

What God Teaches You through Your Job

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Day One

Have you ever thought of your workplace as God's classroom for you? This may be a totally new thought for you—that God can use your job, the people you work with and for, and the atmosphere where you work as a training course. I must confess I didn't always see my job that way. But God never wastes anything in our lives. He uses every experience, every person, every struggle, even our failures and sinful choices to teach us something we need to learn, so we can move forward—becoming more like Jesus.

Having this attitude about your job—looking at it as a training course, so to speak—could make it a bit easier to get up and go to work every day. It gives new meaning to your workdays, even if those days aren't always pleasant. When you start to see the lessons God wants to teach you through your job, it's a paradigm shift; a new perspective that gives meaning even to mundane and tedious work, even to irritating relationships, even to a demanding boss or heavy workload.

Think about this: No matter what you do on your job each day, you have developed skills and abilities through that job that are valuable. I have a friend who is teaching communication skills in a very different and difficult cross-cultural environment. As she was telling me what she does and how she has learned to communicate in this challenging setting, I told her what she is learning through her experience in this job, though difficult at times, is giving her skills and abilities that are rare and very valuable. She's learning "on the job" as we say, and that knowledge and skill is giving her very important and marketable skills you could not learn in a classroom.

Certainly, that's been true in my life, as well, as I spent many years conducting training seminars in my company and for many other companies across the country. That experience of putting together and making an effective presentation is a skill God was teaching me through my job—and one he now uses for ministry purposes.

Think about what you've learned through your jobs and how God is—or maybe how God wants to use that in his service.

Day Two

You have learned skills and gained experience on your jobs that have proven very beneficial to your career, and those skills and abilities have been an important part of your growth. Just stop and think about how your jobs have taught you many skills and made you more productive and confident. I think in the midst of hectic schedules and deadlines and difficulties, it's easy to overlook the many good things you're learning and ways you're growing simply by doing your job each day.

In addition, think about the many life and relationship skills you are learning, even while you're in it. It may seem more like baptism by fire rather than a training experience. Here are some examples of the practical and important things you should be learning in a job, if indeed you're doing a good job. You learn:

- The importance of being on time.
- The importance of meeting deadlines.
- How to work with a team to accomplish a task.
- How critical it is to fulfill your promises and commitments.
- That it's very important to do everything with excellence and avoid do-overs!
- That procrastination is deadly.
- That you can't afford to let things fall between the cracks.

Those are just some of the practical things you learn when you accept the responsibility of a job. For sure a job well-done will require these kinds of skills. And if you are not willing to learn these things and grow in these areas, it will affect your progress, your promotions, and your paycheck; it will hold you back.

I would ask you to survey your work habits. Are you learning these things, or are you resisting them? Have you established a reputation within your organization of being truly committed to doing your job with excellence, to improving and learning and growing? I've often said a Christ-follower may not be the smartest or the most educated or the most experienced person on their job, but they can be the most dependable, the hardest worker, and have the highest level of integrity. No matter what you do or where God takes you, these characteristics will always be important to your success and to pleasing God.

Day Three

What does God want to teach you through your job? I think toward the top of that list would be learning to love people you may not like that much! Your coworkers may not necessarily people you would choose to be with five days a week, eight hours a day. No doubt you have discovered not everyone is "your type," and so you are challenged to get along with people who are not that easy to get along with.

In 1 Corinthians 13, the Bible teaches us the true definition of love. It is patient, it is kind, it looks for the good in people, not the bad, it doesn't hold grudges, it hangs in with someone when others have given up, and it endures all things.

God's love is an action, not necessarily a feeling, and you can choose to love someone by showing them these kinds of actions, even if you don't like the way they behave, the way they treat you, their work habits, or their lifestyle.

Almost any job you have—and that includes working in a Christian environment—places you in the company of other people, and you have the privilege, the great opportunity, to learn to love people with God's kind of love. That means you become more and more like Jesus, as you follow his commandment to "love one another."

Of course, you also have the option of refusing to learn this lesson, and instead just being continually irritated and negative about the people you work with or for. You can choose to gripe and complain and blame others for your bad attitude. But all that gets you are bitter roots growing in your heart, which will cause you great pain and affect those around you, as well. But if you can see what God wants to teach you through working with difficult people, you then can turn a desert into a garden and use that tough place as your training grounds to teach you this incredibly useful and critical ability to love and get along with people you don't like that much.

