

REGENT BUSINESS REVIEW

ISSUE 13

The Theology and Practice of Strategic Planning



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The Theology and Practice of Strategic Planning

Michael Zigarelli

Forty thousand teens, standing on top of their seats with their arms raised high. Rock stars on stage. Amplifiers cranked. Pyrotechnics galore. And God's at the center of it all.

Before and after the concert, Ron Luce grabs the microphone to deliver an impassioned, life-changing message. "Jesus *really did* die for you. He loves you and wants to radically transform your life, to take you to a place you've never been before. Are you ready to stand up and go with Him?!"

Other speakers underscore the message. Author Josh McDowell, former President Gerald Ford, football stars Kurt Warner and Reggie White. The teens are captivated. They're not used to being challenged. Thousands come forward to commit their lives to the extreme call Jesus gave us. Many also sign up to take a month-long mission trip this summer.

This is not your father's Billy Graham crusade. It's Teen Mania, the brainchild of Ron Luce, a humble yet dynamic guy from a broken home in California. A couple decades ago, he had a vision of saving a generation, bringing millions of teens to a genuine commitment to be on fire for Jesus. In the early 90s, he took a critical step toward achieving that vision, orchestrating the

first "Acquire the Fire" (ATF) Teen Mania event in New York, drawing a couple hundred guests. Today, Ron's vision is being realized in 250,000 kids attending ATF events annually, with about

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And since the
imitation of God
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6,000 a year taking missions trips, and several hundred more enrolled in a year-long "Honor Academy" program at Teen Mania's 400 acre campus near Dallas.

God is clearly at work in all of this, as Ron and the other Teen Mania leaders emphasize, not only in the hearts of the teens, but in the internal operation of Teen Mania. For this ministry, God-honoring strategic planning has become a necessity.

"We went from having no formal planning, to having something that failed, to having something that's now working pretty well," recalls George Babbes, a member of the Teen Mania board, a

Wharton MBA grad, and a lifelong friend of Ron. "After a few years of ministry growth it was complete chaos. Ron's BHAGs (big hairy audacious goals) kept taking us to new levels of impact, and his vision led the ministry to where it is today, but along the way we encountered major stress fractures. There were too many moving parts and without a formal strategy and structure, the ministry began tearing apart at the seams."

So at that point, Babbes, then a brand manager at Procter and Gamble (P&G), invited Ron to join him to draw up a formal strategic plan. "We put together a clear mission statement and then went into the 'war room' at P&G and walked through Jay Galbraith's standard approach to strategic planning.¹ We filled board after board with ideas, and by the end of the weekend, we had easel paper hanging on every wall of the room."

The new plan had the effect of focusing the ministry and alleviating some of the chaos, but people still felt plenty of pressure at Teen Mania, with labor intensive processes

¹ See Jay Galbraith, *Designing Organizations: An Executive Briefing on Strategy, Structure and Process*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995).

dominating the ministry's approach to getting things done. Over time, though, and after bringing in planning consultants to train the leaders throughout the ministry, Teen Mania's systems became much more efficient. It was becoming a culture of planning and of streamlined execution.

"God had grown Teen Mania before we started planning, and He probably would have continued to grow Teen Mania without our planning efforts," Babbes says, "but partnering with Him to plan has taken this ministry well beyond where it would have been otherwise."²

Planning is an indispensable tool for effective management. When it's a priority, planning will strengthen your organization and improve your bottom line; when neglected, the opposite happens. Whether you are managing a company, a church, a department, a project, a career, or a household, the old adage resounds: failure to plan is a plan for failure. It's a truth that we learn not just from an extraordinary ministry in Texas, but throughout Scripture as well.

A Brief Theology of Planning

God is a planner. He planned the whole storyline of Scripture from the beginning. He had it laid out, down to the very last person (e.g., Jeremiah 1:5).

² Personal interview with George Babbes, May 2004.

Many ascribing to the Judeo-Christian tradition seem to understand this well, as evidenced by our incessant citing of Jeremiah 29:11. Whether comforting one another or sporting a bumper sticker, we often say: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" Indeed, God is a planner.

Plan in partnership with God, and plan in pencil.

Jesus also affirmed the enterprise of planning. Remember the stories in Luke? To a large crowd He said:

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'

"Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will

ask for terms of peace." (Luke 14:28-32)

Since the imitation of God glorifies God, we are to be planners, too. Proverbs offers us some advice regarding how we should proceed.

Plan in Partnership with God

"There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord." (Proverbs 21:30)

Planning in opposition to God's will is foolish. The results may not show up instantly. They may not show up dramatically. But like the Tower of Babel, in the end the plans will culminate in ruin. Proverbs 19:21 makes the same prediction: "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."

This is an essential point about planning for anyone who claims a Christian worldview. As with every other area of our lives, we are to be dependent upon God and seek His counsel. We are to make Him a full partner, leaning heavily on His Word and on His personal revelation as we chart our course from today until tomorrow.

In the New Testament, James says it piercingly well:

"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while

and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'" (James 4:14-15)

Bottom line? Plan in partnership with God and plan in pencil. Defer to God, as best you can discern His will, and be sensitive to course changes He desires for you to make along the way. "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed." (Proverbs 16:3)

Plan in Partnership with Others

"Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance." (Proverbs 20:18)

"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed." (Proverbs 15:22)

Many people sing the virtues of gathering advice from others, but when it comes to implementing that virtue, they fall short. It's often a pride thing: if someone else has valuable ideas—ideas that are better than mine—adopting those ideas is a tacit admission to that person's superiority. Leaders are strong, we tell ourselves. Leaders have all the answers. Leaders tell other people what to do, rather than ask what they should do.

It sounds sophomoric, almost anachronistic given recent findings on the value of humility in leadership,³ but it's

³ Jim Collins, *Good to Great: What Some Companies Make the Leap and*

a pervasive attitude among managers, regardless their faith.

In other cases, the problem is not pride, but time. Sometimes we need to make plans quickly and soliciting advice prolongs the process beyond what is tolerable. So, we circumvent the advice-gathering stage for

Strategic planning is a management tool used by almost every major company in the world, as well as by many not-for-profit organizations.

the sake of expediency. We would do better, at these times, to recall yet another proverb—"The plans of the diligent lead to profit, as surely as haste leads to poverty" (Proverbs 21:5)—and make some time for at least a brief consultation.

No matter the reason, Scripture counsels against an independent approach to planning and to management generally. Create an advisory board, surround yourself with smart people, solicit input from your employees, assemble a personal accountability group. There are many ways to "make plans by seeking advice." Our

Others Don't, HarperCollins: San Francisco, CA, 2001.

challenge is not a dearth of options; it's merely finding the hour and the humility to do so.

Strategic Planning 101

Building on this counsel, how, exactly, should we move forward in the 21st century organization? What are the modern best practices in planning that complement the scriptural advice?

