

# Work It Out!

## Ephesians 6:5-8

**Main focus of this series:** This series is a formulation of key teachings and understandings from the book of Ephesians. It is the textbook for Christian living, affective church growth and unity. It is also a manual for harmony in the home and an affective lifestyle in our work place in the world. Ephesians draws many lines, it is clear and very defined. Why many Christians fail to live fully in the shadow of the cross is because they have never ventured into the truths documented in Paul's writings to the Ephesians. In an effort to decipher each statement of Paul in Ephesians we believe we will learn how to successfully operate in the three positions of the believer: to **sit (Ephesians 1-3)**, to **walk (Ephesians 4-6:9)** and to **stand (Ephesians 6:10-24)**. The first half of Ephesians (chapters 1-3) tells us what a Christian is and the last three chapters define how to live that out in harmony with other believer's and separately from non-believer's as well in a power filled life winning victoriously over Satan.

**The importance of this message today:** Today we must realize the powerful impact we can have in the vast mission field called the workplace. We must have the help of the Holy Spirit which is necessary for us to be successful in the workplace. We need to destroy the myth that there is a Spiritual-Vocational Hierarchy, that there is "spiritual" jobs and "secular" jobs. Today I also want to convey that it is imperative that we understand that our work is a reflection of our God. We are "called" to work as worship, not worship our work.

**Intro:** I remember the first time I fell off a train. I was 16 years old and it was my summer job, not falling off of trains, but gathering seed samples found in the train cars. On any given day I might run on top of 150 to 300 open tops, hoppers or box cars to probe wheat, corn or maze. It was a huge lesson in balance. My job was to take a pole about eight foot long and about three inches in diameter and plunge that pole all the way down into the corners and center of that train car, twist it where it would open up and fill with the grain and pull it out to fill up a bag that was later tested for seed moisture content and quality.

Time was of the essence and I would run the top of the box cars and jump from one to the other probing designated cars. I remember one day that I jumped from a box car to an open top, open tops were just that, they were train cars that had no tops. They only had about a four to five inch ledge that you could walk on to get to the other car. This particular open top was empty and it was necessary to make my jump just right. Balance was a huge necessity to get the job done and how well I maintained balance determined how well I got the job done.

Obviously you've already guessed my conclusion. I landed on the other train car but stumbled near the side and falling off grabbing everything I could on the way down. I was a bit bruised and frustrated, because I knew it would become the next story to tell and laugh at when we got back to our office.

I learned something else about balance that summer, and that was that balance was required in every aspect of me on the job. What I learned on the job as well as going to school, my job was the place where the spiritual side was confronted with the work side. It's where the spiritual dimension met character. It was the place where the many different motives of lives converged:

- For one, he was there to make money because they had goals and dreams for their money.
- Another one was there because they were doing everything they could to stay away from home.
- One was there because it challenged them and they woke up every morning with the anticipation of a new day.
- Another one was there because it was the only way his dad would allow him to keep his Corvette.
- Still others were there because the job had provided a place to feel powerful and significant far beyond their actual accomplishment.

In the midst of all this diversity I had to find my own balance, to set my own perimeters and determine who I was and who I would be. Finding this balance was a huge task and the boundaries and perimeters formulated at 16 year old still influences my actions today.

We may be wondering who is going to show up when we go to work, and I'm not talking about your boss, I'm talking about you! We have this feeling that our work is out of sync with who we are and in more than one instance, we come to this struggle between the “*spiritual*” person we are supposed to be and the “*productive*” person we are expected to be. One of the reasons why this message is so important today can be summed up in a statement by Doug Sherman, author of *Your Work Matters To God*. He states,

"Our surveys reveal that 90-97% of Christians have never heard a sermon relating biblical principles to their work life."

This is our challenge today. How do we respond to work and employees and fellow employees?

### A Look At God's Word

*"Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him."*

Ephesians 6:5-9

**Slaves:** When the letter of Ephesians was written the **slaves** of that time that Paul is addressing, were more than likely well **educated** people who were **captured** by war. Some students of Roman history have estimated that about **one-third to half of the Roman Empire's, (500-year-old Roman Republic from 510 BC – 1st century BC)**. It consisted of our modern-day **Portugal, Spain, England and France, Italy, Albania and Greece, the Black Sea, and Asia Minor** , and **Turkey**; parts of the **Middle East: Syria, Lebanon**, and southwestward to **Egypt**, northern Africa- **Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, the Balkans**. **These areas where highly** population with slaves, approximately **60 million individuals**. Many of these slaves were Christians. And most ancient **Greeks and Romans regarded them as little more than tools**.

