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Work as Calling

Gn. 2:15 "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it".

The work was primarily to take care of the earth with all its resources, but due to sin and human greed, work has become a toil, and instead of taking care, the exploitation of the earth to satisfy selfish gains has become the challenge.

The work was to enjoy, but later it has taken a toll on humans and the entire creation. The original design is marred, the concept of rest which God himself demonstrated after six days of work is replaced with an overtime work culture. Human wants are more than needs, acquiring more wealth by any means became the motive behind the work. Looking for salary packages has taken priority over knowing the heart of God or being at the centre of God's will. Many are in the rat race to keep up the 'status quo'! Societal standards and expectations have overtaken the purpose of work.

The expectation of the employers from employees has increased rapidly over a period of time and it has affected not only the individuals, but also the families and the relationships with people and with God. It's high time to get the Theology of Work right to consider it as God's call rather than doing a job. When we consider work as calling we understand the value of work and we do it with complete devotion and dedication. It changes our attitude towards work and gives us the motivation to excel in the careers God has placed us. Nothing but giving our best and being fruitful will be the outcome that ultimately brings glory to God.

Seeing work as a God-given responsibility will give the right perspective to keep us engaged in God's world without compartmentalizing. "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve." (Col. 3.23,24)

I invite you to explore more on the theme and get inspired to influence the workplace by becoming an agent of change thus fulfilling the command of God.



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WORK vs VOCATION

AN ANALYSIS UNDER BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

Everyone works to earn their living and to support their families. But we also find some who take up jobs to fulfil their passion or jobs that suit their interest and capabilities. Many of us think work and occupation are the same. But both the words have different meanings. The work in which a person is employed is known as his /her occupation. Work requires the involvement of both mental and physical activity to accomplish a particular task. Vocation is where individuals work based on their trained skills. For example, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, etc. who are skilled and trained alone can perform those jobs. The work of a Human Resource Manager

is to identify the right person for the right job. But in the current globalized world, various kinds of jobs are available for everyone. An individual can work towards taking up any kind of job irrespective of his/her qualification.

Profession vs Occupation

There is a difference between profession and occupation. A profession requires specialized qualifications, knowledge, skills and training. Occupation is any activity undertaken by an individual to earn his/her livelihood. The qualified and the educated community are sometimes at crossroads when they do not get jobs according to their interest and qualifications,

Lead

becoming prey to their employers. They become vulnerable when they must choose between meeting their immediate needs or waiting to get a suitable job to build their career or passion.

Believers vs Vocation

Christian believers are no exceptions; they too are facing similar challenges. Initially, individuals used to take up jobs to earn their livelihood. Gradually it turns out to become his vocation. Discipleship and Leadership camps have trained us to submit our lives to God and obey His will. Sometimes when we face financial pressures, we give in, rather than obey God's call.

The noble prize winner Mother Theresa opines that 'many people had mistaken their work as their vocation. She had claimed, "Our vocation is the love of Jesus". Aristotle stated that 'where your talents and the needs of the world cross; there lies your vocation.

Traits of a believer

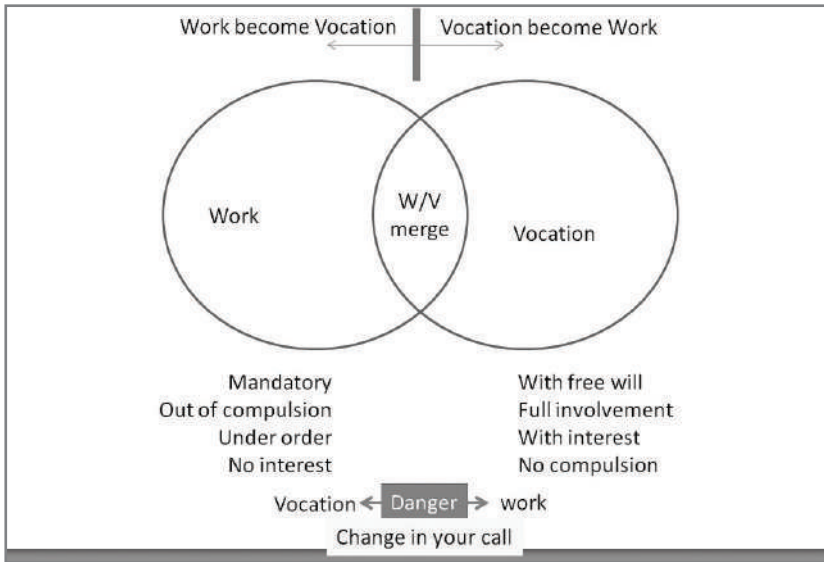
1 Timothy 6:1-2 emphasizes that sincerity, honesty, and truthfulness are the traits a true believer is expected to possess. It clearly states that irrespective of what job we are doing we are expected to be faithful in that job. When believers are employed in any place, they are expected to be a witness to the

Lord Jesus Christ in their workplaces by doing their duties with full involvement and bringing glory to God. Proverbs 22:29 says 'do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before unknown men'.

Believers are expected to do their duty with an utmost conscience. In our camps and conferences, we have been taught to do our best in our job in whatever position we are placed. The question is whether we like the job we are doing or not. If we are placed in a job which is not of our interest, we should accept the fact that God has kept us in that work to fulfil His plans for our lives. So, we should prayerfully ask God to teach us ways and means to improve our interests in the job and develop strategies to excel in that job God has assigned to us.

Reflections on work and vocation

The diagram explains how work can become a vocation. We might get a job which satisfies our interest either partially or fully. But we should always remember that God would have planned to use us as a blessing to others in that job. The diagram given below exhibits that the overlapping of the vocation and work can happen on some occasions. If our priorities are one-sided, we will end up spending more time earning more. Similarly when



the vocation becomes monotonous and a routine then we will not be able to enjoy our profession. The vocation will become work if we work under compulsion and not out of passion and gratitude to God. Work may overlap with vocation when God uses us in the place we are called to serve.

