



WORKTALK WEEKLY

13 October 2009

Welcome to the new format WORKTALKweekly

Love, Work, Puzzle 6 - Love and Work

Early on in school maths, students learn that two parallel lines never meet (except at infinity - whatever that means). Early on in the quest to solve the puzzle of love and work, many students of the subject seem to see love and work as parallel lines running side by side. Perhaps they can even be seen as a kind of railroad track along which you can run your life and take the journey to the last station with a solid sleeper connection between love (which has to do with the personal, family and social) and work (which has to do with the professional, formal and official). So love lives at home, in the bar or at a Christmas gathering whereas work lives in an office, a lab, a ward, a studio or on site.

The lines, of course, get blurred in today's work culture because now it is seen as acceptable to be friends with colleagues and, if possible, dare to enjoy the working day rather than see it as simply a money generating necessary curse to be endured until the train arrives at the station called retirement.

But blurring the lines is not the same as solving the puzzle and easing the ride is not the same as finding the right route. Suppose there is another way of seeing love and work altogether. Maybe it is not a question of blurring the lines, or narrowing the gauge, but figuring out a completely different dynamic.

Let me illustrate. Consider any human relationship you have. It may be a friend, a parent, a child or a partner. What would it take to keep that relationship healthy? It will require time, attention, focus, thought, energy, effort, planning, remembering and learning.

Now consider the best expressions of your career - the times when you found most satisfaction in what you do and achieved the most. It would include a sense of meaning, purpose, higher causes, making a difference, counting, significance, pleasure, commitment and forgiveness. There will be profound emotions associated with such achievement.

To summarise, love can be described using terms usually applied to work and work can be described using terms usually applied to love. In fact, for love to succeed it requires work and for work to succeed it requires love. So there is an element of work in love and love in work.

Neat thinking this may be, but still a blurring of the lines, albeit in a slightly more sophisticated way. What I am proposing, however, is not a blurring but a meeting of the lines - I am suggesting that love is work and work is love. More than that, I am suggesting all love is work and all work is love.

You may need some convincing here. If you believe the first and great commandment, it is about loving God with heart, soul, mind and strength. If you believe Paul's writing to the Christians at Colosse, you will see that everything you do is to be done "as to the Lord". If you agree with Paul's Roman letter, you will conclude that all of life is to be laid on the altar as an offering of love to God. If you recognize the great hymn to love from a letter to some Greek wild Christians, Paul argues that if you attempt to function without love it is just a load of noise. So all of life, every activity is about expressing love to God. All work, therefore, is love.

Now go back to your favourite people. Does it ever go wrong? Is it always plain sailing? Even relationships that are swept along by the madness of passion hit the obstacles of

reality where the only route to progress is to hew the path through solid rock. All love is therefore work.

The last thought in this piece is this. None of this either makes sense or actually works unless it is all put into the context of the divine.

It is only at infinity that parallel lines meet, but the surprise is that they don't join, they intersect. The place of intersection is the place where love and work finally make sense. Where the work of love and the love of work are revealed. There is a place where work becomes love and love becomes work and the puzzle finally is solved. The two lines don't form into one they form into a cross.

Work well
Geoff Shattock

Next week - the Cross as the Ultimate Solution

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BIBLE SECTION

Colossians 3:23-24

²³Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men,
²⁴since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Romans 12:1&2

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. ²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Deuteronomy 6:5

⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

1 Corinthians 13:1

¹ If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

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