



'Living Life Together'

Working 9-5... With A Purpose

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Today in our series 'Living Life Together' we want to look at that lovely topic of work. I know that some of you love your job, some of you live at your job and for others it takes all your courage to get up in the morning and wrestle your way through the day at your job. A number of years ago when Kathy was putting me through my Masters Degree she had a horrible job at a hardware store. The games they played the things they said to her, and the way they treated her made it very hard to make it through the day. Then there was this particular Thursday that they did some terrible things to her, all the way home she vented and she cried, telling me what they had so unfairly done to her. We knew we needed to do something, so we went to a show that just happened to be playing called "Working 9 to 5" in which 3 ladies (Dolly Parton, Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin) all secretaries take over a company by kidnapping a boss and doing those things to him which every disgruntled employee wants to do to their boss. I remember watching Kathy, watch the movie with tears of laughter running down her cheeks, thinking that with a boss like hers, God's timing and this show was perfect. Maybe you have had a boss like that, maybe you understand why Jonny Paycheck sold 2 million copies of "Take this job and shove it, I ain't working here no more".

Sometimes work can feel like slavery? Actually, in *Titus 2* Paul was writing to slaves concerning their work situation. Historically, Paul is writing during a time where 50% of everyone in Rome were slaves, and ¾ of those in Greece were slaves. While some were slaves like you see in the movies pulling oars on ships many who had been captured by the Roman army entered slavery due to a debt they had brought upon themselves while others were born into slavery. Many did jobs similar to jobs you may do today. A slave could be a domestic servant, the key accountant for their masters or the teacher of the family's children, many earning some money they used to pay for their freedom from slavery. Then in the middle of this situation Christianity began to have an impact. The result was that as (*1 Corinthians 11*) mentions that there were churches where both the slaves and masters had become Christ followers. And on a particular Sunday the slave could be preaching to his master and then they would sit around the same table and have communion together. As you can imagine this began to have an impact on their relationship, how they worked together during the week, and eventually on their culture. So Paul wanted to make sure that the slaves who followed Jesus as workers did their jobs as Christians. And that their attitude was right.

Now, while none of us here, are slave's, I believe that it is important as people who work for a living, periodically look at their attitude and work habits because we are Christians. I say that because in February 2007 the Conference Board came out with the results of a survey which claimed that 50% of all workers were increasingly unhappy with their jobs. Twenty years ago a similar survey said that 61% said they enjoyed their jobs. The largest number of those who were unhappy were those in their 20's, but was also seen in many people with high paying jobs. But, you might say 'well that makes sense because work is a result of the curse after sin entered the world' so it only makes sense that many people don't like their jobs. Actually, that is false, for scripture says that Adam worked in the Garden of Eden before sin entered the world and loved his job. When sin came, work however changed for *'the ground was cursed...'* and work became harder. But don't miss that God desires that work can also be a place where fulfillment and impact can be made. For in *Ecclesiastes 5:18, 19* *'Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor, and be happy in his work, this is a gift from God'*. That is not saying that every job in your life or every season in a job will be enjoyable but that God's desire is that in our work we will find fulfillment and make an impact on others through our jobs. *Titus 2:9-12*

There Is Only One Type of Call:

A short while ago, I had the honor of joining seven of our business men at a conference for men and women who work in the market place. In our group were insurance brokers, managers of multi-million dollar businesses, land developers, engineers, high level salesmen and folk who worked in the oil industry. Our first speaker blew me away with what he said, and I think we need to begin here as we talk about work. He began by telling a story about how he was powerfully saved, and very shortly after that decided to give his whole life to God and so he went off to Bible School.