We also need to demarcate and draw boundaries if our work does not enable us to live a balanced life. As one grows in their career to higher roles and responsibilities, it becomes challenging to also give time for ministry. At times, senior roles and positions force us to compromise our integrity. This has happened to many of our EGF graduates and this might become a snare of the devil to hinder us from doing God's ministry. Now

the question is whether I am happy doing the work which enables me to do God's work as a vocation?

Work in accordance with God's plan

Lord Jesus Christ has taught us to follow HIS command to 'Love the Lord with all our heart, soul and mind' and 'Love your neighbour as yourself. When we accepted Christ, as our saviour, our aim of life would be changed as God's child. From then onwards, our attitude and passion will change and we will be willing to please God in everything we do including our area of work. If my work brings dishonour to our Lord, or the resources being used are unacceptable in the sight of our Lord or if the outcome of the job leads another person to sin, it will

Lead

not be right in the sight of our Lord. In such a situation it will be wise to leave the job. As a believer you are expected to obey God first, and not the Manager. Your conscience will not allow you to proceed further. In such a situation, God will give wisdom and strength to take a decision which will bring honour and glory to God and not to the Manager.

God's ministry as a vocation

We might see many missionaries, evangelists and pastors doing God's work at different places for building God's kingdom. Vocation is to do the work with full involvement and with likeness. Here work and vocation merge to glorify God. God's servants depend on God for their earnings and resource for themselves and family. Though organizations like Dioceses, mission agencies and other movements employ full-time workers, then these individuals consider ministry as their vocation to work for God's kingdom.

Our EU/EGF students and graduates take on additional responsibilities to serve God in the ministry. It is not considered as work but it is considered as a vocation because we are voluntarily taking up the responsibility to serve God in a given stipulated time. In case, if anyone

feels that it is burdensome, it can be considered as work because they might have taken the job due to the compulsion of others.

Suggestions to improve our vocation

Advancement in every field is required. If an individual accepts to do his vocation, he has to decide to excel in the area for which he needs to equip himself with the requisite knowledge that field and he should understand the pressing needs and requirements of his vocation. Even areas of the ministry need to be made more interesting to bring interest to the hearers as well as the preachers. Periodic training is required for Christian workers and leaders to enable them to serve God with passion and not out of compulsion. If a person is not showing interest in improving his skills, then ministry cannot be his vocation.

Tips to choose the right type of work or vocation

We always think that our qualification, our calling to serve God, our passion and interest in a particular field and our family background comes to our mind when choosing a job. The question is whether I can satisfy all four areas of my interest in the work. I may give importance to my qualifications

to get a higher position due to the lucrative salary I may receive. My family also may get excited but it may not satisfy my inner desire of glorifying God. We should remember that God's calling is different to every individual. As per our availability, nature and talents, God's people may be fully satisfied to do God's will. God trains people by giving them skills or talents to meet the needs of HIS kingdom.



Daniel: King's choice but it is a God's choice:

When God plans one's life, he can empower the work of captivity to the work of God to fulfil God's plan in this world. Daniel praised 'Praise be to the name of God forever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons . . .' (Dan. 2: 20-21).

Faithful work

Master certified the servants who multiplied the talents that 'Well done, good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter the joy of your master.' (Matthew 25:14-30).

Thomas Ragland studied Mathematics in Cambridge University born in 1815 and landed in Madras, India as a missionary 1846 and

died in 1858. Although he had an opportunity to be in royal palace, he left all his lucrative life style and came to Sivakasi, India, since he was disturbed by the thought that thousands were dying without knowing Christ. He visited village after village and shared the Gospel to many villages. In Sivakasi, Ragland was chased away by the villagers with stones and sticks. But the incidents motivated him to do God's ministry more. During his life time, he has not seen much fruits of his labour. But after his death, many churches have been formed by his ministry in Tirunelveli and Sivakasi areas of Tamil Nadu, India. The mathematic graduate of Cambridge University has left the qualified profession, and taken up the cross to serve in Indian soil as passion of his vocation by the will of God.

Lead

God will provide the requisite skills to his children to excel both in work and vocation.

God's word says that "Whatever you do work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23).

Peter was a 'fisherman' but God called him to become 'fisher of men'. Saul had planned to kill Christ-followers, but he became the chosen vessel to preach the Gospel to gentiles. Life-changing incident will transform a person to do God's will whether it is from his profession or his occupation.

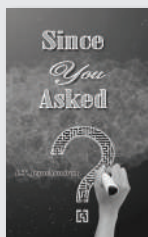


Dr R Moses Inbaraj is a retired faculty of Madras Christian College and Dr Madhana Rekha is working as a faculty in MCC. Both belong to Tambaram EGF, Chennai and actively involved in EU ministry. Inbaraj is involved in UESI-mission cell. Early days he studied and worked in Banaras Hindu University as a witnessing student as well as a faculty. He has two children, Amy and Andrew. Amy is married and working as a government medical doctor and Andrew as a software professional at Bangalore.

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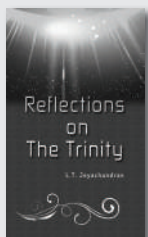
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BIBLICAL VIEW OF WORK AS CALLING

It is important to recognise that the Bible begins with God's creation of the universe. He then proceeds to create humans in His creative image. We are not able to see that all legitimate work in God's creation in which we can engage creatively can be part of God's calling for all our lives. In what follows, I have given, in brief paragraphs, what the Scriptures say about work and how we can engage in marketplace work as part of God's calling for us.

Our problem is that our fundamental understanding of the Bible begins only with *Genesis 3* – the Fall and ends with *Revelation 20* – the lake of fire. Because we leave

out the first two chapters of *Genesis* – the present creation, and the last two chapters of *Revelation* – the New Creation, our understanding of God's purpose is limited only to our salvation and sanctification and not to the many things we do in the course of our daily lives. The Bible is thus limited to being a *religious book* and not a *reality book*. I can be misunderstood at this point – our personal salvation is crucial to us, but the rest of our working lives seem to us to be only to maintain our families and giving for Christian work and charities. But is this approach sufficient? Is it because we have inadvertently replaced the

first commandment of *Genesis 1:28* with the great commission of *Matt. 28:18-20*? Should we not see them both as one commandment to fulfil our calling in the workplace?

