

Notes on The Life of a God-made Man Chapter 7

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This was the most difficult chapter for me. I have read it few times. The first time I read it, I was struggling to find what it meant to please God and build a stronger relationship with Him. This lead me down the path of non-secular vocation as thats what I thought was doing God's work. Although, I intellectually got the Puritan or Protestant work ethic, I still believed that what pastors, missionaries and evangelist do is better work than my own.

I continued to struggle with this, as I didnt want to be a Sunday Christian or only during my AM times of Bible readings.

The secular and sacred divide was still strong as I didnt know how to bridge that in my own life.

I have been thinking about the topic of work seriously and wrestling with it since earlier this year. When I read this chapter, over this weekend, although I agreed with some, I was disagreeing with some of the fundamental emphasis.

Here is where I am today in my thinking. . .

The God worked

From the beginning (Bereishit), God worked. While most other mythical accounts of a creator, called for leasure as the noblest thing or creation account of men and animals for the subservient role of workers; our God Himself worked.

This is same as work and occupation, as well as a whole host of things from business to craftsmanship, property and industry. It appears 5 times in [Gen2]

Since God worked, and Adam worked pre-fall, work itself can not be a curse as shown in secular writings and in various writings by some theologians. Even after the fall, there are plenty of indications in the bible that work itself can be a form of worship.

Joy in our work

Since He created us in His image [Gen1:27], we need to work as He did - Taking pride and joy in what we create or produce.

This means there needs to be some mastery that comes, may be not naturally in the beginning, but one that builds.

[Gen2:15] uses the words cultivate and keep. Hebrew word for cultivate is *abad* which is to work and serve. This is a continual form and in addition to that Adam kept the garden. The Hebrew word for keep used is *shamar* which means to employ offensive and defensive measures to protect. Guard, obey, observe and perform are used in various parts of OT for this same word. [Lev22:31] uses the same word in *keep the commandments*.

Pride and joy used here is not that of being boastful or vain, but one that comes from diligence, that we can look at our creation - whether its a scientific or white paper, statistical graph, surgery, counseling a patient, PPT of a business case, words describing our thoughts around a business problem, code we write, systems we design, physical goods we create, garden we tend, as a joy to His glory.

[Ecc19:10] states Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.

The word might used above translates to rock-wall strength, indicating protection and power.

All talents are His

But all our power, might, talents come from Him. In [Exo31:3] talking about Bezalel, the master craftsman of the ark, God says, "I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship"

Therefore I cant waste any talents He has given me and be a slack or half-KJV-donkey.

I also cant just follow my own dreams and desires unless it comes from God. Following and chasing your own dream, which is a secular cliché is paved with traps and troubles and will require a much larger post in itself.

Not every one can be a Bezalel

In [Exo31] God says, He has appointed Oholiab to help Bezalel, giving him the ability of skilled worker. Therefore there is no shame in being an assistant or

helper or laborer. Doing whatever God has called us to do is a good thing.

The key is the word *do* and not to sit and wait around idly for fruits to fall in your lap.

As [Pro18:9] states, He also who is slack in his work Is brother to him who destroys.

Retirement is overrated

I used to read *get rich and retire* books so I can have an exit strategy from my job, so as to have more time to read and pursue knowledge. There was remnant of that even after I became a believer.

I now know how ridiculous this was. There is something about being productive in whatever God has called for, instead of being an idler. Based on the season of my life, this can mean a lot of things. I also have found that I need to balance this with stewardship of what God has blessed me with and my other responsibilities to my family. See previous posts on wife and children.

I cant make work the central theme of my life nor can I desire to be someplace else than where God has placed me for now. Based on the season of where I am in my walk with God, I know I will be called to different types of work and I better be prepared to do whatever the Lord wills.

As [Eph5:15-16] states the following - Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

Quit social media

This means that I cant be distracted in what God has called me by slicing my day or week with unproductive social media, site hopping, gaming, TV watching or tweet chasing.

I quit social media in the FB, G+ and other sense, but do get sucked into tweet chasing or site hopping. This starts off innocuously, as I am trying to research or checking to see the weather and before I know it, its an hour later and I have learnt about the dining habits of the Kardashians.

