



WORKTALK WEEKLY

13 JULY 2009

Welcome to WORKTALKweekly

Metavision 2

In a climate where finding a job is difficult and having a job is a privilege, finding meaning in a job could be considered a luxury. If you consider your own situation, however, you will be aware that it is not sustainable to keep living out a working pattern which you would describe as largely meaningless. You crave meaning - not just in theory but in practice. It is soul destroying to engage in a weekly activity which consumes a large percentage of your time, and an even larger percentage of your energy, if you see little meaning or purpose in what you do.

As a Christian believer, you run the risk of narrowing down meaning in your work by reducing the instruments of measurement to too few categories. You may have been given the impression that your meaning and purpose at work is solely to be an evangelistic presence - bearing witness to your faith to those around you. So your search for meaning becomes associated with a search for evangelistic opportunities or witnessing moments.

This, apparently spiritual, approach is very dangerous for several reasons. First, it attaches meaning to a small percentage of your activity. You are not paid to be a recruitment officer for your faith; you are paid to do a job. The vast majority of your time is taken up with the business of your job and so if you only find meaning in the fleeting moments when you are evangelizing (and this usually has been further reduced to verbal evangelizing) then you still attach little meaning to the rest of your working day.

Secondly, if you have taken this approach, you are likely to up your anxiety levels as you nervously watch for the moments and guiltily regret the missed ones. This will create a vicious circle in which you want others to be attracted to your faith but your anxiety will be less than magnetic.

Thirdly, you will find that in looking for witnessing moments you will tend to have a somewhat utilitarian approach to relationships, whereby their usefulness and significance will be judged by the progress of the Christian dialogue. This will cause you to miss the holistic nature of the people around you.

Fourthly, you will find yourself under pressure to present a positive picture of your faith when you know that the reality is rather messy and there are times when you feel yourself to be hypocritical or failing.

The result of these four features is a rather tense internal state investing meaning in a small proportion of the week and living with a general sense of inadequacy.

Another impression that you may get is that your work finds meaning in the fact that you earn funds out of which the Kingdom work can be funded. This view can be expressed from various pulpits where well meaning leaders are attempting to raise resources from the troops for the latest church related project. This relegates meaning to the level of a by-product of your work - namely your earnings.

Neither the evangelistic nor the fundraising model of work provides a satisfactory solution to the search for meaning.

What would a metavision approach mean? I suggest that one aspect of this would be to

recognize that God invites you to see your work through different lenses. The first set of lenses is that all work is to be done "as to the Lord". This means seeing the Lord as your employer and your manager for sure, but it also means seeing the Lord as a friend, companion and team member at work. Everything is done as if for Him, with Him and on His behalf - I repeat everything.

Another way to describe this would be that every task is an act of worship. In fact the whole job is an act of worship. Every email, lesson plan, item you produce, and service you render can be seen as an act of worship.

You can further use the word "service" to describe your work. The phrases "spiritual worship" and "reasonable service" are used synonymously in the bible and are wholly applicable to your tasks.

So you are not just doing a day's work you are designing a day's worship and preparing a day's offering to the Lord. This encompasses all that you do - I repeat, all.

Now look through another set of lenses. Back when God was starting off the whole work business with His acts of creation, He made stuff because He could. He designed species and created dynamics simply because the design, creation and production itself was intrinsically meaningful and good, and apparently, extravagantly enjoyable. The results were an expression of His own fertile imagination and that gave them intrinsic meaning. He didn't need to justify the creation of an elephant - it was just good.

Which brings you to the lenses of fun and enjoyment. God wants you to find ways of enjoying your work or perhaps, more accurately, to enjoy yourself in work.

When you put these lenses or perspectives together, you find that work becomes worship, service, intrinsically meaningful, and there to be enjoyed.

The added bonuses when you take this metavisision approach to your work are that your faith will become more attractive and your fundraising less of a burden. The mundane, tedious tasks and the pleasant rewarding ones can be seen simultaneously as spiritual worship and sacrificial service when you use the lenses of metavisision.

Work Well
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BIBLE SECTION

Colossians 3:17

¹⁷And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Romans 12:1

¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual[a] act of worship.

Genesis 1:21

²¹ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

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