As he neared graduation he just didn't find that he felt called to full time pastoral ministry. He found that hard, because his older brother, who was his hero, was a pastor. And because he felt, that if you wanted to make a real difference with your life, and then you needed to be in full time ministry. That he said this *'that meant that because I wasn't going to be on the A-Team (pastor) then I was relegated to what I felt was the 2nd string of ministry. And my job was to make money so I could pay the pastors and church leaders to do their important work, as well as do things in the church, again, so the A-string people could do their job'*. Now, this guy was no slouch, he was a top mover and shaker in the NHL dealing with marketing and player franchising. Here he was, a top executive, doing fascinating work, making great money, involved in things in his church and having a real personal walk with God, and yet he felt like he was living as a sub-par Christian in his walk because he wasn't in 'full time Christian ministry' because he wasn't a pastor.

I heard that and it took my breath away. For he was saying that many market place people believe that they aren't in full time Christian ministry because they aren't being paid full time in the church. And that same idea has led others to believe that there is an A team and then a 2nd string who feel their only call is to just financially back up the 'full time people'. I want to shout out that in scripture do you find Jesus calling anyone to follow him part time. Jesus calls us to give our whole lives to him and our entire lives to him. We need to hear that full time ministry is about ATTITUDE not a POSITION. When Paul talked about his calling, if he was preaching or making tents the word he used to describe himself was the same (*Titus 1:1*). He was a 'skivvy' a slave or a servant of Jesus. He saw himself as the *'property of another'* that his life (that included his 9 to 5 work) was God's time, God's life. And right beside that are Peter's words in *1 Peter 2:9* *"But you are a Royal Priesthood, a holy nation, God's possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light"*.

You and I are God's possessions. We are his Royal Priests; he was on the call committee who called us into the MINISTRY, some as pastors others as Market place people but all equally called by the Call committee of ONE who is God himself. That is why I am so passionate about how we Set People aside for the Gospel ministry after their Baptism. I believe with all my heart your call is just as if not more profound than my call to Brentview. Only you didn't have an induction service where others around you laid hands on you and said in the IT business, on the campus at Sait, in the business towers up town, in your classrooms at your school, as you clean that room, as you build that house or run that electrical wire, as you rub shoulders with other policemen, firemen, students, nurses, musicians, friends over coffee, at the soccer field, politicians or multi-millionaires. Don't ever forget that: God has had to work very hard to place you in the circles you are now working, He has had to work very hard to get some of those people in the same room or shop with you, and that He has ordained you as a minister of the gospel in order to make a difference in your sphere of influence, and that you are on the A team because that is where He placed you.

You are a Market Place minister who will meet people in situations that a full time clergy member would never have an opportunity to meet. You have learned the language of the company or the trade (for similar to a foreign language every job has it's own inside language and its own way of knowing who is 'on the inside' enough to know the unique issues that come with the job). Being an insider can speak into their lives like no one else ever could. Because of that you are in a unique place with a unique opportunity to help Jesus 'Kingdom Come' into that area of city and possibly of the world. Through you they will have a chance to see God's heart turning toward them.

Here is where it gets even more profound, for as you do that you will have a chance to leave a legacy in and through your work in the market place that could only happen if you, under God's calling are exactly where you are today, doing what you are called to do in the sphere of influence God has placed you in.

Let me go through a clip of the movie "Amazing Grace". It is based on the true story of 'William Wilberforce' a man who realized that he had been placed in the British Parliament by God himself, to live out his calling in the Market place, to make an impact on people and for God. Which in the end led to the abolition of the slave trade. Being 'a politician he saw that he had been placed in a unique situation to be salt and light, to bring joy and freedom and leave a legacy that would change history. While we may see this as living life on a grand scheme, I'll bet Wilberforce would tell us that he was just being faithful to his calling as 'A minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ' in the job he had been given by God and having an influence for God with the people he worked with. Remember there is only one type of calling, and it is to be Jesus followers who have influence in

the exact spot he has placed you. While our jobs may change over our life time the call will always stay the same and we must remember that full time ministry is about ATTITUDE not a POSTION.

How to Stay on Mission

Grab your bibles and let's go back to (*Titus 2*) The reality is that some times our jobs overwhelm us and at other times our jobs are so under-whelming it is hard to stay on Mission as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ at our work. But remember that Paul was writing to slaves, many in a more difficult situation than some of us face today. So let's look at some of the principles Paul gives that I think transcend the different circumstances we face.