Mechanics needed in a digital age

This is important in using our talents and honing our craft. My current vocation is that of a knowledge worker. My observation has been that as demand for

knowledge work has gone up, the ability to perform meaningful knowledge work is getting harder, due to the distractions and challenges we face with 24/7 digital presence. This requires a more detailed post, which will have to wait. For the impatient, see my presentation on the effect of social media I did at GBC.

Not Greek nor reformers

The book by Doriani, introduces the view of work from a Greek/Roman, Medieval and Reformation standpoint. I think this line of reasoning is fundamentally flawed. We as americans like to be binary - Red or Blue, Republican or Democrat, Bond or Bourne and finally Arminian or Calvinist. This leads us into false dichotomy. The notion of just contrasting the hellenistic form of work as opposed to the reformers view doesnt depict the complete picture. I think we need to go to the biblical times and context to see how the apostles of NT or prophets of OT worked. There was something unique about the balance they had that is sorely missing in the other two views. This will require a longer analysis, which I am not ready to share yet. So at this point, I think we need to get back to the biblical context instead of just looking 1000 or 500 years back in our own Church history.

Work as my mission

Currently, I am placed to be at a tech company doing knowledge work. I felt like I was doing boring work, but getting paid well, so will continue to do it. There were exhilarating times or times of accomplishments. I was always looking for that exit strategy - be it to another job or a startup etc.

In the last year, I have totally changed my perspective. As I think, of the very job I have is a gift of God and the talents He has blessed me with to do it. I need to hone my craft as did Bezalel or Boaz or Naaman. Whether its to lay bricks for Pharoah or plant my vineyard in the promised land or going out to glean barley or tend the sheep, I need to do it for God as He is with me in partnership with whatever I am doing.

I had to struggle deeply in my thinking of how to apply biblical principles at work and with my co-workers. I felt like I wasnt being a Christian as I wasnt out there preaching the Gospel to everyone. It changed from that to how to live out the Gospel, so my colleagues can see that. From treating my employees with respect, as they God's children; to praying for some my competition at work,changed my perspective about work.

God also did some heart surgery to cure me of jealousy, pride and vanity, so the pangs of these that I would feel started to fade away. Living out the Gospel also meant that my co-workers see my full life not just the work I do. There are

plenty of womanizers and bad fathers that work with me. Hence the mutual respect, human dignity, equal opportunity, holding them to a standard, being helpful, teaching them to fish, were things I started to focus on.

Emphasis on rest

On the other side, it also meant that I was not *always* available to my executives to do their beck and call. I started putting boundaries around my family time and my sabbaths. This started initially as a religion, as I applied the rule-following Hindu-self to my Sundays. But slowly it transformed to actual meaning of the original Hebrew word *moed* used in [Gen1:14]. Moed (or moedim) means appointed times with the Lord. Its for me to take my mind and self away from other gifts He has given to focus on the gift that is Jesus. It was a time of holy communion. It was not a symbol or sign or rule to follow but a relation to build and keep.

Discerning God's will

At this point in my walk with God, I am working at where He has placed me. Is this the right thing for me, should I be picking another job/role etc.?

My frustrations at work or lack of being productive at times are but a manifestation of my own desires and not looking at them in why God has placed me here for. The only way I will know this is NOT the right place for me, is when He will open or close doors.

At this point, I will continue to ask for His grace and His Spirit to be poured on me, so I can be a good steward of whatever He has in store for me.

The anxiety about is this the right thing for me or am I doing the right job or am I doing the job right, all fades away knowing, if God can part the sea or bring Lazarus from the dead, He can place me where He wants me and that I should be content in my heart knowing that being where I am right now means to Him.

Giving thanks; not looking at how good we had it in past [Ecc7:10] or any of the could have should have has faded away as I begin to realize the work of His hand in my life, even before I was born.

This whole topic of work, I believe has started to show a bit of what working out my salvation actually means [Philip2:12–13]. It means

- to walk with peace of the Lord
- to walk in obedience,

- trusting in the Lord as Abraham did when he was called out of Ur, when he couldnt even see Him;
- becoming a good steward of everything God has blessed me with;
- not forsaking my responsibilities He has given me, starting with my health/body/mind; to my wife, sons, friends in Christ and the broader world.
- in doing any job well, instead of trying to get away and be done in name-sake
- praying deeply before my work day to invite from Him to come and share His day with me