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Bill Peel
Dallas, Texas

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INTRODUCTION



“I want my life to count. I don’t want to look back at the end and think I wasted it.”

Most of us have heard this sentiment expressed many times. Many of us, the authors included, have expressed it ourselves. The desire to make a positive difference—to be significant—before God is a healthy desire. Those in the church, evangelicals in particular, define this significance largely in terms of their efforts to share the gospel—to spread the Word, to see others at home and abroad come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, few have experienced much success in this area of their Christian lives. Efforts to share Christ seem uncomfortable, awkward, ineffective, perhaps even counterproductive. The formulas and methods for sharing the gospel seem mechanical, unrealistic. They may look good on paper, but they just don’t seem to be working. Thus many, despite their desire to carry out this biblical responsibility, have simply given up.

If you have questions about how to share your faith—how to “go public”—this book will help. You will see how the seemingly insignificant words you speak and actions you take can have great significance before God and in the lives of the people you encounter.

WITNESS THE WAYS

As you will soon see, our focus is on our culture’s ripest mission field—the workplace. You will encounter others who have gone public in their places of work whose testimonies can instruct and inspire. One such person is George. I (Bill) sat across the table from George as he finished the paperwork for the purchase of my wife’s fiftieth-birthday present. He is a jeweler of Lebanese descent whose grandfatherly personality, exotic accent, and love of Jesus make my heart smile every time I visit his store. I asked, “George, what’s the favorite part of your job?” He quickly replied, “Helping young couples find a beautiful ring that is just right for them.” He explained how, as he

does his work, he looks for opportunities to impart some small bit of biblical wisdom about relationships. He pulled out a note from his desk drawer and read a few lines a young bride had recently written:

Thank you so much for helping us find the beautiful ring and making it possible for us to purchase it. Of all the salespeople who helped us, you seemed to really care about us. And thank you for the advice about marriage. Dick and I have decided we need to find a church to attend. Thanks for your encouragement.

And there is John, a caretaker. Before leaving on a business trip to England, John's boss gave him final instructions: "Take good care of my family, John." The graying caretaker smiled and said, "I will, and I'll pray for your success." The executive paused, looked back, and said, "John, I don't know what I'd do without you. There's no one on this island I trust more than you."

It hadn't always been that way. A great sea of mistrust separates the cultures that John and his employer come from. One was raised in a privileged environment, the son of six generations of plantation owners on the island of Barbados; the other was the son of slaves. When John began working for his wealthy boss ten years ago, he was charged with maintaining the perimeter of the property. He was not allowed to go anywhere near the house. Each year John's hard work and godly character earned him more responsibility. Today John oversees the entire property, entrusted with not only the house and grounds but also with the well-being of the family when his boss is away on business. John told me he prays daily for this man and his family. "God has allowed me to win my way into his house. Now I pray that God will open their hearts so they'll come to know Jesus."



These followers of Jesus in the workplace are passionate about their faith. They love to talk to people about Jesus. But their motive is not to proselytize. Rather it is to discover what God is already doing in someone's life and to join that effort. It is to show Jesus to those with whom they work, not to sell Jesus or force him on others. It is to help others become new creations, not to coerce people to "change religions."

A NEW WAY TO LOOK AT EVANGELISM

Our proposition is simple: For most Christians these days, the workplace—not the church or a foreign mission field—is the primary setting for effective kingdom work. We believe this proposition to be both biblically and historically true. When the church has allowed people to set their focus inside the four walls, it has tended to dwindle in size. But when the church has launched people outward into the world, encouraging them to *go public* with their faith, it has invariably grown. The early church is a prime example. It grew from a handful of disciples in the A.D. 30s to over half a million people by the end of the first century. This growth didn't occur as a result of the proliferation of full-time missionaries; it happened because ordinary followers of Jesus took their faith to the workplace and lived it out in their ordinary everyday encounters. Early Christians chatted about the gospel in bakeries, shops, marketplaces, and barracks. From the dusty streets of Jerusalem to the soggy outposts of the British Isles, these early followers of Jesus spread the gospel gladly and with an enthusiasm that could never be produced by wage or sense of duty.

At times God provides other avenues for spreading the gospel. But we contend that the primary historical means God uses to spread the Good News and extend the influence of faith is to “send it to work” with ordinary people. This was our premise in 1995 when we teamed up to develop “The Saline Solution,” with the goal of teaching doctors how to talk about their faith with their patients. Ironically, neither of us considered himself a gifted evangelist. Both of us have had thorough training to aggressively present the gospel message to people we didn't know. And even though we had a great desire to share our faith, we broke into a cold sweat when faced with the opportunity to talk about Jesus with non-Christians. What emerged from our collaboration was serious business—a new model of evangelism, a model of spiritual influence that doctors who live under intense time pressure and significant ethical limitations can use every day with every patient. As we taught this approach to doctors, many of whom have a deep passion for spiritual impact, we regularly heard the same three comments: (1) “I feel a load of guilt has been taken off my shoulders,” (2) “I can do this!” and (3) “You need to adapt this for other professions besides health care.”

This is our goal for this book. We believe the *going public* approach to offering spiritual truth to a lost world is biblical. We believe it will change the way Christians view evangelism and also the way non-Christians view Christians.

As we examined both Scripture and our own experience, we stumbled on a concept that is often ignored by modern evangelistic methods: Evangelism is not an event but a process. That is, evangelism is less about imparting a set of facts about God and humankind and asking a person to make a decision to receive Jesus as Savior on the spot than it is about a process—usually a prolonged process—that begins by preparing or *cultivating* someone’s heart to receive that message.

To put it another way, evangelism is organic, not mechanical. Interestingly, the Bible consistently chooses an agrarian model to describe evangelism. Evangelism, after all, is a process comparable to growing a crop: cultivation + planting → harvest. It takes time to cultivate a relationship in which seeds of biblical truth can be planted and can grow, resulting in an eventual harvest of eternal life.

We believe that the bubble has burst for an aggressive, nonrelational approach to evangelism. It’s time to go back to the farm for our model. Like growing a crop, evangelism takes intentional work over an extended period of time. There’s nothing instant about it. For people who love to “close the deal,” such “preliminaries” may seem like a waste of time. But we strongly believe that people today have no more desire to hear from a stranger about how to receive eternal life than they do to invest all their money in the next cold-call stock tip. Skepticism about Christian faith is as prominent today as it has ever been. This is a significant barrier to belief that must be recognized, addressed, and overcome if we expect people to come to faith. To do so takes time.

