

In the first story of this session, we met David Green, the CEO of Hobby Lobby. In talking about his family, he said that his father was a minister and that *all five* of his siblings went into some sort of full-time ministry. But not David. He started working in retail when he was in high school, and loved it. It's pretty clear that God wired David for business. But David also said, "*After I got into retail, I really felt like a second class citizen.*"

**Have you ever felt like David? Do you think that people who go into full-time Christian ministry, like pastors and missionaries, are in a "class above" people who go into the marketplace? What has the church done to either promote or dispel this view?**

God has blessed David Green and Hobby Lobby with incredible success. David said that he is intentional about honoring God with his business. One decision he made was to not open his stores on Sundays. **How do you feel about Christian companies who remain closed on Sunday? Do you think that decision has anything to do with the level of success Hobby Lobby has experienced? In what other ways can a company publicly honor God?**

In this story, one of Hobby Lobby's housekeepers is quoted as saying, "*I clean restrooms and I clean floors to help David Green spread the gospel worldwide.*" This housekeeper has both humility and purpose. We can't all be the CEO; some of us clean floors.

**Take a moment to think about your job. Do you have a clearly-defined purpose for your work? What can we learn from this housekeeper?**

David concluded his interview by saying, "*We do not own this company, we are the stewards. God has given us the responsibility to be good stewards, and that we want to do.*" Stewardship is one of those words that most of us only talk about during capital campaigns at church. And while being generous to your local church is important, there is so much more to being a steward of what God has entrusted to you than simply writing a check.

Someone read **Matthew 25:14–18**.

Jesus told this parable in response to his disciples asking about the end of times and when He would return (in Matthew 24). One of the main points of this parable is the eternal significance of present faithfulness.

**What did the servants do with what the master had given to them?**

Someone read **Matthew 25:19–23**.

The master's reply in verses 21 and 23 are identical. He refers to both the five and two talents that he initially gave as "a *few* things," compared to the "*many* things" to come. Because of their faithfulness, the future responsibilities of both servants will far outweigh this initial task. You can almost hear the master saying, "Boy, if you thought that was a lot of money, just wait until you see what I'm going to have you manage next!" The floor cleaner will become the CEO.

**How is God calling you to be faithful—right now—with whatever He's entrusted to you?**

Someone read **Matthew 25:24–30**.

The third servant simply returns to the master what was originally given to him. **Do you think his punishment was too severe? Why or why not? What do you think the third servant's outcome says about the importance God places on faithful stewardship?**

What does this parable really teach about stewardship? Is Jesus just teaching us about how we are to invest our money? If you read the parable at face value, the master rewards the first two servants for wisely investing his money, which they double. Consequently, this parable is often used to encourage people to give more money to the church. But is that the message of this parable? Again, giving to the church is good (2 Corinthians 8:1–15), but notice that not one of the servants says to the master, "Master, I took 70 percent of what you gave me and invested it in large cap stocks, which netted a 102 percent return, and then I gave the other 30 percent away to remodel the church."

What if stewardship means being faithful with *all* God has entrusted to you on this earth—including your money, abilities, passion and time—to bring the maximum return for His glory and for His kingdom? That includes being generous at church, but it also might mean investing in a business that will reap eternal rewards far beyond your wildest imagination.

Imagine for a moment if David Green had taken all the money he used to begin manufacturing small frames in his garage, and instead, left it in an offering plate.

**Would that have been the best investment of what God had given him at that time?**

We need to be careful and not use this as an excuse to be stingy with our church. Honoring God through generous giving has always been part of David Green's philosophy, even before he was in a position of wealth and ownership. But because of the success of Hobby Lobby and his other business ventures, he's been able to give away millions of dollars to the church and to other charities. He frequently purchases buildings and donates them to be used as churches or for other Christian ministry. And he has pledged to give away the majority of his fortune. But he couldn't have done any of this if he had remained a store manager.

**How might God be calling you to be a faithful steward?**

In the interview with Norm Miller, Chairman of Interstate Batteries, he talked about the early years of the company and the intentional decision they made to lift up Christ in their business. Norm was very aware what that decision could cost him. He said, "*We could lose some employees, we could get someone mad, we could get sued. We could lose some customers; we could lose the whole business. We have to think this out... how far are we going to go here.*" The climate in corporate America has not changed. Many companies discourage their employees from talking about their faith at the workplace.

**What obstacles prevent or discourage you from sharing your faith at work?**

As Norm prayed about lifting Christ up at Interstate Batteries, he came across Matthew 10:28, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be

afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” As a result, Norm asked for “perfect boldness and perfect sensitivity” in honoring God through his business.

### **How do you be both bold and sensitive when sharing Christ at work?**

Some people will be offended by the gospel message no matter how sensitive you are. **Has your fear of what others might think about you caused you to be silent about your faith?**

Someone read **Mark 8:34–38**.

