



One Step Further

Class 2 - One Step Further at Work

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- Let's first review the Fundamental Principle of **ONE STEP FURTHER...**

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- People with Legalistic minds tend to look for the **MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS** that are expected, because they are focused on not falling short of the mark

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- Jesus rightly points out that concentrating on the **ACTIONS** required to fulfill rules and regulations does not transform us into the types of servants that God desires

SLIDE

- Jesus calls us to transform our **THOUGHTS** by accepting that we are saved by **GRACE** and are not responsible to try to make it on our own

SLIDE

- An appreciation of this great gift motivates us to **ACTION**, it motivates us to do the **MOST** that we can do, and to **ABOUND** in Good Works
- Jesus doesn't just call us to simply follow the **RULES**
- Jesus expects **GREATNESS** from us!
- We aren't called to simply spend our time avoiding **SIN**
- We are put here for the purpose of doing something **GREAT**

- Being saved by Grace and living a life of appreciation of God's Mercy doesn't cause us to ***“sin all the more so that Grace may abound”***
- Having that weight lifted from our shoulders is what causes us to want to go that *“Extra Mile”*, to give our *“cloak also”*...
- To go **ONE STEP FURTHER**
- Today we will look how we can live that way Monday to Friday, Nine to Five...
- Remember the example from Ephesians 4?

SLIDE

- Ephesians 4:28
 - 28) Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, **doing honest work with his own hands**, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.
- The commandment to the thief is **NOT** to simply stop stealing...
- The thief is called to actually do something **GOOD** with his life to help others
- We are asked to make the same kind of choices in our lives...
- But, alas... It's not that easy, is it?
- The first thing that the thief has to figure out is, *“What is honest work?”*

SLIDE

- Work consumes a huge part of our daily life, and yet, in my experience we don't talk about it from the Podium that often
- Is it because the Bible doesn't address any principles regarding work?
- On the contrary...
- Next to the Hope of the Kingdom, I would say that the concepts regarding employment and labor are one of the most talked about subject in the Scriptures

- A large part of the Law, good portions of Proverbs, and many of Christ's Parables talk specifically about those hours between 9:00 and 5:00
- So, why is it that when we walk through the double doors in the front of the office, we feel that a whole new set of rules apply
- Why do we turn to Stephen Covey, Brian Tracy and anyone that writes in The Wall Street Journal for our guidance and direction?
- Maybe we simply don't see work as a Moral Issue
- You manufacture Widgets or you teach Widget Manufacturing to others, but it's not really someplace where you feel the temptations to do **WRONG**

SLIDE

- You may not be doing anything **WRONG** at work, but are you doing anything **GOOD** at work?
- Sure, you may not be sinning that badly at work, but are you making anything **GOOD** out of it?
- Let's hold our Work Lives up to the light of the principles we've discussed...

SLIDE

- **Let's go ONE STEP FURTHER at Work!**
- First... Let's start at the beginning...

SLIDE

- What about Work, itself?
- What would be the **BEST CHOICE** for us to make?
- If we don't want to just do the opposite of Sinning, we first have to figure out what is stated as **CLEARLY SINFUL** in the scriptures...
- That's quite simple, isn't it?

SLIDE

- 1st Timothy 5:8

8) But if **anyone does not provide for his relatives**, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is **worse than an unbeliever**.

- It would be **SINFUL**, not to provide for your family
- So, clearly, most of us **HAVE** to work...
- We have to provide for our families...
- Or else we are worse than an unbeliever
- But, when we try to look at what is Clearly Right though, we really have to ask some serious questions about “Work” altogether...

SLIDE

- Maybe a case could be made that **EVERY** job we take is less than the ideal
- The scriptures do tend to show employment as fundamental...
 - But, in reality, the instruction seems to be on **HOW** we should work, once we have chosen to work...
- Look at Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians as an example...

SLIDE

- 1st Thessalonians 4:11-12

11) and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to **work with your hands**, as we instructed you,
12) so that you may **walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one**.

- No one denies the responsibility that the Bible teaches about working...
- But, there is also another message that is very strong throughout the New Testament:

SLIDE

- Mark 16:15

15) And he said to them, “Go into all the world and **proclaim the gospel** to the whole creation.