1. Take Jesus to Work.

When you look at the list of things these folk are suppose to do at work, I think they can be summed up very easily by saying when you go to work take Jesus to work with you. It is so easy to segment our lives. There is the spiritual part which happens at Church on Sunday morning and in our small group and then the 'real part' we live out during the week.

When I sit with some of you and hear about who you work with I have to admit I get excited for the kingdom of God. Some of you sit around the table with people who influence the future of our province and our country. Others work with people who have never come in contact with anyone who has had a good marriage or had someone ever care for them at all. Some of you will have a chance to be the only Christian some world leaders will ever meet. And some of you work with people for whom your one line of care will keep them from suicide or doing something that will change their lives in a horrible way. When you get up in the morning ask God to whisper in your ear what you need to say and do so that 'His Kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven" in your work place and in the world.

2. When you live honorably at work you honor God.

Paul is saying in your present situation, with the boss you have and the co-workers you have live in a way that is honorable and respectful. For as you do, you honor God. The idea of 'being subject to your boss" is the idea of not being the one who sits around the water cooler and stirs up trouble among the other workers. We all know that one person can change the tone of a church or a company. Be that person who helps the crew and the office to move in a positive way.

3. Serve Jesus right where you are

I believe that God wants us to enjoy our work, and of course that may mean at times we look for that new job that gives us more challenge and fulfillment. But, I also know that all of us will go through times when due to circumstances or the strong call of God to stay at the job we are at, that it will mean being faithful while staying at a job that is hard and some times hard on us. Jesus wore a tool belt for many years and was probably a part of an insurance renovation crew who cleaned up after the foolish man built his house on the sand. It was while being faithful in that dirty job that he picked up a story which has changed 100,000's of people's lives as they heard it. The point is, during those times when the jobs are tough ask for God's strength and live like a believer during those tough times, in faithfulness for God's sake.

I had a friend named Larry who was part owner in a car rental company in White court, when out of the blue his partner lost another company that he owned which in turn pushed Larry into bankruptcy. It wasn't Larry's fault and bankruptcy allows you to walk away from your debts. But Larry decided that he wouldn't leave that town until all the bill had been paid back. And that is exactly what he did. It was a tough time for Larry but he served his Jesus right were he was 'stuck' and others saw the heart of Jesus through it all.

4. Be 100% trustworthy

Remember the passage was written to slaves, some of whom were their master's book keepers and could easily embezzle a little money every so often to pay for their freedom. It would have been so easy to justify why they could 'skim a little off the top', but Paul said live with integrity and honesty. Johnny Cash had

this song about how he stole car parts from where he worked at a Detroit assembly plant “one piece at a time’ in his lunch box. While we laugh at the song, I know from working in the mine it was amazing what walked out of the front gate every day. As Christians, we are called to live with integrity and honesty, by not stealing and by giving an honest days work for an honest day’s wage. And be 100% trustworthy.

Maybe, a greater issue among many of us is that often we give too much to the company and rob our family and spouse of time, and being available for them as well. Remember, robbery is robbery and we who are passionate about our work need to fight for balance. At times we may need to empower our spouse to wave their arms, and remind us of how our priority needs to be those we love as well.

Paul concludes these comments on how to stay on mission as God’s men and women at work in vs. 10 by saying “In every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive”. The word used for attractive in the Greek is a word every husband will understand. Have you ever been to a jewelry store and watch how when they lay out a necklace or beautiful ring? They lay it out on a beautiful velvet cloth so that every diamond or ruby will be seen in its best light. Paul is saying that because there is only one type of call for us Christ followers, for we are all on God’s a team. Live in such a way, at work, that the beauty and sparkle of Jesus will be seen in how we work, how we interact and how we live. And in living this way we will leave a legacy at that job, job sight or board room of the beauty and the way Jesus can sparkle in a life, lived well for Jesus.