We work only because God wants us to be stewards of His creation; that is the substance of the first commandment. Our EU students are to do well in their studies only because they are to look after God's creation. The fruitfulness and multiplication mentioned in *Gen. 1:28* is a reference to the flourishing of the whole of creation under our stewardship. (We are kings and queens stewarding God's creation on His behalf). Christian students should never call their subjects boring because they study God's creation. (Their teachers could be boring!). An incident that comes to my mind in this context is my visit to Highfield in the early 1970s where I heard Dr Sterrett tell students, "If God has given you the capacity to come first and you come second, that is sin for you!" – a strange definition of sin indeed!



In the same way, Christian teachers should teach their subjects with such passion that their students should come to love their subjects till the end of their lives. We should not fail to note that we humans are created in God's image – one of the implications of this fact is that we are expected to be creative in our workplace. *Psalms 8:5* (NASB) makes it clear that we are made a little lower than *Elohim* – God! We are to put our best abilities into our study and work.

We then proceed to God's commandment to Adam in *Genesis 2:15* (NIV–2011 edition). The word for work in Hebrew is *abad* and the word for taking care in Hebrew is *shamar*. *Abad* is also the word for worship (of God) and *Shamar* is also used to describe keeping His commandments. Not surprising that Jews found work and worship as contiguous with each other and not contradictory to each other. The Jewish people, despite their tiny population, have made a disproportionately higher contribution. I am not saying that work is (identical to) worship; but, according to the Bible, worship is contiguous with work and not against work; therefore, there is no secular-sacred divide in the eyes of God. By using the word calling only for full-time Christian work, we are unintentionally giving the

impression that Christians in other jobs are second-class citizens in God's kingdom.

The tragedy of our rebellion against God occurs in *Genesis 3*; the result is that the woman will find child-bearing painful (*Gen.3:16a*); man will find work becoming toilsome (*Gen.3:17-19*). Our relationship to nature is broken only because our relationship with God is broken; advances in medical sciences to alleviate pain and increase longevity are all part of God's purpose for His creation worked out through us.

In *Exodus 19:5-6*, before the tribe of Levi was separated for tabernacle work and before the family of Aaron was separated for priestly work, God adds another responsibility to us - even in the course of our work, we represent God to His creation as kings/queens and we represent creation to God in intercession as priests/priestesses. The two quotations of the Exodus passage in *Revelation 1:5b,6; 5:9,10* show that salvation in Christ is not just to escape the punishment of hell but for us to perform this dual role in all legitimate work that God may assign to us in His creation.

In *Genesis 3:16b*, God tells the woman that she could control and manipulate her husband and he will respond by dominating her (the word **desire** in this verse and

Gen.4:7c is the same and is used in a negative sense); a child knows instinctively how to manipulate one parent against the other; in other words, a desire to control and manipulate is the hallmark of our rebellion against God. In our workplaces, some of us have bosses whom we call control-freaks! I have come to see the Cross as the place where God chooses to lose control over His creation and allow His creatures to crucify His Son – what an amazing Sacrifice! That is why the Cross confuses the devil - through Peter, he tries to prevent Jesus from going to the cross (*Matt.16:21-23*), and through Judas Iscariot, he sends Jesus to the Cross (*John 13:2*)! Is not the workplace also part of the reconciliation that Jesus has accomplished through the Cross (*Colossians 1:19,20*) which we as His cross-bearing, spirit-enabled disciples work out in practical and creative ways?

I was privileged to be part of the first MTech batch of IIT, Madras. Sir C V Raman, who spoke at our convocation made a statement to this effect: 'When you engineers and technologists leave this institute and go into the world, you will be tempted to prostitute your knowledge for the service of human greed.' Whenever we take a forward step in knowledge, we are offered a moral choice to use that knowledge

either for good or for evil. It is the Christian who considers her/his work as a calling from God, who can creatively and redemptively put that advance in knowledge to the glory of God and the flourishing of His creation.

What is the significance of the resurrection of Jesus to the workplace? Jesus rose from the dead in a remarkably different physical aspect from how He raised Lazarus from the dead. Before He called Lazarus out of the tomb, He had to have the stone at the mouth of his grave moved away and, after Lazarus is resurrected, the grave clothes had to be removed – *John 11:38-44*). The two physical evidences – the stone at the mouth of the grave and the grave clothes – are very different in the case of the resurrection of Jesus – the stone at the mouth of His grave was rolled away by an angel but He had already risen – *Matt. 28:1-6*. It was rolled away not to let Jesus out but to let us in! Peter and John who go into the tomb of Jesus find that the grave clothes are exactly in the same position – lying undisturbed where His body was and the scarf around His head was seen rolled up on a stone where His head was resting; that is why John believes that something different from Lazarus' resurrection had taken

place (*John 20:3-8*). The resurrected **physical** body of Jesus had gone through the grave clothes (without disturbing them), through the stone at the mouth of the grave and come through the walls of the upper room where the disciples were hiding! Resurrected Lazarus would die again but the resurrected Lord Jesus will not! What is the significance of the resurrection of Jesus for the workplace? The resurrection of Jesus is the inauguration of the new creation in higher physical dimensions – that is why the grave clothes, the stone at the mouth of Jesus' tomb and the walls of the upper room could not obstruct His resurrected body – this fact cannot be established by physical experiments because we along with our universe are constrained by three physical dimensions, but mathematical physics can demonstrate this fact. In God's new creation we will continue to be His stewards as kings and queens (*Rev. 22:5*). This reality of the new creation is the motivation as we struggle through the problems in the present creation; that is why Paul closes his majestic chapter on the resurrection with the statement that our labour in the Lord – which, in the first century, did NOT mean full-time Christian work – is not in vain (*1 Cor.15:58*); this verse, as

it were, is a one-verse answer the whole book of Ecclesiastes! What a wonderful way in which we are motivated to struggle through the situations in the present creation!

As you laboured through this densely concentrated article, I trust you can see our study and work, as important aspects of God's calling on our lives



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LT is a member of the Editorial Board of the Theology of Work Project <https://www.theologyofwork.org>

LT and his wife, Esther, moved back to India in September 2012 and make their home in Pune, Maharashtra. They have two children and four grandchildren. They are members of the Oldham Memorial Methodist Church in Pune.

