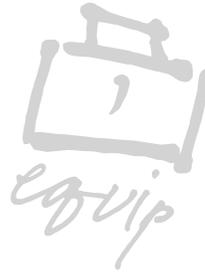


IF I'M NOT A PREACHER, CAN GOD USE ME?

BY KEVIN PREWETT



- * DANIEL 6:1-6, 26-28
- * EXODUS 31:1-6
- * ROMANS 6:4-6A
- * RUTH 2

STUDY 1:

MARKETPLACE SKILLS USED FOR GOD'S GLORY

I remember my first real job in high school, selling shoes in a shoe store in a small, Midwestern community. My boss had started as a shoe clerk nearly 40 years earlier and had eventually worked his way up to being the owner. He was well respected in the community, a deacon in the First Baptist Church and a good provider for his family. He certainly modeled a good foundational work ethic for me.

Across the street from us lived a retired insurance salesman. He loved to sit on his front porch and umpire our backyard ball games from his lawn chair, complete with a cold glass of sweet tea. One day, he called me over and asked how my job was going. In typical 15-year-old style, I said, "Fine, but you know, it's just a job." I will never forget his response. He looked me straight in the eyes, as if he wanted to speak to my soul, and said, "Kevin, always remember. Never steal. Be the first in to work. And never leave before your boss leaves." I shrugged and walked away, probably rejoining the ball game in progress. But those words, spoken nearly 35 years ago, have never left me.

I have heard the term "work ethic" used in many different contexts. Usually, people are talking about working hard at whatever vocational task is at hand. But I would venture it means more than that. It is more than simply working hard, coming in early, staying late and never stealing from the company. I would say that a biblical expression of work ethic is faithfully living out the vocational role that God has called you to and using your vocational skills to advance the kingdom of God.



KEVIN PREWETT IS A MARKETPLACE STRATEGIST AT THE IMB. HE AND HIS FAMILY HAVE LIVED IN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST WHILE HE WAS A BUSINESS CONSULTANT FOR INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES. THEY CURRENTLY RESIDE IN RICHMOND, VA.

»» **Biblical models of ethical workers**

There are many examples of people in the Old Testament who were called by God to fulfill roles in the marketplace but who also were called to fill critical roles for His mission. God calls and equips His followers to meet needs and seize opportunities. Three examples of people who realized that God works this way were Daniel, Bezalel and Boaz. They integrated their faith into their daily vocations for the glory of God.

the journey

»» **Daniel, a model worker**

* Read Daniel 6:1-6, 26-28.

What stands out in this passage that clearly reflects Daniel's character? What does it mean that Daniel had an "excellent spirit" in him? What impact did Daniel's devotion to God have on his co-workers? What impact did Daniel have on the king?

The story of Daniel teaches us that whatever work we do, wherever we are, we are to do our work with excellence and diligence. God was with Daniel and blessed the fruit of his labor. Daniel's trustworthiness also allowed his employer to continue to increase his responsibilities and influence on society. Excellence in Daniel's work brought attention to his godliness, leading to opportunities to be a representative of God so that even his "boss" recognized Daniel's God as the Living God. Our work also can lead to opportunities to be an ambassador for Christ where we work, in our community and even on mission with God overseas.

»» **Bezalel, God's craftsman**

* Read Exodus 31:1-6; Romans 6:4-6a.

What was the specific task God had given to Bezalel? What were the two ingredients for Bezalel to show excellence in his craft in this specific situation?

I love this passage. I can just imagine Bezalel working every day to make items for the Tabernacle, stopping periodically to lean back and admire the product of his labor—knowing it was God who equipped him and called him for the task. God is calling skilled craftspeople to serve him in specific roles today. In Romans 6, we learn that God has given each member of the body of Christ a spiritual gift. I also believe God gives humans in general different vocational gifts. You have special skills that others in your church may not have. For the Christian, those vocational skills, as well as one's spiritual gift, can make a kingdom impact and be used to glorify God.

