

AUTHOR Q&A

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Grace at Work: The Secret to Getting More from Your Job than a Paycheck

You've written a lot about grace-based families. What does grace look like in the workplace?

Grace, in any setting, looks like patience, encouragement, forgiveness, and hope. And just as homes and families are refreshed by these qualities, so too are our workplaces and relationships. Bringing the grace of God to work with you may not transform your workplace into a haven of kindness, but it will have a deep and personal impact on those folks at the receiving end – people who have all kinds of issues and are longing to get a bite of life's happy pie.

Bringing the grace of God to work also benefits you – in fact you may benefit more than anyone else! Even if you are not crazy about your job, making a deliberate choice to bring God's heart of grace to work will have a radically positive impact on how you view yourself, the God you serve, the people with whom you work, and the job you do.

God always meant for work to be a vital part of our lives. Work isn't just about what we do, where we do it, the client base we do it for, or the colleagues we do it with. God designed work to be a way He provides for us, makes us better people, and works through us for the benefit of others.

How should Christians prioritize work within the scope of their lives?

The typical way people of faith are encouraged to set their priorities usually goes something like this: God, my spouse, my kids, my work, everything else. The problem with this approach is that it relegates God to a compartment of our lives. Once we do that, all bets are off for God ever having the kind of influence and impact he deserves. God isn't supposed to be a compartment of your life; he's supposed to be your life.

When it comes to our priorities, it isn't God, spouse, kids, work, pace of life, fitness, and money. It should look more like this: God and our spouse. God and our kids. God and our work. God and the pace of our lives. God and our fitness. God and our money. If there is anyone we need to maintain a heart connection with, it's the Lord. And as we maintain a heart connection with God, then maintaining it with our spouse, kids, and the key people in our lives – including the people we work with – is likely to become reflexive.

How does prioritizing my relationship with God impact my ability to live a grace-filled life?

When we let God own his rightful place in our hearts—the driver's seat—his grace is going to run through us into all these areas:

- to the primary people we work with and for;
- to the obscure people who work in the background at our jobs;
- to the lonely, frightened, and insecure folks who make up our company's payroll;
- to the hurt, angry, and bitter people who sometimes take out their issues on us.

People in your workplace can tell you care by how you look at them, how you speak to them, how you speak about them to others, and how you view their significance as a human being in comparison to yourself.

Must we love our jobs in order to be truly happy?

Making a living by doing something we love is a goal presented by self-help books and misguided commencement speakers. But nowhere does God say this is standard operating procedure for humankind. That's not to say that God wants us to be miserable in our work. Far from it. Like other parts of our lives, he longs for us to experience joy and contentment in the midst of what we do. But God sees joy and contentment not as something work delivers to us but as something we bring to our work.

Our reward for working "heartily" is that we are "serving the Lord" through our work (Colossians 3:23–24). But loving our job? That's a false expectation. God's greatest plan for us is to place our faith in him and cling to him in the face of life's troubles. In doing so, we experience joy and contentment, even in the midst of a less-than-ideal job.

For those in management positions, how do they help foster more grace-filled workplaces?

As a manager, supervisor, VP, CEO, or owner of a company, you're in an ideal position to influence the culture of your workplace. It's like being able to set the relational thermostat to "comfortable." Grace doesn't shrink back from doing the hard things; it just does them graciously.

You can learn to love, care for, and encourage your coworkers the same way Jesus does for you. As you begin to intentionally live out grace at work, you have something new to bring to tense and stressful moments, acting as a positive influence for improved outcomes. A grace-filled perspective comes to your aid in all types of leadership scenarios, from helping employees through personal crises, to confronting rogue employees or delivering needed criticism during a job review.

Grace at work isn't about trying to "witness" to people or get coworkers to come to your church. Instead, grace is modeling Jesus in the workplace, following Jesus in the workplace and, in the process, allowing his grace to flow through you to the people around you.

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