The journey of faith consists of a multitude of small, incremental decisions (many mini-decisions) regarding spiritual realities. Thus the greatest privilege in the world—being part of someone’s journey to Jesus—can begin with something as simple as having a cup of coffee with a colleague, listening compassionately when a customer shares why she’s had a rough week, or doing something beyond the call of duty for a boss or employee who’s under stress. As you read and

interact with the ideas in this book, you will see that small actions and simple attempts to serve others in the course of everyday life have a bigger impact than the “spiritual interruptions” we sometimes seek to orchestrate out of a sense of guilt.

You will also discover that, although you play an important role, it is ultimately *God* who is at work behind the scenes to create opportunities for meaningful discussions about spiritual topics. Our job as God’s representatives is not to try to “start a fire in the rain” but to discover where he is already at work and to pour fuel on that fire.

We regularly meet men and women who do not consider themselves evangelists by any stretch of the imagination. Yet they love God deeply and want their lives to count for his kingdom. Our prayer is that you, our readers, will not only recognize the incredible influence you can have right where you are but that you will also experience the unparalleled joy of seeing the people with whom you work come to know Jesus. Oh, and we’d also love to see you set free from guilt and learn to say, with God-given confidence, “I can do this!”

SPIRITUAL ECONOMICS



In 1921, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was stricken with polio, a disease he struggled with until his death in April 1945. On the tenth anniversary of FDR's death, Dr. Jonas Salk announced that the polio vaccine he had developed was ready for use by the general public. Over thirty years later, in the late 1980s, thousands of doses of oral polio vaccine were being stored in drug company refrigerators. Yet hundreds of thousands of polio cases were still being reported around the globe. The supply was plentiful. The problem was a failure of distribution.

In stepped Rotary International, which set a lofty goal—to eradicate polio from the world. The organization raised more than \$200 million to buy enough vaccine to meet the entire global need. But they, too, confronted the same massive problem—distribution. Working in conjunction with the World Health Organization, Rotarians developed a strategy that called for identifying the most needy countries and designating “national vaccination days.” Thousands of health officials and volunteers vaccinated entire countries against polio in a matter of days or weeks. By 2001, only 500 cases of polio were reported worldwide. By addressing the challenge of distribution, the Rotarians have saved thousands from premature death or disability.

Basic economic principles revolve around supply, demand, and distribution. A business enterprise may have abundant capital, solid management, and a worthy product. None of it will matter even a little bit if the enterprise cannot address the challenge of *distribution*. No matter how strong the demand or how abundant the supply in the warehouse, if the enterprise cannot get the product into the hands of the consumer, its demise is inevitable.

Many of the world's problems are a result of failure to meet the challenge of distribution. While the granaries in many developed

nations overflow, millions go to bed hungry each night. We've all read the accounts of how rival factions in various Third World countries prevent grain from reaching starving people. The problem is *distribution*—figuring out how to bridge the gap between abundant resources and desperate demand. Tons of much-needed food and water sat in warehouses in Umm Qasr in the spring of 2003 while Iraqis went without basic necessities because Iraq's distribution system was virtually non-existent.

One of the key components to America's prosperity is its distribution system, that is, our ability to identify a need, develop a product or service to meet the need, and then deliver it to the customer quickly and efficiently. Although Sam Walton (the richest man in America until his death in 1992) has been called a retailer, the true key to the success of Wal-Mart is automated distribution. It efficiently delivers goods to its more than 3,200 facilities in the United States and passes on the savings to its more than 100 million weekly customers.¹

THE SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE

This same dynamic applies to the realm of spiritual resources. All over the world, people are looking as never before for spiritual answers and resources. As human solutions continue to fail, more and more people are seeking divine help. Vaclav Havel, president of the Czech Republic, has said, "Communism has left a vacuum in the hearts of men." Stories of spiritual hunger from the former Soviet bloc pour into the West.

But by no means do the spiritually oppressed in the former Soviet Union have a corner on spiritual need. In 1995 researcher and futurist George Barna estimated that the number of people in the United States who do not have a relationship with Jesus would reach 235 million by 2000,² making the U.S. home to the world's fourth largest non-Christian population.

Americans are not so much antispiritual as they are indifferent to religious institutions. In 2000, Barna reported that the number of unchurched adults had been on the rise for three years, leaving one out of three adults unchurched.³ Nevertheless, there is more openness to spiritual answers today than in previous decades. Two-thirds of

unchurched adults want to experience God in a deeper and more tangible and significant way.⁴ But Americans are not automatically turning to the church for this experience, as did their grandfathers and grandmothers. Instead they are trying counterfeit spiritual remedies.

THE SUPPLY

If you know the God of the Bible, you certainly know there is no problem on the supply side of the spiritual economics equation. “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine,” wrote the apostle Paul (Ephesians 3:20–21), “according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

God’s resources are limitless; his grace and love have no boundaries. And he longs to pour out this spiritual wealth on desperate and spiritually needy people. Paul wrote to the Christians in Philippi, “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

Given that we worship a God of *unlimited abundance*, the spiritual problem is clearly *not* a matter of supply. This leaves only one alternative: distribution. Simply put, the ways in which we’ve been delivering the spiritual goods have not been working. The idea, for example, that we can open a “distribution center” on some street corner and expect those in spiritual need to come to us has not worked. In fact, God did not intend for it to work. God is not in the retail business. He has chosen one-on-one mass distribution as his method to distribute his grace.

GOD’S DISTRIBUTION METHOD

It’s fascinating to consider that, of all the methods the Creator of the universe could have used to spread his grace to the world, he chose to use men and women—ordinary Christians—not a few select, elite spokespersons. As he departed this earth, Jesus told his followers, “And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

God calls you and me as his witnesses, and we do not need to search hard to find a mission field. Our mission field is the place

where we already spend most of our time, namely, our workplace. By being an ambassador for Jesus in the workplace, each of us can become a pipeline of God's grace to people who would never darken the doorway of a church. Now *that* is distribution!

God wants to use us to accomplish something so grand we can hardly imagine its significance. For each person this *something to be accomplished* is totally unique. Sound daunting? Relax! God has given you everything you need.

EVANGELISM AS A PROCESS

Many Christians of our generation were taught mechanical, aggressive (some would say intrusive) methods of evangelism that produced minimal results, despite the claims made by the organizations espousing

The longer I am in business, the more passionate I become to be the hands, the feet extended of Christ. I see so many people who have not known God, don't think about God, don't talk about God. I want to provoke people to at least think about God. I want them to experience the love of Christ through me.

