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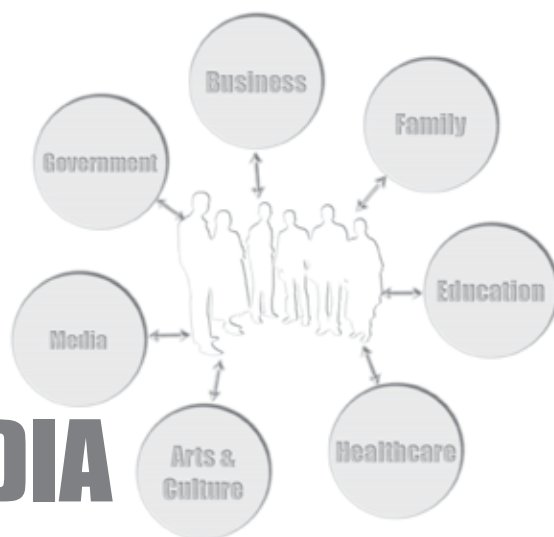
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# THE GROWTH OF MARKETPLACE MINISTRIES IN INDIA



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# CHRISTIAN MANAGER

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## Editorial Note

Several of our readers had responded quite positively to the previous issue, Managing Microfinance Enterprises. The issue resonated quite well in terms of how it was packaged. For the uninitiated reader not conversant with microfinance, it was informative and educative without being too verbose and dense. To our pleasant surprise, quite a number of readers have appreciated the interview with credible personalities of international stature like Prabhu Guptara and Ram Gidoomal. In these recessionary times, there's too much of knee jerking analysis paralysis, we guess people are craving for some balanced sound analysis which is biblically grounded.

One reader commented that he was delighted to come across a magazine that is intellectually stimulating, fresh and innovative in term of cutting edge articles and topics packaged together. And that is something we are committed to keep pursuing. So following that tradition, we have here packaged a special issue entirely focused on Marketplace Ministries in India. It's presented in a way to give readers a sense of where the marketplace movement- and a movement it is - is headed. We have tried our best to give a balanced perspective by recognizing the fact that scores of Christian professionals and businessmen are taking their faith seriously enough to integrate it within their professional life. While the story may sound critical of local churches and seminaries that don't affirm the vocational life, the critique is not to paint them generally in poor light but more to recognise how deeply entrenched and pernicious is the sacred and secular dichotomy and it's implication on how we process the world. The church gathers and the church scatters. But what does the Christian life look like when believers are scattered on Monday morning right upto Friday? We have also highlighted albeit very briefly, churches that are mentoring and actively supporting workplace ministries. All Peoples Church is a case in point.

There's much to focus on marketplace ministries and we can't possibly highlight everything in a single issue but we hope this edition will provide you the wider perspective on marketplace ministries especially in India.

Enjoy the read and do write to us.

**Bennet Emmanuel**



# A CHRISTIAN MEANING OF WORK

Richard Gnanakan

## Part -1

**W**ork is so central to human existence that it needs to be something that will have meaning and significance. Alan Richardson, who developed a sound doctrine of work in the fifties, suggests that we look at work in the three principal senses in which it appears in the Bible:

- i) The work of creation attributed to God
- ii) Human work, which included all work that, we do, from ruling empires to hewing wood and drawing water
- iii) The metaphorical use of the work in the New Testament

We must note here that Richardson does not consider human work as creative in the sense of God's Work. While this is in fact true it cannot be denied that humankind, created in God's image, has been blessed with a certain measure of creativity within the parameters of their mandate to

maintain creation. The image of God in humans must imply the gift of rationality and creativity - to be able to think and to create, and in this being a bit like God who created them. Had this not been true it would be hard to understand Adam's responsible role in creation as God's vice regent. God has given to humankind the lordship over all created things (Gen 1:28, Ps.8:6ff) and in exercising dominion, we demonstrate that God given faculty of creativity through which we bring into existence the means whereby our tasks are accomplished.

To Richardson, biblically human creativity is limited to only that which is received from God. In Isa.28:24-29 we find this emphasizes as the prophet asserts that the farmer's success is because of God's instruction and teaching. God is "wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom". So then while creativity in biblical sense belongs to God who brings things into existence by His words, creativity is also given

to human kind, in a real sense who have been created in the image of God. In many ways God is working to extend his creativity through his people.

It will be hard to justify that human do not have creativity inherent within them, for, if not we would find it hard to accept all of the new developments in the world today. Regardless of one being a Christian or not, humans, made in the image of God have been given a bit of God himself through the gift of creativity. It is this that makes humans develop newer and newer inventions that help them to adapt to the growing demands of the world today. The image of God in humans must mean a rationality that separates them from animals helping them adapt to the pressures of the world.

Richardson has indeed developed for us a sound biblical doctrine of work but has done so without attempting a deeper search for a Christian meaning of work. What is required is for the Christian worker to see some real significance in the work done without which labour, work or action become empty efforts only helping survival. It is only when we find meaning and significance in our world of work that the biblical doctrine will have relevance today. This task has been attempted by J.H Oldham who has tried to interpret the meaning of work in our lives today. He states that:

*Unless men feel that to be a Christian makes some recognizable difference to what they do in the daily occupations which fill the greater part of their waking hours. They can hardly be expected to regard Christianity as having an important meaning for their earthly life.*

The question being asked is clear – Does being a committed Christian make a real change to one's attitude to work? We will need to answer this question. But, this is only one reason for the need to look for a Christian meaning for one's work. Since most of us spend the major part, perhaps even the best part, of the day at work, we will need to know what significant contribution we make in these hours. According to Larry Peabody:

*The Christian who works at a job which demands forty hours or more each week devotes over a third of his waking hours to his occupation. Much of his family's life style is dictated by his job. Month by month his work schedule makes its regular withdrawal from his limited fund of time. The hours a man spends at work are not the leftovers, wither. They are the prime-time hours taken from the heart of the day when his energy level and capacity for productive labour are at their*

*peak. If a person is to accomplish anything worthwhile in this life it will probably be done as he devotes large blocks of this prime time to the task.*

This is important for us to see as most people spend their best hours at work. If then we are to become an effective force or a healthy influence in our society we need to fully understand the biblical meaning of work, find fulfillment in this and live it out with conviction. This is urgently needed because of the widening gap between the attitude to work in the "world" and that of work for "God". Some wait to escape from work in the world. The age-old difference between secular and sacred continues to be blindly accepted and with it both a false view of one's work as well as one's service to God. The work place is a sacred place for Christian witness.

Jesus Christ who calls us to participate in his efforts to bring about a complete restoration between God and human kind ordains every good work as being fit for the Christian. There ought to be no difference between God's work and any other work, only the difference between good and bad work or between good work and evil work. However this claim should not be used to justify all kinds of work tainted by sin and corruption. Paul so rightly addresses the Colossians pleading with them to do all in the name of the Lord (Col 3:17). This will mean that whether one is in a school or in a factory, or whether one is in a church or a Bible school it is pleasing to God when the work is done in his name.

### **HUMANKIND'S RESPONSIBILITY**

While Richardson has looked for a Biblical understanding of work in a study of the concept of work as it appears in the Bible, Oldham suggests correctly that the Christian doctrine of work, relevant to our present day conditions, can be found only in the Christian understanding of humankind and their role on earth is the key to a fuller understanding of the reason for work in our life. We are therefore, in agreement with Oldham that a clearer understanding of the Christian view of man and woman and their destiny in the basis on which we can reach a proper understanding of the Christian meaning of work. Oldham suggests a three-fold view of the Christian life, which he insists, each one must fulfill as responsible member of the body of Christ. Firstly, there is the response to God because of the unique relation between humankind and God. Secondly, since we in our essential nature are people in community, there is a responsibility to our neighbor. Thirdly, there is a responsibility towards creation.