Foremost is that we should plan strategically. In fact, "strategic planning" is a management tool used by almost every major company in the world,⁴ as well as by many not-for-profit organizations and small companies. In lay language, it's a comprehensive process for determining what we should do and how we should do it. However, the simplicity of that definition belies the complexity of the tool. Although there is no agreed-upon "one right way" to do strategic planning, there are several generally-accepted guidelines we can glean from how it's practiced across organizations. Here are six of them:

Decide What Business You're In and Write a Mission Statement

"Decide what business you're in"? That seems absurd. I'm in the plumbing business, of course. I'm in the education business. I'm in the spring

⁴ Darrell Rigby, "Management Tools Survey 2003," *Strategy & Leadership*, 31: 2003, p. 6. See also, www.bain.com/management_tools/

manufacturing business. Next question.

Well, not so fast. There's a lot at stake in how we frame ourselves. At the business school where I work, we can see ourselves as being in the MBA business, or we can see ourselves as being in the training business. Or, even more broadly than that, we can see our business as disciplining Christian managers worldwide. Our mission statement, our goals, our plans, and our implementation will all flow out of this framing, so it's imperative to understand what business you're really in.

Even some of the world's most successful and mature businesses sometimes struggle with this question. Bill Pollard is the Chairman Emeritus of The ServiceMaster Company, an international leader in facilities management services. But when Peter Drucker met with Pollard's top management team a few years ago and posed the *what business are you in?* question, he received multiple answers, each of which he deemed incorrect. "Your business is simply the training and development of people," replied Drucker. "You package it all different ways to meet your needs and the demands of the customer, but your basic business is people training and motivation. You are delivering services....You can't deliver quality service to the customer without motivated and trained people."⁵

⁵ William Pollard, *The Soul of the Firm*, (San Francisco: HarperBusiness, 1996), 113-114.

Although Drucker's statements weren't an epiphany at ServiceMaster, Pollard says that it added essential clarity to what they were doing and where their priorities should be.

You simply can't put a price on the proper framing of what you're really trying to do in a business, a ministry, a school,

Don't surrender to the temptation to create a mission statement on the back of a napkin over lunch.

or any other organization. It's the root of good management, the first tangible manifestation of which is a mission statement. Once you know "what business you're in," you know why you exist. And once you know why you exist, you can write it down and use it as a filter for choosing priorities, setting goals, and making plans. It's a very logical, linear process.

Writing the mission statement is a similarly-complex task, though. Don't surrender to the temptation to write one on the back of a napkin over lunch. Instead, choose a deliberate, circumspect process. The Leader to Leader Institute helpfully describes the process this way:

"Changing the mission – or creating an organization's first mission statement – is a process of gathering ideas and suggestions for the mission and honing them into a short, sharply focused phrase that meets specific criteria. Peter Drucker says the mission should 'fit on a T-shirt,' yet a mission statement is not a slogan. It is a precise statement of purpose. Words should be chosen for their meaning rather than beauty, for clarity over cleverness. The best mission statements are plain speech with no technical jargon and no adornments. Like the mission statement of the International Red Cross – *To serve the most vulnerable* – they come right out and say something. In their brevity and simplicity is power."⁶

Good advice. And after you've chosen descriptive words that have both "meaning" and "clarity," review the mission statements of several organizations, especially those in your industry. Then craft your own statement. Write several drafts and circulate them to people smarter and more experienced than yourself. After that, fine-tune the statements based on their feedback, and circulate them again to your advisory group. Eventually you'll converge on something much more useful than what was on your napkin.

⁶ Leader to Leader Institute: www.pfdf.org/leaderbooks/sat/mission.html

Audit the External and Internal Environment

Externally, you want to do (or buy) some solid market research, as well as research your competition. What's the demand and what's the current supply? Moreover, looking ahead, what are the trends that will affect the market for your product or service in the future (e.g., potential product substitutes, more people getting the product/service on the web)? What do these trends say about what you should be doing today and tomorrow?

Internally, what are the core competencies of your organization? What niche are you set up to serve? What can you offer better than anyone else (i.e., your competitive advantage)? What skills do your people have? What resources are available and what obstacles exist to getting more resources?

Some organizations find it helpful to organize the answers to such questions into a "SWOT Analysis," a matrix of the organization's **s**trengths, **w**eaknesses, **o**pportunities and **t**hreats. Ask yourself: What does our internal audit indicate about what we do well and poorly? What does our analysis of the external environment indicate about the opportunities for us (e.g., emerging markets, competitor weaknesses, political changes) and the threats to our bottom line (e.g., a slow economy, pending legislation, new competitors entering the market)? Many find that doing a SWOT Analysis helpfully filters their priorities,

strategies, and tactics (although some object that it tends to be too large and a bit cumbersome).

Set "SMART" Goals

Next comes goal setting. Many

If you can't assess your progress toward a goal, how will you know whether you're doing the right things to achieve that goal?

experts wisely recommend using the acronym "SMART" as a guide. And although these mnemonic acronyms for management can be pretty dumb and painfully forced at times, this one's worth remembering. "SMART" goals are those that are **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**ttainable, **r**elevant to the mission, and **t**ime-bound.

Specific goals are focused and well-defined. "To dominate the market" might be a motivational stretch goal to some, but its lack of specificity renders it useless for guiding action. Consider instead something like: "To have fifty percent of our target market purchasing our product within three years."

Measurable goals are those whose progress you can track.

Without the ability to assess progress toward a goal, how can you know whether you are doing the right things to achieve that goal?

Attainability is critical when designing goals. One of the most robust results in goal setting studies is that if people do not consider a goal to be attainable, they will not pursue it in earnest.

Relevance to the mission is fundamental as well. Goals exist for no other reason than to effect the mission of the organization. So don't get sidetracked. Although many tempting opportunities will present themselves along the way, be sure that the goals you set remain aligned with your central purpose.

Time-bound means that the goal will have a target date for achievement. It can be short term (under one year), intermediate term (one to five years), or long term (more than five years), but for each goal that you set, create a deadline. Without one, a goal can quickly fade from the priority list.

Formulate a Strategy and Create a Structure to Pursue Your Goals

Once you have the mission, the SWOT analysis, the market research, and SMART goals in hand, you're ready to design a strategy and an organizational structure to pursue those goals. How to do that is a topic of considerable controversy and one that has filled volumes over the past several decades. Commentators have proposed myriad models, many

touting their new model as revolutionary and even definitive.

Obviously, then, there is no way to do justice to the topic in a few paragraphs. To give you a flavor for some of the options, though, the four corporate-level strategies proposed in one of the best selling management texts on the market today are (1) concentration on a single business, (2) diversification into new industries, (3) expansion internationally, and (4) vertical integration (i.e., assuming ownership over other pieces of the value chain).⁷ Indeed, depending on the product or service, one could adopt a web-based strategy, a low cost / high volume strategy, a product differentiation strategy, or a strategy that focuses on a narrow, under-served niche in the market. Organizational structures that support these strategies could be based on function, division, geography, market served, or some hybrid. Moreover, they could be flat or hierarchical, centralized or decentralized, team-based or individualistic. No doubt, you could add many more strategy and structure options to these lists.

