyfully.

Other Theological Perspectives

The theological discussion on the integration of faith and work is complex and ongoing. In the early twentieth century, Max Weber advanced the thesis that two key doctrines of the Protestant Reformers enabled modern capitalism to come into being: Martin Luther’s doctrine of vocation and John Calvin’s teaching on predestination. What made capitalism unique, according to Weber, was the pursuit of profit by means of systematic and rational behavior.⁹⁷ The crucial point in Weber’s analysis is that making a profit became a value in its own right. Since anxiety over possible damnation is eased if one is materially successful, it “made sense” to be almost single-mindedly focused on material success.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 6-7.

⁹⁷ Max Weber and Talcott Parsons, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 15-31.

Thus the Protestant ethic changed history. Prior to this point the common ethical value had always discouraged such a single-minded quest for profits. Weber goes on to show how the Protestant ethic eventually lost its religious roots and yet maintained its vitality with a secular vision. What remains is what Weber calls a “fundamental element of the spirit of modern capitalism: rational conduct on the bases of the idea of calling.”⁹⁸

Miroslav Volf strives to develop a new theology of work that stems from the concept of the “new creation” and as a result is a “Theology of Hope.”⁹⁹ He challenges the reader to consider “vocation” to be greater than the simplified Reformation perspective of vocation as a divine calling to a single profession or station in life. Rather, vocation is a fluid participation with the Holy Spirit through use of charisms throughout all of life. This perspective is helpful for us today in that vocational mobility has become a prevalent experience in modern western culture. The economic landscape of pre-industrial Reformation society, Volf argues, simply does not fit the modern realities of the computerized world, and to try and impose a single vocation paradigm upon a career-mobile world will only result in alienation and internal conflict.

Volf also argues that the classical priorities of *vita active* and *vita contemplative* are not in opposition to one another, nor can one be reduced from the other, but rather when combined form an inseparable unity. Volf writes from his eschatological perspective and his comprehensive theology of work, as normative and transformative, becomes part of God’s transformation of all creation. This is accomplished through the

⁹⁸ Arguably, this theological foundation for capitalism unwittingly laid the very groundwork for consumerism and its theological counterpart, the prosperity gospel, (“health and wealth,” “name it and claim it,” “vending machine God”) currently espoused by Joel Olsteen, T. D. Jakes, Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer and others.

⁹⁹ Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 79.

use of charisms, or gifts, used by humans in what he describes as a pneumatological framework. These spiritual gifts and first fruits of the Spirit are to be developed in consultation with God as the Holy Spirit continues its re-creative work. “All Christians have several gifts of the Spirit. Since most of these gifts can be exercised only through work, work must be considered a central aspect of Christian living. Anthropological reflection will corroborate this pneumatological insight.”¹⁰⁰ In modern workplace terminology, God has given spiritual gifts to every believer, but the believer must employ their gifts in some activity and put them to work in order to fulfill their purpose of edifying the body of Christ. Therefore, Volf concludes, the context in which the gifts are made manifest is also a valuable component of the believers’ life. The gift and the activity surrounding the gift are both spiritually significant. Volf adds that one benefit of this understanding is that because each person is empowered through charisms, even those who are unemployed or under employed are able to find meaning in God’s activity.¹⁰¹

James Mead’s concise assessment of the Reformed theology articulates that the Bible and Reformed theology affirm that “vocation is divine before it is human and that it is corporate before it is individual.”¹⁰² Os Guinness, in *The Call*, supports this thesis. He states that vocation involves “Everyone, Everywhere, Everything (hence, corporate before it is individual)” and is lived out “by Him, to Him, for Him (divine before it is

¹⁰⁰ Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*, 124.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Mead, 2.

human).” He goes on to add that “these two affirmations gain further focus in at least three principles of Christian vocation: it is creative, redemptive, and communal.”¹⁰³

In summary, the Reformation marked significant changes in the concepts of work. A clear progression is evident. Augustine and Aquinas taught that Christians were to serve in the world when necessary. Luther recognized the importance of work in the world and taught that his followers must serve in the world, but largely accepting the status quo (a passive action). Calvin’s followers, however, were called to transform the world as Christian activists. Regardless of the various forms a person’s calling takes, *vocation* is part of his or her response to God’s claim upon his or her life.

Contemporary Voices

The theological discussion continues to the present. David Miller, Executive Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture at Yale Divinity School and Assistant Professor of Business Ethics, adds his perspective to our understanding of the divine nature of call. His definition suggests four dimensions. First, a divine call implies that there is a divine caller, one who does the calling. Second, a calling has a sense of urgency, a sense of insistence from God; yet at the same time it remains an invitation. God does not force us to accept our callings. Third, these callings often involve accepting responsibilities for a particular task or tasks, and unready as we may feel, God equips us to fulfill these callings. Finally, a calling often brings the one who is called into a new relationship with the one who does the calling.¹⁰⁴ This last move is perhaps one of the

¹⁰³ Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville, TN: Word, 1998), chapters 4-5.

¹⁰⁴ Miller, “The Sunday-Monday Gap: Called to Pew or Profit?” 2.

most extraordinary things about a Christian conception of calling – the task we are invited to undertake suddenly is more than a task. The humble task now becomes a sacred, holy offering. In the process, not only are our tasks transformed but even more importantly our relationship to God is transformed.¹⁰⁵ This concept is key. The work setting is first of all more than a job. It is even more than a job for God. Rather, work becomes a setting where we can encounter God and be transformed by God’s presence.

Miller echoes the premise set forth by Volf:

I would like to suggest one minor – yet, I believe, significant – contribution to enhance this conception of calling. Most theologians and clergy tend to teach and speak of calling in the singular, as if we have just one divine calling or task in life. That is a gross distortion of many biblical calling narratives; furthermore, it is a denial of the living God who is ever active in creation and our lives. Indeed, biblical evidence and theological thinking support the idea of callings in the plural. It is the rare few who have one primary calling that lasts and defines their whole lives. Most of us have multiple callings. Some are sequential, while others are parallel. Some last a lifetime, others just for a season. Moreover, in a purely theological sense, we all have two callings. First, we have a general calling as baptized believers to be disciples and followers of the risen Christ. Second, we have our own particular callings, our own personal urgent invitations to particular tasks. And these tasks may change as our lives and circumstances change.¹⁰⁶

Dallas Willard reinforces the beliefs expressed by others and places his emphasis on the “incalculable damage” done by our human distinction between the sacred and secular.

Possession and direction of the forces of wealth are a legitimate expression of the redemptive rule of God in human life as is Bible teaching or a prayer meeting. For example, it is as great and as difficult a spiritual calling to run the factories and the mines, the banks and the department stores, the schools and government agencies for the kingdom of God as it is to pastor a church or serve as an evangelist. *There truly is no division between sacred and secular except what we have created.*

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

And that is why the division of the legitimate roles and functions of human life into the sacred and secular does incalculable damage to our individual lives and to the cause of Christ. Holy people must stop going into “church work” as their natural course of action and take up holy orders in farming, industry, law, education, banking, and journalism with the same zeal previously given to evangelism or to pastoral and missionary work.¹⁰⁷

People shortchange themselves when they erroneously define their sense of vocation as an occupation that must be done in order to pay the bills and from which they escape at every possible opportunity. This is a significant distinction to make and an important one to articulate in the church setting. The goal of integrating one’s personal faith and public work is not just to become more productive, profitable or even “successful.” Rather it is to enable all followers of Christ, through their work, to become more fully engaged in the greater activity God is doing in the world. Vocation is far more than an occupation. It is at its very core the means of human-divine connection with both the Creator and the created. Miller goes on to write:

The Reformed theology of vocation...claims that every person has a calling in life that is more than simply the job that offers a source of financial support...There is an implicit mandate in both the biblical and Reformed traditions that calls us to employ our thoughts and our words in critical and creative ways. Every choice we make about the ways in which we live obediently and gratefully before God needs to be permeated by the exercise of reason, critical analysis, and careful speech.¹⁰⁸

In his book, *Serving Christ in the Workplace: Secular Work is Full-time Service* Larry Peabody points out that “the New Testament draws no sacred/secular lines between Christians in *full-time service* and those in other types of work. In fact,” he continues, “the Bible does not contain the phrase ‘full-time Christian service.’ It teaches that all

¹⁰⁷ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1988), 214 (Italics mine.)

¹⁰⁸ Miller, “The Sunday-Monday Gap: Called to Pew or Profit?” 4.

Christians should serve God fulltime, even though our differing vocations display such service in a variety of forms.”¹⁰⁹

Not all theological insights come from professional theologians. From the perspective of Brad Anderson, vice chairman and chief executive officer of Best Buy Company, Inc., “Look at the concepts of sin and forgiveness. Look at their application from a business link,” he said. “With the best of intentions can come the worst decisions. We profoundly need forgiveness.” Anderson reflected that a calling is not a warm and fuzzy “nice and fulfilling” concept. He pointed out the “dangerous callings” in the Bible, and how difficult it was for many to accept. “Moses didn’t want his calling. But there is a sense of calling outside the man – it’s bigger than I am,” he said, adding that for him “Calling has a very different meaning now. It’s about creating a culture of accountability.” Anderson goes on to say that this culture of accountability pervades Best Buy. “The mission of Best Buy is to make technology and entertainment products affordable and easy to use,” Anderson said. “This is what the top fifty companies have in common – the commitment to something larger than themselves – greater than making money. An organization needs something people can hold onto and build, based on trust. The ideas that work must be true.”¹¹⁰

Frederick Buechner offered these words of wisdom:

The voice we should listen to most as we choose a vocation is the voice that we might think we should listen to least, and that is the voice of our own gladness....Is it making things with our hands out of wood or stone or paint or canvas? Or is it making something we hope like truth out of

¹⁰⁹ Larry Peabody, *Serving Christ in the Workplace: Secular Work Is Full-Time Service* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2004), 18.

¹¹⁰ Sheri Booms Holms, “Best Buy Ceo Contemplates Faith and Leadership in the Workplace,” Luther Seminary http://www.luthersem.edu/story/story_article.asp?article_id=67&issue_id=10 (accessed March 28, 2009).

words? Or is it making people laugh or weep in a way that cleanses their spirit? I believe that if it is a thing that makes us truly glad, then it is a good thing and it is our thing and it is the calling voice that we were made to answer with our lives.¹¹¹

In this chapter we have seen that Jesus' Great Commission to go into the world with the gospel includes the marketplace. For many pastors, the business world is a foreign territory and they fail to recognize that their greatest resources for significant and worldwide impact are the people already attending their churches each week. There is a hunger for help in integrating the truths of Scripture with the realities of the workplace and the church's active and intentional response to this need and opportunity is long overdue.

The biblical foundation is laid when it is understood that in Scripture the words for worship, work and service all derive from the same Hebrew root and are therefore integrated exegetically and theologically. A person's work is to be offered up as an act of worship to the Lord and the energy spent and product produced are intended to be part of the Christian's service to the world and to God.

We also examined a theology of work that addresses three essential elements of a successful faith-at-work ministry: Call and Vocation, Naming, and Community. First, the common misconception is that a person's "call" is a divine act to a divine position, whereas a person's "vocation" is simply the job they do. A closer review of these words' etymology reveals that they both derive from the Latin, *vocare*. Significantly, then, there is no sacred-secular distinction when a person's labors are done as an expression of their

¹¹¹ Frederick Buechner, as quoted by Ken Gire, in *Windows of the Soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 71.

faith and to the glory of God. All people are called by God into their work. Second, the privilege of naming his environment was given to Adam in the creation story. As such, Adam (representing the whole of humanity) is given authority and power over his own circumstances. This ability to influence one's own life setting is critical to job happiness and human flourishing. The third essential element is the role of the community in providing support and encouragement.

When properly placed together, a person's work is not a "necessary evil" but a glorious gift of God. Work becomes an act of worship offered in daily service to the Lord. A person is called by God into his or her "vocation" for the purpose of fulfilling the worker as well as benefiting society as a whole. Every action and every place is sacred; there are no second-classes careers from God's perspective. When this is fully realized, the person is able to demonstrate control over his or her work environment (naming) as they participate with God in God's ongoing Kingdom work. Finally, this work is done within the supportive Christian community.

The Reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin in particular, have helped shape our modern understanding of the protestant work ethic. I have argued in this chapter that leaders in the modern church are well-served by reading the Reformers' writings, which affirm that all work, when dedicated to God, is sacred activity.

Unfortunately this idealized vision is not the reality faced by most people today. Numerous stumbling blocks get in the way that prevent women and men from realizing God's intended blessing. These stumbling blocks, addressed in the following two

chapters, range from the philosophical to the pragmatic and from ancient times to the present.

CHAPTER 3

PHILOSOPHICAL STUMBLING BLOCKS

Introduction

Even though a solid foundation for faith-at-work integration *can* be built, numerous factors work against its implementation. Marketplace ministries, and resources to support them, are becoming more plentiful, but there is still resistance to the faith-at-work effort. To believe that all good faithful Christians are eager to learn how to apply their faith in their own particular workplace, and will do so once they have the right tools, is naïve. Launching a new faith-at-work ministry in a church can be difficult. The problem is a complex one rooted in a long historical context. All too soon one encounters a multitude of obstacles from both outside and inside the church. These come in various forms – philosophically, as well as the more pragmatic: biblical, theological and cultural mores within both churches and the business community, not to mention, legal challenges. The road to a fully engaged faith-at-work ministry is littered with these stumbling blocks.

By far the first and most profound obstacle faced is a philosophical one. Is there a difference between sacred and secular work? In the arenas of faith and work, the words used to describe their activities almost reflexively indicate and reinforce the sacred-secular barrier addressed in this dissertation. A pastor is *called* into ministry and because she is working in a church she is therefore engaged in sacred work. In contrast, a shepherd *chooses* his vocation and because he is working in the fields, he is engaged in secular work. The difference is revealed in the language used to describe the two. Both

are shepherds, one of people, the other of sheep. The pastor works in a building built by human hands, but it is considered sacred space. The shepherd works in nature, created by God, yet the job and location are considered dirty and secular. This language bias is found in both “sacred” and “secular” communities of people and serves an injustice to both.

Does one person who works in “full time Christian ministry” serve God while another in a “secular” job does not? Larry Peabody, in *Job-Shadowing Daniel*, raises the concern that Christians who are not called into ministry as a pastor or missionary might easily become infected with an “occupational inferiority complex”.¹ For a Christian, is a job in the secular world “second best?” Beneath these questions is a more fundamental one: are there parts of life that belong to God and other parts that operate outside of God’s jurisdiction?

The western worldview is a dualistic one and it is so pervasive it impacts the assumptions of our entire culture including the church and business communities. The predominant American culture operates with a functional division between the aspects of life that are considered sacred and the remaining parts labeled as secular. Graham Buxton, in his book *Celebrating Life: Beyond the Sacred-Secular Divide*, identifies this as the “Sacred-Secular Divide Syndrome” because it is so much a part of our western worldview.² Does, or even should, this sacred-secular distinction exist? The answer to that question is a philosophical one. This single premise is such an unquestioned “truth” that it warrants its own chapter and attention.

¹ Peabody, *Job-Shadowing Daniel*, 13.

² Graham Buxton, *Celebrating Life: Beyond the Sacred-Secular Divide* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2007), x.

Dualism is defined as “any philosophical system that seeks to explain all phenomena in terms of two distinct and irreducible principles. It is opposed to monism and pluralism.”³ More formally:

[The] term *dualism* is used to describe any system in which there are two realities. The term is sometimes used to express the existence of two God’s or the existence of God and the cosmos, but its most common usage is in the philosophy of human nature. A dualist holds that a human person is constituted by a body and what may be called a mind or soul or consciousness.⁴

In essence this dualistic perspective is an attempt to understand the contrasting natures of the human experience. The material part of our human experience is physical and tangible and experienced through the five senses. It can be seen, touched, and measured empirically. This part of life can be photographed, examined under a microscope, smelled and tasted. In contrast, the other part of life is intangible and ethereal. It is the world of ideas, spirit and soul. Abstract concepts as beauty, faith, hope and love help comprise this mystical nature of human experience. They are real, but defy constraint. Dualism not only identifies these two realms, it separates them into distinct fields of study. Like oil and water mixed in a jar, they coexist, but remain ontologically distinct.

The reality of these two realms does not in and of itself pose a problem for most people. The problems develop, however, when they are assigned differing values and placed in opposition to each other. Rather than being two dimensions of the same reality, the spiritual realm is assumed to belong to God and is therefore considered sacred. In contrast, the physical realm is earthy and temporal and therefore considered outside of

³ Dualism, in the The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1E1-dualism.html> (accessed January 18, 2009).

⁴ Dualism, ed. Charles Taliaferro, in the Science-Religion Encyclopedia enotes.com/science-religion-encyclopedia/dualism (accessed February 22, 2009).

God's primary concern. In short, what God controls is sacred; what humans control is secular.

The sacred realm is mystical and intangible. Since it pertains to the human soul, spirit and consciousness it defies being objectified. It is the locus of one's spiritual life. From a common Christian perspective, the sacred realm belongs to God, includes matters of faith and morality, and is focused on the eternal and divine. This intangible part of life is deeply personal, highly subjective and often emotionally charged. Wars are waged over religious beliefs; families split over which church is the "right" one. In our American culture, one's spiritual beliefs are considered private matters of conscience and are to be kept that way. In "polite society" politics and religion are off limits and when the sacred matters of God do cross over into the public arena they are to be reserved for church and its activities.

The secular realm, in contrast, is considered to be objective and freed from such intangibles. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines secular as: "Belonging to the world and its affairs as distinguished from the church and religion; civil, lay, temporal. Chiefly used as a negative term, with the meaning non-ecclesiastical, non-religious, or non-sacred." Larry Peabody draws this distinction between sacred and secular: "Anything sacred or clean was that which was accepted by God and set apart (made holy, sanctified) for His purposes. Anything not sacred was therefore secular, common, profane, or unclean."⁵

Charles Conniry identifies the sacred – secular divide as the source of the dissonance between cultural assumptions and Scriptural norms. "There are reasons for

⁵ Peabody, *Serving Christ in the Workplace: Secular Work Is Full-Time Service*, 14.

this disconnect between professed belief and actual belief. We are the products of a conflicted age. We inhabit the secular world and the sacred world – the sphere of commonly held cultural norms and the sphere of personally held beliefs.”⁶ Graham Buxton, in *Celebrating Life, Beyond the Sacred-Secular Divide*, presents a thorough examination of the impact, and fallacy, of the sacred – secular division. Buxton highlights the negative impact this division has had upon literature, the arts, science, politics and economics as well as the church and business communities. This belief in a compartmentalized world view has had a negative impact in the church. Buxton highlights four implications: 1) this fragmentation dismisses what happens outside the church as unrelated to God and his kingdom and results in an ‘ostrich’ mentality; 2) it may lead to a triumphalism which ignores the needs of the ‘secular’ world; 3) the perceived dualism results in a distorted understanding of mission which emphasizes bringing people ‘in’ to the church from being ‘out’ in the world; and 4) it creates a false sense that all is ‘light’ inside the church and ‘darkness’ in the world.⁷

The impact of this sacred-secular world view upon society is clear and lines get drawn between the two. Matters of life that are sacred are set in opposition to those in the secular realm. For secularists, experience, not belief, is the source of truth. Science, not the church, is the source of authority. In western society, business and politics are to be free from religious rule. While the sacred values are privately held; secular values are public domain. Whereas the sacred/spiritual parts of our lives deal with lofty values, the secular/physical parts focus on the nuts and bolts of living and paying the bills.

⁶ Charles J. Conniry, *Soaring in the Spirit : Rediscovering Mystery in the Christian Life*, Faith in an Emerging Culture (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2007), 132.

⁷ Buxton, 16-17.

Logically, church, since it focuses on the ethereal matters of faith, hope and love is considered a sacred place and dealing with sacred activities. The office building or manufacturing floor, in contrast, focuses on things that are tangible and able to be held and seen, bought and sold, and is therefore considered secular space filled with secular activity. These differing values come into conflict when the Christian who is seeking to be faithful to Christ comes to believe that their spiritual life is sacred and matters to God, but their work life, since it represents the concerns of day to day living, is secular and therefore separate from God's providence, grace or concern..