Indeed this view widens the influence of work beyond merely something to earn and help our survival. It enables

us to see all our work as God's appointment since it is performed within a framework and context of life as a responsibility to God and service to neighbor. Work when looked as our responsibility to God takes on a totally different meaning. No longer can it mean merely fulfilling a human responsibility. Paul, therefore, exhorts slaves to be serving their masters as if serving God.

Furthermore when this divine appointment is fulfilled in all sincerity, work will also become a ministry since society will be served. Work in the consumer world has become an individual occupation. True Christian work must be directed towards society as well. Looking at work from this point of view where the object is service, both manual and spiritual work will be seen on the same level, this breaking down any difference that may exist between the two in their importance. Whether we are involved in manual work or the so-called "fulltime" spiritual work hardly matters when that work is performed as a service to God and humankind.

#### WORK AND WORSHIP

Dr. Ken Gnanakan, one of our leading theologians, has constantly emphasized the fact that Christians must learn to work with their hands and restore the dignity of labour. Seeing the sharp distinction between secular and sacred work in the Indian context he stresses, that Indian theology must consciously strive to remove the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. To us Christian this separation comes not only from the predominant Hindu background in India but also from the handover from outdated Thomistic teaching. We need to be reminded that the reformation brought about a more biblical outlook.

Richardson points out how the reformation revived the biblical view of work:

The reformers, Luther and Calvin, first began to use the expressions 'beruf' and 'vocatio' of men's daily tasks and stations. It is important to note that they did this as a protest against the Medieval use of 'vocatio' exclusively as the call to a monastic life. They wished to destroy the "double standard" and to show that God could be glorified in the workday world.

Although Luther and Calvin did not deliberately intend to do so, their efforts brought about a healthy understanding of God's calling as applying to humans in all areas of their lives. The radical reformers in Europe went on to set up exclusive working, worshipping communities and thus, they laid the ground for a positive evaluation of work, employment, and labour, in the light of one's commitment to Christ.

In arguing, for an effective Christian witness Gnanakan States that:

This kind of integration of work and worship is crucial to the Christian witness in India today. The dangerous disparity between our work attitude and our worship attitude has weakened our impact on the country. On a positive note, it must be said that Indians highly respect worship. Nevertheless, the sad thing is that they recognize no connection between work and worship. This has been a struggle over the last twenty years of the existence of ACTS institute, a work established by Gnanakan that brings together work, worship and witness. Today the ACTS graduates are taking this message into our country and bringing necessary corrections in the minds of the people.

The reformers, Luther and Calvin, first began to use the expressions 'beruf' and 'vocatio' of men's daily tasks and stations. It is important to note that they did this as a protest against the Medieval use of 'vocatio' exclusively as the call to a monastic life. They wished to destroy the "double standard" and to show that God could be glorified in the workday world.

Biblical theology that is written in India today must take this much-needed integration of work and worship far more seriously. The starting point must be to deal with the unhealthy way in which some forms of work are shunned. Many biblical themes, with the doctrine of Creation itself, lend themselves to

upgrading the value of work in all its forms. This accent needs to be woven into the fabric of all our theology. The important factor to note is that in weaving this accent into theology we should not give the impression that all our involvement in the country's physical needs is only a disguise to ultimately channel men and women into the church. We are even as God cares for His people. Aren't we all created in the image of God? Should we not then share a commonality that bind us together which arouses my concern for him as a fellow human being and not as potential catch for the kingdom?

The answer to India's economic problems is not just economic aid. What can help far more is theology of work

that will motivate Christians themselves to stir up God's entire gift to utilize our minimum resources for maximum output. Such a theology will recapture the dignity of labour and will be creatively dynamic rather than coldly doctrinal. If humans can be challenged to be productively involved in God's material creation, their worship can become more meaningful.

However, one must be careful not to equate work with worship. Mahatma Gandhi stressed such an attitude when he called all work as worship of God. The Government of Karnataka went even further and put a slogan on the Secretariat that reads, "Government work is God's work". All we need to show is that work is not in the position of worship, but rather is an extension of it. Through our work we can glorify God and offer up that activity as a form of worship. While there is a distinction between work and worship, we need to note that there is no separation. In a sense, work begins where worship ends and vice versa. For, if our worship is true, our work becomes a continuing expression of love for God the creator and for His creation. Alan Richardson interprets the Lord's Supper as a form of worshipping the Lord through our works. The bread and the wine are products of the works of our hands but, in the Lord's Supper, become symbols of Christ's body and blood:

*The bread and wine which are laid upon the altar [or table] in the Eucharist are the symbols not only of 'ourselves, our souls and bodies', but also of all the work which we do in our workaday lives.*

Probably no one else has ventured to look at the work of our hands in connection with the Lord's Supper. What a beautiful picture this is of an offering to God that incorporates the products of our daily labour. Work now becomes true worship because of this offering.

The Greek word *latreuo* particularly in Romans 12:1 is rendered both worship and service. Although this refers primarily to religious service it should be possible for the Christians, who has submitted himself entirely to the Lordship of Christ, to be able to see all of his or her involvement in the world as an act of adoration of his master.

However, one must be careful not to destroy the distinctness or worship. The commonly used word in the New Testament

is *proskuneo*, which refers to a singular reverence of God, honouring as Lord. Indian biblical theology must motivate more meaningful and reverent worship or else it may become an obstacle to a nation given so sincerely to worship. But we need to know that we are only transforming true worship when we come to our Master as ones who have faithfully fulfilled the tasks that He has called us to perform in His world.

The kind of intermingling of our work attitudes and our worship attitudes will add immensely to a more powerful witness in India. Injustices, perversions, laziness and superstitions can only be tackled by the participation of a working-worshipping Indian Christian Community in the problems of the struggling country. Theology must seek to arouse this concern not from deficient and questionable theologies of liberation and development but by motivating men into more Christ like involvement in the country. In addition, this must be achieved from within the very texture of basic theological concerns.

#### **WORK IN THE SPIRIT**

Miroslav Volf suggests that reflection on work from the perspective of the doctrine of sanctification is indispensable

**The commonly used word in the New Testament is *proskuneo*, which refers to a singular reverence of God, honouring as Lord. Indian biblical theology must motivate more meaningful and reverent worship or else it may become an obstacle to a nation given so sincerely to worship.**

to Christian ethics. He argues that since Christian faith is eschatological we must live our life here in that hope. The Christian life is also life in the spirit of the new creation. Therefore work, which he terms Christian work, must be done under the inspiration of the spirit and in the light of the coming new creation. Within the framework of the new creation and the work of the Holy Spirit in the world this kind of Christian theology of work must be developed. This normative understanding of work will lead the present world of work he states towards the promised transformation in the future.

*Richard Gnanakan is the Principal of ACTS Institute. Extracted from Work Worship and Witness. TBT publications.*

CM

# God@Work

## National Marketplace Ministries Conference

A Report





While several marketplace seminars and workshops have been conducted in different parts of the country as regional initiatives organized by professional networks or local churches, none can claim a national distinction in terms of vision and scale. The God@Work National Marketplace Conference will go down in history as India's first marketplace conference of national significance. Held in Bangalore at SAIACS CEO Centre, from May 1st to 3rd the conference saw over a hundred professionals drawn from across the country taking part in the three day event.

Likeminded leaders in the marketplace movement joined forces and spending months over groundwork preparations to mobilize a campaign for an event touted as the mother of all marketplace conferences. Regional professional fellowship groups such as Synergy, Interface, Chennai Corporate Fellowship lend their support to make the God@Work Conference see the light of day. The vision was to catapult the marketplace idea on the national map. With several delegates coming from the IT industry, other professionals ranging from healthcare personnel, journalists, engineers, businessmen to corporate trainers took part in the event.

