



What lessons can be learned from the job you do?

Thoughtful Service

By Katherine Rowland

I work as a clerk in an elementary school library. When I give this as my occupation, the ready assumption is that I check books in and out, which I certainly do! That is, however, only one part of my job description. I serve as a library clerk, a bookkeeper, a secretary, a technician, a public representative, and a teacher, sometimes all at once and sometimes by turn. I love my job—and it has also made me think a lot about my vocation as a Christian.

Since my librarian is only at my school a third of the time (she has two other schools to oversee), she has to be confident that I will carry out library, instructional, and administrative functions in her absence. She also has to be able to know that I will do these things as she would. There are several elements that go into this:

I have to be familiar with the library’s policies. I have to know the rules that apply in the library—both to my conduct and to the children’s—and I also have to know why those rules are in place. In addition, I must have an idea of how those policies and procedures fit into the overarching structure of school policy and procedure.

Now, if I only know the rules and not the principles behind them, I am hamstrung: I can’t tell how to handle situations where there is no rule. Likewise, God has not dictated to us a network of rules for every conceivable circumstance—such a list would be too huge to keep in one library! Instead, He gives us His principles, He shows us examples of those who have gone before, He gives us His Spirit...and then we have to figure out how to apply what we know in our own circumstances.

I have to know my librarian.

There are some things that aren’t rules or written procedures, but are rather my librarian’s preferences. In addition, since I have to deliver instruction when she is not there, I need to know what she wants taught and how she wants it taught. How does she engage the students? What things does she emphasize?

Any good secretary, as well, will study her boss’s habits and tendencies. Part of my job is to know how to do my job and how to help my librarian do her job better, more effectively. Now, God does not need my help to do His job. But it is still vital that I know how He works and how His

mind works, as well as I possibly can. How do I do that? How do I put into practice the admonishment to “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus..*” (Philippians 2:5)? The only way I can know that is by studying His written word—the Bible—and learning from the examples of those around me who are also following Him.

I have to keep my conduct to the highest standard, whether my librarian is present or not. I am alone in the library most of the time, with no one checking my work on a regular basis. However, I know that I need to be at my best constantly. I cannot have one rule for when my librarian is there to watch, and one rule for when she is absent. Likewise, Paul admonished the Philippians, “*Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel...*”

(Philippians 1:27) My conduct as a Christian should not change, no matter where I am or who is watching—for surely Christ is always present!

Inside This Issue...

Thoughtful Service
by Katherine Rowland.....1

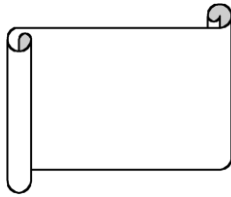
Know When to Quit
By Robert Berendt.....2

ARE WE PLEASING TO GOD? by Diane Clark.....3

Who Cares?
By Amy Stephens...6

There are a lot of other lessons that one can learn from one's job. What have you learned from yours? How does it apply to your Christian walk?

For more information request the booklet: You Can Have Living Faith



God expects us to know when to stand firm and when to change direction.

Know When to Quit By Robert Berendt

The body of George Mallory was found on Mount Everest in 1999. It had lain undiscovered since he died in 1924. Mallory died on his third attempt to climb Mount Everest. He and his climbing partner, Andrew Irvine, died during the last leg of the climb near the top. It is not known whether they made it to the summit, but had they done so, they would have been the first.

Mallory left behind a young widow and three small children. Most all who die leave loved ones to mourn the loss. One wonders why people take such great risks when they have such great responsibilities. Grand and noble words are often written about such adventure seekers, but few will accuse them of not knowing when to quit. Any person with family responsibilities ought to know that there is a time to abandon dangerous activities.

Lessons from a political figure

One of the most famous speeches of the "British Bulldog," Winston Churchill, was delivered to a group of soon-to-be college graduates. The introduction to this illustrious speaker was grand, colorful, long, and very complimentary. He came to the microphone in measured strides, looked directly at his audience and said, "Never quit! Never, never, never quit!" and walked off the stage. He left to thunderous applause. It is obvious that the record of Winston Churchill's life and work spoke volumes about his speech. He was not called the "British Bulldog" because he had no teeth or could not hold fast to a chosen course. He was one of the great men of the 20th Century.