Sometimes the separation between sacred and secular is slight, yet the distinction remains clear. A painting of Mary cradling her new born son, Jesus, is "sacred art" while another painting of an ordinary mother cradling her new born child is "secular." The love of both mothers for their babies is equal, but the value given to each is grossly imbalanced. Teaching children in Sunday school is praised as a sacred activity yet teaching the same children in public school is considered a secular occupation. Singing "This is My Fathers' World" makes for a spiritual moment, but to study the origins of "My fathers' World" in science class is legislated to be a strictly secular activity. A love song which includes the name Jesus is sung in worship; a love song without his name is played by top forty radio stations. One easily sees the fallacy of such distinctions, yet they remain bulwarks of modern American society.

This sacred-secular divide is strongly felt across all walks of life and one significant result of this dualistic view is the inevitable divorce of the church from the business community. Church life, since it is the place where people gather to worship, seek spiritual counsel, learn the scriptures and join in prayer is labeled sacred space and

sacred activity. In worship, common elements of bread and wine (or even Welch's grape juice) become sacred elements in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

In contrast, a person's work life occupies the ordinary days of the week. Common elements of bread and wine remain bread and wine and are served at dinner. Since one's work is most often focused on the task of earning an income, includes frustrations and hardships, and is focused on physical matters it is assigned to the secular realm.

In respect to this study, the goal of integrating one's faith-at-work runs into direct conflict with this dualistic worldview. Common consensus asserts that when at work, businessmen and women live according to the secular standards of society, and their sacred and spiritual principles are to be practiced during their private time. Not only is this division pervasive in our culture, it is also a commonly-believed assumption within the church.

The resulting separation of life's spiritual beliefs from work activities often creates a tension for the Christian who seeks to be both faithful to Christ and successful in business. Consequently Christians end up leading disjointed lives, separated with one set of rules and expectations at work and another when at church or at other church-related activities. The believer is trapped in an unavoidable tension between the split demands of life and is caught in the grip of this philosophical tug-of-war. Chuck Conniry refers to this conflict as "soul dissonance":

When we embrace Jesus as Lord of all things, seen and unseen, and then try to live by the conflicting rules of two worlds, we set ourselves up for another deadly form of dissonance – soul dissonance. Soul dissonance occurs when we try to live as functional secularists in the public domain and followers of Christ in the private domain. We are neither our best as citizens of the world or as disciples of Jesus Christ.⁸

⁸ Conniry, 133.

This trend is in direct opposition to the biblical instruction to do all things to the glory of God: “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” (Colossians 3:23-24).

To help illustrate, in the modern American psyche, life is often envisioned as a pie chart, with each component of life occupying a different slice of the pie. Picture a life-sized version of the board game, Trivial Pursuit®. “Faith” is the subject of one category of life, “work” is another, as are “recreation,” “family,” “political affiliation,” and so on. From the sacred-secular perspective, these pieces of the pie are to remain distinct from each other. *“Don’t bring your private life to work and don’t take your work home”* is frequently offered as wise counsel for both work and home.

These pieces of the board game are easily interchangeable. Under “recreation” we have many choices for how to spend our free time, from reading to mountain biking. For “family” we also may choose between being married or single, with or without children. Under the heading of “work” one can insert any one of countless jobs, such as truck driver or neurosurgeon, scientist or pastor. “It is just a job” is the assumption. In keeping with this same mindset, the category of “faith” also becomes a matter of interchangeable options. “It doesn’t matter what you believe, just as long as you are spiritual,” as the saying goes. Christian, Buddhist, Baha’i, Muslim, Wiccan, agnostic, or atheist are all equally valid options and viable choices from this widely-held perspective. A “well-rounded” person or “winner” in game terminology is someone who has each piece of the pie filled up, regardless of the content.

This compartmentalized view of life commonly accepted as reality, and even healthy, yet an examination of biblical texts leads to a much different conclusion. Here a different “pie” illustrates the point. Picture a fruit pie, enticing to the eye and tongue alike. From a biblical perspective, matters of faith do not occupy a *slice* of the pie; they provide the entire *crust* of the pie. As the crust, one’s religious beliefs hold *every* aspect of life together, not just where to worship and which creed to believe. In this model, faith encompasses all aspects of life, including one’s work and life vocation.

In order to better understand this sacred-secular worldview and be able to turn this philosophical stumbling block into a building block, we must look back to see its origins and historical development. Understanding the nature of this belief helps equip the modern Christian to combat its assumptions and challenge its precepts. All theology is bound in cultural context and since the western worldview stems from its Greek heritage it is there we turn to first.

Early Greek Philosophy

Although the secular-sacred divide would not take shape fully until years later, the seeds for this dualistic mindset were planted early on by the Greek philosophers. Walsh and Middleton, in the book *The Transforming Vision*, define dualism as “a split – vision world view” and has its origins in Greek philosophy, with its sharp distinction between the body and the soul.⁹ This classical dualistic view originates from the ancient Greek philosopher Plato (427?–347 B.C.E.). Plato, like his mentor Socrates, was concerned with the fundamental philosophical problem of the relationship between living

⁹ Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984). Cited in Buxton, 6.

and knowing. In his early writings he asks if virtue can be taught (The *Meno*) and explores the absolute nature of right and wrong (the *Gorgias*). In these early dialogues with Socrates, Plato illustrates his main ideas of the unity of virtue and knowledge and of virtue and happiness. Like Socrates, Plato was convinced that the structure of the universe is ultimately harmonious. His goal was to show the rational relationship between the soul, the state and the cosmos and he sought to construct a comprehensive philosophical system to connect all three together. In the *Republic*, Plato shows how the operation of justice within the individual can best be understood through the analogy of the operation of justice within the state. However even this is not enough, this justice cannot be understood apart from the higher, supreme principle of order and truth, called the Good.

In his famous metaphor of the cave in the *Republic*, man is chained in a world of shadows. These shadows give an indication of reality, but are not the realities themselves. These shadows are what Plato calls Ideas or Forms. Ideas or Forms are the unchangeable archetypes of all physical phenomena, and only these Ideas are completely real; the physical world possesses only relative reality. The Forms assure order and intelligence in a world that is in a state of constant flux; they provide the pattern from which the world of sense derives its meaning. Only as the proverbial cave dweller moves closer to the sun, or in Plato's terms, the highest Good, will full knowledge be achieved. This now famed process Plato called dialectic, or supreme science is a method of inquiry that progresses by a constant questioning of assumptions and by explaining a particular idea in terms of a more general one until the ultimate level of explanation is reached.¹⁰

¹⁰ *The Columbia Encyclopedia* Sixth ed. (Encyclopedia.com, 2008), s.v. "Plato."

Plato's case of the immortality of the soul is predicated upon a dualistic metaphysical construct. This argument is worked out in *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic*. Instrumental in the later development of this dualistic belief were several assumptions made by Plato: 1) God corresponds to the higher and superior world and is therefore unchanging, timeless, and unfeeling; 2) a person's rational soul is a spiritual substance and is distinct from the body in which it dwells, and 3) evil and disorder have their origin in Matter and are subsequently in conflict with God.¹¹ One can see in early Platonic thought, the founding premises taking shape from which dualism would be birthed.

In this split-level view, Greek philosophy emphasized the superiority of unchanging, timeless, and unfeeling reality in the higher realms whereas emotion, changeableness and temporality were considered negative features of the lower physical world. On an anthropological level this manifested itself in the division between body and soul, with the body belonging to the lower realm of nature and the soul to the higher.¹²

In a thorough review of Plato's thoughts and contributions to the dualistic perspective, Howard Robinson notes that Plato believed that the true substances are not physical bodies which are temporary and fleeting. Physical bodies, according to Plato, are imperfect copies of true eternal Forms. These forms not only make the world possible, they also make it intelligible. This similarity and close connection is so strong that the soul strives to leave the body in which it is imprisoned and dwell in the realm of forms. Therefore, Plato's dualism is not simply a doctrine in the philosophy of mind, but an

¹¹ Buxton, 16-17.

¹² Even though the term "dualist" was actually coined at the beginning of the 18th century in the writings of Thomas Hyde, a professor of Hebrew at Oxford University, the term can be easily applied to the ideas and teachings of Plato.

integral part of his whole metaphysics.¹³ Pushed to its extreme, Plato's basic assumption was also that the nature of reality was impersonal rather than personal and at the heart of his thinking was the idea that even above and beyond God was a pure perfection far removed from our physical world.¹⁴ By this, the course of western philosophical thought was set.

Plato's student Aristotle expanded Plato's dualistic model and concluded that both matter and God are co-eternal, his argument being that God, who is the Prime Mover, required a world to move. He also adopted the position that objects are distinct from our perceptions and ideas about the object. This premise led to his anthropological conclusion that humanity, as an individual human being, is the result of the union of both Form (soul) and Matter (body).¹⁵

With this dualistic philosophical assumption the human creation, rather than being a unified whole, is understood to be in essence two separate parts attached together. This premise became the basis for an entire storyline in the television series *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. In this subplot a particular "soul" was able to move from one body into another. A love interest developed between a crew member on the Enterprise and this "soul" and as the story wove its way through several episodes, and the soul occupied different intergalactic species and both male and female genders, the loving relationship also transferred from one body to the next. The message was loud and clear, the physical body (a lower creation) is secondary and interchangeable, existing solely to host the soul

¹³ Dualism, ed. Howard Robinson, in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dualism/> (accessed May 5, 2009).

¹⁴ Buxton, 13.

¹⁵ Dualism, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. M. Maher, in the Robert Appleton Company, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05169a.htm> (accessed February 13, 2009).

(a higher creation) which is constant and eternal. The moral of the Star Trek story was that what matters most is the love between two souls, regardless of the physical bodies in which they reside. The two realms are connected, yet distinct; the physical realm is of lesser value while the spiritual realm is of supreme significance. This premise obviously has both philosophical and moral ramifications.

Dualism, now an integral part of western thought, continued to capture the minds of modern philosophers Francis Bacon, René Descartes, John Locke, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Thomas Reid.¹⁶ During the Renaissance the debate raged on regarding the exact relationship between the material and immaterial realms in humanity. Modern philosophy in Europe focused on three philosophies of human nature. On one end of the continuum Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) championed the position that only matter exists and the very notion of there being something immaterial was absurd. “The universe is corporeal; all that is real is material, and what is not material is not real.” –*The Leviathan*. Hobbes insisted that even God is a material reality. Logically, this position is called Materialism. On the other end of the continuum is found idealism. George Berkeley (1685–1753) believed the opposite of Hobbes, and he held that matter was not a fundamental, mind-independent reality. In other words, the cosmos is made up of minds and their sensory experiences; only minds and their states and activities exist. The material world, from Berkeley’s perspective, is all a construct of the mind. Between these two extremes was Cartesian dualism, named after the French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650). Descartes claimed that the immaterial mind and the material body are ontologically distinct from one another, yet mutually interact. Mental events cause

¹⁶ Conniry, 133.

physical events and vice versa. As a result, in the eighteenth century dualism became the moderate choice between the two extremes of materialism and idealism.¹⁷

Immanuel Kant's Perspective and Impact

Of all these brilliant minds, no one had a more significant impact on the later development of the sacred-secular divide than did Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Historically the time was ripe for philosophical theology and Kant found a ready following. His thought, and its impact on our current western worldview, deserves special attention.

Kant is considered by many to be the most influential philosopher in the last 200 years and a large part of his work addresses the fundamental epistemological question "What can we know?" Kant argued that the human mind is not a blank slate waiting to receive raw data from experience. Rather, he said, the knowledge we gain from experience is possible only because the mind itself provides a way of structuring the data it receives. Kant argues that the human mind helps give shape to the objects around it since these objects must themselves conform to human conceptual capacities. In other words, for Kant, the structure of the human mind actually shapes reality.

Kant divided reality into radically distinct opposites of subjectivity and objectivity. His premise was that physical objects could be observed and studied, but they can never be understood apart from our human perception of that object. The further one delved into understanding the object and the harder one tried, Kant argued, the more he

¹⁷ ed. Taliaferro.

ended up investigating not the object itself, but his own conscious constructions of the object.¹⁸

Significantly, Kant placed in question the human understanding of God and attempted to determine the extent to which human reason, without the assistance of divine revelation, could under its own ability establish the meaning, validity and truth of concepts and claims about God. This single step radically altered the way people thought about God.

Initially, philosophical theology began with the acceptance of divine revelation as the source of truth. Religion and the established church served as the curator and messenger of this divine truth. The belief system supported the conclusion that since the Word came from God it was to be an unquestioned truth. Scripture, mediated through the church, established the criteria by which human life was analyzed and evaluated. Human thought and reason were critiqued through the lens of religious belief. But with the advent of philosophy of religion, as it evolved in the eighteenth century, human logic and experience became the primary source of knowledge and religion became subject to human reason. Human reason took the place of Biblical revelation as the source of truth, and the university supplanted the church as the institution charged with seeking and teaching the truth. Religious beliefs were now evaluated by how well they matched up with human reason and logic. “Philosophy of religion, as it began to take shape in the eighteenth century, began to function independently of formal theological inquiry and shifted its focus from religion as divinely revealed to religion as a human

¹⁸ Of particular significance are the influential *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, 1787), *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) where he works out his moral philosophy, *Critique of Judgment* (1790) which examines the concept of purpose, and finally, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793), where he explores the consequences of transcendental criticism for theology.

phenomenon.”¹⁹ Conniry recognizes the far reaching impact of this philosophical shift when he writes that Kant “would drive a wedge into our world, sundering it in two.”²⁰

This subtle but significant shift has had far-reaching implications for us today. Where philosophy of religion is normative, the authority of God is undermined and with it comes a weakening in the authority of scripture and of the church. Human reason and personal opinion begin to change seats with God’s revelation as the acceptable source of truth. Conniry stresses the devastating impact of this change upon the church. “Rather than seeing the church as something of God’s making, which he conceived before creation of the world, many Christians in the modern world have come to see it as a thing of human making.”²¹ It is added that many non-Christians also hold the same belief and therefore consider the role of the church to be a marginal one.

Pertinent to this study is the progression of thought taking place toward an understanding of God, who accordingly is not only outside our realm of experience, but whose very *existence* is now put into question. The question changed from an inquiry into the nature of God to an assessment of opinions on whether or not God even exists. Even in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) Kant deals with these topics mainly in terms of their placement within such a system of metaphysics. His arguments that focus on the concepts of God and the soul are primarily to show their philosophical incoherence as they were articulated within those systems. Although *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793) is closely tied to Kant's larger critical project, it also signals the

¹⁹ ed. Robinson.

²⁰ Conniry, 135.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 134f.

shift in focus to religion as a human phenomenon.²² In addition, already active in the dualism discussion introduced by Kant in 1781 are the concepts of the *phenomenon* and the *noumenon* which placed in question the ability of anyone to truly perceive real objects directly.

Alongside Hume and Hegel, Kant played a pivotal role in changing the attitude from “philosophical theology” to “Philosophy of Religion.” Even though the shift appears subtle, the resulting change was seismic in its consequences. Previously, claims about God were understood to come from divine systematic revelation. Now, claims about God are understood to be the result of subjective human origin. Previously, God’s revelation was understood to have authority, now it provides only guidance. Connery concludes: “In short, if we want to blame anybody today for our two-part world, we can blame modern philosophers and those who followed them.”²³

Kant took his ideas of transcendental criticism in many directions, particularly in the field of faith and morals, and argued that God as an object can never be known.

Stanford historian Philip Rossi writes:

Any argument for the proof of God would have to be drawn both from predicates not inherently contained in the idea of God, and principles established prior to sense experience—collectively, what Kant called synthetic and *a priori* judgments. Kant dismantled Anselm’s ontological argument and the search for rational proof of God, arguing that existence is not a predicate, and that positing pure existence does not ensure the actual existence of the object with any necessity.²⁴

²² ed. Robinson.

²³ Connery, 133.

²⁴ The Influence of Kant's Philosophy of Religion, ed. Philip Rossi, in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-religion/supplemental.html> (accessed May 6, 2009). 3.1

Kant not only denied that any logical proof of God was possible, but he went further and asserted that no logical proof should be possible. If the human will is truly free and unfettered, Kant argued, then belief in God should never be a “compulsion of logic.”²⁵

In summary, it is impossible to understate the significance of this societal and cultural shift and its impact on our present day understanding of the role of faith in the workplace. The impact of philosophers from Plato to Immanuel Kant cannot be minimized in understanding the origins of this sacred-secular bifurcation.

In an ironic twist of history and especially in light of the current efforts made to correct this secular-sacred divide, Fontaine in *The Light and the Dark: A Cultural History of Dualism* posits that it was in fact the Protestant Reformation that created the zeitgeist for such a philosophical transformation to take place.

Why was it that a phenomenon which has existed since the dawn of time and that was well-known to ancient authors, only got its name in the early eighteenth century? As a result of the Reformation Europe had become roughly divided into two spheres, one mainly protestant, the other predominantly Roman Catholic. The difference between these two denominations was felt to be more radical than it is nowadays. The Wars of Religion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gave this difference a still more absolute and even highly aggressive character. As a consequence the field became prepared for an upsurge of dualism. This found a vigorous and high expression in the way Descartes opposed body and soul.

It was yet another consequence of the Wars of Religion that theology became discredited as being a source of strife and an incentive to civil and interstate war. Its place as the leading discipline was taken by philosophy with its corollary, mathematics. So the era of rationalism was ushered in. Philosophical ideas got pride of place and were considered to have practical, mainly political consequences. This was especially the case with the thinkers of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. “Ideologies” were born (let me characterize an ideology as a philosophical idea that is

²⁵ Ibid.

worked out in practice). The age of –isms had begun. It will not surprise the reader that one of the very first –isms to appear was dualism.²⁶

Dualism in the Church

As secular humanism molded our culture it also shaped our understanding of the church. Christians often share the belief that the sacred-secular separation is “the way it is supposed to be.” Clergy and laity alike often subscribe to the same conclusion that the world of the church and the world of business are separate and distinct. Many Christians are taught that the Bible focuses primarily on spiritual matters, including morality, familial relationships, sin, forgiveness and salvation and that other sources of truth and instruction exist for so called secular matters as business, education, politics, economics, science and law. Beaton and Wagener write, “Many have now suggested that Western Christianity has become fundamentally Gnostic or neo-platonist, in the sense that it focuses upon a dualism that emphasizes the spiritual at the expense of the physical, material world.” To support their claim they point to sermons and popular language where, “Much of it emphasizes devotion, pietism, [and] living apart from the world.”²⁷

The church contributes to the problem by reinforcing the sacred-secular separation. This prayer of confession, provided by a major subscription-based resource for clergy, illustrates how the church reinforces the divide: “At this moment, we confess that too often we’re in a *hurry for the wrong things: career, power, money*. And we never stop for the *right things: prayer, kindness, service, worship*.”²⁸ It is easy to understand

²⁶ Petrus Franciscus Maria Fontaine, “The Light and the Dark: A Cultural History of Dualism,” J.C. Gieben http://home.wanadoo.nl/piet.fontaine/on_dualism.htm.

²⁷ Beaton, 14.

²⁸ in the HomileticsOnLine, http://www.homileticonline.com/subscriber/worship_resources_list.asp?item_type_id=266&imageField3.x=10&imageField3.y=11 (accessed 7/13/2010), (emphasis added.)

why people who attend church, and are presented with this as their prayer of confession quickly compartmentalize their lives into two, dualistic categories. Perhaps unwittingly, the church reinforces the notion that the immaterial realm comprising of “Prayer, kindness, service and worship” is the one of greater value. In this instance, a secular career is not just “second best,” it violates God’s value system. The “wrong things,” and therefore to be shunned, avoided and in need of forgiveness, are the very activities and realities faced by the vast majority of the people repeating the prayer in church.

The message communicated in church is clear – anyone who spends time building their career is engaged in “wrong” activities and has the wrong priorities. For the person who is concerned about keeping their job so they can support their family this prayer offers little comfort or assurance. If someone sitting in church that day whose career provides a great benefit to society, or whose job provides the money needed to put food on the table and pay for college tuition, to be told that their career, and the money earned are wrong, sinful and in need of forgiveness places that person in an impossible quandary. This creates a dissonance between the words professed in worship and the primary activity of the coming week. To everyone who will be handed the offering plate, listen to stewardship sermons, and be implored to “give more,” to mouth the words that the money the church is asking for is a ‘wrong thing’ seems hypocritical at best. Too often churches communicate a double message: Secular work, the power necessary for advancement, and the money it generates are all sinful; yet when it is time for the church to raise its budget, build a worship center, or pay the pastor a salary, those very elements of work, power, and money are called upon to be given generously to “God’s work.”

