

God in the Marketplace

“So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there”

(Acts 17:16-17, *NIV*).

Genesis opens with introducing God as Worker and Creator. He created a garden and placed Adam in it. It became his workplace. He was to tend and take care of it (Genesis 2:15). Man was given dominion over what had been created (Genesis 1:26). God came down and spoke to the gardener at his workplace (Genesis 3:8-10). Man and God partnered together to care for the earth.

“And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made” (Genesis 2:2).

In the Book of Acts, God can be identified as God at work through, and in, His church. He continues to work today. Paul and others resorted to tent-making, their secular work, to support church planting efforts and as an opportunity to witness. They took God into the marketplace. This is a tremendous model for us.

For many there is little connection between church and other areas where Christians can let their light shine and be the salt of the earth. Julian Doorey in “Faith in the Work Place” explains that “the main purpose of life is extending God’s kingdom.” This includes “loving God, loving people, witnessing, building community, seeking justice, feeding the hungry, caring for creation, working with others to produce goods and services for all to use, doing good works and of course building the church.” These are not only performed in the church, but in the workplace, as well.

Do you view your work as a way to extend and expand God’s kingdom, or meet your personal needs? Someone has said that if you will take care of God’s business, God will take care of your business.

“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:31-33).

Effective witnessing requires that we have something in common with others. Where are places where we share common ground with others?

- ~ Work
- ~ Family
- ~ Friendships

- ~ Meetings
- ~ Travel
- ~ School
- ~ Community
- ~ Neighbors

Where are you when the world needs you? God forbid that you would be hiding in the church. The light is to shine before men. This is accomplished when you get out of the church and into the streets and marketplace (Matthew 5:16). Doorey wisely explains that the church world is viewed as spiritual and divine. The marketplace world is viewed as carnal and secular. They are not supposed to be unconnected or separated. They are connected and integrated.

Harvest Field in the Workplace

Jesus commanded that we go into the whole world and preach, teach, and make disciples. How can this be done? Take the gospel to work. We need to believe God has called us to the workplace. Our occupation is the will of God for us, and an opportunity to serve Him.

Alistair MacKenzie said, "The future of the church will not be decided by what a few people called missionaries or ministers do on behalf of the rest of the church, but by the whole membership of the church living out the Gospel in the world every day."

Rev. Nathaniel Urshan, long-time superintendent of the United Pentecostal Church International used to say, "The whole gospel to the whole world by the whole church."

Harold Burke-Sivers in "Taking Christ into the Workplace" reveals, "The Christian doesn't have to move an inch to help evangelize the world. Each person can serve God and spread the love of Christ in his place of work, no matter what his job is."

Have you ever wondered what could be the result of your individual witness on the job, school, or in any other sector of life? Here is a personal testimony from the author of this book.

In 1979 I was pursuing a degree. I was doing my best to live for God according to what I knew, and did not know, being raised in an orthodox church. While looking through the local newspaper friends noticed an advertisement for the United Pentecostal Church. I knew nothing about the UPC but strongly stated, "It will be over by dead body that I ever walk through the doors of that church."

To help pay for my education I worked at a local store. On staff was a secondary school student called Lynne. There was something special about her. I couldn't put my finger on what it was that set her apart. She was different from all the other people who worked in the store and went to my school. She invited me to attend a revival at her local church. Well, I had been used to church, didn't feel that there would be any harm in that, so I agreed to go along. What a surprise! The Pentecostal service was a shocking experience compared to where I went to

church. I wasn't familiar with the loud praying, various forms of demonstrative worship, the earsplitting choir and preaching. Then there was the altar call. I had been down to the altar before, signed my name on dotted lines, and accepted the Lord as my personal savior. Each time I left the altar the same way I had gone; a sinner. This time was life-changing. There was no card to sign and I quickly exhausted all the words I knew how to pray. Then someone introduced me to Acts 2:38. I hadn't known there was a Book of Acts. This trip to the altar was different. It really should be referred to as an 'alter' and not an 'altar' because it altered my life and I was never the same. I left different that night, thanks to the power of God, the preaching of the gospel, and the witness of a secondary student in the workplace.

Lifestyle in the Workplace

It is often said that we are the only Bibles some people will ever see. People learn a lot from our examples.

Here are a few questions to ask:

1. Do you work at a job that is appropriate for a Christian? Would Jesus be willing to work where you do?
2. Do you conduct a Christian lifestyle? Are you honest and work with integrity? Do you use clean, wholesome language? Do you dress like a Christian? Are you compassionate? Do others recognize your character and say, "There is something different about him"? Or do they gasp, "What a hypocrite"?
3. Do you have a good work ethic? Are you submissive and respectful of your employer and others? Do you report to work on time? Is your conversation upright? Do you make ethical decisions and refuse to compromise?