»» **Boaz, God's gifted employer**

* Read Ruth 2.

As an employer, how did Boaz greet his workers and how did they respond? As an overseer, did Boaz lord over those under him?

Boaz, like many Christian employers today, exhibited godliness to his employees and to others he came into contact with, such as the foreigner, Ruth. Today, for example, many Christian employers who are working in companies located overseas are exhibiting those same qualities to national workers in their care.

»» What about you?

God has gifted us all with certain skills. Although He certainly does call some into full-time vocational ministry, the majority of us do not fall into that category. Just like Daniel, Bezalel and Boaz, we can use our vocational skills—whether business, medical, teaching, crafts, writing, and the list goes on—to advance God’s kingdom in the world, especially in places that are closed to missionaries. Many who do not have seminary degrees or specialized Bible training believe they have nothing to offer in spreading the Gospel throughout the world, but as we look at examples in the coming lessons, you will realize that God has gifted and commanded that we all have a role in His mission.

the journey

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

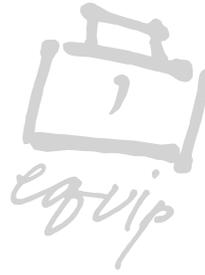
1. Do you feel inadequate to be involved in God’s mission to spread the Gospel? Why or why not?
2. Discuss with the group the marketplace skills that God has given you. Allow the group to comment how these skills could be used to spread the Gospel throughout the world.
3. How can your church get more marketplace professionals trained and involved in reaching the lost of your community and overseas?
4. What was the most significant thing God taught you through this study?

(OPTIONAL) DIGGING DEEPER

“Roger” is an experienced, well-trained mechanical engineer. When he was in university in the U.S., he decided that he wanted to use his workplace skills to serve the kingdom in an international setting. Today, he has taken a role in a foreign company, moved his family overseas and strategically works to exhibit excellence in his daily work while being a distinct and shining light for Jesus. He has successfully led a few of his co-workers to faith and has started a weekly Bible study that he hopes will soon become a new church plant. Do you see the potential to have a story like this? How has God prepared you, or someone in your family, to serve God’s kingdom in the marketplace?

If I'm not a
preacher, can
God use me?

BY KEVIN PREWETT



* ACTS 18:24-28
* CORINTHIANS 15:3-4

STUDY 2:

AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

In the first lesson in this series, we looked at three examples in the Old Testament of people in the marketplace—Daniel, Boaz and Bezalel—who were called by God to utilize their skills, experience, authority and vocation to advance the kingdom. Let's look now at a few New Testament examples of marketplace people being used by God to be on mission with Him.

>> Marketplace disciples

I remember, as a young child in church, trying to learn all the names of the original Twelve disciples. I always got hung up on the fact that more than one of them had the same name. I know, there were clarifiers for the two Simons (the one soon-to-be-called Peter and the one called the Zealot—although both seemed fairly zealous) and for the two Jameses (the brother of John and the son of Alphaeus). Let's not forget the two who carried the name Judas (however, only one finished well). Even though we knew their names, did we really know where they came from? What were they doing before they were called? Although the Bible is silent on all of their professions, we do know that some were fisherman, one was a doctor and there was at least one IRS employee in the bunch!

Soon after the birth of the New Testament church, persecution arose, leading to the dispersion of the early church members. These were lay people that were carried by the four winds to the four corners of the globe, while the original disciples remained in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). Who made up this early church? The members were tradesmen, craftsmen, laborers, families and lay leaders. They were men and women. But not many were theologians.

Take a look around your church. What is the makeup of your church today? Isn't it much the same? The church body is made up of business people, educators, laborers, students, families—normally with few paid church staff. Can this relatively small number of church staff fulfill the Great Commission that God has given His church?

