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Steward

the power to live to submit to abide to give to serve

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The "People" Side of It

*Steven G. Rose, Undertreasurer
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Recently I went on a trip with a colleague to work on a major project. My partner had met with the committee several times, but I was new to the group. Anticipating our meetings, I pictured very serious, narrowly-focused discussions, diplomatically hammering out details.

To my surprise, I was impressed at how personable the discussions were. Rather than just discussing business, the members demonstrated genuine interest in each others' lives. The primary agenda items took the least amount of time. It was the relational discussions that were most important. I could see that my colleague had spent considerable time building relationships with these people.

The Lord has blessed us by giving us relationships with Him and with our fellow humans. These relationships are extremely valuable, and, within the principles of Christian stewardship, we need to focus on them carefully. We cannot separate the importance of relationships from our everyday activities in the work environment. As Christians, it is critical that we demonstrate Christ-like values in the workplace, allowing Him to work through us as we care for others.

There are two sayings that have made a real impression on me with respect to building positive workplace relationships:

1 "People don't care how much one knows until they know how much one cares."
Technical skills are crucial for carrying out our responsibilities; but sometimes we concentrate too much on the technical aspects of the job while overlooking the "people" side of the equation. If technical competence is not united with a caring spirit and a caring attitude, then both work assignments and relationships will suffer.

2 "Seek first to understand, then to be understood."
I read this gem of wisdom several years ago in a book by Stephen Covey. We often focus our energy on trying to make sure that we are understood while we miss out on truly understanding the other person's point of view. Since communication is one of the most important skills in life, if we concentrate on listening and make an intentional effort to understand before we attempt to be understood, we would see dramatic benefits in our workplace relationships.

Yes, my colleague has it right. When we care deeply for others and seek first to understand, the job will be done, and the workplace will be a blessing to everyone.

5 Steps to Workplace Satisfaction

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Introduction

It's Monday morning. You step into your place of business wondering if you will make it through the next hour. As you walk through the halls you hear co-workers, obviously annoyed, grunting muffled greetings to one another.

Let's face it, for most of us work is not enjoyable. We do it out of obligation. However, God clearly admonishes us not only to work, but to work hard *and* enjoy it (Php 2:14; Ec 9:10)! How can we reach the point where we actually look forward to going to work?

Thomas Warney, author of *Mind at Work: Improving Workplace Satisfaction and Enjoyment* (National Consultation on Career Development, 1998) outlines a set of criteria for workplace satisfaction. In your individual or small group Bible study, reflect on Warney's five points. What biblical passages come to mind as you consider these principles? Here they are in order of importance.

1. Appreciation

"This includes recognition, praise, respect, being valued, and feeling that what I do counts."

It is incredibly gratifying to know that we are cherished. In Matthew 25, the parable of the talents, the master enthusiastically congratulates his servant for his good work: "Well done good and faithful servant" (v 21). He even invites him to celebrate. How special that servant must have felt!

2. Control

"This means having a significant amount of control over what I do, and includes exercising responsibility, being 'empowered' with the opportunity to exercise choice and be creative, and working within a team structure."

We grow from experience. When we are allowed to make certain decisions, we gain a stronger sense of ownership. We begin to see that our contributions make a difference. Our interest level increases as we realize that we are indeed part of a team.

3. Good working environment

"This means surroundings and conditions that are safe, clean, healthy, and comfortable, and support from the organization, including learning programs, health initiatives, flexible scheduling, employee assistance programs, and wellness facilities."

We can also assure a good working environment by readjusting our attitude. Smiling at our co-workers, humming a soft tune as we pass through the halls or simply waving "hello" to someone may work wonders for our surroundings. We enjoy being around pleasant people. Why not become a pleasant person yourself?

4. Organizational integrity

"The organization has a clear vision/mission, created with significant input and buy-in from everyone, clearly communicated to all levels. Management truly 'walks the talk' by providing real support and modeling the core values of the organization."

Have you ever heard the saying "Do as I say, not as I do?" It is hard to respect people who do not practice what they preach. Whether you are a manager or a secretary, as Christians it is important to remember who we ultimately work for.



Whatever we do, we must do it in such a way that God's character is revealed through us.

5. Reward

"Fair remuneration and benefits tailored to what is important to the individual."

One of the best features of work is the compensation! When we are paid fairly for what we've worked for, it makes all the difference.

Many of us view work as drudgery, therefore we dread every second of it. That is not how our Heavenly Father intended it to be. He wants us to work and enjoy it. When we are satisfied in our workplace we begin to view it as a blessing. In turn, we bless others through our work.

Zondervan Student Bible—Revised

*Reviewed by the staff of
Dynamic Steward*



The award-winning *Zondervan Student Bible (NIV)* has been completely revised! The new revision includes updated notes by Philip Yancey and Tim Stafford and a new 180-day "Guided Tour." This Bible was developed to help any student of Scripture who has difficulty in reading and understanding the Bible.

I especially like the introductory overviews to the Old and New Testaments as well as each book of the Bible. The "Book Introductions" give insights on how to read each book—how the book is broken down into parts, key points the author is making, and lessons to be learned.

But there is more. The "Guided Tour," "100 People You Should Know" articles, and the occasional "Highlights and Insights" that you encounter along the way, enrich your understanding of what you are reading and encourage you to reflect on what you have learned. There are also three Track Reading Plans to choose from.