The Voice in the Workplace

A group of people approached John and asked, "Who are you?"

John responded, "I am the voice."

They cried, "Are you the Christ?"

John repeated, "I am the voice."

Again they queried, "Who are you? Are you Elijah?"

Again John answered, "I am the voice."

Frustrated they repeated, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those that sent us."

John insisted, "I am the voice."

“In fact, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness; Make straight the way of the Lord.”

The leaders pressed John to say who he was because they were expecting the Messiah to come (Luke 3:15). But John emphasized only why he had come—to prepare the way for the Messiah. They wanted to know who John was, but John wanted them to know who Jesus was.

A witness is a voice! He shares what he has seen, heard, felt or experienced. A witness gives a testimony of something that is evidence in a case. He observes a certain event and tells about it. *Webster’s Dictionary* relates, “to bear witness,” means to “declare, on the strength of personal observation, that something is true.”

Times have changed. The Early Church could not stop telling the wonderful news, but the modern church has difficulty getting started. We need to echo the words of four lepers in 2 Kings 7:9, “We’re not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves” (NIV).

The Psalmist said, “Has the Lord redeemed you? Then speak out! Tell others he has saved you...” (Psalms 107:2 NLT).

Use your voice. Speak out!

“Go to the exiles, to the sons of your people, and speak to them and tell them, whether they listen or not...” (Ezekiel 3:11 NASU).

On a plane, a businessman sat beside a talkative little girl. After a few moments, she looked at the man and asked, “Mister, do you brush your teeth?”

Surprised, he answered, “Well, yes, I brush my teeth.”

She then said, “It’s a good thing. If you didn’t, your teeth could rot and fall out.”

After a couple of minutes of peace, the little girl continued, “Mister, do you smoke?”

“Well, no, I don’t smoke.”

“It’s a good thing, because if you did, you could die of cancer.”

The next question came sooner than the businessman had hoped. “Mister, do you know Jesus?”

He proudly responded, “Yes, I know Jesus!”

“It’s a good thing, because if you didn’t, you could die and go to hell.”

Another man came and sat beside the businessman and the little girl.

“Ask him, ask him!” the little girl said.

Reluctantly, the businessman asked, “Sir, the little girl wants me to ask you something. Do you brush your teeth?”

The man, taken aback, answered, “Yes, I brush my teeth.”

“It’s a good thing. If you didn’t, your teeth could rot and fall out.”

“Ask him, ask him,” she prompted.

“Sir, the little girl wants to know—do you smoke?”

The man answered, “No, I don’t smoke!”

“It’s a good thing, because if you did, you could die of cancer.”

“Ask him, Ask him!” she insisted.

“Shhh! That is personal!” said the fearful businessman.

“Oh, come on. Don’t be afraid. Ask him, ask him!”

“Sir, the little girl wants to know—do you know Jesus?”

“No, I don’t know Jesus. But I’ve been having serious problems for some time now, and I sure would like for someone to introduce me to Jesus.”

Way to go, little girl! God is not looking for a theologian. He’s looking for an available voice.

Practical Points for the Workplace

Let’s close with a few ways to take God into the workplace:

1. Call the names of fellow workers in prayer each morning in your private devotions. God opens hearts in answer to sincere prayer.
2. Music prepares hearts for Christ. Play Christian music from the radio, CDs, or cassettes. There is also a double blessing. Uplifting music will help you stay focused on Jesus.
3. Display free tracts or magazines in the office or workplace.
4. If you are an employer (and can) begin the day with worker devotions.
5. Offer a lunchtime Bible study.
6. Care for others. People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. Be compassionate!

- 7. Coworkers will occasionally ask you to pray for personal needs. Take advantage of the opportunity and say, "I will pray for you. In fact, let's do that right now."
- 8. Always speak positively about the church. You can't be negative about the church and expect people to join it.
- 9. Little acts of kindness open the door for effective witness.
- 10. If you have a computer at work put a Christian screensaver on it.
- 11. Look for opportunities in daily conversation to slip in a word for Christ.
- 12. Be sensitive to the Spirit. He will lead you to someone who is hungry for truth.

Study Questions

- 1. Relate or explain how God is a worker. _____

- 2. How did God work in the Book of Acts (and continues to do so today)? _____

- 3. What is the main purpose of life? _____

- 4. List three of the things included in the main purpose of life. _____

- 5. How should one view his work? _____

- 6. Name five of the places where we find common ground with others. _____

- 7. What is the difference between the way the church world and the marketplace world are normally viewed? _____

8. What is the motto of the UPCI as expressed by the late Rev. Nathaniel Urshan? _____

9. Explain the truth in the statement "The Christian doesn't have to move an inch to help evangelize the world." _____

10. State the response that John the Baptist gave to the question, "Who are you?" _____

11. What is a witness? _____

12. List five ways one can take God into the marketplace.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____
