

Every person who sets their heart to follow Jesus Christ with no reservation is a full time career minister in the Kingdom of God! We find our identity one place and one place only and that is being who God created us to be. Every one of us is a totally, one of a kind collection of abilities, strengths, talents and passions that are meant to become the pipeline through which you express and live out your Kingdom call.

The structure used to channel your personal gifts toward Kingdom purpose is your career. Your careers are defined by school grades, salary aspirations, or by mere opportunity. Your career is a custom crafted calling from God to serve Him and His designs in the world through one of thousands of occupations.

An example of this is found in the Biblical principle put forth by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the church at Colossae.

Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. ²⁴ Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ. Colossians 3:23-24 NLT

Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.” 1 Corinthians 7:17 ESV

To see what you do as being important to God you have to look at it through “kingdom glasses” so that you can see what you do as God sees it. Do you think God cares more about a preacher/pastor than He does a mechanic? I don’t think so. The fact is you may rub shoulders with more people in a factory or in a classroom or in a barber shop than a pastor does on a weekly basis. For the faithful Christian, every day must be viewed through the lens that allows us to see our days as opportunities to be used by God. When you look at your life and work through God’s perspective consider three Kingdom elements: partnership, passion and priorities.

1. A view of Kingdom partnership

We are invited by God Himself into His story on this earth. This began as far back as Biblical history. When God placed Adam and Eve into the perfect and brand-new created world He could have made the garden maintenance free. He could have just suggested to them that they kick back and relax but in fact He invited them to partner with Him in shaping and tending that paradise. Adam was invited by God to help in naming the animals and He invited them both to help in ruling the world. God has always been about partnership.

This series is a continuation of the series I started in January entitled: So You Want to be a Christian? Every Christian should know this: We are called and commanded to participate in God’s work and Kingdom on this earth. It is not optional. You did not sign up to be a Christian so that you could avoid hell. Or did you?

We have to ask ourselves daily, what role are we playing in God's Kingdom? We are to be partners with Him everyday wherever we might find ourselves. One thing you should know from the start is that partnership with Jesus in His Kingdom will involve serving. This may not be a popular notion but it is Biblical.

“We serve God by serving others. The world defines greatness in terms of power, possessions, prestige and position. If you can demand service from others, you've arrived. In our self-serving culture with its me-first mentality, acting like a servant is not a popular concept.” R. Warren

Being able to partner with God will mean that you embrace a Christian world-view. What exactly is a Christian world-view?

Before I define a Christian world-view, let me just define what it means period. Worldviews are held by many different groups, cultures and religions. Leslie Stevenson in his book, *Seven Theories of Human Nature*, lists influential thinkers who influenced whole societies. Plato saw our main problem as being the physical body and its weaknesses; for Marx it was unjust economic systems; for Freud it was inner unconscious conflicts between desire and conscience; for Sartre it was not realizing we are completely free since there are no objective values; for B.F. Skinner it was not realizing we are completely determined by our environment; and for Konrad Lorenz it was our innate aggression because of our evolutionary past. All of these theories were extremely powerful even though they were flawed because they grasped the imagination of whole societies and cultures.

To develop a worldview you will have to answer three questions:

- a. How are things supposed to be?
- b. What is the main problem with things as they are?
- c. What is the solution and how can it be realized?

Stevenson included Christianity as a “theory” but pointed out how different it is from the alternatives. He said, “If God has made man for fellowship with Himself, and if man has turned away and broken his relationship to God, then only God can forgive man and restore the relationship.”

Do you know what this means? It means that the Biblical worldview uniquely understands the nature, problem and salvation of humankind as fundamentally relational. We were made for relationship with God. (partnership) Plato, Marx, and Freud may point out some truth but as a Christian these theories of philosophy; communism/socialism and even psychology are terribly flawed. Our worldview must be based on a foundation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Only the Christian worldview locates the problem with the world not in any part of the world or in any particular group of people but in sin itself. (our loss of relationship with God) And it locates the solution in God's grace and salvation. (our restoration of a relationship with God through Christ)

- a. The whole world is good. God made it
- b. The whole world is fallen. Sin destroyed it
- c. The whole world is going to be redeemed. Jesus will return one day and restore and redeem, spirit, body, reason and emotion, people and nature. There is no part of reality for which there is no hope.