I encourage anyone who wants to take this informative and inspirational tour to buy this excellent resource.

quotes

Good leaders make people feel that they're at the very heart of things, not at the periphery.

Everyone feels that he or she makes a difference to the success of the organization. When that happens, people feel centered and that gives their work meaning.—Warren Bennis

Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak:

for your work shall be rewarded.—II Chronicles 15: 7

Community-minded people regard hard work and service to their fellow man as a life-long commitment, expressed on a daily basis.—Jim Turner

Even if you are the boss, adjust your attitude from "chairman" to "servant."—Robert Wolgemuth

The wisdom of the worker is apparent in his handiwork.—Anthony of Padua

Good for the body is the work of the body, good for the soul, the work of the soul, and good for either, the work of the other.—Henry David Thoreau

It is not doing the thing which we like to do, but liking to do the thing which we have to do, that makes life blessed.—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Men are naturally tempted by the devil, but an idle man positively tempts the devil.—Spanish Proverb



In All Thy Ways

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The question startled me. “Will you be my business advisor?” Joe had tired of his profession and was buying his own business. The business had a number of challenges, and he was asking me to be available to counsel him whenever he needed it. When I protested that I really did not have the appropriate business qualifications, he clarified what he wanted.

He had others to help him with the business decisions he would face. What he wanted was someone to help him integrate God into the way he would *do* business. He wanted someone with whom he could reflect on God’s involvement in the new business. More than that, he was determined to operate his business on the basis of biblical principles and in a Christ-like manner.

So we began to explore foundational principles that he could apply to the way he would run his business and work with his employees. Together, we discovered that God can be just as real in the workplace as in church. Let’s explore some of these principles.

The first principle we discovered was that since God is really the Owner, the business was His. That took a great deal of pressure off Joe. He could now function as the managing partner, managing the business for God as Owner. He also could know that God was intimately interested in the details of their business.

This insight led us to the next key principle: Whatever we do in the workplace should be done to God’s honor and glory (1Cor 10:31). Since it is His business, what is done in the name of that business reflects on Him. Joe determined to act in such a way that God would be exalted and honored. He would also seek to act in the name of the Lord, “...Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col 3:17, ESV). The following verses led us to the conclusion that everything that is done in the workplace should be in service to Christ:

“Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ (Col 3:22-24, ESV).”

Since he was serving God as the Owner, Joe began to pray about daily details in the business. Nothing was too big or too small to bring to God. Joe discovered a rich source of practical counsel in the book of Proverbs. He now read it for insights as to how to manage the business and the employees.

Joe discovered that it was good practice to treat employees as he thought God would. He found that after doing his best, he could leave matters in God’s hands and not be as stressed by thinking about what still needed to be done or what should be done differently. He found a purpose higher than simply making money or succeeding in turning the business around. He saw his purpose in life to be serving God in daily activities and decisions—doing God’s business, not his own.

Then came the day Joe started having problems with his foreman. The foreman’s

work was not up to standard, and the quality of the product was starting to decline. Customers were beginning to complain. Over a period of weeks things got worse, and Joe thought about firing the foreman. What should he do? We explored how Matthew 18:15 might apply. After time in prayer, Joe privately confronted the foreman from the perspective of seeing him as a brother who was doing something wrong.

Together they explored the implications, decided on corrective measures, and established a time table to follow. Six weeks later Joe told me that applying the biblical principle not only solved the problem, it restored a good worker and boosted morale with all the employees as they felt the difference. The biblical process had the added benefit of earning the foreman’s loyalty.

Joe and I discovered that bringing God into the ways of doing business could have a powerful impact on the business. But it had an even greater impact on Joe. God became more real to him. And I grew as a business counselor. Oh, I didn’t know any more about running a business, managing production, making contracts, or monitoring production. Instead, I learned that God wants to be involved in every aspect of our lives. There is no area that is beyond His ability. He can guide. He can provide. He can be real in the workplace.

This experience led me to ten key points to help us bring God into the workplace:

1. Believe that God is real and that He wants to be involved in your daily life.
2. Invite God into your life each day and bring daily issues to Him in prayer.
3. Take God with you into the workplace. He promises to be with you always (Matthew 28:20). Practice His presence—even at work.
4. Surrender your life to God each day and seek to apply biblical principles to the way you live.
5. If you own a business, transfer the ownership of that business to God. (The state may not recognize this transfer, but it will transform your attitude toward the business!)
6. If you are an employee, remember, beyond serving the business, you are serving God. Choose to do everything you do for Him, not just for the earthly boss or owner.
7. At the end of the day, leave things in God's hands, do your best, and then trust Him.
8. Ask God to give you a vision of what He wants for your life in the workplace.
9. See your work as a ministry of worship to God—serving Him in ways that honor and exalt Him.
10. Look for ways to treat those around you as Jesus would have treated them.

The first principle we discovered was that since God is really the Owner, the business was His. That took a great deal of pressure off Joe.

stewardship window


Over and Over Again—2

Young ministers do not make a lot of money, but I wasn't prepared for making less than I had made as a student. Yet, that was the case when we finished seminary and went to pastor our first district.