In this passage, Jesus is fully aware that we live in a world full of people who do not believe in Him. Yet He still calls us to lose our lives for Him and for the gospel (v 35).

**What do you think Jesus meant when he said, “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels”?**

One theme Norm mentioned several times is prayer—praying for wisdom, praying before meals, praying for the convention, daily prayer meetings, etc.

**Do you pray about work? What kinds of things do you pray about in relation to your career? How about for those you work with?**

Someone read **1 Thessalonians 5:16–18**.

These verses list three things that are part of God’s will for every believer—joy, prayer, and thankfulness. **Considering how much time we spend at work, how do you apply these verses to your career?**

As you seek to be bold and sensitive in honoring God at work, people will know that you are a Christian. As Christians, we are God's ambassadors—His representatives—on earth. Norm said, *"If you hang God's name on this business, then you have to be excellent."*

Someone read **Exodus 25:8–9**.

Most of the last 16 chapters in Exodus deal with the tabernacle. In these verses, God tells Moses that they are to build the tabernacle *exactly* as He instructs.

Scan **Exodus 25:10 to Exodus 28:43**. Here, God gives the specific directions for how He wants the tabernacle and all the things that go along with it to be built.

Scan **Exodus 35:30 to Exodus 39:31**. God supernaturally empowers Bezalel and Oholiab with skill, ability, and knowledge, and they lead the effort to build all that God has commanded. Then at the end of chapter 39, Moses inspects their work.

Someone read **Exodus 39:42–43**.

**What was Moses' conclusion? What did Moses do to the people?**

Then in **Exodus 40:1–33**, the children of Israel set the tabernacle up. Someone read **Exodus 40:34–38**.

**What filled the tabernacle? Imagine being there when that happened.**

These craftsmen were constructing a dwelling for All Mighty God. Do you think they did their jobs with excellence? Their work passed Moses' inspection, and it passed God's as well.

Someone read **1 Corinthians 3:16**.

Remember that as a Christian, your body is now God's dwelling place—the Holy Spirit lives in you. Shouldn't our lives—who we are, what we do and how we do it—be excellent?

**How well do you represent God? What does it mean to demonstrate excellence at work?**

Norm talked about the “maximum utility of your assets.” How can you best use what God has given to you to lift up Christ in the marketplace? One of the ways Norm did this was by creating the love commercial. Think about the last time you watched television and the commercials you saw. Chances are, none of the commercials were anything like Interstate’s love commercial. Talk about thinking outside the box!

**What are some radical ways you and your company might use your assets to promote Christ?**

Interstate’s love commercial was a huge hit. Lots of people said they’d never buy another brand of battery because of that commercial. Norm’s sincere intention with the commercial was to honor God. He originally intended to run the commercial without including Interstate’s name. It was not a ploy to create additional revenue.

**How do you keep your motives pure in business? Is there tension between wanting to honor God and also wanting to be profitable?**

The last story we watched was of Betenbough Home Builders. The President and Co-founder, Rick Betenbough, said that they wanted to honor the biblical principle of giving first fruits to the Lord.

Someone read **Proverbs 3:9–10**.

The children of Israel saw the firstborn of the flocks and the first product of their fields and vineyards as belonging to God. They even had an annual celebration where they brought these as offerings to the Lord.

Think about this principle for a moment. **What is the significance of giving to God out of what comes first? What’s wrong with giving God what’s left over after all the bills are paid?**

The people at Betenbough love to be generous. Some years, they give away as much as 82 percent of their annual net profits. Sometimes we get hung up on how much we should give away—what’s the right percentage? More than a percentage, we’ve been called to have an attitude of generosity.

Someone read **2 Corinthians 9:6–8**.

**What principles of giving do you see in this text?** (1. There's a correlation between what you give and what you get back. That does not necessarily mean that what you get back comes in the same form as what you gave. 2. Giving is something each individual decides before God. 3. Our attitude should be that of joy, thankfulness, and gladness. We aren't supposed to give begrudgingly or because we feel like our arm is being twisted. 4. God will take care of us. 5. God will supply the means for the good works He wants us to accomplish.)

But being generous isn't just about money. **How can you be generous with all the resources God has entrusted to you?** (Take some time to think outside the box. If you own a corporation, what does it look like to be generous with your employees? How could you encourage them to generously give of their time and resources? How can you be generous with your time? Your talent? Your facility? Your product?)

Rick ended their interview by saying, *"Full-time ministry is right here in the marketplace. Everybody has to go to work—you don't have to go to church, you don't have to go to small groups—but you do have to go to work and make a living, and the marketplace is where you spend most of your time. Just take the first step: commit your relationship in the marketplace to Christ."*

It's time we all started seeing our careers as a calling to full-time ministry. You might not be the kind of missionary who moves to the far regions of Africa. But around the conference table, around the water cooler, or around the cubicle, you have an opportunity to worship the God who created you.

**What's your first step?**