- **Aristotle** lays it down that there can never be friendship between master and slave, for master and slave have nothing in common; 'for a slave is a living tool, just as a tool is an inanimate slave.' A slave was nothing better, and had no more rights, than a tool.
- **Varro**, writing on agriculture, divided agricultural instruments into three classes—the articulate, the inarticulate and the mute.
  - The articulate comprises the slaves;
  - The inarticulate the cattle;
  - The mute the vehicles.

The writings reveal that the slave is no better than a beast who happens to be able to talk.

- **Cato** gives advice to a man taking over a farm. He must go over it and throw out everything that is past its work; and old slaves too must be thrown out on the scrap heap to starve. When a slave is ill it is sheer extravagance to issue him with normal rations. The old and sick slave is only a broken and inefficient tool.

## Ephesus

Among the other dilemmas of Ephesus, it's great financial prosperity, it's sexual perversion and religious distortion that continued to decay the idea of any healthy family unit, but now we deal with the additional convenience of not only cheap labor, but abusive power. Ironically, what is historically known about Christianity in that day is that it flourished mostly in the ranks of those who were in brutal ranks of bondage under the Roman Empire through slavery. Historically, Christianity spread first among these slaves and then gradually the slave-owners in the region could not resist the work ethic and heart of those who were enslaved to them.

Paul tells the Christians in Corinth, (I Corinthians 12:13), that the Spirit doesn't consider us "**neither bond or free**" and that here in Ephesians, our eternal rewards are not determined by being bond or free. It doesn't matter where the Rail Road Tracks were in your town...God sees us both the same. Jesus' blood covers all sides of the tracks and all sides of the town. God is not stuck on lower, middle or high class, His Son's blood is the equal sin solution... once and for all. Some of those living in Ephesus were masters, some were slaves, and in our time it is the equivalent of employers and employees.

## Prisoner, Volunteer or Vacation

I was recently asked if I would consider attending a leadership development training here in Garden City. One of the first questions that was asked was, "Are you a prisoner, volunteer or on vacation?" What they were asking was, were you forced to come, did you come willingly or did you come to get out of work? Amazingly people were pretty honest and there were responses in every category. We could ask ourselves that question about many things, but today I would like to ask that question in particular about your job. Are you a prisoner, a volunteer or a vacation? What would your response be today?

In 2005, the American Time Use Survey Summary by the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that on an average weekday, full-time employees in America spend more time working than participating in any other activity – even sleep! I like what Doug Spada, Founder & President of HisChurchatWork.org said,

"The workplace is where a majority of a church congregation spends a majority of their time, interacting with a majority of the unchurched world. The Church on Monday is evidence that the Church on Sunday is real!"

## Obey Your Masters

**"Slaves, obey your earthly masters..."**

The word "**obedient**" is the same word used in verse 1 when it commands the children to obey their parents, "**to follow orders**".

### The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

In 2004, the Billy Graham Association headed up "The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization." This special meeting was held in Pattaya, Thailand, assembling over 1500 leaders from 130 countries to discuss how we might best define the critical issues confronting the church in the 21st century with the theme, "The whole church, must take the whole gospel, to the whole world." Among the 31 issues that were identified as important in the 21st century, the number one area that was designated was "**Marketplace [or Workplace] Ministry**" [mono-cultural; ministry within the same culture] and second was "**Business as Mission[s]**" [cross-cultural; ministry across cultures].

Interestingly enough, our workplace is a place of evangelism, but it is also a place of function, "fruitful" function. It's where the person of *faith*, Happy Bill becomes partners with the person of *function*, "Get-er-done" Bill. Like we have discussed in weeks before, our actions toward our wife, husband, children and parents are not based upon the response of their actions toward us. We are acting as unto the Lord and here once again, we are asked to serve in our business areas as if we were working in a called position in God's own House.

John Stott (British theologian and Honorary Chair of Lausanne) defines work as:

"the expenditure of energy (whether manual or mental or both) in the service of others, which brings fulfillment to the worker, benefit to the community, and glory to God." [Stott, Issues Facing Christians Today. Marshalls, 1984. p. 162]

### Look how Paul tells them to obey:

**"Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear..."**

- 1) **Obedience is to be done "with respect and fear"**. It's easy to lose the honor that our bosses deserve. Remember, you can only give the amount of authority that you are willing to be under.
  - Paul says "**fear and trembling**" is the opposite of "**the wisdom of the world**" (I Cor. 2:3). In other words, the world tells you to do all you can to directly oppose masters!
  - Respect- The same response behind their back as it is in their presence.
  - Fear- You complete the task to their standard not yours.

