

A Place God calls You To

Today I want to focus particularly on understanding what it means to live meaningfully in the place God calls you to. What does God think about what you do? Not so much what you do here in this church on Sundays, important as that is, but what you do the rest of today, and the rest of the week. The other 166 hours. What about your job, your work, your family, your hobbies, the little things that bring you joy and make life interesting for you? What does God think about those things? And how do those things fit in with God's calling on your life?

What does God think about your leisure activities, or your school work, your eating habits, your sleeping habits, how you manage your home or business, and how you take care of your children? What does God think about those things? The everyday, mundane, trivial things that fill our time and make up what it means just to be "human." Do those things really matter to God? And how do they fit in with the **calling of God**? These questions may have been burning a hole in your mind for a long time now. So let's examine the subject to see whether we can glean anything useful or beneficial.

Most of you love your jobs and find it hard to see how you could feel close to being fulfilled doing anything else. But you always get the impression from fellow Christians that doing business or work doesn't matter to God as much as things like prayer, and church, and Bible reading, and mission trips, and other more "spiritual" pursuits. What's more, the heroes of the faith that you heard about in church weren't businessmen, or high school students, or elderly bed-ridden people. Neither were they homemakers, bankers or lawyers, or regular people like that. They were saints, monks, missionaries, pastors, and other types of people who had committed full-time to serving the Lord. So you may be excused for feeling a little second-rate at times. After all, if you were really serious about God and His mission then you wouldn't be in a regular job. Would you? Some Christians even say that working a job was good for paying the bills, "but it was not going to count for anything in eternity."

I decided early in my Christian walk that I would never be satisfied with mediocrity, and have always desired to follow God's leading in my life. Every step I've taken has been with the confidence that God would lead and guide me all the way. I believe God led Loraine and I to stay in business after we planted the church. Even this, to many other ministers was unsettling. They could not see that God's calling may involve other aspects of one's life. So a big part of my journey was to find out what God thinks about business activities. That is the same as knowing what God thinks about your daily activities, whether it is taking care of kids, comforting your friends, doing your chores, or whatever it may be. And not just work, but the seemingly insignificant part of your life that makes you – you.

In this regard, I continue to ask questions. And I think God has opened my eyes to some insights that confirm I'm on the right path (in His will). I know that, because my thinking was slowly being transformed, that my whole outlook on life was being affected also. I now feel that I am a better pastor, husband and father as a result. And I would like to share a couple of these truths with you, in the hope that God will inspire you. I believe that you can join me in this quest to uncover the glory, sacredness, and significance of everyday life. Like all Christians, I'm sure you've prayed the Lord's Prayer, yet have you ever stopped to think about your request for God to provide you with your daily bread? Matthew 6:11 says, "**Give us today our daily bread**" (NIV). So simple, so profound, but how does God answer that prayer? Because, He does – right? Every day we not only have the food we need and our basic necessities provided, but we have much more

beyond.

God answers that simple prayer through the work of others. God is at work answering that prayer through the farmer, truck driver, granary employees, bakery staff, quality control people, packaging workers, and many unknown others long before you even pray that prayer. If you asked any of them, they would say they are just doing their job. And maybe just because they are trying to make ends meet. But the reality is that God is at work. Through the ordinary work that is done by ordinary people who may not even profess faith in Him - God is at work to provide your needs. That giant interconnected network of business relationships and exchanges is how God answers that prayer. Every day! God is hidden behind everyday things, and ordinary people. Theologian Karl Barth said, *“The Christian knows that all work, even that of the non-Christian, has meaning and necessity as ordained by divine providence with a view to this goal [the coming of his Kingdom]. He regards the work of all men as their preparation for the service in which he is engaged as a Christian.”* So God answers your simple prayer for daily bread through **the work** of so many others. In Matthew 22:37-38 Jesus answered the question, **“What is the greatest commandment in the law?”** with the statement, **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”** This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: **“Love your neighbour as yourself.”** It's good to start with the second commandment to love our neighbour!

