

**WORK WITH PURPOSE - OPERATING PRIVATE LAW FIRMS WELL FOR
GREATER KINGDOME GOOD**

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Description: All work matters to God, not just the work of occupational pastors and non-profit ministries. We are all called to fulfill a higher purpose through our professional lives, which includes running our businesses well. Come learn Biblical principles and practical tips for operating a private law firm with good business and employment principles to create a successful and God-honoring environment. Hear two private firms' stories of creative ways they pursue the two greatest commandments - to love God and to love and serve others - without being a non-profit ministry or Christian Legal Aid Clinic.

I. INTRODUCTION – GOD’S VIEW OF WORK

A. We are all called by God to a greater purpose through our work.

- i.** While we may not be preachers, we are called to tell the story of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- ii.** While we may not be a pastor, we are commissioned to share the love of God with those around us.
- iii.** Though God did not call us into occupational church ministry, He has certainly called us to be ministers of His Grace.

B. God created Work, and it is Good.

- i.** Colossians 3:23-24 “²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human leaders, ²⁴ since you know that if you do you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Jesus you are serving.”
- ii.** Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 “¹⁸ *This is the one good thing I’ve seen: it’s appropriate for people to eat, to drink, and to find enjoyment in all their hard work under the sun during the brief lifetime that God gives them because that’s their lot in life.* ¹⁹ *...to accept their place in the world^[a] and to find pleasure in their hard work—all this is a gift from God.*”

C. Common misconceptions among Christians about work:

- i. “Work is a curse, not a gift.” Before the fall of man that allowed sin into the world, God instructed man to work and care for the garden. After the fall God only cursed the ground and made work harder.
- ii. “Work has no intrinsic value beyond paycheck.” Ephesians 2:10 teaches, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.”
- iii. “Religious workers have higher calling and purpose.” The first person ever recorded in scripture as being “filled with the Spirit of God” was not a prophet or a worker in the Temple, it was a craftsman.
- iv. Exodus 31 – story of Bezalel “The LORD spoke to Moses: Look, I have chosen Bezalel, Uri’s son and Hur’s grandson from the tribe of Judah. I have filled him with the divine spirit, with skill, ability, and knowledge for every kind of work.”

II. VOCATION AND STATIONS

A. What is Vocation?

- i. Vocation is “the ultimate purpose to which I am called.” Vocation is our collective calling to know and love God, to live in a dynamic relationship with Him, and to then love and serve others.
- ii. Matthew 22: 35-37 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Jesus replied: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*”
- iii. 1 Corinthians 7:17 “*Let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him.*”

B. What are Stations?

- i.** Stations are the roles that we fill throughout our life that allow us to fulfill our calling. Stations are how we “work out our faith”.
- ii.** Stations of life can be generally summarized into four general arenas:
 - a.** Family
 - b.** Church
 - c.** General society
 - d.** Occupation
- iii.** Our Passions and Gifts help us creatively pursue our Calling in our Stations.
 - a.** What Good and Worthy things am I deeply passionate about?”
- iv.** What am I naturally good and gifted at doing?
- v.** The intersection between our Passions and Gifts is one of the most powerful methods by which God helps us find and fulfill our Vocation.

III. STORY OF TELIOS LAW

- A.** Theresa Sidebotham personal journey, background at Court of Appeals, large law firm
- B.** How Telios Law was formed
- C.** Firm values
 - i.** Concept of “Telios”
 - ii.** Task—excellence in work
 - iii.** Truth—walking in the light
 - iv.** Taking care—of clients and of others on the team
- D.** Being a light
 - i.** In the “legal mountain” and business world
 - ii.** Dealing with dark issues in the ministry world, such as sexual harassment and child abuse

- iii. Prayer team
- iv. Approximately 10% of firm hours to pro bono work

IV. RUNNING A BUSINESS WELL

A. Great Teams

- i. Law firms are typically toxic in a variety of ways. The profession trends towards this problem because attorneys are often not good managers by personality type and often have not received training in good management. Common problems may be:
 - a. Drive-by training—throwing projects to employee with minimal instruction and letting them work things out;
 - b. Poor planning and time management, leading to a lot of stress, work done late, or low quality work;
 - c. Often levels of disrespect towards staff, either from busy attorneys or from clients (permitted by attorneys);
 - d. May be cash flow/payment problems, even sometimes leading to issues with keeping up with payroll and taxes, or even client trust fund issues; and
 - e. Current labor shortages, which mean that it is hard to get staff, and many firms have too much work.
- ii. Looking after employees well is a Kingdom value and also leads to better legal practice.
- iii. Treat people with respect and courtesy, including giving them the information they need.
- iv. Work on getting benefits in place—while this can be a challenge for a small firm, it is possible if you make it a priority. Benefits to consider can be HRA for health insurance, a Simple IRA for retirement, and fairly generous vacation/sick/parental leave.
- v. Honor financial commitments to employees, such as payroll, benefits, and bonuses—employees who are secure and happy do better work and stay

longer.