“Come, follow Me.” That is the call from Jesus to all of us. Does that mean you are to leave your profession and follow Him? Possibly, but maybe not. When the church was dispersed, people truly left everything. They left their houses, their property and everything else that they knew and loved. They simply had to start over wherever they landed. Because they also took the kingdom with them wherever they went, the Gospel was proclaimed.

the journey

The Apostle Paul met some of these displaced marketplace professionals. In Acts 18:1-3, Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla, a couple who had recently been displaced from Rome. They were tentmakers, which was the same profession as Paul. However, they were also fully-committed disciples of Jesus Christ and were gifted teachers as well!

*** Read Acts 18:24-28.**

What role can a marketplace professional play in training others? What did Priscilla and Aquila teach to Apollos? What was the result of Apollos’ encounter with the couple? What was the difference between verses 25 and 28?

What a beautiful picture of the various members of the body playing the roles God gave them. Their willingness to share their knowledge was not dependent on their vocations, but on their availability to answer God’s call when the opportunities arose. They updated Apollos’ message to include the full Gospel of Jesus Christ so that he would discontinue telling only part of the story.

»» The simple Gospel

It doesn’t take a seminary degree to share the Gospel. Paul captures this message in a clear, concise manner.

*** Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.**

What are the key component parts to this message? In your vocation, how could you share this truth in a clear, contemporary and culturally-appropriate way?

Think back to the time when you first believed Jesus was the Messiah. You have a story of how Christ changed your life once you accepted that He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. As you go through your day in your current vocation as a student, mom, retiree or whatever, you will have opportunities to share the Gospel. “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, certain that God is appealing through us. We plead on Christ’s behalf, ‘Be reconciled to God’” (2 Corinthians 5:20, HCSB).



When we lived in the Middle East, I needed to get a work visa for a European country. Because we were not full residents of the country where we lived, we were not able to access the full services of that particular European embassy. However, I knew an ambassador who worked in another European embassy. I called my friend and because of his position and title, he was able to access the system and help us out. As an ambassador for Christ, we have "access" to the truth, and we have the authority of the King. We need to remember to live out that truth, regardless of where we earn income. Let God use you where you are. Be a faithful ambassador each day, not just Sundays. He will use you and your vocation to be a light in the darkness.

(*the journey*)



GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

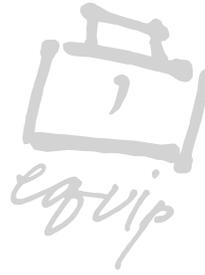
1. What did you learn about people in the early church who took the Gospel with them?
2. What is your salvation story? How can you use your marketplace skills, the Gospel and your salvation story to make a difference for Christ?
3. If your church took a survey of how many different professional skills were represented among members, what types of skills do you think would be found? Consider conducting a survey for the purpose of exploring ways to use those skills on mission with God.
4. What do you have in common with the people from the Old and New Testaments that we looked at in Studies 1 and 2?

(OPTIONAL) DIGGING DEEPER

Do a web search on "ambassador" through Wikipedia or other Internet encyclopedia. What parallels can you see between your role as an ambassador for Jesus and an ambassador of a sovereign State?

If I'm not a
preacher, can
God use me?

BY KEVIN PREWETT



* MATTHEW 5:13-16

STUDY 3:

SEASONED WITH SALT AND FILLED WITH LIGHT

Since graduating from university with a degree in economics, I have been blessed to work in some great companies with some very creative people. I remember sitting through many meetings developing new products or launching new initiatives. The most productive meetings were focused not on the obstacles in front of us but on this simple question, "What is it going to take to get the job done?" Those who stop asking this question soon find themselves in danger of losing the creativity that God inherently places within the hearts and minds of marketplace professionals.

Business owners and entrepreneurs have been asking these types of questions for a very long time. But historically, church leaders have not fully utilized these creative, entrepreneurial skills of these believers to solve problems and seek opportunities related to ministry. Many church leaders and marketplace ministries are awakening to the possibilities of releasing this new wave or ministry force of marketplace professionals. Where professional ministers may encounter barriers of entry and acceptance in the marketplace, business and vocational leaders normally do not. It is truly a new day in ministry.