ANNE BEILER, FOOD SERVICE

these methods. I (Bill), motivated partly by guilt, took part in several evangelism seminars or courses, but the results became predictable. I would get inspired, go out and try what I'd learned, fail, stop trying—and feel even more guilty. I finally concluded that I just wasn't gifted to share my faith with others, which made me feel like a substandard Christian.

In the medical arena, I (Walt) found that an aggressive approach to evangelism was not only uncomfortable (both for me and my patients) but was also largely unfruitful. One day I just quit trying, content to consider my practice as merely a secular "tentmaking" operation while carrying on my ministry in the context of church life. Yet my heart was troubled. Every day I saw twenty to thirty non-Christian patients who desperately needed both physical and spiritual healing, and I came to believe I had nothing to offer them in the latter area.

The problem was that, as with many Christians, we (both authors) thought of evangelism as an *event*—a point in time when we mechan-

ically recite the facts of the gospel message and encourage non-Christians to place their faith in Jesus. It was liberating for each of us to discover that evangelism, according to the Bible, is not an event but a *process*. Evangelism is organic—a lot more like farming than selling. This concept radically changed our lives and our ministries—Walt’s in medicine and Bill’s in professional ministry.

Event-centered evangelism defines success as getting a person to pray to receive Jesus as personal Savior. But when evangelism is seen as an organic process, this “decision” is only the climactic step of a long process that God uses to draw a person to himself. God’s process typically enlists a number of people with a variety of gifts—each playing a different but vital role in helping someone take a step closer to Jesus. Accepting God’s gift of salvation—obviously the goal of evangelism—is dependent on many steps before it. Bill Kraftson of Search Ministries observes that each Christian who encounters a non-Christian is like a link in a chain. “It’s great to be the last link in the chain,” says Kraftson, “but it’s not more important than any other link. We just need to make sure we’re not the missing link.” Jim Petersen of the Navigators likewise views conversion as a process: “Few of us make it in one big decision. Instead, it’s a multitude of small choices—mini-decisions that a person makes toward Jesus.”⁵

THE DISTRIBUTION PROCESS

The Bible consistently employs an organic rather than a mechanical model to explain how God draws a person to himself. Paul uses the agrarian analogy in his passionate comments about the growing factions competing in the Corinthian church:

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.

1 Corinthians 3:5–9

After speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus uses the organic model to teach his disciples about the process of evangelism. The disciples were about to lead people to Jesus—or as he puts it, “reap” in a field that had previously been cultivated and planted by others:

Do you not say, “Four months more and then the harvest”? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying “One sows and another reaps” is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.

John 4:35–38

Jesus also uses an agrarian analogy to explain why some people respond to the word of God while others don’t:

A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Matthew 13:3–8

The seed—“the message about the kingdom” (Matthew 13:19)—falls on soils at varying stages of cultivation, representing the varying degrees of readiness of the human heart. The path—representing hard, uncultivated hearts—can’t receive God’s word. The rocky places and thorny soils—partially cultivated hearts—receive the words, but life can’t flourish. The good soil—well-cultivated hearts—brings forth an abundant harvest.

Jesus’ point is clear: A person’s journey toward a relationship with him and the experience of eternal life is a process—a long process.

And as with raising a crop, a lot of hard work is required before there is any talk of harvesting.

JESUS' GUIDE TO ORGANIC EVANGELISM

Based on an agrarian model, evangelism can be divided into four phases: cultivating, planting, harvesting, and multiplying. According to Jesus, the hard work of evangelism is not the harvest phase but the *cultivation* phase. Cultivation focuses on the soil of the human heart, which includes addressing emotional barriers. It requires our presence with non-Christians. The goal of cultivation is to help others begin to see the benefits of being a child of God. An important part of cultivation is to develop trust in the messenger, for if people don't trust us, they will never trust our message. Thus, the first step entails building relationships and then living in a way that creates trust. This does not mean we must live impeccable lives, which is something that can't be done anyway. But we can live authentically and honestly—demonstrating to others that we ourselves are in need of grace.

The *planting* phase addresses intellectual barriers—misconceptions, misinformation, and ignorance about God and the Christian faith. It requires thoughtful conversation as part of planting seeds of biblical truth, seeds designed to build an understanding of who Jesus is, what he wants from us, and what he wants to do for us. As we develop relationships with non-Christians and they become attracted to what Jesus is doing in us, we can begin to explain how Jesus has made, and continues to make, a difference in our lives. It begins slowly, with just enough truth to pique interest. As curiosity grows, so does the appetite for the truth. As non-Christians come to grips with spiritual truth, they are likely to discover significant discrepancies between the Bible and their way of thinking or philosophy of life. They'll need answers—presented patiently and humbly—to their intellectual questions.

The *harvesting* phase focuses on a person's will and its resistance to make a decision to trust Jesus. Even after someone's emotional and intellectual barriers have been broken down, the will remains. Men and women can neither think nor feel their way into God's kingdom. Though these elements are foundational, ultimately every human being must make a choice. Involvement during this phase requires

MICRODECISIONS OF FAITH⁶

DISCIPLE	Chooses to live by faith	+ 5	MULTIPLYING	<p style="text-align: center;">SPEAKS TO: THE WHOLE PERSON ADDRESSES: SOCIAL BARRIERS TO OVERCOME: ISOLATION BY: PARTICIPATION IN THE BODY GOAL: GROWTH ANSWERS: WILL I LIVE FOR CHRIST? EXAMPLES: JERUSALEM CHURCH (ACTS 2:41-47) THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH (ACTS 11:19-26)</p>
	Chooses to share faith	+ 4		
	Makes Christlike choices	+ 3		
	Joins in community life	+ 2		
	Assimilates God's Word	+ 1		
BELIEVER	Trusts in Christ	0	HARVESTING	<p style="text-align: center;">SPEAKS TO: THE WILL ADDRESSES: VOLITIONAL BARRIERS TO OVERCOME: INDECISION & UNWILLINGNESS TO CHANGE BY: PRAYER & PERSUASION GOAL: TRUST CHRIST ANSWERS: WILL I TRUST CHRIST? EXAMPLES: PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA (ACTS 26:1-29)</p>
	Turns from self-trust	- 1		
	Sees Christ as the answer	- 2		
	Recognizes spiritual need	- 3		
SEEKER	Considers the truth of the gospel	- 4	PLANTING	<p style="text-align: center;">SPEAKS TO: THE MIND ADDRESSES: INTELLECTUAL BARRIERS TO OVERCOME: IGNORANCE, MISCONCEPTIONS & ERROR BY: PRESENTATION GOAL: UNDERSTANDING ANSWERS: WHO IS JESUS? WHAT DOES HE WANT FROM ME? EXAMPLES: ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH (ACTS 8:26-39)</p>
	Understands the implications	- 5		
	Aware of the gospel	- 6		
	Recognizes relevance of the Bible	- 7		
SPECTATOR	Looks positively at the Bible	- 8	CULTIVATING	<p style="text-align: center;">SPEAKS TO: THE EMOTIONS ADDRESSES: EMOTIONAL BARRIERS TO OVERCOME: DENIAL, INDIFFERENCE, FEAR & ANTAGONISM BY: YOUR PRESENCE GOAL: ATTRACTION, TRUST YOU ANSWERS: WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME? EXAMPLES: WOMAN AT THE WELL (JOHN 4:4-30) NICODEMUS (JOHN 3:1-21) MATTHEW 13:1-23</p>
	Recognizes difference in the messenger	- 9		
	Aware of the messenger	- 10		
	Going his/her own way	- 11		
	Avoids the truth	- 12		
CYNIC				