Camille and I were the proud parents of a baby boy. As we sat down at the kitchen table to pay our bills, we wrote the tithe check first. When we finished, we only had eight dollars left and a whole month before another check. How would we put gas in the car, buy formula for the baby or feed ourselves? We had no other income, and the cupboard was empty.

We considered holding the tithe check for a week or so. It wasn't our bread we were worried about, but our baby's; and I was supposed to be the "breadwinner" of the family. After a heart-searching discussion and a time of prayer, we decided that by faith we would return the tithe, pay our bills, and trust God to open doors. We got into the car and went for a ride—a poor way to economize when we needed to save gasoline!

When we returned, a car was parked in front of our home. It was Howard Lee, the local Worthington Food's representative. After we visited for a few minutes Howard asked, "Could you folks use some health food?"



"Could we!" Camille and I cried in unison. Howard went to his car and brought back some food. I knew right then that we wouldn't starve.

Throughout that month little miracles continued to happen! An anonymous friend left fresh vegetables on our front porch; a lady in our church who raised hens brought us a gift of two dozen eggs; a refund check from our former utility company arrived! There was always plenty for the baby and plenty for us! At the end of the month, we had thirty-four dollars left over. And we had only begun with eight!

*By James Gilley, Vice President
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All This, Plus a Paycheck

Stephen Chavez, *Managing Editor*
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Introduction

One of the great things about Jesus' parables is that they communicate so many truths on so many different levels. The parable of the vineyard workers (Mt 20:1-16) is a primary example.

You remember the story: A landowner goes out early in the morning to hire people to work that day in his vineyard. They settle on an amount agreeable to all, and everyone goes to work.

Later in the day, however, the landowner finds others who are not working, hires them, and sends them to work in the vineyard, promising to pay them "whatever is right." Two more times he finds people unemployed and promises to pay them if they will spend a few hours working for him.

Finally, with just one hour to go until quitting time, the landowner goes out and finds still more workers standing idle. Apparently, not able to leave people inactive when he has work for them to do, he hires them on the spot and promises to pay them a fair wage for one hour's work.

Payday

When it's time to get paid the workers line up, beginning with those who have worked the least amount of time, and ending with those who have worked all day. Everyone is shocked to see those who worked one hour being paid the same wages as those who worked the entire 12-hour shift.

You can almost hear the mental calculators whirring as the 12-hour workers figure out how much their salary would be if they were paid a full day's wages for each hour they worked! They reason: "We worked 12 hours; aren't we entitled to 12 days' wages?"

But to their utter disbelief, those who worked three hours, six hours, nine hours, 12 hours, all receive the same wage—the same amount as those who worked just one hour!

Imagine the disappointment of those who have worked all day. If they were paid 12 days' wages for one day's work, they could take the next two weeks off! They could spend time with their families, take care of chores around the house, practice their golf swing, or take a vacation. But all they get is a day's wage. If they want more, they have to work again tomorrow.

So they grumble: "'These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day'" (v. 12).

Then the landowner gently reminds them that it's his money, his vineyard, and his rules. He has paid them what he promised. If he wants to pay everyone the same, that's his prerogative.

Fringe benefits

There are a couple of things worth noting here: Although the one-hour workers received the same salary as the 12-hour workers, the 12-hour workers got to spend 12 times the amount of time with the landowner than the one-hour workers did. True,

they all got paid the same, but the one-hour workers missed an opportunity to spend 12 hours with the master. No matter how much they work for the landowner in the future, they will never get those 11 hours back.

Let's imagine the conversations of each group—the 12-hour workers, and then, the one-hour workers:

The 12-hour workers: "I'm not working here tomorrow!"

"Yea, who does he think he is, treating us no better than those one-hour workers?"

"If I'm going to work 12 times longer, I expect to be paid 12 times as much."

"You said it, brother."

In the meantime the one-hour workers are talking among themselves:

"Did you get as much as I did? I can't believe he's so generous."

"Me neither, I can hardly wait to work for him again tomorrow."

"Me too. In fact, I'm going to tell all my friends about this; maybe they can work for him as well."

The days of our lives

Let's face it: most of us have a kind of love/hate relationship with work. We spend roughly a third of our adult lives making a living. There are things about our jobs that we hate, things that we tolerate and, ideally, things we enjoy doing—things we do well.

It would be nice to be paid *not* to work. But honestly, don't you find that, left to your own devices, you would rather be active than inactive? Even on vacations we rarely spend our days doing nothing. God created us to be active. So there is always something to do, even if—especially if—it is something we don't have time to do when we are working.

The thing that brings satisfaction and fulfillment to our professional lives

is this: beyond working to make a living, working to support our families, working to keep from being fired, our work is a way to honor God and reflect a bit of His character to the people around us.

After all, God is a working, active God. He imagined an orderly and self-sustaining cosmos and built it from scratch. Throughout the Bible we read about His “works,” how He provides humanity with spiritual and material blessings in creative and never-ending ways. We talk about how He will finish His work in righteousness. When we take the responsibilities He has given us seriously, we reflect the glory of the One who has equipped us to be a blessing to those we work for and with.

I like Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of Ephesians 6:5-8: “Servants, respectfully obey your masters but always with an eye to obeying the *real* master, Christ. Don’t just do what you have to do to get by, but work heartily, as Christ’s servants, doing what God wants you to do. And work with a smile on your face, always keeping in mind that no matter who happens to be giving the orders, you’re really serving God. Good work will get you good pay from the Master, regardless of whether you are slave or free” (*The Message*).