» Salt and light

* Read Matthew 5:13-16.

Jesus talked about us being salt and light in the "Sermon on the Mount." Think about where you spend most of your time throughout any given week. For most of us, little time is spent in the presence of our church family. Much of our week is filled with encounters with people somehow related to our vocations. These are normally encounters with co-workers, vendors, customers, employees, fellow students or friends. Where is the need for salt and light more evident than in the places where we live and work?

If you read the passage in Matthew in its context, this short passage is bookended by the blessings of Jesus in the Beatitudes and by His proclamation that He came not to abolish the law but to fulfill every part of it (something we could never do ourselves). It seems strange to place

this passage about salt and light between these two topics. Yet, if we look closer, it becomes clear. Jesus fully understood the culture and environment the disciples faced. He also clearly understands what we are walking into every day. He wants us to first know who we are in Him and what blessings that heritage and lineage encompass. He wanted His disciples (and all of His followers who would come in the future; i.e., us) to understand that those blessings were (and are today) for the purpose of glorifying Him.

the journey

In biblical times, salt was used for signifying truth in a covenantal relationship, flavoring, preserving and cleansing. Light, in this context, was for a different purpose. In Matthew 5:14-16, the first place light shines is in the world. We, as followers of Jesus, are the light of the world. Light, when allowed to shine, is impossible to hide. Jesus clearly did not fill us with His light to keep it hidden. We are all called to be shining lights wherever we are, whether in Dallas or Dubai, Seattle or Shanghai, rural or urban. Light bearers have many purposes, such as revealing God's truth and bringing light to a place of darkness.

Why are we called to let our lights shine before men? Matthew 5:16 states, "...so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (HCSB). It's not for us to be glorified, but He is glorified. How do we display light and be salt? How can we—not just the super-Christians, paid ministers or those specially gifted—be salt and light? It's simple: Follow Him. Then we can fish for men and women to follow Him also.

When we follow Him, when we are filled with His Spirit and when we are "salting" our workplaces, He will be glorified. The Holy Spirit will overflow from us.

»» ***The world is a global village***

According to Thomas Friedman, "The world is flat." He even wrote a book about it. The idea of the world being a global village has broken down the barriers and borders of nations. Travel or actual relocation is much easier than it used to be. Prior to turning 30, I had lived in three counties, all in the same state. At present, my wife, children and I can say that we have lived on three continents. Whatever we discover God's purpose to be and wherever we find ourselves in His purposes, we are called to be salt and light. Our neighbors are no longer "just like us." The "nations" are becoming our neighbors. What a tremendous opportunity for all of us to glorify Him by being salt and light and to serve as His ambassadors in both the ministry and message of a Heavenly Father reconciling a lost world to Himself! Maranatha. Come Lord Jesus.

»»

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

the journey

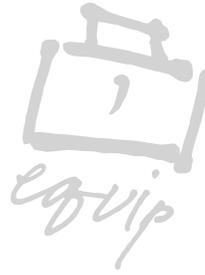
1. What are some examples in which you have exhibited salt and light in your workplace?
2. Why is it necessary to first follow Him before we can be salt and light?
3. How has your own community or city changed demographically in the past decade?
4. How has your church welcomed these changes by reaching out to people of different cultures and languages?
5. What opportunities, either locally or internationally, do you believe God is placing in front of you as you are His ambassador?

(OPTIONAL) DIGGING DEEPER

Go to www.peoplegroups.info. Look up either your city or the closest major city to your church. Do research on a people group that is represented in your area. Organize a creative group of marketplace professionals who can develop a strategy for ministering to this often overlooked and neglected segment of society.

If I'm not a
preacher, can
God use me?

