

MONDAY MANNA

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WHAT IS YOUR PERCEPTION OF WORK?

By Robert J. Tamasy

As we continue to deal with the repercussions of the global COVID-19 pandemic, our work – and how we perceive it – has been dramatically affected. Many of us, if we had not already been doing so, have learned the joys and challenges of working from home. Some have seen their job descriptions modified dramatically, while others have lost jobs or have been laid off temporarily due to economic slowdowns.

All of these factors have prompted many of us to re-evaluate our attitudes and perceptions of work: what it means, why we do it, and what we expect from it. Is work, as some would describe it, merely “a necessary evil” that they would like to avoid if it were possible? Is it just “earning a living” – generating income to pay bills, meet needs and support a desired lifestyle? Or is there more to it than that – does work have intrinsic value that can help us to find meaning, worth and purpose?

One clever person gave this assessment: “I love work. I can sit and watch people doing it all day.” Does this statement mirror your feelings, that work is good – as long as someone else is expending the effort?

David McKay, president and CEO of RBC, Canada’s largest bank, has offered a much more affirming perspective on work: “Let us recognise that the privilege to work is a gift, that the power to work is a blessing, and that love of work is success.” In this brief statement he connects work with a number of intriguing concepts: that it is a privilege, a gift, a blessing, and success – if you love doing it. Each is deserving of consideration and elaboration.

Believe it or not, there was a time when work was not drudgery, when it was not fraught with frustration. According to the Bible’s Old Testament book of Genesis, when God created the first people – Adam and Eve – their “workplace,” Eden, was a wonderful, idyllic setting. *“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every living creature that moves on the ground.... I will give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food....’”* (Genesis 1:28-29).

It was a perfect arrangement, but then Adam and Eve messed it up. They defied God’s command to not eat the fruit of *“the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”* (Genesis 3:17). The consequences of their act of rebellion are still being felt today: *“Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.... By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food”* (Genesis 3:17-19).

So, when we go to work, whether in a traditional office setting, traveling through airports, or reporting to a workstation in our homes, and things are not going well, we can all thank Adam and Eve. They started it! But does this mean we should begin each workday kicking and screaming, grumbling because work is hard? We can take that approach. Or as McKay said, we can choose to view it as a privilege, a gift, and a blessing. Then roll up our sleeves and put forth the required effort.

Business consultant Tim Kight has observed, “Doctors don’t make you healthy. Nutritionists don’t make you slim. Teachers don’t make you smart. Trainers don’t make you fit. They help, but you must take responsibility and do the work.” When we do this, we can enjoy the fruits of our labours and feel the satisfaction of a job well done.

© 2020. Robert J. Tamasy has written Marketplace Ambassadors: CBMC's Continuing Legacy of Evangelism and Discipleship; Business at Its Best: Timeless Wisdom from Proverbs for Today's Workplace; and The Heart of Mentoring, co-authored with David A. Stoddard. Bob's biweekly blog is: www.bobtamasy.blogspot.com.

Reflection/Discussion Questions

Before you read this "Monday Manna," how would you have described your attitude toward your work?

What do you think is the importance of one's perspective toward their job, especially since it typically consumes a sizable percentage of our time each week? Does our perspective really matter? Why or why not?

David McKay speaks about work being a privilege, a gift, and a blessing. How do you react to hearing those terms associated with the everyday challenges and frustrations we all experience in the workplace?

If you were to change one thing about your perception of work – in general, or in your current situation specifically – what would it be? Explain your answer.

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

Genesis 1:27-31

Proverbs 10:5, 12:24, 22:29

Ecclesiastes 1:1-2,9-11, 2:4-11,24-26, 5:18