One of the key features of the conference is the programme schedule uniquely designed in a format to break the usual mould. And so, with three days packed with plenary and breakout sessions the conference gave participants much

options to choose from. Naturally, this was bound to create unprecedented impact. The hallmark of the conference were the speakers drawn carefully from various sectors in the marketplace

On day one, Anand Mahadevan, editor of Business Outlook began the main session setting the stage on the right note for the next two days. Anand was clearly the show stealer. Delving deeper on the purpose and meaning of work, Anand radically altered the delegates' preconceived notions of work. Anand offered a much needed corrective on prevailing understanding of work. Grounding his speech on the biblical doctrine of creation, he took pains to emphasize that work is intrinsically sacred and good. He dispelled the notion held dearly in certain quarters that work had value insofar as it provided opportunities for sharing the gospel. "The purpose of work is to work", he declared. His session was packed with biblical and provocative insights that left the audience with much to mull over. A sign that Anand's speech had made its impact could be judged by the constant references to his speech by other speakers and participants.

The breakout sessions for the first two days were divided into three tracks which were a big draw at the conference. Social Transformation, Helping your Hurting Colleague and Being a Transformational Leader were handled by C.B. Samuel, Devendra Chowdhry and Vijay Paulson respectively. Participants got to choose their track



preferences. Deliberately designed to be more informal and interactive, the breakout sessions facilitated a greater level of dialogue even among the participants themselves. The Social Transformation track assumes a special significance which should've been included in the main sessions for it formed the very basis and central purpose of all marketplace ministries. C.B. Samuel, former director of EFICOR, gave a historic overview of the meaning and practice of development and talked about how marketplace initiatives need to go beyond a single point economic paradigm. He stressed the need for a deeper understanding of mission that centres on transformation as the main motif.

If Anand stole the show, Jaya Abraham brought the house down. Connecting naturally with the participants by her lucid and free flowing presentation, Jaya had this uncanny ability to strike a chord with participants even at an interpersonal level. Ubiquitous as she was, Jaya made her presence felt throughout the three days of the conference. Titled "Thriving as Working Women" Jaya effortlessly engaged a captive audience recounting her experience as a professional woman and the multifaceted roles and challenges that come with it. Kick starting her speech with the experiences of several women in high profile

professional background, she reminded that women didn't just survive but thrived in their workplaces. Whether it's her humour which constantly drew burst of laughter from the audience or the poignant anecdotes she shared which left participants teary eyed, Jaya's speech was an emotional roller coaster. She spoke about having a Godly perspective in everything we do right from having the correct attitude to realizing our true identity in God even more so in our workplaces. What comes across very poignantly is the value Jaya places on building relationships in the workplace. She states "dealing with people is very subjective. You cannot objectify everything as we do in our HR practices".

With the programme tightly scheduled, the conference did provide a platform for greater interaction and fellowship among participants of various professional backgrounds who had converged here from various States.

Senior executive with Infosys, Devendra Chowdary spoke on Character and Competence and there was hardly a moment where the audience was not in splits. His talk was devoid of theories and went right on target to help marketplace leaders to practically demonstrate both character and competence without pitting one over the other.

There were other important topics that were ably dealt by very resourceful speakers. Titled as Church: God's Answer to the World, Sunny Joseph, chief editor of Fountain of Life spoke passionately on why the church is the only hope for the world. Speaking on Urban Trends influencing modern cities, J.N. Manokaran presented a panoramic picture on mission trends spanning multiple eras. Duke Jeyaraj, founder of G4 Mission – a ministry to modern youth, spoke on Reaching out to the Google Generation.

Jaya Abraham led a session on the role of prayer and intercession which was replete with case studies and stories of people and situations which got turnaround by prayer and intercessions. She laid down a biblical framework to be an intercessory catalyst in the workplace and developing a persistent and consistent prayer life which marketplace leaders need to practice. In another session, Jaya presented an overview of the critical issues surrounding the seven pillars of society namely Arts, Business, Culture, Media, Education, Religion and Government. For the delegates this was an eye opener and proved very informative in terms of strategic future actions even as she stressed the need to pray consistently for these societal pillars.

An interesting part of the conference were the panel discussions comprising experienced leaders in the marketplace. With some in the panel comprising the resource persons from the conference, others were specially invited to join the panel. CEO of Kerygma, Jacob Isaac, one of the key figures behind the God@Work moderated

the discussion. Without shedding inhibitions, the panelists spoke of their success and failures and how they had dealt with them. The audience got to see real people struggling with real issues.

Reflecting on the takeaways from the conference, Samuel Jose, a corporate trainer and a delegate in the conference states: "I used to have this guilt that being involved in a secular work was not spiritual and it was the full time ministers who were productive for God. This conference blew away that myth." Samuel also adds: "The sessions taken by Mohan Patnaik really helped me see that there are believers who are in top executive positions and successful in their careers and yet at the same time who are not sold out to work. That family and church life matter deeply for them is very encouraging for me as a young man."

Another delegate, Albert Pouluse, a senior software engineer with UST Global, based in Trivandrum said that before registering for the conference he was skeptical that it could generate anything of interest to him. He and his friend Rahul Koshy George were invited by a common friend to attend the conference. "I was a bit depressed about an issue I was facing in my workplace and I was skeptical about what the conference could offer. But right at the first session itself when I heard Anand Mahadevan speak about the purpose of work I was blown away" says Albert. He found time to interact with other resource person and lap up whatever he could. "My time with Mohan Patnaik was particularly useful in the light of what I was going through.

People from different networks, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Mumbai joined and worked together. They joined at different point of time and did their part in putting this together. So there is no specific



## How we pulled it off

organising team as such. We did not even meet physically to discuss. Most of our coordination happened online.

The vision is to equip and network believers in the marketplace for marketplace missions. As this is an

untouched area in the church today. Bringing the right perspective about work and understanding the role of a believer in the marketplace is very crucial. As the Indian Church is going through difficult times in different places like Orissa and other places and many of us had lot of questions, church needs to pray, discuss, plan and work together to fulfill God's purposes in our times. So this conference was also aimed to facilitate this.

Selection of speakers topics was the critical exercise we undertook. We learnt from similar marketplace conferences which happened earlier. We drafted the topics, selected the speakers and invited them based on

their availability.

This conference just a beginning. It is wonderful to see at the end of the conference a whole new perspective that God has placed in our hearts.

The need to equip people is crucial. We are planning to facilitate more smaller programs in churches wherever given the opportunity. It is encouraging to see the upcoming programs in different cities.

Working to build online resources at [www.godatwork.in](http://www.godatwork.in)

Lot more needs to be done, but we are sure God is leading this movement in His way. These efforts are just small parts in His big picture.

