

# LEADING LIKE JESUS

Jim Hackett

One of my **goals tonight** ... speak to ... St. Paul's advice ... **Colossians 3:23** ... "whatever you do, **work at it with all of your heart**, ... **working for the Lord**, not human masters" ... and ... Romans 12:1 ... "I urge you brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to **offer your bodies as a living sacrifice**, holy and pleasing to God."

Joining our faith to our **whole** lives ... **including work** ... conforms with both ... of St. Paul's exhortations ... to Christians ... that **our "bodies" and our "work"** ... be offered as a "**sacrifice**" to God. **Let's now contemplate** ... upon ... this **concept of "sacrifice."**

Let me start ... with two questions?

- 1) A show of hands, please ... **who** thinks that **actions** ... are more important ... **words** in leading others?

I'd like to **talk ... about ... both ... but, agree actions** ... speak more **determinately**

- 2) How many of you ... have tried to live out your faith at work ... or in your personal life ... and failed occasionally?

Good ... then I am **amongst friends ... in Christ**

We're all **striving**, ... however **imperfectly**, ... to be true ... to our faith.

And, it **isn't easy, is it?**

Should it be ... or is that **part of God's plan?**

Did God put us here to be **comfortable?**

**I think not** ... the world is **intentionally too imperfect**. It is **filled with dark powers and suffering**. But, also with **great joy** ... and the **promise of ... eternal happiness** ... for those who accept Christ as their guide.

We all know the **topic for today – Faith** -- is a **very personal matter ... but also ... has magic ...** when applied **communally**.

**Today, we desperately need ... people of faith ... who can lead ... in a society hungry ... for a spiritual dimension ... to our work.**

**We all come by ... our faith ... differently ... and exhibit it ... in varying ways.**

### Personal Faith Journey

**Mine developed ... from a devout father ... and agnostic mother... a perfect combination ... for both practicing ... and questioning my faith.**

My faith was one of **fear and ritual** until **college** ... and then became one of **understanding God's love**

**I believe my behavior at work ... always reflected a desire ... to be kind to others ... and to make the world better, but faith was only integrated into work ... within me, as an individual ... not with others. This was a missed opportunity.**

In my **late 30's** my **faith flowered**. I **stopped reading** books about **business leadership** ... and, rather **focused**, in my free-time on ... **histories of the great faith traditions and writings of, ... or about ... great moral leaders and theologians**. Perhaps the **Holy Spirit** knew that what I **needed ... to lead ... a global company** ... in my early 40's ... was **greater moral and religious literacy, not business acumen**.

**I thought** from the age of 21, as an international worker at Amoco ... that **studying comparative theology and other religious traditions** ... would help with working in international environments ...and ... inside an increasingly diverse ... U.S. work force, ... to know from whence

others came ... and how they might view ... what we hold dear ... about Christianity. But **words** ... about my faith beliefs were kept ... **mostly private** ... and ... certainly **not used** in any **deliberate way** ... **at work**.

Only in my early 40's ... did I realize ... my work could be a place ... to authentically own my **whole** faith ... where I could **speak** about ... and ... not just evidence my faith through actions. I know many of you in the audience ... found your voice at a much younger age ... but I didn't know how to. I hadn't focused on Ephesians 6:19 ... where we are told to pray ... that "words may be given [us] so that [we can] make fearlessly known the mystery of the gospel."

### Faith at Work

**Belatedly**, then, **my faith** became **communal**. I **missed many years of opportunity** ... in **speaking** about, **not just acting out** ... **my spiritual purpose**. I hope you didn't ... or don't.

**At least two questions** that **might come to mind** in a **liberal secularist society** include:

- 1) Can we **safely speak about our faith** ... in our institutions – private or public?
- 2) Is it a **competitive disadvantage** to direct our departments, divisions, or institutions ... by comportment with the **principles** ... or **cardinal virtues** ... of our **faith traditions**?

I suspect **some ... of you** ... have figured out **workable answers** ... to **these two questions**.

My definitive answer is "**yes**" to **safely speaking out** ... and "**no**" to the **competitive disadvantage question**. In fact, it is an **advantage** to have strongly held spiritual beliefs in the workplace.

Let me be **briefly mention** a few things that can be **done by all** of us in the workplace ... in **any department or division** of an institution, ... even without a corporate commitment to do so.

### **First:**

Develop a **mission statement** ... that speaks not just to what business or activity your team is pursuing ... but also ... **why** you and your employees are **coming to work each day ... to improve society**. This mission, when joined to the values you develop ... become the ... spiritual mission for the team, which is to serve others.

### **Second:**

Develop a set of **Values** that are inspiring to others ... but deeply authentic to you as a leader.