- vi.** Work on good training—while this is expensive at least in time and sometimes money, it is essential both for good quality work and to reduce stress levels. Training can be found through entities such as the state Bar or providers like LawPay. The National Institute of Trial Advocacy is the gold standard in deposition and trial training, but many Bars also have courses.
- vii.** Have project planning and time management structures in place. This means using appropriate software (Monday.com, Trello, or the legal software like Clio and others) and training on the software.
- viii.** Consider performance bonuses
 - a.** 3x salary, then 25% of what is earned;
 - b.** Or bonuses depending on if the firm meets goals, or depending on whether a person is living out firm values.
- ix.** Be available to people you are managing. Although it can be quite difficult to schedule, it is really key so that people can do their best work.
- x.** Schedule one-on-ones on a regular basis, such as weekly for people you work with closely.
- xi.** Batch questions—having staff group their questions together to be asked at a certain defined time each day can be very efficient.

B. Time Management

- i.** Balancing personal and professional time is a challenge for everyone.

Attorneys should model good balance for staff and juniors:

- a.** Work well, live well—we don't want to have an imbalance of all work or no play;
- b.** Put in place good boundaries with time, i.e. weekends—while there may be busy times and litigation emergencies, good planning can make these the exception; and

- c.** Vacations and time off for you and everyone else.
 - ii.** Working well with a team
 - iii.** Communicating and planning is essential—for complex projects, you will need team meetings.
 - iv.** Use a program like Monday.com or Trello to keep track of what everyone is doing and deadlines, and also subitems of projects.
 - v.** Concept of time blocking
 - vi.** Transition time between projects is wasted and just gets lost.
 - vii.** Interruptions to flow take 5-7 minutes to fix.
 - viii.** Being busy is not necessarily the same as being productive.
 - ix.** Production Time is a block of time scheduled to work on big projects.
 - x.** Group similar tasks and do them all at once.
 - a.** Time Template concept—lay out a template of your “ideal week,” with Production Time, time for phone calls, time for batch questions, time for client meetings, etc. This helps you plan each week.
 - xi.** Managing emails
 - xii.** Don’t constantly check emails—it leads to interruptions in your work flow.
 - xiii.** Plan to check emails in batches at certain times, or even between projects.
 - xiv.** Use rules and other systems to categorize emails to be dealt with later.
 - xv.** Plan for planning—it doesn’t happen unless time is set aside to plan on a regular basis, such as weekly. There are tools that will help. In addition to Time Templates, each week should have an overall plan of the main items you want to accomplish that week.
 - xvi.** Gantt chart dependency concept—you have to be aware in projects if there

are items that need to be finished before other items can be started.

- xvii. Atticus uses tools it calls My Great Week and My Great Day that help to plan down to a daily level. (Their planners are available online.)

C. Processes and Work Flows

- i. Do people know what to do?
 - a. Checklists and workflows around different types of projects can be very helpful.
 - b. Work on developing these. Then improve them. They don't have to be perfect at the outset, just helpful.
- ii. Adequate emphasis on training—drive-by training does not work!
- iii. Training for software that the firm uses
- iv. Training for processes on how to do things in the firm
- v. Training for substantive areas of the law that you are practicing in
- vi. Have someone do the training who is not confusing—lawyers often are.
- vii. People running the firm may need some management training, such as working with Atticus.
- viii. Onboarding process for new hires
 - a. Do you have a process for setting a person up? This should include a checklist of everything they need.
 - b. Do you have a training/onboarding program in place for new people? These can be a mix of webinar and in-person format.
- ix. Consider a password manager like Dashlane or 1Password. This can make it so easy to track passwords in the firm, and everyone who needs access to a particular password can be given it.
- x. You need processes for client intake, engagement letters, and client communications.

