

Bible Study

God in the Workplace

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Presenter:

Rev. Brian R. Thompson, Sr.

Are You the Right Person **for the Job**

Perhaps a better picture of a person living out his purpose emerges from one of the most dynamic figures in all of Scripture. God uses David to teach so many truths, but it seems almost inconceivable that a man who never wore a dress suit, pushed a broom, or carried a briefcase might be our biblical model for this subject.

However, let's take a look at a passage of Scripture from 1 Samuel 16 and watch how the Old Testament hero and model of grace once again plays the part God want to highlight. His perfect employee. And he sent, and brought him in.

Now he was ruddy and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him, for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubled thee. Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on a harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him.

Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep. And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul.

And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly, and he became his armourbearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me, for he hath found favour in my sight.

And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him. (I Samuel 16:12-23, KJV).

While a young shepherd boy was receiving his first anointing, which would eventually result in his becoming king, we find the king being harassed by an evil spirit. The critical timing of these two incidents reveals the hand of God in each and the plan of God to anoint this young man to enter a hostile environment.

It is of notable interest for us that David is already God's chosen even though someone else is occupying his space. At only age fifteen, David is about to become equipped for his destiny, which begins with simply playing a harp for the troubled king. David, who would be king, begins his journey to greatness by being faithful to what might have seemed to some mediocre and mundane. Yet God often prepares us for greatness by teaching us faithfulness in a substandard situation. It doesn't matter where you start. It only matters where you finish!

Help Wanted

According to most sources, you will spend over half your waking life on the job. Think about that for just a *moment*—*over half your life*. That's more time that you spend at home with those you love the most!

Imagine sitting at your desk amidst all the spreadsheets, hiding out in your cubicle with your keyboard, or sweating in the factory on the assembly line year after year after year. While most experts agree that the average adult will only spend about seven years with the same employer before changing jobs, this is still an astounding amount of time spent in any one workplace. And from what I've experienced myself in corporate America for 15 years, I know what it's like to experience trials on the job. If you don't like your job and the challenging environment in which you are forced to work, you are not alone.

I have learned a great deal about what it means for a believer to endure a difficult work environment. Missed deadlines, petty supervisors, conflicts with coworkers, overblown budgets, and frayed nerves become the constant land mines waiting to detonate each day. Not only do we experience the usual frustrations, office politics and administrative red tape that every working person endures, as Christians we often find our values clashing with those around us, our faith conflicting with the office status quo. We often find ourselves in the midst of a spiritual battlefield. We need to know how to equip ourselves for the battle, how to prepare ourselves for the fight, and how to balance our expectations about what our job provides for us with the attitudes about what we provide for our jobs. We need to let go of our "hire power" and turn to the Higher Power of the Lord our God.

Know that You are Anointed for the Job Or Position You Now Hold

While it's human nature to think that the grass is always greener, I believe that it's one of the first areas where we must take control of our response to our present workplace.

You may be thinking, "Thompson, surely the Lord doesn't want me to be sweating for Minimum wage?" or "Surely God doesn't intend for me to work in this prejudiced, unfair environment where unethical practices are the norm?"

My answer is that ultimately no, God wants much more for you than what your present workplace requires you to endure. The reality is that God often uses ordinary circumstances as a training ground to perfect our character. Furthermore, I have known Him to use some of the worst situations in my life to shine through me to others. Your presence in your current workplace may be so that you can be as a light in an otherwise dark and foreboding environment.

It's far too easy to complain and grumble about your present position, whether it be as night shift cashier at the 7-Eleven or CEO of a Fortune 500 company, without appreciating how you got there. I encourage you to spend more time, before you go any further, reflecting on and giving thanks for all of the contributions that your families, friends, teachers, coaches, and mentors have made in your life. Perhaps they have not given you exactly what you would like or as much as you'd like, but all of us have received something that enables us to be where we are at this present moment.

I exhort you to release any notion of victim hood that may be stalking your mind, laying claim to your peace and robbing you of your contentment. Your agony might have been your ancestors' ecstasy.

Your job, in spite of all of its problems, would have been the dream of our forefathers. In fact, many of you may have prayed over the application to get the job that you now loathe. God is no respecter of persons, you are not entitled to a life of independent wealth or irresponsibility. Every gimme has a gotcha and when all is said and done, no one wins by accident.