- The examples we have of Jesus, Paul, and the Apostles from the New Testament, are of people to whom the service of the Lord was primary over their responsibilities to any other occupation...
- An argument could be made that by accepting **ANY** job, we are already making a choice that is less than the Ideal...
- The most important thing in our life (sharing God’s gospel with those around us) should be our Vocation, not something that is relegated to an Avocation...

SLIDE

- If we really want to go **ONE STEP FURTHER** in selecting a career, then the best choice would be to devote our lives to God’s Work...
- The Bible Mission is constantly looking for interested couples to do missionary work...
- This is a career choice, not just a short term opportunity...
- The way to be most effective in Mission Work is to dedicate yourself to a long term service
- With all of the interest generated from Bible Reading Seminars, there is a huge amount of domestic mission work that needs to be done also...
- So, before we move on to talk about jobs and careers, let’s not completely ignore this option...
- Most of us choose the option of going out to work in the workplace...
- But, let’s keep our minds open to another option, and hopefully encourage that type of thinking in our young people...
- Or maybe even in ourselves...

- What about those parents that choose not to work and to stay home with their children?
- I feel that this is a better choice than choosing to go to work, and hiring day care for God's future saints
- Sure, it's hard...
- It brings pressure to bear on the finances...
- It can bring its own stresses and problems...
- But, it's the right thing to do!
- It requires Faith to make a decision like that
- But, God always blesses us for making decisions that require Faith

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- **Faith** is very important to God

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- Any decision that we make in life that **requires Faith is pleasing to God**, and will be **blessed** by Him

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- **Faith is like a muscle**, the more you use it, the more it grows...
- So, let's remember that growing up, going to college, and getting a "Job" is not the only option available to us...
- It's not a Wrong option...
- But, it is not necessarily the Best option either...
- Having a Job is simply the choice that most of us choose...
- Whenever you make a choice like this, it will bring with it complications...

- We will be challenged to make further choices that can themselves be Right or Wrong...
- One of the complications that comes with choosing a career, over a more spiritual pursuit, is the actual choosing of the career...
- It's obvious that some jobs are not acceptable for a servant of Christ...
- Policeman, stripper, Bomb Designer, etc...
- Those are easy not to choose, and few of us face that issue...
- Something interesting struck me several years ago, while having a conversation about these "questionable occupations"...
- A Brother was talking about working in jobs that support these "questionable occupations", and how this is just as wrong...
- Pick a gun up at the local Police Station Evidence Locker that has been used in the murder of someone...
- Trace back everyone who has been involved in the "stream of commerce" that brought that weapon to the killer's hands, and I think you can clearly illustrate the concept...
- Someone started a company for the manufacture of handguns
- Someone went to work for this company, turning a lathe and shaping the guns
- Someone had the responsibility of testing the weapon and performing quality control inspections to make sure it worked "properly"
- Someone went into the wholesale distribution business to distribute these guns to gun shops
- Somebody else went into the business of selling the guns to the public, and opened a gun shop
- Someone was hired to hit the streets, meet the gun shop owners and write up orders
- Someone packaged it, and shipped it to the gun shop
- Then...

- Finally... The bad guy came in, stole the gun and shot someone...
- Everyone of them probably consoled themselves that night by thinking that “**Guns don’t kill people, people do...**”
- But, nonetheless, I don’t think that my conscience would allow me to take any one of their jobs...
- But, what really struck me as we were talking about working in jobs that support these “questionable occupations”, was...

SLIDE

- **Where do you draw the line?**
- The first thought that came to my mind, is that some poor agent had to write the insurance on both the gun manufacturer and the gun shop...
- I know that I wouldn’t do it, but would that be wrong if I did?
- ***What if you don’t write the Products Liability, and just wrote their Health Insurance?***
- Somebody provides these businesses paper products, computers, and office supplies (and likewise, somebody manufactures these items...)
- Surely, it’s not wrong to work at Office Depot, is it?
- Somebody provides tax services, accounting services, janitorial services, advertising design services, and all kinds of other services to them...
- Someone is selling groceries, clothing, and household appliances to all of the owners and employees who made their money by providing a weapon of death to a killer...
- ***Where do you draw the line?***
- My wife, Kellie was a travel agent when we first married
- Seems harmless enough, eh?
- Her biggest client was an Aerospace Company that was busy building Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles during the early ‘80’s