And you should—in conjunction with your team. Involving those who will implement your strategy in the future is usually a wise approach to generate both

⁷ Gareth Jones, Jennifer George, and Charles Hill, *Contemporary Management*, 2nd Edition, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000), 245-253.

ideas and buy-in. Brainstorming can lead to innovation which can lead to path-breaking results. Moreover, this collaborative process will allow those on the front lines to raise execution constraints early, thereby saving you save countless headaches later. But before you call that meeting, it might help

Some in the faith object that planning crowds-out the work of the Holy Spirit. If taken to the extreme, they are correct.

to read up on some of the best thinking on strategy formulation. A good start would include any of the following authors: Michael Porter, Robert Kaplan and David Norton, Henry Mintzberg, Jay Galbraith, The Boston Consulting Group, Gary Hamel and C.K. Prahalad. If you don't have the time for the 300 page books, though, consider instead the eight page *Harvard Business Review* articles.⁸

Identify Good Measures of Progress and Create a Feedback Loop

“You get what you measure.”
It's an old adage and it's often

⁸ You can find these articles by going to www.hbsp.harvard.edu

true. Consequently, business has long been on the cutting edge of developing measures of success—metrics for financial health, market share, customer satisfaction, productivity, product quality, and so forth. Within the past decade, the metaphor of a “scorecard” has captivated top managers everywhere. “The Balanced Scorecard,” originally developed by Harvard researchers Robert Kaplan and David Norton—a tool currently used by 62 percent of large and medium-sized companies⁹—is one approach worth considering. It traditionally yields four categories of measures: financial, customer, internal processes, and organizational learning. However, the tool is flexible enough to adapt to your organization's specific needs.

Regardless of whether you use this brand of scorecard, the important thing is that you use something—something accurate and objective—to assess organizational performance. People are simply more attentive to what is measured. Moreover, metrics give you the information you need to make adjustments in the system, creating a “feedback loop” that is essential to continuous improvement.

Consider “Contingency Planning” As Well

This approach to planning, also called “scenario planning,” is an increasingly-popular management tool. In fact,

⁹ Darrell Rigby, “Management Tools Survey 2003,” p. 6.

based on a Bain & Company survey of 708 companies worldwide, it was used by 7 out of 10 medium and large businesses in 2002, up from fewer than 4 in 10 in the year 2000.¹⁰

As the name implies, contingency planning entails considering and preparing for alternative futures, thereby putting the organization in a better position to respond quickly as the future unfolds. Accordingly, contingency planners think through plausible scenarios that would render their current plan sub-optimal, and craft back-up plans in the event that any of these scenarios does in fact occur. So, shifting government regulations, new technologies, the entry of significant competitors, the unionization of a plant, and other possible events are incorporated into the central planning process, culminating in alternative plans ready for implementation if necessary. Contingency planning is also an outstanding

organizational learning tool, given its ability to educate managers about the assumptions they harbor when planning, as well as the breadth of strategies available to them.

Since the future is unpredictable, why rely on only one forecast of it in your plans? Organizations that generate multiple forecasts and multiple plans are much better positioned to adjust rapidly and gain a competitive advantage.

Plan in the Spirit, Not Instead of the Spirit

Without a plan, goals are merely hopes and dreams. The decision-makers at Teen Mania can strongly attest to that statement, as well as to the power of the six best practices described above.

Still, some in the faith seem skeptical about the value of planning, objecting that it

crowds-out the work of the Holy Spirit. If taken to the extreme, they are correct. Without sensitivity to God's empowering Spirit, and without deference to His leading, our plans arguably make an idol of the one who formulated those plans! So we would do well to respect their caution that a sovereign God is the God of our plans, just as He is the God of everything else. Plan in the Spirit, not instead of the Spirit.

Remember, planning is simply a tool, and as with all tools, it can be used for noble purposes or for evil ones. "But the noble man makes noble plans, and by noble deeds he stands" says Isaiah (32:8). May we do the same in our jobs and in every other aspect of our lives.

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How to Find What You Need Online

Kevin A. Miller

“The Internet is exploding with empty dazzle,” explains Richard Saul Wurman, “sites that direct you to nonexistent links, send you down fruitless paths, and generally don’t help you get where you want to go ... Several studies have found that somewhere between 60 and 80 percent of people searching for information on the Web failed to find what they were looking for.”¹

And we thought the Internet was supposed to be the mother of all information, the answer to all our information needs. Instead, it frustrates us most of the time—60 to 80 percent of the time. How ironic.

Still, by knowing how to properly search the web, we can flip that statistic upside down: we can find what we’re looking for 60 to 80 percent of the time. Here are five tips for more successful web searches. By using these principles, you’re highly likely to find what you’re looking for online—in the first page of results.

¹ “Richard Saul Wurman, “Redesign the Data Dump: As the author of 1989’s *Information Anxiety* proves again, ‘information architecture’ still has a long way to go,” *Business 2.0* (28 November, 2000), 212.

1. Choose the Right Search Engine for the Job

Google.com is still the best all-purpose search engine. But the Internet offers many other search engines, some of which

By using these five principles, you’ll find what you’re looking for online—in the first page of results.

outperform Google on certain tasks. Let me recommend which search engine to use when.

When you want the widest possible search:

- HotBot.com lets you select from four search engines: HotBot, Google, Lycos, and AskJeeves. (HotBot also lets you filter out offensive content, change the look of results pages, and save your search preferences.)
- Gigablast.com is simple to use, and if you don’t find what you want, each results page allows you to search in six other search engines,

including Google and Wisenut.

Faster than those are the metasearch engines, which search many search engines in one pass:

- Dogpile.com fetches results from six search engines, including Google and Yahoo. (Too bad its sponsored links look just like the noncommercial ones.)
- Metacrawler.com covers eight search engines: Google, Yahoo, AskJeeves, About, Looksmart, FindWhat, Overture, and Altavista. (The Exact Phrase feature doesn’t appear to work, however.)

Even better, choose your own list of search engines, directories, and news sites to search—in one pass:

- Mamma.com (www.mamma.com/psearch.html) is good, and Vivisimo.com (vivisimo.com/form?form=Advanced) is better, because it lets you search sites like eBay, CNN, and Britannica.
- If you want the ultimate in search coverage and don’t mind software adventures, download the free Internet browser Mozilla Firefox (www.mozilla.org/products/firefox). Firefox lets you download free plug-ins to

search more than one hundred search engines, reference sites, and more (www.texturizer.net/firefox/extensions).

For news:

- News.Google.com searches 4,500 news sources—and adds breaking news to its home page continuously.
- For European and international news, uk.newsbot.msn.com works similarly.

For books and magazines:

- Amazon.com allows you to search the text of more than 120,000 books. Click the Books tab and then use the Search Books tool at the top of the left column.
- LookSmart.com offers 3.5 million magazine articles from more than 700 publications. Just click the Articles tab.

For entertainment, pop culture, and personals:

- Lycos.com. More a home page than a search engine, Lycos helps you browse as much as search. Click any result, and Lycos deftly brings up the web page, so you can see if it's what you want, but keeps your search results in the left column, so you can easily return to them.
- Eurekster.com offers an intriguing twist: personalized search. Your search results are affected by what you and your friends

(the ones who use Eurekster, anyway) have searched for recently. If you and your friends are fans of a new band or TV show, you'll help each other find the best sites.