It’s not just a job, it’s a calling

When we meet someone in a social setting, one of the first questions we ask is, “What do you do for a living?” Another way of saying it is, “What is your vocation?” The word “vocation” literally means “calling.” What we are saying is: “What is your calling?”

We usually think of a calling as being related to some kind of ministry, such as being a pastor, doctor, teacher, nurse, or evangelist. But in fact, God calls and equips all of us so that, by the quality of our work in our vocations, He is honored and we reflect His character.

By this definition of “calling” there is no distinction between a pastor and a piano-tuner, between a dentist and a dietitian, between a stock trader and a stock car driver, a missionary or a mechanic. If we are doing our jobs, obeying (serving) our masters (bosses, clients), we are involved in acts of loyalty and worship each and every day.

And that’s one of the points in the parable of the vineyard workers: while some obviously care more about collecting a pay check than serving the landowner, others are captivated by the landowner’s generosity and can hardly wait to work for him again. Can you imagine the one-hour workers saying, “Tomorrow I’m going to goof off until the ‘eleventh hour,’ then I’ll work for an hour and collect a full day’s pay”? That would show they didn’t understand the landowner at all.

For the glory of God

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) composed most of his music for worship settings. At the beginning of each of his musical transcriptions he wrote the initials JJ, Latin for *Jesu, juve* (Jesus, help me). At the end of each piece he wrote the initials SGD, *Solo gloria Deo* (Solely for the glory of God). Those initials, at the beginning and ending of each piece, indicate Bach’s dependence on God throughout the creative processes that resulted in some of the most significant and inspirational music in the history of civilization.

“And work with a smile on your face, always keeping in mind that no matter who happens to be giving the orders, you’re really serving God.”

What would happen at the beginning of each day if we made a compact with Christ, asking Him to accompany us to work and, throughout the day, relied on His guidance to solve problems and overcome challenges related to the workplace?

And what would happen if, at the end of the day, we were able to say, “Whatever good I’ve accomplished today, I want it to be for God’s glory”?

God has given us an invaluable gift in calling us and equipping us to provide useful service to our churches and communities by our vocations. Not only do we get paid for doing what we’re good at, we also have the great benefit—in the office, in the field, in the pulpit, on the assembly line, in the classroom, in the operating room, in the laboratory—of standing, shoulder-to-shoulder, with Christ.



Interruptions: Nuisance or Opportunity?

Ken W. Smith

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*At work or at home:
how to make the best
of interruptions!*

Do you ever resent being interrupted? I know I do. Interruptions can be a most unwelcome bother, but they can also be God's way of getting our attention and redirecting our steps for His purposes. Every one of us is interrupted many times each day. And sometimes we're the ones interrupting as well. Clearly there are times when we need to avoid distractions. At other times, we need to be open to the Holy Spirit's leading. But how do we know the difference?

Avoiding unnecessary interruptions

Family time should be sacred. Our family adopted a family dinnertime and simply refused to answer the phone from 6:30 to 7:00 each night. That was before the days of answering machines. But we never missed an important call. And we put a high premium on spending quality time together as a family.

You may need similar blocks of uninterrupted time at work or at home. A secretary or phone answering machine can help here. Or, if you must answer, be brief and tell your caller that you cannot talk right now but that you will return the call at an agreed-upon time later in the day.

Don't explain why you can't take the time to talk now. The caller may be convinced his or her message is worthy of immediate response and may not appreciate your priorities. You don't want to offend the person. Simply say you'll call back at a time that is mutually agreeable. God has a best time for everything, and you're just trying to be obedient to Him as you schedule when you will handle an interruption. You always retain the right to talk to anyone at any time. But many of us need to establish the discipline of not talking just because the opportunity presents itself.

E-mail can really help in this situation. E-mail can enable you to avoid being an interrupter as well. It's great for reaching many people at once, and not interrupting any of them! If you have this handy tool, you can provide information and request a response—usually in less time than a phone call—and the other person can respond when he or she is free.

Responding to telephone opportunities

Would you rather dig ditches and clean latrines than serve time as a telephone solicitor? Most of us would, and we hate to be on the receiving end of those sales calls almost as much as we would hate to make them.

I've tried every approach to handling these unwelcome calls. I was rude. I was silent. I would lay down the phone and walk away. I would hang up. I complained to the phone company. Nothing worked.

Then God gave me the answer. Now I look forward to getting these calls. When a telephone solicitor phones, I ask if they will listen to me after I've listened to them. They always agree.

When we've finished talking about what they wanted to discuss, I remind them of their commitment to listen to me. Then I ask if they know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. If they answer "no," I present the gospel. If they are local, I invite them to go to church with Pat and me. I give my testimony. I offer to send them a Bible if they will give me their address. I was really thrilled one evening when a lady working at a phone bank in Alabama gave her life to Christ. I only know her first name, but I still pray for her.

SCRIPTURE:
Proverbs 3: 5, 6

Dealing with unexpected visitors

The same principle of dealing with interruptions works for those who are on the home front. If you've developed a schedule for cleaning your house and a neighbor drops by, share your plan and offer to get together another time. Let your neighbor know she's important by making time for her. You'll also have the advantage of thinking about how you want to spend the time together. Perhaps you will have an opportunity to pray with a neighbor or introduce one to the Lord.