This hierarchical relationship between the sacred and secular is subtle but clear: pastors and missionaries are lauded for devoting their life to sacred work while Christians in the pew are resigned to devoting their lives to second-class “secular” work. Even the terminology of “sacred” and “secular” automatically and instantly sets up a false dichotomy dividing the two. Human philosophical thought, not biblical revelation, has led us to this belief that God, faith and the church form one side of the divide while work, commerce and money form the other.

Christian theologians have been party to these and similar philosophical debates through the ages, including the great early Christian leader Augustine of Hippo (354–430 C.E.). Augustine was significantly influenced by Greek thought which contended that the non-material, spirit world was far superior to the material world. The key point of life, he concluded, was contemplation.²⁹ Contemplation was not Augustine’s ideal alone. In the Roman world at the time, leisure was the ideal to strive for. Life’s supreme goal was to spend time in contemplation and dwell in the lofty non-material world of ideas. In fact, daily commerce was so antithetical to this ideal that the very word for business in Latin was *neg otium*, literally *not leisure*.³⁰ Augustine developed a Platonic form of Christianity, rejecting some of Plato's beliefs (prenatal existence, as well as Plato's view of the divine as a finite reality) but he preserved the overall assumption of dualism.³¹ The philosopher Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) preserved much of the Platonic, Augustinian tradition, but he more firmly insisted that human beings are comprised of matter and

²⁹ Mark Greene, in *Catherwood Lecture in Public Theology* (Belfast, Union Theological College, October 18, 2001). <http://faithandworklife.org/images/SSD%20Syndrome-The%20Great%20Divide-Sacred%20vs%20Secular-1.pdf> , (accessed March 25, 2009).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

³¹ *ed. Rossi*. 3.6.

form. The dualistic hypothesis of an eternal world co-existing side by side with God was rejected, but the concept of spiritual beings as opposed to matter received fuller attention and support

Thus the seeds of the sacred-secular divide planted by Plato also began to take root and grow in Christian orthodoxy. As a consequence, the Christian worldview echoed this same dualistic divide between body and soul. We see the underlying assumptions invade every aspect of modern life. The notion of good vs. evil, God vs. Satan, right vs. wrong, eternal life vs. life on earth, the kingdom of God vs. the kingdom of this world³² have resulted in a dualistic divide between the community of faith in the church and the community of commerce in the marketplace. This often unchallenged stance has resulted in unnecessary conflict and in fact often creates destructive tension for faithful and devout Christians who are caught between their religious instruction and faith and the realities of their work world faced every day.

However, the good news is that this dualistic view of life and its negative impact on the church today has not gone unnoticed. E. E. Ellis notes: “The Greek soul-body dualism is incidentally reflected in the parable of Luke 16:19ff, but is not in accord with the general New Testament outlook or teaching.”³³ Dallas Willard speaks directly to the impact of a dualistic worldview in relation to the workplace:

There is truly no division between sacred and secular except what we have created. And that is why the division of the legitimate roles and functions of human life into the sacred and secular does incurable damage to our individual lives and the cause of Christ. Holy people must stop going into ‘church work’ as their natural course of action and take up holy orders in

³² John 18:36; Ephesians 2:2; Revelation 11:15.

³³ E.E. Ellis, “Life,” in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. F.F. Bruce J.D. Douglas, J.I. Packer, N. Hillyer, D. Guthrie, A.R. Millard, D.J. Wiseman(Wheaton: Tyndale Press, 1982), 699.

farming, industry, law, education, banking, and journalism with the same zeal previously given to evangelism or to pastoral and missionary work.³⁴

Christian Overman depicts the contrast between Greek and biblical thought with two diagrams in his book *Assumptions That Affect Our Lives*. He points out that the differing world views are the result of their origin in thought:

The Hebrews depended primarily on revelation, inspired directly by God. The Greeks, who didn't acknowledge the one true God, depended on humanly inspired reason. Because the sources were different, the results were different. Different views of deity, of origins, of absolutes, of truth resulted in different worldviews.”³⁵

Overman argues against the assumption that the Sacred (“Things pertaining to the spiritual, eternal, and unchanging upper realm of God in heaven”) resides on a higher plane and the Secular (“Things pertaining to the physical, temporal, and changing lower realm of humans on earth”) are relegated to one below. Accordingly, in this Greek view businesses and occupations inevitably end up in the lower realm. In contrast, according to Overman, the biblical (Hebrew) worldview places all things in a neutral territory and holds that “all things are good when in harmony with God’s design or evil when in conflict.”³⁶ In other words, things such as art, school, drama, sports, business, law, agriculture, sex and medicine, Overman argues, are neither sacred nor secular in and of themselves but become either sacred or secular depending on their use and purpose. With this worldview, a painting of a mother cradling her newborn, if intended to depict God’s love, is sacred art independent of who the mother and child are.

³⁴ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 214.

³⁵ Cited by John D. Beckett, *Loving Monday: Succeeding in Business without Selling Your Soul* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 70-75.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Other contemporary theologians also argue against the sacred-secular divide in favor of a unified whole. Larry Peabody focuses on this issue in *Serving Christ in the Workplace: Secular Work Is Full-Time Service*.

In the New Testament God does not depict the Christian life as divided into sacred and secular parts. Rather, he shows it as a unified life, one of wholeness, in which we may single-mindedly serve him, even in our everyday work. The glorious, liberating truth is that in Christ, God has performed the impossible. In Christ, that which was once secular has become sacred. The wall between them has been removed. ‘For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude: for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer’ (1 Timothy 4:4-5).³⁷

John Beckett, in “Loving Monday,” quotes A. W. Tozer:

One of the greatest hindrances to the Christian's internal peace is the common habit of dividing our lives into two areas—the sacred and the secular. But this state of affairs is wholly unnecessary. We have gotten ourselves on the horns of a dilemma, but the dilemma is not real. It is a creature of misunderstanding. The sacred-secular antithesis has no foundation in the New Testament.³⁸

Many others echo this position, including Eugene Peterson who, in an interview posted in “The High Calling” summarizes the issue well. Answering the request to “Give us your thoughts about the sacred-secular divide,” Peterson responded:

It’s a false distinction. There is no secular-sacred divide. And, there wasn’t until the 18th century. It’s an enlightenment thing....It destroys people on both sides. “Secular” people think they don’t have anything to do with God. “Sacred” people don’t think they have to deal with the world or anything that’s not God visibly. So it distorts from both sides. But we can recover. In fact, this is what the Christian faith, basically, is trying to do—recover the interpenetration of God into the way we live our lives.³⁹

The fact remains that a sacred-secular mindset has become ingrained in our western worldview. It is a natural outgrowth, therefore, for this dualistic perspective and

³⁷ Peabody, *Serving Christ in the Workplace: Secular Work Is Full-Time Service*, 17.

³⁸ Beckett, 70-71.

³⁹ Eugene Peterson, “Video Interview with Eugene Peterson”, The High Calling <http://www.thehighcalling.org/Library/ViewLibrary.asp?LibraryID=4753> (accessed December 14, 2009).

resulting Sunday–Monday gap to develop. One tragic result of this philosophical and religious progression of thought during the Enlightenment was that God as revealed in Scripture became an object to be studied rather than the Lord to be worshipped. God’s presence in the world became a matter of personal opinion and debate rather than an affirmation of truth. Therefore, applying one’s faith in the marketplace became an elective choice rather than a commandment.

CHAPTER 4

PRAGMATIC STUMBLING BLOCKS

Philosophical stumbling blocks are not the only ones encountered in efforts to implement a church-based faith-at-work ministry. Whether the image used is stumbling blocks to avoid, a divide to be bridged, or challenge to overcome, the end result is the same: faith-at-work ministry is wrought with difficulty, not only philosophically, but pragmatically. Within the church there is often as much if not more resistance to reaching out to the business community as there is resistance on the part of the business community toward accepting the church's hand. Spirituality is messy. Faith is subjective. With few defined borders and even fewer agreed upon definitions and expectations, problems quickly develop once the decision is made to integrate spirituality into business.

Alongside the philosophical debate run biblical and theological conflicts of opinion within the church itself. Within the community of believers there is often complacency by laity and resistance by clergy. Outside the church, cultural, corporate and constitutional tensions are also quickly encountered. The research phase of this project uncovered five pragmatic obstacles that easily become stumbling blocks to implementing an effective church-based faith-at-work ministry. These five are 1) Bible passages that present conflicting messages and easily lead to contradictory conclusions, 2) Theological disagreements among marketplace ministry authors, 3) Inadequate support from churches and clergy, 4) Resistance from within the business community, and 5) The legal and constitution constraints placed upon business employment practices. In order for the church to be more effective in faith-at-work efforts, an awareness of

each is helpful. A thorough review of each is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but a brief overview gives an indication of the complexity of the issues faced.

1. Old Testament versus New Testament

In addition to the philosophical stumbling block of sacred-secular dualism, the Bible also presents conflicting and often confusing instruction on the issue. At different places in the Bible the reader finds seemingly contradictory messages; from Genesis to Revelation the Bible presents varied and incongruous guidance on the relationship between the common (secular) life and the human experience of ordinary life set apart for a sacred purpose.

The conflict between the roles that faith and work play in our lives is woven throughout Scripture. No clearer is this tension stated than in Matthew 6:24 where Jesus teaches, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” Since our work is the primary means by which we earn money, the logical conclusion is that we each have a choice to make – either work for God, or work for money. Jesus appears to offer little middle ground on the issue.

This “either-or” dynamic can easily become a tripping point without more thorough exegetical study. In the Old Testament, God presents a clear distinction between the parts of the world that are profane and those set aside as sacred and holy. This can be seen in the law, as put forth through Moses. The priests were to differentiate between the clean and unclean and to teach the people of Israel to make the same distinction. “You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, and you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the LORD has given them through Moses” (Leviticus 10:10). One day of each week, the Sabbath, is to be kept holy and, in order to properly honor God, many of the activities

permissible the rest of the week are strictly forbidden on this single day. Certain foods were considered clean and therefore acceptable to eat while others were forbidden. Certain places were designated as “holy ground” in contrast to ordinary terrain. The tribe of Levi was set apart from the rest of the tribes for the special purpose of serving as priests of the most high. These messages from the Old Testament seem clear: God and the world are to be kept distinct and separate.

From the New Testament, however, the reader draws a differing conclusion. There is ample evidence to support the argument that unity in all things, not a sacred-secular distinction, is God’s intent. In Christ, the walls separating sacred from secular are torn down. “For everything God created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (1 Timothy 4:4-5).

Larry Peabody, in *Serving Christ in the Workplace*, points out the difference between the standards of the New Testament over and against the Old Testament law. Jesus proclaimed “all foods clean” (Mark 7:19). Peter is told: “What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy” (Acts 10:15). When the Samaritan woman spoke of holy places Jesus countered by stating that a time would come when neither the holy mountain nor the holy city of Jerusalem will be the places for worship, but rather all true worshippers will “worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23) wherever they may be. Similarly, no single set of people will be set apart for a holy occupation, but all Christians are a “holy priesthood” (1 Peter 2:5) and all believers are holy.¹

Although a theological argument can be made for the unity of all things, there still remains evidence in the New Testament that supports keeping this sacred-secular division in place. The Johannine writings promote this conclusion most directly. John’s writings describe

¹ Peabody, *Serving Christ in the Workplace: Secular Work Is Full-Time Service*, 15-17.

our human condition as being caught between two realms, light and darkness, spirit and flesh. George Eldon Ladd provides excellent commentary on this Johannine dualism and points out that John's dualism differs from the dualism presented in the synoptic Gospels. The Synoptics present a dualism that is, according to Ladd, "primarily horizontal: a contrast between two ages – this age and the Age to Come" whereas the dualism of John is "primarily vertical: a contrast between two worlds – the world above and the world below." In John's gospel "this world" almost always stands in contrast with the world above. "This world" is viewed as evil with the devil as its ruler (16:11), and Jesus has come to be the light of this world (11:9). The authority of his mission does not come from "this world" but from the world above (18:36). When his mission is completed, he must depart from "this world" (13:1).²

Jesus' own words confirm this vertical division. Dualism is obvious in the language of Jesus *descending* from heaven to earth and *ascending* again to heaven. "No one has *ascended* into heaven but he who *descended* from heaven" (John 3:13). Jesus has *come down* from heaven to fulfill a mission that he received from God (John 6:38). He has *come down* from heaven as the "living bread." If anyone eats of this bread, she or he shall never die but have eternal life (John 6:33, 41, 50, 51, 58). When his mission is fulfilled, he must *ascend* to heaven whence he had come (John 6:62). After the resurrection, when Mary clung to him, he told her not to hold him, for he had not yet *ascended* to the Father. She was instead to go to the disciples and say to them, "I am *ascending* to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (John 20:17). Jesus' instruction to his followers also conveys this dualistic divide, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth...but store up treasures for yourself in heaven" (Matthew 6:19-20).

² George Eldon Ladd, "The Johannine Dualism," in *A Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974). http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/Ladd_Johannine.html (accessed December 16, 2009).

From these passages it is easy to deduce that a person's work when done in "this world" and whose end product remains in "this world," is inferior to work done for God's eternal kingdom. Understandably then, work can easily be construed not as a source of eternal blessing but as a necessary evil in this world. How is the lay person in the pew supposed to know any differently if the issue is never addressed by those theologically trained?

Is work a blessing or a curse? Is work a gift from God or the painful consequence of sin? In the Genesis account of creation we read that work is both a gift given to Adam (Genesis 2:15) as well as a consequence of the Fall (Genesis 3:17). Even the commands of the Decalogue present a confusing dichotomy. As noted earlier, *avodah* is the Hebrew root word for both work and worship and as such align the two in divine purpose of service. Work, when done to the glory of God, is an act of worship.

Yet in the Ten Commandments, the fourth commandment makes it clear that days spent in labor are to be kept separate from days devoted to worship:

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy (Exodus 20:8-11).

An even more strident prohibition is given in Exodus 31:12-15:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy. Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; whoever does any work on that day must be cut off from his people. For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death.'

When reading this passage, any individual who seriously and genuinely wants to please God might easily conclude that worship and work are antithetical rather than complementary. Is work an expression of worship or a rival for attention with potentially deadly consequences? Mark Greene, speaking to this very question at the Union Theological College in Belfast, insightfully asks:

Haven't we got a worker God in Genesis 1, creating, engineering, decorating, finishing, and appreciating? Haven't we got a worker God in Genesis 2? Doesn't he command people to look after the Garden? In Genesis 3, doesn't he tell the people about the consequences of their rebellion on their work? And in Genesis 4, isn't the first symptom of Cain's rebellion – which is going to lead to murder – actually that he disconnects work from worship, that he doesn't offer the fruit of his labour to God with a faithful heart?³

Biblical scholars debate the reasons why God praised Able for his offering and cursed Cain for his, but Greene offers a stimulating insight by suggesting that it was not because Cain gave the wrong sacrifice, but rather because he separated his work from his worship of God.

Many more examples are given in the Bible of how one's work becomes an act of faithful obedience. To name just a few, in Leviticus God says a merchant can be holy by using fair and just weights and measures in their transactions (Leviticus 19:35). A farmer can be holy by leaving some of the harvest for the gleaners to pick up off the ground so they can eat (Leviticus 19:9). Joseph in Pharaoh's court (Genesis 39 – 50) and Daniel in the Babylon palace (Daniel 1:6ff) are held up as shining examples of how to keep one's own high standards and moral code in the face of cross-cultural and even life-threatening opposition.

Proverbs give praise to the fruit of one's labors: "From the fruit of his lips a man is filled with good things as surely as the work of his hands rewards him" (12:14). "All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty" (14:23). "Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men" (22:29).

³ Greene, 5.

Proverbs also warns against idleness: “One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys” (18:9). “The sluggard's craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work” (21:25). “Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labor” (12:24).

Biblical contradictions seemingly continue into the New Testament. When Jesus called Simon, Andrew, James and John, all professional fishermen, the Scriptures say, “they left their nets and followed him” (Mark 1:17f). Levi the tax collector left his booth (Mark 2:14). The rich young ruler, when asking Jesus what more he needed to do to earn eternal life, heard Jesus respond, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Matthew 19:21). It is easy to erroneously conclude from these texts that to truly follow Jesus as his disciple believers must abandon their careers and livelihoods, and, consequently, the families these jobs support. From these texts it appears that activities in commerce and activities of faith are inherently in opposition to each other. Yet we also read that Jesus himself worked as a carpenter until beginning his years of public ministry at age thirty. The Apostle Paul, trained as a rabbi and Pharisee, learned the skill of tent-making to support his itinerate preaching expenses.

Just recently a man in his early forties came to see me in my office asking for help in discerning a career choice he was facing. Intensely wanting his life to matter for God, he asked my opinion on whether he should continue his career in state government or “serve God” by selling his house, leaving extended family, and going on a two-year mission to his native Viet Nam. In his mind, “serving God” or “failing God” (my words, not his) hinged on which job he took. He was shown that he can serve God in either location but the tension he felt by having to choose between being successful in his career or being faithful to Christ was clearly a serious issue. His struggle reflects this hierarchical view of sacred versus secular work.

When churches embark on developing a faith-at-work ministry one of the first obstacles it will most likely face is this theological one. What does the Bible really say about the relationship between faith and work? Does the Bible teach that work is contrary to one's faith? Is it legal in the eyes of God to work on Sunday? Are certain types of work more acceptable in God's eyes? Is "sacred work" more important than "secular work?" Are all Christians working in the marketplace serving only second-rate occupations? These are the questions being asked and an unquestioned reading of Scripture can yield confusing conclusions. Without assistance, how can the common woman or man sitting in church on Sunday morning be expected to arrive at a coherent and cogent understanding of what the Bible says to them about their work? It is my strong conviction that the onus of responsibility, as well as prime opportunity, rests firmly in the hands of trained clergy.

2. Theological Disagreements

A second stumbling block is a hermeneutical one. How does one interpret the Bible's approaches to this controversy? Some authors' works convey the premise that biblical principles are given in order to become more successful in business. While others advance the perspective that the marketplace is a setting in which God moves to make believers more spiritually mature. Theological disagreements center around the question, Are godly rules set forth so people can become more financially secure, or are work successes and failures instruments to shape us into more godly people? In short, is the purpose of God's word to enable Christians to be more successful in life; or are life's experiences, including those at work, given to make Jesus' followers more spiritual mature?

By far, the most common types of faith-at-work books are aimed at the general business public and are designed to help make their business more profitable. Books filled with "biblical

principles for success” clog the shelves. *Life@Work*, *21 Irrefutable Laws*, and *The 21 Most Powerful Minutes in a Leader’s Day*, all by John Maxwell, *Jesus CEO* by Laurie Beth Jones, and *The Christian Employee* by Robert Mattox, among others, represent this perspective. Larry Burkett’s classic book, *Business by the Book: The Complete Guide of Biblical Principles for the Workplace*, opens with this enticing call to action:

In this book you will learn the ageless principles that are the heart and blood of all successful businesses in America, Japan and all the world. *Business by the Book* is a step-by-step of how businesses should be run according to the Creator of all management rules: God. In the short run, you can violate these rules and continue to operate, but in the long run, profits will suffer as morale declines.⁴

Feeding into our human desire for success and greatness, one will similarly find in *Life@Work* by John Maxwell the promise of success when Maxwell’s “Driving Thoughts” are applied. Such “driving thoughts” include: “God’s original blueprint for our Life@Work calls us to be comfortable and capable in both the spiritual arena and the commercial arena,” and “a God-centered Life@Work delivers a skill that causes awe among humans and praise toward God.” And even, “We will never experience the Life@Work that God intended for us until we answer the question, ‘What is my created greatness?’”⁵ One must ask whether comfort in the workplace, “awe among humans” or even “my created greatness” are the values that Christ preached.

Another national bestseller, *Jesus, CEO: Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership* reduces the Son of God to the role of business consultant. Jesus’ daily time spent in prayer with his Father is described this way: “Jesus knew who his boss was, and he kept in touch with him

⁴ Larry Burkett, *Business by the Book: The Complete Guide of Biblical Principles for Business Men and Women* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 1990), Introduction.