- MSN.com Search offers useful channels to browse, as well as a solid search engine.
- Yahoo.com offers numerous popular search categories, such as Real Estate and Personals.

Using quotation marks around phrases is the technique that will help web searchers more than any other.

For shopping in mail-order catalogs:

- Catalogs.Google.com searches 6,000 catalogs and returns pictures from their pages.

For searching sites in foreign languages:

- AltaVista.com, which offers nice translation tools.

For when you don't know what term to use:

- AskJeeves.com allows you to type a question. Suppose you want to find information about the current prime

minister of Israel but can't remember his name. At AskJeeves, simply type, "Who is the current Israeli prime minister?"

For phone numbers and addresses:

- Click the tab for White Pages or for Yellow Pages at Dogpile.com, and usually you'll quickly find the right person or business, complete with a map to their location.

For pictures:

- Google.com offers an easy way to search through 425 million images, using the Image tab on the home page. Close behind are AltaVista.com and Yahoo.com.

For videos:

- AlltheWeb.com. Use the Advanced Search under Video to choose streamed or downloadable files and video file format.

For overall, everyday use, I like, in this order:

- Google.com now conducts 55 percent of all searches on the web, for good reasons.²

² Geoffrey Nunberg, "As Google Goes, So Goes the Nation," *New York Times*, 18 May 2003, www.nytimes.com, www-csli.stanford.edu/~nunberg/google.html. The percentage is variously reported. Lev Grossman, "Search and Destroy," *Time*, 22 December 2003, writes, "Right now 32% of all Web searches go through *google.com*. That number shoots to around 70% when you count searches on

Simple to use, fast, exhaustive, Google usually returns the most relevant results.

- Mamma.com stands out because it searches many other engines but returns only the best results. I like getting only a few dozen, highly relevant results.
- Wisenut.com's Sneak-a-Peek feature allows you to open a web page while in the results list so you can see if it's what you want.
- Teoma.com offers a simple design with bonus features. Next to your results, you get suggestions on how to narrow your search. For example, search on "Super Bowl" and you get six suggestions, including Super Bowl History and Super Bowl Tickets. Below those suggestions, Teoma also gives "collection websites" that may be a mother lode on the topic you searched for. For my search on "Super Bowl," the ten sites listed include www.superbowlhotelrooms.com

I suggest you bookmark your two favorite search engines so you can quickly return to them. (To bookmark in Outlook, select Favorites, Add to Favorites.) Even better, Google, AltaVista, AskJeeves, and other search engines allow you to add their search box to your browser's toolbar, so you don't even have to visit the site to start searching. I love this. (To add this feature, go to the

sites like AOL.com, which licenses Google's technology."

particular site. At Google.com, for example, click on Services and Tools, then scroll down and click on Google Toolbar.)

2. Add and Arrange Words to Make Your Search as Specific as Possible

Add words to make your search as specific as possible. For example, don't search on meatloaf when you really want meatloaf recipes; instead of

Arrange your search words in order from most important to least important.

typing information overload, key in surviving information overload.

Use precise wording. If you're looking for information on scleroderma, type scleroderma rather than skin diseases or autoimmune conditions.

Arrange words in order from most important to least important. Better than small Midwest colleges is colleges Midwest small.

Avoid common words, since search engines throw those words out anyway. For example, when I searched on Kevin A. Miller, the search engine threw out A since the word is so common. That meant I got results for Kevin F. Miller and for Kevin

Doolittle and Lauren Miller. The solution to this problem is point 3, which in my opinion would help web searchers more than any other.

3. Use Quotation Marks Around Phrases

Instead of typing Kevin A. Miller, enter "Kevin A. Miller," and the search engine will return only web pages that include that exact phrase, with the words in that order. Thus, quotation marks usually narrow your search to what you're actually seeking. For example, if I search on Cornerstone Festival, I get 59,000 results, but if I add quotation marks and search on "Cornerstone Festival," a summer rock-music event, I get only 4,710.

Quotation marks make it possible to quickly find common information.

To find a residential phone number, type "the person's name" "their city, state abbreviation." (In Google, add rphonebook: at the beginning.)

To find a commercial phone number, type "the company's name" "contact us". (Or in Google, bphonebook: "the company's name".)

To find directions, type in "the address of your destination". Google gives you two links (one from Yahoo! Maps and the other from MapQuest) so you can quickly get a map of that location. The map pages also contain links for driving directions.

To find the best price on a product, type “the model name and number” “price comparison.”

These first three principles—the right search engine, precise wording, and quotation marks—work together well. PC magazine gives a good example:

“Bill and Melinda Gates recently had a baby girl, and you want to find out the baby’s name. Lycos and Yahoo! are good sites to use for news searches, because they carry breaking stories from newswire services. “Bill and Melinda Gates” baby retrieves pages that are about the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and babies in general, so you need to add more definitive terms. If you refine the search to “Bill and Melinda Gates” daughter, the first five results are announcements about the new Gates baby.”³

4. Use Operators and Wildcards

Many people search happily without this principle, but if you search the web frequently, take ten minutes to learn it well. Your investment of ten minutes will be amply rewarded.

To make your search exact, use operators, which are symbols, or words in capital letters, that tell the search engine what to do and what not to do. Search engines assume the operator AND between words. That

³ Janet Rubenking, “Search Smarter,” *PC magazine* (4 February 2003), pp. 66-67

means they return results that include all the words you typed. For example, ice hockey will return only pages that have both the word ice and the word hockey in them. You won’t get pages that have only the word ice somewhere, as in Ben and Jerry’s ice cream.

The operator OR tells the search engine to find pages with any of the words you typed. This comes in handy when a word has synonyms

Remember, the web isn’t the only way to find information, and often it’s not the best way.

and you don’t care which word you find. For example, type turkey AND dressing OR stuffing. That will return pages with turkey and dressing; you’ll also get pages with turkey and stuffing.

The operator NOT, usually expressed as a minus sign (–), excludes words you don’t want. For example, in the earlier example about the Gateses’ baby, you could type “Bill and Melinda Gates” baby –Foundation to make sure you don’t get any pages about the Gates Foundation.

Use a wildcard symbol, usually an asterisk (*), when you need to pull up all forms of a word. For example, theat* will return theater, theatre, and theatrical. Typing color* will

return colors, coloring, coloration (and Colorado, which you probably don’t want; to solve that, type color* – Colorado).

Few people will need to search by URL, link, or domain, but should you, see the clear guidelines at SearchEngineWatch.com: www.searchenginewatch.com/facts/article.php/2155981.

5. When General Search Engines Don’t Work, Try Directories, Specific Sites, or Librarians

Now you know how to conduct word searches well. But sometimes general search engines still don’t yield what you need.

Try the Directory tab. In Google, if your search yields too many results, click the Directory tab at the top of your search results page. This will return websites that focus on your topic and will greatly reduce the number of results. For example, a search on “Ellen DeGeneres” yielded 141,000 results. A click on the Directory tab then narrowed that number to 359.