***“Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.*”**

- 2) **Obedience is to be done "with sincerity of heart".** The best worker ought to be a Christian worker; who loyally serves his employer. employees are to obey their employers from the heart - Colossians 3:22-24

- **Don't give someone a reason to write a Country Western Song about you!**

- 3) **Obedience is to be done "as unto Christ"**- Whatever you do, do it as if you were doing it for Christ Himself. employees are to please their masters in all things - Titus 2:9-10

***Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.***

- 4) **Obedience is to be done not only for "eye-service"**- Not with "eye-service" (Gr."*ophthalmodoulia*"). Service performed only under the master's eye, diligently performed when he is looking, but neglected when he is not.

- 5) **Obedience is to be done as "slaves of Christ"**-. God, in His providence, has given to you your work.

***“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”***

Galatians 2:20

- 6) **Obedience is to be done "doing the will of God from your heart"**-. I will do my job because of my heart toward God. It doesn't matter if my boss is a Christian or not, my allegiance is toward God and I will do toward my boss as if I were working directly for God.

It is important to understand that the job assignment I have right now is my divine call in life. Without "calling" all you have is a job. Without this "calling" in my life, the best I can manage is:

- I hope my job makes a difference
- I hope my work counts
- I hope I headed in the right direction

But I know that when I obey my boss, "doing the will of God from my heart" I am working in my calling. I have a mission. I have a divine commission. I know who sent me and the exact errand I am on in this life. **Thomas Edison** said,

***“If we all did the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves.”***

Booker T. Washington observed,

***“Excellence is to do a common thing in an uncommon way.”***

Leo F. Buscaglia,

***“Your talent is God's gift to you. What you do with it is your gift back to God.”***

See, God is not only telling me to do the job as to the Lord, He is telling me to put my heart into it as well. To give my heart to it.

***“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”***

**Matthew 6:21**

In other words, Jesus is saying for us to treasure, value, hold with high esteem our jobs. No one is more enjoyed than an employee who values his job. No employer wants to honor, respect and develop an employee more than someone who values his job.

Here's what this is saying to us today, **my job is God's will for me right now**. It is as ordained as any other call I could have in my life. My job is God's will, if He changes it, He will tell me about it. I am just as ordained of God on my job as I am serving in any other opportunity of life. My job has a green light of God's approval. He will give me an arrow when I need it.

**Also, you work for your boss because you want to.** I don't know of anyone in our church who is under contract for more than a week or a season. Stop blaming your job, change it. Quit, get a better education, get after a new career or shut up! I know that sounds mean, but your boss is not your enemy, your boss is Jesus Christ and you are not serving Christ by criticizing, complaining or degrading your earthly boss.

***Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.***

- 7) **Obedience is to be done “knowing that there is a true reward”- How can I work like this? What is my motivation to give my all at work? “Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does...”** *Waiting tables, babysitting, cleaning cars, driving trucks, fixing motors, working on power lines, teaching school, working cattle, cutting meat...it is all, ALL seen by God. If you cannot work for Him directly, YOU CAN WORK FOR HIM INDIRECTLY!* Serve Christ, bond or free, rich or poor, and your reward is the same as others (v.8).

**Paul Stevens** constructed in his book, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Eerdmans, 1999) a pyramid that illustrates a “Spiritual-Vocational Hierarchy.” The vocations that are higher up on the pyramid are considered more God-pleasing and get more points than others. From the top of the pyramid, we see:

**Foreign missionaries**  
**Pastors, home missionaries**  
**Social workers, schoolteachers,**  
**Nurses and those involved**  
**in other helping ministries**  
**Business people, trades people,**  
**farmers, stockbrokers, lawyers, etc.**



A misunderstanding here, “Not Knowing” this will cause you to mistakenly believe that those who are engaged in so-called full-time Christian work are getting higher marks or

points with God than those who are involved in the nine to five, Monday through Friday routine. **Loving Sunday and hating the rest of the week is not what the Bible teaches us.**

I believe the next big move of God is not going to come through signs and wonders though I will welcome them and look forward to them operating in our midst. I don't believe it will come through the gospel being preach in a loud and powerful way through myself or anyone else coming into this church even though I do believe many will come to know God through that means. I believe the great move of God in our community, our state and in our nation will happen when the people of God KNOW that when they go to work on Monday that their obedience to respond to the will of your boss or teacher is responding to the will of God and in that you KNOW that you will be rewarded from heaven.

