

# **Get a Life**

## **Winning Choices for Working People**

### **By Paul Valler (IVP 2008)**

What I liked about the book was it was broken into small chapters, with questions to challenge and consider, and it was practical with real examples – and my learning style is activist/pragmatist!

Paul Valler introduces the topic of work/life integration by asking how much our choices are consistent with our identity and our purposes and suggests that to enjoy an integrated life requires applying our belief system (a set of values and principles) to our personal work-life world.

#### ***Are we 'practising polytheists'?***

We need to watch that our priorities have not become like little 'gods' – "we are under the tyranny of too many priorities, gods which will not share our devotion with other gods, gods who demand all of us. We worship one god in one situation and another god in another situation... Our lives become oriented around whatever and whoever we value most – whatever we choose to worship... Making the right choices depends on being clear about our values. To develop authenticity and integrity (consistently living our values) we must develop clarity and conviction." (pp24-5)

#### ***Some key truths in the book which spoke to me***

- Our self-worth and acceptance are ultimately found in who we are as God's children – not by what we do.
- If our identity is rooted in Christ instead of our role, change becomes less threatening.
- If we fear rejection, we put the approval of others above the approval of God.
- Integrating work and life means smashing the sacred / secular divide in our lives and seeing the reality of Colossians 3:23 "*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord...*" There is no sacred / secular divide in the kingdom of God.
- We discover our role in life through our relationship to others. Workplace relationships are based on getting the job done, but relationships in the body of Christ are based on a common identity in Christ.
- Work culture is performance based whilst Christian culture is grace based.
- It is possible to live by a different set of values in an alien environment without alienating everyone around you. The challenge is authenticity and credibility.
- Forgiveness is not easy, but it is key to our mental and emotional health and important to maintaining our freedom to contribute positively to those around us.
- As our involvement with the world intensifies, so our engagement with God must also intensify.
- Those whose lives are controlled by wealth are in just as much bondage as those who are in debt.
- The agricultural model of growth: things produce fruit when they are cared for properly. Just like us!
- The expectations we put on ourselves are often way beyond what makes sense, yet we find it difficult to step off the treadmill.
- Missing a quiet time is not a punishable offence, but a missed opportunity.

- The man or woman who is 'joyously surrendered' to Christ cannot make a wrong choice – any choice will be the right one. (A W Tozer)
- Instead of giving us an index to every possibility in work and life God gives us principles in his Word, and an interpreter, in the Holy Spirit.
- Our calling is usually consistent with a sense of passion. Developing our personal mission is one of the most powerful ways to bring work and life into alignment, into an integrated whole in the context of God's mission on earth.
- God seems to specialise in using people who feel weak.
- For the Christian, the summit is not 'self-actualisation' (Maslow's hierarchy of needs), but service – service for God and service to others.
- Prayer is followed by power to do God's work, power is followed by persecution, and persecution is followed by perseverance... and victory!
- Loving God involves all our work and life with no hidden compartments.

***What can we do?***

- Find and create ways to be regularly connected to other Christians – to strengthen our faith and impact. Attend networking evenings (e.g. CAFE), workplace fellowships or find a prayer partner who understands your work environment.
- Identify opportunities to connect with God – seasonally, weekly, daily and moment-by-moment.
- Read the book for yourselves!

"The Lord will fulfil his purpose for me." (Psalm 138:8)

Jackie Nelson, Director of CAFE (May 2008)