Check out specialized websites for your topic. For example, here are two dozen information sites I’ve used, in alphabetical order by topic.

Bible: Bible Gateway (bible.gospelcom.net). You can search easily by word or Bible verse. Blue Letter Bible (blueletterbible.org) adds study

tools, maps, hymns, and devotionals.

Books: Amazon.com, of course, or for rare books, Bookfinder.com. And remember that Amazon allows you to search the complete text of 120,000 books.

Business: CEO Express (www.ceoexpress.com), a nice portal for business sites.

Cars: Edmunds.com.

Christianity: For current information, ChristianityToday.com, and for classic reading, Christian Classics Ethereal Library (www.ccel.org).

Dictionaries: Bartleby.com outdoes Dictionary.com.

Facts: RefDesk.com calls itself "the single best source for facts" on the Net, and it just might be. If you still don't find what you're looking for, check Library Spot (www.libraryspot.com), a portal to virtually any information a library contains.

Health: With nearly 20,000 health websites, many of which offer unproven information, I stay with MayoClinic.com.

Ideas: To stay fresh on the world of ideas, check out Arts and Letters Daily (www.aldaily.com).

Maps: MapQuest.com or MSN Maps and Directions, which offers the nice LineDrive feature (maps.msn.com).

Movies: For the content and quality of a specific movie, I like Screenit.com (though it

loads slowly). To research actors, directors, and the film industry, choose imdb.com.

Myths and hoaxes: Is that story going around the Net really true? www.snopes2.com will know.

Phone numbers: SuperPages.com.

Pictures: The images directory in Google makes finding pictures a snap. Go to www.google.com and click on the Images tab.

Sports: Espn.com tops cnsi.com, in my opinion.

Weather: weather.com.

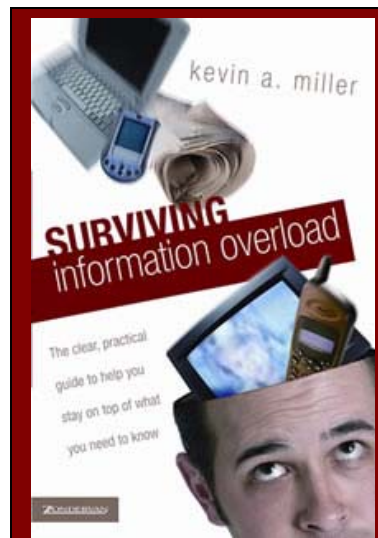
Call a Librarian.

Still stumped?

Remember, the web isn't the only way to find information, and often it's not the best way. Writes Richard Saul Wurman: "The highest-tech choice isn't always the most efficient, although sometimes the dazzle blinds us to more dowdy, but perhaps speedier solutions, like the old-fashioned reference librarian. Librarians find information for a living. If you need to know something specific, you can get an answer from a librarian before you can make your way through thousands of responses to a search engine query."⁴

⁴ Richard Saul Wurman, "Warp-Speed Rules: What successful designers and communicators need to master in a Net-connected world," *Business 2.0* (28 November, 2000), 222

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Witnessing @ Work: Watching for Doors of Opportunity

Kent and Davidene Humphreys

Years ago Angela worked in our office. She was young and bright, just out of high school when she entered employment. During her first year with us, her dad died of cancer. He had been a wonderful man and she was extremely close to him. Four years later, her mother died of cancer. Angela had been through two major life-changing episodes in four years. I watched her closely and prayed that God would make me sensitive to her and her pain. But every time I asked her how she was, she answered in a positive way. Davidene and I had discussed her situation several times and had grieved with her. We did not know how to help her through her pain except to pray and encourage her. So we waited, observed, and prayed for her.

Several months later she appeared at the door to my office, broken and sobbing. I listened as she agonized over her feelings of isolation. She truly believed that God had left her. My own heart broke for her and soon tears were streaming down both of our faces. I shared with her that she was of great value to God; He loved her and had not abandoned her. We ended our conversation by praying aloud, a new experience for her.

When we finished, her countenance had changed. There was a look of peace

rather than sorrow, and joy had replaced fear. Angela was a different person. Later, she wrote to explain how that time of expressing her anger and grief helped her understand God and her own feelings. She was convinced that such times

It's shocking how often we do not even see someone in need because of our focus on a goal.

of listening and praying with those who are hurting can help.

After losing her mother at age twenty-two, only four years after her father's death, Angela wrote, "I felt completely alone. Who could I turn to; whom could I trust? Now I was not only disappointed with God; I was angry. I had convinced myself that I was being punished for something I had done, or maybe something I had not done. . . . I struggled with this for some time and my faith was diminishing. I seldom prayed, and when I did there was not that 'connection' I had known before.

"Over a year later, I muscled up all my courage and went to

see the one man I knew could give me the advice and wisdom I needed, our CEO. After sitting in his office for an hour, crying so hard I could barely be understood, I became convinced that it was not my fault, I was not being punished. I was only punishing myself for letting my relationship with God fail. Before leaving the office, Kent asked me to do something I felt very uncomfortable doing; he asked me to pray aloud with him. For the first time in months, I prayed for God to forgive me for turning away from Him when I needed Him most.

"Because of this, I am a better Christian today than ever before. I honestly believe in my heart that if this man had not been openly demonstrating his beliefs so strongly, I would never have gone to him."

The Provision for Our Lives

I (Kent) must admit that even though I knew that Christ could meet Angela's needs, I was uncomfortable. I believe that if I had not been observing Angela and praying for sensitivity, I would not have been prepared when she appeared at the door. I had to trust fully in God because my only confidence was in Him.

Have you ever been nervous when put in a position like the

one I just described? Is the thought that you might have to come up with the right words to say to a person in crisis frightening to you? The disciples felt the same way. Jesus' answer to them is His answer to us, "Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit" (Mark 13:11).

We may not be literally arrested and sent to jail, but we do feel sometimes as if facing such situations is a trial. But it is not our responsibility to plan everything. The Holy Spirit will bring to our minds exactly what we need at that time. The key is to be available to the Holy Spirit, walking with Him daily so that our lines of communication are open. The more time we have spent with Jesus in His Word the Bible, the more prepared we are. With God's Word in our heart and minds, the Holy Spirit has a lot He can use. Jesus told His disciples, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26).

Preparation is not easy, but it can be done with a commitment to study God's Word and a passion to know Christ's character. Being aware of the needs of others, however, is sometimes more difficult. Such awareness may not come naturally, yet God can develop your sensitivity as you look for opportunities and ask Him to make you more sensitive. I realized early that

sensitivity is not a natural strength of my personality type; in fact, normally it is nonexistent. Being a hard driver who tends naturally to run over people on the way to a goal, I work hard at developing this characteristic.

You may need to focus on developing that sensitivity. Sometimes we aren't as sensitive because we have

If I had not been observing Angela and praying for sensitivity, I would not have been prepared when she appeared at my door.

focused on a project or find other duties distracting us. My assistant of eighteen years told me that I did not recognize her as a person for the first six years of her employment. I pray for sensitivity and I make a conscious effort to slow down so that I can observe others more carefully.