In my early 40s, I developed a list of 10 Values ... analogous to the 10 Commandments ... for my team ... delineating what I ... held dear about communal life at work ... including:

- 1) to honor our faith and family obligations
- 2) to be kind to colleagues ... whether or not we like them
- 3) to be focused on long-term (not short-term) results for ... multiple stakeholders
- 4) to act without deception (as distinguished from complete honesty)
- 5) to be competent ... or to be willing to work ... somewhere else
- 6) to be team-oriented ... but desirous of champions at work
- 7) to not blame individuals ... for group decisions

8) to practice servant leadership

9) to continuously improve ... by embracing different forms of failure.

And,

10) to hold each other accountable for the 9 preceding values.

Regarding these values, I then **talked in small groups**, one after another ... for **2 weeks** ... and discussed only these values – and **for what we would stand** ... and hold each other accountable ... in the future. The objective was to be **concerned first with creating ... a culture of integrity, caring, and performance** ... before deciding **what we were going to do** – the strategy and tactics -- our investors were urgently demanding from us.

### **Third:**

I made a **covenant with God** that I would **speak His name or refer to my faith** in every **group setting** ... or public meeting ... at work.

**Owning what motivated my behaviors** ... was liberating ... not just for me, but for others ... of various faiths ... in two multi-national and culturally and religiously diverse organizations ... and even ... it seems ... for those with ... a humanist view of what they ... wanted ... from work. My limited testimony ... **wasn't a conversion exercise**, ... simply an attempt to be an **authentic leader**. Consistent with Ephesians 6:18, ... I also began to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” ... to alternately thank and beseech God ... for courage and grace ... before (and after) every meeting, phone call, or task

### **Fourth:**

We started making promotions, demotions, and compensation decisions ... based on **adherence** to the **10 Values** ... **without** allowing **strong** technical or financial **results** ... to **excuse bad behaviors**.

#### **Fifth:**

We started **360-degree evaluations** for all executives and did **broad surveys** of thousands of employees for feedback ... as evidence of our concern ... for the **continuing health of our culture** ..., a **measure of progress** ...on establishing **virtuous leadership**, ...and to show everyone the **dignity** of having their **voice heard**.

#### **Sixth:**

In **every publication and public setting**, we took time to show ... how our **actions or results** occurred **in the context of** ... **our Values** for the company.

#### **Seventh:**

We **changed the definition of “privilege”** ... in areas such as pay, parking, access to the executive floor, dining rooms, etc. ... to let everyone know we were **in this together**, without caste-like divisions within the company.

The employee teams ... universally accepted, and most often ... enthusiastically embraced this approach to institutional life. They were **hungry for a spiritual purpose for their work** ... and, I believe, **also hungry for a leader talking authentically about ... what motivated his or her actions**. It released others in the organization to do the same. It was **not proselytizing**, ... it was simply owning up to one's own motivations and beliefs ... without any attempt to convert. **I don't think it's a coincidence** that both companies ... are **still remembered as high points** in many of my former colleagues' professional lives ... and that the companies **had uncommon success by secular standards** as well.

It was a **competitive advantage** ... to consciously and publicly **integrate ... the sacred and the secular.**

Now, let me turn to ... **all of our spiritual journeys** ... and make some ... further comments ... about **integrating our faith into our work lives.**

We are born with the option to choose **magnanimity – the desire to be great with God’s gifts to us** – and to pursue ... a sacred mission of exercising those gifts ... **for the benefit of His world.** Leaders like you should never apologize ... for wanting to be great ... and to make a positive impact on the world. I believe it is ... what God wants us to do. **But, all people, especially the very gifted ones,** ... are also **born with a tendency** to let **success rearrange** ... their **mental picture** of the world. Those blessed with the ability and energy to lead others ... must recognize they **embark on a perilous path** ... for themselves and others ... because **power, self-adulation, and secular success** ... will forever try to **seduce humans** ... into **thinking they are “special”** -- superior to others. Nothing could be further from the truth. **Our talents were given to us by God...and we will be humbled** ... by **HIM** ... if we do not practice the cardinal virtues of ... temperance, prudence, fortitude, and justice ... as we exercise our talents ... and enjoy the fruits of our hard labor.

No matter what profession you pursue (including the blessed profession of full-time parenting) or what level you have reached in that profession, there are **several things of which I am** convinced:

- 1) It is a big competitive **advantage** to be guided ... **at work** ... by **our Christian faith.** It results in **better decision-making** ... **more trust** from others ... **and more self-worth.** Without preaching about faith and prosperity... I also believe that when material goals and self-recognition ... are **not the object** of our work ... we **experience more achievement in those areas** ... than we ever dreamed of.

