Omega Discussion Guide & Case Studies Included

WORSHIP @ WORK SERIES
Living the *Faithful* Life at the Workplace

BUSINESS @ WORK

See Clearly Your Business At Work

NEO BAN SENG

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About *Worship @ Work Series*

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.
– Romans 12:1 (NIV)

His lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."
– Matthew 25:21(NKJV)

Christians are generally more comfortable worshiping God in Christian settings such as church meetings, home cells, and other Christian activities. Worshiping God at the workplace, however, seems remotely abstract. How can the secular workday (and workplace) be considered spiritual, let alone a place of worship?

Consequently, many Christians look forward to finishing the day's job at the office so they can get on with the *real* spiritual activities in the church, such as prayer meetings, Bible studies, choir practices, and the like. Yet, Christians are called to a life of worship 24/7, and this includes necessarily worshiping God at the workplace.

Many hail, "*Thank God, it's Friday!*"

Why not, "*Thank God, it's Monday!*" too?

Worship @ Work is designed to equip Christians for *faithful* living in the marketplace.

This ***Worship @ Work Series*** offer seven areas on living the faithful life at the workplace, all of which will help in clarifying your perception, understanding, and application of your Christian calling and service at the marketplace. To entitle this series "Living the *Successful* Life at the Workplace" might perhaps be more appealing. Yet, it is being *faithful* that we are called to.

May it be for us always ***Worship @ Work***:

Business @ Work
See Clearly Your Business At Work

Walk @ Work
Shape Circumspectly Your Walk At Work

Wealth @ Work
Steward Commendably Your Wealth At Work

Witness @ Work
Sharpen Courageously Your Witness At Work

Sex @ Work
Shield Cautiously from Sex At Work

Success @ Work
Sow Consistently for Success At Work Savor

Sabbath @ Work
Savor Contemplatively the Sabbath At Work

Introduction

The world crowns success; God crowns faithfulness!
– Our Daily Bread[1]

Work is a major area of our lives. It is where we spend the best of our waking hours. Having a healthy understanding of work enables us to talk meaningfully about what we do for the most part of our lives and to live out our Christian calling at work and in business. Conversely, if our understanding is misguided, we will struggle as we find ourselves caught in the dichotomy of the *secular* and the *sacred.* We will then have great difficulty integrating our faith and work or, worse, become indifferent altogether to living out our faith at the workplace.

The Bible urges us "to offer [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is [our] true and proper worship" (Rom. 12:1 NIV). Worship does not just take place at church services, prayer meetings, or home cells. It is not limited to singing Christian songs, lifting up of our hands, giving tithes and offerings, listening to sermons, and participating in Bible studies. Our whole life is worship unto God, and as such, the call to "offer [our] bodies as a living sacrifice" must include our lives in the world of business.

Worshiping God is not confined to Sundays alone. A comic clip portrays this humorously as a Christian wakes up on Sunday morning and cheerfully greets, "*Good morning,*

1. *Our Daily Bread,* RBC Ministries, *January 7, 2010.*

Lord," but on Monday he awakes crying, *"Good Lord, it's morning!"*

In the story of creation, God worked for six days and rested on the seventh day. At the beginning of Genesis, God is introduced as a Worker. He took delight in His work of creation and declared that it was good following the day's work (Gen. 1). When God created Adam, God put him in the garden to "tend and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). And together with Eve, the first man and woman set out to work, filling the earth and subduing it (Gen. 1:28). We see, therefore, that work was initiated and designed by God. God is a Worker Himself.[2] The Bible portrays God as potter, king, shepherd, vinedresser, architect, and builder.

Today, however, not everyone sets off to work eagerly. The fall of man has turned the pleasures of work into pains. Many people see work as a curse, slavery, and bondage—as "the very ground is cursed because of [Adam]; getting food from the ground will be as painful as having babies is for your wife; you'll be working in pain all your life long. The ground will sprout thorns and weeds, you'll get your food the hard way, planting and tilling and harvesting, sweating in the fields from dawn to dusk, until you return to that ground yourself, dead and buried; you started out as dirt, you'll end up dirt" (Gen. 3:17-19 MSG).

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2. In his book, *God the Worker*, Robert Banks introduces us to God as composer and performer, metalworker and potter, garment maker and dresser, gardener and orchardist, farmer and winegrower, shepherd and pastoralist, tentmaker and camper, and builder and architect. Such images of God help us to appreciate that God is a *Worker Himself*. Banks further elaborates on the metaphors of God, tracing Scriptures to show God as a worker in graphic images with which we can identify with a spectrum of roles covering society, work, relationships, and communication. The metaphors show a correlation between the work of God and the work of humankind, suggesting that the work of humankind is a point of real connection with God and therefore a source of meaning and spirituality. Robert Banks, *God the Worker: Journeys into the Mind, Heart and Imagination of God* (New York: Albatross Books Pty. Ltd., 1992).

