

Full Time for All...

named, designated and appointed

by Jeff Rogers

Stan leaves for work each day at 6:15 fighting the evermore congested Pacific Northwest highways on his way to the office. He's blurry eyed after helping his eldest on Algebra the night before. A swing through the Starbuck's drive through & he's on the way to a day of fighting corporate forest-fires & politics, dancing a fine line between results and not casting out the "sacred-cow".

Stan worked hard at a large local university to finish his EE degree while working part-time to keep his student loans at a minimum. While in school he balanced his studies & work with involvement at "The Inn" college ministry. He deepened his faith & was surrounded by teaching at a solid church. He heard about mission trips other students were taking to Mexico and the privileged few overseas. The leaders seem to affirm these important acts of faith, yet Stan needed to continue his work in construction to pay for school. He did manage his senior year to take a spring break to go with a work-crew to build homes across the border in Mexicali. Moved by the experience and the impact their work has for the community, Stan considers "ministry" work upon graduation. Yet, he's always had a love for creating and developing new ideas and thinks some day he may be able to integrate that with some business interests.

Stan's job offers include a consulting engineering firm, a large international manufacturing organization hiring lots of recent engineering grads, a local electronics manufacturer working within the aerospace industry and a more senior role with the construction firm he's worked with through college. While Stan appreciates the great team he's worked with over the last few years, he wants a new challenge. He finally settles on the consulting engineering firm, given the opportunity to work directly with senior engineers while having a high regard for the owner who seems to integrate his faith in the business practices.

Luther challenged the late medieval world when he wrote: "The works of monks and

priests, however holy and arduous they be, do not differ one whit in the sight of God from the works of the rustic laborer in the field or the woman going about her household tasks, but that all works are measured before God by faith alone.”

The Bible gives significance to any work. There are no non-sacred occupations. Called to ministry or full-time service are often cultural misrepresentations of God’s view of meaningfulness work; creeping out the near singular focus on salvation, rather than “Making disciples of the nations”. Thus, there exists an artificial ranking of the Godliness of work. It can be even more discouraging to read one more letter from someone who shares the exciting news that they have suddenly discovered they are called into full-time service. What message does that send to those that thought they were called into the traditional (secular?!) workplace?

Stan’s career progresses well and he starts his family just as he’s beginning MBA school at a local Christian university. He’s been leading project teams with the engineering firm and decides it’s important to have a better handle on the business dynamics to augment his technical skills. Working full-time Cindy – his wife, reduces her work-load as an accountant to begin their family. They’ve moved to the “plateau” hoping to plug into activities for their kids and find a good church. Stepping into their home was a bit of a “stretch” but with the career going well and a growing family, Stan & Cindy believe it’s a good move for their long-term future.

Stan is thriving learning about business & see’s a real integration of his technical proneness with an overall view of business; in one of his classes a professor challenges the students to view their business world as a mission, not just as a means to an end. This is the first time he can remember hearing that his work can be a ministry, not just in the way he conducts himself with clients, co-workers, and management, but that the work itself carries meaning. Maybe this can be a mission, as he thinks back to his days working with the construction team in Mexico.

Everyone has a vocation, a calling. This is not something reserved for only a chosen few who end up as clergy or missionaries. We can & should live out our calling by being excellent at whatever God created us to be. As we take on this perspective, then everything we do is a part of fulfilling our vocation. In doing so, we are living out a Hebraic model, rather than a “Greek” model. A Hebraic model is holistic, it all belongs to God. The Greek view is compartmentalized as different parts of our life that shouldn’t integrate. The word vocation comes from the Latin “vocare,” which means, “to call”. It suggests that you are listening to something directed to you.

Biblical Perspective On Work:

- *God established work before the fall. “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” (Gen. 1:15) This work assignment was given before sin entered the world and God pronounced the curse.*
- *God expected us to enjoy our work! Solomon wrote in (Ecc. 3:13) “That every man find pleasure in his work -- this is a gift of God.” To recognize unique talents as is to accept God’s unique gift to us. Could you be waiting for God’s call to ministry when you’re already in it?*
- *God blesses work – including post-fall. If work were evil, could God encourage people to engage in it? In Colossians 3:23 we are told to “work hard and cheerfully at all you do, just as though you were working for the Lord and not merely for your masters (bosses).” In Nehemiah 4:6 it shows that the people were able to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem because of unique giftedness: “So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart. So it is with God-called work.*
- *God will have us work in eternity. (Isaiah 65:17-25) In heaven we will “build houses, plant vineyards, and shall long enjoy the work of their hands.”*

In I Corinthians 3, Paul expresses concern about having the ability to speak freely from the Lord if he was being paid by those people hearing his preaching. Thus, to maintain that freedom, he chose to continue providing for his personal needs by doing secular work he was gifted in doing. Could it be that each one of us is called to ministry and that it's all full-time service? Is it an "OR" model or, perhaps, could it be an "AND" model?

At home coaching softball & soccer with their two kids is rewarding, yet hard to mix in with all the other commitments. Stan believes this is an important time to connect with their kids and invest in their lives and get to know some of their friends in the process. Cindy is a leader within the church & oversees the youth missions program. With the good relationships with members and the excellent work she does on missions, along with Stan's technical background & developing business savvy, the church asks him to put his skills to "ministry" use. The church is embarking on a capital campaign, to finally get the building they need and move from the school facility.

Stan is feeling pulled; church members and some of the leadership feel that his work, while provision for the family, is a means to an end and the higher calling is to those church endeavors. He looks at the project-management aspect of the capital campaign as a near part-time job for the next year. Something will have to give, but that's just part of being a good "part of the team"? He can drop coaching as one alternative. Another idea that's been suggested to him, given his now senior leadership role at the consulting engineering firm, is to back off a bit from work, and delegate to team members. This way, he'd be able to get out of the office a bit earlier so he can keep up with family obligations and then dedicate

the necessary time to the campaign.

He is uneasy, given this new role at work has him as key oversight to four large customers for the firm, all with significant projects in play. Stan knows these customers and has worked directly with their management teams; he knows they are counting on him to deliver the results they've decided to outsource to his organization.

Is your work a job or a vocation? Wisdom and understanding come from God and surpass human ability. As God was giving Moses detailed plans for building the tabernacle in Exodus, He said, "I have put wisdom in the hearts of all who are gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you. And Moses said, "See, the Lord has called by name Bezaleel and has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of artistic workmanship." (Ex. 31:6; 35:30-33

"I have put wisdom in the hearts of all who are gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you."

NKJV)

Seeing work in the context of a calling (ie. Ministry) gives an entirely different picture. "Call" is the verb used to communicate the action of being sent for and directed to come. The Greek kaleo (to call) is used to describe the voice of the shepherd, a voice heard in a unique context by the sheep. "Call" is used for naming, designating and appointing. From beginning to end, God's actions toward us are captured in the act of calling

On today's rainy drive to the office, a fresh cup of coffee to his side, Stan wrestles with life-margin. Something needs to be cut back; he thinks, "Well, what really is ministry and where should I serve?"

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Jeff also serves on the boards of Youth Transition Network, Doingood Foundation, Circle Building Software Corp, and the Seattle Christian Foundation. He enjoys coaching soccer & basketball, which he's been involved with over the last 12 years. Jeff & Amy attend Westminster Chapel & have been married over 20 years with 3 girls, Lauren, Addy, and Camryn. You can reach Jeff at Jeff.Rogers@OneAccordPartners.com and www.oneaccordpartners.com.

