



## My Journey in the Workplace

by Ken Broussard

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**D**uring college, I decided on a career in banking, specifically commercial real estate. It was during college that God revealed His forgiveness and love for me in Jesus Christ, called me to be His, and began to change many areas of my life. I attended a good Bible church, got involved in the singles ministry, and taught a junior high Sunday school class. I was also part of a small accountability group with four other guys from church, a group that was a significant stabilizing force in my life at that time. All of us later went through the decision process to get married at about the same time—the wives-to-be would have paid a lot of money to hear those conversations! Not a chance, though; strict confidentiality was the rule. As back then, I have been in a men's accountability group for the past eight years, meeting at 6:30 a.m. every Thursday at a local diner. The fellowship and encouragement are awesome, reflecting the truth in Matthew 18:20: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them."

In 1980, a job offer with First International Bank of Houston, in my hometown, was particularly appealing. My parents were kind enough to let me live at home for a while to get my feet on the ground—an amazing turnaround, since they were eager to have me leave home after my high school days! After almost four years at First International Bank, I accepted a job offer from a friend I met at church who ran the Houston office of Wells Fargo Realty Advisors, a real estate group with more of a national real estate presence. Shortly thereafter, the Houston economy hit hard times. I worked out many loans with developers and watched several fortunes ruined in a rather short period of time. After spending some time in

Washington, D.C., working on a project in 1988, I was offered a position with Wells Fargo in D.C. to take an active roll in building a book of business in New England. It was difficult to leave Houston because I had developed many great friendships and was actively involved at First Presbyterian Church. In fact, it was there that I had met Caroline Chapman, a wonderful southern gal who would become Caroline Broussard shortly after my move to Washington.

In spite of leaving family and very close friends, the Lord helped me settle into Washington, D.C., very quickly; Caroline did as well after we were married in May 1989. My job was very enjoyable, challenging and rewarding...for a couple of years, until the New England economy and real estate market went into a depression. The Washington, D.C., area would soon follow suit, as would California, the home base for Wells Fargo. Right about that time I went into depression, too!

The markets did eventually turn around, and in 1993 I was given the chance to manage the Washington, D.C., office. At Christmas time that year, we were blessed with our first daughter, and on Good Friday in 1995 with our second daughter. Work was very much a "sweatshop" environment, with only a handful of us covering the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast. I was a "player-coach" and burning the candle at both ends as well as the middle. Problem was, I had a young family, and the workload I had committed to as first a single man and then a married man with no kids was not allowing me the time or the physical or emotional energy I wanted and needed for my wife



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and children. I knew something had to change, but I didn't know how it would change. God did.

At the end of 1997, I was told that the company wanted me to stay on, but someone from California would be taking over the management of the office from me. I remember one thing clearly—that solution was not on my prayer list! Needless to say, I had lots of emotions wrapped around a lot of disillusionment, leading to a long period of deep soul searching about life and work. Perhaps the most surprising and painful realization was that I had really allowed my position at work to define far too much of what I thought of myself. My identity had become wrapped up in my career. I decided to accept an opportunity with Bank of America's real estate group, in part to make a complete change from the organization I had been with for 14 years, but mostly to get more time and energy back for my family. A change that I had thought would take at least a year happened in less than 30 days.

Soon after that, Caroline and I entered into another faith-building endeavor, when we tore down our 50-year-old house and built a new home for our family. God provided so abundantly, coordinating the timing of different approvals with the county, a special-order window arriving on the day the bricklayers reached the opening of the window, and ensuring that the gas, electric, and phone companies were all onsite on the same day so that we could move in on time. Each step of the way, we learned to thank God for each answer to prayer and to trust Him for what needed to happen next.

I remained with Bank of America until late 2005, when I accepted an opportunity to manage the Washington, D.C., office for KeyBank Real Estate Capital. And, once again, the real estate market and banking industry are currently having a few "issues," which you may have heard about in the news.

### **"He Faithful Will Remain"**

Thinking back on those years, a phrase in the song "Be Still My Soul" encapsulates a lot of my experience: "In every change He faithful will remain." Throughout my career, my trust in God has increased as He has provided me with courage in many new business challenges, wisdom to work through very difficult lending and personnel situations, patience and control of my tongue

when dealing with demanding or irate clients, and peace when my anger was ready to take over.

Many times, the pressures and demands of work have made me feel like throwing in the towel. But in those times, God has strengthened me for the work He has given me to do. And He has reminded me that He puts each of us in our positions because that is where we are to glorify Him. Sometimes He changes our circumstances, but we are to always "do [our] work heartily as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord [we] will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ [we] serve" (Col. 3:23-24).

How I work with people matters. How I lead matters. In leading others, I endeavor to help them develop their potential by treating them with respect and dignity, looking after their best interests, listening attentively to them, not allowing the need to complete a task cause me to treat them with disrespect, helping them to grow and develop, and caring for them as individuals. I try to create an environment that fosters hard work and a sense of enjoyment. I look to elevate others' reputations, not mine, when they do a good job.