If you work in an office and you have a door, close it! You might even try a note that says "Please do not disturb before 10:00 a.m." If someone knocks, don't answer. All but the most determined visitors will give up. If you don't have a door, a divider or screen around your work area will help. Place your Bible in plain sight. Most visitors won't interrupt you if they think you are spending time with God.

If your visitor persists, get up and walk toward them as quickly as they enter your office or work area. Be friendly and respond politely, but briefly. If they remain in your office or work area, leave and move toward a neutral location like the water cooler or copy machine. Let your guest follow you.

If your work setting is noisy or lacks privacy, you may want to find a place other than your regular work station when you want to avoid interruption. Perhaps your boss can help you.

Avoiding distractions

Often we're interrupted because we welcome distractions. The first step in avoiding distractions is to decide in advance that you are not looking for any, and if one comes your way, you will resist it.

Many people lack focus. They do not welcome distraction, but they cannot seem to concentrate on what they are supposed to be doing and just drift off into other things. It may be just a lack of discipline. The following suggestions may help:

- Try to work in an interruption-free environment. Avoid radios, TVs, stereos
- Resist talking to other people
- Organize your desk or work area and keep it free of clutter
- Establish a written plan for your time. Work from an outline
- Use a straightedge to help you read
- Plan periodic breaks to get up and walk around, but return promptly when it's time
- Get plenty of sleep at night
- Establish the habit of doing the same thing at the same time each day
- Keep track of your time and how you spend it
- Use a timer to break your work up into fifteen or thirty-minute segments

If you suspect you may be distracted because of a medical problem, have your eyes and ears examined. Consult a Christian psychologist who can look at your situation from a spiritual perspective. Or seek help from the Lord. Ask God to give you supernatural insight into what is causing you to fall prey to distractions. Is it disobedience in your life? Is it something that only He can reveal to you?

*As often as not, the way
God informs us
of the differences between
our plan and His
is through interruptions!*

Living amidst interruptions

Of course, there are times when interruptions demand immediate attention—when the baby cries, a siren wails immediately behind you, or a dog barks at midnight. I don't believe God wants us to worry about those interruptions that are beyond our control. Plan your day as best you can, but don't expect that it will go exactly that way. As often as not, the way God informs us of the differences between our plan and His is through interruptions!

As we grow in knowledge and grace, we learn how to distinguish between those interruptions God wants us to resist and those that reflect His real plan for us. That is called discernment, and we all need to develop it. That can only come from spending quality time with Him on a regular basis.



For Whom Do You Toil?

Howard Dayton, CEO
Crown Ministries

Howard Dayton is co-founder
and CEO of Crown Financial
Ministries, which is headquartered
in Gainesville, Georgia.

*A biblical view of work
offers opportunity for
personal growth and
evangelism.*

First assignment

During a fifty-year career the average person spends 100,000 hours working. Unfortunately, many people just endure their work. And this is because of a worldly view of work that keeps them focused on the fact that twenty-five percent of their lives is devoted to a distasteful job. In order to find satisfaction in our work and place ourselves in a position where we can possibly earn more income, we need to understand what Scripture teaches about work.

Even before sin entered the human race, God instituted work. Genesis 2:15 says, “The Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” The very first thing the Lord did with Adam was to assign him work. Despite what many have come to think, work was initiated for our benefit in the sinless environment of the Garden of Eden. After the Fall, work was made more difficult. Genesis 3:17 reads, “Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.”

Work is so important that in Exodus 34:21 God gives this command: “You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest.” The Old Testament believer was required to work six days. In the New Testament Paul is just as direct when he wrote in 2 Thessalonians, “If anyone will not work, neither let him eat.”

A house builds a carpenter

A primary purpose of work is to develop character. For example, while the carpenter is building a house, the house is also building the carpenter. Skill, diligence, manual dexterity, and judgment are refined. A job is not merely a task designed to earn money; it is also intended to produce godly character in the life of the worker.

Scripture reveals we are actually serving the Lord in our work. Colossians 3:23 says, “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men . . . It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.” This perspective has profound implications. Consider your attitude toward work. If you could see Jesus Christ as your boss, would you try to be more faithful in your job? The most important question you need to answer every day is: “For whom do I work?” You work for Christ.

The Lord wants us to work hard. “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might” (Ec 9:10). And Proverbs 12:27 says, “The precious possession of a man is diligence.” In Scripture, hard work and diligence are encouraged, while laziness is soundly condemned. “He who is slack in his work is brother to him who destroys” (Pr 18:9).

But don’t overwork! Working too hard has reached epidemic proportions. A frantic, breathless, over-commitment to work pervades our culture. Hard work must be balanced with the priorities of our relationship with the Lord and our family.

If your job demands so much of your time and energy that you neglect your relationship with Christ or your family, then you are working too hard; perhaps the job is too demanding or your work habits need changing. Exodus 34:21 reads, “You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during plowing time and harvest you shall rest.” Rest can become an issue of faith. Is the Lord able to make our six days of work more productive than seven days? Yes! The Lord instituted this weekly rest for our physical, mental, and spiritual health.

SCRIPTURE:
Colossians 3:23

Responsibility 1: Honesty

Several work responsibilities that we have were modeled by Daniel. Daniel 6:4 tells us that “No evidence of corruption” could be found in Daniel’s work. He was absolutely honest, and we must be as well.