- My dad was a draftsman in little, old Springfield, Vermont...
- 20 years later he's watching "60 Minutes" 20 one night, and finds out that one of the ball bearing projects he worked on was secretly sold to the Russians, and was an integral part of the guidance system in the missiles they were aiming at Americans...
- Is there any job that isn't complicated?
- Kellie and I Home-Schooled our kids, and as Home-Schoolers we used to dream about raising our kids on a farm...
- Surely, that would be a bucolic, simple life with no complications!
- Nope! Stress to provide an income for your family in an uncertain farming market, versus the sense of security that a salary provides
- Regulatory hassles with the Agricultural Administrations
- Loans on the farm, on the equipment, on the animals, and even on the seed!
- Being a Teacher wouldn't offer any spiritual complications would it?
- Well, not unless you count being part of a Union, swearing an oath, pledging allegiance to the flag, teaching Evolution and dealing with a strong Pro-Homosexual influence in the school leadership as complications!
- That's when it hit me!

SLIDE

- **EVERY** job brings with it **COMPLICATIONS...**
- Every time you accept anything less than the Ideal, you bring Complications into your life
- Even if you do find an occupation that seems harmless, every business lives and dies with the threat of legal action today...
- Malpractice, debt collection, wrongful employment practices...
- Business run on the backs of Lawyers, it seems

- What do we do?

SLIDE

- **We live with it!** That's our curse in this world...
- Adam was told,

SLIDE

- Genesis 3:19

19) **By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread**, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

- ***Well, isn't that a reassuring, wonderful message!***
- But, that is the facts
- Everyone has to draw a line somewhere
- It can't be at arm's length
- And, if you are like me, it can't be in the sand, either!
- We are placed here by God, and put in this position

SLIDE

- God has placed us in this trial of **COMPLICATED** choices and decisions...

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- And He wants us to be **FAITHFUL**
- He wants us to be Honest...
- He wants us to be Trustworthy...
- He wants us to be Reliable...
- He wants us to be Diligent...

- These are our real challenges at work...
- We are not only asked to **“Get by”** under these circumstances...
- We aren’t called to just **“Not do anything wrong”**

SLIDE

- God expects us to be **GREAT** at it!

SLIDE

- Ephesians 6:5-8
 - 5) Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ,
 - 6) not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, **doing the will of God from the heart,**
 - 7) **rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man,**
 - 8) knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free.
- We need to work diligently at whatever position we find ourselves...

SLIDE

- We need to go **ONE STEP FURTHER** at Work also
- Quite simply, the one simplest way that we serve our Father at work is by working diligently and heartily
- Look at what Verse 6 is telling us!
 - 6) **Don’t just do what you have to do to get by, but work heartily, as Christ’s servants doing what God wants you to do.**
- You really don’t have to read much more beyond that...
- Work isn’t just something that we suffer through
- Christ commands us to EXCEL at Work!
- But, let’s see what else Jesus said on the Mount that affects us between 9:00 to 5:00

- Interestingly enough, there is quite a bit that has to do with suing...

SLIDE

- Matthew 5:40

40) And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, **let him have your cloak as well.**

- And this one also...

SLIDE

- Matthew 5:25-26

25) **Come to terms quickly with your accuser** while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison.

26) Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

- I can't take the time to go into the wealth of scriptural argument against legally forcing your will upon another, but will suffice to say that the Legal System and a Believer should find themselves as far apart as possible...
- This advice seems particularly pertinent to believers who own their own business, and is one of the hardest parts of owning your own business today
- But, does that let everyone else off the hook?
- If the corporation you work for is rapacious in their legal attacks of others, do you have no moral connection to that behavior as an employee?
- My sister rose to a high position in the nation's third largest stock brokerage
- She started in Customer Service over 30 years ago, and just kept growing
- Well... "Customer Service" quickly turned into "Customer Complaints", and the higher she rose the higher level of complaints were transferred to her
- When she realized that she was spending more than half of her time talking to the Legal Department about they were going to handle specific customers, she realized that maybe she needed a job adjustment