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TENT MAKING – CAN IT BE A TREND TODAY?

The world is urging us to choose our work or career wisely. Often, the ‘spiritual’ teachings in our fellowship and the ‘career guidance’ teachings in colleges often points to two different directions which confuses us Work by Definition

Work can be defined as ‘the job that a person does in order to earn money’. Cambridge dictionary defines work in different ways. One of the definition which is related to our topic is the noun ‘work’ and I am picking up the first and most popular meaning which states it as “an activity, such as a job, that a person uses physical or mental effort to do, usually for money”.

The synonyms of work include employment, labour, toil and many others based on different contexts.

Vocation by Definition

Vocation is a type of work that you feel you are suited to do and to which you should give all your time and energy, or the feeling that a type of work suits you this way. Thus, vocation is the work through which God calls us to serve others. The synonyms or related words to vocation include calling, mission, purpose, pursuit and niche among others.

Then we have many other related words including Employment,

Career, Job and Profession which carries closely related but slightly different meanings.

When a student hears the word 'vocation', the student might think it as a new field of study introduced by the UGC in 2013 called Vocational Studies and B. Voc. Courses in many universities are led by central universities. Also, some states like Kerala have vocational higher secondary schools trying to teach life skills like carpentry, painting etc in schools. In B. Voc. degree courses are focussed on teaching electrical maintenance, computer operations and such subjects in detail. Thus, it is a training in a practical trade for a living which is intended by our government ..

Vocation for Christians.

Genesis 2 describes the creation of man and also the work which was entrusted to him.. It says *"The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it"* (Gen 2:15 ESV). Thus we can see that the first work assigned to man is to work the garden and cultivate the land. Then he is to keep it well and steward the resource well. So, the work is an intention of God even before the fall of man and it was purposed by God even before sin entered the human race.

Paul in his letter to Colossians says "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."(Col 3:23-24). Thus, any work we do should be as working for the Lord.

Purpose of Our Life on Earth

The purpose of life for all can be derived by the commission given to his disciples. "Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." John 20:21 ESV. This is echoed in Matthew 18:20-22 which reminds us to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations". This is a commission to all of his followers, not a suggestion or option. So, living a life witnessing Him is our life purpose and calling.

Bi-vocational Missions or Tentmaking over centuries

From the early century starting with apostle Paul, many of his disciples were engaged in a vocational skill along with preaching and teaching ministry. Like vocational studies, Gandhiji envisioned for all in India and attempted in some of the vocational courses, Paul was trained in making tents, as a vocational skill. As a missionary, he continued to

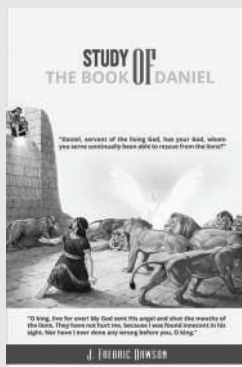
make tents. This was first to support himself and his teams by not depending on anyone else for their day-to-day expenses. Also, it was an important part of his mission to model for his disciples of how they should live and work. (Acts 20:33-35; 1 Thess. 2:9). This model gave the name “tentmaking” to bi-vocational ministry, where one works for a living alongside with ministry.

In the early church history, we can see this as the way of ministry followers took. Apostle Thomas is believed to be a master carpenter in India. Prominent bishops in different parts of Christendom were bi-vocational missionaries or tentmakers. Spyridon of Cyprus was a shepherd. Priests under Basil of Cappadocia worked for their daily bread. Chrysostom of

Constantinople spoke of rural pastors who yoked oxen and drove the plough. Zeno of Gaza was a linen weaver. So, working a job and doing ministry was a normal practice then. In 1800's when Moravian missionaries went in to China and parts of North India, they moved as bi-vocational missionaries. This was true for Jesuit missionaries who went to many parts of the world.

William Carey, father of modern missions was a tentmaker. In 1793, after his arrival in India at Serampore near Kolkota, he worked as an indigo plantation manager for several years while studying the local language for Bible translation. Then he worked as a professor of Bengali for 30 years at Fort William College, where he trained British officers and influenced them as

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civil servants. He learned and taught many more languages and introduced many skills and research in India. He continued to work in many ways and support his ministry during his lifetime. We can read more about his life from his biography *The Legacy of William Carey: A model for transformation for a culture* by Ruth and Vishal Mangalwadi.

In recent years, Ruth Siemens pioneered student ministry by starting IFES movements in 5 countries as a tentmaker. Christy Wilson Jr. first associate General secretary and Missions Secretary of IVCF-USA pioneered ministry and pastored the first church in Afghanistan going as an English teacher, a tentmaking vocation in 1950. He pioneered the first missions conference in 1946, which later became Urbana and this conference had Bro. Bakht Singh as a speaker. We can learn more about his life in his biography *Where no one has Heard, the life of Christy Wilson Jr.* by Ken Wilson

Many of our fellow Indians have moved as tentmakers within India and abroad since 1970's and pioneered student ministry, NGOs and Schools in many parts of our country and stood as great testimonies among the local population they served.

Why not Tentmaking as a vocation?

In the classic article which is freely available on the internet by a modern day tentmaking pioneer Ruth Siemens titled "Why did Paul make tents?" gives the **definition of a tentmaker** as follows "Tentmakers are mission-motivated Christians who support themselves in secular work as they do cross-cultural evangelism on the job and in free time. They may be business entrepreneurs, salaried professionals, paid employees, expenses-paid voluntary workers, or Christians in professional exchange, funded research, internship or study abroad programs. They can serve at little or no cost to the church."

Let us look at some of the reasons to be a tentmaker in order to be an active witness and missionary in needy places

- ▶ It gives easy entry into a needy place or to an unreached society
- ▶ They are accepted by the society because of the job or position compared to full time missionaries and share Christ in a friendly way by words and deeds. It provides contact with non-believers in a natural setting and friendships can be sustained for years.