Here's what I know. God wants to bless you. God wants to pour His favor on you and our community. But you think you serve a man or a woman. You think that you have the option to respond to your superior through your production based upon what kind of relationship you have with them. If they say good morning and treat you a certain way you believe you will be productive that day. If they come in and mumble as they pass you up you dig your heels in and refuse to give them an inch of your service. You will only commit what you think they are worthy of. This does not please God. This opposes God because God's will for you is to respond to them as if God were your boss and Jesus was your supervisor or teacher.

### **A Wise Word to Employers**

***“And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.”***

- 1) **Treat them with the same response you want to be respond to. Model leadership, loyalty and work ethics.** Do to them, NOT what your expect they should do to you, but what God expects of them. . . . *“do the same things unto them.”* You think they are serving you but as an employer you are serving God. A Christian boss is to have the same characteristics of the Christian employee. Serve...
  - **“With respect and trembling”**
  - **“With sincerity of heart”**
  - **“As unto Christ”**
  - **Not only for “eye-service”**
  - **As “slaves of Christ”**
  - **As “*doing God's will from your heart*”**
  - **“Knowing that there is a true reward”**
- 2) **Treat them with the same respect you expect from them.** Threats are the least affective form of leadership. You do have to take action, but don't let it be “the last straw,” let it be well defined and documented and be brave enough to either dismiss, demote or terminate.
- 3) **Treat them with the same judgment that you want to be accountable to.** You know that you will one day face your Master, and He is not a respecter of persons.

## So Who Are You, “Happy” Bill or “Get-er-done” Bob?

Some of you may know exactly what kind of day it will be by the way your boss walks through the door. Those who work around you might also be able to determine what kind of day it will be by the way you walk through the door. Sometimes “**Happy**” **Bill** walks through that door. That's the Christian Bill, he's got a smile for everyone and patience and kindness to boot. Everyone likes “Happy” Bill, when he comes to work everyone knows it will be a good day.

But then there is “**Get-er-done**” **Bob**. Bob is all about business. He comes in cracking the whip and doesn't even realized you got your hair done! He comes in pushing for results, for production, for performance. He wants things done better, bigger, faster and cheaper than ever before. “Get-er-done” Bob is not as enjoyable and positively not as popular. When he comes through the door everyone knows it's going to be a grueling eight hour day that will feel more like a twelve hour shift.

The advice of many Christians is that you should kill the “Get-er-done” Bob. And if you can't kill him, somehow you have to keep him in the basement chained up and never let him out. Only “Happy” Bill should be seen and left out of the cage.

So here's a question for you to ask yourself,

- “**Do you feel like you are a person of faith and a follower of Jesus Christ?**”

All the surveys done in the United States today indicate that 4 out of 10 Americans say “yes” to that question. Four out of ten say that they are a person of faith and a follower of Jesus Christ. That means that there are over a 100 million of us out there. We spend an hour or so together in worship and the Word of God and then we spend the other 40 or so hours with others. We walk out these doors today and tomorrow we will walk through many other doors in our community and surrounding areas that may or may not be accepting and could even be hostile toward your beliefs and spiritual stance. Jesus was accurate in stating,

“...let your light shine before men [and women] in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 5:16

## Vocation

The word “**vocation**” comes from “**vocatio**” which means **calling**. Work is not just another occupation; it is a calling. Do you enjoy Mondays and the rest of the work week or do you suffer from the misconception of *Spiritual* work vs. *Secular* work?

Marc Gunther wrote an article called, “God and Business,” in *Fortune*, (July 2001) that affirmed the existence of a new movement, reporting the marketplace presence of “a mostly unorganized mass of believers—a counterculture bubbling up all over corporate America—who want to bridge the traditional divide between spirituality and work.” The article went on to say:

Historically, such folk operated below the radar, on their own or in small workplace groups where they prayed or studied the Bible. But now they are getting organized and going public to agitate for change. People who want to mix God and business are rebels on several fronts. They reject the centuries-old

American conviction that spirituality is a private matter. They challenge religious thinkers who disdain business as an inherently impure pursuit. They disagree with business people who say that religion is unavoidably divisive.

On October 31, 2004, the *New York Times Magazine* featured a cover story on Christianity in the workplace entitled “*With God at Our Desks.*” The article stated:

The idea is that Christians have for too long practiced their faith on Sundays and left it behind during the workweek, and that there is a moral vacuum in the modern workplace, which leads to backstabbing careerism, empty routines for employees and CEO’s who push for profits at the expense of society, the environment and their fellow human beings.

