



Marketplace Moments

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Bibliophoria

Courage and Calling

Embracing your God given potential

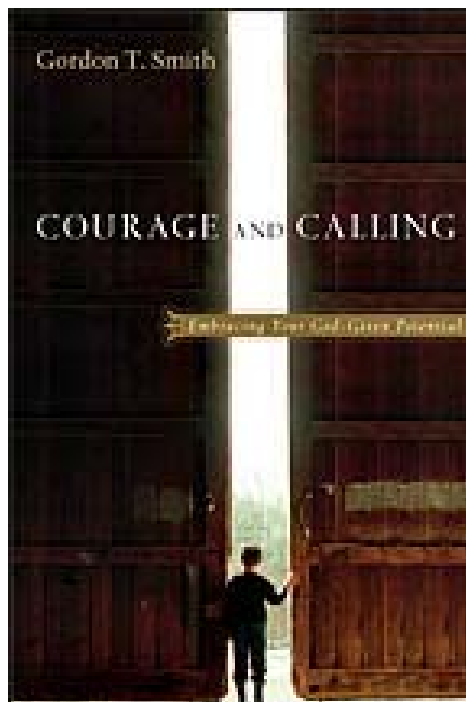
By Gordon T. Smith

There is a crisis in our churches today. It is a crisis, writes Gordon of a lack of understanding of three very important theology; work, vocation and identity.

The book emerges through a series of notes as a missionary in the Philippines and later as a academic dean of Regent College, of Christians and students who struggle to make sense of their work, calling and self.

Courage and calling is about answering the most pertinent existential questions as Christians; what is my calling? How do I live it out in the midst of difficult relationships or moral challenges? Will my vocation change as I enter a new stage of life? As I cope with competing needs and demands, how can I craft a balanced, ordered way of living? Where do I find the courage to follow God's call? *(From back cover).*

Many of us grew up with the notion that calling is limited within the confines of pastors, missionaries and staff work. However, the word 'vocation' has its root in Latin meaning 'to have a calling'. Gordon writes "...the way forward is through conscious reflection on what it



means to have a *vacation*. Reflections based on a good theology of work, vocation and self.'

For those who are starting out in the workplace (clergy or laity alike), for young and the old, this book gives us a glimpse of God's gracious call in our lives to fulfill His purpose.

At the end of the day, it is neither sacred or secular work, soul work or manual work that matters. It is about how we are faithful to His calling. Upon that premise, whatever we do afterwards, becomes sacred and holy.

By Timothy Liu

Highlights

- Courage and Calling
- All the King's Men
- Works of Praise
- What is a fair wage?
- Events Update

Eyes in a Darkened Room

All the King's Men

Lord Acton, his over quoted phrase states that "Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely!" It still rings true after generations of politics and authority, highlighted here in this movie.

Based on Robert Penn Warren's Pulitzer Prize winning and best-selling 1946 novel, *All the King's men* is a fictionalized account of Louisiana's colorful state governor (1928-32) and Democratic US Senator (1932-35), notorious Huey Pierce Long—"The King-fish" played by Sean Penn.

The story portrays a young and idealistic whose initial passion was to fight corruption in his county. He began a popular campaign that wielded power to get himself elected and documents his slow but sure slide through the eyes of an admiring journalist, played by Jude Law.

The synopsis at the website writes, "All the King's men is a complex saga of human nature, power, corruption, idealism, romance and betrayal. Using politics as a framework to delve into the



more profound dilemmas of human existence—sin, guilt and redemption, it explores the nature of corruption in a way that is timely and relevant today."

Backed by a strong cast also starring Anthony Hopkins and Kate Winslet, the story also tells of that fine line between corruption and immorality. As we consider the story, the difference is that corruption can be both immoral and illegal. Corruption may also be le-

gal but immoral.

The temptation for corruption usually comes in the form when one does it because one can rather than one should, as in the case of Huey.

The other side of the coin is also to note that it seems to Huey the ends somehow justifies the means. Corruption, it seems, doesn't requires effort as one seems to just slide into it. The warning for those of us in the workplace is to realize that it needs a conscious effort to fight our own fallen nature.

No matter how noble our causes may seem, we have our own blind spots and we need to find the humility from our Savior God to keep us from falling too deep.

Questions for reflection:

- 1) Observe and describe the process of Huey's downfall.
- 2) Discuss what factors might have contributed to his slide from nobility to corruption.
- 3) How can Christians help each other, whether in politics, church or at the workplace be accountable?

By Timothy Liu

Of the Heart and Mind

Works of Praise

The example of a godly women is oft quoted in Proverbs 31. She has no name. Her diligence puts many men to shame. Her managerial skills and entrepreneurship is beyond her time. She is a working mother running a property,

linen and clothing and agricultural business and managing her family.