⁵ John C. Maxwell, Stephen R. Graves, and Thomas G. Addington, *Life@Work: Marketplace Success for People of Faith* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005).

daily.”⁶ Jesus’ twelve disciples are his “staff” and together they “built a thriving enterprise.” The Ancient Wisdom for why we are not to judge others is because judging is an “energy leak” and doing so “wastes time.”⁷ The preface tempts the reader with the assurance that this book,

...is a practical, step-by-step guide to communicating with and motivating people. It is based on the self-mastery, action and relationship skills that Jesus used to train and motivate his team. It can be applied to any business, service, or endeavor that depends on more than one person to accomplish a goal, and can be implemented by anyone who dares.⁸

In contrast, the Focus on the Family publication, *Going Public with Your Faith*, approaches the purpose of Christians in the workplace from a different theological standpoint and considers the primary reason for serving in the commercial sector is to evangelize the lost. “As you will soon see, our focus is on our culture’s ripest mission field – the workplace.”⁹

Other authors seek to provide valuable and helpful resources for Christians in the workforce, trying to walk the paths of faith and business success together, by applying direct scriptural solutions to common workplace problems. *The Christian Employee* by Mattox, *Christian Ethics in the Workplace* by Hilgert et al., *Daily Wisdom for the Workplace* by McQuade and *Serving Christ in the Workplace* and *Job Shadowing Daniel*, both by Peabody, along with others also seek to provide the ordinary Christian with helpful biblical guidance for their workplace setting and daily workplace demands. Whereas most writers in this field begin with business-related anecdotes and then search out Scriptures that apply to the story, Peabody

⁶ Laurie Beth Jones, *Jesus, CEO: Using Ancient Wisdom for Visionary Leadership* (New York: Hyperion, 1995), 10.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Preface.

⁹ William Carr Peel and Walter L. Larimore, *Going Public with Your Faith: Becoming a Spiritual Influence at Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 11.

draws on examples from Scripture, “not personal anecdotes and experiences” for work-related guidance today,

The book is offered to those in ordinary work with the prayer that the Holy Spirit may use it to transform their daily tasks into worship and service to God. It is offered to those who teach in the hope that they may communicate to others God’s New Testament plan for men to live unified lives, whole lives, instead of lives fragmented into “sacred” and “secular” halves.¹⁰

In *Business by the Book*, Larry Burkett outlines the “Six Basic Business Minimums” as his form of the Ten Commandments for business. Burkett, in telling his own story, writes:

The business school I attended taught the bottom line: if it doesn’t make money, forget it. But since graduating from business school I have been studying another textbook: It’s called the Bible and, compared to most business schools today, it takes a radically different approach – one more concerned with eternity than with profits.¹¹

Burkett’s six Christian essentials are 1) Reflect Christ in your business practices, 2) Be accountable, 3) Provide a quality product at a fair price, 4) Honor your creditors, 5) Treat your employees fairly, and 6) Treat your customers fairly. Other than the first minimum, ambiguous as it is, one must question what distinguishes good “Christian” practices from what many would argue are simply good business practices, regardless of religious belief, or even none at all? What, then, makes for a distinctively *Christian* presence in the marketplace?

Success to Significance by Lloyd Reeb¹² and *HalfTime* by Bob Buford¹³ are both aimed at assisting the mid-career business person “with margin” in transforming their business success

¹⁰ Peabody, *Serving Christ in the Workplace: Secular Work Is Full-Time Service*, 10.

¹¹ Larry Burkett, *Business by the Book: The Complete Guide of Biblical Principles for Business Men and Women* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 1990), 4.

¹² Lloyd Reeb, *From Success to Significance : When the Pursuit of Success Isn't Enough* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004).

into lasting kingdom significance. Reeb recounts his own personal journey from mid-career success to ministry success:

My first-half definition of success, lived out to its fullest extent, would cause me to spend my life reaching financial and material goals, accomplishing tasks, and solving problems – but I would never get in touch with my soul, with how God created me. I might never discover a higher reason to live beyond the confines of accumulating things. As Bob Buford says, “Our first half is about how to make a living, and our second half has the promise of being about how to make a life.”¹⁴

Can it not be argued that the first half of a person’s career is also about making a life?

The assumption of a dualistic life still exists in this model. What differs is that the context is chronological rather than philosophical.

Can only those “with margin” look forward to having their career parlayed into God-pleasing significance? What about the single parent working two jobs who has absolutely no “margin” in any area of his or her life? With nothing extra to give are they to be told they have nothing of significance to offer in God’s on-going work? Or the lower- to mid-level employee who does not bring to the table the resources to develop large-scale ministries, does their work day have nothing of significance to offer to God? The work done by men and women engaged in “Halftime” and “Success to Significance” activities is unquestionably positive, and to be encouraged, but a lingering question remains: Is business success necessary for ministry significance? In biblical terms, was the widow’s mite, too small of an offering?

It is encouraging to see the rapidly increasing list of books and resources addressing the issues faced by Christians in the workplace. The advantage of these resources is that they give concrete examples of how to incarnate the Christian faith in

¹³ Bob Buford, *Halftime: Changing Your Game Plan from Success to Significance* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994).

¹⁴ Reeb, 31.

the workplace. These practical illustrations are beneficial to the reader for whom lofty theological discourse gives little “real world” application. The disadvantage is the temptation these kinds of books can give to have the Christian life become just another avenue to business success. Motivations become mixed and tested between genuine desire to serve the Lord and selfish desires for self-glorification. Even with the best of intentions, “biblical truths” can be employed for selfish gain. The concern is that for many of these books the Christian life in the workplace is formulaic. These “step-by-step” guides are helpful in providing practical actions for the believer to implement, but the subtle message is that an incarnational life can be reduced to a series of steps to follow and principles to implement rather than a Lord and Savior to follow and a personal relationship with the risen Christ to live out.

Robert Greenleaf’s groundbreaking book *Servant Leadership* is an anomaly when compared to the others researched. It is not a Christian book, per se, but is based on values that are, in this researcher’s opinion, much closer to biblical truth than many who carry the moniker of “Christian.” He developed his theory of servant leadership while an executive at AT&T and subsequently lectured at MIT, Harvard Business School, Dartmouth College and the University of Virginia. According to his introduction, the book was written “out of concern for pervasive student attitudes which then and now, although the manifestations differ, seemed devoid of hope. It seems to me,” writes Greenleaf, “that hope is absolutely essential to both sanity and wholeness in life.”¹⁵ Written in 1977, *Servant Leadership* was one of the first books to identify the role of a “servant leader” in business. The term, “servant leader,” is often used by the Christian

¹⁵ Robert K Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 3.

community to identify Jesus Christ's style of leadership, yet Greenleaf does not use Jesus as his model. Instead, he uses a man who himself used Jesus as his own role model, George Fox.

When George Fox gave the seventeenth-century English Quaker businessmen a new business ethic (truthfulness, dependability, fixed prices (no haggling), he did it because his view of right conduct demanded it, not because it would be more profitable. It did, in fact, become more profitable because those early Quaker businessmen quickly emerged out of the seamy morass of that day as people who could be trusted.¹⁶

The essential element of Greenleaf's work is his emphasis that the best leaders are those who serve the employee and society as a whole in addition to the customer. Greenleaf writes,

The servant first makes sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit or, at least, not be further deprived?¹⁷

These values resonate with Jesus' example of serving his disciples by washing their feet and command to do likewise. "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). In contrast to pure bottom-line or profit-driven management, Greenleaf shows that when a business leader considers the entire picture as his market, business profits and success will follow. A second key ethic promoted by Greenleaf is that, "*The work exists for the person as much as the person exists for the work.* Put another way, the business exists as much to provide meaningful work to the person as it exists to provide a product or service to the customer."¹⁸ A third emphasis by Greenleaf is the contribution that

¹⁶ Ibid., 143.

¹⁷ Ibid., 13-14.

¹⁸ Ibid., 142.

business makes to the larger society as a whole. “Businesses are asked not only to produce better goods and services, but to become greater social assets as institutions.”¹⁹

Yet another perspective is given by Brother Lawrence in *The Practice of the Presence of God* where he is able to discover God’s presence in even the most mundane of his monastic kitchen duties. Contrary to the foci of the other books where the purpose of Scripture is to make Christians into better employees and to be more successful in business, Brother Lawrence focuses on work itself as the means of grace to encounter God. Work for Brother Lawrence was not a task done *for* God as much as it was working at each task *with* God. “The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several personas are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament.”²⁰ Conniry points out that “For Brother Lawrence it was the commotion and demands of life in a monastery kitchen that sacramentally conveyed Christ’s presence as in the Eucharist.”²¹

From Brother Lawrence we learn that the workplace can also become the crucible for spiritual formation. Drawing from Brother Lawrence’s perspective, rather than using God’s words to enhance business success, the objective is reversed so that business successes, failures and everything in between, enables a person to better listen to the words of God. Eugene Peterson takes this concept even one step further when he writes, “I’m prepared to contend that the *primary* location for spiritual formation is the workplace.”²²

¹⁹ Ibid., 134.

²⁰ Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, ed. Harold J. Chadwick (Gainesville: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1999), 14.

²¹ Conniry, 104.

²² Eugene H. Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 127. (Emphasis added.)

How does one reconcile the conflicting values of the Christian life and the realities of the modern business environment? How does the average believer balance gentleness and honesty with the often harsh realities of the competitive and fierce battlefield of commerce? Hilgert, in *Christian Ethics in the Workplace* poses the dilemma: “‘The Bible is fine for Sundays,’ people say. ‘Ethics are great for academic discussions. But if we had to follow these rules in the working world, we would soon be out of business....The concepts of loving our neighbor and putting others’ interests before our own seem to be a prescription for failure in the workplace, whether we are employees or business owners.’”²³ Jesus told his disciples he was sending them out as sheep among wolves; does this metaphor apply equally to today’s Christians in the twenty-first century global economy? The needs expressed and questions raised in the opening pages of this dissertation are real ones and in need of answers. How does discipleship in Christ manifest itself in the modern workplace?

Mark adds a provocative observation to this discussion in response to the question of what it really means to be a disciple of Jesus:

Presumably it means that we are learners and that we apply the Word of God in the Spirit to everything that we do. For most, this personal discipleship would be evidenced by such characteristics as integrity, honesty, and sexual morality. Yet, one can be honest and still be building land mines that maim and kill innocent children in war-torn regions of the world. One can be sexually pure and still pay below minimum wage to the working poor.²⁴

Greene raises relevant and provocative questions that force the reader to go deeper in examining the complexities inherent in living in a multinational, geopolitical and global economic work environment. Many ethical questions are convoluted and thorny and their answers do not fit into simplistic formulas nor are satisfied by simply quoting Bible verses. For

²³ Raymond L. Hilgert, James L. Truesdell, and Philip H. Lochhaas, *Christian Ethics in the Workplace* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2001), 10.

²⁴ Greene, 9.

example, if a company builds heavy construction machinery that is used half way across the world by another nation to destroy people's homes and livelihoods, is it that company's responsibility to stop selling the equipment? Or, to be competitive in the highly volatile clothing industry with thin profit margins, should the clothing manufacturer refuse to purchase cotton and cloth from countries suspected of questionable child labor laws? Is the company's primary obligation to the managements' personal faith convictions, shareholders, or the people overseas?

On a more individual level, is the believer who works in the factory helping assemble the machinery used for destructive purposes, or as a sales clerk at a local mall selling the clothes with questionable origins, responsible for the ethical decisions of the company they work for? The farther one gets from the offense, the murkier these ethical questions become. Do the guides on the bookshelves help the socially conscious individual reach a satisfying answer to the questions they ask? In recent years, there has been an increased awareness and response to these types of eco-justice issues, but the answers to these questions are far more complicated than what can be resolved through step-by-step guides.

In summary, at the foundation of this hermeneutical discussion, one must address the various perspectives surrounding the role of faith and biblical instruction in the marketplace. Some popular authors posit that the Scriptures are given to enhance our workplace experience, comfort and success. Others take the position that they are given to equip Christians to serve as kingdom people, employed by God in the secular world for sacred purposes. Still others will argue that they are given to aid the believer in being better able to handle the demands, temptations, struggles and opportunities from a spiritually mature perspective. Can they coexist in symbiotic harmony?

Each position can be argued effectively through Scripture and personal belief. But again the question is raised as to who will assist the Christian in the workplace to sort out his or her own conclusions? The church is in the best position to address these issues. Ideally, a pastor or other trained leadership in the church would function like a marriage counselor, who guides a couple to greater intimacy, by guiding the parishioner to greater fulfillment in his or her work. There are no formulas or a pat answer in this process; rather it is a journey to discover what it means to be faithful to Christ in the context of everyday work, worship and service.

While it is true that a business must be profitable to stay in business, and there is certainly no biblical admonition against making a profit (Proverbs 14:23; 21:5), Christ puts it in perspective when he poses the question: “For what does it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his soul?” (Mark 8:36 KJV). A danger lurking in the modern American church is the temptation to use the words of Scripture and the truths of God as a means to become more successful in business and thereby “gain the whole world” without adequately preserving the care, nurture and spiritual health of the soul.

3. Inadequate Support from Churches and Clergy

A third stumbling block in this discussion can be found inside the doors of most churches. There is little doubt that many clergy are aware that the worlds of church and business operate by different rules. On one hand, it is not unusual after a presentation on the lofty ideals of following Christ to hear someone say, “But in the real world....” Even clergy use this phrase in recognition that the demands and expectations in the corporate world are vastly different than those faced when serving the church. A recent email from an executive in my own Presbyterian denomination to a friend just entering seminary late in life illustrates this point. She wrote, “I just

completed my MDiv at Yale Divinity, am almost 62yrs, and left a vibrant career in business....Attending seminary as a second or third career person has its special challenges. We see life from a different perspective having lived in the real world of getting things done.” It is disconcerting when even church leadership in its highest offices experience the gross disconnect between church life and the rest of society to such a degree that they refer to the “secular workplace” as the “real world.” Is not life the most real when God is present?

In addition to these mixed messages, my experience and research leads to the conclusion that the obstacle to overcome within the church is not an overt opposition to faith-at-work ministry, but rather an ignorance of or passive indifference to it. Nash and McLennan observe,

Despite all this spiritual interest, mainstream Christianity has not been a notable force in the businessperson’s pilgrimage....(And) has failed to deliver on the desire for experiential, personalized ways of knowing God in one’s work....When they look to the church for guidance, they find one of two responses; clergy who are indifferent to the idea or who are wildly interested but stumped as to how to begin.²⁵

One reason for this seeming apathy is that not everyone faces direct and open hostility towards his or her own Christian values at work. With moderation, many American Christians are still allowed to keep such items as a Bible on their desk or Scripture quotations in their office. Whereas for some, religious displays are strictly forbidden by company policy, the key difference between those who are allowed such displays and those who are not is often whether the person keeps their faith personal and quiet. From the data gathered from the informal surveys conducted during the research phase of this project, we were surprised to discover the high number of people who do not feel any conflict at all between their faith and their work. With little felt need there was little motivation to learn what more is possible. Apathy, not antagonism, posed the greater threat.

²⁵ Nash and McLennan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, 5.

In group discussions and personal conversations it became apparent that for many, “being a good Christian” is synonymous with a person who goes to church and is “a good person” or “good American.” The assumption is that as long as a person is honest, dependable and works hard, it doesn’t matter what they believe spiritually. For many interviewees, their basic assumption was that the primary role of having a Christian faith in the workplace was to establish a base level of ethics. This finding is consistent with Hilgert, et al. who identifies three primary ethical philosophies:

One is based on the ideas of Socrates and holds that knowledge and understanding are the only ultimate good and that there is no right or wrong except what the individual may determine within his or her own thinking. The second places value on the pursuit of power through strength – the survival on the fittest, with good being equated with dominance and victory.... Finally there is the teaching of Jesus, who calls on us to watch out for the interests of our fellow man as we follow the Golden Rule.²⁶

A commonly held belief is that as long as everyone else follows the Golden Rule, there is little cause for alarm. Of course, having a Christian ethical system may in fact, run into opposition from others with opposing ethical assumptions. Approaching business from a value system that prizes generosity will run into conflict when placed in competition against a colleague or business whose belief is that “Greed is good.” In this regard, a Christian ethic is of importance, but if having a “Christian ethic” is the sum total of following Christ, then much is left behind. If being “a good Christian” is synonymous with being “a good person,” then in the absence of direct opposition, it is easy for complacency to set in.

One example of this complacency comes from author and friend, Larry Peabody. Peabody is an early pioneer in the field of marketplace ministry and has authored two books to assist believers in integrating their faith in the workplace. As both a successful businessman for

²⁶ Hilgert, Truesdell, and Lochhaas, 12-13.

twenty-eight years and then full-time senior pastor for another thirteen, he speaks with business practicality and theological insight. Larry confided his difficulty in getting churches to take advantage of the workshops he leads and his frustration with the lack of interest expressed by church leadership. He went on to confirm David Miller's conclusion that, "most churches are generally uninterested in, unaware of, or unsure how to help laity integrate their faith in their workplace."²⁷

The laity cannot be criticized for a limited understanding of the powerful potential of Christ's Spirit in the workplace if they are not given such a vision by their pastors. Pastors are poorly trained in how to apply the Christian faith in workplace settings and churches are often unsure of their own role in this effort. It is impossible for any progress to be made in helping believers integrate their workplace dynamics and their Christian faith if their clergy are unable, or unwilling, to assist.

A substantial literature review has revealed that the majority of books on faith and work are written, notably, by business people who are seeking biblical guidance for the workplace rather than clergy writing theologically about business. Miller in his lecture at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota observes,

Responsible theological and ethical criticism of immoral and unethical business is always in order, of course. Yet clergy seem often to exhibit a presumptive and prejudicial suspicion of capitalism and marketplace structures that prevents them from thinking — or talking — about the redemptive, creative, productive, ministerial, and transformative possibilities in the business world and in the lives of those called to live out their Christian vocations in the marketplace.²⁸

But to be fair to the clergy, their professional training has not equipped them for such a task.

Miller continues,

²⁷ Stuart Dugan, personal email, by Larry Peabody, November 25, 2009.

²⁸ Miller, "The Sunday-Monday Gap: Called to Pew or Profit?" 4-5.

This phenomenon is not necessarily the clergy's fault. Many of today's clergy were influenced by seminary faculty who are heirs of Christian socialism and advocates of liberation theology, both of which employ materialist categories of analysis and tend to presuppose that capitalist structures are de facto oppressive sources of injustice. Moreover, seminary training seldom addresses "faith-at-work" and workplace ministry as subjects for theological reflection or practical training, leaving most clergy unaware and ill-equipped to minister to the needs and callings of those in the workplace.²⁹

A few notable exceptions are: Mockler Center for Faith and Ethics in the Workplace at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Max De Pree Center for Leadership affiliated with Fuller Theological Seminary and the Denver Seminary Master of Arts in Counseling Ministries with a Chaplaincy (Business/workplace/industrial organizations) and they are to be lauded for their efforts. In recent years academia has also witnessed an increased interest in Christian fellowship groups. Hillman reports that such groups have been launched at some of the best secular business schools in the world, including Harvard, Duke, Columbia, Dartmouth, MIT, Chicago, Yale, and the London School of Business.³⁰

Although in recent years there has been a marked rise in the number of books published on faith-at-work issues as well as new websites and on-site Christian affinity groups there has not been an accompanying increase in the churches intentionally developing faith-at-work ministries. While at First Presbyterian Church, Ft. Lauderdale, FL I was invited to join a cohort of church leaders working in this field. Leadership Network, Inc. in Dallas, TX, (2005) organized what was to be the first of the three "think-tank" cohorts comprised of "early innovators" from six to eight churches across the country who were intentionally addressing this issue. The title for the gatherings was "Transforming Marketplace Leaders into Kingdom Leaders: How Churches are Helping Successful Businesspeople Move into Significant

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Hillman, "The Faith at Work Movement: Opening the 9 to 5 Window."

Ministry.” I was invited to be a member of their first cohort. The group met twice a year for two years to brainstorm new ideas, learn from each other’s experiences, and inspire further innovation. The experience was fruitful and the highlights from this experience are summarized in chapter five.

