



MONDAY MANNA
 A service to the business community
 January 14, 2008

A MODERN-DAY WORKPLACE TRAGEDY

By: Rick Boxx

A powerful scene in the theatrical film, "Amazing Grace," communicates a powerful point that many people – including those in the business professional world – have profoundly misunderstood through the centuries. In the movie, William Wilberforce, the 19th century British abolitionist, struggles with what to do with his new found faith – he wonders how to make it a meaningful part of his everyday life and responsibilities.

As he wrestles with this critical issue of faith and practice, Mr. Wilberforce receives several visitors who have been told about his dilemma. These people all were abolitionists, ardently opposed to slavery, and knew of Mr. Wilberforce's political passion and skill, especially in his own opposition to slavery.

"We understand that you are having difficulty deciding whether to do the work of God or the work of a political activist," one of the men said to him candidly. The woman in the group then drove home the point with surgical precision. "We humbly suggest you can do both." As a result, he became instrumental in the dissolution of slavery in his homeland.

Many followers of Jesus Christ operate under the belief that value in God's eyes comes only from entering "full-time ministry." In essence, this means leaving their business or professional jobs to pursue careers directly affiliated with churches, mission agencies or "parachurch" ministries. In many cases, unfortunately, this is a tragedy that results in a terrible waste of gifts, expertise and experience.

God has made each of us with unique talents and has given us the opportunity to develop distinctive skills. When we mistakenly come to the conclusion that only missionaries or pastors have special, high callings from God, we miss His best for our lives. As a result, we may either leave work where God could have used us in extraordinarily fruitful ways for His purposes or, plagued by the feeling that our work is not important in God's grand scheme, we underutilize the gifts we have received.

In his first letter to the church in the ancient city of Corinth, the apostle Paul wrote, *"Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches"* (1 Corinthians 7:17).

Imagine a world in which everyone that claimed allegiance and devotion to Jesus Christ – called "Christians" in the Bible - served only as pastors and missionaries. Who would reach the people in the workplaces of the world? Who would provide the food, shelter, clothing, and other necessities that are essential for carrying out God's plan? Who would start businesses or lead our governments? To withdraw from being an integral, contributing part of the so-called "secular" work world (the Bible makes no such distinction) would be disastrous. Even worse, to do so is not God's plan.

If you are wondering whether to leave your current job to go into vocational ministry on a full-time basis, remember we all are called to be in ministry to others, regardless of where we work. Consider the sage advice of Wilberforce's friends: You can do both!

(Copyright 2007, Integrity Resource Center, Inc.) Adapted with permission from "Integrity Moments with Rick Boxx," a commentary on issues of integrity in the workplace from a Christian perspective. For more information about receiving Integrity Moments in their e-mail box, write to: rboxx@IntegrityMoments.com and type "subscribe" in the subject line or visit his website, www.IntegrityResource.org.

CBMC INTERNATIONAL: Robert Milligan, President
1065 N. 115th Street, Suite 210 • Omaha, Nebraska 68154 • U.S.A.
TEL.: (402) 431-0002 • FAX: (402) 431-1749 • E-MAIL: info@cbmcint.org
Please direct any requests or change of address to: www.cbmcint.org

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever contemplated giving up your present work to go into "full-time ministry"? Explain your answer.
2. How can a person do his or her job and obey God at the same time? Does this require having to act "religious" or acting very differently than one's peers and coworkers?
3. Do you view yourself as special and unique in the talents God has given you, and do you have a desire to use them for God's purposes?
4. In your view, is it possible for people to carry out the will of God in the contemporary workplace and succeed at being a light of hope to those that they work with at the same time? Why or why not?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to consider other passages that relate to this topic, look up the following verses:

Genesis 1:26-31; Colossians 3:17, 23; Ephesians 3:20, 4:12-13; James 2:14-18