Responsibility 2: Faithfulness

The second responsibility is faithfulness. In Daniel 6:4, Daniel is described as “faithful.” The godly worker needs to establish the goal of being faithful and excellent in work. Then he or she needs to work hard to attain that goal.

Responsibility 3: Prayer

Thirdly, the godly worker is a person of prayer. Daniel 6:10 reads, “Daniel ... continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.”

Daniel governed the most powerful nation of his day. Few will ever be faced with the magnitude of his responsibilities and the time demands that must have been required. Yet Daniel knew the importance and priority of prayer. If you are not praying consistently, your work is suffering.

Responsibility 4: Honor

Fourthly, the godly employee always honors his or her superior. 1 Peter 2:18 reads, “Servants [or employees], be submissive to your masters [or employer] with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.” One way to honor your employer is never to participate in gossip behind your employer’s back—even if he or she is not an ideal person.

Responsibility 5: Share your faith

The final responsibility of a godly worker is sharing his or her faith. At the appropriate time, Daniel spoke of his faith in God to those around him. Listen to what King Darius said in Daniel 6:20: “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?”

King Darius would never have known about the living God if Daniel had not communicated his faith at appropriate moments. Daniel’s profession of faith in God would not have as powerfully influenced King Darius if Darius had not observed how Daniel did his work. Daniel fulfilled his responsibilities with honesty and faithfulness while honoring those around him.

Daniel influenced his employer—one of the most powerful people in the world—to believe in the only true God. You have that same opportunity in your own God-given sphere of work. Let me say this another way. A job well done earns you the right to tell others you work with about the reality of Christ. As we view our work from God’s perspective, our potential to earn more income increases, dissatisfaction turns to contentment from a job well done, and drudgery is replaced with excitement over the prospect of introducing others to the Savior.

If you could see Jesus Christ as your boss, would you try to be more faithful in your job? The most important question you need to answer every day is: “For whom do I work?” You work for Christ.

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Resolving Conflict

*Steve Marr, President
Business Proverbs Management—
a company providing biblical consult-
ing to ministries and businesses.*

*To learn more, visit their website at
www.businessproverbs.org.*

*Too often, even within
the church, unresolved
conflict creates
workplace tensions*

Introduction

Tom was the pastor of counseling in a growing suburban church. Because he wanted to protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals in the congregation who came to him for marriage counseling and other personal issues, he would frequently schedule appointments away from the church office. Often, these appointments would stretch over several hours, during which time he was absent from the office. Unfortunately, Tom also struggled with his personal time management, occasionally arriving late for appointments and appearing disorganized.

Over time, the administrative pastor and the church secretary, who usually had to “cover” for the counseling pastor, became angry. Although they both agreed that something should be done, neither was willing to confront Tom about his absences or other problems.

A year had gone by when the senior pastor finally stepped in to investigate an increasing number of complaints. When Tom defended his habits as part of his job and seemed unwilling to change, the situation quickly became heated. Ultimately, the only feasible solution was to dismiss Tom.

Too often, even within the church, unresolved conflict creates workplace tensions. Issues that should be dealt with between individuals become staff-wide or church-wide problems. And when the principal parties won’t face the issues and resolve the situation, the senior pastor or board of elders must get involved. In the end, failure to resolve such conflicts affects everyone—pastors and staff, as well as parishioners.

Handling a situation like Tom’s may never be easy. On-the-job confrontations seldom are. However, if a biblical pattern of conflict resolution had been followed, the church would not have encountered such severe difficulties, and the pastor of counseling could have stayed on as a productive team member.

Conflict in any organization is inevitable. Everyone has his or her own perspective of the events and people that make up the workplace. These different perspectives don’t always mesh. In spite of disagreement, the key to growth and progress is to ensure that whatever the conflict, it is resolved in a positive way. The process is just as important as the end result. Even if the ultimate solution is not pleasant, the process of resolving the conflict can be a positive experience.

Three biblical principles govern the conflict resolution process. Implementing these principles can avoid the potentially divisive course of having a conflict spread throughout the congregation.

Principle 1: Deal with conflict right away

Jesus was attacked by the Pharisees many times. Each time, His strategy was to confront the issue immediately. He never let anything “slide” for the sake of “keeping peace.” With wisdom and enviable precision, He faced each confrontation when it occurred.

While the memory of an incident is fresh—act quickly—because time has a way of rewriting the “facts.” When we hold onto an offense or delay confronting wrongdoing, our minds build on the foundation of frustration until the whole situation becomes distorted. If we fail to act promptly when we have been wronged, we give our anger an opportunity to grow and increase the chance that we will act

SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 18: 15, 16

inappropriately when we finally do confront the issue. Most importantly, when we fail to act quickly we lose the opportunity for immediate improvement of the circumstances. Had either the administrative pastor or the secretary acted quickly to resolve the conflict, the misunderstandings would likely have been alleviated and the scheduling problems would have improved measurably.

Principle 2: Deal directly with the person who has offended you

Jesus tells us “If your brother sins, go and reprove him in private” (Mt 18:15, NASB). We must develop the biblical habit of going to the person who has erred or wronged us. *Who else can immediately change the situation?*

Explain your perspective of the issue clearly and calmly. Stick to the facts and explain the circumstances that have caused the problem. Recommend a solution. Stay positive by focusing the conversation on solutions rather than attacking the person or the problem. Avoid stating how you feel and how you are personally affected, or you and your colleague could easily digress into a personal conflict.

