

BE ASSURED, THINGS COULD BE WORSE

By Robert J. Tamasy

No job is perfect, and probably all of us have had times when we felt, "I hate my job." But maybe the following will provide a new perspective on your present situation:

A name-brand pharmaceutical company manufactures a rectal thermometer. Inside the box are included directions for use, and small print on the instructions sheet states, "Every rectal thermometer is personally tested and then sanitized." How would you like to have the job of thermometer quality control inspector at that company? How does your job seem now, in comparison?

You might be thinking, "Well, I'm not a thermometer tester, but sometimes it seems as if what I have to do is nearly as bad." How should we handle hard times at work, those vexing moments when, as a friend of mine liked to say, "I would rather eat a bug"?

There are many opinions that could be offered on that question, but I think there is no better source for practical advice than the Scriptures. We often see key individuals of the Bible called to perform distasteful tasks they would have preferred to avoid. Noah, for instance, devoted many years to building an ark, no doubt having to endure the ridicule of his neighbors. The prophet Jeremiah continually gave messages of gloom and doom to the rebellious, disobedient Israelites that had no interest in his calls for repentance.

Writing to followers of Jesus in the city of Colossae, the apostle Paul urged them, "*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him*" (Colossians 3:17). These people in many cases were required to perform unpleasant tasks, even shoveling horse manure in stables. Perhaps they would have preferred being thermometer inspectors!

The ultimate example of dealing with a hard job is Jesus Himself: "*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*" (Mark 10:45). This refers to His crucifixion, which He willingly endured. Not that Jesus looked forward to the physical suffering He would have to endure with enthusiasm. Apart from His disciples the night before, He prayed, "*Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will*" (Mark 14:36).

So when confronted with difficulties of our own in the workplace, how should we respond?

We do not have to do it alone. We are tempted to think we are on our own, that no one understands our misery or can offer any help. But we can turn to God for the resources we need to continue despite the adversity. "*I can do everything through him who gives me strength*" (Philippians 4:13).

Trust that even undesirable work will receive notice. If we are faithful in doing the little things, Jesus promised, opportunities will be opened for doing much more. "*Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men*" (Proverbs 22:29).

Take a long-term approach. If we focus on the present, sometimes circumstances seem hopeless. But perseverance often brings many benefits. "*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward*" (Colossians 3:23-24).

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CBMC INTERNATIONAL: Jim Firnstahl, President

2850 N. Swan Road, Suite 160 ▪ Tucson, Arizona 85712 ▪ U.S.A.

TEL.: 520-334-1114 ▪ E-MAIL: mmanna@cbmcint.org

Web site: www.cbmcint.org Please direct any requests or change of address to: jmarple@cbmcint.org

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. What is the worst job you can imagine having to perform? What is the worst job that you personally had to do – and how did you handle it?
2. How difficult is it, when assigned difficult or unpleasant tasks, to carry them out while maintaining a higher sense of purpose or mission?
3. If you can, imagine yourself in the place of Jesus, knowing you would soon be enduring an excruciating death on a cross. From a human perspective, what thoughts do you think might have been going through His mind?
4. Do you think striving to maintain a long-term viewpoint, being willing to endure hardship to attain a greater good, is sufficient for being able to perform work that is tedious or undesirable? Explain your answer.

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 10:4, 12:27, 21:5, 24:30-34; Ecclesiastes 9:9-10; Matthew 25:14-30; James 1:2-4