### **Biblical Basis**

- In the New Testament – Of Jesus’ 132 public appearances in NT, 122 were in the marketplace
- Of 52 parables Jesus told, 45 had a workplace context.
- Of 40 divine interventions recorded in Acts, 39 were in the marketplace.
- Jesus spent his adult life as a carpenter until age 30 before he went into a preaching ministry in the workplace.
- Jesus called 12 workplace individuals, not clergy, to build His church.
- Work is Worship - The Hebrew word “*Avodah*” is root for word from which we get the words *work* and *worship*.
- Work in its different forms is mentioned more than 800 times in the Bible, more than all the words used to express worship, music, praise, and singing combined.
- “54% of Jesus’ reported teaching ministry arose out of issues posed by others” in the scope of daily life experience. – Lewis and Lewis, LICC

Paul says:

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men”*  
Colossians 3:23

The church over time has lost a correct view of our purpose on this earth. There has been a lie that has penetrated the church that there is a difference between the **clergy** vs. **laity**, the “**spiritual**” work and the “**secular**” work. It all comes from a misunderstanding or the lack of knowledge of the biblical principle of the priesthood of all believers. Pastors, missionaries, lawyers, and business people alike are ministers to proclaim the gospel and share the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

*“It was he who gave some to be **apostles**, some to be **prophets**, some to be **evangelists**, and some to be **pastors and teachers**, to prepare **God's people for works of service**, so that the **body of Christ may be built up**, until we all reach **unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”*

Ephesians 4:11-13

Pastors have the responsibility to bring the Spiritual dimension of God in a systematic, productive way and those employed outside the church are to bring productive and systematic ways to their job with a Spiritual dimension. Both are to work together in

the church.

## Work Test

Before I go any further, let me ask you some questions about you and your work:

- **Is your skill set sharper than it was three years ago and would your boss agree?**
- **Has the example of your “faith” at work contributed to the atmosphere and production of the business or has it become a detriment to it?**
- **Do you have a reputation at work for being someone who sacrificially helps others succeed without needing any credit for it?**
- **Are you as energized and engaged in your work life as you are in your ministry world?**
- **Are you the same person on Monday at work as you are on Sunday at church?**
- **Even if you become independently wealthy, would you still continue to work?**
- **Are you actively working with leadership at church to help build an environment that would help engage and be welcoming for those at work?**

## Christmas Time

I know for some of you, this is the time of the year, (Christmas), that you hope to get some benefit for putting up with “Get-er-done” Bob all year by getting a **bonus**, **gift** or at least some **recognition** for a job well done. But in reality, you may not get any of those three blessings and even if you do, it may not feel like it evens out all that it seems it has taken from you. So, what do we do?

Here's what I believe we need to do, we need to learn how to let “Happy” Bill come to work with “Get-er-done” Bob, that's right, you need to be “Billy Bob!”. They need to become partners, they need to look alike and work together. God wants us to learn that we need to be **people of faith** and **productive people!** We need the two to match, to become one.

## A Look At Jesus

Our ultimate example of “Get-er-done” Bob happens to be Jesus Christ. Jesus' whole life was getting it DONE!

*“I have brought you glory on earth by **completing the work** you gave me to do.”*  
John 17:4

We don't normally look at Jesus as the “Get-er-done” Bob we see Him more like “happy” Bill. Most of us have a Sunday School picture of who He was.

- The pictures really **don't depict Him as a high achiever.**
- Most of the time, **pictures** of Him show Him in **nice robes** either **knocking on a door** or **hanging around children.**
- He is **never pictured working**
- Our Sunday School Jesus was **probably a pretty good carpenter**, but of course He **wasn't that good** or He'd make the other carpenter's feel bad.
- **Our picture is that He never worked for profit.**
- He was the **originator of the “Non-profit” tax exempt system.**
- He always **gave everything He made away.**
- **He was normal, not a genius, not stupid, but average.**

## Jesus Was “Get-er-done”

**Jesus was production personified.** Jesus grew up in Nazareth – a village in Galilee, notorious for rudeness & wickedness. It wasn't an easy place for a kid to grow up. God placed Jesus, not in a perfect palace, but in an average working class families home. Not in Tel Aviv's new Hilton Suite that goes for \$3000 a night, but in a humble home in Nazareth. He would have attended the village school connected with a synagogue. Luke is the only gospel that gives us a **brief**, but **adequate** and **valuable** record of Jesus, from babyhood to manhood, ages 12-30.

**“And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.”**

**Luke 2:40-51**

He became **strong** and **vigorous**. We want to raise children who are **spiritually strong, strong enough to resist the pressures of this world**. Jesus must have been very **secure** and confident because he was left for 3 days, away from his parents at the age of 12 without any plans for a sleep-over. His parents were a day's journey away. It took them a day to get back, & found him on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. A day's journey was 20-30 miles.