The intent was to have three such cohorts. Sadly, however, the director of the program informed me several years later that there had not been enough interest shown to convene a second cohort and the project was discontinued. How disappointing it was to discover that nationally there were not enough churches, regardless of denomination (mainline or non-denominational), worship style, or size who consider this ministry area worthy of their attention and investment. When compared to the plethora of workshops, seminars and resources dedicated to singles, parenting, and other life needs, the notable absence of interest shown on making a spiritual impact in the business world is alarming.

Even within the church community there remains a strong hesitation to reach into the business world with the gospel. Most seminaries do not train their students for it; most clergy are inexperienced in the realities of business dynamics and ill-versed in its language and demands, and most churches do not offer even rudimentary opportunities to discuss and train for this mission field. Miroslav Volf contends that we are facing a “crisis of work,” both subjectively and objectively, and these work problems require theological solutions. Volf identifies six aspects of this crisis and although he approaches the subject from a global perspective the issues raised are also relevant for American churches today: child labor, unemployment, discrimination, dehumanization, exploitation, and ecological crisis.³¹ Few churches are able to adequately equip their worshippers to speak to these issues with a sound theological voice.

³¹ Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*, 35-42.

The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelism, at their conference in Pattaya, Thailand in 2005, identified that not only in the West but in developing nations as well, marketplace Christians feel trivialized or stereotyped by pastors, Christian academics and even church social justice and welfare agencies. They “speak from judgmental ignorance on business and economics” and as a result, “Many Christian businesspeople feel like they are second-class citizens in the church.”³²

Two requirements for graduation from many seminaries, and for ordination by many denominations, are an extended internship in a local congregation and Clinical Pastoral Education in a hospital setting. Yet, real-world experience in the marketplace is left up to the individual student to discover on his or her own. The trend is shifting toward second-career clergy in many seminaries but most pastors still come from academic, rather than vocational backgrounds, and are thus ill-equipped to address these significant issues with any degree of personal life experience or passion. As a result, there is little energy generating from within the congregational setting for developing active marketplace ministries. Seminaries, clergy, and churches, however, are not the only ones to blame for this resistance. The business community also shares culpability.

4. Resistance from the Business Community

The fourth stumbling block in developing a vibrant faith-at-work ministry is the resistance encountered from members of the business community. Like boys and girls at a middle school dance, lined up on opposite sides of the gym and eyeing each other with suspicion, so too the church and business worlds are wary of approaching one another too closely, not sure

³² Liu, 12.

of what might happen if they actually touch hands. As one person said, “Let’s face it, the business community isn’t rushing to sign up.” In very general terms, twenty-first century American society is becoming increasingly suspect of the Christian church as a whole. According to a recent study by the Barna Group, American society is rapidly becoming less “Christian” and increasingly resistant to its influence. Christianity is perceived by the majority of the unchurched public in negative terms as being judgmental, hypocritical, old-fashioned, too involved in politics, out of touch with reality, insensitive to others, boring, not accepting of other faiths, and confusing.³³

Thierry Pauchant, citing work by Mitroff and Denton, confirms this assessment and offers a comparison of perceptions associated with the traditional organized church and less-defined spirituality:³⁴

NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS ORGANIZED RELIGION

RELIGION	VS	SPIRITUALITY
Organized		Personal
Formal		Informal
Structured		Nonstructured
Externally imposed		Internally driven
Directed		Chosen
Rigid		Flexible
Closed		Open minded
Imprisoning		Liberating
Dogmatic		Enriching
Brings division		Brings togetherness
Life after death		Life on earth

In today’s permissive climate, the adjectives used to describe “religion” are unmistakably negative and if the gospel message is going to gain a fair hearing, the church must examine its own contribution to this negative image. Unfortunately, the vocal Christian who is eager to share

³³ David and Gabe Lyons Kinnaman, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity....And Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 34.

³⁴ Thierry C. Pauchant, *Ethics and Spirituality at Work: Hopes and Pitfalls of the Search for Meaning in Organizations*, ed. Thierry C. Pauchant (Westport, CO: Quorum Books, 2002), 192.

his or her faith is frequently saddled with this negative perception about the church they represent. The challenge for the believer as well as the organized church is to find the fine and ever-moving line between the unchangeable truths of God and an ever-changing form of expression in modern culture. The church should not look to non-Christian society to define its behaviors, yet neither should the church lose sight of the incarnational aspect of bringing the Gospel to the workplace.

The individual issues are as varied as there are believers and workplace dynamics. Yet certain unspoken rules are commonly agreed upon. There is common agreement that spiritual matters are far too personal and private to be broached directly in the workplace, the most public and communal of settings. Mitroff and Denton betray their bias when they state, “Conventional wisdom also declares that spiritual matters have virtually nothing to do with the day-to-day demands of work, and even less to do with corporate affairs. As such, they are best dealt with outside of work, on employees own time and in a particular way of their choosing.”³⁵

On a practical level, we live and work in a multi-cultural society, often rubbing shoulders with people who hold differing religious beliefs. When those people are colleagues, supervisors, employees and customers, to engage in proselytizing or to impose one’s religious beliefs onto another often results in awkward and difficult dynamics. Wolf, writing in 1998, verifies the observation that an increase of faith-at-work activities brings a corresponding increase in conflicts. “As the population diversifies, conflicts between work and religions inevitably arise. Not surprisingly, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has reported a

³⁵ Ian I. Mitroff and Elizabeth A. Denton, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America: A Hard Look at Spirituality, Religion, and Values in the Workplace*, Warren Bennis Signature Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 6.

significant increase in the number of religious discrimination charges it has received over the last ten years.”³⁶

This backlash has been noted by others as well. Although the faith-at-work movement is still young and in many places experiencing positive results, problems are beginning to emerge.

Authors, Dean, et al, make the observation that,

“To date, most work conducted in the spirituality and religion in the workplace (SRW) domain has adopted a positive tone regarding its role within organizations. Extant research by and large has accepted that SRW is good for organizations without examining where and how it might go awry – that employees will simply be spiritually expressive without threats or interference from either the organization or peers. The newest wave of SRW experiences, however, shows increasing disputes about SRW and how it is practiced. On the basis of the growing numbers of SRW disputes, we cannot take for granted that managers and organizational members (1) know what to do inclusive way; (2) want to be spiritually inclusive; (3) and/or will not use SRW for personal or organizational gain.”³⁷

One person’s deeply held convictions and religious values will often differ strongly from another’s and from a practical perspective it is frequently easier to leave one’s personal faith and politics outside the office. Therefore without clear guidance or creative alternatives it is often deemed wise to simply instruct employees to keep their faith compartmentalized outside of their workplace. Thus, maintaining a sacred-secular divide in the workplace is considered wise counsel to ensure a peaceful and productive work environment.

³⁶ Michael Wolf, Bruce Friedman, and Daniel Sutherland, *Religion in the Workplace: A Comprehensive Guide to Legal Rights and Responsibilities* (Chicago, IL: Tort and Insurance Practice, American Bar Association, 1998), xiii.

³⁷ Kathy Lund Dean, Charles Fornaciari, and Scott R. Safranski, “The Ethics of Spiritual Inclusion,” in *Spirituality in Business: Theory, Practice, and Future Directions*, ed. Jerry Biberman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 188.

To help handle rising Faith-at-work conflicts Dean, Friedman and Sutherland suggest four dialogical questions between employee and employer when a SRW dispute arises:

1. What is the essence of this spiritual or religious expression? What message is crucial to get across to others, or to what principle is at crucial to adhere?
2. Are there multiple, authentic ways to get the message across or adhere to principles?
3. If so, which way best balances the employees expressive needs with others' freedoms of expression and belief as well as with organizational needs and limitations?
4. If not, what are the remaining options for both parties?

Other factors also contribute to a hesitant reception from business. Fear serves as an effective motivator in keeping Christian voices silent in workplace settings. Mitroff's research discovered that employees, managers and executives alike, all expressed a desire to be able to express themselves and their spiritual natures more freely in the workplace. Yet they were worried that if they did express their souls "they would end up selling them to their organizations."³⁸ Mitroff goes on to say, this fear is not unfounded. Would they be totally ridiculed, put down, and humiliated? One does not have to look far to find examples where this projection has proven accurate.

Solange Lefebvre highlights two more reasons Christians are hesitant to speak up about their faith in the workplace, "Taboo and Residue" and "Lack of References." He explains:

1. Taboo and Residue. On the one hand there is the issue of passion: like politics, religion or spirituality arouses very strong feelings that stem from one's convictions. It is also difficult to discuss religious issues for historical reasons: modernity caused the withdrawal of religion into the private sphere of the family and of the individual. Implicit social norms recognize the right to a diversity of beliefs on the condition that they do not disrupt the social order or constrain individual freedom.... Religion or spirituality have been invested with a certain taboo just as sexuality once was. It doesn't look bad to have a spiritual life or to practice a religion but it doesn't look good to talk about it or display it.³⁹

2. Lack of References. Alternately, we have few well-established references to help us deal with spiritual questions in the workplace. For example, in Western history, there are two negative aspects that weigh on spirituality at work: first, work has been considered as a very painful thing; second, the day of rest or Sunday (at least for Christians), was the state or space in which one did not work.⁴⁰

This separation of a person's spirit from their work creates an ultimately destructive dissection of the person's character. Mitroff astutely recognizes the pattern that rather than

³⁸ Mitroff and Denton, 7.

³⁹ Pauchant, 50.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

seeking ways to, “integrate the potential inherent in the soul with the realities of the workplace, most organizations go the opposite route. They seek to manage the cares and concerns of the soul by separating it from other realms, by walling it off as strictly as they can...by declaring them inappropriate or out of bounds.”⁴¹ Or as one person complained, “When people go to work they shouldn’t have to leave their hearts at home.”⁴²

There are still others who are vocal critics of the faith-at-work movement and merit serious consideration. One such critic is David Boje. Boje holds the Bank of America endowed professorship of management (awarded in September 2006) and has held Arthur Owens professorship in business administration (June 2003 through June 2006) in the Management Department of New Mexico State University. He has published nearly 100 articles in various journals, including in the top tier journals such as *Management Science*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, and *International Journal of Organizational Studies*. Boje reflects the bias against having one’s business be a distinctly Christian environment. What Boje criticizes as lowered resistance (obedience), submissiveness and servility are highly valued traits in the Bible. His criticisms are worth listening to:

In the past, I have been rather critical of the spirituality and business movement. First, spirituality and religion is too often used instrumentally as a way to motivate employees to higher levels of identification and commitment to so-called spiritual leaders and so-called spiritual business to boost performance, lower resistance (e.g. obedience), promote submissiveness, and manipulate servility (e.g. serving the customer and considering him or her as sovereign King).

Second, since there are a variety of spiritual and religious practices, there is a difference between the rhetoric of “spiritual business” and the enactment of spiritual practices at work, as well as between espoused religious theory of spirit

⁴¹ Mitroff and Denton, 6.

⁴² Betty Bender, ed., *Bits and Pieces*, vol. December (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Ragan Communications, 2009), 9.

and what is practiced in the name of business. Third, critical theorists who have focused on the ways spirituality is abused in business may be dismissed by the mainstream as anti-spiritual, or as having no interest at all in developing viable spiritual practices in business.⁴³

Boje's criticisms are fair. It is easy for the Christian community to blame the resistance it receives on "non-believers" or even spiritual warfare, when in fact, the opposition comes as a result of the Christian's inappropriate behavior, dubious motives and poor business practices. Simply put, Christians are often their own worst enemies and the resistance encountered is well deserved.

This lack of clarity regarding the exact role of one's personal religious faith in the workplace raises the odds of developing conflict. The risk is that overly zealous Christians will in their zeal for Christ create ill-will which, in turn, results in even greater overt restrictions against expressions of faith in the workplace. Therefore, a crucial part of a church's preparation of its members for faith-at-work ministries is the warning against these kinds of impressions, and reactions expressed by Boje and others like him.

Even with his own cautions against faith-at-work integration Boje prefaces his book, *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America* with this positive observation:

The data suggests strongly that those organizations that identify more strongly with spirituality and that have a greater sense of spirituality have employees who (1) are less fearful of their organizations, (2) are far less likely to compromise their basic beliefs and values in the workplace, (3) perceived their organizations as significantly more profitable, and (4) report that they can bring significantly more of their complete selves to work, specifically their creativity and intelligence – two qualities that are especially needed if organizations are to succeed in today's hypercompetitive environment. *On nearly every dimension in which we have made comparisons, those individuals and organizations that perceive themselves as more spiritual score better than those that perceive themselves as less spiritual.*⁴⁴

⁴³ David Boje, "Critical Theory Approaches to Spirituality in Business," in *Spirituality in Business: Theory, Practice, and Future Directions* ed. Jerry Biberman and Len Tischler (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 160.

⁴⁴ Mitroff and Denton, Preface. (Emphasis added.)

The result is a mixed and contradictory response. On the one hand, corporate America declares spiritual matters out of bounds while still demanding unbridled energy and enthusiasm from their employees. Yet it fails to recognize that enthusiasm is fundamentally a spiritual attribute. The word “enthusiasm” comes from the conjunction of two Latin roots - *ens*, meaning “within” and *spiritus*, meaning “god” or “spirit” - literally, “the god or spirit within.”⁴⁵

The business community puts itself in a bind when it expects from its employees the loyalty, commitment, integrity, self-control and sense of meaning and purpose that come from spiritual maturity and, for the Christian, indicate the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), while at the same time expecting these same employees to compartmentalize their faith and keep it outside the work setting. The irony is that despite all of these resistances within the business community, Boje’s research cited above indicates that those who do embrace a spiritual component and allow their employees to integrate their personal faith in the workplace experience positive return.

5. Legal Constraints

Finally, and by no means the least formidable, the fifth stumbling block is the constitutional and legal one. A significant part of the tension facing any Christian who desires to have his or her faith play a visible role in their business are the legal restraints under which one must operate. The book, *Religion in the Workplace: A Comprehensive Guide to Legal Rights and Responsibilities* by Wolf, Friedman, and Sutherland is targeted for the American Bar Association

⁴⁵ Ibid., 6.

audience and provides a thorough treatise on the legal technicalities. The book opens with this sobering list:

The protection of employees' religious rights in the workplace is not derived from a single source. Instead, there are several different federal laws and regulations, as well as the U.S. Constitution, that regulate religion in the workplace:

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, and implementing guidelines promulgated by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- Executive Order 11246 and guidelines issued by the U.S. Labor department's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (governing federal contractors).
- National Labor relations Act.
- Federal personnel laws and regulations.
- First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
- Religious Freedom Restoration Act
- White House Guidelines on Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace⁴⁶

Approaching this very issue from a legal perspective, Wolf, et al, write,

The most significant reason [for the Sunday Monday gap] may be the cultural and historical legacy of the United States. From its very beginnings, the United States has insisted on a strong separation between religion and government. This separation is enshrined in our Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion" (Amendment 1).⁴⁷

Wolf explains,

One reason that religion in the workplace has caused more problems than one might expect is that the law does much more than prohibit discrimination based on religion. Religion, in the eyes of the federal law, is more than a status (such as one's race or sex). The law protects religious *practices*, as well as beliefs. What employees *do* in the practice of their religion is entitled to protection.⁴⁸

Wolf goes on to illustrate the common dilemma faced by employees concerning the observance of religious holidays. Is an employee forced to decide between his or her job and observing the rites and ceremonies of their faith? Christians have long enjoyed a

⁴⁶ Wolf, Friedman, and Sutherland, 1.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁸ Ibid., xiii.

cultural privilege of having the main church holidays, Christmas and Easter, be recognized as national civil holidays. But as our culture becomes more inclusive more and more religions will be arguing for equal rights and employers will be faced with increased pressure against discrimination. Which religions will also get their festivals and holidays sanctioned by the government? Who will decide? A second example is the Christian who believes that evangelizing the lost is a primary duty of a follower of Christ. While one employee may consider sharing their faith to be a religious responsibility, coworkers may find the proselytizing offensive. Wolf asks, “Whose side should be employer take when an employee demands freedom of speech, while others demand a cessation of what they see as harassment?”⁴⁹

In conclusion, if issues like those described above become increasingly common, and if Christianity as a religion continues to lose its cultural support in America, efforts to separate matters of faith from the business world will become more formalized. As the American culture becomes increasingly secularized and multicultural, religious freedoms historically given to Christians will be put to the test. The potential is ripe for the separation of church and state in government to find its parallel in the business community.

The obstacles to an effective faith-at-work ministry are realistically formidable. Philosophical assumptions lay the foundation for a dualistic western worldview that instructs us to separate faith from work. Biblical contradictions give seemingly mixed messages to the believer regarding what the Bible says about the relationship between Sunday worship and Monday morning work. A lack of consensus among theologians and writers regarding the proper role of the Christian faith in the marketplace adds to the confusion. Poorly equipped clergy and lack of vision within the church leaves many parishioners complacent in their actions. Resistance

⁴⁹ Ibid., xiii

from within the commercial world to the perceived intrusion of Christian principles makes it difficult to bring an active faith into the workplace. Finally, constitutional and legal constraints prove too threatening for many who seek to openly serve Christ in their daily employment.

Taken together, these obstacles form a barrier that appears too great to conquer and a divide too wide to cross. Yet, because of the power of the living God, “all things are possible” (Mark 10:27). For the church to effectively impact the business community with the gospel it will need to address these issues, as difficult and challenging as they may be. The challenge and opportunity for the emerging church is to transform these stumbling blocks into building blocks in the Kingdom of God on earth.

Even “secular” journalism recognizes this internal conflict and need for a Christian spiritual presence in the corporate world. The New York Times Magazine cover article, written by Russell Shorto, states,

The idea is that Christians have for too long practiced their faith on Sundays and left it behind during the workweek, that there is a moral vacuum in the modern workplace, which leads to backstabbing careerism, empty routines for employees and C.E.O.'s who push for profits at the expense of society, the environment and their fellow human beings. No less a figure than the Rev. Billy Graham has predicted that "one of the next great moves of God is going to be through believers in the workplace." To listen to marketplace pastors, you would think churches were almost passé; for them work is the place, and Jesus is the antidote to both cubicle boredom and Enron-style malfeasance.⁵⁰

Shorto makes the astute observation, “With traditional institutions fragmenting and many people both hungry for spiritual guidance and spending more time at work than ever, it was perhaps inevitable that the job site would become a kind of new church.”⁵¹ It is exactly this hunger to connect every aspect of life, including work, into one unified whole, that presents the

⁵⁰ Russell Shorto, “Faith at Work,” *The New York Times Magazine*, October 31, 2004.

⁵¹ Ibid.

greatest opportunity for the post-modern American church. Unfortunately, this opportunity continues to be overlooked by most clergy. “Most mainline Christian denominations have been slow to embrace the movement. Church leaders either haven’t recognized it as significant or have determined that since it takes place outside the walls of their institutions, it is by definition not of concern to them.”⁵²

The good news, and where hope can be found, is that this indifference is beginning to change. Innovative churches across America are waking up to this need and working to satisfy this workplace spiritual hunger. In chapter five four models are presented of how church-based faith-at-work ministries are achieving success.

⁵² Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

FOUR MODELS OF CHURCH-BASED FAITH-AT-WORK MINISTRY

Introduction

Efforts to correct the Sunday –Monday gap come from both sides of the divide. From the business side these efforts take shape primarily in the form of books, marketplace ministry websites and workplace-based Christian affinity groups. In a similar fashion, the church is also beginning to make strides to cross this chasm and is slowly beginning to recognize the gifts and value of the business community in enhancing ministry effectiveness. Businesses as well draw upon the gifts and attributes the church bring to the table, namely its spiritual emphasis, in order to enhance business productivity and success.

Attempts are being made by churches to make connections with the business world even though the churches are late in initiating these efforts and still few in number. From this religious side church leaders are reaching into the business community to draw upon its expertise, networking, and entrepreneurial spirit in order to increase ministry outreach and enhance ministry success. The goal of these ministries is to draw upon the business strengths developed for “secular success” and then redirect them into ministry strengths to help build the Kingdom of God.

This chapter examines four primary models of how churches nationally are structuring their faith-at-work ministries to accomplish this goal.

