



WORKTALK WEEKLY

27 OCTOBER 2008

Words That Need Redefining

Welcome to the New Series of WORKTALKweekly

Over the next few weeks we will have a look at a few of the common words we use to describe ourselves and see them in a different light.

2 Professional

Professional is a word with multiple meanings. Put it before "football player" and it speaks of high level, highly paid individuals. Put it before "foul" and it speaks of cynicism and poor ethics. Put it after the word "consummate" and it speaks of excellence. Place it before "fundraiser" and it arouses suspicion.

What happens if you put it before "Christian?" I suggest to you it has come to imply that a person makes a living out of their faith as employed in church or Para church work. Put it after "Christian" and you find yourself talking about someone who could be practicing any skilled activity for a living but who is also a Christian.

So how about we capture this word and learn from its layers, lessons for your week? At a basic level one of your life's' challenges is to practice your work in such a way that the positive aspects of professional - high level, excellence, skilled - are nurtured whilst cynicism and suspicion are minimised. So if anyone uses the word professional about you it will be a complement.

But the word is part of a family - so your exploration and expression of it can take on the family values. One of its relatives is the verb "to profess" which speaks of a clear, passionate commitment to a cause. An elder statesman in this word family is "professor" which implies expertise, high levels of knowledge and often experienced coupled with wisdom. A profession is both a chosen career path and a statement of belief.

Today the word professional is occasionally limited to the professions such as law, medicine, teaching or academia and contrasted with trades or businesses. Thankfully the lines are now more blurred as everyone recognizes skill when it is expressed.

So maybe it is time to train your inner voice of identity to say "I am a professional Christian" which contains in its meaning the rich repertoire of ideas upon which you can nourish your soul. Let it speak to you of striving for high skill levels coupled with high quality work carried out with excellence. Let it encourage you to connect your work with your church community by contributing gifts of talent and expertise; but, simultaneously, listen to the call to find ways to do what you do every day in a Christian spirit.

Let the whole of your work be a clear declaration of faith in which you have utter confidence and have developed a degree of maturity and wisdom.

Before this becomes too daunting a to-do list you may like to remember that all of this is possible only through the power of the one who "did all things well" working inside of you. When He does what He does you can do what you do. Then you can call yourself a Christian professional or a professional Christian, a professing Christian or perhaps even a professor of the Christian faith. Maybe that's why the writer to the Hebrews encourages you to hold on to the faith you profess.

BIBLE SECTION

Hebrews 4:14-15

14Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are?yet was without sin.

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