



solutions that transform

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Gleanings

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A Priceless Christmas Gift

Frank called to ask if I knew of any job openings. During the course of the conversation, he also asked if I would review and critique his resume. But more importantly, he wanted to know if any of my clients or business contacts needed someone with his skills. After all, for Frank the bottom line was that he needed a paycheck and to receive a paycheck he needed a job.

For most of us, a job is simply a way to earn a living. A job is a chore—a task that is frequently laborious and often not enjoyable. One survey concluded that 84 percent of workers do not have their dream jobs.* This suggests that they do not like their jobs, or at the very least, would be happier doing something else. Why is this?

One possible explanation is that we have the wrong view of work. The common view of work is that it has little purpose other than to make money; hence, work is simply a utilitarian function of life. There is therefore no transcendent meaning—no redeeming purpose and no eternal value to work.

The concept of purpose in life implies a God who establishes that purpose. Atheists reject the concept of purpose because they reject the concept of God. Life and work, therefore, have no purpose or meaning.

There are some theists—those who believe in God—who also reject the idea of purpose in the workplace. While they don't reject the idea of purpose in life, they believe that God does not value the workplace; hence, there is no significance to work. But is this true?

For this to be true, one must conclude that God does not value His physical universe. But such a view would be contrary to Scripture. For example, in the creation account in Genesis 1, at the end of each day God declared that His work was good. At the end of the sixth day, He declared that the physical universe was very good. Clearly, God valued His physical universe.

Furthermore, Genesis 1:26–28 tells us why God made man—to rule God's physical creation. Man's rulership is to be expressed by multiplying (growing) and subduing (mastering) the creation. Hence, human dignity and man's purpose as a created being are inseparable. God so valued His physical universe that He created man to manage and master it.

A biblical view of work is that it is a divinely ordained activity. Work is not simply a utilitarian activity that facilitates making money, but it is an assignment given by God to man.

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Since God creates each of us individually, it follows that each of us has a divinely ordained work assignment. Furthermore, each of us was created for our individual work assignment. Our assignment is specific to each of us. And since God is intentional and strategic, our gifts, talents, personalities—indeed all that defines who we are—were given to enable us to fulfill our divinely ordained work assignments. This means that the challenge for each of us in life is to discern that work assignment.

A key concept for each of us is to view our work, not in utilitarian terms as simply a job, but rather as a divinely ordained assignment. Our life work should be a means by which we contribute to the plan and purpose of God. This is what gives work meaning and significance.

If the surveys are correct, there is an 84 percent probability that you are not on your divinely ordained work assignment. My experience leads me to believe that the surveys are optimistic. Anecdotally, I think that the probability that you are not on your divinely ordained work assignment is actually much greater than the survey indicates. Perhaps this is why workers are preoccupied with retirement and generally frustrated and discouraged with their work.

If you feel that you are part of the 84 percent, what should you do? May I suggest that you begin by changing your view of work? Stop thinking of it as simply a job. Embrace the biblical reality that work is a divinely ordained activity that is valued by God.

Consider the words of the psalmist when speaking to God about God's creative work and God's purpose for man:

You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: Psalm 8:6 (NIV)

And consider how the psalmist delighted in God's physical universe:

Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them. Psalm 111:2 (NIV)

Work that is consistent with the plan and purpose of God has redeeming eternal value because God made man to do this work. This means that no matter what you do in life, if it is consistent with the plan and purpose of God, your work is valuable.

So give yourself—and God—a priceless Christmas gift. Start viewing work as God does. Recognize the truth about who you are and why you were created. The apostle Paul eloquently stated this reality:

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 (NIV)

If you view your work as simply a job, stop—ask God to reveal your assignment. And if you are not in your assignment, start praying and seeking God about your assignment. And until you find your assignment, be faithful to work as unto the Lord in whatever you are doing. But give yourself a great gift and make it a priority to find your divinely ordained work.

Just a quick footnote: don't let money determine your life work. All too often people make work choices based on money. Instead, allow God to reveal the work that you were uniquely created to do and accept the income that goes with that assignment as God's provision for you.

My Christmas wish for you is that you find your divinely ordained work assignment. Then your heart will sing Merry Christmas every day!

— from my heart to yours,

Merry Christmas!

* <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16795881/>

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