**Jesus gained favor with God but also with man. He did it the same way we do it today, He became known by what He did and how He did it.** He had a great reputation as a young man, and coming from His home town, it didn't come from being a good little mamma's boy.

**Heisman Trophy-** Florida sophomore quarterback **Tim Tebow** was the recipient of the **Heisman Trophy** on Saturday night, December 8, 2007. It was wonderful to hear him share his faith in Jesus Christ and his commitment to God as number one in his life. He also shared how his mother had invested time in him to memorize scripture his whole life long. He was beaming because he knew and verbalized that God gave him the opportunity and is the reason for the success. Tim gained favor with man and God.



Long before He entered His ministry at 30, Jesus was a very **skilled carpenter**. The **word** that was used to **describe Jesus** in **Matthew 13:55** and **Mark 6:3** is the **Greek** word, **tekton**. A **tekton** was someone who **understood something completely and transitions that knowledge into creations of excellent craftsmanship**. Before the world knew Jesus as the Messiah, He was known as a skilled craftsman. **Tekton pictures someone who has very little but does very great with what is given**. He was no push over. Jesus was not a passive hippie type who would be found among the flowers but a man's man working with those who lived a life of precision and focus. Jesus was “Get-er-done.”

- Jesus' commitment to excellence set the stage and gave Him a reputation that would cause others to stop and listen and think.
- He was a master teacher:
  - He **silence** those who **tried to trap Him**
  - He **seized** those who had **never heard him, thousands at a time**.
  - He **secured** those **who were nothing** but a **fisherman**, an **outcast**, a **tax**

- **collector** and others who became an **elite of 12**, teaching, leading, discipling.
- He **synthesized** those who were **once part of one of histories largest empires**, (Roman Empire) **into nations of believers**.

You will find that **everything that Christ did in those three years of ministry were done at the highest level of excellence and production.**

### **What's His Motive?**

So why was Jesus driven to excellence and production? What caused Him to be so focused?

- It's not because He had a perfectionist personality
- It's not because He was the typical Type A, first born child
- It's not because He wanted to control all the carpentry market in Nazareth
- It's not because He needed to prove that He was somebody
- Christ had excellence and was productive for one reason:

**All Jesus' excellence in production was an outcome of His relationship with God!**

*"I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do."*  
John 17:4

### **JESUS EXCELLED IN HIS WORK TO BRING GLORY TO THE GOD WHO SENT HIM**

#### **Our Work Is A Reflection of Our God!**

Many people minimize "their" responsibility to work.

- Often they believe that if they are not told to do something then it is their superiors fault why nothing gets done.
- Others believe that if they are doing something other than working it is their superiors responsibility to manage them and keep them on track.
- And some believe that they are over qualified, too experienced or far above the menial task of their job. Work is an exchange of ego, if you make me feel good about myself, if you give me something that will elevate me among my peers, if you want excellence from me then give me something to do that I like, not what you want.

Excellence and production matters to God because excellence and production is fundamental to who He is. It is the core of who He is. It is His character. God is ultimately defined as "Holy." Holiness means that God is perfect in all His ways. He is excellence in all He does and all He is.

*"Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord; no deeds can compare with yours."*  
Psalm 86:8

**Moses asked,**

*"O Sovereign LORD, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do?"*  
Deuteronomy 3:24

**David states,**

**"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."**

**Palm 139:14**

**God Lives By The Code:** He is God because there is none like Him. He is the standard. He is the benchmark of all creation. He cannot help but delight in Himself since He is the best there is! **Our reflection of our work is a reflection of the God we serve.** Excellence and productivity are two attributes of us seeing God correctly. God's excellence and productivity is more than just doing something. It's not just perfect because He is doing it. **God's excellence, His capabilities, and His attributes do not consist only because of his superior quality or lack of defect. His excellence is drawn from a moral code that even He abides by.**

**"The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made."**

**Psalm 145:17**

See, God would be God no matter how He acted. But God is God because of how He acts. God is characterized by and dependently set on the moral code of righteousness and love. He will not change the code that He will live by. God is perfect, but His excellence and commitment to activate all of heaven, if necessary, is based upon those who honor the code. God interacts in perfect harmony to His moral code and He will not cross it. See if this scripture doesn't make more sense to you now:

**"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."**

**Romans 8:28**

**Excellence in our work matters because God made us in His image.** Human beings carry the image of God while the rest of creation does not. We have the capacity to voluntarily appreciate and imitate God's excellence. He gave us the ability to choose to do our best for Him. Our work becomes worship when we will fully give out our best every day for the good of those around us through our jobs! By lining our will with the excellency of God's will, the production from our labor become platforms to activate the moral compass of God, the code of God, righteousness and love.