And just consider this—as you accept and learn what God wants to teach you through your job, your light for Jesus shines so much brighter. You have the great privilege of demonstrating through the way you work and the way you treat others the difference it makes when Jesus is the central focus of your life. I want to encourage you not to miss what God wants to teach you through your job. They are worthwhile lessons that will make a difference in your life and your testimony for Jesus.

Day Four

What are some of the most valuable things God has taught you through your job? I think we can sometimes get so weighed down with the day-to-day busyness and difficulties of our jobs that we fail to see all the good things God is doing in us and through us through those jobs. One valuable lesson you often learn in a job is how to get along with people you may not like that much.

Another thing you can learn through your job is how to cast all your care on Jesus because he cares for you. Instead of taking those problems home with you every day and dumping on your family or friends, you can learn to trust God to work all things out for your good and leave those cares and concerns in his hands, so you can spend a carefree evening with your loved ones. Do you realize how absolutely important it is to learn to draw boundaries in your thought life? To not allow yourself to think about things over which you have no control? To cast all your care on Jesus regularly—everyday—so the joy of the Lord can be your strength? That's an eternally important thing you can learn through your job.

Jesus said to his disciples:

Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all (Mark 9:35).

When you were young, did you ever tell anyone you wanted to be a servant when you grew up? I doubt it. Yet, Jesus made it clear his disciples must learn to be a servant to all. And what better place to learn that lesson than on your job each day!

The way we serve God is by serving others, and developing a servant heart and attitude takes practice. You have to be intentional about it; you have to be humble and do it out of love for Jesus, not to get recognition. Think of ways you could serve your coworkers, your management, your employees.

You could serve by choosing to go the extra mile and help someone get their job done (even though you think they could have done it themselves if they hadn't wasted time talking on the phone!), help someone learn a new skill, stay late to give a helping hand to your boss, doing things for which you may get no credit or recognition. These are everyday things that can teach you the joy of being a servant, and that means you're growing more like Jesus.

Day Five

What is God trying to teach you through your job? Recently a friend shared with me God is teaching her how to get along with all kinds of people, even those with whom she has some strong disagreements. These are coworkers who really needed to know Jesus, coming from different religious backgrounds and very different beliefs. She said through the years she was not—in her words—"very nice to my unbelieving coworkers." Their discussions would often end with not so pleasant words of condemnation. She said, "I have not been quiet about it when I think they're wrong." When a new coworker joined their company who was very lovely, bright, and energetic, she liked her a lot, and then she discovered she was living an unbiblical lifestyle. She said, "I think the Lord has given me another chance here."

She is learning on her job how to love the "lost sheep"—people who don't know Jesus. She's learning how to communicate with them in loving ways, not in harsh, condemning ways. That's a lesson we all need, isn't it, but you can never learn that lesson if you never interact with unbelievers. In most situations your job puts you right in the middle of many people who do not share your faith, do not know Jesus, or even people who may think your commitment to Christ is fanatical. How do you build friends and share the love of Jesus with people like that? You can learn a Christ-like attitude right there on your job.

Can you see how God is teaching you many valuable lessons through your job? You learn critical lessons about relationships—cooperation, fairness, flexibility, humility, patience—all fruits of God's Spirit that help you to shine as a light in a dark place. You learn to forgive people who may never ask you to forgive them—who don't even recognize or care that they have hurt you. You learn to persevere, to hang in there even when you think you can't hang in any longer.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything (James 1:2-4).

That is the path all Christ-followers are on—growing mature and complete. Perseverance helps us get there. Maybe your job is very frustrating right now and you're thinking of leaving. Could it be that you don't need a different job? You just need a different attitude toward the job you have.

You can grow spiritually right there where you work. Sometimes we think our spiritual growth only comes through Bible studies, church attendance, prayer, and they are all important in our lives. But you can grow much faster and in so many diverse ways if you see your job not only as a mission field but also as a classroom. Don't miss what God wants to teach you through your job.