We must grasp this so that we can partner with God in His redemption of our world. If you really seek to understand this it will radically affect everything you do and say.

2. The voice of Kingdom passion

Deep inside all of us are God given dreams and motivation for a reason. You may or may not have tapped into those dreams yet. You may tend to think that your place of employment could not possibly figure into your passion for life. The fact is that whether or not this is God's ultimate destiny for you, you can serve the interests of heaven right where you are.

The key to all of this is hearing God's voice. I don't mean by that an audible voice of course, but it is about knowing, being and doing God's will.

Finding God's voice in your vocation is incredibly freeing and challenging on a daily basis.

Let me give you some examples of people who found the voice of Kingdom passion:

Bill Kurtz a public school administrator started to see that the gospel worldview could make a difference in education. It gave him a passion for inner city kids and educating those in poverty. He saw the brokenness of problems at home, lack of sleep, inadequate nutrition, and gangs on the street and realized that all of it led to rebellion and hopelessness. Most kid's attitude could be summed up in two words, "why bother."

Bill decided that the gospel could shape the culture of these kids. So in 2004, he launched a public charter high school in Denver to serve a very diverse student population. One grade at a time he helped create a culture of shared accountability and success in the school. Every morning students gather, along with their teachers, for morning meeting. Morning meetings provide an opportunity for the community to celebrate success through weekly awards, by giving shout-outs to one another for acts of service and living the school's values, and by sharing stories that point to a story of hope. But the brokenness is addressed as well. To help change behaviors where students fail to live the values of the community, students participate in public apologies where they hold one another accountable and support one another to live the school's core values better. If a student or teacher is late to school, they apologize to the rest of the community. He recognized the students' innate need to be known but held accountable and created an environment where no one could be lost in the cracks. While good teachers have certainly been key, Bill attributes the school's success to its culture and their shared, singular goal to get 100 percent of its seniors into four-year colleges. The school has seen amazing success—every

single senior in the school's history has earned a four-year college acceptance. This first school has grown into a network of six top-performing schools across Denver.

How about Milton Hershey? He founded Hershey Chocolate Company in 1903. The company prospered as did the dairy farms in the surrounding communities. When the depression hit and business fell apart, Hershey committed to not lay off his employees. Instead he created his own public works projects in the town and put the employees to work building houses, an amusement park and a hotel. Toward the end of his life, he and his wife founded a boarding school for orphans to give them practical life skills within a supportive community. The trust that runs the school owns a large portion of the company stock, so today the school is funded by dividends and stock appreciation.

A Christian worldview will not seek to see how rich one can become but will proactively seek to better those around them with one's success. It is one of the hardest things to do unless you truly have a passion for God's voice in the world.

Let me give you another example:

Don Flow put the Christian worldview to work in his automotive dealership business. The typical narrative in an auto dealership is to sell each car for the highest price you can and so sales people are rewarded for identifying and wooing the highest paying customers. Don's vision emphasized the value of a good automobile for every customer. There was a problem: Women and minorities were paying more for their cars than more negotiation savvy white males. He decided to set a flat rate on all cars – no negotiating—to effect equal opportunity pricing. He was the owner so he could make such a radical decision. Most of us may not be able to affect the company we work for directly but allowing our Christianity and a Christian worldview to shape our approach to our work is imperative to doing the work of Christ in the world.

The Bible is not a comprehensive handbook for running a business, doing plumbing, or serving patients but it does speak to an enormous range of cultural, political, economic and ethical issues that are very much part of how we all live. As Christians that make up this church or the expression of Christ's body I am calling you to start thinking and praying this way.