After the fall, work continues. As the psalmist declares, "Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening" (Ps. 104:23 NKJV). When Jesus came into this world, He worked as a carpenter. Jesus did not come to abolish work. Instead, His teachings were filled with stories of kings, businessmen, farmers, shepherds, stewards, and servants in their respective work capacities.

Paul Marshall in *Calling, Work and Rest* summarizes aptly:

> Human beings are made as workers: this is part of what it means to be created in the image of God. We are called to work, and we are to find fulfillment in our working. Work has fallen under the curse of sin and so is torn with pain and suffering. But the curse is not the core of work: it is a cancer upon it. Work can be and will be fully redeemed as in the new creation it becomes an authentically free human action.[3]

Work can be meaningful, purposeful, and fulfilling in God. In *Fabric of This World,* Lee Hardy counsels,

> The point of the Christian religion is not to leave the world behind to live the life of faith, but to live the life of faith in the midst of the world. The religious life is not the prerogative of a small group of spiritual specialists. Rather, it must be lived by all; and it can be lived in the context of everyday work.[4]

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3. Paul Marshall, *Calling, Work and Rest* (PU for CHE: Institute for Reformational Studies, 1991), 12.

4. Lee Hardy, *Fabric of This World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 51. In tracing the traditions on the work theology of Martin Luther, John Calvin, and contemporary Catholic positions, Hardy sums up a helpful convergence in the practical theology of work both from the Protestant and Catholic perspectives. Essentially, it gives "human work a

Living Out Your Faith at Work

Many Christians in the marketplace do not view their *secular* professions and jobs as full-time work for the Lord, much less see themselves as full-time ministers at the workplace. Our faith should be one that can walk the talk every day—at home, in church, and in the world of business. Otherwise, a great divide will separate our lives on Sundays from the rest of the week.

It is inconceivable that God would be interested only in the *church* aspect of our lives and not what we do *outside* the church. The Bible calls for a Christian faith that permeates all facets of our daily lives, going beyond the church environment to the home, society, and workplace, where everyday issues present themselves. Jesus says, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21 NKJV). This, in essence, makes us ambassadors of the "kingdom of God" at the marketplace!

God sees as much the work of Christian workers and businessmen/women as He does the work of pastors and missionaries. No work is *secular* when it is done unto God. In shedding light on the matter of *secular work* and *spiritual work*, the sixteenth-century reformer Martin Luther, put it pointedly.

> A godly maid-servant if she goes within her command and station and according to her duties sweeps the yard or carries the manure, or a man-servant who with the same mind goes and drives his cart, they move straight into heaven on the right road; whereas another one

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central role in the understanding of human life in its relation both to God and the world. Through work we respond to God's mandate to humanity to continue the work of creation by subduing the earth; through work we realize ourselves as image-bearers of God; through work we participate in God's ongoing creative activity; through work we follow Christ in His example of redemptive suffering for the sake of others; through work we serve God himself as we serve those with whom He identifles'.

> who runs into the monastery or goes to St. James (on a pilgrimage) or to church, and leaves his duties and his station and work on the side, goes straight to hell.[5]

The task of the Christian worker and businessman/woman should never be seen as any less *spiritual*. The world of business offers vast opportunities as God positions us for the life He intends. The early Christians in the Bible were people who held *secular* occupations. They were fishermen, tax collectors, carpenters, shepherds, and physicians who were touched by Jesus. Their relationships with Jesus made all the difference in the way they conducted their lives. They knew what it meant to be the light and salt of the world, living out their faith in their daily lives.

Whether you are a young adult starting out in the workforce or a veteran in the business world, whether you are a blue-collar worker or a professional, whether a clerical staff, a civil servant, a C-level executive, or a business owner, as a Christian you grow to be no longer satisfied merely with achievements of career advancement and business goals. Rather, you live foremost with a profound awareness that only in Jesus do you truly "live and move and have [your] being" (Acts 17:28 NKJV), serving Him in ordinary daily service.

Full-time or Part-time

Given my active involvement in church and Christian service, I have frequently been asked if I am in "full-time" ministry. To this I have often responded, "No, not full-time or part-time but *overtime!*" But I have come to prefer a different response: "Not full-time, not part-time, and not even overtime but *all the time!*"

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5. Quoted in *With Heart, Mind and Strength, The Best of Crux- 1979-1989 – Volume One,* ed. J. I. Packer (Vancouver: Regent College, 1990), 90.

Yes! Work is of God; therefore let our work be worship to Him.

May we, even as we sing the familiar hymn "I Surrender All," live to surrender not *some* but *all* of our life to Him. He alone deserves our utmost love, devotion, and service. What is important is not how *successful* we are (or will be) in our careers and businesses but how *faithful* we are (or will be) in what He has entrusted to each of us.

Life's final commendation comes not from our earthly shareholders and bosses but from Jesus Christ our Master, who will smile at us with His words of commendation as we live it all unto Him,

"Well done, good and faithful servant;
. . .enter into the joy of your lord."
(Matt. 25:21 NKJV)

Worship @ Work spurs you on to worshiping God at your workplace and in the world of business.

