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By Rick Boxx

THINKING THROUGH WORKPLACE PRIORITIES

Early in my business career, like many young people I was trying to gain an understanding of what striving for success would require. One of the things I learned in this process was far from anything I had anticipated.

The first time I met Gregg, he said, “Rick, if you choose to work with me, you need to know my priorities in life. God’s first, my family’s second, and this job is third.” Being a person who had been “running from God” for decades, listing priorities in that order was alien to my thinking. I could not imagine how Gregg’s priorities would impact the way he ran the bank where we worked.

Soon, however, it became clear. Before moving forward on major tasks, Gregg made his business decisions by first considering God and His principles, as they are presented in the Bible. Observing how he made those decisions revealed to me how to seek God’s wisdom, and encouraged me to consider how placing Him first – as my top priority – could have a positive impact on my work, its quality and effectiveness.

My perspectives on work and my priorities in life did not change overnight, but Gregg’s example and the ideas he had sown in my mind had a profound effect on me. Those later bore fruit, revolutionizing my thinking about business, its purpose – and my own. Ultimately, it led me to establish a consulting ministry in which I seek to help others to also understand what it means if we follow Jesus’ admonition when He said, *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33).*

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Putting God first in our lives is easier said than done. First, we must believe it is even possible to do, and then act upon that belief. Be assured there will be challenges along the way, testing our convictions. There are times when we wonder, "If I insist on putting God first, this will never work." We might be tempted to think, "Well, a minor compromise will not hurt, will it? I will bend the rules this time, but after this, no more."

This, however, is one reason we read, *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4)*. When our faith is tested, including our desire to remain true to priorities we have established, perseverance develops. This enables us to stay true to our convictions, even when it becomes difficult.

Some people might think that making God the top priority is a nice-sounding ideal, but not very practical. We live and work in a highly competitive, unyielding marketplace environment where most people are operating according to rules that run counter to biblical principles. How can we thrive under those circumstances? We have to be realistic, right?

That is what I thought when I met Gregg. But he proved me wrong. Even when confronted with adversity, or when a particular decision was very difficult, he never wavered. He stayed true to the priorities as he had stated them to me – God, family, then job. There were times when there was a cost to pay, a necessary sacrifice, but he never had to compromise his values. And he never regretted taking such a stand. Let me ask you: What place does God have in your work priorities?

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Reflection/Discussion Question

1. What would you say are your priorities at work? Have you ever consciously and intentionally tried to define them in your mind – and even write them down to review periodically?
2. If you, like Gregg, have strived to put God first in your work and business, how easy – or difficult – has it been to stay true to that commitment? What are some of the challenges you have faced?
3. If you have not always made God your first priority on the job, can you think of anyone who has done so? From your observation, what has been the impact of that commitment?
4. Why do you think the testing of our faith – including holding true to our priorities – results in developing perseverance? Why is that important, or even necessary?

NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Psalm 127:1-2; Isaiah 26:3, 41:10; Matthew 6:9-13, 19-21, 24-34; Philippians 4:19

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