

God at Work

Living every day with purpose

By Ken Costa (Continuum 2007)

Ken introduces the book suggesting that "there is a widespread view that God and business simply don't mix: the competitive, cut-throat demands of the marketplace are seen as the obvious enemy of Christian compassion and love." However his own view is that if the Christian faith is not relevant in the workplace it is not relevant at all! He gives us a glimpse of his testimony and his struggle as to whether God would be in charge of all his life or only some part of it – a "joint venture", "partnership", "50-50 arrangement". He prayed that God would take 51% of his life – control but not whole ownership! I can certainly relate to that.

Even as an investment banker he has had doubts about the market economy, about the unfairness of the world, about the need to operate within a wider moral context which sees all human beings and the world's resources as valuable, precisely because they matter to God. "Without a value-based architecture, the market economy is weak in its foundations." (p6).

Is God a 24/7 Creator or a withdrawn actor confined to a Sunday show with a declining audience?!

Some key truths in the book which spoke to me

- Reading the bible, praying and talking to friends are all helpful but there is no 'click here' answer to the many dilemmas we all face at work each day.
- He describes our walk at work as being like on the narrow ledge of a sand dune – "all the time leaning towards the light and away from the shadow."
- Knowing we are placed in the world not by random accident but by God's design carries us through the difficult days.
- 'Joy at work gives people the freedom to use their talents and skills for the benefit of society without being crushed or controlled by others' (Dennis Bakke)
- True security can only be found in God's promises of security, both now and after death.
- Love is central to our faith and we are to be known by our love therefore we can't exclude it from our workplaces.
- My workstation is my worship station! Work is a ministry, empowered by God, for the benefit of others, and ultimately for his glory.
- We need to rid ourselves of the view that there is a religious pecking order in God's sight where bishops rank ahead of bankers.
- We need to live according to our Christian values in every aspect of our lives.
- Our prime task at work is not to be evangelists. That is not what we are employed to do. But we should be ready to answer people's questions, be ready to pray with or for them...
- When our ambition becomes divorced from the context or extending God's kingdom it risks destroying us. Our career can easily become an end in itself if we lose sight of its real purpose. Workaholism can become as acute an addiction as any recreational substance.
- Our aim is to be significant at every stage of our working lives.
- Remember the seed that falls among thorns – this is so often what happens to the Christian at work. Stress can be a totally overwhelming, choking almost drowning experience. (The chapter on stress gives seven biblical strategies to keep stress in check.)

- As we work in partnership with God, drawing his values into the world, we are called to lay down our lives, identifying with Jesus on the cross and sharing in the same resurrection power.
- Although we may feel inadequate and incomplete personally or spiritually, when we act together God uses us to be agents of hope in the world.

Our challenge!

"If we are to see our society truly transformed and our nation turned to God, it will only come about when people at work rise to this vision." (p192) "The missionary effect of Christians at work living authentic lives, weak yet empowered by the Holy Spirit, vulnerable yet strengthened by God, anxious yet filled with peace, could, through a new outpouring of God's spirit, become the greatest evangelistic movement of our age."(p193)

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord,
not for human masters." (Colossians 3:23)

Jackie Nelson, Director of CAFE (May 2008)