*Mark Raja, Sr Designer, Infosys.*



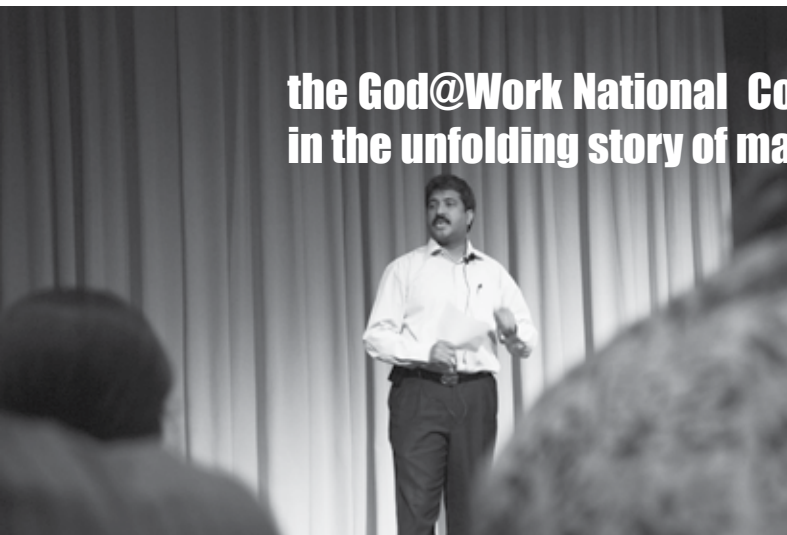
I felt a great sense of freedom when he shared that God knows best where he places us in our workspots and that climbing the corporate ladder is not always God’s plan. I was touched when Mohan shared with me about his own struggles where he had to sacrifice careers or positions that didn’t fit God’s overall plan. He had to settle down with something small in human eyes but which had God’s clear purpose behind it. That I had to trust Him in all situation in my workplace was something I learnt” he added.

Rahul George was even more skeptical. Prior to participating in the conference, Rahul had participated

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**the God@Work National Conference will be a defining event in the unfolding story of marketplace ministries in India.**

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in several workplace related seminars which didn’t quite appeal to him. They never offered him anything beyond cerebral abstractions. “I thought this would be one of those spiritual seminars that never did connect with me as far as challenges in the secular workplaces was concerned. I figured that it was another seminar for Christian professionals but when I heard the Purpose at Work session by Anand Mahadevan, it was a revelation time for me. God’s purposes at work took centre stage and not my selfish ambition which was to make it big professionally. I truly felt convicted and free at the same time.” Rahul opted for the Business as Mission track which he testified was ably handled by Jerry and Andrew Bhagyanathan. Rahul adds: “What I learnt in this track was that following biblical principles and finding success are not contradiction in terms. On the other hand sound biblical truths are the basis on which genuine success can be found.”

On the final day Jacob Isaac, wrapped up the sessions by helping each participant discover their spiritual gifts through a self analysis technique. Jacob spoke about gifts-based marketplace ministries. He reminisced how he had used his God-given gifts to impact lives even in the marketplace.

Definitely one of its kind, the God@Work National Conference will be a defining event in the unfolding story of marketplace ministries in India.



(T-B) Panel discussion moderated by Jacob Isaac  
Mohan Patnaik  
Deepak Martin



# CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT CONDUCTS

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### RESOURCE PERSONS

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- ✓ Mr. Vijay Samuel Benjamin (head-communications & training, springboards)
- ✓ Mr. Paul Asveen (executive director, cim)

### VENUE

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### TOTAL SEMINAR COST Rs.2000 - (covers cost of Seminar Materials, Lunch, Tea, etc.)

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  - (ii) Balance: Rs.1000 (to be paid at the venue by cash)
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YOUR PURPOSE@WORK

FIND IT...FUTURE



## Interview with **Anand Mahadevan**

Anand Mahadevan is the Editor of Outlook Business, a leading business magazine in India with a readership of over 160,000. He has been a business journalist for the past 15 years. Christian Manager caught up with him on the sidelines of the God@Work conference, where he took part as one of the main speakers. Anand shares his convictions about God's purpose for work.

### **What were your earliest impressions and understanding about the nature and meaning of work?**

I first started to think about these issues when I was struggling at the workplace. I was spending too much of my time at my workplace. I figured that the best years of my life would be spent working and I struggled to understand what does this mean to God. There were two important elements introduced into my life at a crucial stage, one is my faith in Jesus Christ and the second was my work life which I really enjoyed. But these two seemed to be two parallel tracks and I was struggling to align the two. There were phases where I was trying to understand what does my work mean to God. There would be swings in my life where I would swing to one extreme which would be working to the extent that I would push God in the background. I would neglect basic things like spending time with God, skipping fellowship with believers so that I finish my work. Sometimes the pendulum would swing to

the other extreme where I would have this great desire to be involved in "full time" ministry in the meanwhile struggling to make sense of my work. In both the phases, the struggle was understanding the nature of work apart from God. This got me crying out to God and to seek his will for my work. I then began to realize that work is part of God's creation purposes and that it did really matter to God.

### **Why do you think the parallel tracks which you talk about exist in the minds of believers? What in our thinking creates this dichotomy in the first place?**

I would struggle to answer that in a generic way. You must understand I didn't have a Christian upbringing. I didn't have the background context to bring in a perspective. At least in my life there were two clear compartments. One that I saw in my church and the other one in my workplace. There was no influence of God in the workplace. These were two conflicting value systems. I became a believer in

Jesus Christ and I loved Him with all my heart and at the same time I was enjoying my work too. Clearly there was a disconnect. I used to wonder why was I enjoying my work, was it an appropriate response? Without the building system from the Word of God, a theology of work so to speak, I was straying away and missing out on God's purpose for work.

**Did the work pressure took a toll on you to make matters worse?**

There was no work pressure. It was not a case of not meeting my targets. I was doing that quite easily. On the contrary I was exceeding the targets that were assigned to me. It was not a performance issue but rather a purpose issue. I was actually overperforming, getting promotions, increments and going places. But there was no purpose to it at all. Did my work really matter to God was the issue. If not, I didn't want to spend the best years of my life working and wasting a huge chunk of my life.

**But how did you make this discovery?**

As a business journalist you get to meet interesting people and get to engage with them at an intellectual level. It's a very challenging environment and you learn a lot.

There was a season in my life where I was desperate to be in full time ministry. However, God didn't create any opportunity for me. At the same time my work was very interesting and exciting. There would be times when I would go home and shut the door and literally cry out to God. And during this phase of seeking God, there were these scriptures that would come alive. A fresh revelation would spring forth from God's word and that's how I eventually understood God's purpose for work.

**As a business journalist, is there a distinct biblical worldview of journalism?**

I know a well known and wonderful man of God called Sam Kamaleson. I've been blessed by my interactions with him. He told me that journalists are modern day prophets and that was a statement which I will never forget. We recently ran a story in our magazine on caste system prevailing in companies and it is my conviction and faith that help me to also raise such social justice issues.

I feel whether journalism or whatever vocation we take, it is a vital part of God's redeeming work in the world. I often wondered If Adam had not sinned or if creation had not fallen, what kind of world this would be? Because we are intelligent beings made in His image we would see a kind of creativity and enterprises without its fallenness. When you believe that Jesus came to pay for the price for our sins, our work is also redeemed in the process. Work is no longer a toil but a joyful engagement with the purpose of God. And

because I am alive to God's purposes I am able to listen to His voice and align myself and values to His revealed will.

**How would you encourage church pastors and leaders to see the value of marketplace ministries and help their congregations?**

We need to realize that historically the church had been focusing on the bottom of the economic pyramid. Focusing on the poor and the downtrodden was the right thing to do because that's where the biggest needs were. But now the church is able to broaden her vision and shoulder a bigger role for herself including the needs of believers in the workplace. If you look at India say fifteen years ago, the nature of the marketplace was different from what it is today. It was a secured job scenario. The marketplace is itself evolving and the church is in step with the evolving nature of the marketplace.

Over the last few years I've been meeting several pastors and almost all of them are affirming the importance of work and no one would disagree that work mattered to God. We need to remember that church is not the pastor, it is we who form the body of Christ. So when the whole understanding and appreciation of the church in the marketplace is alive within me God is at work and He is at the same time deploying other believers from the church to be in the marketplace. Like any other move of God, marketplace ministry is one move of God which will unfold at God's pace.

