



Marketplace Moments

Bibliophoria

Where's GOD on Monday?

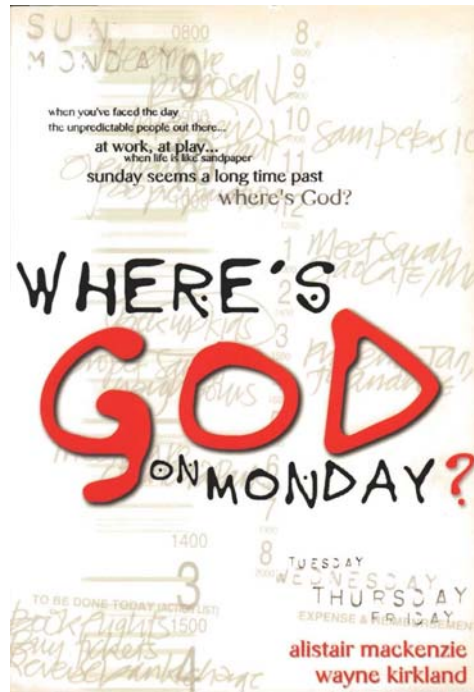
Alistair Mackenzie & Wayne Kirkland

Some might call it unholy partnership. What has a car dealer has to do with a pastor? One profession has unfortunately through crude jokes and sometimes bad experiences of car buyers, been associated with cheating, lying and not so honest dealings with customers. Probably the tax collectors of our days. Wonder if in biblical times they had similar impressions of carriage and bull carts dealers? I also wonder if Jesus made any carts or carriages? The other is highly esteemed in the Christian community, the model of righteous living, honesty and integrity. Some have wrongly drawn a parallel between them and ask, "What has God to do with money?"

It is precisely such a combination of both a shepherd's heart for Christians to live out God's purpose in the fallen world and one who is in the world but not of it that differentiates this book from the rest.

This book succinctly deals with the sacred secular divide in the Christian mind and a solid biblical theology of vocation, work and ministry. It has many real life examples and experiences.

On practicing the presence of God, *'We all find it easy to see God at work in miraculous events, but not in everyday ones. As a result we end up with a much reduced vision of God and His work. And sadly, also a very limited vision of the sig-*



nificance of our own daily work. We fail to see it through God's eyes.'

This book is great for small group studies in churches and with office groups. What I like is that each chapter is short and very readable. There are also 'Questions to consider' at the back of each chapter to allow for group discussions. What I am also impressed is the last chapter where Wayne shares his testimony with the 'Confessions of a car dealer'. I believe he puts it candidly and in a very integrative way of chapters before as an example of how we too can begin to not only think, but also to live an integral life with family, work and ministry without the dichotomy of the sacred and secular.

By Timothy Liu

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Of the Heart and Mind

Walking Alongside

It is from a series on the early church produced by Focus on the Family that our small group at church is now embarking on a study journey. Bible teacher in the video series is Ray Vander Laan. At the very beginning, it speaks of the relationship that Jesus the rabbi has with his disciples (talmidim). This is in stark contrast to the Greek or the present day understanding of discipleship.

Rather than knowing the knowledge of the teacher like the Greek, the Hebrew understanding of a talmidim was to be like the teacher, doing what the teacher does and living as he lives. A rabbi is a model which the disciples imitate as they live day in and day out. Contrast to our concept of discipleship, consisting mainly of bible studies, fellowship and prayers.

In large congregations, how many of us really know our pastors intimately. Most contacts are exchanges of pleasantries without much else during the week. This is by no means a criticism of pastors but a reality of modern life and the nature of a pastor's work. Our learning is more cerebral and informational than modeled. The irony that you are reading these words without actually knowing perhaps who I am as a person.

A Greek educational system essentially builds an individual to think critically, hold his own arguments. In contrast, a rabbi builds a biblical community that carries the values and principles in

daily and communal living. This is a reflection of our creator God (who is community), who made us in His image for community. This is particularly needed in the days perusing the persecution of the 1st century church and as much needed today for biblical communities.

The Greeks prefer to dwell on philosophical concepts in vacuum, most of the time, apart from the realities of this world. Their focus is on the primal form which all realities are but imperfect shadows. This is typified in the allegory of the bounded cave man. But the rabbi (particularly Jesus) did not merely teach the law but also fulfilled the law in the sense of interpreting the laws within the realities of daily life. Contrast this with our Sunday School or Adult CE classes which we learn much of the fundamental tenets of reformed faith such as justification by faith, perseverance of the saint and scarcely find them helpful in their relation to daily life.

But these basic doctrines of the Christian faith does have a bearing on daily life. It is because we have a very Greek perspective in our approach to knowledge and the bible, the doctrines we learnt stays at an intellectual level. We see Jesus interpret and integrate His teachings, illustrate them with word pictures.

Harold Best in his book *unceasing worship* writes, "To say, "This is what I am integrating with my faith at work and at home," then take this to church for fur-



ther testing, is just as important (perhaps more so) than to say, "Here's what I learned in church, and I wonder how it applies when I get home and back to work."