Tenacity is a good character trait. The Bible tells us to "take firm hold of instruction" (Proverbs 4:13) and to "hold fast" so no one takes your crown, which represents a place in God's Kingdom (Revelation 3:11). To be strong-willed and determined is vital for a Christian. Success in almost anything usually results from long hours of hard work and persistence. However, the determination never to quit also requires some logical thinking. There are things that we ought to be willing to die for, but they ought not to be foolish things. A goal that is questionable and poorly thought out or planned can make a person seem foolish, reckless, and pathetic.

None of us lives alone in this world—we all have strangers and loved ones who are hurt by our folly. Some inner drives need to be controlled and curbed. We need to know when to say "no" or "that's far enough."

Lessons from the Bible

I believe that knowing when to quit and doing so takes every bit as much courage and quality of character as it does to never quit. The book of Proverbs is full of words of wisdom. God wants us to set personal goals, but in a responsible and thoughtful, caring manner. Tenacity, drive, and

strong will are necessary. Wisdom helps a person admit they need a course change rather than just plunging headlong into any attempt.

Jacob was blessed because he would not stop wrestling with God (Genesis 32:26). We need to remember, though, that the same "British Bulldog" who said "never quit" was the one who ordered the retreat from Dunkirk in WWII and the same one who came to the USA and said "give us the tools and we will finish the job." He understood the need for great determination not to quit and also the need for wisdom to retreat and fight another day.

Quitting goes against the grain for some. It is not wrong that a person finds it hard to do. I do not want to imply or suggest that anyone should quit a task too easily. In all likelihood, most people who quit their marriages, educations, businesses, or new experiences do so far too quickly. The Bible tells us God is not pleased with a spiritual quitter. Jesus stated that in Luke 9:62. He said, "No one having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." This verse can mean to look back longingly as Lot's wife did (Genesis 19:26), but it also implies regret for the path chosen. Israel did this when the people wanted to return to their old lives in Egypt (Exodus 16:3; Acts 7:39).

The Bible shows us that God is not pleased with those who give up on the God-ordained goals of life, including Jesus' command to "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). He admonishes us to persist and to exercise our will. In Revelation 2 and 3 Jesus Christ promises to give eternal life and gifts to those who overcome. An overcomer is a person who persists in wrestling or struggling with a personal problem or until he has solved it.

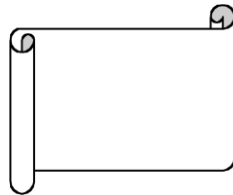
The Pharaoh of Egypt would have been better off if he had known when to quit. He never stopped pursuing Israel. Israel also suffered mightily because it would not quit worshipping false gods (1 Kings 18:21; Ezekiel 20:8). The nation came under the wrath of God because the Israelites did not abandon evil acts even after being warned. Humans need to know that the pursuit of false gods brings death. We need to fix our eyes on the truth of the one and only God and follow Him. The result is eternal life.

It takes personal courage to fight the good fight (1 Timothy 6:12). Pride and vanity need to be abandoned in the service of the true God. People need to learn to quit fighting against Him and submit to His will instead. When some people in the First Century realized that they had been following the wrong path, they changed their course and sought a new direction (Acts 2:37-40). We need to "gird up our loins" (1 Peter 1:13) and be sure our chosen direction is right, which we know is the case if it lines up with God's word. Jesus said we ought to be willing to lay our lives down for others (John 15:13). Jesus also said we need to love God more than our own lives (Matthew 10:39).

