

This Truth Module addresses the workplace issue of:

Do I regularly grow my practical work skills in order to serve my employer and God?



Overnight Sensation



The job offer was a surprising one. The college from which I had just graduated offered me a sales position—and I was (and still am) about as far from a salesman as you can get! However, the position as a recruiter encouraging students to attend the university was an intriguing one.

I weighed the pros and cons. From the positive side, I had been active during the four years there and believed it represented a good place to get your degree. My girlfriend had two years left in her studies, so it would keep me close.

On the other hand, I was a shy person who didn't really enjoy being put into situations with strangers. Plus, public speaking was not really my cup of tea.

In my mind the "cons" clearly outweighed the "pros," and I could name dozens of graduates who seemed much more qualified than me. Nevertheless, after praying and seeking guidance from the Lord, I was surprised to discover my answer was "yes."

So for the next 12 months I found myself visiting high schools in a three-state area, speaking to groups as small as two people and to auditoriums filled with hundreds. Looking back, I'm amazed at the growth I experienced. The first few weeks were probably the most challenging of my life. I was being thrust into situations that previously would have caused me to shut down, or at least perform a finely-tuned avoidance maneuver.

Day by day, week by week, I worked on tuning the skills of presenting to and connecting with students and parents. I observed recruiters from other schools—seeing what worked well and what fell flat. Gradually, I began to see that what determined their reception was not how well they spoke, how attractive they were, or even which school they represented. No, the main characteristic that made a positive difference was the ability to communicate their genuine concern for the people they were addressing.

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Much to my surprise, I actually had a blast during this year in my life. I learned over the months how to make the sessions fun, and that the students and parents appreciated honesty—not some glossy speech filled with hyperbole and false promises. Their most earnest desire was for someone to genuinely care about them and their future.

Looking back, that year was pivotal in my development in a multitude of ways. The lessons learned and skills developed have helped me in my career, my service at church, and in my overall ability to relate to others.

What if I had not taken that opportunity? What if I had let my fears and feelings of inadequacy keep me from that growth experience?

What about you? Can you look back and see areas where life situations provided opportunities to further develop your skills? Were there times when you dropped the ball or did not take advantage of an opportunity? What about now? Do you have a chance to develop your skills that may be used in ways you would have never imagined?

In Depth

SCRIPTURE PATH

Exodus 31: 1 – 7

I Samuel 16 – 17

I Corinthians 10:31

How many times have you heard the phrase “overnight sensation”? It is most commonly used to describe someone who suddenly becomes famous or held in high esteem for a skill they possess or demonstrate. Maybe it’s a singer or a band that rises from obscurity to record a #1 hit. Or it might be a college quarterback who comes off the bench and sets several school records.

In most cases, behind each overnight sensation are years filled with countless hours of preparation to get them to that point. The skill they demonstrate is usually one that was developed over a long period of time.

List some skills you have now that were developed over time. Similarly, list skills you see in others that took years for them to develop.

Scripture is full of passages demonstrating God’s respect for people who work to develop skills in their lives and careers. Humans were created to both develop and appreciate skill. Proverbs 22:29 asks, “Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men.”

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God gives us opportunities every day to see skills in action:

- A teacher who gets her students to enjoy and understand math;
- A pizza maker who tosses the dough and catches it perfectly every time, ending up with the perfect thickness, shape and size;
- A computer programmer who writes code and develops internal instructions to produce an application that works flawlessly. In most instances, the user never realizes the complexity—he just knows it works!

In this study, we take a closer look at two biblical characters from the standpoint of their skills and how they used them for service to God and their fellow man. We will also acknowledge they were not the “overnight sensations” it first appears they were.

Read Exodus 31:1 – 7. For what skills is Bezalel noted?

Where does Scripture say those skills originated?

This is the first reference to Bezalel in the Bible. Do you think this was his first time using his skills? Why or why not?

How else did God help Bezalel in the use of his skills? (31:6 – 7)

Now let’s examine another character in the Bible who developed and used his skills for service to God and mankind—David. 1 Samuel 16 – 17: describe the early stages of David’s calling, preparation, and service.



Read 1 Samuel 16:7 – 13. In this passage, Samuel has been sent by God to choose the next king of His chosen people. Notice that Samuel applied the world's standards to find the right person. However, God had a different plan.

In verse 11, what do you think Jesse meant when he said, “There is still the youngest, but he is tending the sheep”?

Question to Consider:

How about you? Do you ever look at yourself and say, “I would serve God more, but I’m just a _____ (teacher, stay-at-home mom, truck driver, etc.). What do I have that God could use?” Why do you think you have that attitude?

Read 1 Samuel 16:14 – 23. What are some of the skills David is said to have possessed?

Wow! What a well-rounded guy! But let's ask ourselves a very important question: Where (and how) did David develop these skills?

Do you think during his years of serving his family as a shepherd, David thought it would lead to anything “significant”? Do you think David ever knew, sitting out under the stars, that God was preparing him to be a king?



How about you? Ever think God might be using even the routine tasks you're tackling today as a training ground for work He's got in mind later? List some skills you possess. Do you see or think those skills can be used for service to God and others? Why or why not?

Read 1 Samuel 17:32 – 50. When confronted with the situation surrounding Goliath, David did not say, "Hey, I'm just a common shepherd. What can I do?" Think about that for a minute: Here he was, surrounded by warriors and soldiers who should be stepping up to use their skills and training, and all the "experts" were cowering.

However, they evidently didn't possess a crucial ingredient—the willingness to believe God could or would work through them!

