

Meredith C. Lloyd: Balancing the Book

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I am an auditor. Yes, say the word with me ... auditor ... what is an auditor? Is this a good person or a bad person? Jesus says "even the tax collectors can love the people that love them back, but how many of you can love you enemies? " Even the tax collector. Wow-we are really at the bottom of the barrel. It was the worst of the worst.

Let me clarify a few things-technically, I am an auditor, not a tax collector. Nevertheless, most people still do not like auditors, we because we are kind of the police officers for business. Making sure everyone is following all the rules. My job is to check on other people's businesses. I check how the people count their money and the things they sell, and how much of a profit they make. For the most part, I don't even care if they spend it on doughnuts and soda instead of making and selling the things they are supposed, just as long as they are honest about telling everyone what they spend it on and how much they really spend. I do not pass judgment on whether or not they are doing a good job at spending the money, I just decide whether or not they are following certain rules. However, as I said before, people do not like auditors because all of a sudden, they have some one standing over their shoulder watching everything they do.

That is what I do every day. Moreover, I have been asked to share with you how I think that my work is a calling.

As I sat in my room, typing this sermon on my company

computer, the one that is "for business purposes only" I thought of the irony of my situation. You see, I am supposed to be in New York right now, trying to finish a project with a deadline that is approaching far too rapidly. As it became apparent midweek that we would not be done by Friday and that we would have to work over the weekend and this coming week, I became worried. I sat down, and I told my manager that I had to be at church this morning. After thinking about for a second, he said okay. Therefore, I got on a plane home and worked in the office here in Virginia all day yesterday. Tonight I will get on a plane back to New York to work with the team. This whole scenario might suggest that indeed, "How could God be present in my work if I have to ask off to go to church on Sunday morning? "

Some of you may feel the same. You have a million things right now, but instead you came to church, when you feel that maybe you should be at work. Moreover, others of you are horrified at the very thought of working on the Sabbath, when the Lord commanded us to rest. For me, writing this sermon has enabled me to see where the Lord is in my work, and how I have been called to my current career.

As I was growing up, I knew I was going into business. Now, realize that I did not know what that meant; I just knew that it was what I wanted to do. I knew this for several reasons. One, I liked to be in charge, as my parents can tell you, and that is what business people do, isn't it? We are in charge of the world. Second, I have always been organized and detailed. I was always good at math and at a young age always made sure to line up my crayons and stay within the lines. Third, I saw the business world as a place that was full of opportunities for women to assert their independence and equal rights. Growing up in Seekers, a woman's place in the world has always been important to me.

Being the headstrong person that I am, I was very sure that I was going into business as I was growing up. It influenced

where I went to middle and high school, where I went to college and what my major was. I was quite certain that I had made all the right decisions until my third year at school when all of a sudden, the "real world" was not so far away.

I had to make a very hard decision during my third year of college: I could work at an internship at a prestigious accounting firm, one that I knew would be instrumental in pursuing the career I had chosen. I could go to camp and spend the summer, as I have since I was eight, outdoors and in the fellowship of other Christians. Camp is where I affirmed the Christian faith that I began to develop at Seekers. Camp is where I have made many friends that I will have my whole life. Camp is camp. What could be better than that? Certainly spending the summer indoors in a suit could not.

I knew that the only thing I could do was turn to God. I prayed to God "Is this your will? Am I supposed to go work at this firm? On the other hand, am I supposed to help lead kids to Christ at camp? Lord, please let me know." Like the words to the hymn, I said, "here I am lord. It is I lord, I have heard you calling in the night. I will go lord, if you lead me, I will hold your people in my heart."

I wish I could say that there was some flash of lightning or booming voice, but that would have been far too easy. I finally made the decision to sign on the dotted line and accept the offer from the accounting firm. Nevertheless, I was afraid. Afraid I had made the wrong choice.

A couple weeks later, after finals had ended but before we headed home for the summer, I went on a retreat with my youth group. As luck would have it, the theme the speaker was talking on that week was work, and knowing what it meant to be a Christian in the working world. For me, his words were God's answer to all my questions and fears.

The speaker taught us that the Bible says that work is not

just a way to earn money; it also produces godly character in the life of the worker. He taught us that we do not have to be a missionary in a foreign country to bring Christ into our work. For a lot of us, that is not what God has called us to do. We just need to act as Christ would in our position. We need to use our talents that God has given us to help other people.

Jesus talked in today's scripture about spreading seed on the ground. Where it was too rocky, or hard, or full of brambles, or sandy, it did not grow, but where the ground was fertile, the seed sprung up. I said before that I believe in the equality of women, and when it comes to serving the Lord, we are all equals, young and old, male and female. We can all provide seed.

Do you work or go to school with non-Christians? Think about what our examples as Christians could mean to them. Do we treat others, as we want to be treated at work? Are we willing to wash the feet of our employees, the way Jesus washed the feet of the disciples? Would Jesus confront his boss directly about the latest budget cuts or gossip around the water cooler? Would Jesus judge his classmates unfairly based on their appearance, age, race or gender? Would Jesus be humble when he made a huge sale? Would Jesus be sure to say please and thank you to the people empty the trash and sweep the floors every night? Would Jesus be envious of the cool sneakers his classmates had at school? Would Jesus pay his workers less than a fare wage? Would Jesus lie to his teachers about a fight on the playground, or what happened to his homework? Would Jesus be open and honest about his faith or hide the scars from the cross underneath a button-down shirt and tie?

Each time I pose these questions, I become aware of how many ways I can better serve the Lord, just during the day at work. I can help to spread the seed on the fertile ground so that others might have a life in Christ. Sure, some of my co-

workers may have a few thorns. Others may be hard as rock. I am not suggesting that we rush out to convert every non-Christian person that we know. I am just suggesting that we all begin to act our daily lives in a way that our co-workers stop and say, "You know, there is something different about Meredith. She seems so happy in her work. She seems so free from worry and stress that everyone else has. I wonder why she has such peace." How many lives can we change by asking ourselves, "what would Jesus do?"

However, that is not all that the scripture teaches us. You see, as much as we try to help to spread the word of the Lord, at the same time we must grow in our own faith in God. We are both the seed and the ground. God has given each of us talents and gifts and we must use these gifts to the best of our ability. If I had ignored my talent for math and business to be a musician, singing the music of God, I would be turning away from God's gifts that he had given me. I would be that rocky ground. Believe me, if you heard me sing, you would agree.

I do not know what the future holds for me; after all, I am only 22. Perhaps I will be a stay-at home mom, or maybe I will stay and try to make partner, or become a CFO somewhere. Perhaps God has called me to work at the accounting firm for a few years so that I can learn what I need to know to run the business operations back at camp in a full time position. Alternatively, perhaps, God is calling me to try and change corporate America so that we all have summers off, and we all can go back to camp. I do not know what the future holds. All I can say is "here I am Lord"