If you are unsuccessful in dealing directly with the person, continue to follow the scriptural model and “take one or two more with you” (Mt 18:16, NASB). Talk to your associate pastors or staff members and request a meeting to openly discuss the issues. Remember, the only one who can effectively change the person’s behavior is the person himself. The purpose in bringing others into the discussion is to establish the facts of the case and bring a balanced perspective, not to exert additional pressure. Do not fall into the temptation to discuss the issue with others just to “let off steam”—this is gossip, and it will only make the situation worse.

Principle 3: Deal with an issue completely

Don’t leave loose ends or “wobble room.” Make sure each person involved understands the issue. Ask everyone to state his or her understanding of the issues. When a solution is chosen, ask each individual to clarify his or her understanding. Have everyone verbalize their agreement with the steps to be taken, then set a time frame for these steps to be completed.

If future actions are to be different to avoid problems, clearly confirm the future change. It is a good idea to document the conversation in a memorandum to avoid further misunderstandings. A great meeting is often ruined by failing to follow through.

When you are determined to deal completely with a challenge so that it will not resurface, a deeper issue may emerge. It is only when the *real* issue is addressed that the conflict can be fully resolved; so be alert to the possibility of a deeper issue.

Tom’s desire to protect his counselees was admirable, but his methodology wasn’t. Setting limits early on through appropriate confrontation might have averted the year-long problem he created.

The church will never be a perfect place as long as imperfect people are involved. But your efforts to resolve on-the-job conflict can make it a better place for everyone. The next time difficult issues arise, remember: deal with the issue right away; speak only with the people directly involved; and make sure the situation is resolved completely. Then sit back and watch your church grow.

If a biblical pattern of conflict resolution had been followed, the church would not have encountered such severe difficulties, and the pastor of counseling could have stayed on as a productive team member.



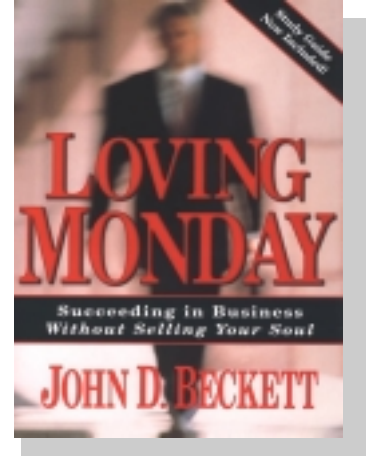
Loving Monday

Reviewed by *Benjamin C. Maxson, Director
General Conference Stewardship Department*

John Beckett's *Loving Monday* is a powerful and practical book on integrating God and faith values into everyday life. In narrative style, Beckett employs his own journey in the business world to demonstrate the very real struggles one faces. He shares practical tips for making God real in the workplace—thus transforming it. The author practices his basic belief that the Bible can be used as a guide for doing good business. His “main mission in life is to know the will of God and to do it.”

The book is organized into four sections, outlining principles and providing illustrations of their application. Part One, “Foundations,” describes the experiences which led Beckett to discover and develop the principles that would become the guiding ethics for his business. Part Two, “The Big Picture,” is an extremely valuable comparison of two philosophical perspectives. The first is common in our day, compartmentalizing work and faith in two separate and distinct arenas—two worlds. The second perspective integrates work and faith in a remarkable and compatible way. Part Three, “Applications,” explores how to apply foundational truths, deeply rooted in Scripture, into every aspect of daily life. Part Four, “The Wrap-Up,” ties things together and looks at applying these principles to people in business.

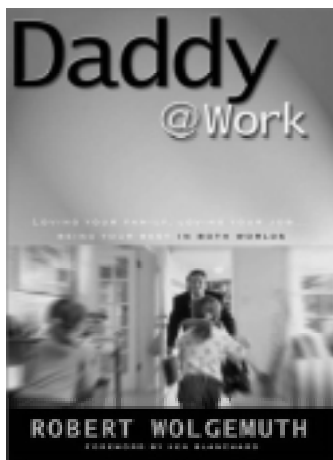
This is a book that I believe every Christian should read. It is time to integrate faith and daily life, and Beckett has given us an excellent example of this journey.



by John D. Beckett
InterVarsity Press
Downers Grove, Illinois
1998 \$15.99

Daddy@Work

Reviewed by *the Staff of Dynamic Steward*



by Robert Wolgemuth
Zondervan Publishing House
Grand Rapids, Michigan
1999 \$16.99

The title of this book did not fully prepare me for what I was about to find, but I was pleasantly and thoughtfully surprised. *Daddy@Work* is about cross-training. What does a father learn at home that he can use in his business practices, and what does a businessman learn at work that can be of value in his parenting skills at home?

If you read this work, you will find out. Robert Wolgemuth's approach is creative and meaningful. The book's subtitle is “Loving Your Family, Loving Your Job ... Being Your Best in Both Worlds.” In other words, says the author, “You can be a good dad and a successful businessman by being the same person in both places.”