It is hard to find many who are integrating well their faith and their work or family life. Busyness, stress and information overload leaves us gasping much less time for reflections. It is therefore, even more critical that we build biblical communities of believers, in church and parachurch, to once again experience what it means to be a 'talmidim' of Christ. We can learn to bridge the gap through

- 1) Living biblically and spurring to model each other.
- 2) Building of authentic communities where we can be our true selves.
- 3) Challenging each other to fulfill the law in the sense of working out biblical truths in the reality of workplace and life challenges.
- 4) Work out our integrative and biblical framework within the context of our real life situations.

It is only through walking alongside each other authentically that we can once again restore the biblical reality of discipleship.

Timothy Liu

Eyes in a Darkened Room

Iron Man

Old time Marvel Comics fans like myself feel that we have died and gone to heaven, celluloid heaven that is. I picked up my first comic books in the 60's. They cost Malaysian 40 sens (list price US 12 cents) then. Yes, it was that long ago. Now we get to see our favourite comic book characters on screen, played by some of the leading actors and actresses of the day, backed up by state of the art CGI. Not all the recent super hero movies work though. Spider Man 2 still gets my vote for being the best of the recent crop. Iron Man (2008) comes close.

The Iron Man character first appeared in the comic, Tales of Suspense, in 1963. It was at the height of the Cold War and our hero Tony Stark (a.k.a. Iron Man), experiences his near death, life changing experience in Vietnam. In the movie, the setting has been updated to Afghanistan. But by and large the movie is true to the spirit of that first Iron Man story.

The best movies both entertain and inspire. Iron Man does both. Unfortunately, the obvious message is still --- human bravery and



intelligence, plus superior technology, wins the day. In the movie, the Stark character is sickened by war and wants to give up arms manufacturing. But when Iron Man dukes it out with Iron Monger, his main adversary, it is Stark's superior technology, and his bravery and ability to think on his feet, that gets him the victory. I wonder how many wars are started, and continued, on the basis of this faith in heroism and killing technology.

Still, the movie does portray sacrifice, and not power, as the most potent human force. In the movie, the captured Stark has a partner, another captive named Dr. Yinsen. (He is Chinese in the comic books, an Afghan, in the movie.) Dr. Yinsen saves Stark's life twice. First he builds a contraption that prevents shrapnel from entering Stark's heart. And when Stark and Yinsen are ordered to build a super weapon for the terrorists, Yinsen helps Stark create the first Iron Man suit. As they are powering up the suit in their bid to escape, the terrorists break in. All would have been lost. But Yinsen buys critical time for Stark by intimidating the oncoming terrorists, firing a machine gun in the air. (That he chooses not to shoot at his opponents is consistent with his peace loving convictions.) He gets killed in the process.

Yinsen pays the ultimate price. He



dies so that Stark, and Iron Man, can live. In his dialogue with Stark as he lay dying, we learn that Yinsen expected that this would happen and had made up his mind to pay the ultimate price long before the actual moment when he had to do so.

Tony Stark: We gotta go. Come on, move with me. We got a plan, and we're going to stick to it.

Yinsen: This was always the plan, Stark.

It appears that even the movies realise that Gethsemane comes before Golgotha. And that death gives birth to life. Even in popular culture we see the shadow of the Cross, and the truth of Jesus' words.

[Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Those who love their life will lose it, while those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:24-25 TNIV)]

[Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. (John 15:13 TNIV)]

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Kingdom Building at the Workplace

Coming Events

For more information check our web-site.

22 May – A Theology of Science
By Engr & Sci CF (ESCF) 7:30pm

30 Jul – Crossings (Transition for school to work)
By MCN. 7:30pm

Above Events at 420 North Bridge Road, #05-04
Graduates' Christian Fellowship Office.

8-10 Aug – Intersect 08
Everyday Spirituality in a
Fallen World
Austin Hills Golf Resort,
Johore Bahru

19 Sep – GCF Annual Dinner
Christian Disciplines in Times of
Economic Challenges
NUSS Kent Ridge Guild House



Not all of us may have the bravery or the scientific genius of a Tony Stark. But all of us can sacrificially give of ourselves to help others. Few may have to give themselves in one dramatic act of sacrifice. Many of us are called to daily sacrifices, the small dyings to self that result in life for others.

I am constantly aware that I am who I am today because many have sacrificed to nurture me and help me along the way. I think of my parents, middle class civil servants who consistently denied

themselves of the good things in life so that they could raise me and put me through university. I think of the many good friends who stood by me in my darkest moments and were maligned for doing so. I think of the many who faithfully contributed money to my family and my ministry when I was all alone, and who continue to do so. And I think of Jesus, dying for me on the Cross.

Which leads me to another line from Iron Man that stayed with me, Yinsen's last words to Stark before he died.

Yinsen: [to Stark] Don't waste your life.

In a world hypnotised by consumerism, we think that life is about getting. In truth life is about giving. We are sustained by the sacrificial love of God. And called to be a conduit of that love for others. This is "life that is truly life (1Timothy 6:19b TNIV)." And if watching Iron Man reminds us of this, it would have been worth the price of admission and much more.

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