

Book Review: "*The Gift Of Work*" by Bill Heatley
Review written by Stephanie Bertholdo

In his book, Heatley writes that his "idols were time and money-I could never get enough of either one." The desire for more work, more money-more of everything-pushed God from his life, he wrote.

After facing financial and personal ruin, Heatley started the long process of reflection that brought him to the realization that a life plan centered on money was dysfunctional.

Heatley had seen executives check their faith at the boardroom door time and again.

"At work and (in) the daily newspaper, I saw a constant stream of Christians making questionable and unethical decisions and justifying or excusing every one," he wrote. "From Enron to the local banker and even in Christian organizations, everyone seemed lost and confused about work and what God intended."

In an interview at his home, Heatley talked about the president of an international hotel chain who would routinely play financial games with vendors. A professed devout Christian, the executive would negotiate prices with vendors but stop payment after services were rendered or products were delivered-a tactic to renegotiate the contract at a lower rate. Heatley said the man considered this business "chess match" a standard operating procedure wholly separate from his religious beliefs.

Heatley saw the same behavior at many corporations.

"Deeply committed Christians were hurting folks," he said. The boardroom, it appeared, was not open to God, he said.

Heatley wants to change that.

"The purpose of work is to bring people together in loving community for mutual benefit and support," Heatley said. "Work is finding structure in the kingdom of God-like marriage, family and friends-to meet each other's needs."

Dallas Willard, a philosophy professor, speaker and author, inspired Heatley to write the book. In 2001, Willard spoke to a group of businessmen, including Heatley, and discussed how God can be found in the workplace.

Heatley was so impressed with what he heard that day he obtained a transcription of the talk.

"That was an inspiration," Heatley said. "It really hung with me after listening to it over and over again."

The inspiration led Heatley to make dramatic changes in his life and work.

"I simplified everything and relied upon Jesus," he said. "Part of it is who you are becoming. God has an image of you, (and) the journey in life is to seek him and become the kind of person he always intended you to be."

Willard wrote in the forward to Heatley's book: "All of us are affected by the frequently self-centered beliefs that undergird the way we conduct business. We think a good person is very different from a successful one."

In his book, Heatley deals with the problem of finding "community in work."

Willard wrote that Heatley "addresses that problem at the level where work is done in a world not really structured around doing what is good and right, but around doing it my way and for my benefit."

Willard also humorously points out that the word "job" is spelled like the biblical Job, "the all-time leader in suffering."

Heatley's message revolves around the acrostic WWJD (What Would Jesus Do).

True moral behavior requires bringing that same spirit into work.

"The power of the kingdom is available in the workplace," Heatley said. "Faith is not proselytizing or evangelizing-it is living."