The book is filled with stories that explain how this can happen. Wolgemuth discusses the benefits of protecting the rights and privacy of those you work with as well as your children, and he tells how his daughter taught him this important lesson. He also talks about conversation—really listening, and not just waiting for a place to jump in and take over the conversation. He speaks of affection, discipline, laughter, faith, and conduct in both of these important worlds—always sharing lessons learned in one and carried over to the other.

The quotes in the book are excellent. I highly recommend this work—for both Daddies and Mommies who care about their families and their co-workers.

Things Unseen

*Reviewed by Claire L. Eva, Assistant Director
General Conference Stewardship Department*

Mark Buchanan's *Things Unseen: Living in Light of Forever* is exceptional. There are few books I've read of late that have been so meaningful. The author-pastor is not only a gifted writer, philosopher, and storyteller—he is God's man. He describes what it means to be heavenly minded. I confess, I had not realized so many Bible passages center in this subject. Says Mark:

"Heavenly-mindedness is sanity. It is the best regimen for keeping our hearts whole, our minds clear. . . . Only those who fill their hearts and minds with heaven can want or even recognize its earthly counterpart. . . . To be of real earthly good requires a certain fearlessness: a freedom from the fear of death, from the loss of property or status or title or comfort, from the threat of tyrants, the power of armies, the day of trouble."

Buchanan says that "our deepest instinct is heaven. Heaven is the ache in our bones and the splinter in our heart." The book's four sections are: 1) Heaven-Haunted: Missing Things Unseen 2) Heaven-Struck: Seeing Things Unseen 3) Heaven-Sent: Being of Earthly Good and 4) Heaven-Bent: Living in the Light of Forever.

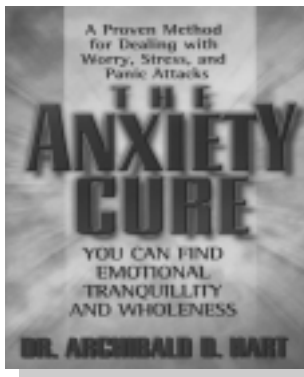
If you want to encounter a transparent, healthy honesty, feel the breeze of a fresh new way to see, and live with eternity ever in view, you will find it here. The Spirit working through this writing has lifted me and given me new vision, new hope.



by Mark Buchanan
Multnomah Publishers
Sisters, Oregon
2002 \$12.99

The Anxiety Cure

*Review by Dr. Delmer Holbrook
Retired President of Home Study International*



by Dr. Archibald D. Hart
Word Publishing
Nashville, Tennessee
1999 US \$13.99

Anxiety, worry, and panic attacks are leading emotional problems in our breakneck, high-speed world. They comprise the number one emotional problem for women and are second only to substance abuse in men. *The Anxiety Cure* is a very readable, sensible text that practically covers the entire field regarding anxiety.

This book is for everyone! Whether you are a worrier or not, there are almost certainly worriers all around you. Hart makes the point convincingly that our brains have their own system of natural tranquilizers, and popping pills isn't the best way to go. The chapter, "A Seven-Week Plan for Breaking the Worry Habit," is worth the price of the book alone. Dr. Hart builds his message solidly on biblical principles and reflects a lifetime of experience in counseling the worried, the fretful, and the anxious. Read it! It could very well change your life.

AdventistStewardship.com

Have you visited our website to see the resources we have available for you? All of the *Dynamic Steward* (DS) journal issues are there in pdf format. Since our last issue, this site is completely updated and each DS is listed by theme. Also, the components of DS—sermons, book reviews, concept articles, et cetera—are listed separately. The Tithe and Offering Readings now include the readings for 2003, and we've added more special documents on biblical stewardship for your study.

Another new resource is our direct link with AdventSource so that you can purchase the stewardship materials you need on line.

Take a look and see what's new! We appreciate your comments. Please let us know how we can best serve you.

editorial

*Claire L. Eva, Assistant Director
General Conference Stewardship Department*

Are you happy in your work? With the people at your workplace? It's difficult to do anything "with all your might" if you feel discouraged or unappreciated (Ec 9:10). So you ask: "What can I do about it? What can I bring to the workplace?"

Much unhappiness at work comes from negative interpersonal relationships. I recently picked up a book with counsel that looked helpful. As I read, I was disturbed, but I wasn't quite sure why. In reflection, I realize that though the author has some very good points to make, he is trying to build his philosophy by criticizing another. Building on what's wrong is like foolishly building on sand.

An old song says, "Nothing comes from nothing, nothing ever could." No sound philosophy, no doctrine, especially Christ's doctrine, can be built from negativity. So where does our mission begin?

Perhaps it begins with a mission statement. Did Jesus have one? I think He did. He even read it aloud: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Lk 4: 18, 19).

Do you have a personal mission statement? Mine is in the making. I'm listening to some great audio tapes that encourage and direct the creation of such a statement. The author of my tapes travels endlessly and faces more hotel room walls and airport lines than she can sometimes bear. But then she says, "When I feel this way, I just stop and recite my mission statement several times. And do you know what? It turns me around, lifts my spirits, and puts bounce back into my life. I know what I am about. I am back on track and it feels wonderful."

Isn't that what we all want?—a positive attitude and mission, conviction that we, and those we work with, have personal value and that Christ is our Savior and Supervisor! Consider what the workplace *could* become. Life is short. Let's "proclaim the year of God's favor" to each other in our workplaces every day.

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Exploring partnership with God

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