Models of Church-Based Faith-At-Work Ministries

The second research phase of this project consisted of interacting with innovative churches also engaged in developing faith-at-work ministries. The following summarizes the

collaborative work done with other church leaders nationally. To achieve this goal I accepted the invitation from Leadership Network, Inc. in Dallas, Texas to participate in a two-year cohort experience for pastors and marketplace leaders from across the nation who were already developing faith-at-work ministries within their congregations.

The title for the conference gatherings was “Transforming Marketplace Leaders into Kingdom Leaders: How Churches are Helping Successful Businesspeople Move into Significant Ministry.” The purpose was to identify the “best practices that are emerging from congregations that are out front in moving marketplace leaders from career success to Kingdom significance.”¹ This venue enabled the various churches to work collaboratively to integrate marketplace ministries into their own congregational life. At each gathering leaders shared their successes and failures and insights gained from their experiences. The leadership teams from each congregation then adopted or adapted others’ ideas to implement in their own church setting. Throughout the two-year process the church leaders met four times, each time refining their own faith-at-work ministries. The seven churches participating were Christ Chapel Bible Church in Fort Worth, Texas, Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, Fellowship Bible Church of Nashville, Tennessee, First Presbyterian Church, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Heartland Community Church in Rockford, Illinois, Indian Creek Community Church in Olathe, Kansas, Pantano Christian Church in Tuscon, Arizona, and RiverTree Christian Church, Massillon, Ohio. The following summarizes the work and conversations which took place during the course of this marketplace ministry cohort experience.

The resulting methods for faith-at-work ministry varied as widely as did the locations, worship styles, theological positions and politics of the churches represented. What was common

¹ Andy Williams, “Permission Granted: Churches Giving Marketplace Leaders the Green Light for Kingdom Impact,” ed. Wayne Smith (Dallas, TX: Leadership Network, 2006), 3.

among all the churches, however, was a shared vision for greater innovation and integration between ministry and the marketplace. Each church leader representing the seven churches voiced their passion to develop outward-focused ministries that capitalize on the unique expertise, networks, and resources of believers engaged in business. How this vision took shape varied from one church to another, but the enthusiasm for the kingdom of God to be blessed through faith-at-work ministry was consistent among them all.

The need for a new paradigm for ministry was also expressed by the participants in order for this type of ministry to be successful. In the past, when pastors reached out to business executives it was often for a financial contribution or to serve on a board or committee. The new model is vastly different and is aimed at mobilizing marketplace leaders into significant areas of ministry themselves. Author, Andy Williams, summarizing the consensus of the Leadership Network conference, identifies two foundational philosophical shifts towards this new paradigm: “1) Marketplace leaders want to change the world – we must give them captivating opportunities to pursue. 2) Marketplace leaders are carrying God-sized visions in their hearts – unearth them.”² Focusing on buildings and budgets is not enough to stimulate the emotional investment of business leaders. If a church cannot present a God-sized vision for these “movers and shakers” they will either find another outlet for their creative energy, or give up believing their work matters to God. “Rather than prescribing where a ministry is headed and soliciting involvement from marketplace leaders, these open-handed church leaders are asking two crucial questions of the capable marketplace leaders in their midst: 1) What vision is God planting in your heart? 2)

² Ibid.

How can the church's staff, people and resources be mobilized quickly and efficiently to facilitate what God has called you to do?"³

Williams goes on to highlight the significant church-culture shift necessary for faith-at-work ministries.

In this new paradigm, the tables are being turned. Roles are being reversed. churches that lead the way in seeing massive Kingdom and community impact are discovering they have a new task when it comes to mobilizing marketplace leaders. Churches exist to serve the servant – not the other way around...The lines between “clergy” and “laity” are blurring when it comes to who creates all the good ministry ideas and who gets the job done.⁴

To help describe this paradigm shift, using the familiar biblical reference of being “fishers of men” (Matthew 14:19), Robert Lewis, pastor-at-large of the Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, Arkansas shared:

If you fish, you know that if you put a fish in a bucket of water, eventually it runs out of oxygen. You can pipe in music, provide a light show, even provide companion fish, but after a while, it's still going belly up. Fish are meant for the river, where there is adventure and opportunity to live and grow, not staying in what fishermen call the live well. Unless you intend to eat them, fish need to be released.⁵

Lewis went on to add that marketplace ministry performs best when “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19) begin to view their purpose to be “catch and release” fisherman. Every church that intends to be successful in faith-at-work ministries, Lewis added, must have a “catch and release” commitment. He observed that churches, including his own, had developed a comfort zone of “catch and keep” ministries. “Our church was primarily a helping institution to people,” he said. Pastor Lewis went on to describe how people enjoyed being there and would encounter Christ, receive help as parents, help with their marriages, their work, their hurts, and their bad

³ Ibid., 4.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Alexis Wilson, “Four Models for Transforming Marketplace Leaders into Kingdom Leaders,” in *Marketplace Success/Kingdom Significance* (Dallas, Texas: Leadership Network, Inc., 2006), 2.

habits. The more people who came, the more they helped and equipped. But he confided, “at some point I saw that caring was not enough.”

Lewis also described his own sense of leadership priorities which are shared by many in his position:

My natural response to people complaining or growing restless is to provide them more events, more stimulation. That’s what many in today’s churches are feeling. If you follow that song and dance pattern too long, you become superficial and lose the substance. You wear out your staff, and you lose your best people. You’ll always have the faithful few, but in every congregation is another type of person – the real creative, energetic person with ideas and passions of their own to do something significant for the kingdom.⁶

Lewis and his staff began talking one-on-one with members of his congregation and asked them a simple question: “If you were released to do ministry in the community, what would you like to do?” He said the responses “varied widely from the quirky to brilliant.” One member of the congregation was chief of staff at a local hospital. He had gone through a terrible divorce during medical school and wanted to teach preventative life skills to hopefully prevent current medical students from making the same mistakes. By enlisting the assistance of marketplace professionals in various aspects of personal and professional life the doctor was able to provide qualified instruction to the medical students. As one example the doctor was able to procure the aid of a vice president of Merrill Lynch to teach on investments and a judge to teach about medical litigation. Lewis went on to say,

From there, the program blossomed. Today, there are 40 classes offered each year to senior medical students and a similar program has been instituted at the law school. Those are the kinds of things that happened. We were looking for the kamikazes, the people who were willing to throw themselves into great things.⁷

⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷ Ibid.

Other examples included a husband and wife team who, because of their own experience in sending their children through public schools, developed a passion for mentoring students. Over the course of the next year they developed a relationship with the middle school principal, recruited ten volunteers, raised a meager budget and put together a mentoring program for students called Excel. As of 2006 this couple runs a corporation called Excel which operates with a half-million dollar budget and is in thirty-one central Arkansas schools, with more than 1,000 people working in mentoring programs through 125 churches. Lewis discovered that all they needed was encouragement and “permission” to do it.

These and similar other examples gave the church an entirely new concept of ministry. Pastor Lewis described how the people in the congregation began to see the adventure of faith like the analogy of the fish living in the river rather than the bucket. One man asked to be released to help the poor; another couple wanted to be released to help inner-city kids have a summer camp experience. This new form of ministry grew to the point of needing administrative oversight and leadership, so Fellowship Bible Church formed a staff position for a “release pastor.” This person worked directly with those ministering outside the church walls to help consult, support, validate and encourage. Lewis described the transformation that has taken place as a result: “We are now in the business of applauding the fruit our people bear through their own kingdom initiatives out in the community.”⁸ He went on to share the vision of what this could mean if more churches across the country adopted this catch-and-release vision:

Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” The community will see your good works, and the community will praise God because of it. The church of the future has got to be in the megaphones of society. Can you

⁸ Ibid., 4.

imagine what would happen if churches across the country had staff people who were equipping, launching, supporting and cheering for its “best fish” to go change the world?⁹

So how do churches become more skilled in this catch and release ministry? Wayne Smith, director of Marketplace Success/Kingdom Significance Leadership Communities for Leadership Network concluded that from the churches participating in the cohort, four models emerge:

- 1) Culture/DNA: Churches that work from this model have marketplace leadership built into their very nature. Market leaders organically assume leadership within the church – they really know no other way.
- 2) Partnership: This model involves collaborative work between a church and a nonprofit organization. They share resources and opportunities and are able to capitalize on each other’s strengths.
- 3) External Opportunities: These churches are looking for opportunities to develop ministry outside the church walls, where they also find the people who have the vision to create and run them.
- 4) Internal Development: The fourth model includes churches that are developing marketplace leaders who are already in their congregations and guiding these people into opportunities for making an impact.¹⁰

Each model was represented by at least one church participating in the cohort project, and each church/model offers helpful suggestions for other churches to emulate.

1. Culture/DNA Model

Heartland Community Church in Rockford, Illinois¹¹ represents the Culture/DNA Model for faith-at-work ministry. In this model the church intentionally seeks out people already engaged in business to become the leadership for the church. The senior leaders of Heartland Community Church are themselves marketplace leaders. They divided the roles of the traditional senior pastor and assigned the duties to different people according to their spiritual giftedness

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ www.heartland.cc.

and business strengths. The church's co-founder is CEO of a fund management group and also serves as the church's directional leader. The other co-founder who served previously as worship pastor, is now the lead pastor and worship leader. Other marketplace leaders fill top positions. A dentist leads the care and compassion ministries while maintaining a full-time dental practice. A local CPA serves as the church's treasurer. Another marketplace volunteer supervises other paid staff. Gordy Smith, the director of adult ministries and teaching pastor, said that:

Most of our leadership team does not come from formal ministry training, but they are called to the work they do. Not one position on staff is sacred. If we have a void, we fill it with the person who's right to lead it. We consider four important things: character, competency, chemistry and call, which is a critical factor. All of our job descriptions are in pencil. We observe what people do well, and we move them toward their giftedness. What's most surprising to our staff is that if we find something they don't do well, we give it to someone else.¹²

When marketplace leaders are in positions of leadership within the church, recruiting other marketplace leaders to assume ministry responsibilities in the community comes naturally. The church leaders are able to demonstrate firsthand and speak with authority about how they have learned to balance the demands of home/work/ministry. Smith said "They respond because they know we're serious about using their gifts and giving them a real place to serve."¹³

By modeling marketplace leaders' involvement at every level of ministry and by incorporating new leadership and new areas of involvement, the ministry continues to thrive. One example of how this marketplace orientation manifested itself was when Heartland was given a unique opportunity to transform a portion of their facility into productive space specifically for marketplace leaders. When the church was blessed with an adjoining piece of property and accompanying building, it was decided to dedicate that space to the development of marketplace outreach. The building was renovated to look more like an office meeting space

¹² Wilson, 5.

¹³ Ibid.

than a church and was accessed by a different road than the one leading to the church. As a result, the building became accessible both physically and emotionally to those who were uncomfortable with going to “church.” This space housed lunchtime discussion groups and other outreach events geared toward the business community. From these gatherings, new people were drawn into the church (“catch”) and others found new ways to express their Christian faith in the workplace (“release”).

With business DNA ingrained in the church leadership Heartland is able to view the needs and potential barriers from a business person’s perspective and successfully launch effective marketplace ministries. The lesson to learn from the Culture/DNA Model is the need to intentionally recruit leadership with business skills and find ways to capitalize on their insight, experience, perspective and creativity in order to develop new marketplace outreach ministries. The likelihood of other churches having the same gift of available land and property is slim, but what can be imitated is their creativity and innovative use of available space for faith-at-work ministry.

2. Partnership Model

A second model for marketplace ministry is The Partnership Model where a church collaborates with a nonprofit organization whose primary function is to serve the wider community. Together they are able to draw from each others’ strengths and share their resources and opportunities. Indian Creek Community Church¹⁴ in Olathe, Kansas exemplifies this model. The church accomplished this by creating its own outside organization and establishing a partner ministry called “Significant Matters” as a not-for-profit agency. Significant Matters was

¹⁴ www.indiancreek.org

launched to “create collaborative projects and partnerships between ministries and people with resources and those who are in need.”¹⁵

An interview with Tom Bassford, who leads the external ministries programs at Indian Creek, indicated that the church serves as the “docking station” for the enterprise. He also added that by separating Significant Matters from under direct Indian Creek authority it has opened up this ministry to other churches and companies to become involved in their projects. As a result the values of the church are being multiplied throughout the broader community. Bassford said, “We are a biblically-functioning community that lives out the love of Jesus Christ as the most powerful instrument of change. And if we don’t operate as an instrument of change, then we’ve failed.”¹⁶ One such project is called “Share the Blessing.” In the conference summary report, Wilson describes,

One of the first ministries that came out of Significant Matters was Share the Blessing, a warehouse of home furnishings, clothes and food for people in need. “Someone in the community had the idea,” says Gary [Kendall, Senior Pastor of Indian Creek Community Church]. “She wanted to gather any extra home furnishings that people had and deliver them to people in need. The operation was running out of her garage, and she was running out of space. So we rented storage space, filled it, rented another, then filled that, and finally, we got a warehouse. We deliver the furniture and we stock food and clothing that people can come get. The amazing thing was, the woman who had this idea didn’t attend Indian Creek, but she came to us because she knew of our reputation.”¹⁷

Many well-meaning charity organizations fail or at least flail as a result of their lack of business expertise. People with a heart for the poor don’t always have the skills necessary to run the business side of the charity, such as balancing the budgets or maintaining profitable viability. To ensure that these types of issues did not handicap the success of Significant Matters, Indian

¹⁵ Wilson, 7.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Creek drew upon the skills of business professionals. For Sean Clouse the experience was so moving it inspired him to create a company to provide these sorts of basic business functions to churches engaged in similar enterprises. Wilson writes,

Sean Clouse is president of The IQ Group, a web-based business that helps companies create a suite of web-based products designed to streamline business processes, minimize overhead and improve customer satisfaction. Clouse is leading the efforts toward creating Dream Worx, “which will provide the platform and the resources for all of the ministries,” he says. “Regardless of what they do, every ministry needs some of the same basic business functions, like accounting, and Dream Worx will provide the infrastructure so that every one of them can be easily managed.”¹⁸

“The key to all of this is humility” Bassford said. “People from other churches are shocked at how quickly we can move on an idea. That’s because we all understand it’s all about something bigger than ourselves. That and we’ve been given permission to create these partnerships.”¹⁹

This Partnership Model of faith-at-work ministry highlights the opportunity available to many churches, namely, to seek out ecumenical ministries or relief organizations already at work in areas the church feels called to expand into. Churches who adopt this model can often find similar relief organizations within their own communities and therefore, with the right vision and motivation, be able to quickly begin their own in faith-at-work ministries.

3. External Opportunities Model

Pantano Christian Church²⁰ in Tuscon, Arizona exemplifies an effective External Opportunities Model of collaborative faith-at-work ministry. In this model, the church inspires members of its own congregation to use their business experience and acumen to help the

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 6.

²⁰ www.pantanochristian.org.

broader community outside the church. The senior pastor challenged his congregation one Sunday to write down on a sticky note one way they could make a difference in their community. Tapping into the church's "Life Groups," they sought to find at least five groups willing to give away two hours in service to the community. "The response was overwhelming," he said. "I had hoped for 50 people and I got 500." He described what happened this way:

A date was selected for Serve Tucson, and for a 2-hour period, 500 people descended on the city, giving free car washes, handing out bottled water at busy intersections, taking coins to Laundromats in low-income areas and paying for people's laundry, and offering many other similarly simple but effective services. 'The concept was that every day people could go out and do an act of service and make an impact for the kingdom.

We also told the groups, if people ask, 'Why are you doing this,' follow these two guidelines: Simply say, 'It's our way of saying God loves you – no strings attached.' Then shut up – because you never want to underestimate the value of saying too little.'²¹

The pastor reported that since they first began, over 700 people turn out for "Serve Tucson" days. They have had to overcome logistical challenges, but the ongoing success enables a wide range of people to become involved and discover ways they too can continue to serve. Pantano Christian Church now has ninety-five per cent of their Life Groups led by laity, and they continue to plug marketplace people into ministry.

From the experience of the Pantano Christian Church, the External Opportunities Model teaches pastors, in particular, that many of the best ideas for ministry opportunities also come from the members of the congregation. Churches accustomed to "top-down" leadership will likely benefit from opening themselves up to the creativity, innovation and drive of the people sitting in the pews and chairs each week. In this model we see how outreach ministries can grow exponentially as the theology of the ministry of the laity is put into practice.

²¹ Wilson, 8.

4. Internal Development Model

The Internal Development Model is the most common among the churches attending the Marketplace Ministry conference, First Presbyterian Church of Fort Lauderdale included. In this model the church leadership takes the lead to identify marketplace leaders already in their congregations and then inspiring, equipping and deploying these businessmen and women into their own ministries.

Fellowship Bible Church (FBC) of Nashville, Tennessee²² provides one example of this approach to faith-at-work ministry. They utilized the Halftime Summit²³ resources to gather and mobilize marketplace leaders in their congregation. One outgrowth of their conference was a dentist who for five years had been contemplating the idea to mentor young dentists and teach them to serve the community with what they know how to do. With leadership assistance from the church he took his idea to the dental school at the University of Tennessee where it was well-received by the dean. The project grew and now one Friday a month a team of eight to ten dental students care for twenty to thirty women in a homeless shelter. Bill Wellons, Pastor of Development and Community at FBC, explained the reason for the program's ongoing success: "Our job is to look for leaders, determine if they have margin and influence, help them pursue their passions, and then look for ways to blow wind in their sails."²⁴

Christ Chapel Bible Church²⁵ in Fort Worth, Texas also exemplifies the internal development model. Senior Pastor Ted Kitchens made the insightful observation, "I can see that

²² www.fellowshipnashville.org.

²³ www.halftime.org.

²⁴ Wilson, 10.

²⁵ www.christchapelbc.org.

God has brought us leaders and honestly, I haven't necessarily known how to lead them. I'm realizing now that they need encouragement more than they need leadership."²⁶

Kitchens identified a key element in the success of any church's faith-at-work effort as being permission-giving. He added, "And they step up when we give them permission to do the work. Being permission-giving is a stated core value for our church." Again, an example from pastor Kitchens best illustrates this permission-giving benefit:

I recently gave a sermon about it, and really put it out there that giving permission was at the root of our being. Afterward, a church member excitedly shared with me his vision for starting an animal ministry at the local Alzheimer's care center. I am not an animal lover, so it was hard for me to understand this idea. I hoped my face wasn't saying what was running through my head, which was, "That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard." Quickly, I could almost hear God laughing, saying, "OK, big boy, you put it out there, let's see what you're made of." So I responded, 'What do you need from us?' and he said, 'Nothing, pastor! I don't need anything. I just want you to tell me it's a good idea and you're for it.' Half-heartedly I repeated his words, 'It's a good idea and I'm for it!' Months later, he has dozens of people visiting this center every week with their animals, and I am amazed at what's happened in the lives of the people involved. It was a great lesson in allowing God to provide the vision and doing my part in truly giving permission for it to happen. That's all the man needed from me.²⁷

The Internal Development Model demonstrates the value of when church leadership identifies people in their own congregation who demonstrate potential for ministry and inspires them with a vision for Kingdom work. The crucial next step, then, is to grant them permission to pursue their own dreams as their own ministry and offering to God fully backed by the enthusiastic support of the church.

Conclusions

The pioneers in faith-at-work ministry come from a broad spectrum of American Christian churches and the methods they employ are equally as varied, yet three unanimous

²⁶ Wilson, 10.

²⁷ Ibid.

conclusions are evident: “1) Marketplace leaders who run successful companies, divisions and even governments are overjoyed about being asked to join the ministry fray. 2) It takes effort and forethought to discover what tasks matter to these marketplace leaders. 3) Engaging this group unleashes tremendous power, a power that sometimes can be a bit intimidating.”²⁸

Several summary observations emerge as a result of participating in this cohort experience and seeing faith and work integration actively being pursued. First, there is no single model for marketplace ministry that fits all churches or communities. Large churches are able to draw from more internal resources than are small churches. Churches in business communities have a different orientation than those situated in labor or agricultural settings. Affluent churches whose members have “margin” are more often able to make a wider impact than those whose members are struggling just to make ends meet. For any church to instantly adopt another church’s model without due consideration of its own ministry context, level of spiritual maturity or regional need will most likely result in frustration. In other words, any church wishing to embark on this journey must discern its own path and follow the Spirit in its own congregation.

