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## **Faith and Work Reflections**

"It must be really nice for you to go home at the end of the day and know that you actually did something meaningful for God." I'll never forget this moment, and these words. A friend of mine shared them with me a few months after graduation from college. My friend was working at a large corporation in Minneapolis; I was working at a church with junior high kids. Business. Ministry. In one statement, the work we both did was placed on two very different playing fields of importance to God and to this world. Even in this moment I knew that the mentality my friend had was a long way off from God's intention, and it was a sad moment for me. However, more sad to me was that I had nothing helpful to say in response.

At that point in my journey, I think I gave my friend a vague response that her work had meaning too, which ended with a one dimensional encouragement to be about evangelizing her co-workers. I could tell that my response didn't help, and I left that interaction feeling a weird hopelessness about connecting the workplace world and God's vision. Since that moment more than a decade ago, I have come a long way. And my sense is I have a lot more to go.

Faith, Work, and Economics is not a topic that I went out looking for. In a strange way it found me, first in the interaction I just described. More than twelve years later, I would move on from a 10-year youth ministry career into a role that would be focused on adult ministry to encourage people to grow in faith. My first assignment was to partner with a team to put on an event that we called the "Connect Faith and Work Conference" in 2013. The leader of that team and I were partnered together to put a small team together and see how we could join God in what he wanted to do for the event. Nine months later the event happened and it was a successful conference that helped encourage people to grow. It was amazing to be a part of the event, but even more amazing to learn from my friends who were on this team about their service in the workplace.

Those nine months I read, thought, and digested just about any content I could between videos or training seminars. I listened to thought leaders on the subject. I attended events put on by Bethel Seminary's Work with Purpose Initiative. Most importantly, I began to spend time with Westwood's people on their turf, in their business environments. I spent time at General Mills, Cargill, Best Buy,



Allianz, a local jeweler, and a construction company. What I discovered is that there are so many people in our church that are doing an incredible job of living their faith in their workplace. I also discovered that everyone is hungry to get better at doing so.

The redemptive potential of a local church exists in how well it helps its people to scatter into the world, and be faithful Kingdom people where they already are. That's a big statement, I know. That takes a lot of energy to actually do. What each of our churches are called to do is to equip our folks to be faithful Kingdom people. They are at their jobs for 70% of their waking hours – they are in our churches for one or slightly more hours per week. We need to view how we're equipping people primarily through the lens of where they are for the majority of their lives. How each of us does that is dependent on a lot of variables – location, size, where a majority of people work & in what industries.

Here are a few things that I'm learning along the way:

- 1) As much as I'm at people's bedside in the hospital, I need to be at their desk-side in their office. I learned this from Tom Nelson. Workplace visitation is a significant ministry that I need to do more of. I find that for most people, when I suggest coming to their office, they're honored at the suggestion and willingly host me. If you do nothing else – do this.
- 2) When you're with people in the workplace, be genuinely interested not only in their work, but how they go about it. They'll be honored, and you may learn a thing or 17 about work and leadership.
- 3) Pray for your people, by name, by company, by prayer request. One Sunday we invited our church to submit a prayer request regarding their work, not quite knowing how many would come in. 39 pages & 475 prayer requests later we recruited a team to help us pray. Stories of God's work came out of those prayers. Let prayer underline everything that you do.
- 4) If this is a new topic for you don't let it intimidate you. Start by reading a couple of books. *Work Matters* by Tom Nelson. Then read *Every Good Endeavor* by Tim Keller & Katherine Leary Alsdorf. Attend anything that Bethel Seminary's Work with Purpose Initiative is hosting. Everything that they have hosted has added value to my leadership and the leadership of the lay team that we have assembled to lead our church in that.
- 5) With that said, put together a small team of people who are in the workplace, and ask them – genuinely ask them to lead this for your church. Provide them with some vision, a few guardrails (not too many) then get into the stands and cheer. You'll go farther, faster with them at the helm than you ever could without them. However, let me say one thing: Go at this slowly and methodically. The wrong people leading it, and you've worked backwards. Take 6-12 months to put together a team.



- 6) A few Faith and Work scripture passages that are helpful: Genesis 1 & 2, Genesis 12:1-6, Colossians 3:23-24, Ephesians 2:10. There are so many more, but if you don't have verses to point people to, start here.

This last spring we hosted a six-week class to help people take a step or two toward integration of faith and work. A friend of mine works in a company that produces agricultural software for farmers. Toward the end of the class she dropped a huge statement: "This helps me to see my job in a whole new light. Before I thought I was selling software products. Now I see my job as adding value to farmer's lives by increasing the efficiency of how they get their work done."

That's the goal. The shift that she made will change everything and there is so much more good to come as she faithfully follows Jesus Monday – Friday.

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