prayer and continued conversation toward the goal of the person's receiving Jesus as Savior. In harvesting, we graciously persuade and consistently pray for God to draw our friend to himself.

The final phase, *multiplying*, entails implanting the new life into a community where it can grow and flourish. The goals of this phase are growth and reproduction. When new life is birthed, we need to give it proper care, ensuring that it has an environment that encourages growth and development toward maturity.

WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOUR WORKPLACE?

If our efforts to go public are to bear fruit, they must take into account contemporary cultural attitudes as well as realities in the twenty-first-century workplace. People are under pressure; schedules are tight. Each working environment is distinctive; relationships between and among supervisors and subordinates, or between employees and clients or patients, vary. A cookie-cutter approach to evangelism is doomed. In fact, some of the old gospel-sharing methods are unwise, if not flat-out unethical. A workable model for evangelism must respect the nonbeliever's integrity and vulnerability while also considering the professional's fiduciary responsibility.

As a younger Christian, I was much more aggressive about sharing my faith. Now I am much more aware that it is God's work. I am just trying to be faithful on a day-to-day basis. I am much more cautious, because the battle is severe, and if it ever becomes known organizationally that you have an agenda, you can get in trouble.

JACK ALEXANDER, TRAVEL
AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

We have found that when people who are not gifted evangelists overemphasize the harvesting phase, they produce more frustration than fruit. They may even further harden the soil of unbelieving hearts. However, when these same men and women exercise their God-given gifts in the cultivating phase of evangelism, they have many more planting and harvesting opportunities. Evangelism is organic. Although this may come as a surprise to some, it is no surprise to any farmer—or to God.

All of us who follow Jesus must think carefully about how we can best make him known in our own workplace, given its particular limitations and constraints. Some work environments afford greater freedom and flexibility to spend time talking about spiritual topics. Others (such as a doctor's office) are highly scheduled and restrictive, allowing virtually no time for prolonged conversations. Some work environments are even hostile with regard to spiritual talk. Those who have a fiduciary responsibility and hold a professional knowledge unavailable to those they serve must take great care not to exploit another's position or situation. Whatever your arena, and however aggressive your workplace may allow you to be, being a "religious jerk" is never appropriate!

Throughout history and today we have witnessed various models for evangelism. We have identified five.

The *proclamational evangelism* model features public preaching and announcing the truth to a large audience. The best-known proclamational evangelist of our time is Billy Graham. Proclamation is modeled in the New Testament by John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter, Stephen, and Paul—all of whom preached the gospel to audiences.

Confrontational evangelism occurs when someone initiates a conversation with an individual (usually a stranger) with the specific aim of leading the person to Jesus. The Bible includes a few examples of this kind of evangelism: Jesus with Nicodemus, Jesus with the Samaritan woman, and Philip with the Ethiopian eunuch. Campus Crusade for Christ popularized this model. In the 1960s and 1970s, when the great search for truth was on at the university campus, this method fit the culture perfectly and was instrumental in both Bill's and Walt's journey of faith and understanding of the gospel.

Though many people are intimidated by talking to people they've never met, there are Christians who love to talk to perfect strangers about Jesus. They come back from business trips with incredible stories about how they met this or that stranger and led him or her in a dramatic way to Jesus. It's easy to think of these individuals as the gifted evangelists who are set apart to carry out the bulk of evangelistic activity for God.

While some people may be ready to hear about Jesus, not as many people are as ready to hear about Jesus from a perfect stranger as they

once were. While making the gospel clear, the danger of confrontation is twofold. First, if a person feels pressure to respond before he or she is ready, the experience can create another emotional barrier that must be overcome before the person will trust Jesus. Second, when people who are not gifted evangelists force themselves into this mold, the result is rarely a positive experience—for the evangelist or the evangelized.

Intentional evangelism refers to creating opportunities to expose friends and colleagues to Jesus in a nonreligious, nonthreatening atmosphere. It's what Matthew (also known as Levi) did when he became a follower of Jesus. Instead of inviting his disreputable friends to the synagogue, he asked them to his home for dinner (see Luke 5:27–29).

In the intentional evangelism model, someone hosts a nonthreatening event that creates in non-Christian friends a sense of curiosity, which the host can intentionally pursue after the event. The event is more about sparking an interest than making converts. Intentional evangelism is based on forming a relationship of significant trust with a non-Christian friend and on the hope that the event will stimulate the non-Christian without causing him or her to feel “set up.” This usually means that the event will not feature a pushy appeal to trust Jesus.

Events might feature a speaker that non-Christians would be interested in hearing. For several years I (Bill) hosted what we called the Leadership Breakfast during the pro-am golf tournament in Tyler, Texas. Several of the touring pros from the PGA are believers. Each year we invited one of them to talk a little about golf and to tell his faith story. Christians were encouraged to host a table and invite friends. More than three hundred men and women, many of whom wouldn't dream of attending church, came to hear a professional golfer. Another type of intentional evangelistic event is a forum, or discussion party. Rather than focusing on a speaker, this gathering is centered around discussion of questions people have about God or Christianity. Search Ministries and the Alpha course are two examples.

Passive evangelism uses symbols, objects, or art to arouse curiosity in the observer. We sometimes call this “trotline evangelism,” after the fishing practice of baiting a series of hooks on a line, then leaving and coming back later to check the line. You put out the bait and hope a fish—or, in the case of evangelism, a person—bites. Religious

art on the wall, tracts and magazines left in offices and waiting rooms, even Bibles, are conspicuously placed in hopes that someone may ask a question about God. The Old Testament is full of symbols designed to create curiosity, and many aspects of the Jewish ceremonial law were designed to draw people toward asking questions. Even the temple in Jerusalem was, in some sense, a giant symbolic tract designed to teach people how to approach God.