**How do you look at an initiative such as the God@Work National conference?**

I think every believer needs to discover God's purposes in work. There's so much that we can learn in this process of discovery. The God@Work Conference is a great initiative because it helps people to consider and discover the nature and purpose of work in light of God's Kingdom. It would be far more beneficial if such a conference were to be conducted for pastors. When these pastors are challenged and their vision for their congregations are broadened they will impact their churches. The present conference is impacting over hundred believers but if you're targeting hundred pastors you can imagine the chain reaction it can set off. That would mean several thousand believers will be indirectly impacted. Any marketplace movement cannot happen apart from the church. It is a movement of the church and the message is spread much faster through churches. Conferences such as this should be alive to every opportunity to serve churches and equip them.

**Conventionally most believers who'd want to take their**

**My daily challenge is to go to God's word and remind myself that I am not working for my ambition but as Colossians 3:23 says I am working with all my heart but as working for the Lord.**



**work seriously would prefer to see their workplace as a means to an end which is sharing the gospel and not see their work as having intrinsic value before God. How would you diagnose this?**

A lot of us think that God has put us in our workplace primarily to preach the gospel. I don't think that's right. My primary calling in my workplace is to work. But how can I not share the love of Christ if I get an opportunity? It changes our perspective if seen this way. My reason to go to work is not to evangelise, it is to work. I am not taking anything away from the importance of sharing our faith. I am not ashamed of the gospel and I will always give a reason for the hope that I have as I Peter 3:15 puts it. But I will share with discernment at the appropriate time.

A friend of mine runs a holiday resort and he had hired a cook who happened to be a believer. One day he walked into his restaurant to find his customers waiting for food which apparently was not being served on time. He walked into the kitchen and found his newfound cook arguing with a bunch of cooks about how Jesus Christ had come to save the world. This friend of mine lost his temper and told me later that he'd never hire a Christian worker again. The cook shared the gospel but failed to live up to the gospel. He didn't come at it with the right perspective. Shouting the gospel from the roof top is not the biblical model.

I want to contrast the example of the cook with the experience that I had. I used to work with another magazine and I was training a person who was part of my team. One of the stories he covered went on to win the CNN's Young Journalist Award. As soon as he got the award he sent me a mail thanking me and wrote that he had learnt many lessons from me especially on humility and not putting myself over others. I was blessed by the feedback he gave me but it gave me a good opportunity to interact. I wrote back to him

saying that the reason you had seen me put others over myself is because I am follower of Jesus Christ and I am only following what Jesus had taught me because He always put others before Himself. This helped me to share the gospel to him and it came to him in a context. He had seen someone who had lived out the gospel.

He came back to me and was really surprised that I was a follower of Christ. There came an appropriate time to share the message of Christ in a context. This requires discernment. We can't have John the Baptist in the workplace. I like the Jesus model, where He spoke to large crowds and then he would personally minister one on one to Nicodemus in the dark of the night. We need to realize that we're not marketing a soap. We are offering someone special.

**Any special message to our readers?**

God has to be the central part of their work life. Most professionals tend to be driven by selfish ambition. This includes me. It's what I want to achieve that drives me. My daily challenge is to go to God's word and remind myself that I am not working for my ambition but as Colossians 3:23 says I am working with all my heart but as working for the Lord. Personally it's easy to work with all my heart but working for the Lord doesn't come easy. It all comes down to basics. John 15:5 is my check which says remain in me and we will bear fruit. No matter what I do I'll never be fruitful if I am not connected to God on a daily basis. I struggle with the consistency of it. But whenever I bring the consistency back, I experience fresh revelation and fulfillment of His will, I see opportunities to impact others and experience joy at work.

# My Work is my Mission Field

## Interview with Jaya Abraham

*Jaya Abraham is one of the emerging marketplace leaders on the national scene. Passionate about marketplace ministries, Jaya is committed towards a people-centric approach to workplace ministry.*

### What is the nature of your work?

I serve as the Vice President, Learning and Development, Stream Global Services, a Technical Process outsourcing company with clients in USA, UK, Canada. My role is to ensure that all the work force that gets into our organization is trained and developed through the tenure they are with us. I work alongside a large team of 20 trainers – who are engaged in language, soft skills, program, technical, sales and developmental training. For the last six +years I've been with Stream Global Services. Previously I worked in the hospitality sector for 11 years. For a year and half worked as a free lance trainer.

### How would you see your work as full time ministry to God?

I joined this current assignment with a clear call of God in it – as my desire was to work investing in young work force. In a typical organization – we are measured on performance, process and people KPIs. The first thing God enabled me to do was put the training function into shape by researching, designing, developing and



they are and also ensuring availability for times of needs opened doors to care, show love and compassion and build relationships. Once people feel belonged, it becomes easier to eventually believe.

Apart from giving into the Body of Christ, God has led me to

**I believe in investing in people immaterial of who they were and also ensuring availability for times of needs opened doors to care, show love and compassion and build relationships.**

delivering programs keeping the Kingdom principles in place. So I got to the classroom and taught for 24 months – day-in and day-out. And when I hired a new person for the function – they went through all of the modules in the classroom as a trainee. So in the bargain a whole lot of impartation happened and God got all the trainers on the same page. So through excellence God established the credibility of the function in the organization. The clients found the training function very different compared to other sites with much appreciation.

I believe in investing in people immaterial of who

invest a part of my remuneration on the folks at work, to open the doors of hospitality to folks at work (which lead to people in distress coming and living with us for months together). God encourages me to plan my giving which makes provision available when there is a genuine need.

Meeting the felt needs of the folks and then moving on as God leads to meet their unmet needs. I see my work place as a mission field.

### What are some challenges you face in your work place. Please mention few Kingdom principles you use to deal with them?

When it comes to hiring I just follow God's heart and the

Holy Spirit's leading in hiring the team members and in due course of time it has paid off well. For the training team have the most tenured folks. Obedience to God to hire not just the talented ones but the ones who come in with most needs and I have seen in the bargain God's bigger purposes are served.

There were times when the management team were forcing to have other alternate training practices like Yoga, Art of living etc. God enabled me to find favour as I came up with better substitutes for these programmes and made the training exclusive and customized. In addition we prayer walked our work places and sought God's protection from other practices entering into the Temple of God where He has placed His ambassadors.

Being able to come up with solutions and stand by the management to overcome areas of concerns is an issue of integrity and character. Being a solution rather than cribbing about the inadequacies comes from a right biblical attitude. Several times, I had the opportunity to unofficially offer counseling to employees with the agreement of the Management and in the bargain God had opened doors for His Kingdom principles to be established.

#### **As a marketplace leader how do you see yourself in connection with your local church?**

I worship at Covenant Community Church, Bandra which is part of the Gateway Ministries International. GMI supports the market place ambassadors and my local Pastor Mathew DePenha encourages and supports me in all the work that I

do in the wide spectrum of market place in Mumbai. I am part of the core team in the local body and also a resource person for the corporate body of Gateways Ministries International. I have responsibilities to share the Word on Sunday services and lead Worship too besides assisting my pastor for local prayer meetings. The young peoples' group called Transformers meet at our home currently and I am responsible to teach the Word in this group and the rest of the responsibilities assisted by a team. I also mentor and assist in building resources for our local Children's ministry.

#### **What is your vision and future plans regarding your work?**

At my current work place, we are praying and claiming our organization for the Lord's Kingdom. We have three work place cell groups active currently. In this next quarter we pray God to enable us to facilitate the setting up of two more cells. So, two cells every quarter is our target. A work place care cell is the nerve center of market place. This apart, initiating prayer cells is also in the heart of reaching the workplace folks. No one refuses prayer when offered. Currently we do have an inter-city, over the conference call model prayer group which meets every Wednesday and I anchor it. I believe God will raise HOUSES OF PRAYER at our workplace to establish His kingdom.



