

CHALLENGES IN PROFESSION

The challenges are the same for everyone. These include corruption, use of short-cut methods for career advancement, absence of justice, unfair treatments on the basis of caste, religion, status and others. In every office, school or college, we have "politics" and being happy at work seems to depend on "connections" and "whom do you know". Those who know how to play the game are happy, lucky and smart in our system's description. Others are the frustrated lot, and perhaps will not move up the ladder as fast as others do.

The biggest problem one faces when he lands a job in our system is the discovery that merits are measured by other parameters! In this background or existing paradigm, how does a Christian survive, blossom and make an impact is what we should be discussing in this Seminar.

I. Making an Impact in our work

We are the Salt and Light. We need to make worthwhile contributions that add colour to what we are expected to do. How does one make an impact? I would tell myself the following:

1. Look for training opportunities to keep yourself better equipped.
2. Maintain strict working hours and other terms in your job description.
3. Hard work pays! Set your goals right and work harder! [my prescription for success].
4. Aim for the best (output: targets, completed projects, publications/papers)
5. Help those who are likely to fail (applies to teachers, lecturers, professors)
6. Be innovative, prepare and accomplish what others can only talk about, and
7. Follow work ethics and Practice the Presence of God in everything you do.

There have been many a godly Christian men and women whose lives are models to us! These have shaken up the system. It may not be that they were recognized for their work. The significant question we Christian professionals need to be asking, "Am I making an Impact". Our careers may last 20, 25, 30 or 35 years. It really doesn't matter how long I worked, or how high I rose up the ladder or how much money I made. We need to redefine what success is and try to do what is impossible, with God's help. Let us be different and let us do something worthwhile to the community, nation and above all, to God's glory!

II. Beating the Rat-Race

I think this means competing successfully for career advancements in terms of money, position and power. This is characteristic of every worker or employee. I need not exclude me and other Christians from this. In general Christians of godly character do suffer. There are so many examples of those who never made it to the top in spite of their exemplary record of work. Also, the competitive spirit in the rat-race of our system has unhealthy sides and it often punishes godly men and women unjustly. How do we handle this tremendous challenge? I would like to offer the following suggestions:

1. Do not look at others (although it is very hard not to do!) as to how well they manage the race. Money and promotions are important matters. God will give them to me. No one can keep these away from me.
2. Do not be tempted to use short-cut or unfair means of the world. Connections are good but I will not compromise on my Christian convictions.
3. If in case I did not get promotion (s) in time or get punished by wrong accusations,
4. I will not take legal remedy or go to big people as others do. I will trust God and wait patiently for His time. I will pray for those who hate me/treat me in an unfair manner!, and
5. My God will vindicate me, elevate me and reward me if! do my work consciously well.

Although difficult to go through hard times, stressful periods and other terrible things that hurt and humiliate us, let us remember what Job said, "But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). I have often benefited from believing firmly what the Psalmist says in Psalm 138: 8 ["The Lord will perfect everything that concerns me"].

III. Maintaining Integrity

Many of us find our places of work as hard and difficult turfs. We can only remember how bad the people are, corrupt and crooked they behave etc. I am a Christian and they don't understand me; nor do they tolerate me. But, they cannot dispense with me if I am valuable to the work/company/institution.

I should be known for my integrity in the following areas:

1. Quality of my work [in Science: Citation Index].
2. Cleanliness of my life [I knew a IIT Professor who thought taking a gem-clip home was theft], and
3. Godliness in my relationships.

Ultimately, it will be profitable for us Christian men and women who are chosen to do different jobs in Indian work places to be people who know their God and also those obey His word. In J. I. Packer's words Christians are "those who acknowledge and live under the Word of God"... and "God's word has gone forth to create, control and order things around them"..... they use the word of God as "a touchstone by which to test the various views that are put to them and they will not touch anything which they are not sure the scripture sanctions" [J.I.Packer: Knowing God, 1988].

Every job brings a set of struggles and challenges. I believe it is still possible to make a worthwhile and rewarding career if our goals and our connections are God and if we try to progress "in God", "through God" and "for God".
