



WORKTALK WEEKLY

05 JANUARY 2009

Words That Need Redefining

Welcome back to WORKTALKweekly
We continue our series on words that need redefining at the start of 2009.

#10 Ownership

Hopefully it's never been said of you but you may well have said it of someone else that they "walk around as if they own the place". Spoken in irritation, frustration or merely distant observation, this phrase conjures up the image of arrogance, hubris and absurdity. So a manager can come to believe that his team or it's assets are somehow his kingdom. A director comes to believe that holding shares implies she is superior. A colleague can become extremely territorial over space or resources. Often this applies to overstepping the mark, crossing a line or invading an old tradition. Whatever the context this "anyone would think he owns the place" description is not meant as a compliment.

If ever there was a word which needs redefining now, it is ownership. This piece is being written for the start of a year - a year that promises to be one of the more difficult ones in marketplace history.

I'm going to suggest to you five categories of ownership you could consider this week and this year in order to help you reconfigure your vision of the way ahead. Because there are five things that you and I really don't own but walking around as if we did has got us where we are.

The first thing we don't own is the money. Somewhere along the line, banks lost sight of the fact that money was owned by the depositors and placed on trust with the banks. Bankers seemed to have attempted to see the money as their own to handle how they wanted.

The truth of the matter is that it neither belongs to the depositors nor the bankers. "The silver (declares the Lord Almighty) and the gold is mine". Once you clarify ownership you also determine in whose interests the money should be used. Is God in the business of corrupt speculation, deceptive derivatives and massive inequality? It is not our hard earned money at all, it is His and as we learn to handle it according to His agenda this will affect all kinds of bottom lines.

The second thing we don't own is the stock. When they were writing psalms "stock" often meant "livestock". Some people think we have moved a million miles away from such a society. If you want to test that theory see how long you can live without food.

"Every animal in the forest (game) all the cattle, the birds (including poultry) and the field creatures are mine" according to the God of psalm 50.

We, however, have acted as if the produce is simply that - farmed the livestock into hormone fuelled absurdities, ignored the seasons, created areas of gluttony and famine, and, in some cases, assaulted the food chain so radically that it lies in ruins. But once you establish ownership you understand in whose interests we should manage our stock, how it should be treated, how it is designed and how it should be distributed.

The third thing we do not own is the globe. According to David the King, who seemed to own quite a lot, "the earth (and everything in it) is the Lords". How on earth did for care for the environment become a party political issue? Perhaps because of our attitudes to money and livestock. But once you establish ownership you begin to see in whose interests it should be managed. Would the owner Himself destroy His own property? Would the owner waste His own

resources? Would the owner pollute His own space? Maybe when we realize the earth is God's back yard we will understand what the phrase "not in my backyard" really means.

The fourth thing we do not own is our bodies. Apparently, according to Saul who became Paul, someone has bought us with His life and has a claim to ownership. Once ownership is established you can begin to see in whose interest your body should be deployed, how it should be cared for, celebrated and displayed. It may help us figure out who's in charge at the beginning and end of a life and how much the in-between is worth. If a life has been bought with the blood of God it is intrinsically expensive, valuable and precious so why throw it away so cheaply at any stage?

The last of my five suggestions is that we don't own the vengeance in this world. Apparently, according to Paul writing to the Christians in the most powerful city on earth, "vengeance belongs to God". This is great news for your stress levels. Most of stress comes from a desire to do something with anger and much of it is aimed at making someone pay. But apparently the repayment authority belongs to God. Apparently also, He wants us to figure out how to forgive and become distributors of mercy rather than misery.

So five for the road less travelled this year - I'll leave you to imagine what the market would be like if we really stopped walking around as if we owned the money, the stock, the globe, our bodies and the vengeance.

It could herald a recovery
Work Well
Geoff Shattock

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BIBLE SECTION

Here are this week's Bible Sections

Haggai 2:7-9

7 I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty. 8 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the LORD Almighty. 9 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty."

Psalms 50:9-11

9 I have no need of a bull from your stall
or of goats from your pens,
10 for every animal of the forest is mine,
and the cattle on a thousand hills.
11 I know every bird in the mountains,
and the creatures of the field are mine.

Psalms 24

1 The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;
2 for he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the waters.
3 Who may ascend the hill of the LORD ?
Who may stand in his holy place?

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Romans 12:18-20

18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

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