

Dear Friend,

A student leader within the Campus Crusade for Christ movement we were leading at a state university, I'll call her Sue, came to visit Jane shortly after the birth of our third child. In the course of their conversation, Sue asked Jane, "How does it feel to not be able to be involved in ministry any longer?" Jane asked her, "What do you mean?" "Well," she said, "all you do is take care of children and your home. You don't get to be involved in ministry any longer, like sharing the gospel or leading Bible studies." Jane looked at her and said, "Is that what we've taught you?" The sad reality was that was exactly what we had taught her to think.

We had taught her and countless other students that the only work that mattered to God was "spiritual" work, such as doing initiative evangelism, meeting for one on one discipleship appointments, leading a Bible study, planning an evangelistic strategy to reach a residence hall. We taught that while God could use you if you graduated from college and pursued a career in engineering or teaching or some other profession, he preferred that people become missionaries. We would communicate that if you really want your life to count for God then you won't waste it building cars but will be a full time Christian worker.

We were teaching an ancient error, one that has plagued the Christian church throughout history and which still flourishes in the thinking of many, if not most Christians. The error has expressed itself in many different observable practices, from desert hermits, to monastic orders, to pietistic missionary movements, to mega-churches with their "gift" identifying ministries and human resource departments which aim to fit "gift" with "ministry".

The biblical fact is that all lawful (not inherently sinful like shoplifting or counterfeiting or prostitution) work matters to God and is used by God to accomplish his will in his world. Work matters to God not because of its evangelistic potential or its direct spiritual influence on people but because the world and all it contains belongs to God. He is caring for his creation and building his church and he is doing it by means of the work of human beings.

The Christian recognizes that all that I am and all that I have belong to God. I am called by God to serve him at every moment of every day in every work that God has given me to do. That is a critical thing to recognize. Whatever work I am engaged in, God is the one who has called me to it; entrusted me with it. He is the one to whom I will answer. He is the one I am serving (1 Corinthians 7:20-24, Ephesians 6:5-9, Col 3:17-4:1, 1 Peter 4:8-11). There is no irrelevant work, no moment of time that God does not care about (Ephesians 5:15-17).

It is this understanding of God's relationship to humans and their work that has informed value #9 of the RHCC Core Values: "We believe that all we are and have comes from and belongs to God and is to be used for his purposes. Therefore, every follower of Christ is to use his or her gifts and abilities to serve God, his people and his world in every way that he calls him or her. Also, he calls each of us to generously and cheerfully give of our financial resources for the furthering of God's work in the world."

Whereas the non-Christian is an unwilling partner in God's work of caring for his world, the Christian fulfills God's calling in his or her life willingly. For Christians, all of our work is used by God to accomplish his twofold work of preserving the created order and redeeming his people. A mother does God's creation work by providing food for her child and at the same time does God's redeeming work as she talks with her child of God's love in Christ. The engineer does God's creation work by designing a bridge to safely carry people and cargo across the river and he does God's redeeming work by refusing to accept kickbacks from a steel manufacturer to use their steel in the construction of the bridge. The pastor does God's redeeming work by preaching the gospel on Sunday morning and engages in God's creation work as he builds a swing set for his children and their friends to play on. The GM worker does God's creation work by faithfully and skillfully doing her job on the line and she joins in God's redeeming work as she leads a prayer group of women in her home in the evening.

All of my work matters to God. Therefore, I rejoice in the fact that nothing I do is worthless, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." All of my work matters to God. Therefore, I recognize that I will have to answer to God for what I do and how I do it as Paul says in Ephesians 6:7-8, "Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether slave or free."

Working in the Lord with you,