- Having the faith to make a decision to change because you are morally uncomfortable with the litigious attitude of your employer is a faithful decision
- And faithful decisions will always be rewarded
- One major thing that we can all do for God at Work is to share His promises with the people we work with

SLIDE

- This can be tricky...
- In this Politically Correct, Religiously Tolerant, Diversity Celebrating society we have a strong sense of separation of Church and State and such a fear of Religious Discrimination that many Believers have stopped talking about the Truth at Work
- If you are in any type of leadership position, you might be accused of harassment or discrimination by someone if they don't respond to your approach, and you subsequently treat them differently...
- **Well, don't treat them differently**

SLIDE

- Don't harass or discriminate against them
- Show them the love that God commands a Master to show a Servant
- **But, that doesn't mean that you can't talk to them in the first place!**

SLIDE

- Of course, **it's stealing if you talk on your Employer's time**, and not on your own time
- All Acts of Love cost you the most valuable thing... Your time
- Be prepared to invest your precious lunch hour, or afternoon break in the salvation of a coworker

SLIDE

- It's **TRICKY**, but it's **IMPORTANT**
- It's important to realize and remember that the people you work with are starving for hope and peace and joy, and may have no other connection to God's Word except for what you can bring them
- Brother Stan Isbell from Houston worked at an oil company for 30 years
- One day he asked a coworker if he wanted to read the Bible with him at lunch
- When a few more joined in, Stan asked his boss if they could borrow an unused conference room for a class at lunch
- Then they moved to a larger conference room when the group got bigger, and Stan started doing PowerPoint presentations during each class
- Over 45 people were baptized through that effort before Stan retired
- He never was penalized, criticized or spoken to about the class
- As a matter of fact, the class continues today, led by some of the Brothers who still work there
- When you are self-employed, you have much greater freedom in sharing God's blessings with your employees
- Because you can't get in trouble from the boss!
- I feel that you almost have an obligation to improve the lives of your employees...
- There is a lot more than just providing them a paycheck
- You are responsible to improve their quality of life, and their spiritual life
- But, you can also share that blessing, even if you aren't the owner of the company
- You preach by taking advantage of opportunities in discussions about politics, current events and the moral issues of the day
- You also preach simply by example

- Often, in a gossip-filled, back-stabbing workplace full of Office Politics, it can be easy to stand out as someone different
- Jesus understood this, and begins his Sermon with the famous words:

SLIDE

- Matthew 5:15-16

- 15) Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.
- 16) In the same way, **let your light shine before others**, so that they may **see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**

- Do you find yourself working in a particularly upsetting environment?
- This may not be a curse
- It may be an opportunity to let your light shine
- Look how Paul explains it to the Philippians:

SLIDE

- Philippians 2:15

- 15) that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, **among whom you shine as lights in the world,**

SLIDE

- This isn't a new concept
- This was God's original intention with His people from the beginning of time
- The Jews were supposed to be a witness to the nations around them, and we are called to do the same in our daily work

SLIDE

- But, no matter how successful we become at work, or how much we are able to successfully share God's Word with our coworkers, we always have to remember that our careers take **THIRD** place behind our commitment to God and His Ecclesia, and our families
- I would contend that more Believers have a problem with **OVERWORKING**, than do with slothfulness and laziness
- Sometimes it's the money, sometimes it's the fame that rises in the company, often it's just the sense of accomplishment and a job well done, and sometimes I've even seen people "hiding" at work, because their home life is not very happy, and they prefer work over being at home...
- But, whatever the motivation, it's a very common temptation to **OVERWORK**

SLIDE

- And **OVERWORKING** robs God and it steals from your family
- You have a limited amount of time in each day, and it's important that you properly allocate it

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- Step out in **FAITH**, that God will bless you and protect you if you put work in its proper perspective
- Prioritize your life based on God's Priorities, not your Boss's!
- I love how David addresses the issue of **OVERWORK**:

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• Psalm 127:2

2) It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for **he gives to his beloved sleep.**

- God provides for the ones He loves
- You don't need to use Work as an excuse to get up early and go to bed late

SLIDE

- Let's take a look at one more thing before we finish today...
- What about the end of work? What about *Retirement*?