The benefit of this model is that it's always at work, even when you're not. It continues to say something even while you are absent or silent. The drawback is that it lacks subtlety. What's more, if the office atmosphere doesn't match the decor, a credibility problem arises. If you announce by what you put on the walls that you are a follower of Jesus, you'd better be sure to reflect the values of Jesus in the way you speak and act.

Relational evangelism builds a bridge of friendship based on common ground between a Christian and non-Christian. Relational evangelists see evangelism as a process rather than an event (see chart on page 24). In this model, success is measured on the basis of helping a person take one more step toward Jesus today.

This type of evangelism was the backbone of the strategy that resulted in the growth of the early church from a few hundred on the day of Pentecost to over half a million by the end of the first century. Christians everywhere chatted about Jesus to their friends, relatives, work associates, customers, masters, slaves, and fellow soldiers. According to church growth experts Win and Charles Arn, "Webs of *common kinship* (the larger family), *common friendship* (friends and neighbors), and *common associates* (work associates and people with common interests or recreational pursuits) are still the paths most people follow in becoming Christians today."⁷

The Arns cite the results of a survey in which approximately 14,000 people were asked the question, "What or who was responsible for your coming to Christ and your church?"⁸ Eight responses were rated as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. A "special need" drew them | 1–2 percent |
| 2. They just "walked in" | 2–3 percent |
| 3. A pastor | 5–6 percent |

4. Church “visitation”	1–2 percent
5. Sunday school	4–5 percent
6. Evangelistic crusade or television show	0.5 percent
7. A church “program”	2–3 percent
8. A “friend/relative”	75–90 percent

The results of this survey highlight the importance of forming solid relationships (friendships) as part of the process of evangelism, regardless of which of the above models of evangelism you may employ.

This book explores the specifics of how to engage actively and fruitfully in the evangelistic task. The *fact* that we ought to be engaged in this task should not be an issue. After all, another person’s eternal destiny is at stake: Revelation 20:15 declares, “If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

The decision to go public affects believers as well. To refuse to join God as a distribution point of his grace is an act of blatant disregard for God’s will and plan for our lives. We cannot stop the flow of grace without doing harm to ourselves. Paul singles out the sharing of our faith as a key to our mature spiritual identity: “I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ” (Philemon 6).

Certain functions are essential for human life—breathing, drinking, and eating being among them. These functions keep us alive and growing. If we want to remain spiritually alive and growing, we *must* speak of our faith with others. It’s a sustaining requirement of spiritual life.

We are all workers in the Father’s field. When we go public with our faith in our workplace, we join in his process of drawing men and women to himself. For most of us, it won’t involve preaching to groups or aggressively talking to strangers about their relationship with Jesus. Instead, it will focus on the *cultivating* phase, doing what Jesus called “the hard work” (John 4:38)—building meaningful relationships with people over time.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Evangelism is not an event but a relational process, and God has gifted each of us to play a critical role in drawing men and women to himself.

CALLED TO THE WORKPLACE



Chris would have been the last person to call himself an evangelist. He reluctantly signed up for a short-term mission trip to Cuba and came home full of stories of how he had seen God at work as the team went from house to house sharing the gospel. His new enthusiasm for declaring his faith was both heartwarming and a bit surprising.

After returning from Cuba, however, he felt increasingly dissatisfied with his marketing work at a large firm. He struggled with the feeling that to continue in his profession was somehow to choose God's second best for his life. *Perhaps I should quit my job to attend seminary*, he thought. He shared this "crazy idea" with his best friend, who told Chris to keep his job and use his vacation time to "do ministry."

But it seemed to Chris a colossal waste of time to spend most of his year working so that he could spend a couple of weeks doing what was truly important. *How can I waste so much time at a regular job*, he thought, *when so many people are facing an eternity without God?*

Chris began taking classes at a local seminary, but he lasted only about eighteen months. It wasn't the spiritual utopia he had anticipated. He later told me (Bill), "I guess seminary wasn't what God had planned for me." Chris returned to his "regular job," his enthusiasm for his faith floundering.

Unfortunately, Chris never considered his workplace as a mission field for sharing his faith in the way he longed to. In fact, when asked about allowing his passion to influence people's lives at his workplace, Chris thought the idea was inappropriate—and people there weren't interested anyway.

Chris is far from alone. We've talked to thousands of Christians who are frustrated by their inability to make a difference for God in their workplace. On Sunday morning, after the parting blessing is

pronounced, they walk out of church into real life, seeing little or no connection between the worlds of faith and work. The six days between Sundays seem to them like a spiritual black hole.

THE SACREDNESS OF THE SECULAR

The average Christian sees a distinct difference between his or her work and the work of the local pastor. This view is rooted in a worldview that consists of two contrasting realities. “God’s world” values activities such as prayer, Bible study, worship, meditation, and evangelism—in other words, “spiritual activities.” In contrast, the so-called “real world” values work, finance, politics, pop music, the Internet, Monday night football, and the stock market. This “real world” worships at the altar of *power*, *prestige*, and *position*.

A few years ago I (Bill) attended a large gathering where the speaker honored the pastors in the audience by calling them forward for a blessing, proclaiming that they had the “highest calling” from God. The crowd affirmed this misconception—that these were God’s real heroes. After the event, I talked to several people, and not one of them challenged the teaching that vocational Christian work is in essence the only work that really matters in the kingdom of God.

By no means do we wish to diminish the value of those who are called to careers in professional ministry. (In fact, at the time of this writing, both authors are working full-time with Christian ministries.) But let us keep in mind that at least three-fourths of the men and women from the Bible whom we call “heroes” were not in “full-time ministry.” They “wasted their time” working in “secular” jobs. Consider Abraham, for example, the father of the Jewish nation. He was not a professional priest but a rancher who followed God west and built a livestock empire on the open range. The patriarch Joseph started out on the family ranch but was abducted and taken to a foreign country where he rose to a top governmental position and saved the Near East from famine by his savvy grain futures trading.

Daniel is known as a prophet, but professionally he was chief adviser to several kings—a government worker who was employed well into his eighties. David became a professional soldier and later the ruler of his country. Nehemiah was a career bureaucrat who became the general contractor over a large government rehabilitation

project. Even the ideal woman of Proverbs 31 receives accolades for executing several entrepreneurial ventures in real estate and textiles while practicing her other profession of being a family manager.

Did all these individuals miss God's best by *wasting time* in so-called "secular" pursuits? If so, we should also conclude that Jesus spent close to ninety percent of his earthly life wasting his time wielding a saw, hammer, and chisel. If God the Son planned to spend only thirty-plus years on earth, why did he "waste" ninety percent of it in secular work?