Habits of Sensitivity

As we look for ways to be sensitive to people, there are at least three habits to incorporate into our lives.

The first is *the habit of prayer*. As we pray for people, we develop a spiritual focus in our

interaction with them. We cannot overemphasize the value and necessity of prayer in the process of becoming sensitive to people. Prayer changes our focus and unleashes God's tremendous power. Recall two powerful promises of prayer in Scripture:

"If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." (Matthew 21:22)

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." (Philippians 4:6)

The second habit we need to develop is to *stop and talk to people at every chance*. That sounds obvious, but it is not easy because we are so often in a hurry. Instead of racing into the house when returning home from work, we can go over and talk to the neighbor who is standing outside. Instead of jogging to be the first one at the office copier, we can say hi to the person at the next desk as we pass. It is shocking how often we do not even see someone we could interact with because of our focus on our goal.

The third habit to add to our lifestyle is to *ask others for help*, especially in the neighborhood. We are a prideful people, and we resist asking for help. But people are usually glad to help, and it opens opportunities for conversation because the other person can talk about something he knows about. That, in turn, opens possibilities for relationships.

These three habits can be used often by God to open doors for ministry to people. As we watch for the door of opportunity to swing wide, as we are sensitive, as we care for others, we will have chances to show and tell of God's love.

Here are several ideas for opening doors, based largely on opportunities we've experienced. Most of these are from our world of business. They are not meant to dictate how God will use you in your world of work, school, neighborhood, etc. As you read them, ask God to give you ideas that will touch others as you work, play, raise your family, and interact with friends.

Doors of Opportunity during Marriage Difficulties

Difficulties in a marriage can become a crisis that opens doors of ministry. For example, consider asking a troubled couple to go with your spouse and you to a marriage or parenting conference. You may want to help them financially if this is possible for you. You may tell them, "We want to help you go with us by providing baby-sitting for you. This is really selfish on our part because we want to spend this time with you."

Maybe you could give anonymously to your church and then say, "Our church has scholarships. Let's both go!" If you cannot help financially, plan far enough in advance that both couples can save for it.

We have offered to send couples to marriage conferences, and the results have been great. Some couples are willing to go by themselves, but we have been known to get a group together to go just so that we can invite a couple we are concerned about as our guests. As CEO of our company, I can also offer

When a neighbor or co-worker is in the hospital, go visit rather than simply sending a card.

this benefit to my employees, and many have taken advantage of it. As one employee wrote recently, "I thank God that you have the marriage conferences, the parenting conferences, and the children's camp programs available to your employees."

Another thing we do at work to help families as well as individuals is the chaplain program that we initiated through Marketplace Ministries (marketplaceministries.com). Many of our employees do not attend church regularly, so when they face a crisis, they have no church of their own to call. Marketplace Ministries provides our company with a chaplain who visits once a week and gets to know the employees. He or she becomes a friend, being available and

holding Bible studies before work hours. When employees face a problem, they can call on the chaplain at any time. Our chaplains have helped our people through some terrible times in their lives.

The company chaplain has been present for births and deaths, trouble with teenagers and spouses, and happy times such as weddings. Since the information of who sees the chaplain and what is said is confidential, employees have great trust and freedom getting the help they need. If you have the authority in your business to look into having this program, or to suggest it to someone else, I would strongly recommend it. The return on your investment in employee morale, productivity, and loyalty is tremendous. Best of all, lives are changed.

We want to be involved with our people when they are in the hospital, and we have spent many hours and days sitting with folks who are there. But with several hundred people that we care about, we cannot be there in person for everyone. Our chaplain really helps the employees and our company.

Doors of Opportunity during Hospital Stays

Most of us, however, do not have a company chaplain. What can we do as individuals? Here's a second suggestion, a second door of opportunity. When a neighbor or coworker is in the hospital, we can go to visit them, rather than simply sending a card. We can offer to pray with them, and do so right then in

their presence. As the conversation in the hospital room unfolds, there may be a natural opportunity to talk about stress, life's crises, family reactions, and other problems.

We can then make a request: "Do you mind if I share this with my pastor so that he and my church family can pray for you?" In some cases, we could even look for an opportunity to ask if we could bring our pastor with us for a visit. The important thing is to go with a prayer for sensitivity to that person's needs and an awareness of the chances God will give for us to minister.

Be bold. In asking a person if you can pray for him or her, you are not imposing on the person, but showing the depth of your care. We have never seen a case in which an offer to pray was not appreciated, and it often opens the way for more spiritual conversation.

Doors of Opportunity during Holidays

Another open door God provides to care for people is during holidays. It is easy to imagine how Christmas lends itself to giving of ourselves to others, but don't forget the less emphasized holidays. Father's Day and Mother's Day are often neglected holidays except by a parent's children, but these are great days on which to surprise someone you care about with a small token. If they do not have children, tell them that the gift is because they have a mother or father!

We decided to emphasize the week before Mother's Day at work. We gave each woman a different small gift each day. The gifts included cards, candy, a flower, and a small book. The morale in the office was sky-high for a long time. On Father's Day, I inserted tracts about Father's Day in the paychecks. Another year we sent a letter, and a third year we sent a small book. I sent these not only to our

The key is not how we do it, but that we do it. Four different Christians may help a person in four different ways.

employees, but also to our contacts in the business world. One letter I received back from a supplier said, "Thank you for your letter. What pleased me most was the information that was inside, the tracts on being a better dad. Raising a family is often difficult." We have found people to be highly appreciative of any effort to make them feel special, especially since daily life does not often produce that effect.

Good material on the family, children, or marriage is usually freely received. Later on, when we want to say or send something that is spiritual in nature, people are receptive.

The Fourth of July is another overlooked opportunity. One

year we sent a letter, along with the book *Preserve Us a Nation*, by Charles Crismeier, to friends and business associates. This book relates many stories about the heroes of our nation's early years. It emphasizes our nation's biblical roots. The reaction to that book from our suppliers was eye-opening. One supplier wrote, "As we celebrate our nation's birthday, this book is indeed an appropriate reminder. Because I travel quite a bit, I am never far from a book. This book will be with me on my next trip." Another replied, "This book will remain among my treasured readings. Thanks for thinking of me."

Of course, the holiday that means the most personally is a person's birthday. How long has it been since you have received a birthday card from someone other than your family? Another holiday like that is a wedding anniversary; not even family members remember that one. It means a lot, therefore, when someone remembers your special day. We make it a practice to send birthday cards, and once in a while, we send a card or an encouraging note to someone, not realizing that it will arrive on their birthday.

On one such occasion, the lady involved wrote back, "Bless you for your kindness to me in sending the precious book, *A Mother's Journey*. I'll attempt to explain to you the significance of your obedience to the Lord's prompting. The book arrived on my birthday. Because of the nature of our schedule, it was the only acknowledgement of my birthday. Also, the Lord told me that He had something

for me when I opened your package. I knew what it was; the Lord was kissing me through you. Thank you for your sensitivity. Every time you have given to us it has met an exact need.”