#### **JAYA ABRAHAM'S MARKETPLACE ETHOS**

- Excellence by Christians is the hall mark of first being noticed at marketplace.
- Love and care for people makes the biggest difference in the marketplace.
- Making people belong and then believe.
- Being faithful at workplace as a calling and not doing a job – is success in itself.
- Workplace care cells is the answer to intimate, close knit networking groups.
- It's important to offer right kind of teaching in the marketplace.
- It's a main track in a society where people have an opportunity to meet so many people and share the good news.
- Be the unspoken Bible at workplace.
- Grab every opportunity to pray in the Name of Jesus – I am yet to come across one person who has ever refused prayer in the name of Jesus.



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# Marketplace ministries in India

## Challenges and Opportunities

**B**efore being promoted to the role of head of Human Resources for Tata Consultancy Services with its operations in Australia & New Zealand, Raj Mudaliar was previously the Talent Management Lead for TCS Financial Solutions, A Strategic Business Unit of Tata Consultancy Services Ltd. The company boasts of an employee strength of 4000 plus distributed across six delivery centers in India and onsite presence in Sydney and Zurich. Mudaliar's major responsibilities revolved around managing HR processes deployment post and developing HR Strategies to create TCS FS as a Brand. "As a business professional, my role is to be a faithful steward of the Lord in the market place. I see myself as a minister of God, a priest drawing fellow colleagues to a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus. Whatsoever I do, I do it wholeheartedly knowing that I do not serve men but the Lord," says Mudaliar confidently. He is actively backed by his fellow believers at the All People's Church based in Bangalore.

"At All Peoples Church, we have a focus on equipping the saints for ministry in the market place. A ministry leader there along with his team work towards fulfilling and following the vision, mission and objectives of the

church's workplace ministry. The vision of his church for marketplace ministry is to transform our city of Bangalore, our nation and the nations, by impacting areas of business, education and politics through Christ-centered leaders." Raj highlights the fact that he draws from the wisdom and knowledge of God to excel in his work responsibilities. "In the greater scheme of God's kingdom, my role is surely to be an effective witness for Christ Jesus by being a man of Character – manifesting the fruit of the Spirit; Competence – ability to deliver results for the organization by continuously learning and improving my skills and knowledge; convictions – living out my beliefs, values and faith without compromise."

Raj Mudaliar is a typical example of a marketplace minister who clearly integrates his Biblical worldview into his workplace, is mentored by his local church and is all set to influence other believers and impact his workplace for the Kingdom of God.

Like Raj Mudaliar, there's a growing breed of Christian professionals in the world who are taking their faith very seriously to make a kingdom impact in their workplaces. While many are openly embracing a form of spirituality

at work that is unabashedly Christian expressed either in the form of prayer fellowship or sharing personal experiences of faith with a colleague. There are others who are equipping themselves with a deeper understanding of kingdom theology that sees all of life under God's reign including their professional work. These professionals and businessmen are more vocal about their faith, more nuanced in integrating biblical principles in their daily work not based on some pragmatic expectation but only because it's the right thing to do. Fortunately, an increasing number of people are also sensing a clear disconnect between their faith and work and are beginning to question the reason for the gap and how to bridge it. Of course, there are those who see their work as a necessary evil to be tolerated, a curse from God which they have to go through begrudgingly in the everyday grind of life.

## Global issue

The marketplace ministries is a global phenomenon where faith is finding expression in workplace decision making process, in boardroom discussions, sharing personal

# What God may want me to do faithfully in the marketplace is an important part of being salt and light in a deteriorating society.

**L. T. Jeyachandran, RZIM, Singapore**

testimonies and the gospel message to colleagues and even framing public policy issues.

And so, there's a deluge of books, DVDs, internet sites that promote and offer faith at work discipleship resources and programmes. Ministries have mushroomed that exclusively offer this service to churches, organizations and individual professionals and businessmen.

While there are multi-factorial issues that may hamper the growth of marketplace movement in India which is still in the early stages of development, the brighter side is that the movement is not very far behind its counterparts in the West and is gaining momentum at a pace that is forcing mission agencies and local churches to sit up and take notice.

The Lausanne Movement initiated and endorsed by well known Christian leaders Billy Graham and John Stott is a global movement committed to make the "whole church

take the whole gospel to the whole world". The ensuing Lausanne Covenant recognized the vital need of addressing significant global issues through its Forum. These issues are of global significance ranging from globalization to religious fundamentalism. The Lausanne Occasional Paper on Marketplace Ministry released in 2004 was one such global issue. Close to around 30 leaders drawn across the world put their heads together to bring out the Paper.

One of India's foremost Christian thinker and apologists L. T. Jeyachandran participated in the Lausanne's Marketplace Ministry track, which was held in Pattaya, Thailand and led by Timothy Liu. Jeyachandran believes that the marketplace ministry in India would be important for four critical reasons. He spells out his reasons in an email to Christian Manager: "Firstly, the heresy that full-time Christian work is superior to work in the marketplace should be shattered. Because of this false teaching, Christians working in the marketplace feel like second-class citizens of God's kingdom as if their purpose is to earn money to support 'Christian' work elsewhere. Secondly, what God may want me to do faithfully in the marketplace in an important part



of being salt and light in a deteriorating society. Thirdly, because God Himself as a Worker, we need to communicate His creativity to the marketplace. His first commandment to Adam was to cultivate the Garden of Eden and to take care of it. And finally, the marketplace is ideal for sharing the gospel – instead of asking the friend from another faith to come to 'Church' we take the gospel to her/him where she/he is. That contextualization is something that has not been sufficiently emphasized." The challenges and promises of marketplace movement in India need to be benchmarked against the backdrop of Jeyachandran's diagnoses.

HCL's Vice President & Global Head, for Talent Transformation & Intrapreneurship Development, Anand Pillai is a well known personality among Christian professional circles. Anand has been sharing his expertise in leadership training to several churches and organizations. Diagnosing the larger issue he observes that "Many of our churches are led largely by the clergy only rather than the

## **The manner in which we have conducted ourselves have led many to believe that the word ‘Christian Professional’ is an oxy-moron.”**

**Anand Pillai, VP, HCL**



Ezra-Nehemiah combination of leadership. The first kind of leadership keeps them aloof from the market place therefore they are not connected with the realities in the business and professional world.” This has implications for Christian witness. “We are often confronted with values/practices in the marketplaces that are against the known guidelines in the Bible. Related to this are the areas often called as ‘grey areas’ where there is no direct answers from the bible but there are clear principles laid out,” he adds.

Consequently, Anand believes that professionalism among Christian has taken a severe blow. “Somehow, we as believing Christians have lost the competitive focus and professional approach in the marketplace. The manner in which we have conducted ourselves have led many to believe that the word ‘Christian Professional’ is an oxy-moron.”

The inference being that there is reasonable grounds for a greater demand of marketplace trainers to help struggling Christian professionals equip themselves with proper biblical based resources and training that would facilitate character development and enhance competency levels.

Anand is not alone in his observation that churches and missions have created a dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, between church ministries and vocational work. Sunil Fernandes is a Chartered Accountant based in Bangalore and he coordinates International Christian Chamber of Commerce (ICCC).



## **Theological education is being revised to secularise the sacred or to sacredise the secular and to bridge the two, curbing the dichotomy and schizophrenia.”**

**Siga Arles, Director, India Institute of Missiology**

The forum has helped hundreds of professionals and businessmen to understand that their work matters to God.

