

GETTING BACK TO THE FUNDAMENTALS OF WORK

By Robert J. Tamasy

Vince Lombardi was a legendary coach in American professional football, leading the Green Bay Packers to five championships. He possessed great expertise as a coach, but one principle he always followed was to never forget the basics. Prior to the first practice of every new season, Lombardi would always raise an object in his hand and say, "Men, this is a football."

His players knew what a football was. They had already spent many years participating in the sport. But Lombardi understood the importance of never losing sight of the fundamentals, much as a virtuoso pianist continues to practice scales on the keyboard after many years of concert performances.

In a similar way, for those of us who are called to serve Jesus Christ in the business and professional world, we too should pause from time to time to review and remind ourselves of "the basics" – the 'why' of what we do every day in the marketplace. As we enter the second half of the calendar year, here are some of the biblical principles that apply to all of us engaged in the marketplace:

Whom we ultimately work for. We typically go to work hoping to please and impress our supervisor, manager, CEO, or owner of the company. But we're told to work as if the nameplate in the boss's office reads, 'Jesus Christ.' *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward"* (Colossians 3:23-24).

Quality of our work. Consider the exquisite detail in which God has designed our world. The wonder and beauty of His work are beyond description. If the Lord demonstrates such excellence in His work, should we not strive to pursue the same excellence as His image-bearers? *"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them"* (Genesis 1:27). *"And 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"* (Colossians 3:17).

Our purpose in work. In God's eternal plan for this world, He has designed each of us with unique gifts, talents and abilities. All are intended to bring Him honor and reflect His character. *"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"* (Ephesians 2:10). *"I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well"* (Psalm 139:).

Fully equipped for our work. Education and training may prepare us to carry out specific job responsibilities, but our 'guidebook' for how we are to go about our work is God's Word, the Bible. *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Who we truly represent. When hired by a company or an organization, we are expected to properly represent our employer. Ultimately, however, as followers of Christ we are to represent the Lord, communicating the saving, life-transforming message of the Gospel to anyone and everyone we encounter. *"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God"* (2 Corinthians 5:20).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. When you got up this morning to get ready for work, why were you doing it? To earn money to pay the bills; work toward a promotion; engage in something you enjoy doing? Have you ever awakened with the idea, 'I am going to work for God'? Explain your answer.
2. How often – if ever – do you review the basics, the fundamentals of what you are doing, whether it involves your working skills, your organization's mission, or what it requires to excel at a favorite pastime? What might be some benefits of doing that periodically?
3. Can you think of other principles from the Bible that you have found useful in your everyday work responsibilities? If so, discuss one or two of them.
4. What difference does it make whether we consciously approach our work each day from a perspective of being God's servants and representatives?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages: Proverbs 22:29; Ecclesiastes 2:24-25; 1 Corinthians 3:9; Ephesians 3:20, 4:12

Challenge for This Week

Perceiving our lives and work from the teachings of the Bible is what many people term a "biblical worldview." Do you think your current worldview and approach to work reflect the principles from the Scriptures? If not, how might you try to change that? Or what areas do you think might need some improvement?

This week, consider setting aside time to discuss this with a trusted friend, mentor, or small group of people, seeing in action the principle from Proverbs 27:17, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."