

Let's get right to the point today: *what's the morality of your personal daily work?* Specifically, what we're talking about here is this: how do you think about the focus, the impact, the morality of your daily work? Even more directly, how have you come to rationalize that your work is godly...is "spot-on"...has great value? And most pointedly, how will Christ view your daily work at His judgment seat for all believers?

Sadly, in my experience, this is an area of thinking and living that foster some of the shallowest beliefs found among serious and nominal Christians alike. So, let's begin with some commonly-held assumptions. Do you recall on the earliest Whitestone podcast episodes about so-called *full-time ministry*? In many believers' minds, "full-time ministry" is limited to work as a paid employee for a church or Christian nonprofit. Let me be blunt here: this false idea does real damage...neutering the impact of many believers!

In fact, for years, in the first few minutes of the college intro course for business that I teach, I ask this question: "how many of you are called to full-time ministry?" Of course, just a few students raise their hands. That's because everyone "knows" that "full-time ministry" is code for getting a paycheck from a Christian organization. So, I tell 'em they just flunked their first quiz! Yeah, they laugh...but now they have their spiritual eyes opened. It must grieve God to see young people who will be nurses, engineers, IT specialists, and business leaders led to believe they're not to minister Christ to others at all times, 24/7!

But, of course you do *know* that business is all about being greedy, right? That's a deeply held belief for many. But frankly, the people who self-righteously believe that are in error, projecting their values onto every person who works in a business. OK, here's the test: are *some* businesspeople greedy? Of course...but so are some animal rescuers and some social workers and some church pastors and some nonprofit administrators. Greed is not a respecter of vocation, including self-appointed critics of business!

OK, you say, but how about the vast amount of money involved in a for-profit business? Listen to this. IRS Form 990 Public information for 2021 reports that the *nonprofit* charity United Way Worldwide had revenue of \$113 million and its CEO had annual compensation of \$3.1 million. So, is the United Way CEO greedy? Does he give most or all of his income away? Is that even the proper standard? I have no way of knowing these things, and frankly it's none of my business because I don't give to United Way! I do know this: very few people are qualified to prudently steward an enterprise that has \$113 million in revenue. By the way, the nonprofit Harvard University has piled up an endowment of over \$50 billion—boy, it's a good thing Harvard is not a business, because then it might be considered greedy for hoarding wealth!

Look, the key underlying point here is this: there is very little *essential* difference today between modern nonprofits and businesses. That's because the legitimate, core purpose of both of these forms of enterprises is to *serve others!* And both business *and* nonprofit leaders are hired to be great stewards for the people who fund each respective organization: donors for charities...investors for businesses!

Wait...a teaching by Jesus is *really* important to insert here. "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ...You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." (Matthew 7:3,5 ESV) Of course, a clear underlying reason Jesus taught this is because our overriding focus is supposed to be that we pay the closest attention to what *we* personally have chosen to do each and every day in *our* lives! So, again, what's the morality of your daily work?

Well, here's a foundational standard to start with: *the results of your personal stewardship for the betterment of others through your personal actions!* So, yeah, what are your personal stewardship results in your workplace? First, are the people you serve...the enterprise's customers...constantly bettered due to your work? Second, are the people you work alongside...your coworkers...constantly bettered due to your work? And, third, are the people who fund the organization...the donors or the investors...bettered due to your work? Yes, that's bettering all three key categories of participants! Frankly, these three key measures really do focus on dimensions of a Christ-like selflessness in workplaces! Here are the parallels. Jesus's sacrificial death and resurrection and ongoing intercessory ministry reflect all three stewardships:

first, His completed, salvific work for the lost; second, His full equipping of His believing co-laborers; and, third, the fullness of His entire work for His Father in heaven!