God expects us to find balance

There are many areas of life that require a balance in our thinking process. Knowing when and what to quit is one of those areas. In Matthew 10:23, we know that Jesus admonished His followers to flee to another city if they were being persecuted in one city. It is not cowardice to flee; it is good sense. Yet, there were times in the biblical record when there was nowhere to run, and when that happened, God expected the person to die if need be rather than quit by denying Him and

Jesus Christ. This is not a foolish and selfish death; it is the result of a mind that has counted the cost and weighed things in the balance, and the decision is made rationally and calmly. People like that will find their names written into a book similar in content to Hebrews 11—the chapter that records some of the faithful followers of God. True followers of God know when to persevere and when not to persevere with each course of action. They would not try to climb Mount Everest in a storm unless God bade them come.



Does our Father have expectations of Christian behavior? If so, what are they?

ARE WE PLEASING TO GOD?

Have you ever prayed to God that you will be pleasing to Him? Do you remember as a child how important it was to be pleasing to your mother and father? It is to most children. It certainly was very important to our mother and father that we were. How much more imperative this must be to God, because it shows an attitude and determination to honor Him.

Our responsibility and opportunity before our Heavenly Father is spelled out in 1 Thessalonians 4:1: "Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God." This isn't just a matter of personal choice. It is essential as Christians that we live our lives to please God.

As Christians, we are to be

continually evaluating ourselves. It is clear that we should make an effort to do this on a daily basis. We should endeavor to excel in the specific area of pleasing God.

As children, we often recognized when our actions would be pleasing to our parents, and we knew when we were disappointing them. As children of God we should be striving to bring Him pleasure, not disappointment. We certainly ought to appreciate how much God loves us. We are told in Matthew 22:37, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." If we are to please God, this love must be the foundation for all that we do.

We can easily recognize the importance of being pleasing to God. It is through the gift of the Holy Spirit that we can have a will to do so. The Scriptures give us the knowledge we need and they tell us that we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. We do this by not conforming to this world but by being transformed through the Holy Spirit to become more and more like Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1-2).

This subject of pleasing God is huge, but I would like to focus on four main points: love towards God, faith in God, increased wisdom and knowledge of God, and bearing fruit.

1. Love towards God:

Jesus, the very embodiment of a loving Son of God tells us, "to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind" (Matthew 22:37). And John teaches that if we truly love God we will keep His commandments (1 John 5:3). Do we comprehend how much this means to God? Do we love God enough to humbly walk the way we should and earnestly keep His Commandments?

Keeping God's Commandments is one way to demonstrate our love for God. We also recognize that we must draw near to God through Jesus Christ, and we do this through the study of His Word, and through prayer and meditation.

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. Love toward God is also demonstrated by being thankful. David, a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), gave a beautiful example of being thankful. Psalm 105 starts with, "Oh give thanks to the Lord!" This is a wonderful Psalm in which are found many reasons to be thankful. It is important to understand that having love toward God is not just an emotional feeling. It is a call to action. We must demonstrate our love toward God by transforming our lives, being humble, recognizing our personal sins and bad habits, and making the necessary changes. We must learn to put the love of God first. We read in 2 John 1:6: "This is love that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it."

2. Faith in God

Hebrews 11 is known as the faith chapter. Verse 6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." To please God, it is absolutely necessary to believe Him and His Word. We must have complete confidence in God, His truth and His promises. To have this faith we must continually grow in our knowledge of God.

3. Wisdom, spiritual understanding, and knowledge of God

Scripture shows the importance of being filled with the knowledge of God. Colossians 1:9-10 says: "For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease

to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." It is clear in the Scriptures that we are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. What can we do in order to increase our wisdom and spiritual understanding? It takes daily Bible Study, not simply doing so on the weekly Sabbath day. In addition to personal study, there are opportunities for Bible Study through the UCG website, and all of our literature is available on the web. Also, many congregations have interactive Bible Studies and a variety of classes to assist in our growth. On the Sabbath, seek out the brethren who are anxious to talk about the Bible, the sermon or topics of individual study. Grow in the knowledge of the doctrines and fundamental beliefs so you feel confident in explaining them to all who ask.

