

MONDAY MANNA

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PRIORITIES AND PERSONAL COMMITMENT

By Rick Boxx

Mark Cuban, an American billionaire entrepreneur and one of the investors on the TV reality show, "Shark Tank," revealed his personal priorities when he criticized one of the entrepreneurs making a presentation to the experts, collectively known as the "Sharks." Cuban said he wanted the entrepreneur's commitment to his business to exceed everything else in his life.

Cuban pointed out when he built his first business, he went without a vacation for seven years! He also pointed to a time when his girlfriend told him he needed to choose her or the business. Cuban bragged that he chose the business.

An all-out commitment to work does not seem unusual to many people. They consider being a "workaholic" a virtue, not an indictment of misplaced or unbalanced priorities. They take pride in not missing a day of work, as well as foregoing days or weeks of vacation, even when they are rightfully entitled to them. In some cultures such devotion to work, perhaps even an obsession with it, is unheard of; midday siestas, even several-week holidays are common in some parts of the world. But in some Western societies an all-out, unreserved dedication to work is displayed like a badge of honor.

This is not to disparage people starting a business who for a period of time must sacrifice time and energy to ensure the new venture is firmly established. But after that, a time should come when the business owner or worker takes a well-deserved break from his or her labors. As Ecclesiastes 3 tells us, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven...a time to plant and a time to uproot...a time to tear down and a time to build...a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them...."

Work is a part of life, a very important part, but work is not life. When God declared, "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath..." (Exodus 20:3-4), I am certain that He was including work and one's business, because they also can become objects of worship.

The Bible speaks to the "whole person," viewing us as multi-faceted, relationship-oriented individuals that need to maintain priorities in proper order. When Jesus responded to a question, stating, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind" (Matthew 22:37), He was exhorting us to make God our foremost priority. Next He instructed that relationships – marriage and family in particular – are to hold the next level of importance: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).

Without question, work is a very significant element in our daily lives. Through it we earn the provisions for our daily needs, and what we do vocationally can give us much satisfaction and fulfillment. However, the Bible exhorts us to maintain a broader view of our lives. In Luke 9:24-5 Jesus taught, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"

Mr. Cuban, without question, has proved to be an extremely successful business leader and entrepreneur. But at what cost? Many in the business world presume success requires putting the business above all else. The Scriptures tell us God has a better plan: God, family, and then work.

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What do you think of the famous entrepreneur's recommendation to make our commitment to business or work greater than anything else in our life? Explain your answer.
2. If we are not to make devotion to our work paramount in our lives, how do you think we can maintain a proper balance – especially when demands on our time and energy in the workplace become great?
3. Do you agree with the idea that work in itself can become a kind of god, an object of worship, or an idol? Why or why not?
4. How would you describe your priorities in life, both professionally and personally? Do you have a particular approach or strategy for ensuring those priorities stay in the right order?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

- Psalm 127:2,
- Matthew 6:19-24;
- Ephesians 2:10;
- Colossians 3:17,23;
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17