As a young man Tom started a business in Southern California that grew into a successful enterprise. Tom's competence and character meshed—resulting in an outstanding reputation in his community. He was overjoyed to see how God used his testimony and his company. Over several years, he saw several of his employees and customers begin a personal relationship with God and grow in their faith.

Over breakfast one morning, Tom's pastor inquired, "Tom, have you ever considered *really* giving your life to God—working full-time for the Lord?"

Tom felt confused. "Pastor," he explained, almost hesitantly, "I feel that what I'm doing now *is* a form of full-time work for the Lord."

The pastor smiled. "Tom, there's no doubt that God has used you in amazing ways. But the work you're in is secular. I think God is calling you to consider becoming involved in something higher."

Over the months, the two men talked more. Eventually, Tom sold his business and accepted an administrative role in a mission organization. He was in that role when I (Walt) met him at the time he

I had said to the Lord, "If you bless us and provide for us, someday I would like to do some mission work." Little did I know that it wasn't going to be in Nigeria or Afghanistan but right here in Holland, Michigan, with this new company. We committed this business to the Lord and asked for guidance and direction; twelve years later we are having a wonderful time, and we are touching and changing lives.

JACK DEWITT,
FROZEN FOODS

became my patient. He had been with the organization about two years and was displaying an array of physical symptoms. As I got to know Tom and studied the results of medical tests, I became convinced that he was suffering from anxiety and depression.

The symptoms responded well to medications, but the medications didn't begin to touch the root of the problem. One day I asked, "Tom, do you think you're doing what God wants you to do?"

His eyes teared up as he gazed out the window. "Walt, I think God had me right where he wanted me—in my business in California." He paused and continued, "Do you think there's a difference between sacred work and secular work?"

"I don't think so," I responded. "I think the real difference is between sacred and secular people." I continued, "Tom, if you and your pastor go to work for different reasons, at least one of you is going to work for the wrong reason." Tom frowned as he absorbed the implication of this statement.

THE ROOTS OF THE FAULTY THINKING

The mistaken conception that some men and women do sacred work for God while the rest of humanity settles for less than God's best by doing secular work is an ancient one, but it has no basis in Scripture. In Western thought, this idea developed from Greek philosophy, which taught that any kind of menial work with physical materials was beneath the gods or men who had the means to choose how they spent their time. Slaves did the menial work, while those with means opted to spend their time in pursuits of the mind—religion or philosophy. This worldview was crystallized in the heresy of Gnosticism, which divided reality into two parts—the material realm (entirely evil) and the spiritual realm (entirely good).

Confucius, father of much of Eastern philosophy, taught virtually the same thing. Whether from East or West, most religions view the physical world as base, in some way unclean and beneath the dignity of the truly pious. This viewpoint has come to dominate the way many religious people worldwide think of spiritual priorities.

This mistaken notion has plagued the church from the very beginning, with the result that "worldly activities" are viewed as a major

distraction to a person's spiritual development. No wonder Chris and Tom and so many others are confused about what it really means to follow Jesus day after day.

THE IMPACT OF FAULTY THINKING

The dichotomous worldview that artificially separates the sacred from the secular has had a disastrous impact on Christians in the workplace and even on the church's vision for ministry. British writer and Christian apologist Dorothy Sayers (1893–1957) wrote:

In nothing has the church so lost her hold on reality as in her failure to understand and respect the secular vocation. She has allowed work and religion to become separate departments, and is astonished to find that, as a result, the secular work of the world is turned to purely selfish and destructive ends, and that the greater part of the world's intelligent workers have become irreligious, or at least, uninterested in religion.⁹

The Impact on Individual Christians

Accepting the secular-sacred split invariably leads Christians in the workplace to feel caught between the demands of two worlds. On the one hand, you sense the need to engage in work, to be a responsible citizen, and to provide for the physical needs of life. On the other hand, you hear the voice of this faulty worldview telling you that you're wasting your time in your work and that you should spend more time pursuing God through spiritual activities. It is difficult, if not impossible, to live successfully if you allow these forces to tug at your heart. There will be certain consequences to pay.

Abandoned Advantages

One of the consequences is the failure to recognize the resources you have working on your behalf. Imagine for a moment that you've been given the following opportunities:

- ↳ Consult with Jack Welch (former CEO of General Electric) on an important business decision.

- ✦ Have Bill Gates (founder of Microsoft and one of the wealthiest men in the world) as your financial backer and consultant during a crucial financial decision.
- ✦ Talk with Richard Bolles (author of *What Color Is Your Parachute?*) about the pros and cons of the new job opportunity you've just been offered.

And what if these men not only made themselves available to you but also were sincerely interested in your success at work? What if they were waiting for you daily at your office or job site, ready to walk with you through every decision, crisis, and success? You'd be a fool to ignore their offers of support. Yet this is exactly what many Christians do every day when they ignore God's interest and presence in their workplace.

Listen to this reassuring promise in the context of the kind of work environment we have today: "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.' So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'" (Hebrews 13:5-6). Imagine making a decision about a convoluted issue, firm in the conviction that what God promised is true: "I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them" (Isaiah 42:16).

Lack of Spiritual Motivation

If the highlight of your spiritual life is going to church once a week, dropping some money in the offering plate, and not giving the preacher too much trouble—or if you think you've fulfilled the bulk of your spiritual responsibility by warming a pew on Sunday morning—then just how spiritual do you need to be? Not very!

If I'm on the reserve team, do you think I'm going to be passionately disciplined about being in shape? Probably not. If the *real* players on the spiritual field are the religious professionals, then ordinary Christians can leave the heavy lifting to them. Why sacrifice some sleep by getting up early to spend time focusing on my relationship with God if he really isn't interested in what I'm doing until next Sunday? The fact is, few of us will ever feel personally responsible

enough to deepen our faith and learn to articulate it well *unless* we think it will really make a difference.

Moral Compromise

Unfortunately, some Christians don't look much different from their non-Christian coworkers. They talk the same, have the same work habits, compromise on the same issues, and entertain themselves in the same ways as those who have never met God personally. In some cases, the only difference between Christians and non-Christians is where they spend an hour or so on Sunday morning.