Good Work

Part of our discontent often stems from the media image that a “successful” person doesn’t need to work. While it’s true that some independently wealthy folks don’t have to work to earn an income upon which to live, they nonetheless have a job to do. You see, everyone is created for a Divine purpose, regardless of how much money is in their bank account.

Perhaps you have heard it preached or read in Scripture that work resulted from the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden when they ate the forbidden fruit. God tells Adam, “Cursed is the ground for your sake, in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread...”

Troubleshooting

David did not attempt to pray away his problem. If David had prayed away Saul’s evil spirit, he also would have prayed away his opportunity to serve God in that environment and the ones to follow. David knew God was up to something good, so he kept his joy, tuned his ear to God, and found out what the moment demanded in order for God to show up. God is a trouble shooter, so when He sees trouble, He send a shooter.

He knew what the situation needed and He sent in the right person—David—to do what needed to be done. Oh, brothers and sisters, get a hold of this for yourselves! Where better to be bright than in darkness? Where better to use your gifts than in an insipid, fruitless environment? God can empower you, just as He did David, to be the solution to the problem—whatever it is—so that God can be God right in the midst of the mess!

Dress for Success

Before we go any further, we need to take a long and serious look at a fundamental issue. It sounds simple, but it is a loaded question: Are you a Christian? “Christ” is not Jesus’ last name. “Christ” is descriptive of what He was anointed to do: save the people from their sins. In other words, He was anointed to carry out that redemption. David was anointed in his house to be effective on his job. And you too are anointed from a specific assignment. Being anointed means you are fully armed and equipped to do the job you are meant to do.

Every profession has its own requirements, specific tools and uniforms necessary for optimal performance. If we work on telephone poles, there’s a whole suit of clothing and protective devices for that line of work; if we work with poisons or hazardous substances, proper dress is provided for precaution against contamination of our bodies. Whether it’s the doctors in surgical scrubs or firefighters in heat-resistant uniforms, proper attire is required to carry out the job. As Christians, we also have to dress for work. No, we don’t necessarily need to fuss with our outward appearance (although dressing for success is a smart tactic, for how we’re perceived can go a long way toward helping us achieve), but we must dress up our character and spirit by “putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.” We are representatives of God, commissioned to build up

His Kingdom. We must drape ourselves in His glory and let our actions indicate that we are on this job carrying out the orders of our Lord.

The world is totally confused about who Christians are, and these misconceptions are continually fed by our inability to step out in our true colors and show up for what we really believe. Your workplace doesn't need a sermon, they could get that on television. Your job, however, is your pulpit. How you conduct yourself should serve as a testimony to God's will.

Don't Expect To Be Appreciated

Many people complain that their job doesn't satisfy them because no one in their workplace appreciates what they contribute. They say things like, "If my supervisor only realized how much I give to this team..." or "I wish my coworkers would acknowledge my contribution..." and "it would be nice to get a little credit for all that I do." While I understand the innate craving to be recognized, appreciated, and valued for what we do, I'm afraid these folks are in for a rather rude awakening. You see, when this desire becomes the condition upon which their contentment rests, then they have bought into a falsehood that can threaten to keep them in a place of misery.

Our workplace is not the place to be affirmed. If we go back to David, we'll see that he was affirmed at home, not in his new place of employment. He was anointed before he ever got to the king's palace. This enabled him to serve, to give, to provide his skills for his new boss, the king, rather than expecting Saul to provide for his needs. No, David's fundamental need to know who he was and what God had in store for him had already been established. This youngest of many brothers, overlooked by his own father while he herded sheep out in the hills, had been chosen by God.

Now if anyone had reason to go into a job with some major expectations, it's someone like David, whom God has anointed as the next king of His people. If you or I were walking in David's sandals, it would be oh-so-tempting to demand respect and subservience from those in the palace where we would soon rule.

Talent Show

And this is another problem with thirsting after appreciation on the job. It gives others such power over us, power to define us and to influence our self worth. We become people pleasers and not God pleasers. It's awfully hard to hear God's voice often directing us against the tide of popular opinion, when we have tuned our ears to only respond to the boss's voice, the team leader's assessment, or the customer's remarks. In His Word, God frequently reminds us that we are to seek Him first rather than the approval of others. "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Whether you're pushing a broom across an elementary school floor or planning a million-dollar budget for your company's next fiscal year, you should do it as unto the Lord. For His glory. Not for your own. Not even for your employer's glory. But for God's and His alone. When you experience His pleasure in what you're doing, even if it's something you hate doing but know that it's where you should be at the present moment, then you won't need the affirmation from your coworkers.