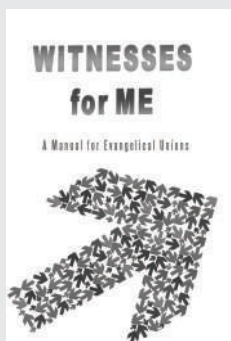
- ▶ They can support themselves and the family financially without depending on the organization or Church. Many can even extend local, financial, spiritual and emotional support for mission work, if they are well paid instead of the need to raise money for their work
- ▶ They can decide the activities as he sees the need and urgency without waiting for the organizations approval and can use his time beyond work hours as well.
- ▶ Many can use their already acquired skills in resource constrained settings.
- ▶ It will bring legitimacy to the Gospel as they are not paid to share the Gospel, they can be a living example for local believers by giving their time, finance and resources sacrificially for ministry without expecting any benefits in return.

There are many models of tentmaking where there are fully self-supported, partially supported and others. In UESI ministry, Tentmakers Cell under NEGF is committed to provide member care and encouragement to those who are passionate about being a tentmaker.



James Sebastian, A tentmaker since 2005 and now based at Patna. He took a decision to be a tentmaker in UESI Missions conference 2001 at Bangalore. He is married and has two lovely daughters.

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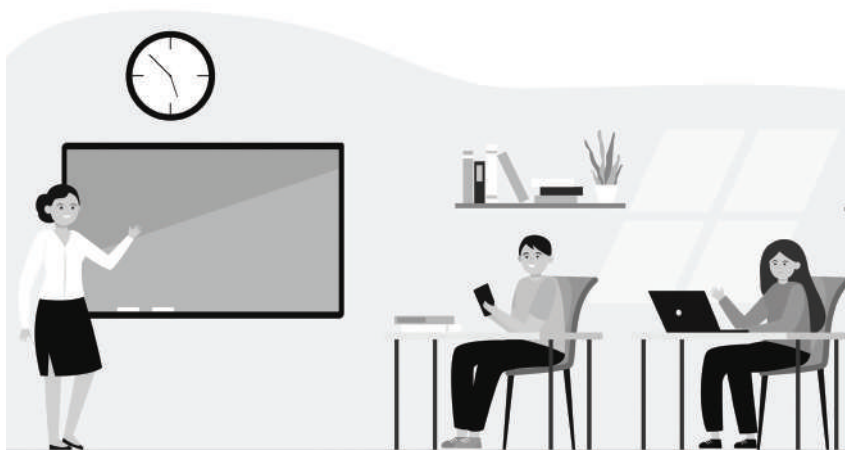
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TEACHING IS MY VOCATION



Mechanical engineer, I dreamt of becoming one, but it remained a dream for any girl in the 1960s. Girls were not given admission in Mechanical stream under the assumption that they were too weak to work with machines. My next option was Mathematics which was taken by very few girls at that time. But my father had an entirely opposite dream, to make me a doctor. So, in plus 2, I was forced to take Biology as major and had to appear for Medical entrance. To satisfy him I appeared but without much preparation. However, as we have Mathematics (noncredit paper) in

plus 2, I opted for Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry in UG, broke our college record in Mathematics and was selected for the state merit scholarship. But my dream to take Math in PG was shattered as my teachers advised me to do Chemistry in order to settle early in a good job. After PG in Chemistry, I joined for Ph.D. programme in Madras (Chennai) IIT. But my health issues forced me to quit Ph.D. after a few months.

This was a turning point in my life. Just before my admissions in IIT, one of my best friends died of an unknown disease and a seriously sick cousin was admitted at CMC,

Vellore for treatment. These two incidents made me think about life seriously. (A Hindu by birth, I later turned into an atheist). After returning from IIT, I took up teaching profession in a college, in which I was least interested. But my trials for other jobs were in vain. I wished someone would guide me about the right career that would suit me, so that I could work in that direction.

Almost after 3 years into the teaching field, I came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal saviour. At that time I appeared for ONGC against the advice of well-wishers who thought it was not safe for women. I qualified in the written test and was so confident that God would give me success in the interview also. I was so excited that finally God was going to bless me in my career. But I was so disappointed and devastated when I was not selected. Unable to sleep the whole night I was crying. At 4 a.m. the next morning, I opened my Bible asking the Lord to speak. My regular quiet time portion was John 14. The words "Do not let your hearts be troubled" comforted me and I had a great peace in my heart. I thanked God and understood that the job was not good for me, a young believer who needed fellowship and follow-up.

Afterwards I was never disheartened; rather I started enjoying my career - teaching Chemistry, the subject which was considered tough by many students. And the Lord helped me to teach effectively and creatively for the next 35 years. Apart from the regular and mandatory training programs arranged by our college management and Academic Staff Colleges, I attended Faculty Development Seminar, Leadership seminars and Counselling seminars etc. organized by Haggai Institute and Person to Person to improve my skills. I used to share my knowledge and experiences outside the college with my colleagues. I also helped in organizing seminars for them with eminent and effective Christian resource persons. When I retired, my college correspondent remarked, "I have been observing madam for the past 33 years. The secret of her success is her faith in Jesus Christ". My principal appreciated my dedication to teaching, helping the management in other areas and availability at any time. I am always thankful to God for bestowing me with the spiritual gift of teaching and used me to teach Chemistry and the Bible doctrines.

Through my personal experience and the seminars I attended, I understood the Biblical view of

work and vocation. Human beings were created in the image of God (1:26-28). God planted a garden and put man there to work and take care of it (2:8, 15). The fall (3:17-19) has distorted God's intention for work and changed things for us. Instead of enjoying and being content, the "garden" we labor in is now filled with thistles and thorns - work is now hard and marked with difficulties. The other effect of the fall is that, we, as workers, lose perspective on who God is and His purpose for our lives. We no longer work to the glory of God. However, thankfully, God through the work of His Son is redeeming men and women to Himself. Those who trust in Jesus Christ are transformed from the image of the man of dust (Adam) into those who will bear the image of the man of heaven (Jesus) 1 Cor 15:49. In the process, He is restoring the nature and purpose of work in the lives of those who belong to Him. God has a plan for each one of us (Jeremiah 29:11; Isaiah 55:8,9) and He gives the required abilities, talents and skills (Exodus 35:30-36:2).