“The biggest challenge is getting the church to grasp the fact that Christ did not just come to get or collect a group of people behind four walls on a Sunday but to reclaim the world. Therefore the purpose of your very work is important to the Kingdom of God. The challenge is trying to get the church and the marketplace man to walk by faith and absolute obedience to God. The church believes the marketplace persons life has to be an inevitable life of compromises with the result that we bow down to systems of darkness in the world unlike the hard route taken by Christ in obedience to God,” Sunil points out. While playing an active role in Bangalore, Sunil mentors myriads of Christian professionals to be biblically equipped to face the hard challenges of the marketplace.

What clearly emerges as a problem is that most professionals and businessmen, far from being affirmed by their churches, feel that there’s no point of correlation and intersection between their faith and work. Considering the fact that almost 60-70 per cent of a human being’s waking life is spent at the workplace and that nearly 80-90 per cent of the congregation in the workforce, most of them have not heard even a single message preached on the meaning of work and why it matters biblically. To compound this further, professionals face unique and complex professional challenges in their workplace but there’s no recourse to help in their churches for any faith based response. They naturally feel alienated and their worldview remains fragmented. Couple this with the lingering suspicion and

fears among several pastors and church leaders of anything having to do with the marketplace.

“One wonders if Jesus Christ was whiling away his time as a carpenter” rues Rajeev Menon, CEO of e-Nable Solutions, a successful businessman based in Mumbai. Rajeev bemoans the fact that so many Christians don’t see their professional life as a service to God and man. Rajeev has been helping scores of business leaders and senior level executives to live their lives according to kingdom of God principles. Positioned as the lead man for Fellowship of Companies for Christ International (FCCI) which is an internationally based organization focused on mentoring company owners and senior professionals in organizations, Rajeev is leaving no stone unturned to equip marketplace leaders across the country in his personal capacity as a businessman and coordinator of FCCI India. business professionals under FCCI meet periodically in small groups to learn from the curriculum designed by FCCI. Sharing experiences and praying for one another’s needs in the workplaces, these

professionals have laid down accountability structures to help each other grow in character and competence.

A large extent of the problem of this skewed view of what ministry is or not can be attributable to a form of theological training that reinforces a dualism among Christians. Principal of ACTS Institutes, Richard Gnanakan says: “It is sad that there are many Christians who do not see their workday lives as sacred. There are several reasons for this attitude including some very uninspiring jobs. Unless we see avenues to glorify God through our daily work we will continue to make this division. Our work day gives us an opportunity to live out the gospel bringing Christ-like living and values into the work place. I see a need for us to teach a sound biblical understanding of work in our seminaries. Graduates have to be challenged to teach this theology of work from the pulpits or wherever they work and minister.”

## Church@Work

### Ashish Raichur, Senior Pastor All Peoples Church



**Generally why is there such a pervasive extent of the sacred and secular dichotomy among churches? Is the pastor the culprit or is he part of the systemic problem within the congregation?**

Personally, I feel it is a lack of proper understanding of three important spiritual truths: (A) of work as designed by God, (B) of what ministry really is and (C) the role of the believer. If our seminaries/Bible colleges train men and women with proper understanding, then consequentially, our pulpits will also proclaim the vital truth that every believer is a minister (Ephesians 4:11).

**Why is the concept of ministry applicable only to church context? The businessman’s ministry is only what he does for the church when he returns back say after 6.00.** We need to understand that ministry is doing any God-ordained activity - which would include work. Since this understanding is lacking, we have a very narrow understanding of what ministry is. Ministry happens where ever people are - even out in the marketplace.

**Very often the only value of the businessman is his money in terms of tithes. Do you agree?**

We have failed to understand Romans 12:4-9, that every

believer has gifts and grace to edify the Body of Christ. Once again, there is a lack of understanding and hence we limit people only to the extent of contributing financially.

**You’re a CEO of a company but for many pastors, a businessman earning good profits is seen with suspicion Why is that?**

There is a wrong fear of profit motivation as being ungodly and worldly. There is a misconception that associates deep spirituality with poverty while we fail to realize that God does use people who are rich in the world for Kingdom purposes as well. Abraham, the father of our faith, was a wealthy man and also a prophet, and a friend of God.

**As a pastor of a church and CEO of a company, how do you see work place ministries?**

For me, it has been a joy to be able to motivate people and help people come to the understanding that every believer is a minister. I purposely reiterate that “every believer is a minister”. We make room for professionals to head up ministries, pastor, and do everything a “full-time” minister does!





Christian Professional Forum

But it is the absence of a theology of work orientation in most seminaries that is a cause for concern. Gnanakan points out that “It will take time before all of us are convinced that our daily work outside a Christian environment can be God glorifying. We still have many who leave their jobs to go into ‘full time’ work. They still cannot see themselves as “full time” Christians living as salt and light of the world,

## We still need more Christians to talk about a sound biblical theology of work.

wherever they are placed. We still need more Christians to talk about a sound biblical theology of work.”

Several professors of reputable Indian theological education institutions lament that there is a crying need for a holistic gospel, one that celebrates the material world and is not just preoccupied with otherworld escapism. Siga Arles, currently the Director of the Indian Institute of Missiology and formerly vice principal and professor of missiology at Serampore College provides a perspective: “Seminaries produced pastors for the old style ecclesial understanding where the ‘church’ was the place of spirituality and the

faithful had to keep going into the church as much as possible and pour money and time into it. The model was that of an introverted church. It took the people and their resources for itself and spent much for itself. A part of the money was spent for mission and social work. But much was eaten up by an introverted church. To escape the world and to prepare to go to heaven - that was the kind of

theology that dominated.” Siga Arles however feels that the winds of change have been blowing and he is positive that the gap between the sacred and secular will be bridged. “The church as the training base and the world as the mission field, where every lay person has a mission to perform, this model is increasingly being promoted now.

The divide between the sacred and the secular is being bridged with missiology. Work as an expression of worship is being taught nowadays. Theological education is being revised to secularise the sacred or to sacredise the secular and to bridge the two, bridging the dichotomy and curbing schizophrenia.”

Much of the energy, time and resources that have been channelized into high profile India focused mission strategies and research have been centred on church planting initiatives. The much touted India Leadership Study, - a two year research project on Christian leadership

development in India - and the nationwide movements and conversations that have emerged as a result of the study have been essentially about church planting networks. Not much serious thought was given to holistic transformation like healthcare, sustainable development, justice and advocacy, marketplace ministries, kingdom business, urban ministries etc.

David Bennet, widely regarded as an ace researcher who had interviewed over 300 leaders in 40 cities of India in connection with the India Leadership Study, a monumental resource of immense strategic value for the church in India agrees that there has been some blind spots too among theologians and practitioners. "Personally, this is an area I've been reflecting on in the last ten years. In fact, what got me thinking more on this was my experience in India and being on the board of directors of an organisation with a strong holistic kingdom vision. I became aware myself, of how little training I had received as a pastor on how to do holistic theology and holistic practise in my local church. That omission is there in the training of a lot of pastors. TAFTEE is a good example that has put together a good theological curriculum with a holistic emphasis. EFICOR has a lot of training on development which local churches

can use. When I look at the church planting curriculum developed I don't see a lot of materials that have a holistic dimension. It can be disappointing when some of the larger deliverers of pastoral training don't emphasize this."

Hopeful that a solid emphasis on transformation movement will turn things around, David states: "The greatest encouragement is the increasing number of people who are using the word transformation. I've been using this a lot in my own teaching in the last five years. What's coming out from the transformational movement is a specific reflection now in India with more people talking about Kingdom theology and its implications when we consider the Kingdom of God and the emphasis of Christ as Lord of all dimensions. It raises the question, what does a society look like when God reigns? Theologically that is a very important concept that should figure in all our leadership development programmes," says he. Clearly putting marketplace ministries within that scope.