I can't tell you how many times people have told me that a card or pamphlet has arrived at an exact moment of need. Of course, there is no way I could know that; it is God's work. He is faithful and true in His love. The awesome knowledge that He is willing to use me to touch others keeps me on my knees in gratitude to Him. What a privilege and a joy it is to be His child.

There's No “One Right Way” to Minister

Ask God for creative ways to meet the needs of the people you are in contact with everyday. As your sensitivity toward others increases, you will find people coming to you for advice. They want to talk

to someone who they feel cares about them. Then you can take them by the hand and bring them with you to Jesus.

The way you do this will be different for each person. For example, I have given many stories about sending cards and books. That is just one way to minister, one well-suited to me. How each of us ministers is influenced by our backgrounds, personalities, gifting, experiences, abilities, and talents. The point is that when a door of opportunity is open, walk through it.

The key is not how we do it, but that we do it. If someone is in grief, four different Christians may help that person in four different ways. One may give a book, another may cook a meal, another goes by to sit and listen, another may organize relatives coming into town for the funeral. Do not limit God by thinking that a method that is natural for me is what you should do. God

probably has plans for you that you will be much more comfortable with, based on what He has gifted you to do.

The creativity of our great God is unlimited. Each of us is unique, placed by the Father to be His personal representative to those who need Him. The Creator of the universe has chosen to work through us. How amazing! As we become more sensitive to those around us, we will experience the words of Jesus in John 14:12, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”

Kent and Davidene Humphreys spend much of their time ministering to business leaders, pastors and church laity. Kent is currently the president of Christ@Work (formerly Fellowship of Companies for Christ International).

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The Sacrament of Living

A.W. Tozer

*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink,
or whatsoever ye do, do all to the
glory of God.*

1 Corinthians 10:31

One of the greatest hindrances to internal peace which the Christian encounters is the common habit of dividing our lives into two areas, the sacred and the secular. As the seas are conceived to exist apart from each other and to be morally and spiritually incompatible, and as we are compelled by the necessities of living to be always crossing back and forth from the one to the other, our inner lives tend to break up so that we live a divided instead of a unified life.

Our trouble springs from the fact that we who follow Christ inhabit at once two worlds, the spiritual and the natural. As children of Adam we live our lives on earth subject to the limitations of the flesh and the weaknesses and ills to which human nature is heir. Merely to live among men requires of us years of hard toil and much care and attention to the things of this world. In sharp contrast to this is our life in the Spirit. There we enjoy another and higher kind of life; we are children of God; we possess heavenly status and enjoy intimate fellowship with Christ.

This tends to divide our total life into two departments. We

come unconsciously to recognize two sets of actions. The first are performed with a feeling of satisfaction and a firm assurance that they are pleasing to God. These are the sacred acts and they are usually thought to be prayer, Bible reading, hymn singing, church attendance and such

It is not what a man does that determines whether his work is sacred or secular, it is why he does it.

other acts as spring directly from faith. They maybe known by the fact that they have no direct relation to this world, and would have no meaning whatever except as faith shows us another world, "*a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*" (2 Cor. 5:1).

Over against these sacred acts are the secular ones. They include all of the ordinary activities of life which we share with the sons and daughters of Adam: eating, sleeping, working, looking after the needs of the body and performing our dull and prosaic duties here on earth. These we often do reluctantly

and with many misgivings, often apologizing to God for what we consider a waste of time and strength. The upshot of this is that we are uneasy most of the time. We go about our common tasks with a feeling of deep frustration, telling ourselves pensively that there's a better day coming when we shall slough off this earthly shell and be bothered no more with the affairs of this world.

This is the old sacred-secular antithesis. Most Christians are caught in its trap. They cannot get a satisfactory adjustment between the claims of the two worlds. They try to walk the tight rope between two kingdoms and they find no peace in either. Their strength is reduced, their outlook confused and their joy taken from them.

I believe this state of affairs to be wholly unnecessary. We have gotten ourselves on the horns of a dilemma, true enough, but the dilemma is not real. It is a creature of misunderstanding. The sacred-secular antithesis has no foundation in the New Testament. Without doubt a more perfect understanding of Christian truth will deliver us from it.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is our perfect example, and He knew no divided life. In the

Presence of His Father He lived on earth without strain from babyhood to His death on the cross. God accepted the offering of His total life, and made no distinction between act and act. *"I do always the things that please him,"* was His brief summary of His own life as it related to the Father (John 8:29). As He moved among men He was poised and restful. What pressure and suffering He endured grew out of His position as the world's sin-bearer; they were never the result of moral uncertainty or spiritual maladjustment.

Paul's exhortation to *"do all to the glory of God"* is more than pious idealism. It is an integral part of the sacred revelation and is to be accepted as the very Word of Truth. It opens before us the possibility of making every act of our lives contribute to the glory of God. Lest we should be too timid to include everything, Paul mentions specifically eating and drinking. This humble privilege we share with the beasts that perish. If these lowly animal acts can be so performed as to honor God, then it becomes difficult to conceive of one that cannot.

That monkish hatred of the body which figures so prominently in the works of certain early devotional writers is wholly without support in the Word of God. Common modesty is found in the Sacred Scriptures, it is true, but never prudery or a false sense of shame. The New Testament accepts as a matter of course that in His incarnation our Lord took upon Him a real human body, and no effort is made to steer around the

downright implications of such a fact. He lived in that body here among men and never once performed a non-sacred act. His presence in human flesh sweeps away forever the evil notion that there is about the human body something innately offensive to the Deity. God created our bodies, and we do not offend Him by placing the responsibility where it

If the acts of eating and drinking can be performed to honor God, then it becomes difficult to conceive of an act that cannot.

belongs. He is not ashamed of the work of His own hands. Perversion, misuse and abuse of our human powers should give us cause enough to be ashamed. Bodily acts done in sin and contrary to nature can never honor God. Wherever the human will introduces moral evil we have no longer our innocent and harmless powers as God made them; we have instead an abused and twisted thing which can never bring glory to its Creator.

Let us, however, assume that perversion and abuse are not present. Let us think of a Christian believer in whose life the twin wonders of repentance and the new birth have been wrought. He is now living according to the will of

God as he understands it from the written Word. Of such a one it may be said that every act of his life is or can be as truly sacred as prayer or baptism or the Lord's Supper. To say this is not to bring all acts down to one dead level; it is rather to lift every act up into a living kingdom and turn the whole life into a sacrament.

If a sacrament is an external expression of an inward grace, then we need not hesitate to accept the above thesis. By one act of consecration of our total selves to God, we can make every subsequent act express that consecration. We need no more be ashamed of our body—the fleshly servant that carries us through life—than Jesus was of the humble beast upon which He rode into Jerusalem. *"The Lord hath need of him"* may well apply to our mortal bodies. If Christ dwells in us we may bear about the Lord of glory as the little beast did of old and give occasion to the multitudes to cry, *"Hosanna in the highest."*

That we **see** this truth is not enough. If we would escape from the toils of the sacred-secular dilemma the truth must "run in our blood" and condition the complexion of our thoughts. We must practice living to the glory of God, actually and determinedly. By meditation upon this truth, by talking it over with God often in our prayers, by recalling it to our minds frequently as we move about among men, a **sense** of its wondrous meaning will begin to take hold of us. The old painful duality will go down before a restful unity of life. The knowledge that we

are all God's, that He has received all and rejected nothing, will unify our inner lives and make everything sacred to us.