In a very sensitive way, I promote the idea of real tolerance, which results in some lively conversations over the lunch hour! We talk during lunch about all kinds of things that are generally not talked about among co-workers—God, politics, social issues, etc. We all enjoy a very good relationship and ask lots of questions about what each one believes. We have Christians, a Zoroastrian, a Jew, agnostics, and atheists. I get asked a lot of questions about what I believe. Over one lunch, things got very tricky when I was asked why Christians like to proselytize so much. After a quick prayer, and with some anxiety, I asked if everyone would like me to answer the question (hopefully covering the legal front!). When allowed, I said that Christians have the greatest news to tell everyone, and I started from before the creation of the angels all the way through Revelation, all in about seven minutes or less! I laid out the entire redemption story, and I said that if all of it is true, and I believe it is, why wouldn't I want to tell everyone? There were some interesting follow-up questions and conversations, and obviously they all didn't agree, but they got an answer that they indicated they understood. I am very sensitive to everyone's

beliefs, but will challenge them as much as they challenge me. It is said that “people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care,” and that applies here. So I spend a lot of time building relationships.

### Family Time

Work is a very important aspect of my life, but I try to remember that love begins in my life at home. Family is one of my top priorities, and balancing family time with responsibilities at work, a couple of boards, mentoring, and preparation for teaching Sunday school is very challenging. Marriage and parenthood have provided a tremendous amount of joy and fulfillment in my life, and they have revealed how selfish I can be. Very often I have to set aside what I would like to do to help out around the house or with the kids’ homework, or run errands. If I am not careful, I can begin to resent having to do that and ultimately allow anger to settle in. I also observe that if I am not careful, I will speak to my family in a way I would never speak to a friend’s child or wife. Familiarity can breed contempt, but it doesn’t have to. A good friend once said that he didn’t know how angry he could be until he had his own children! On the list of seven deadly sins, the ones I have to guard against the most with my family are pride and anger. Guarding against pride helps me to continue to grow and admit when I am wrong; guarding against anger allows for the healthy development of friendships and character before God for all involved. In all these ways, I seek to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling in which [I] have been called” (Eph. 4:1).

In raising our two girls, we have been very blessed by the book *Shepherding a Child’s Heart* by Ted Tripp. It encourages us not to focus on behavior modification, but to help our kids develop a heart with a God-ward orientation. When they sin, where do they turn? They must know they are sinners to know why they need Jesus. Discipline is intended ultimately to restore relationship (to God and the parent) when a child has been disobedient, not merely administer punishment. Discipline is intended not only to encourage the right behavior, but to shape the child’s heart. Isn’t that what our heavenly Father does with us? He doesn’t just want our good behavior (white-washed tombs, legalists), he wants a “heart of flesh” that longs for Him alone.

### Stewardship

Stewardship of all God gives me is another major priority, especially when it comes to financial resources. Those resources are made available to us for the building of His kingdom, not ours. His kingdom includes the needs of our family and the needs outside of our family that he puts on our heart. When financial resources increase, we need to be prepared ahead of time to hold them with an open hand, not a clinched fist. In *The Treasure Principle*, Randy Alcorn challenges us with the following: “God prospers me not to raise my standard of living but to raise my standard of giving.” I don’t think of it so much as me giving back to God as me determining how God wants me to give the resources He has entrusted to my care for the building of His kingdom. It’s kind of like God tells me what to do with His resources under my stewardship when our church needs to fund its work, when my family needs a home, when we need a car, when a poor family is in need of assistance, when a disaster strikes. In his song “Hold On To Jesus,” Steven Curtis Chapman writes, “I will hold loosely, to things that are fleeting, and hold on to Jesus, I will hold on to Jesus for life.”

### Why Do We Do What We Do?

Much encouragement is needed to continue the race to the end. So why do we do it, why do we continue? Certainly my work provides for my family, and that’s good. It allows us to share with those in need, and that’s good. We want to raise our girls to love and serve Jesus, because they will go out and do a lot of good things—and that is certainly good. I want to love Caroline so we will have a lasting marriage, and that is very good. While all those reasons are good and definitely motivational, are they the only reasons I do what I do? The Westminster Confession tells us, “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” Our motivation for all that we do is to bring glory to God. Jesus, in John 17, prays, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee.” Jesus’ life brought glory to God. In a similar way, I work to provide for my family. Why? Because that brings glory to God. We share out of our excess with those in need, to bring glory to God. I treat my employees the way that I do because it brings glory to God. We raise our girls earnestly praying that they love Jesus, so

that they will go out and do a lot of good things, to bring glory to God.

I must look beyond my actions and cherish the intended result that God will be glorified in what I do. We will not enjoy the fruit of our labor as we should if we fall short of knowing in our heads and our hearts that we do all that we do ultimately for the glory of God.

So, press on. Don't give up, so that we can all say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). Confident that "He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ" (Phil 1:6). Filled with hope, "knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; it is the Lord Christ whom you serve" (Col. 3:24). Don't be weary long, and never give

up! And we will know His joy now and forever. To God be the glory!

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