Work is an opportunity given by God to be *fruitful* and to make an *impact* in the world we live in. Hence, jobs are not merely to earn money. They are a means by which we can use our talents and abilities to develop godly character. Through our character, we can increase our circle of influence. I am really happy to testify that some of my students are active in UESI, Church and other organisations. A whatsapp group is formed with more than 100 alumni for whom monthly meetings on zoom is conducted for fellowship and prayer. The ministry started in our college still continues even after 5 years of my retirement. Some non-Christians students are now in very good positions, excelling in their professions and are known for their sincerity and honesty.

"Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life; everyone must carry out a concrete assignment that demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated, thus, everyone's task is unique as his specific opportunity to implement it." - **Viktor E. Frankl**



V Gouri Kumari is a retired lecturer in Chemistry and a graduate from Tenali, Andhra Pradesh. Hailing from a Hindu family, she came to know Christ through her colleague and EGF graduate. She is active in UESI ministry as a family.

Role Model

Lord your beloved child;
Little Miss Ida Scudder,
Grew up to become a
theologian,
Decided not to carry on the
legacy,
Of the family of missionary
doctors,
Just to ease the pain and
distress,
Of having to live far away,
From family, friends and
loved ones.

Lord, as a responsible
daughter,
Ida came home to help her
ailing mother,
And when the spirit of God
sensitized her,
To the great need that
surrounded her,

She quickly accepted change,
Equipped herself to take care
of the need,
And she impacted the
society,
With you by her side.

Lord, my heavenly Father,
Help me be sensitive to
listen to you,
To understand the need and
get equipped,
To enrich the society,
entrusted to me,
With hard work and
sincerity,
Beyond all my own
capabilities,
Being accountable to you
each day and;
Relying on you in every step
of the way.

Written based on the inspiration from the biography of Ida Scudder "Passing On The Torch Of Life" by Dorothy Clarke



Anitha John Wesley is a graduate working as a Biostatistician. She currently resides in East Tambaram with her husband John Wesley and daughters Abigail Johanna and Annshel Jochebed.



The Battle of Being a Christian Feminist: RECLAIMING THE ORIGINAL DESIGN

As soon as I had turned a teenager, the question of identity was looming over me. As a new believer in Christ, I was discovering my position in God's kingdom and as a girl living in the world, I was constantly challenged with the discussions of feminism. As a feminist, I understood the inevitable patriarchal system that drove the notions of gender roles. My primary struggle was to understand it from a Christian perspective. It took me time to understand that I was approaching the questions wrong. I was trying to question God's design based on human fallacy. What I had to do was put to test the cultural

'Christian' practises through the Scriptures. Therefore, it is imperative to view the Bible as a canon, in its entirety rather than in a vacuum of individual references. Which is why for the discourse surrounding feminism and Christianity, I try to bring it back to the original narrative and examine it from what is called 'the Logic of Counterfeit', the simple reasoning that a counterfeit currency can only exist in the presence of an original bill.

Since every Christian feminist discussion at least once would refer to Eve in the garden of Eden, it is an inescapable discussion point to begin with.

Rethinking Eve in the Garden

Elisabeth Elliot in her book 'Let me be a Woman', contextualises the title by highlighting the dialogue between the Serpent and Eve, that if Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, she wouldn't die but become 'like God'. What happens next is narrative history. Elliot then raises the question of what would have happened differently if Eve had 'refused the serpent's offer and said instead, "Let me not be *like* God. Let me be who I was made to be- *let me be a woman*." If that had happened, the discussion around everything would have been different. This central focus, pins the question of identity not on the self, but on God, as the Creator of man and woman in absolute completeness. It was never a more-or-less measure of characteristic attribution. Man and woman were created equals and to hold different responsibilities. Elliot contests that insisting women must prove their ability to do all things that men do, is a distorted viewpoint. It is in their femininity that women participate in the human race; why ever is that considered a position of weakness? This is where the battle lies.

Since Eve was deceived by the serpent's words, the world is not how it was intended. As much as it was a lack on Eve's part, it

was equally Adam's too, that has been carried forward throughout generations. Therefore, it is not just a correction of gender roles that is needed, but also of sin that entered the grand design of plans and distorted everything in it. Elisabeth Elliot further notes in her book and I agree, that 'once we start discussing the things on the list, we will soon be discussing religion, for "all our problems are theological ones"'. Which is why as humans in general and specifically to understand Christian scholarship, it is necessary to look at Jesus as the model for all things to be renewed, redeemed and reconciled. As the apostle Paul in his epistles would refer to Jesus as the Second Adam.

Jesus in conversation with women

As Navamani Peter, in the introduction of the book *Jesus Talks to Women* writes that 'Jesus saw women as intelligent, thinking humans, equal with men. His attitude with women was remarkable in a day when men thought women were a lower grade than themselves.' These conversations that Jesus had with women, were essential ways of establishing the counter-cultural notions of inclusivity and equality, something which was seen as triggering not just to the Jews and Romans but also to his own disciples!

This also is the reason to look at Jesus' interactions and actions as the 'original' idea for women rather than the counterfeited interpretations and exaggerations of Jewish laws translated into aspects of Christian legalism. Let us look at only two specific interactions:

a. The woman at the well

Jesus talks to the Samaritan Woman who comes to fetch water at the well at noon time, an uncomfortable hour for a tedious chore to avoid other women. Thus, was despised not just on grounds of gender but also morality, by men and women both.

It is with this woman, that Jesus has one of the most intellectually robust conversations. Though rejected by the society, she is no gullible individual, because at the first approach she asks an imposing question to Jesus. She questions His ethnicity and the rules of discrimination laid against Samaritans; but never in the conversation is Jesus seen imposing himself. Rather, He responds to her questions by drawing out on her knowledge and leading her to her own conclusions.

What Jesus does here is reposition her in a way that she finds value in herself first, not in a manner of prescribing through a sermon but

self-discovery of her own rational thoughts. Jews in those days would rather burn a copy of laws than give it to a woman, but here is a woman more thorough in history and thoughtful of the practicality of laws than most Jewish men. And Jesus was not just breaking a social barrier between Jews and Samaritans, He was also bridging the gender gap and offering inclusivity!

