

The Influence of My Job



Surveying the Site

In the last seven days, count up the hours you spent with or in the following:

- ___ your job
- ___ your spouse or significant other
- ___ your television
- ___ your children or other children
- ___ your home computer
- ___ your church
- ___ your hobby
- ___ a volunteer organization
- ___ your parents

Be honest. Write down any observations you make about how you spend your time. Did anything surprise you? How so? Share your observations with the other apprentices.



Checking Your Toolbox

For the average man, the largest single block of his time is devoted to his job. Somewhere between one-third and one-half of his waking hours is spent making a living. No wonder we are so tired all the time! When you add to the number of hours spent working each week the hours volunteered in your service club(s), the time you spend mowing the yard and maintaining your house and car, the time for a leisurely round of golf or fishing with friends and the time watching a game or two on television, there isn't a whole lot of time left for giving of one's self to God, family, and faith community. How we spend our time is a

reflection of what we hold most dear. Those who study human behavior have identified that men are more prone to find self-worth from the outside-in rather than from the inside-out. A man's self-esteem is dependent on the kind of job he has, the kind of car he drives, the kind of neighborhood he lives in, the competitive edge he holds over others, the success of his children, and the social circles he travels in. One prominent example of this male characteristic in our time occurs in the all-too-frequent circumstance of downsizing. Typically, when a man is forced out of his place of employment, no matter what the reason, he loses a major part of himself. That which once defined him is now gone.

Such personality characteristics are not inherent. They are learned, and weigh heavily upon both men and women. They are scripted by the culture and by one's role models. The good news here is that it is a behavior that can be unlearned, a script rewritten. In Romans 12:2 the apostle writes, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God."

- What outside influences do you think have the greatest impact on your self-esteem? Discuss with your fellow apprentices.

In today's scripture reading, Paul reminds us of a couple of significant principles related to life. The first is that the true human vocation is the bearing of one another's burdens. This is done through the building up of community, where pride in one's work is treasured, but not in how it builds

up the man. The pride of man's real work is in how it builds up others to the glory of God. Second, Paul is quick to remind us that what we sow is what we reap. Sow the seeds of anger and you reap anger. Sow the seeds of love and you will reap love.

This session offers you an opportunity for a reality check. It asks that you step off the merry-go-round of your life for a moment. It asks you to take a good look at your life and put it in some kind of perspective. Are you where you want to be? who you want to be? living the life you feel called by God to live?

Ponder these questions for a few moments in silence. The most important next step is to see the opportunity you have been given now. You cannot change what has been, but you can change how you let the past influence your life. (Sound familiar?) You are a spiritual house, a dwelling place of the Spirit of God. Now may be the time to begin to assess your real state of repair. The Master Carpenter, Jesus Christ, stands ready to guide you and assist you every step of the way.

- What is one thing you already know you need to attend to with respect to your "spiritual house"? Why?



Conversation with the Master Carpenter

Close your session with prayer. Thank God for the life work of each man in the group. Invite God to be a participant in each man's day-to-day activities.

Blueprints

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

Galatians 6:7-10



On-the-Job Experience

1. Within the next twenty-four hours, get a pocket notebook. Tape a small finish nail into the inside front cover to remind you that you that you are "under construction." Carry this notebook with you. At least once each day (twice would be better, once in the morning and once in the evening) for the next two weeks, pause to write a brief prayer that begins: "Lord, I am a man under construction. Help me to..." You fill in the rest. Do not labor long on these prayers. Be brief. Let the Spirit of God talk to your spirit. You record the conversation. (There would be tremendous benefit to doing this throughout your apprenticeship.)