



Jim Lange

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Does My Work Matter?

If you're like most doctors, you've asked yourself that question! What about this one: *"Is this all there is?"* or *"Is the only purpose in my work to just earn a paycheck?"*

Several years ago I experienced a very unhealthy work environment, which prompted me to write a book. During that time, I began to wonder - *"Where is God in my work? Does what I am doing really matter? Is work a good thing or a bad thing?"*

One of my favorite verses in the Bible is Romans 8:28 (*"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."*) This usually gives me great comfort, but during that difficult time in my life, I would find myself saying, *"I don't see it God. How can anything good come out of this work environment?"*

I'm sure most of you can relate to this. Maybe many of you have asked similar questions. *"Does what I do really matter? Is the only purpose of work to earn a living? Can my work have a greater purpose?"*

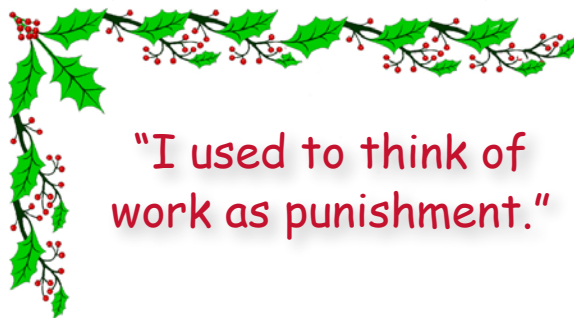
Questions such as these may have come up during a time you were discouraged. It could have been when you were tired and worn out. Or it might have been when you were treating that *"difficult"* patient. No matter when it was, I'm sure you have felt this way at some time or another.

Through my difficult work times, I took a look at what was God's view of work.

I used to think of work as punishment. I would think to myself, *"If only Adam and Eve hadn't eaten the forbidden fruit - I'd be in my hammock all day watching football."* But it didn't take long before God corrected my thinking on that: *"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it."* Gen 2:15

The verse above appears before Eve was created and before they ate of the forbidden fruit. If you read the whole passage, you see that God is excited about His creation. This is His perfect world. You may say, *"But God, if it's perfect, why is man working? And why in the garden? Couldn't You at least give him something significant to do?"*

The reason is that God loves it when we work. One of the 10 Commandments also addresses work. Exodus 20:8-10a *"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God."*



"I used to think of work as punishment."

Most of us look at this commandment and focus on the first part - trying to remember to keep the Sabbath day holy and to rest. I don't think Christians as a whole do a great job of this (*I know I don't!*) but that is what many tend to focus on. But let's look at the second half of that verse. We are commanded to work for six days a week! So there's no escaping it, we were made to work.

OK so we were made to work. God loves it when we work. Then why are we sometimes so miserable? So how can we enjoy our work? First, anything we do that has a purpose is much more enjoyable. Second, our work actually has

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significant purpose. Our work can be a ministry when we live out our faith. Some body builders were on a television talk show. They were showing off their muscles when the host asked, "What do you use these muscles for?" One man answered by flexing his muscles in one of those bodybuilding poses. "No, you don't understand me," said the host. "What do you use these muscles for?" The body builder answered, "I'll show you," and flexed again, posing another way. "No, no, you still don't understand what I'm asking. What do you use them for?" The guy posed again.

Many of us are like that. We attend church, go to seminars, conferences and Bible studies and keep building our spiritual muscles, but we do not use them for the reason for which they were created. We end up like the body builders, with well-defined muscles for show, just to look good, but they are good for nothing else. So how can we use our spiritual muscles for good?

One thing we can do is encourage others every day. Hebrews 3:13 says, "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." Have you ever had anyone come up to you and ask how you are doing when you are down? Have you ever had any one ask you that and know they really do want to know how you are doing? How about when they say something encouraging to you? Doesn't that make you feel much better?

I have had times when I have gotten a word of encouragement, and I felt like God just pulled me up. I needed it at that very moment, and God knew it. We, too, can do that; we can be God's messengers. In fact, we need to look for opportunities to encourage. It may be just what the other person needs at that very moment.

In Bill Hybel's book *Walk Across the Room*, he challenges us to get out of our comfort zones and to look for opportunities to strike up conversations and encourage others. Some of us will need to work at this and stretch more than others. But in order to really encourage, we will need to be uncomfortable—we'll need to get out of our comfort zone. Just like your patients as they are being adjusted, you may need to feel uncomfortable first in order to see results.

So look around. Who can you encourage right now? Who can you encourage later today? What about tomorrow? And the next day... *Goal:* Commit to yourself that you will purposefully encourage one person each day for the next week. *Tip:* Put it on your calendar each day to remind you. I'll be discussing some additional ways to flex your spiritual muscles while in your office in the next issue.

Jim Lange is a new supplier member of the CCA and is the author of the award-winning book *Bleedership, Biblical First-Aid for Leaders*. He also serves as a leadership consultant and as president of Bleedership, a ministry, which provides doctors with a way to easily, effectively and consistently encourage and impact the spiritual health of their patients. For more information and to learn how to receive a free gift that is only available to CCA members, go to www.bleedership.com/cca.html.

The CCA Would Like To Hear



- Have you had a positive/negative experience with a practice management firm or weekend seminar you attended?
- Has a CE or "boundaries" seminar been ethical or professional in their approach? Has the teaching been from a world-view not supporting of your Christian values?

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