Don't Take It Personally

A job should not be the source of your affirmation. Get that clear in your mind. Now if you get appreciated or affirmed, wonderful. But I can promise you that if being appreciated is your sole reason for performing and working, God will have people overlook you until you get the order of work straight in your mind. You can get appreciated at home, by your friends, your family, or your volunteer group at the hospital, But work is just what it sounds like: work. You are on that job to give and to give and to give some more. A job is not a personal environment. It is a professional environment. Don't let that job affect who you are; you are sent to bring in godliness, not get gratification for personal needs.

One of the absolutely surest ways to become disappointed is to make our expectations so unrealistic that we are continually depressed. Too high expectations lead to frustrations. Spouses set them up for marriages; parents for children, children for parents; church folk for pastors, pastors for church folk, people for jobs. A job should not be your identity. It should be an environment for you to exercise your gifts. up for marriages; parents for children, children for parents; church folk for pastors, pastors for church folk, people for jobs. A job should not be your identity. It should be an environment for you to exercise your gifts.

Embrace Opportunities for Change

One of the greatest sources of friction in many people's work environment is change. Just when you get on solid ground with your manager, she's promoted and you have to learn to relate to her successor. Just when you complete that big project and look forward to some downtime, a new and bigger account takes its place. Just when you thought you had the office politics figured out, your company is

bought out by another corporation. An on and on the cycle of change spins, leaving us dazed and unsettled by its turbulence.

Much of this friction is caused by our expectations and our desire for things to go smoothly. It is indeed ironic that out of our desire for stability, security and predictability we set ourselves up for instability, uncertainty, and surprises. Perhaps if we adjusted our expectations to be more realistic, we wouldn't be so traumatized when change comes. And rest assured—it will come. We should expect change in our workplace and know that only God can serve as our secure anchor, our unshakable, immovable rock.

So often we view job security as the be-all and end-all, the condition upon which we can finally rest and coast through our remaining time in the workplace. Once we become used to the personalities of our coworkers or team members, we want them to remain in place, stay the same, and require nothing more out of us than what we've given in the past. *Even when our work environment is hostile, as long as it's predictable, many people grow accustomed to it and lose sight of their purpose for being there.* You may even realize that much of your job dissatisfaction stems from boredom, from being stuck in a rut, locked inside the box instead of having the freedom to risk thinking outside it. But nonetheless, you know what to expect and would rather be bored and stifled from reaching your full potential than face the discomforting dynamics of change.

Stay in Character

Like Moses' journey from the flocks he had been tending to the foyers of a royal palace, David also faced an abrupt change of locale. And with this scene switch, all the rules seem to have been changed. Where once David fought bears and lions preying on his sheep, suddenly he finds himself confronted with an evil-afflicted king bent on the young

shepherd's destruction. Where once he had been out beneath the stars composing poetry in praise of his God, David finds himself in a standing-room-only concert for one as he plays his harp to soothe the savage Saul. Where once he had been the youngest, most overlooked member of a large family, David finds himself anointed for the highest position in the land, with authority over every member of the nation.

Even in the midst of all these changes, David grasps the fundamental truth of the situation quicker than Moses seems to have processed it. *He was the man for the job!* It's that simple. Time and time again, we must remember that when God anoints us for a position (our first commandment of working in a hostile environment, then nothing can ultimately stand in our way. In fact, if Moses is an example, we may be our own largest obstacle to getting the job done. Our perception of ourselves, if not based on faith in what we cannot presently see, will cause us to limit ourselves and undermine the blessing and success that God has planned for us. We are short-circuiting our own destiny, pulling the plug before the on switch has been flipped, all because we don't think we're adequately equipped for the job.

Additional Thoughts About God in the Workplace

- **Telling your boss and others what God says**
- **Laying on hands**
- **Scripture or directed message screen savers**
- **Dating coworkers**
- **Going to office parties**
- **Sharing personal stories**
- **Sharing stories about church or issues with church**
- **Falsifying timesheets**
- **See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil**
- **Praying on the job**