Marginalized Faith

The question begs to be asked: How can we be serious about God if we devote the largest measure of our time, talent, treasure, and energy to a part of life we think God has no interest in? Dorothy Sayers asked the question this way: "How can anyone remain interested in a religion which seems to have no concern with nine-tenths of his life?"¹⁰

If you are living with a divided secular-sacred worldview, then you'll tend to make one of two choices: You will separate yourself as much as possible from worldly things, or you will forget God and devote yourself to the pursuit of success as the world defines it. Trying to live in both worlds is schizophrenic, dishonest, and profoundly crippling. Chances are neither your work nor your faith will be very satisfying.

There's no way we can compartmentalize our faith. We don't have any choice about it. We are integrated, consistent people. Therefore, the exercise of our faith in the workplace should be as natural as it is at home, with our families, or at church. We should not be different people at different times and different places.

LARRY COLLETT,
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Impact on the Workplace

This dichotomous secular-sacred worldview has had a pronounced impact on the workplace. I (Walt) remember a conversation I had

with a woman named Shelley. Her husband worked for a large international ministry. When their kids were grown, Shelley reentered the profession she had left in order to raise her family. One day I asked her about the differences in the business world since she left it over two decades earlier.

She thought for a moment. “I’m not surprised at the faster pace and the increasing importance of technology. But what really blows me away is the noticeable loss of care and service. The whole business world seems to be *all about me*. The only reason people seem to care about someone else is for what that person can do to help them reach their goals. It’s really a dog-eat-dog world now.” Shelly paused. “I’m thinking of getting out. I may try to get a position at the ministry.”

This woman, whose godly influence the business world desperately needs, is considering withdrawing into the “holy huddle.”

Eroded Ethical Foundations

It shouldn’t surprise us, given the abandonment of the workplace by the church, that godless thinking and misguided values have come to dominate the workplace. If you want to be a success today, it’s likely that your workplace—not the Bible—determines your value system. The corporate scandals in 2002 will provide ethical case studies for years. Dishonesty and greed defined the values of corporate officers, boards, and auditors of a number of massive corporations, leading to “cooked books” that vastly inflated company earnings. When these deceitful practices were uncovered, the loss of trust in the market as a whole was disastrous.

To say it’s all about money is to be simplistic. It’s really about what money buys. Three elements are deemed by many as absolutely essential in today’s workplace:

- ↳ power—How many people report to you and obey your orders?
- ↳ prestige—Who looks up to you and envies your position?
- ↳ possessions—Where do you live, where do you go on vacation, what do you drive?

Lying, cheating, and stealing won’t necessarily disqualify you from staying in the game, but failing to have power, position, and possessions will.

Lost Personal Trust

Hang around the workplace awhile and you're bound to hear someone say, "It's not personal. It's business." This phrase is the practical equivalent of a permission slip to do harm to someone. The fact is, business *is* personal. Without people, business doesn't exist. Can you imagine someone saying, "Nothing personal. It's the Lord's work"? Somehow we know that God's work is very personal. He cares about people. But declare your independence from God, and "anything you can get away with" is going to be your mode of operation.

Questions such as "Is it legal?" and "Will it make money?" have too often replaced the question "Is it the right thing to do?" No wonder trust has become a depleted commodity. How can any market be truly productive without people who trust each other making a commitment to work together? But how can they trust each other when their own selfish interest is what they value most?

The Impact on the Church

The secular-sacred divide has not just invaded the workplace but also the church. A few years ago, a church near my (Walt's) home called a new pastor. The former pastor had taught and equipped, but the men and women in the pew were the ministers—and their impact on the community was notable. The new pastor's views of church growth met with approval, and he slowly transformed the church essentially into a staff-led business. More and more people attended worship, and the budget grew tenfold in five years; however, the impact on the community began declining, and the men and women who had once been the most active in ministry quietly left for churches that needed and desired their giftedness.

Don't misunderstand us. We're not saying that Church Street can't learn from Wall Street. We can—a lot! But when power, prestige, and possessions—as opposed to biblical teachings that value glorifying God, serving others, and receiving eternal rewards—become the measuring sticks of success, we've got problems.

Undermined Godly Motives

Worldly values and philosophies have crept in and gained access to the pulpit. In the minds of many pastors today, the size of one's

membership and budget has for all intents and purposes become *the* criterion for a successful ministry. More energy seems to be expended on marketing principles than on prayer and other spiritual disciplines.

You may be thinking that now we are pledging allegiance to the secular-sacred distinction ourselves. Actually, we believe that good business principles are good for any organization—commercial or spiritual. We believe that God’s work, whether done in the workplace or the worship place, should operate based on both prayer *and* sound business principles. But when the secular-sacred division is embraced, it becomes easy for contaminating influences to undermine godly motives. The truth is that it’s usually easier to get the church out of the world than to get the world out of the church.

Misaligned Priorities

The church has also tended to improperly elevate spiritual matters above earthly matters, thereby marginalizing its impact on society. Too often, the church sees its most important day as Sunday. In actuality, Monday through Saturday are critical. The goal should not only be to get the community into the church but to get the church into the community, because in order to bring people to Jesus, we must bring Jesus to people.

On Monday morning, the church is not at the corner of Meadow and Central. It spreads out all over the community, the nation, and sometimes the world as men and women disperse to do their work. It’s out there—on the street, in the classroom, at the workplace—where the kingdom of God meets the kingdom of this world. *That’s* where the real battle is taking place.

Unprepared Workers

Mislocating the battle has led the church to a major tactical error. If the battle is *inside* the church, then the front-line duty can be assigned only to a few highly trained specialists. If the role of the nonprofessional is merely to provide support, there’s little need to train and equip people in the pews for serious kingdom work. From the vantage point of the pew, if you don’t see the need to be part of the kingdom, why take the risk?

When the church neglects to equip people to talk about their faith with friends, colleagues, and coworkers, it fails to make a genuine impact on the workplace and ends up marginalizing itself—a sad state of affairs, especially because people today are on the greatest soul search in human history.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

The biblical worldview leaves no room for secular-sacred, dualistic thinking. Unlike the aloof gods of Greek or Eastern thought, the God of the Bible is actively involved in his world. He rolled up his sleeves, so to speak, as he engaged in creation. Note that the biblical words used to describe God’s work of creation are physical and earthy:

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens . . . the LORD God *formed* the man from the dust of the ground and *breathed into his nostrils* the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Now the LORD God had *planted* a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had *formed*.

Genesis 2:4b, 7–8, italics added

Interestingly, the Hebrew word used to describe God’s work in creation is the same word often used to describe human labor: “By the seventh day God had finished the *work* he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his *work*” (Genesis 2:2, italics added). No wonder God has a high view of the physical world and the work we do in it. The author of Genesis writes, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).

