Identity

Reflection by Murray Harvey

You've all been there. You are at a social gathering and you meet someone you don’t know and you strike up a harmless conversation that generally begins with . . .

“So what do you do…?”

A harmless question, and yet one that unveils a lot about how we view ourselves and how we view others. A question of identity. Having been involved in supporting people into employment for the past 13 years, I see how work can become a person's identity, and sadly I have seen it many times in my own life and it continues to be a shadow that creeps into and of which I need to be wary.

Yet, what we ‘do’ is important. We were made to work (God put Adam to work pretty quickly in Genesis 2:15), God has given us all different gifts to use (Romans 12:6) and He has called us to use them to serve others (1 Peter 4:10). Besides this, we spend a lot of time there. . . for many people it’s 5-7 days, 48 weeks or more per year for about 2/3 of our lifetime. What we do IS important.

But what we do is not our identity. It’s not who we are.

If who I am = what I do,
We have a problem.

If what I do = what I am worth,

We have a problem.

Because if what I do is who I am, and how much I am worth, my work becomes my identity and my self-esteem.

This is why Sabbath is such a gift. Not just for the rest from our work and a chance to be revitalized for the week ahead, but as a reminder that our work does not define us.

We stop.

We remember that work does not own us. God does.

We remember that work does not determine our value. God does.

We remember that what we produce, and how much we produce does not determine the fruit our life bears. God does.

Make no mistake. What we do is important. It is important because the gifts God gives us can point others to God. The artist, the song writer, the tax agent, the engineer, the receptionist, the pastor . . all are a calling that can show others who God is. Often this can also be so due to the way we go about our work rather than the work itself . ..but it does not define us.

God does.

Recalibrate

When you reflect on your own life, have you ever drawn your identity and self worth from your work?

If you are new into choosing your career or are looking to change career, is your choice determined by how others value that work, or by how you can reflect God in that work?

The next time you are asked ‘So what do you do?’ how will you answer?

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