But, maybe still lurking there in the back of your mind is that \$3.1 million paid to a nonprofit CEO in 2021—and you may be wondering whether you yourself would put that kind of annual salary to good use...yeah, with your joyful obedience to Holy Spirit-led direction! Well, back to the logs in our eyes: let's get real—just how do you and I handle the compensation *we* earn *now*, day-in and day-out? With that focus, we advance to another key dimension of stewardship resulting from the privileges of our work lives! We know that God is our total Provider...so, do we funnel resources back to God and His purposes? Then, are we good stewards for our spouses, our families, our neighbors...thoughtfully balancing short-term priorities with the necessity of providing for long-term needs? That is God's tension that all serious believers grapple with until the day the Lord calls them home—where I trust you will be amply rewarded by Christ!

OK, so back to you and me in our workplaces to address an uppermost, thorny, fascinating dimension of workplace morality! You see, It's all well and good when we exhibit strong stewardship for customers, coworkers, and investors—but would that still justify actually working for a criminal enterprise like the Mafia...or perhaps working for the Ku Klux Klan...or maybe employed by Germany's Nazi government in the late 1930s, working to make the trains transporting Jews to the death chambers at Auschwitz run on time? Are the "customers" here the Jews forced onto the train on the way to unspeakable horrors...or are the "customers" the German citizens dutifully following Hitler's supposed "final solution" for the Jews?

Come on, you might say, that's radical, we don't face that kind of thing nowadays! But hold your horses. These extreme examples can be instructive for other contexts. Key facets of American culture are rapidly devolving. Citizens are experiencing a deepening cultural divide with folks with opposing stances, each often claiming that ordinary Americans who disagree with them are fascists, socialists, racists, or misogynists. And there might even be some truth found in several such allegations. But can't *both* sides be wrong in key ways, especially in the practical handling of and emphasis on these issues? Here's the deal—culture manifests in the workplace, so can we be morally correct working in corporations or nonprofits or even churches who are notably off-base Biblically?

Oh, so now we may be back to a supposed safe harbor of Christian *full-time ministry*, huh? So, is God's vision that Christians are all siloed for a nice life in Christian neighborhoods, yes, working only for "safe" Christian enterprises? Hardly. Jesus Himself hung out with and ministered to the sinners of His day. I can tell you this, when graduating college seniors land a job as technology specialists in companies that have no discernible Christian influence in them, well, then, I rejoice! That's because they are clearly positioned to witness for Christ by their competent deeds—and ultimately positioned for their words of testimony!

But beware: if a workplace culture is allowed to belittle a Christian with unfounded racism or false cultural assumptions that work to render legitimate Christian witness impotent in the workplace, then such believers may well need to "shake the dust from their feet" and move on. (See Matthew 10:14.)

Here's the rub for a Christian: God's purposes are not fulfilled solely in Christian settings! You *could* be rightly working at an un-Christian organization and "doubling up for God" by witnessing to all the folks who also work at the enterprise and need Christ! But what if that organization is starting to ingrain very ungodly paths for its workers and the beneficiaries of its services? ...Wow, you see what I mean? It's the fascinating morality of your daily work! So, just where has God called *you* in this season of your life? Well, whether "Christian" or not, you are at a workplace that needs God's love! *Wonderful*...so love God and love your "neighbors" in your workplace! Truly, it's all about communicating God's eternal love for all...

So, the fascinating morality of daily work has two key dimensions: first—competent, love-your-neighbor stewardship for the enterprise's three key participant-groups...and second—discerning obedience to God and His purposes for your being at that enterprise, even if your presence there may be perceived by others as ungodly! Knowingly serving an enterprise chock-full of sinners? That's fascinating morality, Jesus-style!

A&A: Application & Action

1. So, just what *is* the morality of your personal daily work? Be specific in your analysis of your stewardships. (Reference the last paragraph of this episode for guidance, if needed.)

2. How do you personally measure an organization's fitness (or not!) for a Christian to be a part of its team? Does it need to be very pristine morally...or can it be "chock-full of sinners" in key ways that some Christians might object to? Be specific. Give examples.

3. See question #2 above and reflect on your answers. Now, do you think Jesus would work as a supervising carpenter or builder for the organization(s) you eliminated as "unfit" for a Christian to work in? Discuss.