This, also on a contemporary perspective, argues against the trend of 'mansplaining' that women have suffered. Where women have been spoken for, explained over and considered as unknowing, contrary to that, here is in the person of Jesus, a listener who lets a woman drive the conversation, and allows space for her reasoning!

b. The woman caught in the act of adultery (Jn 8:1-11)

The mob of Jewish men brought to Jesus only the adulterous woman, (not the man) accusing only her of a two-party offense. In response, Jesus asks them to do a simple task: "let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."

Even today, a woman is 'used' to prove something lacking in the society. The Jews brought forward the incidental sin of the woman to trap Jesus in discourse but Jesus

exposed the society's double standards of 'purity', proving that it has nothing to do with gender. The convincing mentions of a woman's role in a man's inadequate show of responsibility, sharply questions the narrative we are raising our girls and constricting our women within. The clear bias of talking about women's modesty and conveniently missing to mention the problem of the male gaze and the necessity for the woman to conduct themselves appropriately because 'men will be men' is what Jesus is breaking here.

This here, brings us back to the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus placed responsibility on individual integrity and accountability over social conforming. Not that Jesus gave her a free card of responsibility-free-living, as some feminist would want to consider freedom but instead Jesus liberated her of her shame, guilt and condemnation by simply forgiving her sin and asking her to do it no more. It was not just a theological statement but a responsibility placed on the woman that made her accountable for her actions and only hers.

So where does that leave a Christian Feminist?

I am not trying to justify Christianity as an ideal mark for feminism, because then how would I justify the rape cases, child abuse,

domestic violence, adultery and other prominent acts of hypocrisy happening within the Church and the so-called Christian households? How would I face the many women who have been exploited and wronged in the very name of religion?

What I aim to highlight is the very gap between Biblical truths and how they are practiced and propagated through Christian culturalism and legalism. It is an attempt to question religious conduct prescribed around woman against the measure of the Bible. Growing up as a Christian and practising the faith, I came to understand that only Jesus was the mark of everything right and truthful. There are lies and convincing counterfeits all around us, which is why I turned to the Bible for truth instead of debating theories with more theories.

While most of feminist discourses are only about deconstructing the wrongs, they rarely engage in the painful task of reconstructing and making amends. This is because we position ourselves at wrong starting points. For a Christian woman, it is reclaiming the original plan of being a woman embodied in strength and purpose as was intended to be. It is a battle to reposition a woman's identity and reconciling gender narratives at its fault lines. For the

feminists who criticise the Bible based on superficial and vacuumed interpretations of scriptural references, I hope it opens a way to critically dive deeper and engage with the text, unravelling inconsistencies within the institutionalised church and apply scriptures to the contemporary context.

Looking back at the choice made in the garden of Eden, we understand that is only in the redeeming act of Jesus at the Cross, His submission

and obedience in the Garden of Gethsemane to reconcile the world back to God and 'make **all** things new', can that choice be reclaimed.

"We are called to be women. The fact that I am a woman does not make me a different kind of Christian, but the fact that I am a Christian does make me a different kind of woman. For I have accepted God's idea of me, and my whole life is an offering back to Him of all that I am and all that He wants me to be." Elisabeth Elliot



Praisy David is doing her Master's in Society and Culture from IIT Gandhinagar, Gujarat. This article is an excerpt from her academic research paper with the same title

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CAREER SPECIFIC SKILLS

CAREER & KINGDOM BUILDING: NURTURING SKILLS FOR TOMORROW

INTRODUCTION During the month of December 2021, job loss figures soared to 105 million salaried employees and entrepreneurs as per the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy. Naturally the lingering gloom over the Indian job market remains a weighty concern among our

Excel in Skills

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CAREER-SPECIFIC
SKILLS: THE MARKET
DEMAND AND OUR
RELEVANCE

Skilling and Re-skilling -
The Future of Jobs

THANK YOU, LORD - based on Psalms 3

Thank you, Lord, for You are a shield around me;

Thank you for bestowing glory on me and
lifting up my head.

Thank you, Lord, for answering me from your holy hill

Thank you for sustaining me each and every day.

Thank you, Lord, for your deliverance

Thank you for blessing your people.



D. Wabaluti Rymbai is an EGF member in Shillong and serving as an Executive Engineer with the Government of Meghalaya and married to Watisangba Imsong and blessed with two sons and one daughter

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RIGHT WHERE I AM SUPPOSED TO BE

“God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supply” — Hudson Taylor

I aspired to be a doctor but landed up as an educator. I am right where I am supposed to be, for that has been the will of God for my life; and God never makes mistakes. This I can say confidently, because His presence continues to be with me through this exciting professional journey, in all my successes as well as failures. He supplies all my needs as I address 1400 odd adolescents and 100 odd teachers each day at my workplace. The insights that God gives me in every situation stumps me and leaves me asking for more such experiences. I am sure many of you can relate to this exciting journey with our Lord, Who has called each one of us with a

purpose and has left an example for us to follow (1 Peter 2:21)

- **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works**

We have been called to take care of God’s creation and to protect it. I believe this also includes our co-workers at our workplace. Man at his core, is evil, sinful and deceitful as the Bible says, but among us evil men are some good qualities and as Christ’s followers, it is our job to bring out those good qualities. It’s a great challenge, but with God nothing is impossible. This comes in handy when I deal with interpersonal issues with staff at

my workplace. It also gives me an opportunity to give my colleagues a sneak-peek into the Bible as I sort out issues at my workplace.

- **Work is full time Ministry**

God inaugurates His kingdom by creating humankind in His image, to be stewards of His creation. Taking care of God's creation encompasses all professions that we are involved in (including home making).

Through the years I realised that a complete surrendered-life in Christ is vital to make our workplace our mission field. Opportunities come at random and at times when least expected. So, to be prepared at all times and to seek God's wisdom at all instances is the key. There is no harm in whispering a small prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to enable us to do His Will in the matter at hand.

