

Os Hillman: Your Work Is Your Ministry

Imagine for a moment that Jesus has just completed his three years of training with the disciples. He has been crucified and is now commissioning the 12 to go into the world and disciple the nations. Now imagine him also making this statement to them.

“Dear brothers, it is now time for you to share what you have learned from me. However, as you share with others be sure that you keep what I taught you separate from your work life. The principles I have shared with you only apply in situations outside your work life. Do not make them fit into this context. The miracles you saw in me can only be done in certain situations outside work life. Keep this in mind when thinking about praying for the sick or the lost. These truths will not work in the marketplace.”

Does that sound preposterous? It may, but this is the mindset of many in our world today. The spiritual does not mix with the everyday world of the workplace.

“What happens on Monday has no relationship to what takes place on Sunday,” they say. These are the thoughts expressed so much in our day and time, although they are not expressed in such direct terms. Let’s think more about this idea. When Jesus came to earth, how did He come? He came as a carpenter; a man given to work with his hands and to provide an honest service to his fellow man. He did not come as a priest, although He was both a King and a Priest (Rev. 1:6 KJV).

When it came time to recruit those for whom the church would be founded, He chose 12 men from the marketplace—a fisherman, a tax collector, a doctor, and so on. They all came from the marketplace. Interestingly enough, none of his disciples were

priests in the Jewish church, a natural place to recruit from if you were going to start a religious movement. Jesus called them all from the marketplace of life. Was this any accident that Jesus called men and women from the marketplace to play such a vital role in His mission? I think not.

When God created the earth, He demonstrated something right up front to human beings. He believed in work. He was above all else, the Master Creator. He was an artist, designer, strategic planner, organizer, project developer, assessor, zoologist, biologist, chemist, linguist, programmer, materials specialist, engineer, and waste management technician. This work did not end when He created man, but was only the beginning in His continued care for mankind. Whether we call our work “sacred” or “secular,” all legitimate work reflects the activity of God. God is honored when we work with the goal of reflecting His life through our life and work. So why and how did society begin to draw a separation between faith and work?

The Great Divide

If you were to conduct a survey on an average city street if people thought religion belonged in the workplace, chances are high that they would say no. Most people today see no relevance between God and work in today’s fast-paced marketplace. Why is this? Why do many Christians even believe this? Well, it goes back to the early years before the protestant reformation.

Os Guinness, in his book, *The Call*, provides us the necessary history of how we got to this segmented view of work and life:

The truth of calling means that for followers of Christ, “everyone, everywhere, and in everything” lives the whole of life as a response to God’s call. Yet, this holistic character of calling has often been distorted to become a form of dualism that elevates the spiritual at the expense of the

secular. This distortion may be called the “Catholic Distortion,” because it rose in the Catholic era and is the majority position in the Catholic tradition.

Protestants, however, cannot afford to be smug. For one thing, countless Protestants have succumbed to the Catholic distortion as Wilberforce nearly did. Ponder for example, the fallacy of the contemporary Protestant term “full-time Christian service”—as if those not working for churches or Christian organizations are only part-time in the service of Christ. For another thing, Protestant confusion about calling has led to a “Protestant distortion” that is even worse. This is a form of dualism in a secular direction that not only elevates the secular at the expense of the spiritual, but also cuts it off from the spiritual altogether.”^[1]

Therefore, it is understandable why we are where we are today. Over many centuries, we have been trained to believe that the two worlds of spiritual and secular are to be separated. Now it is easier to understand why the separation of church and state is such a debated issue.

Jesus' and Paul's Ministries

Of 132 public appearances in New Testament, 122 were in the marketplace. Of 52 parables Jesus told, 45 had a workplace context. Of 40 miracles in the book of Acts, 39 were in the marketplace. 54 percent of Jesus' reported teaching ministry arose out of issues posed by others in the scope of daily life experience.

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.

Jesus and Paul saw their work as ministry. Paul wrote: “And whatever you do,

do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that

from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance;
for you serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:23).

*"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden
to work it and take care of it" (Gen. 2:15).*

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Change Agent and TGIF Today God Is First, a free email
devotional.