The time is now for vocational recovery!

1

My Father's Business

A wise person gears earthly goals to heavenly gains.[6]

Do business till I come.
– Jesus Christ[7]

"*Day in, day out doing the same old thing; how boring a routine! Where is the meaning of it all? Yet, there is no choice, for there is still need to put food on the table.*" This was the cry of my church friend when we shared concerning our day's work.

My friend is definitely not alone feeling this way. Many Christians live in the humdrum of the mundane routine of life. Some see work as a "necessary evil" and eagerly look forward to finishing the day's work at the office in order to do what "I really like to do." The bus driver wakes up each day to repeat the routine of picking up and dropping off passengers. The teacher arrives early at school to prepare for yet another day of lectures and coaching students. The corporate executives attend meetings after meetings to return home, sleep, and awake to another day of the repetitive cycle. And the farmer hopes for good weather each day, looking for a good return for his toil and sweat.

It is interesting to note the saying of wise King Solomon. With all the possessions, pleasures and prestige he had

6. Words for Thought, http://callongod.org/words.htm
7. Luke 19:13 NKJV.

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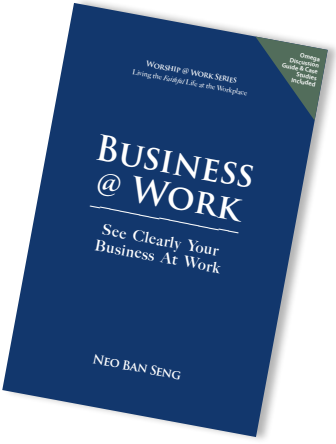

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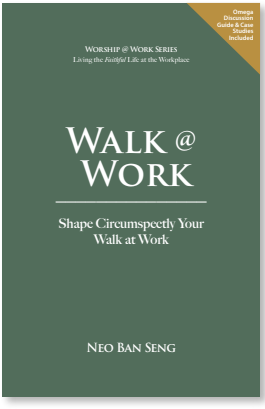

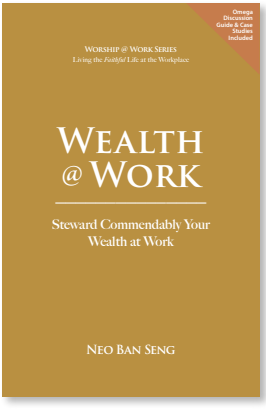

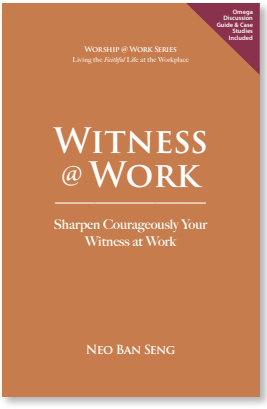

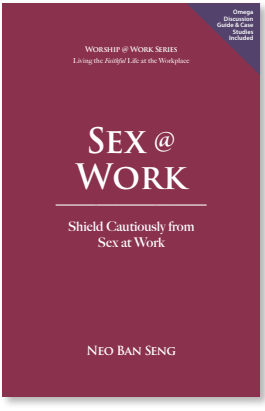

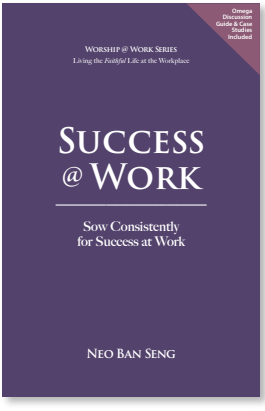

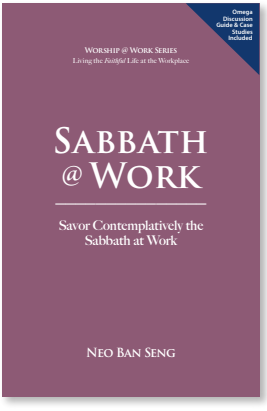

Worship @ Work Series

"Thank God, it's Friday!"
Why not, *"Thank God, it's Monday!"* too?

Many Christians do not view their *secular* jobs as full-time work for the Lord. Yet, our faith should walk the talk every day, otherwise, a great divide will separate our lives on Sundays from the rest of the week.

Worship @ Work Series is designed to equip Christians for *faithful* living in the marketplace.

In this book, *Business @ Work* invites a reflection on My Father's Business and The *CEO*.

Neo Ban Seng's ministry confronts the condition of Christians at the workplace. In 1994, having worked for more than 10 years, he took a break from his job to study theology. His ministry passion in equipping fellow Christian workers and businessmen/women for *faithful* living at the workplace has significantly shaped the theme of *Worship @Work*.

Ban Seng is former partner of a Big Four accounting and advisory firm. Presently, he is the CEO of KAPPS Consulting. He worships at The House of Prayer and serves as an elder of the church. Ban Seng received his Master of Arts (Theological Studies) from Regent College, Vancouver.

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