

“My Day: Taking God to Work”
by Rom A. Pegram (9/17/17)

Last week, we started a new worship series called, “Back on Track: Daily Steps to a Vibrant Faith.” And here’s the truth: Most of us, over the course of the summer—the past few months, have been distracted—by good things! And the summer distractions have interrupted many parts of our lives, including our spiritual lives. So, maybe we need a little adjustment right now ... to get ‘back on track’ with God. Again, the GOOD NEWS today is ... *now’s the time to do something about it!* As we get back on track in other areas of our lives, this fall, it’s also a great time to get back on track in our relationship with God—with our faith!

So, to begin, let’s go to our key verse—once again—and read this promise together. This is from Jeremiah 15:19 (NLT). Here we go...

“...If you return to me, I will restore you....”

If you return to me, God says, “I will restore you.” This is one of the great promises of scripture, because no matter where you’re at with God—either a little off track or a lot off track, God is willing to meet you where you are today! And, as we mentioned last week, *maybe it’s just a little adjustment that’s needed.* Folks, today, I’m not talking about life-altering adjustments; I’m talking about small adjustments you can take in four major areas of your life. And if you do these, they’ll help you get ‘back on track’ spiritually...

Last week, we talked about the first area—steps you could take in your morning routine. If you missed last week, you can catch up on our website. But if you look to your note sheet right now (in bulletin), in that top graphic I gave you a word for last week (under the Bible graphic) and it was “Priority.” This week, we move from the morning routines ... to your work day; I’ll give you a word for this week too, but let’s start here...

Studies show that 70% of Americans are dissatisfied with their jobs right now. In other words, you wish you could do something else. You wish you had a different job, but get this: 36% of Americans are so dissatisfied with their job that they would quit today if they had another alternative—if they could afford to or if there was someplace else they could go.

What I’m saying is ... many, right now, don’t feel ‘on track’ at work. We feel stuck. And one of the biggest barriers to getting ‘on track’ at work—whether your work is your job, going to school, staying home with the kids, whatever your work is ... one of the biggest barriers to getting ‘on track’ at work is that we have the wrong ‘perspective.’ *We view our work the wrong way...*

Folks, see if any of these ideas relate to you: **For some of us, we’d say “work is my life.”** In other words, it’s all consuming. We don’t have time for anything else. From when we wake up in the morning, until we go to bed at night, we just ... work...

For others of you, you may say ... “work is my identity.” It’s who I am—where I get my self-esteem from. It’s like me saying, “Hey, tell me about yourself.” And the first thing you talk about is your work. You don’t know who you’d be without your work...

For some of you, you'd say ... "work is my paycheck." I work for the money. That's why I go to work. I get money and try to make more money. That's your perspective. **Or for some, it'd be ... "work is my curse."** I hate work; I dread work. I wish there were no such thing as work. In fact, you've got this calendar, and you're thinking to yourself ... "37 years and I can retire!"

Folks, contrary to many of these perspectives, *the Bible says work is good and God has a purpose for your work* that's greater than your paycheck. In fact, *here's how God views work* (your word for the week). Under the computer symbol (lower right) of that top graphic, I want you to write '**Mission**'.

From God's perspective, my work is my 'mission.' See, work isn't who I am, but it's a part of God's plan for my life. God wants me to go to work as a mission for him! So folks, if you want to get 'back on track' with God, you may have to change your perspective on work. It's more than just a job; *it's going on mission for God!* In other words, *we can't leave God at home! We take God to work with us*—where every encounter is a divine appointment, every challenge is a holy opportunity, and every disappointment can be looked at as potential—a very different way to live, wouldn't you say? Psalm 44:8 describes it this way: "Oh God, we give glory to you ... *all day long.*" The idea is ... God is our constant companion; we talk with God and walk with God through everything—on mission with God.

Today, I want to share with you a few simple steps that'll help you go to work differently tomorrow. Instead of walking out the door, dreading your day, or just living for a paycheck, these steps'll allow you to go on a mission with God and get back on track with your faith... Here's the first one:

Decide to work for God. Now, if we're all honest about this, I'm sure there's some here today who are really dissatisfied with your job or with your career trajectory right now ... and your unhappiness is throwing you 'off track' at work; it's also throwing you 'off track' in your faith, 'off track' with your friends & family, and so forth. I mean, you may wake up dreading your day; you may not like what you do; it could be that your job is stressful; it could be you have a BOSS who makes your life miserable. And if that's the case, you may feel like ... if you could only get a new boss, life would be rainbows & puppy dogs & lollipops ... and life would be so much better, would it?

So, what if you went to the same job tomorrow ... but went to work for a different boss? The truth is ... you can; *you can go to work for a different boss tomorrow ...* and Paul tells us how! The Apostle Paul writes to the church at Colossae: "Work willingly at whatever you do as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people." For the Lord, folks. Let him be your boss. God's word basically says, "Go to work enthusiastically. Do your very best. Kill it at your job, but do it for God!" Go to work for God. Let God be your boss...