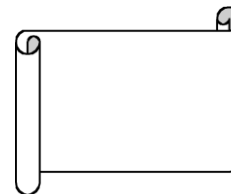
4. Bearing Fruit

As Colossians 1:10 said, we are to be fruitful in every good work while increasing in the knowledge of God. Too often we think we might be pleasing God because of what we don't do. We don't use drugs, steal, kill or practice the works of the flesh listed in Galatians 5:19-21. Instead, we need to focus on what we are doing. Study the Fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23 and the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. We should be asking God to show us how and where we can grow. We must desire to have Jesus Christ, through the Holy

Spirit, directing our lives. It is important to read and understand the parable of the True Vine found in John 15:1-11. It is very obvious that we will not bear fruit if we do not abide with the Father and Him with us. It is also apparent that there are consequences if we are cut off from the Vine. We must abide with Him so that Christ in us can reach out and touch others during our Christian lives.

We all want our walk with God to be pleasing to Him. We can do this if we develop a stronger love of God and grow in faith while being filled with wisdom and spiritual understanding, which will assist us in developing the Fruit of the Spirit. "Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12).

We can't consider ourselves worthy of this great calling; it is God who counts us worthy. Yet, it is clear that there is an important message in the Bible that we must strive to bring pleasure to our heavenly Father!



*Are you feeling unnoticed?
Feeling like no one cares
whether you exist or not?*

Who Cares?

By Amy Stephens

Sometimes we can be overcome with the emotion of a situation, the stress of daily life, the trials that we have to face, or the disheartening news of society. We ask ourselves, "Who really cares for me and the circumstance that I am going through?" We wonder if anyone notices what is happening in our world. Too often during these times we forget just how much God and Jesus really care for us. We know that we worship a God who, along with His Son, has a wonderful plan for expanding their family. A plan that offers hope and salvation through the supreme sacrifice of Christ that covered the penalty for each **Jesus still cares** We see another example of the care that God and Jesus show to us in the story of the stoning of Stephen. We are told Stephen is a faithful man, and at the time of his martyrdom, Stephen was given a vision of God and Jesus in heaven (Acts 7:55-56). What an amazing example of care to encourage Stephen at a time of great despair and anguish with a vision of the hope that was the foundation of his faith. It can be noted that Jesus sits at the right hand of God. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). However, in the vision of Stephen Christ is standing. "And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). Was this a demonstration of Christ's caring effort to encourage Stephen? Possibly.

of our sins individually. But beyond that plan and the

ultimate sacrifice, what other ways does God show us He cares?

Jesus' example on earth

While Jesus was suffering for all of humanity, dealing with the emotional and physical torment of His crucifixion, He set an example for us as He cared for His physical mother. We read in John 19:26, (King James Version throughout) "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!" During that time, the eldest son was responsible for providing for his parents. A widow would be dependent on her son for support and protection. Jesus recognizes that His death would leave Mary dependent on others, and He takes the time to make sure she will be cared for.

How often have we used a trial or a time of suffering to excuse ourselves from expressing love to another? We can get so focused inwardly on our own needs that we forget to notice the needs of others around us. It is at this time that often true healing can occur, when at our weakest moments we show love and care for others.

The details

Life can be demanding; we have numerous responsibilities, commitments, tasks, and chores. We go about the day, perhaps without realizing how intense the care is that God has for us. We are told in Luke 12:7, "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." I know that I have no idea how many hairs I lose on a given day, but God tells me that at any given point He knows how many are on my head, and not only my head

but every person on the earth. What a truly awesome level of care and concern that God and Christ show towards us.

Called to care

As we live our lives and strive to be like our older Brother and coming King, perhaps we can take these examples and try to mimic the care and concern that Jesus has. Take the time to really listen to others; try to understand the difficulties someone else may be facing and find a way you can lessen their burden or encourage them. . It always amazes me how the little things that we do for each other can totally turn someone's day around, such as holding a door, lending a dime, picking up something someone has dropped, smiling, or sending a card or flowers. Then sit back and watch the attitude difference that a simple action can make.

We are told that we are to show love to each other, preferring and honoring each other; "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another" (Romans 12:10). We are to care, just as God and Christ care.

Request our free booklet, "Who Is God?" to find out more about the attributes of our heavenly Father.