God calls us to develop our skills and then invites us to let Him work through them.

What caused David to be confident against Goliath (17:34 – 37)?

What do you think Saul was trying to do in verses 38 – 39?

Why do you think the tunic, armor, and helmet didn't work for David?

In verse 40, David "chose five smooth stones from the stream." Why do you think he chose smooth stones? Do you think this is the first time David has done this? Why or why not?

Notice the result in verses 48 – 50. We see Goliath was in attack mode, but David was not swayed or intimidated. He approached his enemy with confidence. In looking at our world today, what are some of the "giants" that seem to be coming against God and his people?



Why do you think so many Christians are standing around, unwilling to use their skills and talents to take these on?

Are you one of them?

More specifically, are there skills that God has given you that could be used to tackle these “giants”?

How can you better develop them for His service?

As God works through us, the experience changes us, deepening our confidence in God and in our relationship with Him.

What do you imagine this success against Goliath did for David’s confidence in God? What does the passage say this success did for the soldiers who witnessed it? For Israel? For Saul?

If you apply your skills to the problems of your workplace, your culture, or your community, what might the impact be on your life as you see God work through you? Describe how you think that might feel.

Now list others who might be impacted by seeing God work through you.



Before we close, don't forget to ask yourself how you can help others grow in their faith. How can you help others recognize their skills? How might you encourage them to use their skills for the advancement of God's kingdom?

What effect might it have if several of you in the same company, church, or community had these experiences?

Common Sense and Eternal Principles

- ◆ Scripture acknowledges over and over that God gives us skills and appreciates our use of them.
- ◆ Skills that may, at first glance, seem insignificant or unimportant can be used in mighty ways when combined with God's power and leading.
- ◆ Although we should acknowledge the skills of others, we should not downplay those God has given us for use in His work.
- ◆ God calls us to develop our skills, and then invites us to let Him work through them.
- ◆ As God works through us, the experience changes us by deepening our confidence in God and in our relationship with Him.
- ◆ Likewise, as others see God work through us, it changes them by deepening their faith and their confidence in God.

What's Breaking your Rhythm at Work?



- ▶ **We all have a Work Rhythm unique to each of us**, but In our busy work lives, our rhythm with God can be overpowered or compromised by issues common to us all. Economic instability, interpersonal conflict, temptation, pride all have a way of rendering us out of tune.

Visit www.WorkLife.org for more on Maestro WorkLife Coaching, and pinpoint your own rhythm breakers.

Explore Maestro™ today!



Maestro™ is a self-directed, web-based coaching system that helps you target and overcome issues breaking your rhythm—no matter what job faces you Monday morning. Maestro™ Includes:

- ▶ A Work Issues Assessment
- ▶ Weekly email-based Maestro™ Coaching
- ▶ Maestro Truth Modules for in depth study.
- ▶ Maestro Tuning Tools for dealing with specific work challenges.



▶ The Top 30 WorkLife Issues

Check out these top WorkLife Issues!

Go to WorkLife.org to learn more.

CLARITY	Do I understand why God created work in the first place?
	Do I relate to God through my work?
	Do I connect eternal significance to my actual work?
	Do I simultaneously serve God and my earthly boss, making sure I don't "turn off" my spiritual life at work?
	Do I narrow my focus each day by setting clear limits and boundaries on my ambitions, so that work doesn't take over my life?
CALLING	Are my God-given talents, passions and temperament aligned to my present job?
	Do I see my work calling as really serving society and God?
	Is my work ethic free from compulsions such as: meaningless goals, accumulating temporary success, and a desire to please everyone?
	Do I learn from detours, zig-zags, false starts, and dead ends in my job to eliminate self-destructive patterns of behavior?
BALANCE	Do I honor my earthly employer with competency and integrity in order to accomplish God's purpose?
	Do I manage stress and discouragement by practicing the principle of rest and recreation?
	Do I manage my time without being distracted by unfocused impulses or becoming a slave to my schedule?
	Am I keeping a connection with God and my family in the midst of my hectic work life?
INFLUENCE	Do I manage all my resources (i.e., time, energy, talent, money) in a way that reflects God's perspective?
	Do I avoid the pitfalls of compensation and position discontentment to maximize my impact for Christ?
	Do I earn the respect of my coworkers in a way that blends a gracious spirit, keen intellect, courageous heart, and cultural sensitivity?
	Do I look for natural opportunities to talk about God that are appropriate to my workplace?
	Do I effectively answer the tough questions coworkers ask me about God, life, and faith?
SKILLS	Do I feel prepared to present the gospel message in language that is clear, succinct, and jargon-free, yet faithful to the Scriptures?
	Can I clearly explain the benefits of a relationship with Jesus to those at work?
	Do I regularly grow my practical work skills in order to serve my employer and God?
	Am I seeking and hearing God when making work decisions?
	Do I operate with virtues that honor God (i.e. fairness, graciousness, and compassion)?
RELATIONSHIP	Do I keep promises and tell the truth at work when subtle pressure is used to encourage hype, false appearance, white lies and spin?
	Am I willing to go against the grain at work when biblical values are at stake?
	Do I effectively deal with a difficult boss, serve an unreasonable client, or cooperate with a cynical coworker?
	Do I resolve conflict involving office politics, gossip, slander, favoritism, and unfounded criticism?
	Do I effectively deal with lust at work, including everything from travel temptations to office affairs, from risqué jokes to sexual harassment?
	Do I protect and help the weakest members of my workplace and society in a "survival of the fittest" world?
	Do I seek out and connect with fellow believers at work for support, encouragement and accountability?