Second, no single model is adequate in and of itself even within a single congregation. As the church leaders met and exchanged ideas, it quickly became apparent that successful churches never limit themselves to a single approach. Rather they assess, reevaluate, adjust and innovate to gather the strengths from different modes of operation and selectively adopt those best suited for their own needs. The church has much to learn from this entrepreneurial spirit that quickly adapts to changing market circumstances. Just as businesses must be highly adaptive in order to stay competitive in an ever-changing market, so too the church needs to respond flexibly and quickly in order to best serve the ever-changing needs of its members and community.

²⁸ Williams, “Permission Granted: Churches Giving Marketplace Leaders the Green Light for Kingdom Impact,” 6.

Third, as mentioned above, one key to the success of these efforts is the concept of “permission-giving.” Men and women who are already successful in their professions outside the church need to be given permission to convert their skills, contacts and passions into Kingdom-enhancing ventures. Traditional clergy-led churches often have the mindset that the “pastor knows best” and that the most effective approaches and programs come out of seminaries and Christian publishing houses. However, experience is teaching us that even greater things can be done by granting people who are already successful in businesses the permission to be successful in ministry beyond the congregation.

Finally, there is a wealth of creativity still to be tapped and innovative models to be developed that will far outpace what is currently being done. When given permission and adequate support, innovators in the field of faith-at-work ministry will likely accomplish in the future what has not yet even been imagined. In the current age of ever-changing technology and workplace dynamics, including the impact of the global informational age, the types of marketplace ministry needs will also always be changing and in need of new innovation. Robert Lewis, pastor-at-large at Fellowship Bible Church said it clearly:

Underneath the fabric of American Christianity are people who are crying out for a personal, hands-on experience for being difference makers, not serving difference makers. They come to the church to be cared for and challenged, but there needs to be a point of ultimate destination – a hands-on ministry of their own. Helping them find this opportunity should be our greatest passion.²⁹

Reflecting upon these four models and the churches engaged in them, benefits and warnings also emerge. The benefits of uniting church and business are many: First, each Sunday churches large and small are already filled with women and men who are poised to become “marketplace ministers” once they are given the vision and permission to do so. Second, churches desperately

²⁹ Wilson, 11,12.

need the “best practices” skills which are necessary for business success to help facilitate ministry success.

“Marketplace stars bring a fresh approach to problems, new ways to deal with the inevitable hurdles, and powerful resources. Their experience in the business world serves them well, as they tackle the kind of issues that face most congregations and the communities that surround them. They are used to working with budgets and time constraints. They have experienced intense pressure from stockholders and bosses. They have managed scarce resources and found ways to get the most out of them, with as little waste and as much efficiency as humanly possible.”³⁰

Proper accounting procedures, management skills, and proven methods for organizational development are needed in congregations whose current leadership “love the Lord,” but are untrained and inexperienced in these business practices.

Third, business men and women who have honed the skills necessary to be successful in their professions are able to convert those same skills to benefit the Kingdom of God. Men and women who have managed entire departments and companies, overseen multi-million dollar budgets, and coordinated massive projects are grossly underutilized when the best the church can do is ask them to be a greeter or help take up the offering. One evening spent in a committee discussing the color of napkins is sufficient evidence for marketplace leaders to conclude that their expertise and drive are best utilized in places other than the church. Fourth, the people who come to church to worship are able to reach other people who will most likely never enter a church. The followers of Christ are therefore in a greater position than their pastors to make significant life-changing and eternal impact upon many people’s lives. And finally, churches who glean the best practices from business are able to apply efficient methodology to their own work and therefore become more productive in achieving their own ministry goals. These

³⁰ Williams, “Permission Granted: Churches Giving Marketplace Leaders the Green Light for Kingdom Impact,” 5.

“church best practices” also enable the church to become better stewards of the money, time and talents it receives.

The list of benefits to the church is long, but one warning is also needed. The risk of connecting church leadership too closely to marketplace leadership is that the attitudes and values that come from the business world would take priority over the spiritual attitudes and values of Jesus Christ. The danger is that the church would shift from being a community of faith that utilizes business best practices to becoming a church business dispensing religious goods and services.

The “bottom line” for businesses is different than it is for churches. The purpose of the church is to make disciples, not to make a profit. For businesses to survive they must be profitable. “Success” is measured by numbers: profit and loss, production and sales quotas, and growth charts. Manuals and policies dictate procedures for consistent excellence. In churches, however, spiritual growth is less tangible. The Holy Spirit is described in Scripture as “wind” because it cannot be confined to a formula or converted into a policy. The warning given is that a profit-loss approach to ministry could easily lead to churches focusing their energies on attracting greater attendance and greater giving, to the neglect of developing disciples of Jesus Christ. Jesus calls us to obedience to God, care for the poor and disenfranchised, humility and sacrificial living. “Take up your cross and follow me” are not the watchwords found in business journals.

A true story illustrates this concern. A large, affluent church was in the process of calling a new associate pastor to oversee the staff and various church programs. Many of the women and men on the pastor nominating committee were very successful in their own businesses and professions. When a candidate came forward with both a theological degree and an MBA he was

quickly invited and courted and soon after accepted the call to ministry at that church. When this new pastor was brought on staff he was given the job of evaluating the various ministries of the congregation. Drawing upon lessons learned in his MBA studies, and encouraged by marketplace leaders in the church, the command went out to all staff to do a thorough “outcome-based” review of their own ministry responsibilities and evaluate the numerical growth of each specific program. Each ministry was then to be given a grade depending on its percentage rate of numerical growth and “return on investment.” Measures of success in business were unquestionably assumed to also be the measures for success in the church. Spiritual maturation, leadership development, or congregational care needs were not on the list of criteria to consider. Staff was instructed that all programs receiving a “C” grade were to be eliminated so new programs could be put in their place that would yield a higher rate on investment. A rebellion by the rest of the church staff derailed this effort, but this episode demonstrates the potential dangers churches face when business values in the church are not tempered by deep theological reflection and critique.

For churches to develop their own faith-at-work ministries careful attention must be given to local context, both commercial and ecclesiastical. The region’s employment base is just as critical as the congregation’s theology in designing a marketplace ministry. The models for faith-at-work ministry presented here will hopefully serve as a catalyst for more incarnational workplace impact. Chapter 6 describes my attempt to address this ministry opportunity.

CHAPTER 6

PRIMARY RESEARCH AND APPLICATION, AND CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

In this final chapter my own attempt to address the faith-at-work subject will be presented and critiqued. The problem to be explored in this project was to find ways to assist faithful followers of Christ to be able to implement their faith in real and practical ways in the modern and complex business world. Having started out in the business world and then switching into the pastoral ministry, I have always been sensitive to the difficulties of integrating the message of Christ with the demands of the secular work world and have sought practical solutions for the men and women I have served.

To begin this project, a new way of conceptualizing the relationship between the church and business community was needed. It has been observed that many of the current approaches to faith and work integration still reflect platonic philosophical dualism and are based on inaccurate theological assumptions.

Conceptualizing Faith-at-Work Ministry

Four diagrams are offered to assist in the discussion and development of a new model for future faith-at-work ministry.

FIGURE 1. COMMON PERCEPTION OF CHURCH-BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP.

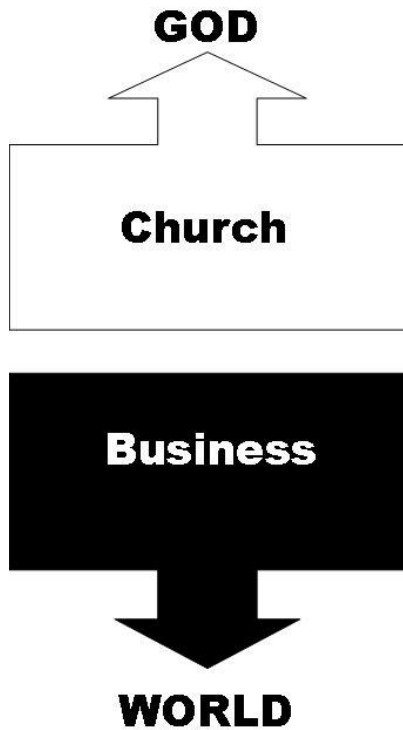


Figure 1 illustrates the beginning point of this discussion and represents the viewpoint of the majority of people both in and outside the church. Here, platonic dualism is assumed and applied. As Warren Brown and Brad Strawn write in “Spiritual Flourishing and Embodied Life,” “In current evangelical Christian culture, body-soul dualism is presumed by most. It is the default position.”¹ In this illustration the church, representing the higher realm of spirit, morals and faith, is elevated above the business community and has service to God as its primary focus. In contrast, the business community concerns itself with the concrete and temporal matters of earth and therefore serves the world. Traditionally these two groups have viewed each other with suspicion and accusation, often considering the other either to be irrelevant or even worse, an enemy to be fought. Here the Sunday-Monday Gap is fully entrenched.

¹ Warren Brown and Brad Strawn, “Spiritual Flourishing and Embodied Life,” *Theology, News and Notes*2010.

FIGURE 2. WORK-BASED FAITH-AT-WORK MODEL

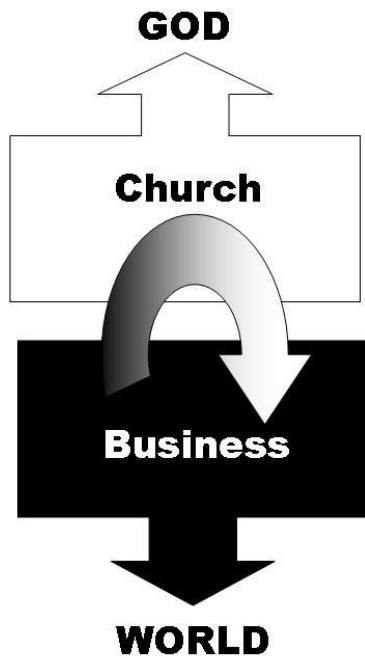


Figure 2 depicts the efforts from the business world to cross the Sunday-Monday Gap. In this diagram we see businesses reaching into the church for spiritual guidance and gleaning from it godly principles, laws and guidance to benefit the workplace. Compilations of work-related Bible verses, support groups for Christian men and women in the workforce, and shelves of books offering practical wisdom are all being generated to assist Christians who are eager to live out their faith in the workplace. In this model, the work-world reaches into the church-world to draw from it spiritual truths and biblical promises for the express purpose of improving workplace success. Authors John Maxwell, Laura Beth Jones, Robert Mattox and Larry Burkett, and others like them, reviewed in chapter 4, reflect this approach.

FIGURE 3. CHURCH-BASED FAITH-AT-WORK MODEL

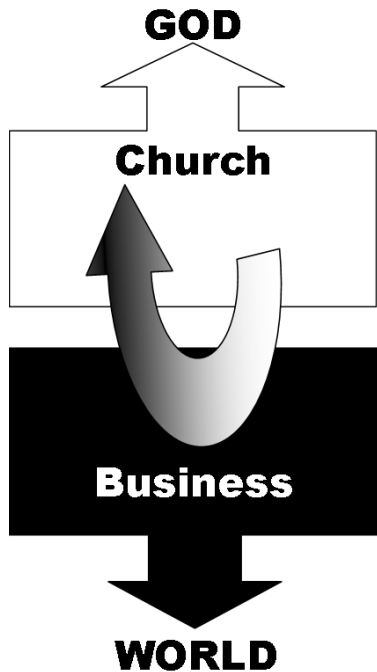


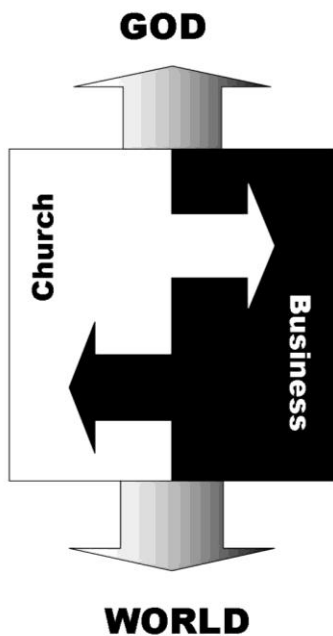
Figure 3 also portrays the efforts to close the Sunday-Monday gap, but this time from the churches' side of the divide. Churches are gradually opening their eyes to the potential for expanded ministry once the business community "gets on board." Rather than viewing the world of commerce as an enemy to fight, a shift is taking place that makes business an ally to recruit. In this model, the church still sees itself in a superior position since its citizenship is in the Kingdom of God and its "product" has eternal benefits. Simply put, this diagram illustrates how the church is now reaching into the business world to draw upon its expertise and resources to expand the work of the church. Phrases like "Marketplace Success to Kingdom Significance" convey this attitude and approach. Other examples of church-based faith-at-work ministries are presented in chapter 5.

Books, programs and ministries based on either of the second two models enjoy success and achieve great strides for the Kingdom of God. Biblical instruction does provide wise counsel for conducting business. God is glorified and believers experience God's blessings

when biblical principles are applied in the marketplace. In the same way, great strides are made when men and women apply the skills that enabled them to achieve commercial success to areas of ministry need. When business success and eternal significance get paired together the potential is unlimited.

Yet even so, this thesis argues that each of these three models presents an inaccurate or incomplete depiction of the relationship between the church and the working world as God intended. Therefore a fourth diagram is presented with the intention to present a new faith-at-work paradigm that is more biblically and theologically sound.

FIGURE 4. AVODAH BASED FAITH-AT-WORK MODEL



Several important factors distinguish this diagram from the previous three. First, it is noticed that the church and business worlds are placed side-by-side horizontally rather than stacked vertically. Exegetical studies reveal that the Hebrew word, *avodah*, forms the root for worship, work and service. From this we surmise that one activity is not set above the others in

importance, but rather are to be lived out with equal devotion. The distinction between the three is not in value, but purpose. From Scripture, and creation theology in particular, we see that God did not create the heavens and the earth as separate entities set in opposition to each other. Rather, “In the beginning, God created the heavens *and* the earth” and both are declared equally “good” (Genesis 1:1). In this new model the relationship between the two, therefore, is mutual, not hierarchical.

Second, the church and work worlds are no longer separated by a chasm dividing the two. The Sunday-Monday Gap has been closed. For the believer, every activity of every day, not just Sunday, is to be a holy offering to God. The faithful Christian is now able to fully connect his or her faith to their business responsibilities. Rather than being forced to compartmentalize his or her faith, or live a spiritually bifurcated existence, a unified whole is experienced. A fluid mobility between the church and marketplace is now possible for believers as they grow in understanding the philosophical, biblical and theological lessons described in previous chapters of this dissertation.

Third, linguistically we also recognize that both call and vocation (job) rise from the single word, *vocare*. As originally understood, and affirmed by the great Reformers, God calls each person to their own particular task and job. A person’s call into medicine, construction, business, or labor, for example, is equal to the call into ministry. Followers of Christ, both clergy and lay, “...are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God” (1 Peter 2:9). The priesthood of believers includes those dressed in clerical garb as well as uniforms and business attire. Just as the church and business world stand equally under the authority of Christ, so too, do the people who work in them.

Fourth, the two sideways facing arrows indicate the intentional offering of one group to the other. They are unidirectional, signifying their intent to serve the other without requirement for self-gain. This is in contrast to the “u-shaped” arrows in figures 2 and 3 where the purpose is to enter the others’ territory, glean what is needed and then return to enhance their own success.

The arrow from the church into the business realm indicates the church’s responsibility to be a servant to the business community. The church must model itself after Jesus and develop a servant heart for all people in need of spiritual guidance, especially those in the American workforce. Greenleaf sees the need more clearly than most Christians,

The problem in business...as I see it, is not in business institutions; rather it is in the attitudes, concepts, and expectations regarding business held by the rest of society. People in churches, universities, governments, and social agencies do not love business institutions....Businesses...must be loved if they are to serve us better.²

When asked about how one loves businesses institutions Greenleaf emphasized, “The people are the institution!”³ The business world needs to be loved into wholeness and who is better equipped to offer this love than the church of Jesus Christ? As Christians embody the grace and forgiveness of Christ and are able to infuse their work environment and decision-making with godly attitudes and behaviors then Christ’s presence will be experienced.

Greenleaf also adds this critique of the church: He rightly identifies that too often the focus of the church is on preventing certain behaviors (abortion, euthanasia, divorce) and then adds, “One must oppose those things that one believes to be wrong, but one cannot lead from a predominantly negative posture. One can lead an intuition or a total society only by strong, specific, sharply aimed affirmative actions.”⁴

² Greenleaf, 136.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Greenleaf, 236.

Richard Beaton and Linda Wagener, in their article, “Building Healthy Organizations in which People Can Flourish” bring an eschatological perspective to the discussion. “[Paul’s] eschatology suggests that the church is to live out the values of the future in the present. If we are a new creation and the old things have passed away and all things are new, there is a sense in which the future order has broken into the present. Surely this includes creating organizations that reflect those beliefs, values and practices.”⁵ In a separate article Wagener adds,

It is interesting that although the original description of God’s creation locates us in a garden, the new creation is described as a city....Part of living life in the foretaste of the New Jerusalem is to pay attention in our lives to the decisions that we make that affect others....In our congregations, organizations, and businesses, in addition to asking about our productivity, budgets, and profit, we ought to be asking how our practices lead to greater well-being among our people....When all are able to flourish, we will feel we have indeed glorified God in our humanity.”⁶

Consequently, if the church hopes to make a significant impact in the marketplace it must learn to love the people in the marketplace. Christian businessmen and women must bring the Christian values of human dignity, purpose and meaning with them into their work environment.

The second horizontal arrow crossing from the business side into the church’s territory indicates the innumerable possibilities business has to make a positive impact upon the religious world. When working collaboratively and toward a common goal, individuals, businesses and even corporations have the potential to make a lasting contribution to society as a whole and to be part of God’s present work in the world. Greenleaf also provides helpful insight for businesses viewing themselves as servants. He writes,

⁵ Richard Beaton, and Linda M. Wagener, “Building Healthy Organizations in Which People Can Flourish,” *Theology, News and Notes* 2010, 12.

⁶ Linda M. Wagener, “Flourishing 101,” *Theology, News and Notes* 2010, 8.

This is my thesis: caring for person, the more able and the less able serving each other, is the rock upon which a good society is built....If a better society is to be built, one that is more just and more loving, one that provides greater creative opportunity for its people, then the most open course is to raise both the capacity to service and the very performance as servant of existing major institutions by new regenerative forces operating within them.⁷

In the *Avodah* model for faith-at-work ministry both the church and Christians in the workplace see themselves as servants helping each other. Rather than business people reaching into the spiritual realm to take what is needed to be more successful in business, or the church leadership reaching into the commercial realm of business to take what is needed to be more successful in ministry, the attitude of both groups needs to shift. “What do you need that I can give?” is the better question to ask than, “What do you have that I can take?”

Fifth, and finally, we turn our attention to the two vertical arrows, one pointing to God and the other to the world. They are both shaded equally to indicate that churches and businesses are to work collaboratively towards the same goals. If the *Avodah* model is implemented then Christians in the workplace will be able to point all of their life’s efforts, work and worship, towards God and for God’s glory. Likewise, the church and business worlds work together, bringing the strengths of each, to serve the humanitarian and ecological needs of the world in every way possible.

To summarize, I propose a new way to conceptualize the relationship between the church and marketplace. In the *Avodah* model the relationship between church and business shifts away from being hierarchical to parallel where both church and business stand in equal responsibility under the Lordship of Christ. We see depicted a symbiotic relationship where both the “sacred and secular” are engaged in mutually supportive roles. The two arrows in the middle represent the efforts by church and business leaders to take what they have to offer and give to the other

⁷ Ibid., 49.

without expectation of personal gain. The two externally focused arrows are depicted in gray to represent the collaborative work between the church and the marketplace. The shaded arrow pointing toward God signifies how the church and business communities are able to present the offerings of their daily accomplishments to the Lord as acceptable gifts worthy of God's praise. Thus, Christians are able to faithfully and happily serve God every day of the week and offer their songs of praise in worship and quality workmanship in the factory to the glory of God.

The shaded arrow pointing toward the world signifies how churches and business communities working together are able to accomplish great humanitarian objectives. Human needs, physical and spiritual, can both be met as the whole person is treated. Environmental issues can be addressed from all perspectives for wise stewardship of nature, jobs, recreation, and science. Scientific discoveries are developed hand in glove with ethical discussions impacted by those discoveries. Medical and psychological health care providers work together with spiritual directors toward a common goal of true shalom. These are just a few examples of the limitless potential when the forces of the church and business enter into unified purpose under the authority of God (and to God's glory) and in humble mission to the needs of the world.