- 2) It doesn't hurt to **enter each day** ... with Ephesians 6:10-17 on our lips ... i.e., to arm oneself with the **“shield of faith,” the “breastplate of righteousness,” and the “sword of the spirit.”** It is a challenging world in which we all work ... and we need to **do battle ... for God** and for others.
- 3) It helps at the **end of each day** to **evaluate** ... our **success** ... by **only looking at the mirror and to God.** And then making the **needed ... mental adjustments ... for the next day.**
- 4) Be **eager to find moments** ... to **stand by a set of moral truths or virtues** ... which you will not violate, ... especially when it **compromises your self-interest.** Those are the moments when **more of salvation** can be **tasted ... and others** can be **inspired by your example.**
- 5) **Don't be satisfied** by a **secular career** joined to a non-work-related spiritual life of “Church on Sundays and work on Mondays.” Instead make your profession part of a sacred mission. Christ didn't choose priests to create his Kingdom, ... he chose people like you to be his disciples and apostles. Define your career ... as one that can help make you ... into a saint. **Use your work as a laboratory ... for practicing Biblical virtues** ... such as humility, fairness, temperance, kindness, and moral fortitude. And those of you that lead departments ... or whole institutions ... can create mission statements ... that speak to helping society, ... not just the internal team you lead. **Remember Matthew 25: 14-30 ... the Parable of the Talents,** ... where those who invested their gifts wisely were rewarded by their master ... and ... he who buried his gift was thrown out into the “darkness” ... where there was “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” **God** doesn't want us to sit on our gifts. **He wants** us to **use them** to the **fullest.** If you are in business ... be great in business. If you are in medicine ... be great in medicine. If you are a full-time parent ... be great as a parent. **God asks simply** ... that **any rewards** from the **exercise of our gifts** ... is

**ascribed to His grace ... and devoted to making the world better.**

- 6) **Become reconciled with needing to make temporal judgments** about others, ... such as criticizing their performance or behaviors, ... even asking them to work somewhere else. But, be careful to keep a mental mind-set ... that **spiritual judgments are reserved for God ...** and allow even the worst performer to preserve their human dignity ... during a painful process. You **must “love” others**, even when you don't particularly want to ... or **cannot ... work beside** them anymore.
  
- 7) **If you hit a flat spot in your career trajectory**, ... which happens to all of us, ... **use your Christianity as a tool.** Christians are taught to look at life as a **challenge of personal salvation, ... not professional advancement.** While you are in a stalled period, ... pray for discernment ... about your future, and, where possible, ... start to emphasize other sacred tasks ... such as spending more time with your family, ... on your faith development, ... helping out in the community, ... or practicing Christian virtues even more deeply.
  
- 8) **Pray every night for the blessings you received that day** – even for the little things -- like someone complimenting your personal conduct, ... your work, ... or someone who greeted you with a smile or a hug – then you will go to sleep knowing ... that **God** was indeed looking out for you ... and ... that **little joys can be had every day.**
  
- 9) **Pray every night for humility** --so you may **keep learning** in life, and **never feel special, except in God's eyes.**

and,

- 10) **Be a good follower**, even if you are a good leader. **Allow people to invite** you to do **things they need done**, especially those trying to be virtuous toward others.

Please **trust** in the **Law of the Harvest** – where we **WILL reap what we sow**: ... if you **are** good and **do** good, be patient, because that **goodness will follow you**, ... not necessarily at every turn ... but certainly over the span of a career ... and **even more certainly in the arc of one's life**.

My last question to myself (and you) is this:

Will we choose to make the measure of our success how we offered our **“work”** and our **“bodies”** as a living **“sacrifice”** to God ... or will we instead struggle to seek the measure of our success from less enduring sources such as the estimation of secular success?

Wesley was a lay preacher and leader in a world of Anglican and Catholic priests detached from the common weal. Also, as I understand it, the Methodist Social Creed was published in the milieu of the Social Gospel, a late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century movement to remind lay leaders to remember to practice Christian principles in the work place. Is the Wesleyan revolution still alive? Can we follow the Methodist commitment to Christian mission and service in a world that increasingly fights against those principles in secular institutions?

We must.

Let me conclude by speaking to myself more than to you: Help me, Dear God, to always ... have metaphysical humility – to recognize that the gifts of my success are yours. Let me not forget ... why you allowed me to experience success ... because I, even if imperfectly, honored You ... and served others. Dear God, ... as my success continues and/or endures ... let me ask more, not fewer, questions of others ... let me listen more and talk less ... let me grow in patience ... let me be more mindful of my vows and duties to my family

... and help me to always discern ... when my mission from you changes. Thank you for providing your Son ... as an inspiration to all of us ... as leaders. Amen.

Thank you for listening ... please share your thoughts and questions with me – if there is time.

Q&A