BY KEVIN PREWETT



* 1 PETER 2:9-12

STUDY 4:

MAKING THE MOST OF WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Σ As I type this, I am sitting in a hotel room in Tennessee. I look around the room, and I could be anywhere in the world. I have stayed in hotels or motels on five continents and, except for the Pizza Hut flyer on the nightstand and English spoken on the television, I could be anywhere. Σ

How many of our faithful, evangelical brothers and sisters stay in hotels around the world? They are serving in their vocations, promoting their company's products or services and meeting new people every day, everywhere. Sometimes, if their jobs require it, they may go to the same hotels in the same places and meet the same group of people, over and over. They remember the person who works the front desk, the shopkeeper down the street and work colleagues in the overseas branch of their company or in the employ of a key international client. Over time, they build relationships. They learn about the families, the lifestyles and the struggles of the people they frequently come into contact. And they have tremendous opportunities to share their salvation story. These opportunities are only given to them, and business travelers just like them, not to full-time ministers.

»» **It will take us all to get the job done**

What are some opportunities that have come to your mind? You may not be a business traveler, but perhaps you have had or will have opportunities to share the Gospel while being a short-term mission partner who uses his or her vocational skills to train nationals, field mission workers and other internationals. These skills and abilities may include small business training, accounting, education, medical, marketing, management, sports, leadership or human resources training. Southern Baptists, and other Great Commission partners, have successfully trained people all over the globe for many years. As a result of these efforts, God is blessing the work by bringing people to faith in Him, providing opportunities for discipleship and planting churches. As called ones put their hands to the plow, He is blessing and drawing the lost to Himself.

As a student either graduating or about to graduate, have you thought about applying for an international internship at a multi-national company? The experience gained not only will augment your résumé, but it will also change your life in ways you cannot even imagine. When we follow Jesus, deny ourselves, pick up our cross and seek Him first, He is faithful to overflow through us into the lives of others. More than 7 billion people are not going to be reached by full-time missionaries alone. An urgent need calls for an urgent response. Is He worth it? I believe if we search Scripture, learn of Him and from Him and think back to that time when we were changed, we will discover that He is worth it.

the journey

»» ***Penetrate the spheres of society***

But what about those people who never leave their home country. How can they be a part of this new movement in the marketplace? In case you haven't figured it out yet, "marketplace" means much more than simply the business world. It also means the various spheres of society outside paid ministerial vocations such as education, government, the arts, media, families and much more. When you watch the news on television every night, do you sense a need for light to penetrate those spheres of society? Is there a need for salt and light to permeate your workplaces? Do the spheres of media, sports, education, government and the arts need the renewal and reconciliation that only Jesus can bring? What happens when the light of Christ encounters these spheres?

*** Read 1 Peter 2:9-12.**

God calls us out of darkness into His wonderful light. But does He remove us from society? You have heard the expression that Christians are to be "in the world, but not of it." How can we change the world unless we are in it? In His sovereignty, He has called us to be His ambassadors. We are not only called to walk in the light but to live in such a way among unbelievers that God is glorified through our good conduct and honorable living. Why would that bring Him glory? Because honorable living is all too often in sharp contrast to most societal norms. Living a godly life labels you as an alien and exile. Therefore, you can appreciate and empathize with those among you who are also, in their own way, aliens and exiles.

We have the privilege to be ambassadors for the greatest King this world has ever known. Our King is calling ambassadors from every segment and strata of the marketplace. Where are you in this story?

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

the journey

1. What are some ways you can be involved in a mission strategy using your professional skills?
2. How are His ambassadors using their skills to minister in every sphere of society across the world?
3. How can those in the marketplace be effective in both short- and long-term mission partnerships?
4. What is God saying to you through these four lessons?

(OPTIONAL) DIGGING DEEPER

Go to www.marketplaceadvance.com and find ways that you can get involved as a mission partner using your marketplace skills.