Presentation and Evaluation of My Three-Pronged Approach

In the application phase of research I sought to implement the values voiced here. The goal was to create an arena for persons to transform their own work situations into ones that were valuable for the employer, meaningful to the individual, and constructive towards others.

I have found over the course of twenty-five years of ministry, in many different locations and settings, that no matter where one lives, the questions people ask and needs they express are much the same. Therefore, when one of my primary ministry responsibilities at First

Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale was to develop the men's ministry program (made up almost entirely of businessmen), I jumped at the chance to focus on faith-at-work issues. At that time, and to my great surprise, there were few published resources available. So I began the process of creating my own. The fundamental goals were three-fold: 1) identify the common questions and struggles of women and men in the workplace to which the words of Scripture appropriately speak; 2) create an environment where commitment to Christ and struggles in the workplace could be safely shared, and 3) develop godly people who will in turn bring God's presence into the marketplace. The desired end result was to combine all three and create a variety of resources to enable First Presbyterian Church to effectively minister to the corporate and business world of its members.

Drawing on my early experience in advertising, one of the first steps was to create a logo for the ministry:

FIGURE 5. FAITH-AT-WORK MINISTRY LOGO



To achieve the goals stated above my approach to develop a marketplace ministry in the congregation was also threefold. The first approach was to gather a variety of people, representing a wide range of work experiences, to participate in an ongoing class format. The second approach was to meet with a small group of businessmen in the conference room of a downtown corporate building for a weekly Bible study, with the express purpose of developing additional downtown Bible studies in the future. The third approach was to serve as a consultant to one of my church members as he formed and launched a new company nationally.

Faith-At-Work Midweek Class Discussion

This first approach had the broadest cast and was open to any and all who were interested in discussing the topic of how to apply one's faith in their job. One of my early assumptions was that like-minded people would provide the best insight and guidance for each other. In other words, business owners and others at the top of the corporate ladder would be the best guides for other business owners and top level management. Similarly, people in the service industries would relate most easily to others who were also in service-type jobs. Teachers would relate best to others in education, and nurses and doctors would be of the most support to others working in the medical field. In my mind's eye, I would eventually plan a class for each specific type of work responsibility, but for my first attempt I wanted to focus primarily on business and faith-related issues.

I therefore geared my initial publicity toward people directly involved in business and business leadership. I announced the class as part of the church's Wednesday Night Live program and had roughly twenty people attend the eight-session series. To my dismay and early disappointment, a wide range of people showed up, from attorneys and business leaders to custodians and graduate students. People in management sat next to others in retail. Those with

advanced degrees shared the room with others who had little formal education. My expectation quickly changed and my instinct was that my experiment would quickly fail. Thankfully I was wrong.

To guide the class I developed weekly lesson plans, study guides, and teaching resources based on my research outlined in previous chapters. Bible verses pertaining to work, vocation, and calling were all incorporated into a guided discussion format and each person was encouraged to respond from their own unique perspective. I was struck first by their high degree of acceptance of each other – even more so than I had been. They did not seem bothered by the fact that others were of a different economic or social strata. Those wearing expensive business suits easily relaxed alongside others in uniforms. Perhaps it was because everyone recognized each other as sisters and brothers in Christ and fellow members of First Presbyterian Church, but there was no visible sense of hierarchy or indication of either snobbery or sense of inferiority.

This mutual respect was a significant factor in the ongoing success of the class and ultimately in the “miracles” that began to take place. Jim owned his own small accounting firm and began to describe how he had been struggling for months with an employment issue. During the course of the discussion that followed it turned out that another class member was an attorney who specialized in employment law and he was able to give the exact counsel needed. Each week, one person’s need was met by another person in attendance that night. The variety of different levels of profession that I anticipated would be a handicap became an asset. A person in management was able to gain perspective from someone who worked in a lower-level job. A laborer, frustrated with his boss, was able to get helpful advice from another class member who had previously worked in the same company. These kinds of stories were repeated throughout the series of classes.

The class proved wonderfully successful, but not in the way I anticipated. Their sharing with each other, and not my well-planned teaching, was the strength of the class. What proved most helpful was the simple experience of being gathered with other Christians who were also striving for their faith to make a positive difference in their workplace. Relationships developed as the people shared their successes and confided their struggles. They sought advice from each other and eagerly dissected the words of Scripture for God-given direction.

Downtown Bible Study Group

Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted.

Proverbs 11:11

The second approach I tried also began with assumptions that did not materialize and ended with surprises that left me humbled. The intent was to change the mindset that held the expectation that business people should come to the church for their spiritual growth. Instead, the new mindset I was trying to instill was that the church's ministries would not be based in the church building, but rather would be exported to where the people worked. In other words, rather than wait for people to leave their workplaces and come to church to talk about how to integrate faith and work, the plan was to start Bible studies in the very office buildings where our church members worked during the week.

My logic was that the first step in bringing the Christian faith into the workplace would be to bring the church's presence into the workplace. I also thought that having the ministry presence downtown would help with outreach. The assumption was that unchurched coworkers would be more comfortable meeting in a familiar conference room setting than in a church and therefore be more open to an invitation to attend. Additionally, convenience would work in its

favor because the business people would be able to park their cars in their normal location, easily walk to the conference room where the group met, and afterward be able to quickly get to their office in time for their workday to begin.

In contrast to the open-invitation midweek class this group was carefully hand-selected. I prayerfully chose the leadership team and personally invited each member to join the team. My selection pool was primarily the Men's Tuesday Morning Bible Study group since these were the people I knew the best. The criteria for participation were that they would be men who 1) demonstrated a growing level of faith, 2) were currently active in business either as an entrepreneur, corporate lead, or small business owner, and 3) were not already overly-committed in other ministry areas at church. I also expressed that the intent of membership in this team was for each member to learn how to become a small group leader himself and that at the end of the course our group would subdivide into smaller groups and multiply this ministry. The vision was that these Bible studies would reproduce throughout the downtown Fort Lauderdale area.

While searching for adequate meeting space, it was discovered that one of our church members owned two of the newest office towers in downtown Fort Lauderdale. I approached him with my vision, my request for use of a ground floor conference room free of charge was quickly approved, and our small group study began. Each week we met at 7:00 a.m. for one hour, leaving adequate time for the members to get to work on time. The book *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren⁸ was at the height of its popularity then, and it was easy to generate interest in reading and discussing the book. The group of eight men quickly grew together as friends and in theological understanding. For those who did not have to rush off to work, the discussions often overflowed to a coffee shop down the street. In this regard the project was a success.

⁸ Richard Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

The expectation that failed to materialize, however, was that the group would continue to multiply. Small group ministries in many churches struggle with this issue, but the downtown study group seemed to experience more difficulty than usual. The majority of hidden stumbling blocks outlined in chapter 4 (apparent contradictions in scripture regarding the role of work in a believers' life, differing messages from popular authors and best-selling books, lack of theologically-grounded resources from Christian publishers to assist churches in this effort, resistances from the business community and legal restraints) were discovered during this experience. The fear of *what others might think* was sufficient to stop all but the most confident from signing up and attending. As I discovered, there is a sense of safety when meeting at church and therefore outside the sight of unbelieving colleagues. As one friend later confided, "You lose your bargaining power when they know you go to church."

True or not, that is the perception held by many. By meeting at church, the businessmen felt free to open up about their faith questions and business struggles and by leaving the office building for the Bible study, they were able to control how much information they disclosed to others in the office. They felt comfortable telling some of their coworkers that they were going to their church, but for others they simply described it as "a meeting" or "an appointment."

In the end two subsequent groups were formed, but neither survived. One failed within a few weeks; the other continued for approximately six weeks but then failed to reproduce itself. The irony is that the one factor assumed to be the experiment's greatest strength, namely the on-site location, was in fact its greatest liability.

Fortunately, this disappointment was offset by several surprises. The relationships built during this experience spawned two far-reaching projects. The passion for faith-at-work ministry

was rubbing off, and the men in my group were generating their own visions for what could be realized.

The first outgrowth came in response to a need at a local low-income housing project. Alexis Wilson, in “*Four Models for Transforming Marketplace Leaders into Kingdom Leaders*,” reported on the event:

Local real estate agent Phil Keagy has begun testing some of the ideas Stuart [Dugan] has put forth. Last year, he heard that the lunch program at a Christian summer camp in one of the local housing projects had been cut for costs. Enlisting the help of some people from the church, Phil decided to buy and prepare the food for the kids. When the kids heard lunch was being provided the attendance grew. “The camp was being charged \$400 a week by a catering company for 30 kids” Stuart said, “and we overfed 54 of them for \$250 a week.”

Phil, and others, have continued their interaction with this community by organizing fishing trips and visits to the IMAX theater and the museum of science and industry. His efforts are becoming infectious. “When people see someone like Phil doing these kinds of things (and live to tell about it!) they say, ‘I want to do that too.’ And then they also get involved,” says Stuart.⁹

This ministry began because one person caught a vision for what he could do to make a difference for God. Phil learned in the studies at church about Christ’s mandate to care for the poor and the hungry and felt convicted to respond. He met and developed deep friendships with other businessmen at church and readily called on others to share in the project. Each week he would report back with contagious enthusiasm about the people he had met and the amazing transformation that was taking place.

Because of Phil, another member in the group, Brian¹⁰ also became involved with the residents in the housing project. Over time Brian became sympathetic to the kids who had no respite from the sweltering heat and humidity during the very hot summers in south Florida. He

⁹ Alexis Wilson, “Four Models for Transforming Marketplace Leaders into Kingdom Leaders,” in *Marketplace Success/Kingdom Significance* (Dallas, Texas: Leadership Network, Inc., 2006), 11.

¹⁰ Names and other identifying details have been changed but the essential elements remain the same and are faithful to the actual events taking place.

recognized their need for relief, so he decided to bus a group of them over to his condominium complex so they could swim in the pool. Imagine the sight, the private swimming pool in one of the city's luxury condominiums filled with kids literally from the other side of the tracks. When the other men saw Brian's brazen courage they also were emboldened to step out of their comfort zones and social barriers. One man in the group organized a network of friends from the yacht club to take a group of these same kids deep sea fishing. Another had forty tickets to a Miami Dolphins game donated and then bused the low-income kids to the game so they could also meet the players. These kinds of stories continue, and walls dividing race, economic and social strata continue to come down.

The most impressive part of the story, however, came after I had left the church for another pastoral position. Because of the relationships built through these and other activities, the kids in that low-income community became eager to learn about the type of faith that would drive such successful business people to care about them and their needs. They wanted to come to church so they too could hear about Jesus. The demand quickly grew beyond the resources of the men from the bible study group so the men approached the church leadership for help. In response to their urging First Presbyterian Church bought a bus which now goes to the other side of town each Sunday to pick up a load of low-income African-American children and bring them to Sunday School. There were more kids who wanted to come than there were seats on the bus, so their parents designed a process where the kids had to earn the right to come by doing their homework, behaving well, and being good citizens. First Presbyterian, which used to be known in the community as "The Yacht Club Church," is now gaining a missional reputation.

The second outgrowth from the downtown study group has had national impact. Tom, a member of this group, was active in civic events and served on numerous community boards.

Another member, Frank, had recently retired from owning his own business and was eager for a “God-sized vision” to capture his enthusiasm. Mark, a third member in the group, was an unemployed television producer and media technology specialist. At first meeting, they had little in common, but as they grew together in faith and friendship they also grew together in a common vision.

Frank had met a woman at church who worked with the foster care program in Broward County and had told him about the huge need for homes for foster children up to 18 years of age. These were good kids who, because they were considered “too old” to be adopted, simply bounced from one foster home to another and never had the chance for a healthy, long-term family life. The stories she told struck a sympathetic chord with Frank, and he became involved in the foster care program as well.

Frank told Tom, and the two of them felt convicted to do something about the need for adopting foster children in the Fort Lauderdale area. Because of his community contacts, Tom knew he could get an audience to hear the message, but they needed a way to adequately express the need. Mark, the producer, knew how to tell a compelling story and had the resources to do so. So they combined efforts. Frank contacted the local foster child social service agencies and identified the children in need of homes and families. Mark interviewed and filmed each child, capturing them in their normal activities, and giving their personalities a chance to shine through.

In the process they heard about a small organization in New Mexico named Heart Gallery which was working to solve this same problem in their region and adopted the name for their project. These men assembled the promotional material, complete with professional quality displays, and called it “Heart Gallery.” Tom utilized his community contacts and social standing

to secure the Fort Lauderdale Museum of Art for an opening night gala. All of the city's most prominent people were invited, and the event was a tremendous success.

Since then, the program has continued to grow, and numerous children have been adopted into loving homes as a result. But it didn't stop there. News of the event spread, and soon other foster child agencies across the country started inquiring about the program. The team of three men from our downtown Bible study took the lead and formed a national network of adoption agencies and soon the Heart Gallery of America was founded. Mark, the television producer, now serves as the national president. There are now Heart Gallery foster care chapters in almost every state, stretching from New York to Hawaii. My vision for multiple downtown bible studies never reached fruition, but God used those early morning gatherings to impact the lives of untold children across the nation in a way that will continue to bear fruit far beyond my imagination.

Business Consultant and Spiritual Guide

The third approach to addressing the needs of helping church members integrate their faith in their workplace grew from a relationship developed during my first two efforts. A man by the name of Doyle shared a similar passion for having Christ glorified in his work. He had an inspirational personal testimony to share about the price he had paid for staying true to his faith in the face of opposition in his previous employment. So, propelled by his faith and vision, Doyle set out on his own to form a new national company that would provide specialized medical care and health services in prisons.

Doyle wanted to build his company based specifically on Christian principles and to glorify Christ in the process. I was honored to be asked to address his newly-formed leadership team at their very first companywide meeting and to help Doyle present a grounded Christian

presence for his company. For their inaugural national gathering of vice presidents and other key leadership the first thirty minutes was slotted for me to lead the entire staff in a Bible-based, work-related study. Because not everyone on this newly-formed staff was a Christian, I worried that my Christ-centered presentation might be offensive to some and backfire against Doyle. Doyle, however, was confident that he wanted Christ to be visibly present in his company so the devotion went on as planned.

Since the new company was named Armor Correctional Health Services, Inc., named after the Full Armor of God described in Ephesians 6, I chose this text as my theme for the devotional. Using PowerPoint, discussion and film clips we discussed what each part of the armor meant in a business context and in each person's particular role and responsibilities. It was important to me to affirm Doyle's stand for Christ.

The presentation and the ensuing discussion went well and positive feedback was unanimous; the people expressed that they felt the rest of the meeting had gone better because of it. At the next national staff meetings, I was still given the opening segment, only this time I was told to "take as much time as you want." Throughout the next two years I provided a theological sounding board for Doyle as he made critical precedence-setting decisions and provided counsel when he faced very difficult personnel decisions that required discipline and grace.

Doyle has since sold the company and one of the senior vice presidents I had worked with closely at the time now owns and runs this company. It still has the same Christ-centered vision statement that we had drawn up in the beginning, and the staff has grown in the amount of volunteer medical care given in Haiti (prior to the earthquake on January 12, 2010) and in other third world countries.

Conclusions and Recommendations for the Future

The potential for explosive Kingdom growth is enormous. As churches implement their own faith-at-work ministries, and equip their people to incarnate Christ's presence in their workplace, the church will be fulfilling its vocation and role in God's salvation history.

What does it really mean to bring Christ into the workplace? Much is written about how to bring Christian ethics into the workplace, how to be successful in business by applying Christian principals, and how leadership skills patterned after Jesus can be applied at work to enhance business success. But following Jesus' teaching is different than following Jesus. A Buddhist or agnostic can live by Jesus' teachings but not be Jesus' disciple. Bonhoeffer states it clearly, "Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."¹¹ What the Christian church has to offer the marketplace that is unique from all other sources is not just the teachings of Christ, but the person of Jesus and the visible presence of God.

The task of the church is to fulfill the Great Commission in training incarnational living in the workplace. When a person's work occupies the greatest part of his or her life, is the primary source of their livelihood and their strongest source of identity, to be cut off from the church's presence leaves them without spiritual guidance. It is the opposite of *shalom*, the wholeness Christ came to bring. And when the church is the one who refuses to enter the marketplace arena the blame rests firmly on its leadership.

A better picture is possible. If churches across America adopted the *Avodah* model for conceptualizing their relationship with the business community the opening vignettes would have a positive outcome. Frank, worrying about the outcome of this morning's proposal, because he had been in a work-related Bible study organized through his church, would be able to remind

¹¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: MacMillan, 1963), 62,63.

himself of the assurance in Philippians 4 to “Be anxious about nothing....” And that “All things work together for the good of those who love the Lord” (Romans 8:28). Frank prays asking for success, but also for wisdom to accept the outcome, no matter the result. As a result he now experiences “the peace that passes all understanding” (Philippians 4:7).

Christy and Mark, because they are in a faith-at-work small group at their church, are able to draw upon the love of their friends and be reminded that they are not alone in the pressures they feel nor the struggles they face. Grateful for the support they receive from their sisters and brothers in Christ, Christy refuses to compromise her ethics and Mark continues his plan to present a bid that reflects the highest standards possible.

Kelly still dislikes her job, but because of the wisdom she has received from her Sunday School class on discipleship and the work-related illustrations used in the teaching materials, Kelly now goes to work with a new perspective on how the part she plays at work is a valuable component of God’s plan. Even during the most difficult days she she is able to use them as opportunities to grow deeper in her spiritual maturity. Kelly is now happier with her life and feels like she is flourishing once again.

Scott, who is struggling with how to fire a single mother working in his office, shared his dilemma in his men’s group. Another member of the group hearing the concern, accesses his professional network and soon another opportunity for this woman becomes available. Scott is then able to speak to his employee and acknowledge his concern for her as a single mom and is able to recommend this new alternative as a viable option. All parties benefit when she accepts the new position.

Sally sits in church and listens to the sermon about witnessing for Jesus. Since her pastor is familiar with the types of stumbling blocks she faces at work the sermon addresses those

issues directly. Practical workplace illustrations are given for how to transform the stumbling blocks into building blocks for God's Kingdom. By the next Sunday, rather than discouraged about what she could not do, she eagerly shares how God is blessing her efforts.

In the thirty years since I began this faith-at-work journey, first from the "work" side in advertising and then from the "faith" side as a pastor, much has changed. First, I have changed. When I left advertising to enter seminary, my attitude was that I was pursuing a "higher calling." I now recognize the error of that perception. All work is sacred and equally high in its calling when the goal is to glorify God. Second, the awareness of faith-at-work issues has grown and the number of publications, organizations and websites dedicated to this purpose has multiplied exponentially. For someone currently entering this field, there is much wisdom to draw upon and many fine resources to utilize.

What is slow to change, however, is the church's reluctance to embrace this area of ministry outreach. There remains a hesitation to co-mingle "the things of the world" with "the things of God." In this area there is still much to be done. Awareness, not more books, is what is needed most in the church today. The tools are available, but the motivation to put them into use still lags. Voices from the business world are clamoring for help and there is a deep spiritual hunger in the marketplace. Men and women are seeking to eliminate the Sunday-Monday gap they experience every week and it is the church's responsibility and opportunity to answer the call. It is the churches' *vocare* to do so.

In retrospect, this overall faith-at-work project proved more difficult than anticipated, but also more rewarding. I am more certain than ever of the need for faith-at-work integration and the importance of the church's role in leading the way, and enthused by the attention this field of study now receives. It is evident that God's timing is at work as awareness and efforts in this

area are emerging simultaneously on business, academic, and ecclesiastical fronts. There is still a great deal of work and research that needs to be done in this area, but thankfully there are many fine clergy, businessmen and women, authors, and educators who are working on effective ways to close the Sunday-Monday gap.

The fields are ripe for harvest. As Os Hillman, president of Marketplace Leaders wrote, “There is a revival coming, revival that is returning us to our roots to understand what the early church understood – that work is a holy calling in which God moves to transform lives, cities, and nations....*The greatest potential ministry in the world today is the marketplace.*”¹²

¹² Hillman, “The Faith at Work Movement: Opening the 9 to 5 Window.”

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