

A New Years' Resolution – Give myself liberty to reach God's destiny for my career..

An article in a continuing series by author and Career Coach, Robert Meier.

For years I've heard a saying coined by Mary K. Ash (founder of Mary K. Cosmetics) used to define the proper relationship of Christians and the work place, "*God first, family second and careers third.*"

At first glance this appears to be a devout truism, but the saying is no more Biblical than, "*God helps those who help themselves*" and it's doing great damage to Christian morale, motivation and confidence as believers compete for increasingly scarce jobs.

The damage stems from the fact that on any list of three items with decreasing importance, there is great chance that the last thing on the list will be ignored.

Many Christians do just that, neglect their careers for the ostensibly commendable reason of putting God first in their life. But, is neglecting your career going to automatically put God first in our life? And if neglecting your career reduces your earning power then tithing decreases, alms decrease and your ability to provide for family decreases. In addition, a neglected career path prevents winning promotions to greater positions of authority, which decreases the Christian impact on the ethics and moral values of corporate cultures.

Finally, if God wanted to be first in our lives at the exclusion of work, why did he spend so much time in Genesis chapter one talking about work (by the way, God worked six out of seven days, or 86% of the workweek). And here is something rarely discussed, but at the burning bush where God spoke to Moses in Exodus chapter three, wasn't the conversation primarily focused on the unfair labor situation that caused the Israelites to suffer at the hands of their bosses or overseers, the Egyptians?

Alienation of work and faith is an epidemic pervading the Christian community. Two examples where I had first-hand experience include a nationally syndicated Christian radio program that wanted to discuss my career coaching expertise and a meeting I held with the editor of a top Christian publisher regarding a career series tailored to the Christian audience that I was proposing. Regarding the radio program, I was asked to suggest career topics for Christian professionals. Of a list of four topics, two suggestions included: "Are Christians becoming second-class corporate citizens?" and, "How do we find God's glory in our career?" So what happened? Both topics were ignored in order to discuss what indicates that Christians are making an idol of their career. A valuable topic, but one that has negative connotations for believers who want to succeed professionally. I doubt the same broadcasting network would ask Christian athletes when are sports fans in jeopardy of making idols of their favorite pro players? The other example of work and faith becoming mutually exclusive occurred at a preliminary meeting with a senior acquisition editor. His response to a Christian career book series was that Christians are not ready to buy titles on careers any more than they want Christian aerobic or auto mechanic books. But a casual perusal of books at a local Christian bookstore indicates that Christians seek information on all sorts of topics; from dating to debt management. So vital information on how to reach career/faith/life balance is not reaching people of faith, or at least not from a Christian source. The result is that Christians are losing the job search battle and remain confused on how to succeed against their job-seeking competitors on a ruthless job market.

So what can be done? First let's be honest about how important work is to God and Christians. Our work, in many ways, defines our faith as it is tested in the real world. It is where our God given gifts and talents are on display and it is where we have opportunity to share Jesus with the unsaved. Remember, the enemy of our soul would like devout Christians to vacate corporate offices so that he has free reign at American business headquarters. Don't misunderstand Matthew chapter six where we are told to "... seek ye the kingdom of God first and all these things will be added unto you" as God's imperative to ignore our career. Instead, pray that God will open your eyes to a divinely inspired career that allows you to do his will - and the kingdom of God will be first in our life. We should adopt a new saying, "Healthy faith, healthy families and health careers are all important to God." Now isn't that a liberating idea?