

OUR PRIMARY CALLING INFORMS OUR SPECIFIC CALLING**By Rick Boxx**

Mike Sharrow, who works with business executives and helps them to achieve excellence in all areas of their lives, was interviewed in a magazine about his personal journey and calling. He told about when he struggled with a sacred-secular divided mindset and with his identity being tied to his vocation.

Fortunately, Sharrow explained, he discovered this profound insight: “If *where* you are, defines *who* you are, then maybe you don’t really understand *who* you are.” In other words, our identity – our innate sense of who we are – should not be determined by our location (where we work or live), or even the position we hold (our job title).

For one thing, where we work – what company, what office, even in what city – can change. In some cases, many times during a lifetime. So, why should our identity be defined based on where we happen to be at a specific moment. When we base our identity on where we are, when the setting in which we work changes, that can have a dramatic effect on our perception of ourselves.

This is especially true for those of us who are followers of Jesus Christ, seeking to represent Him through our work. The Bible teaches that our true identity is in being a child of God, not in our job title. *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light”* (1 Peter 2:9).

God has a calling for each one of us vocationally, and as 2 Corinthians 5:20 tells us, we are to serve as *“ambassadors of Christ”* wherever we go to work. However, our true identity and primary calling is that of a child of God.

Sports columnist, Terry Pluto wrote about visiting an out-of-town church where a young pastor preached about discovering your vocation. What stood out to Pluto during this message was that while this pastor emphasized the callings of professionals in the workplace, he overlooked the so-called blue-collar professions – such as people that work in the construction trades, mechanics, repair people, even maids and custodial staff.

People striving – and thriving – in jobs like these also have a calling from God. They too are representatives for Christ wherever they work, serving others with diligence, excellence and integrity.

I think of the plumber that visited our home when we had multiple appliances broken, which was causing considerable frustration for my wife, Kathy. The plumber was kind to say to her, “I know this is stressful. Would you mind if I pray for you?” Can you imagine someone actually doing that? That is something a true follower of Jesus might do. And it impacted my wife deeply.

In our world we tend to elevate certain professions above others, as if they are more significant. In reality, the most important job at any moment is the work that must be done right then. Including doing household repairs. As 1 Corinthians 7:17 exhorts, *“Let each one live his life in the situation the Lord assigned when God called him.”* Whether you are a businessperson, professional or blue-collar worker, God has a purpose for you and desires for you to bloom right where He has planted you.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Read the quote again, "If where you are, defines who you are, then maybe you don't really understand who you are." What is your initial reaction to that statement?
2. When we meet other people, especially in a marketplace setting, one of the first questions we often ask is, "What do you do?" meaning, "What kind of work do you do – and where?" What are the positives and negatives about asking that?
3. What would you say is the basis of your own sense of identity? How important is the kind of work you do – and where you do it – in understanding who you are?
4. How does someone knowing that he or she is a child of God influence not only their sense of personal identity, but also their perspective on their work?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages: Proverbs 18:9, 22:29; 1 Corinthians 7:21-22; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 3:17, 23-24

Challenge for This Week

Take time this week to honestly evaluate your attitude toward your work. Is it where you receive the most fulfillment – your sense of identity? Where does your faith factor in as you perceive your identity?

It might be helpful to discuss this with a close friend, mentor, trusted advisors or a small group you are a part of. Where do they get their own sense of identity?