3. The virtue of Kingdom priorities

Wherever God may lead you to serve in your life it is critical that you embrace the virtue of Kingdom priorities. Regardless of your job requirements, your commitment Christ and His Kingdom must be the priority.

We cannot be passive or allow the values of the corporate or internal culture to define you; you must define it. You and you alone must set the boundaries and conditions under which you will work. Your hours, your travel, your ethics, your time for family and church – all of these things and more will be on you.

As an extension of God's creative work, we must labor as Christian with an orientation toward God Himself, and we must ask how we can do our work and bring glory to Him.

You and I must be honest in our dealings. Christians are honest. Christians don't lie. They don't cheat or take advantage of others. Situational ethics are not valid in a Christian worldview. Our ethics are fixed and steady. They don't come and go as the situation demands.

In fact, Christians take a stand against unethical behavior even if it costs them personal sacrifice. Fortunately for us the Bible gives us an ethical bedrock to base our behavior on. We are to be honest, compassionate and generous not because these things are rewarding (although they usually are) but because they are right in and of themselves. When we do these things we honor God and His design for our world and human life.

Bruce Waltke points out that the Bible says that "the very definition of righteous people is that they disadvantage themselves to advantage others, while the 'wicked are willing to disadvantage the community to advantage themselves.'"

We are called to a different set of virtues. I have said it before that while I certainly believe in our Constitution and its mantra of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, those things are not Biblical priorities.

Think of the tired old cliché that nobody gets to the end of their life and wishes they had spent more time at the office or at work. That is mostly true but I want to suggest to you that just maybe you could come to the end of your life and wish that you had plunged more of your time, passion and skills into work environments and work production that helped people to give and receive more love. It is a change of perspective toward the job that you do. It is coming to understand it in light of a Christian worldview.

When Frank Sinatra died in May 1998 at the age of 82 everyone agreed: There will never be another Sinatra. Sinatra had an amazing career; he even topped Elvis! He holds the record of 40 consecutive years with a song on the billboard charts. One of those chart topping songs was "I Did It My Way" a theme song for many Americans.

The opening verse says, "Now, the end is near, So I face the final curtain – My friends, I'll say it clear State my case of which I'm certain. I've lived a life that's full, and traveled each, and every highway – And more, much more than this I did it my way."

When Sinatra died, he left family and friends, plus a world full of fans who grieved his loss. He also left behind millions of dollars in cash and assets: cars, houses, land and stocks. He left all of his platinum and gold records, his Grammys, and his Oscar. When Francis Albert Sinatra died, he left behind exactly what you and I will leave behind when our days on Earth are over. HE LEFT BEHIND EVERYTHING.

Just like all of us will someday do, Frank Sinatra left this world to stand face-to-face before Jesus Christ. When God asks him, "Frank, why should I let you into my Heaven?" he won't have the

courage to sing, or even say the words “I did it my way.” When we stand before the Lord in heaven our self-achievement and accomplishments, no matter how great or small will not count for anything. What will count and what will matter on that day is that we did it God’s way. Whatever it is that we are called to do; great or small, important or seemingly unimportant, there is within each vocation a job to do for God.

God always has a Kingdom purpose behind your career, and it’s your job to pay attention, see it, and then live in it. Can you see it? Are you willing to live it out?

Reflective questions:

Does your current career provide an outlet for your spiritual gifts and ministry calling? Are you strategically positioned for Kingdom impact in our community and culture?

How can you be a conduit for Jesus’ prayer – “Your kingdom come. Your will be done” – in the place where you work and spend a great deal of your time?

Are you the same person at work that you are at church? If you are not living in the presence of Jesus with a daily awareness of His claim on your life you will live in dissonance and it will work against you positive effect on the Kingdom. And by the way this goes the other way as well. You may live more authentically at work than at church.

God has a grace for you and God has a place for you based on His unique design and creation of you.