### **What's Our Business?**

In his book *The Church of Irresistible influence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), Robert Lewis makes a persuasive case for Christians and their churches to reengage their communities and their cultures. Here's what he says,

"Art, media, and education all need involved Christians. Unemployment, illiteracy, teen pregnancy, homelessness, health care, dissolving families- these are just some of the issues begging the church to step up its involvement, right where you and I live. For too long, evangelical Christians have been passive citizens, benefiting from society but not making a constructive contribution to it."

Bob Briner, author of *Roaring Lambs* declared,

**"It's time for believers to confidently carry their faith with them into the marketplace so that our very culture feels the difference."**

Today there are about 1.6 billion of the world's 6.3 billion people have not heard the gospel and have little or no opportunity to hear it. Here we live in a land that used to be littered with the gospel and now it's amazing that the person you work with in the cubby next to you has never really had a descent conversation about God. The least-utilized of Christians today are the business people. We must restore the biblical concept of the priesthood of all believers. The people of God are all ministers. They are called to witness where they are through whatever professions they have chosen.

People of faith, we must learn to be comfortable, not lackadaisical, we must learn to be valuable, not "what's in it for me." We must become intentional in the two worlds we live, in God's Kingdom and the worlds commerce! We don't have much time. The clock is ticking.

### **Which of the following statements do you identify with the most?**

- **I am tired of juggling two worlds**- Work says my faith is strictly personal and to leave it at home. And, pretty much from my Christian culture, it has told me that working for the world is a waste, give it up, find something more "spiritual."
  - My work and my church are in two different places.
  - We speak two different languages.
  - They both demand my allegiance.
- **I need my work to have more meaning**- I want my life to count. Who doesn't? I don't want it to be a waste. I often question the value of what I do. I look back each week and I see little that will last for eternity.
- **I need a clear picture of what being a Christian on the job looks like**- I know that my faith should influence my work. I just don't understand how to make that happen. I know that I'm supposed to be a follower of Christ everywhere I go but I need someone to spell it out for me, what does that look like? How do you do it?
  - Howard Hendricks once said, "How do you convince a world that God is alive? By His aliveness in your life, by His work in producing reality in your experience."
- **I need a faith that makes a difference in my life and my job**- I am committed to His being Lord of all that I am. Everyday I face the daunting challenges of navigating my life around minefields of obstacles, knowing that each one of them could sink my career, destroy my family and ruin my testimony for Christ. I know I cannot miss them all with out the help of the Holy Spirit in my life. I need all the help I can get and I want my life to count!
- **I want to bring my two worlds together**- I want my church and my work to be equally affective and equally fruitful. I want positive eternal consequences in all my labors, not just in one. I want to be encouraged to take my call of God into the whole world. I not only want to build a bridge from one world to the other but to assist others in building the same bridges.

### **Anointed For Business**

Ed Silvos has written a book, *Anointed for Business*, that typifies four types of Christians in the workplace. He cites these four categories, ([www.intheworkplace.com](http://www.intheworkplace.com)):

**Level One: The Christian who is in survival mode.** This is a person who has no purpose or zeal in their work or life.

*“So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless.”*

Ecclesiastes 2:20-23

In a survey done by the Gallup organization in 1983 they measured the work habits of church going people compared to non-church going people. What they found was no significant difference between the morality and ethics of non-believers and Christians. Christians were as likely to steal company supplies, cheat on taxes and call in sick as the non-Christian. Category 1 is a large segment of the Christian population.

**Level Two: The Christian who is living by Christian principles.** Interestingly enough, these Christians live by Christian principles as a cultural process of order rather than a healing act of faith. This type of Christian depends on the logic and reasoning of applying the “rules” of God's Word in every situation rather than living by the power of the Holy Spirit to be led by God.

*“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.”*

Galatians 5:18

**Level Three: The Christian who is living by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

*“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father””*

Romans 8:14-16

The key characteristic of this level is best exemplified as one who has a heart toward God that hears the voice of God in every aspect of their life. They understand that their life in Christ is a result of the love of God born in their hearts. They understand the grace of God and relate to God in loving obedience. These Christians know the importance of developing a heart toward God through prayer, study of the Word of God and obedience. They realize these are the three core ingredients to experiencing the power of God in their lives. They live alive in the darkest areas of life.

**Level Four: The Christian who is transforming their workplace for Christ.** It is manifesting the **Kingdom of God on this earth, which is mentioned 70 times in scripture.** This Christian is one who is transforming their workplace for Christ. Level 4 Christianity is a byproduct or fruit of Level 3. You can only transform your workplace if you are moving in the power of the Holy Spirit.