It'll be good to remember here that it is God Who will be doing His work through us. We are slaves to our Master.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. James 3:13

- **We have been called to build the kingdom of God**

A description of the Kingdom of God can be found in Genesis 1, wherein

God pronounces everything to be 'good'. We find the preview of the Kingdom, envisaged by God but marred by Satan, in the Word of God. They say that actions speak louder than words. Faith without action is dead according to James in Chapter 2. We are missionaries called to leave the imprint of Christ in every act, decision and communication of ours, displaying the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22. God builds His Kingdom through the 'surrendered' us. As an example, through the lesson "Alcohols, phenols and ethers" I speak to my students on substance abuse and even the biblical standards of sex. "Esters" is another topic in my subject which opens a window for me to talk about 'Easter' and give the Gospel message.

- **It's a mandate and not a choice.**

It's a command given by God Himself to all believers to reach out to **all nations** and to **teach** through our lives, words, and actions, promising the Indwelling Holy Spirit to be with us **always**. (Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:16-20)

We create the Kingdom of God wherever we are present, and the Holy Spirit enables the impact and aroma thereof to spread wide.

When the Lord Jesus taught us to pray that the kingdom of God should come and His will be done

on earth as in heaven, Jesus expected us to realise that we are to be the answer to our own prayer!

At my professional expanse, I create a personal space and trust, wherein staff come in with confidence to share their issues, and ask for prayer. Even the students come to me as a last resort seeking advice; opportunities galore!!

- **Your Word is a light to my feet and a lamp to my path.**

An important pre-requisite is that our walk and our talk must match!

Walking closely with God will help us not to lose focus on our mission. When I use verses from the Bible to complement my talk, it adds value and validity.

Jesus did not say, "Look, if you are in the mood, if it works into your busy schedule, as a personal favour to Me, would you consider going into the world and making disciples?" No. The great Commission is a command given to all believers. Although we speak, the transformation of the hearts is the work of the Holy Spirit. Hence fellowship with God and His Word is the catalyst to be obedient to His calling.

- **Mission accomplished?**

To accomplish our mission, we must keep our Eyes, Heart, Hands and Possessions open.

Creating the kingdom of God wherever we go should be at the forefront of our thoughts.

Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan found in Luke 10 is a good example for us to emulate.

Open eyes: *"But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him."* Do we look with compassion at people and situations with open eyes? Or do we respond like the Levite and the priest who also had their eyes open?

Open heart: *"He went to him"* The heart was pumping blood, but the Spirit was pumping compassion. The Samaritan's love was neutral, non-prejudiced, godly. There was no discrimination, he just saw a man suffering. God encourages me to be bold and take that first step towards the person.

Open hands: *"bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine."*

The Samaritan did whatever he knew, with whatever he had.

He was willing to give his time, to give his very best to a person who was in great need. He was certainly busy and was on a mission, so were the Levite and the priest. They held back without opening their hands.

What are we holding back?

Abraham did not hold back Isaac and give Ishmael instead.

Ananias and Sapphira held back part of the money, and they died.

I try to go beyond my call for duty at my workplace.

Open possessions: *"Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'"*

The Samaritan, not thinking about himself, put him on his donkey. It'll be good to remind ourselves that we are on a journey, not of self-accomplishment but of self-giving. Our treasures are laid up in heaven where moths and vermin do not destroy (Matthew 6: 19-20)

A few questions I would like to ask myself along with all of you:

- How much time do I have for this?
- Does my walk with the Lord impact my decisions?

- What are my fears? Are they stopping me from being effective?

- What are the deceptions of the devil that I am giving in to?

You gave me love

You gave me faith

You gave me courage to endure

You gave me light

You gave me strength

That abide me as I grow

The Call from my Father above

It's my Father's call

Yes, it's God's call

(excerpts from the song "The Call" by Hubert Dapliyan)

Our mission is to build God's kingdom wherever we are, even so at our workplace. So, vocation and mission cannot be considered as separate entities but as one unit. Many believers struggle with aspirations, ambitions and humility. My motto is simple. Be ambitious. Work hard with sincerity. But seek the will of God in everything including your ambition. The journey is important. Do the footprints you leave lead others to Christ?



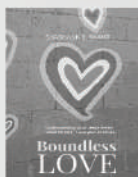
Florence Joseph is an active member of UESI Delhi. She is the Vice Principal of a CBSE school and teaches Chemistry to Senior Secondary students. She is married to Joseph Manoharan and they have two daughters. They are actively involved in UESI Delhi ministry and their passion is to counsel young couples and college students.

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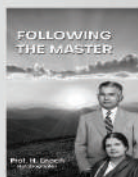
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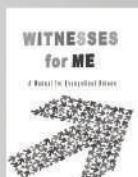
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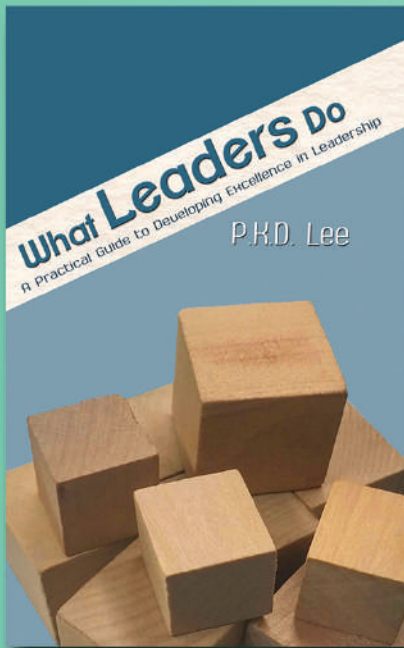
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What Leaders Do

Leaders make things happen. That is one important thing leaders do. But we should beware of stereotyping leaders as dynamic, outgoing, or charismatic individuals. A leader is not a person with followers. Rather, a leader is a person who produces change in society.

The change can be historic. Or it can be confined to a small group or organisation. Of course, if you wish to produce change of any sort, you will need the support of others. But that does not mean you need to be famous or have an important job. The genuine leaders - the leaders who produce positive change - are often unknown to outsiders. Such leaders are a "human resource" that empowers a society to develop successfully.

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