Here's the question: *Who or what are you working for each day?* God says, "Listen, if you will come to work for me, I'll replace your pressure with my peace; I'll replace your worry with my presence; I'll replace your stress with my power; I'll replace your deadlines with my purpose." Who are you working for right now? Let me encourage you. When you get up tomorrow morning, go to work for a new boss; go to work for God ...

and remember the words of the psalmist (Psalm 37:5, NLT): “Commit everything that you do to the Lord. Trust him and he will help you.” Here’s what’s next:

Direct my thoughts to God. Now, I work at a church office where we are all sold-out, dedicated servants of Jesus—not that any of us are perfect, but we’re sold out to ‘going on to perfection,’ as John Wesley would call our spiritual growth. Some have said to me, “Now, it must be so easy for you to come to work at the church every day and just think about God all day, to keep your focus on God, and to walk with God.” You would think that it would be, wouldn’t you?

Last week, we talked about talking to God (prayer) before anything else. Some mornings, I’ll do that ... and really connect with God. I’ll walk out the door of the parsonage, walk across the parking lot and into the church office area, and the first person I usually see is ... Teresa. And she really annoys me ... and gets on my nerves! And all of a sudden, the distractions of the day begin to get my attention and before I know it, I’m not thinking about God any more...

(You all know I’m kidding, don’t you? I couldn’t function without Teresa most days...) But even in the church office, ‘the stuff of life’ will distract you and you’re not longer focused on God as you should be. I think about work. I think about other people. I think about all I’ve got to do and my attention is then drawn away from God. Does that ever happen to you? ... And the temptation is to compartmentalize our lives and to relegate God to just a few hours on Sunday or a few moments in the morning—leaving God out of most other areas of our life. But, remember the goal of this worship series: *to learn to invite God into the daily flow or fabric of our lives....*

Now, here’s a suggestion for you to help keep your thoughts on God throughout your work day—*five quick prayers* you can pray at work or at school or wherever you are during your day; are you ready?

- **God, thank you.** It’s simply recognizing nothing comes to your life accidentally—that all good things come from God. It’s a great prayer to put your focus back on God...
- **Lord, help me.** Anytime you’re feeling overwhelmed, afraid, or under pressure, this is the alternative to trying to handle work yourself. Give it to God. A great prayer...
- **Here I am, send me.** This is acknowledging you’re on a mission—a purpose for being there much bigger than you are. Let God know you’re ready to be used by Him...
- **Not my will, but yours.** Before you make any major decision at work, let God know you’re #1 concern is to be in the center of His will...
- **You are with me.** During those times when you’re feeling alone, or isolated, or afraid of something/someone, just pray: “God, you are with me.” Acknowledge by faith that you’re not in the work alone; just speaking this promise reminds you God’s never going to leave you...

So, direct your thoughts to God, then...

Do everything with integrity and excellence. Now, these two values, integrity and excellence are so important because they don't just affect the course of your day; they also communicate to everyone around you ... *who you really are*. You see, everyone in your work place is known for something; they're known as 'the one who' ... cracks jokes, brings the donuts, always eats the donuts, etc. But you don't want to be 'the one who' ... is always late, slacks off, or doesn't tell the truth.

So, *who are you known as?* Proverbs 10:9 (NLT) says, "People with integrity walk safely, but those who follow crooked paths will slip and fall (exposed)." Being a person of integrity is essential to getting 'back on track' with God; it's also essential to receiving God's blessings!

Let me ask you: *Have you ever been one of those people who just 'phones it in' at work?* You were given an assignment ... you didn't much care for. As a matter of fact, you're even a bit peeved you had to go through the motions. So, you completed the work, but not very well. You just did it; you just 'phone it in'—not really present in the project at all. At the same time, you're hoping & praying to get ahead at work—to get a promotion. 'Ever been there?

You see, here's the thing though: God doesn't work that way. He's not going to bless you with something bigger and better ... if you're not faithful with the small things you have right now. If you're 'phoning it in' right now, God knows that. If you lack integrity and excellence in your work, God can't bless you. Don't be that person! Romans 12:11 (NLT) tells us: "Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically." How? *Enthusiastically* ... with integrity and excellence. Next:

Determine to be God's witness at work. If you want to know why living with integrity and excellence is so important, this is a big reason—because you're to be God's witness at work. I know this is scary, but others are looking at you to see what Jesus is all about! Did you know that? You're God's Plan A for that person who sits next to you at work ... and there may be no Plan B! This is a part of the everyday mission God has for you—to live your faith out in the workplace, to love others just as God through Jesus has loved you!

Promise me something, would you? If you're going to act like a Grade A jerk, *would you please not tell people you're a Christian ... or that you belong to Trinity UMC?* (Instead, tell them you're from ____ Church; just kidding!) To be God's witness at work involves how we act, but it also involves something else—from 1 Peter 3:15b (NLT): "...if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it." That's a part of adult Christian education; we're going to help you with that in the future... Finally:

Dedicate my entire life to God. Is there a theme here? I thought we talked about that last week. The answer is: "YES! There is a theme here..." And if we don't remember

this step, we'll never get 'back on track' with God... Applying this to what we've talked about today, let me say ... YOUR WORK MATTERS!

BUT ... in Mark 8:36, Jesus tells us: "And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?" Do not lose your soul in pursuit of something that's not God! Do what you do for God ...and dedicate every part of your life to him and for him and if you do, not only is he going to bless you, but you're going to find more purpose and more fulfillment in what you do every day ... than you ever have before!

Jesus also says (John 14:6, NLT), "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me." Would you dedicate your entire life to God—*including your work life*—(with me) right now?