D. Marketing

- i.** Do people in the firm understand who is responsible for marketing?
 - a.** Do they get rewarded? Like an origination bonus?
 - b.** Have they received any training?
- ii.** Client intake process
 - a.** Is it easy to find out about your firm?
 - b.** Is the process pleasant?
 - c.** Is it prompt?
 - d.** Who is in charge of it?
 - e.** What kind of documentation do you use?
 - f.** Is the administration of client intake simple or at least comprehensible?
 - g.** Do you have good engagement letters?
 - h.** Are they easy to fill out and get back? For instance, you can use fillable PDFs and/or Adobe Sign or other automated signing programs.

E. Cash Flow and Profitability

- i.** Do clients clearly understand when and how they need to pay?
 - a.** Are there easy ways to pay, like LawPay?
 - b.** Do you use retainers where needed?
- ii.** Is the pricing of your matters right to make a decent living for everyone in the firm?
- iii.** Do you invoice promptly?
- iv.** Do invoices get created, reviewed, and distributed monthly?
- v.** Is there any prompt payment discount?

- vi. Metrics
- vii. Utilization rate—how much time is billable?
- viii. Realization rate—how much time do you invoice? If you can't invoice the time being worked, your people may need more training.
- ix. Collection rate—how much do you collect on? Ideally, you want to have a collections rate of over 95%.
- x. Billing personnel should generate at least 3x what they bill. One third of this would be allocated to their salary, one third to overhead, and one third to firm profit. If they are doing better than this, consider rewarding with a productivity bonus.
- xi. The profit margin should aim for 25%. To gain insight into how to start tracking and improving your profit, read *Profit First* by Mike Michalowicz.

V. STORY OF MSB LAW

A. Andrew Speicher personal journey, and formation of MSB Law

B. Integrating Faith and work at MSB Law

- i. MSB Law corporate Operating Agreement and Core Principles
 - a. All choices under Matthew 6:33
 - b. Self-interest subjected to Philippians 2:3
 - c. Stewardship - Proper perspective on money and earning profit
 - d. Purity and Integrity in everything
 - e. Use unique talents to pursue excellence, diligence and faithfulness.
 - f. Be gracious in sharing non-revenue generating duties.
 - g. Accountability under Proverbs 27:17
 - h. Resolve conflict pursuant to Matthew 18:15-17 and Luke 17:1-3.
 - i. Tithed 10% of annual billable quota to Kingdom-minded pro bono.
 - j. Treat everyone as instructed in Luke 6:31 and Matthew 22:37-40.

- ii. MSB Law corporate Mission Statement: “MSB Exists to serve our clients, team, and community with excellence so that they can see and experience God’d grace, love, and justice.”
- iii. Faith-based interviewing and hiring processes:
 - a. “Faith based law firm seeking . . .”
 - b. Lengthy process, including MSB team and applicant’s family
- iv. Office culture
 - a. Owners’ Statement of Faith: Clearly defines what we believe as owners of the company. Employees do not have to agree or believe what we believe, but it’s important they know who we are and what motivates us to work.
 - b. Employee Commitment Form: Signed by all attorneys and staff every year:
 - a. Treat everyone with same courtesy and respect we desire.
 - b. Devote best efforts to clients and their matters.
 - c. Bill time honestly and accurately.
 - d. Be ethical and above reproach in all dealings.
 - e. Resolve in-office conflict maturely and discreetly, 1-on-1.
 - f. Maintain client confidences completely.
 - g. Maintain positive attitude, for yourself and others.
 - h. Offer to help fellow team members when able.
 - i. Maintain Highest levels of professionalism in all things.
 - c. Monthly Bible study and prayer time
 - a. 15 minutes before each monthly all-firm meeting
 - b. Fully voluntary, not coerced, no ramifications
 - d. Detailed and organized processes and procedures
 - a. Forms folders
 - b. Research folders
 - c. Daylite Project Management (Projects, Pipelines, Tasks)
 - e. Pray for clients, and give spiritual guidance when asked (Examples)

- v. Quarterly community service projects
 - a. Get Team input and suggestions for team investment.
 - b. Organizations supporting causes about which we're passionate
- vi. Pro bono initiative in partnership with local non-profits and ministries:
 - a. Identify causes about which we are passionate and called to serve.
 - b. Operate as an informal Christian Legal Aid Clinic through strategic partnership with local non-profits and ministries.

VI. CONCLUSION

A. What now? How about you?

- i. Battling future hurdles and roadblocks.
- ii. We can't do it alone (Proverbs 27:17 "*As Iron Sharpens Iron, so one person sharpens another.*")

B. Final Thoughts

- i. Truth is not relative.
- ii. Integrity in all things.
- iii. Profit is not king, God is King.