SLIDE

- How do we apply the concept of **ONE STEP FURTHER** to Retirement?
- There seems to be two sides to the argument about preparing for the future...
- In Matthew 6, Jesus spends quite a bit of time talking about these concepts:
- He explains how the birds of the air don't sow, harvest, or store into barns, and yet God cares for them
- He talks about how the lilies of the field don't toil or spin, and yet God gives them more beautiful clothing than the richest of men
- On the surface, it seems that Jesus is implying that working hard to save for your financial future is foolish:

SLIDE

- Matthew 6:19-20
 - 19) “**Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth**, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal,
 - 20) but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.
- But, don't we have other instructions that commend this type of behavior?
- There's the famous passage in Proverbs:

SLIDE

- Proverbs 6:6-8
 - 6) Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.
 - 7) Without having any chief, officer, or ruler,
 - 8) she prepares her bread in summer and **gathers her food in harvest.**

- The answer, as you know, lies in the 21st Verse of Mathew 6:

SLIDE

- **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**
- Jesus isn't opposed to 401(k)s...
- The concept of saving from a young age to support yourself when you are no longer working is prudent and wise
- Jesus **IS** opposed to spending more time online reviewing your accounts, transferring money to the high performing funds, and reallocating your investments than you do reading the Word of God!

SLIDE

- Luke 12:16-21
 - 16) And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully,
 - 17) and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?'
 - 18) And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.
 - 19) And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry."'
 - 20) But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'

SLIDE

- 21) **So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."**

SLIDE

- ***Plan for the future, but live today!***
- Concentrate on how you can best serve your Father today, and don't spend your whole time thinking about tomorrow
- I've met people whose Retirement Fund is not as healthy as it should be, because

they helped many Brothers and Sisters over the years that were in need, and weren't always able to put as much aside for themselves as they would have liked

- God rewards that type of behavior!
- It might not be fiscally sound, and your investment advisor might warn against it...
- But the man that lends to God is always paid back in full... **WITH INTEREST!**
- So, you've saved for your Retirement...

SLIDE

- When do you retire?
- ***Do you Retire?***
- I've got to say...
- When I look at Jesus, I see a man who said things like, *"If your right eye offend thee, pluck it out... And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off..."*
- I have a hard time seeing him decide one day to just pack it all in, move down to Florida, and live a life of leisure...
- *Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven...*

SLIDE

- **You don't retire simply because you don't want to work anymore**

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- To go **ONE STEP FURTHER** is to retire because there is so much that you want to get done, that you can't afford to spend any more time at work
- That is why you've saved up all those years! To allow you the convenience of no longer **HAVING** to work, so you can now concentrate on your service to God
- Who's better equipped for service to God than those who are experienced, mature,

financially-independent Brothers and Sisters?

- Have you saved enough money to retire?
- Are you trying to decide if you need to retire?
- Ask yourself some questions:
- Is your Ecclesia problem free, or could it use more attention?
- Is every member in your meeting doing well, or could they use regular visits?
- Is enough outreach being done in your community, or could it use someone who has the time to invest in 18 months of weekly classes?

SLIDE

- God designed you to **MAKE A DIFFERENCE** with your life

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- God wants you to **GIVE SOMETHING BACK** to those around you
- God wants you to serve Him
- A verse that's been haunting me for years is in Matthew 25:

SLIDE

- Matthew 25:40

40) And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, **as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.**'

- Maybe, like me, there are people in your Ecclesia that you don't pay much attention to
- People who aren't really on your radar
- People who you don't have a natural social affinity with
- People who are the "least" of your concern
- THAT is who Christ wants me to reach out to!

- THAT is who Christ wants me to spend my time with
- It's EASY for me to spend time with the people that I love and who I get along nicely with
- But, we're going to be judged on how we treated the least of Christ's brethren

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- *Whenever you serve others in any way...*

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- **YOU ARE ACTUALLY SERVING GOD!**
- This is what God wants most from us, and this should be what we all work toward
- Every one of us - Every day of our lives - At Home, At the Ecclesia, **AND** at Work!