

Lessons Along the Career Path

by Robin King

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Several years ago as communications director for a major, global stock exchange, I was tasked with representing the exchange to the public during dual fraud investigations by the Justice Department and Securities and Exchange Commission. Over that two-year period the media pointedly portrayed our entire exchange as fraudulent, blurring the distinction between the traders being accused and the corporate employees like me. It brought major challenges on both professional and personal levels, especially the painful accusation of Wall Street fraud at small investors' expense.

During this same time frame, personal, small-group, and church studies were bringing increasing conviction in my heart regarding biblical truth. In particular I noticed how Christ wanted people around him to not only appropriate his truths into their lives but to also live the truth out in their day-to-day lives.

It made me wonder: Was I compromising my integrity as a believer by defending an institution accused of fraud on the one hand and defending Christ's truth on the other? This led me to look for reasons why God might have placed me in this role at such a troubled time for the market.

After looking back over my role and job description, I realized that, for the past few years, my primary focus had been to fight for corporate disclosure to investors by companies and trading firms, promoting a practice of delivering truth fully and quickly to the investing marketplace. Where companies and trading firms had failed to be forthright, they had to expend a great deal of effort in order to change their ways to protect future investors and markets in the United States. I could see that, at a minimum, this new emphasis on disclosure by companies and markets to investors—my core responsibility at the exchange—had taken center stage in the investment world. I could see, too, how God had placed me in a role where I could actually help to promote truth in public investing. He had given me an opportunity, not just to believe in absolute truth, but also to help foster a practice of truth-telling in a key sector of our nation's life.

As I understood my God-given role more clearly, I gained a greater confidence in the Lord's work both in

and through me, and I developed a peaceful confidence in my employer while in this difficult role. I realized that believers are called to work for open truth, honor, and mutual respect in our workplace, responsibilities, and community relationships, even in small and simple ways.

When the investigations concluded, new rules and compliance practices now required much more open disclosure than ever for companies and the market. The satisfaction of my work to advance these practices was heightened when, a few years later, Enron, WorldCom, and Imclone were judged very harshly by investors and the public for violating truth and trust.

Reconciliation in Conflict

Just as God wants us to bring truth to our business dealings, he also calls us to reconciliation with others. As difficult as it is to deal with corporate practices, interpersonal strains can be even more challenging.

I had been struggling for a long time—for several years, in fact—with a colleague whom I considered to be arrogant, rude, and sinful in his dealings in the workplace. Nothing I tried seemed to improve my relationship with him.

Then one day, much to my amazement, he mentioned something about his church. I began to look and listen for ways to learn more about his beliefs. Some time later, he again referenced his church, so I asked about it. To my further surprise, I found that he was not only a member but also an elder of an evangelical Christian church. I could hardly believe it: Had his church made a mistake or had I?

I began to realize that Christ was at work in bringing our paths together. In time I was reminded that, while this guy wasn't perfect, neither was I. Even though vestiges of our struggles still linger, the Lord has increasingly enabled me to look past our earthly differences and look for God's grace. Just knowing that my colleague and I profess belief in the same Savior allows me to forgive him. It also humbles me to remember that Christ died for him no more and no less than he died for me.

Sometimes it's best not to run from or ignore conflict, even if the conflict facing you is not your issue, or maybe something you'd just rather not tackle. If there is conflict, God may very well be calling you there—in small ways and large. Our natural tendency is to find the easy way, but as we yield to Christ, we can see him work in surprising ways.

Look for Christian Support

Earlier in my career I felt I had made a wrong turn. I was a partner in a communications firm which had begun during a good economy, but when a recession occurred, our income abruptly slowed. The other partners wanted to keep the momentum and spending pace, thinking better times would soon return, but I was more cautious and wanted the assurance of lower risks.

When the down-market prevailed another year, I realized that I had decisions to make. I began to share my concerns with my favorite and most stable client, a community bank. Rather than drawing back, they encouraged me by signaling they would support me through whatever happened.

During this period, the bank's top officer shared with me his Christian position on indebtedness, and gave me some valuable pointers on dealing with my other partners. I later discovered that the bank's marketing staff was a part of a weekly Bible study using the same materials my own Bible study group used. The Christian support and encouragement in that critical time in my career will always be in my memories, reminding me of the invaluable benefits we find in the body of Christ.

Pray, Pray, and Pray

During this same low period, I found myself wondering just how I could get myself out of this situation that worsened as the economy slid further down. Our small firm had payrolls it could not meet, new clients were saying they had no money to spend, and there was little prospect of a remarkable upsurge in the local business economy. It was a struggle to face what seemed to be more bad news each day.

Going to work each morning along Connecticut Avenue, I started every day in prayer. At first, it was just a few lines of appeal to God and then back to the morning radio news. But, over the course of the next few weeks and months, the balance shifted to more prayer and less radio. Then my praying continued on the elevator from the parking garage and sometimes even over my first cup of coffee. I had reached a place of complete dependence on God's will for this resolution. Slowly, God graciously closed and opened doors to help us find our way through. Looking back, I re-

member how difficult that time was, but what I remember most was the prayer and Christ's work in me.

Our career paths will take twists and turns, travel to exhilarating peaks and also to dismal depths. The key to finding happiness in our work and career is to recognize God's hand at work both in and through us, sometimes in small ways, sometimes in unseen ways, but always at work bringing about his good will and pleasure. In the end, we will likely find that God's primary purpose in our career paths was not so much the fruit of our labors but the fruit of *his* labors in conforming us to the image of his Son.



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Robin and his wife Carol Hallene King have two children, Emily and Peter, and live in Bethesda, Maryland. They attend Fourth Presbyterian Church where Robin is a leader in the Bible Overview class and serves on the board for the Fourth Presbyterian School.

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