This is not quite all. Long-held habits do not die easily. It will take intelligent thought and a great deal of reverent prayer to escape completely from the sacred-secular psychology. For instance it may be difficult for the average Christian to get hold of the idea that his daily labors can be performed as acts of worship acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The old antithesis will crop up in the back of his head sometimes to disturb his peace of mind. Nor will that old serpent the devil take all this lying down. He will be there in the cab or at the desk or in the field to remind the Christian that he is giving the better part of his day to the things of this world and allotting to his religious duties only a trifling portion of his time. And unless great care is taken this will create confusion and bring discouragement and heaviness of heart.

We can meet this successfully only by the exercise of an aggressive faith. We must offer all our acts to God and believe that He accepts them. Then hold firmly to that position and keep insisting that every act of every hour of the day and night be included in the transaction. Keep reminding God in our times of private prayer that we mean every act for His glory; then supplement those times by a thousand thought-prayers as we go about the job of living. Let us practice the fine art of making every work a priestly

ministration. Let us believe that God is in all our simple deeds and learn to find Him there.

A concomitant of the error which we have been discussing is the sacred-secular antithesis as applied to places. It is little short of astonishing that we can read the New Testament

That we see this truth is not enough. It must condition the complexion of our thoughts.

and still believe in the inherent sacredness of places as distinguished from other places. This error is so widespread that one feels all alone when he tries to combat it. It has acted as a kind of dye to color the thinking of religious persons, and has colored the eyes as well so that it is all but impossible to detect its fallacy. In the face of every New Testament teaching to the contrary, it has been said and sung throughout the centuries and accepted as part of the Christian message, which it most surely is not. Only the Quakers, so far as my knowledge goes, have had the perception to see the error and the courage to expose it.

Here are the facts as I see them. For four hundred years Israel had dwelt in Egypt, surrounded by the crassest idolatry. By the hand of Moses

they were brought out at last and started toward the land of promise. The very idea of holiness had been lost to them. To correct this, God began at the bottom. He localized Himself in the cloud and fire and later, when the tabernacle had been built, He dwelt between holy and unholy. There were holy days, holy vessels, holy garments. There were washings, sacrifices, offerings of many kinds. By these means Israel learned that **God is holy**. It was this that He was teaching them. Not the holiness of things or places, but the holiness of Jehovah was the lesson they must learn.

Then came the great day when Christ appeared. Immediately He began to say, "*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time... , but I say unto you...*" (Matt. 5:21-22). The Old Testament schooling was over. When Christ died on the cross the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom. The Holy of Holies was opened to everyone who would enter in faith. Christ's words were remembered, "*The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father... But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:21-23).

Shortly after, Paul took up the cry of liberty and declared all meats clean, every day holy, all places sacred and every act acceptable to God. The sacredness of times and places,

a half-light necessary to the education of the race, passed away before the full sun of spiritual worship.

The essential spirituality of worship remained the possession of the Church until it was slowly lost with the passing of the years. Then the natural **legality** of the fallen hearts of men began to introduce the old distinctions. The Church came to observe again days and seasons and times. Certain places were chosen and marked out as holy in a special sense. Differences were observed between one and another day or place or person. "The sacraments" were first two, then three, then four, until with the triumph of Romanism they were fixed at seven.

In all charity, and with no desire to reflect unkindly upon any Christian, however misled, I would point out that the Roman Catholic church represents today the sacred-secular heresy carried to its logical conclusion. Its deadliest effect is the complete cleavage it introduces between religion and life. Its teachers attempt to avoid this snare by many footnotes and multitudinous explanations, but the mind's instinct for logic is too strong. In practical living the cleavage is a fact.

From this bondage reformers and puritans and mystics have labored to free us. Today the trend in conservative circles is back toward that bondage again. It is said that a horse after it has been led out of a burning building will sometimes by a strange obstinacy break loose from its

rescuer and dash back into the building again to perish in the flame. By some such stubborn tendency toward error, Fundamentalism in our day is moving back toward spiritual slavery. The observation of days and times is becoming more and more prominent among us. "Lent" and "holy week" and "good" Friday are words heard more and more

Let us each day offer a thousand thought-prayers as we go about the job of living.

frequently upon the lips of gospel Christians. We do not know when we are well off.

In order that I may be understood and not be misunderstood I would throw into relief the practical implications of the teaching for which I have been arguing, i.e., the sacramental quality of every-day living. Over against its positive meanings I should like to point out a few things it does not mean.

It does not mean, for instance, that everything we do is of equal importance with everything else we do or may do. One act of a good man's life may differ widely from another in importance. Paul's sewing of tents was not equal to his writing an Epistle to the Romans, but both were accepted of God and both were

true acts of worship. Certainly it is more important to lead a soul to Christ than to plant a garden, but the planting of the garden **can** be as holy an act as the winning of a soul.

Again, it does not mean that every man is as useful as every other man. Gifts differ in the body of Christ. A Billy Bray is not to be compared with a Luther or a Wesley for sheer usefulness to the Church and to the world; but the service of the less gifted brother is as pure as that of the more gifted, and God accepts both with equal pleasure.

The "layman" need never think of his humbler task as being inferior to that of his minister. Let every man abide in the calling wherein he is called and his work will be as sacred as the work of the ministry. It is not what a man does that determines whether his work is sacred or secular, it is **why** he does it. The motive is everything. Let a man sanctify the Lord God in his heart and he can thereafter do no common act. All he does is good and acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For such a man, living itself will be sacramental and the whole world a sanctuary. His entire life will be a priestly ministration. As he performs his never so simple task he will hear the voice of the seraphim saying, "*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.*"

Lord, I would trust Thee completely; I would be altogether Thine; I would exalt Thee above all. I desire that I may feel no sense of possessing anything outside of Thee. I

want constantly to be aware of Thine overshadowing Presence and to hear Thy speaking Voice. I long to live in restful sincerity of heart. I want to live so fully in the Spirit that all my thought may be as sweet incense ascending to Thee and every act of my life may be an act of worship. Therefore I pray in the words of Thy great servant of old, "I beseech Thee so far to cleanse the intent of mine heart with the

unspeakable gift of Thy grace, that I may perfectly love Thee and worthily praise Thee." And all this I confidently believe Thou wilt grant me through the merits of Jesus Christ Thy Son. Amen.

Excerpted from *The Pursuit of God*, © 1948 (expired) Christian Publications.

A.W. Tozer was called "a 20th-century prophet" even during his lifetime. For thirty-one years he was pastor of Southside Alliance Church in Chicago. Concurrently he became editor of Alliance Life, a responsibility he fulfilled until his death in 1963. Perhaps his greatest legacy to the world has been his thirty books.

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