Towards the end she was praised for her love of God and her work (Pr 31:30,31). At times as a man, I wonder what the husband is for? Rather than just an example for women, she is an example of

a devoted and full life amidst the ordinary and mundane to all. It is the quality of 'surpassing' v29 and finding joy in all she does v25 that I believe sets her apart.

To all mothers working, paid or unpaid,

HAPPY MOTHERS DAY

Of the Heart and Mind

What is a fair wage?

It is headline news all over Singapore for a whole week: civil service pay rise. The debate or contention was not that we should pay civil servants fairly but more of how 'fairness' (or in contemporary term 'benchmarking') is being measured. Even more, to pay sufficiently to retain or attract 'good' political leaders to move Singapore forward.

It is of importance for Singaporeans to understand the underlying world-view in which the foundation of our society is built on. The various approach to the debate or formulation of arguments reveals the underlying assumption of those who proposes it. Many of such must meet altruism with the hard realities of a secular society.

Even more for Christians, we need to evaluate these assumptions based on the biblical perspective. This is of particular challenge for those of us who are proponents of marketplace ministries to ask of ourselves, what makes a fair wage? This of course does not limit to pay of civil service but also jobs performed by ordinary folks and migrant workers amongst us. From where does the Holy Scriptures give us guidance on such practical matters?

Question for those of us in the faith is, "Are most arguments presented for justification of pay from CEOs to ministers reasonable based on Christian

teaching?" "Is it possible that market rates are skewed to pander to the rich and exploit the poor?" "Is free economy a fair system?"

These are NOT meant to be a rhetorical question but to be genuinely explored because many Christians assumes them without considering them in depth.

Paul writes in Timothy 5:18, For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages."

One perspective in the parliamentary debate takes in the average income of Singaporean and that ministers earn in half a day what they earn in a month. Is that a good measure? Another speaks of comparing pays with ministers of first world countries.

Yet another which I would like to bring, goes beyond the local scene to a global one, (after all Singapore is a global city) through the eyes of World Bank data on the issue of poverty.

- Each year, more than 8 million people around the world die because they are too poor to stay alive.
- Over 1 billion people—1 in 6 people around the world—live in extreme poverty, defined as living on less than US\$1 a day.
- More than 800 million go hungry each day.
- Over 100 million primary school-age children cannot go to school.



(World Bank data from Times, March 14, 2005)

How do you feel about your pay now? Or even for those of us who are students who receive pocket money, "How much is enough?"

There is little wonder why God has to elaborate about 'Covetousness' in the ten commandments. ^{EX 20:17} "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." I believe it also includes 'your neighbor's paycheck.'

I learnt a lesson recently as I received a sizeable (in my perspective but may be peanuts to some people) commission for a sale that I have done. But I thought to

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Marketplace Christian Network

Teban Garden Post Office
PO Box 669
Singapore 916003

Phone: +65 6872 4732
Email: info@marketplacechristian.net
Web-site:
▶ www.marketplacechristian.net

Kingdom Building at the Workplace

Coming Events

Intelligent Design—Science and Faith

May 24 (Thu) – Open Forum
7:30pm St. Andrews Cathedral

May 25 (Fri) – Public Meeting
Darwinism and Intelligent Design
7:30pm St. Andrews Cathedral

For more information check our web-site.



myself, 'it could have been 4 times if the budget wasn't cut'. That was plain, outright coveting. The Spirit was kind to remind me to have a thankful and content heart.

The Spirit reminded me 'Matt 6:33 – But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.' 'These things' refers to what we will eat and what we will wear. And I don't think God was referring to Buddha jump over the wall, abalone, caviar type of food and Prada or Armani apparels.

Coveting is a relative thing as much as perhaps 'fair wage' is. Consider John the Baptist advice to the crowd, tax collectors and soldiers in Luke 3:10-14 "What should we do then?" the crowd asked. ^{LK 3:11} John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the

same." ^{LK 3:12} Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

^{LK 3:13} "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.

^{LK 3:14} Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely--be content with your pay."

It is interesting to note that at point of repentance and baptism, critical point when one enters the kingdom of God, the advice from John the Baptist was not to pray more, have quiet time or go to church. It was a very real and practical step in which we share with those who are in need around us, to not abuse authority given to us and be content with our pay.

What then should the Christians do? I believe we need to first evaluate amongst ourselves, at office groups, at our home/cell groups about Biblical teaching on

the issue. As God's representative, we need to redeem the call to have 'dominion over the earth' by making the marketplace a fairer or more just environment. We can start at home with our domestic helpers, old uncles and aunties who are barely making ends meeting working at food courts, public areas as cleaners, migrant manual laborers etc.

In our focus on discussing the top earners, let us not forget those who live among us who are at the bottom of the social strata. Let me leave with the words of James 1:27, 'Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.'

True faith produces good works and good works are the evidence of true faith.

By Timothy Liu