I now know that my business activities are a key way, in fact the chief way, in which I can fulfil the commandment to love my neighbour. The beauty of this is that I can love my neighbour by employing my professional skills, experience and passion by doing the very things I enjoy most. When I find and negotiate the best deal, when I pursue excellence in what I do, I am loving not only my colleagues, but their customers, their shareholders, and other clients. Some of whom I may never meet. Also, in my calling as a husband, when I serve my wife by spending quality time with her, I am obeying that commandment. And in my calling as a father, listening to music with my daughter Xana also fulfils the commandment. God uses any good thing I do to create value. So it all matters. All of it!

When ever you serve, you are most accurately reflecting the character and nature of God. So whatever you do, whether it is pouring coffee, or visiting someone in hospital, or helping another student with their study, or caring for someone who is sick, or teaching third graders, or playing guitar in a coffee shop, playing well on a sports team, or just spending good time with friends. All of these human activities are ways of serving others, and thus loving them. That gives each activity a unique sacredness, because God partners with 'servers'. When we do this, we are putting the same value on things that God is. But what about loving God? (the first and greater commandment). How does this fit into what we are saying? In the very beginning in Genesis 1:28 the first man and woman are together commanded by God to work creatively in relationship with each other to fill the earth and subdue it. They are to rule over God's creation and shape it as they best see fit. It says just after this in verse 31 that **“God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.”** The creation of humanity (as imitators of God), in creating new relationships and cultures and work environments was a good thing. Work is not the result of sin, though our sin can sometimes make work, or school, or whatever we do, harsh and unproductive and unfulfilling. But the image of God is still there in people. And **creation**, despite being corrupted by sin, is still good.

One day God will, through the resurrected Christ, complete the healing and restoration of what He has made. Romans 8:21 says that **“the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage of decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.”** Then our relationships, our work environments and our

cultures will truly be **right** - the way God originally intended them to be. So one way we can **love** God is to pour our heart and soul (and mind) into whatever things that God gives us an ability to do. Not something that would take the place of God and become an idol in our life, but rather something we delight in doing that brings us **closer to God**. When we imitate the creativity and excellence of God in enjoying everyday things, we are most truly what God made us to be. Every day activities are another way in which you and I can work out the image of God that resides in you. It doesn't even have to be what you would normally think of as a "spiritual" activity. This is because when we are in Christ, which we are as His followers, so all of life is spiritual and sacred because it all belongs to Him. Colossians 3:23-24 says, ***"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. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."*** Ephesians 2:10 says, ***"We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."***

So, what does God think about what we do? The everyday, mundane, trivial things that fill our time and make up what it means just to be "human?" Those things do matter to God, so they should matter to us too. In the place God calls us to, we can feel God's **pleasure** in what we do, even when those things seem so ordinary to us. All of our service in the kingdom is inherently valuable, whether it is in sacred or secular realms, whether it receives a greater or lesser return. Our responsibility is to plan for the long haul and use our 'giftedness' to advance to kingdom of God." Thus those of us who are followers of Christ, every part of our life is infused with the presence and power of God. **We just need eyes to see it.**

"If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; they loose their way. But when they attend to what God reveals, they are most blessed." (Proverbs 29:18) Paul said to the Ephesians, ***"have the eyes of your heart enlightened to know the hope to which He has called us and His incomparably great power for us who believe."***

In my many interrelated callings as pastor, husband, father, businessman, etc., I sense a deepening awareness of the working of God in the everyday things in my life, an awareness of the sacredness of the everyday. We can all be confident that we are able to participate as co-workers in His mission to restore all of creation back to Himself in Christ. Why? Because God is hidden, yet active, active behind everyday work, the mundane things and ordinary people. People like you and me.

I read a quote by Frederick Beuchner that said, *"The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."* Have you found that place?

THE PLACE GOD HAS CALLED YOU TO IS THE PLACE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW! So enjoy the moment...