Before there was ever a need for evangelism, God gave humans a commission he has yet to withdraw: “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Genesis 1:28). When we go to our workplace to meet legitimate human needs, we are working for God—whether we realize it or not. Even though we may forget that God is in the workplace, he does not forget our work. Abraham Kuyper, nineteenth-century Dutch theologian and prime minister, said it well: “There is not one

square inch of the entire creation about which Jesus Christ does not cry out, ‘This is mine! This belongs to me!’”¹¹

Several times in his letters, the apostle Paul reiterates God’s claim over the workplace. The placement of these passages indicates that our work life is, in many ways, as important to God as our family life. Just as God is head of the family, he is also your boss at work:

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. 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. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.

Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Colossians 3:22–4:1

Though our circumstances today are different from the first century, the context is the same—the workplace. In Paul’s day slaves comprised the bulk of the workforce in the Roman world. Rather than using the terms *employee* and *employer*, as he would if he were speaking to us today, he addressed slaves and masters.

Today, Paul would say something like this: At least three things that transcend time and circumstances have changed about your work if you are a follower of Jesus:

1. We Have a New Job Description

If we follow the job description given to the readers of Colossians, *we should go to work to serve others*—not to get others to serve us. We work not to gain power over others but to empower them. Whether I am an employee or an employer, a manager or the managed, the gospel truth expressed by Paul declares that I go to work not primarily for myself but for others. I must treat fairly the people I work for, giving them the work that is expected of me. I must treat fairly those who work for me, empowering them to do their work.

This is usually easier for those who are more people centered than task oriented or project directed. Nevertheless, God places us in

particular situations so that we may both come to know him better and make him known to the people with whom we cross paths in the workplace. As we serve others in the workplace, we serve the Lord of the workplace.

Work is also an avenue to demonstrate excellence. Our work should always be done with integrity and excellence. “With sincerity” (Colossians 3:22) means literally “without wax.” A common way to repair damage done in the kiln to a piece of pottery was to fill the cracks with wax, thus deceiving the purchaser. Paul exhorts us to be honest in all our actions—no wax in the cracks.

Whether someone is watching us or not, our work should be of the same quality—done out of pure motives, with nothing hidden. The truth is, we *are* always being watched, because Jesus, the Lord of the workplace, is always with us. Therefore, in everything we do, says Paul, we do it as though we are working for the Lord—as though he is physically watching and supervising us.

Paul also tells us that we must put our whole heart into our work. After all, the Lord of the workplace deserves it, but so do our colleagues and customers. Dorothy Sayers reminds us, “What the church should be telling him [an intelligent carpenter] is this: that the first demand that his religion makes on him is that he should make good tables.”¹² Pursuing excellence in work is always the right thing to do. Just as we do, God recognizes good work when he sees it.

2. We Have a New Motive

Work is an avenue to demonstrate our love for God—a way for us to express our worship. I go to work not to gain personal prestige but to honor God. Paul indicates that work is a means of worship, of ascribing worth to God: “It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Colossians 3:24).

Don’t miss the shocking effect this must have had on Greek ears. It’s hard to escape the idea that Paul sees all work as God’s work: “*Whatever* you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord” (Colossians 3:23, italics added). *Whatever* includes a broad spectrum of activities, especially considering the fact that Paul is addressing slaves, some of whom did the most menial labor—things like emptying chamber pots. This word *whatever*

strikes the deathblow to the idea that God’s work and a person’s daily work are separate. If you are meeting legitimate human needs, you are working for God.

Doing God’s work in God’s way allows you to fulfill the first commission given to humankind to “fill the earth and subdue it.” The opening chapter of Genesis shows that God worked to create; and he created humanity in his image—as workers. Our working well and for his glory consists of acts of love and worship. (There are, of course, things we do that don’t bring glory to God. If an activity is essentially sinful, no worthy motive can redeem it. Drug dealing, prostitution, or bank robbery will not be listed as a job in God’s human resource department.)

Did you catch Paul’s astounding claim that work is an essential part of the spiritual life? “Whatever you do,” he writes, “work at it *with all your heart*” (Colossians 3:23, italics added). Any Christian

My work is worship to me. In that light, God puts me in contact with people who are divine appointments. Some of them are people I would call my business associates or employees, and others are called customers. In this massive amount of human interaction, I have an opportunity to embed a philosophy. The way we do business, the way we treat customers—eventually this gets embedded in the service provided.

MERRILL OSTER,
BUSINESS JOURNALIST

who is comfortable with a secular-sacred dichotomy must explain how “work at it *with all your heart*” fits with Jesus’ response to the expert of the law who asked him about the greatest commandment: “Love the Lord your God *with all your heart* and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37, italics added). If doing your work is a separate department from loving God, then you must disobey one command in order to obey the other. On the other hand, if all work is God’s

work, then working heartily at something with the intention of bringing glory to God can be a supreme act of love for and worship of God.

3. We Have a New Salary Structure

Work is an avenue for eternal significance to the individual. We go to work not to get rich but to gain an eternal reward. Contrary to

what some of us have heard from well-meaning individuals, as followers of Jesus our daily work now counts for eternity. The old adage “There are only two things of eternal significance—the Word of God and the souls of men” is just not valid—or biblical. Paul’s statements here bring incredible dignity and eternal importance to even the most menial task.

KINGDOM BUSINESS IN THE WORKPLACE

When William Wilberforce made a serious commitment to follow Jesus, he went to John Newton, slave trader-turned-pastor (writer of the classic hymn “Amazing Grace”) to discuss whether he should leave the British Parliament and go to seminary. Newton wisely reminded Wilberforce, “Maybe God has you there for a purpose”—and indeed he did. As we’ll discuss in our last chapter, Wilberforce became one of the strongest forces for Jesus in his generation.

When a spiritual mentor asked Danish attorney Valdemar Hvidt about his next challenge, Hvidt pointed to the biggest problem he could imagine in the 1930s—unemployment. With little prospect of success, Hvidt convened a group of associates who prayed for guidance. The ideas they implemented resulted in thousands of new jobs. When Nazi forces occupied the country in 1939 and Denmark faced a darker problem than unemployment, Hvidt’s prayer group became part of the Christian Resistance Movement.¹³

Please notice that neither Wilberforce nor Hvidt left the workplace in search of spiritual significance. They found it where God designed them

to find it—*right where they were*. Although God may and surely does call some men and women to leave the workplace for professional ministry, it is the exception. He wants Christians to go to work for

You need to be aware of the opportunity and the responsibility you have to use your place of work as a mission field. Because you are aware of the opportunity, you can be opportunistic. If it is something in your consciousness, you are more apt to take advantage when those opportunities come along.

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MANUFACTURING