*“This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven””*

Matthew 6:9-10

One businessman who barely made his flight sat in his assigned seat in economy

class. As the doors shut, he suddenly heard his name called out. He was being informed that he was being upgraded to first class. He never flew this airline so he wondered how in the world he would get upgraded. However, he gladly accepted.

He went to his seat which was occupied by a lady who wanted to exchange seats. This businessman happily agreed. He moved a row back next to an executive who seemed to be very irritated. He was well dressed and it was obvious that he probably was a very successful and wealthy. This businessman realized that God was allowing there to be a supernatural influence of some sort and he pondered what God might do with this arrangement. He wanted to move in a supernatural dimension in his walk with God and speaking into other's lives. "Lord, tell me something about this man so that he would know that it was You who knew him" he quietly prayed. Just then the words "finance" and then "financial services" popped into his mind. Now, he had to decide whether this was God answering his prayer or was it just his own thoughts? Stepping into the supernatural he decided to risk it and go for it. Turning to the man "I understand you are in financial services". The irritated executive looked at him and said, "Yes I am, how in the world would YOU know that?" He was amazed himself at God's work but asked "Do you really want to know how I know that?" "Yes, I would." Doug said "The Lord told me" "What?" the man replied "Well, when I sat down I began to pray for you and I asked God to tell me something about you. God told me that you were specifically in financial services."

The man, startled and not sure what to make of this began a conversation. It turns out the man is the CEO of one of the largest financial services company in the US - a 32 billion dollar company with global influence. He shared the rest of the flight with the man about the integration of faith with work and business. The man did not accept Christ. But he experienced a touch of the Kingdom of God in a very personal way that may be a stepping stone for him coming into the Kingdom in the future. It was a supernatural seed-planting encounter. At this level, the supernatural is part of the normal Christian life.

### **Jeremiah Lanphier**

Jeremiah Lanphier was a businessman in New York City who asked God to do something significant in his life in 1857. In a small darkened room, in the back of one of New York City's lesser churches, a man prayed alone. His request of God was simple, but earth-shattering: "What will You have me to do?"

He was a man approaching midlife without a wife or family, but he had financial means. He made a decision to reject the "success syndrome" that drove the city's businessmen and bankers. God used this businessman to turn New York City's commercial empire on its head. He began a businessmen's prayer meeting on September 23, 1857. The meetings began slowly, but within a few months, 20 noonday meetings were convening daily throughout the city. The New York Tribune and the New York Herald issued articles of revival. It had become the city's biggest news. Now a full-fledged revival, it moved outside New York. By spring of 1858, 2,000 met daily in Chicago's Metropolitan Theatre, and in Philadelphia, the meetings mushroomed into a four-month long tent meeting. Meetings were held in Baltimore, Washington, Cincinnati, Chicago, New Orleans, and Mobile. Thousands met to pray because one

man stepped out. Annus Mirabilis, the year of national revival, had begun. This was an extraordinary move of God through one man. It was unique because the movement was lead by businessmen, a group long considered the least prone to any form of evangelical fervor, and it had started on Wall Street, the most unlikely of all places to begin.

### **R.G. LeTourneau**

R.G. LeTourneau, a businessman from the United States, wrestled with the secular versus full-time Christian work idea. LeTourneau was a successful businessman in the early 1900s that recounts the turning point in his understanding of how God desires to use business for His glory. His pastor one day said to him, "You know, brother LeTourneau, God needs businessmen as well as preachers and missionaries." "Those were the words that guided my life ever since," said LeTourneau. "I repeat them in public at every opportunity because I have discovered that many men have the same mistaken idea I had of what it means to serve the Lord. My idea was if a man was going all out for God, he would have to be a preacher, or evangelist, or a missionary, or what we call a full-time Christian worker. I didn't realize that a layman could serve the Lord as well as a preacher. I left the parsonage in sort of a daze. If God needed businessmen, he could certainly find a lot better material than a dirt-mover with a lot of debts piled up in the garage business. But I said, 'All right, if that is what God wants me to be, I'll try to be His businessman.'" LeTourneau later became known for his generosity for giving 90% of his income to Christian causes.

### **Conclusion:**

God wants us as Christians to live a life (including our work-life) that puts Him at the center, that subordinates our will to His as we work in the Biblical manner commissioned by Paul. God never expected us to live a dualistic life, split-personality here on this earth, "spiritual" and "secular." We were never meant to attend church on Sunday while living independent of Him the other six days of the week. Rather, God wants our faith and our life to be effective, productive, even fruitful all seven days of the week.