### **Spirituality@work**

A rising phenomenon among corporate houses in metropolitan cities is the growth of corporate fellowship groups. Largely predominant among IT companies, virtually



Corporate Care-Cell in prayer



Music Concert organised by HCL Corporates and Chennai Corporate Fellowship

hundreds of IT professionals gather in care-cell groups in different companies for a time of intercessory prayer and mutual encouragement.

Such networks go by the names Synergy, Interface, Chennai Corporate Fellowship, Morph, HCL (IT company), Karmashetra and several other informal networks that don't go by any name. Some networks are company specific groups such as HCL in Chennai where fellowship groups meet in various HCL buildings. Part of their strategy would include inviting colleagues and their families for the Christmas programme followed by dinner, a regular annual feature for the last six years. "In 2007, an effort was made to connect all the fellowship groups across Chennai. The event was known as 'Honouring Christ our Lord' and senior VP, Anand Pillai shared a message," says John Wesley, one of the coordinators at HCL. HCL professionals would partner with another fellowship group such as Chennai Corporate Fellowship to jointly conduct worship concerts for the benefits of these professionals.

Synergy is an umbrella network of fellowship groups based in Bangalore. Fellowship groups either meet in office during lunch or meet up at a common friend's residence. Intercessory prayers are done for one another and work

related testimonies are shared. Prayer petitions are made for the organization and its leaders and management. Most of the other groups follow similar patterns with slight modifications here or there. Most of these care groups are encouraged to multiply and pass on the leadership as the groups grow.

Evidently, these caregroups have provided a support structure for Christian professionals in companies. Stories abound of how such groups have made an impact on colleagues struggling with personal problems faced at the workplace. There are also remarkable instances of the gospel being shared to senior executives or in other cases supernatural turnarounds in the organization as a result of consistent intercessory prayer.

Corporate fellowship networks use e-groups and e-devotions quite effectively either to connect with one another or stay abreast with ongoing events.

With hundreds of such care-cell groups spread around the country and corporate networks providing the much needed leadership and direction, network leaders have managed to leverage their influence to stage events and programmes, flying in high profile speakers and music

bands. Several of these networks are yet to move beyond the event management fixation that typify their approach. And, so these groups have not ingrained in themselves a solid biblical worldview of kingdom theology and a larger vision for the marketplace ministry.

Michael Fernandes, a senior executive with a leading MNC in India, is one of the key figures in the movement. He has been thrusting the need to co-develop an integrated marketplace ministry model in India. “One key thrust area - in this little model - that excites me, is developing profession-based networks of Christians, who will seek, practice, and articulate biblical solutions to contemporary professional problems. The profession-based networks would not be mere fellowship groupings - as mostly seen today- but a coordinated group of people with complementary callings and giftings, who would mentor, proclaim the gospel, train and get involved in advocacy to shape policy for the nation - all based on a biblical perspective, to disciple the nations.”

Michael is part of the Bombay Baptist Church, based in Mumbai and he believes that local churches have a huge role to play. Realizing that there’s a long way to go he states: “There is a lot of fragmentation in marketplace ministry and lack of coordination right now. One aspect of the ‘big picture’ is to leverage the gifts/roles of ‘apologetics’, ‘pastors’ and ‘administrators’ to reach the land, uniting across local churches.”

Casting a holistic vision of marketplace ministry among churches and other professional networks, is what Michael does currently besides actually practicing what he’s preaching.

## Social Transformation

From a biblical standpoint, marketplace ministry’s most pivotal emphasis is its commitment to social transformation. Recognizing the complex problems dogging all sectors of society, marketplace leadership calls for intentional and strategic effort to mobilize believers placed in different professions to make a personal and structural differences in society. L.T.’s reminder of the biblical motif of salt and light is critical here. Several voices in the movement are sounding clarion calls for marketplace leaders to reclaim the seven mountains of society – business, art, religion, education, media, healthcare and family.

Former director of EFICOR and a social activist, C.B. Samuel says that mission as transformation is a very crucial mission paradigm for a genuine social engagement. “Marketplace ministers need to redefine and reclaim the true meaning of social responsibility,” Samuel says. It’s a no brainer that Corporate Social Responsibility as popularly

practiced by media savvy companies can be a dubious double standard where these big corporate giants “give back to society” claiming to be responsible but yet violating basic human rights in the most irresponsible way. “Christian professionals need to go beyond the social service mindset and think strategically towards social transformation. Christian corporates can raise their voice against systemic social injustices within their own companies.”

Loy D’souza comes from a law background and is actively engaged in coordinating strategic events through the forum Christian Legal Association. The forum has seen Christian legal luminaries coming together to address issues of national significance. “We are now inviting Christian lawyers from all over the country to meet and strategically deal with the issue of corruption in India.”

“Media is a sector that is crying for the involvement of more Christian media personnel”, observes Stephen David, a senior journalist with India Today magazine. Interviewing top notch officials and personalities has given Stephen opportunities to influence and make an impact inter-personally. Says he: “Christians need to respond to burning issues of the day by engaging the media. Even a simple act of writing a letter to the editor may go a long way to make an impact.” Stephen also used the platform of the recently held God@Work conference to encourage Christian media professionals to network and lay down action plans to influence the media sector.

The Christian business community is probably one of the most conspicuous and active groups to be actively engaged in the mainstream business sector. With several forums and active Christian chambers of commerce around the scene in different states, hundreds of businessmen are networking and learning from one another on best practices and biblical principles of business. Scores of Business as Mission and Kingdom companies are also emerging that have been imbuing social transformation as it’s core philosophy.

Christian Professional Forum (see standalone interview) has been actively networking with key government officials, journalists, doctors and businessmen. “God has blessed India with several competent and God honouring professionals in positions of power of influence,” says Binu Thomas, one of leaders in the Forum who’s a keen observer of the marketplace movement in India. “I believe there’s going to be a great move of God among Christian professionals in India in the years to come.”

*by Bennet Emmanuel*

CM



*National Christian Charitable Organization working for the holistic development of communities, is seeking competent,*

*committed and motivated individuals who are willing to work with us. We invite you to join us in transforming our great nation.*

## **POSITIONS:**

### **Communication Executive (3)**

Should be a believer and be passionate about writing. PG Degree in Communication and Journalism or English Literature is important but not vital. Samples of writing must accompany the CV but they must be their original writing. Preference will be given to those who can read any two other Indian languages. Experience in professional writing is an advantage.

### **Photographer / Videographer (1)**

Experience of 1-2 years in taking photographs and video shoots is essential. Self motivated, should be able to operate equipment and assignments independently. Willing to travel extensively when required. Exposure to and basic understanding of shooting documentaries will be an added advantage.

### **Internal Audit Executive (3)**

B.Com/M.Com/CA. Inter with atleast 2-3 years experience in Audit. Should be willing to travel extensively for 15-20 days in a month. Should have good command over English.

### **Remmuneration:**

Package will commensurate with qualification and experience. Eligible and aspiring candidates may forward their detailed resume with two references of Christian leaders in sealed covers, superscribing position to the address mentioned below. Only Christian candidates need to apply.

## **Seva Bharat, HR Department,**

12-13-99, Mazher Chambers, Street No.3, Tarnaka, Secunderabad-17 or  
email:[hrd@sevabharat.org](mailto:hrd@sevabharat.org)/[manager@sevabharat.org](mailto:manager@sevabharat.org)



# Interview with Binu Thomas

## Christian Professional Forum

*Binu Thomas is one of the key leaders in the Christian Professional Forum. A successful businessman and a gifted networker, Binu's key passion is mobilising Indian Christian businessmen and professionals to make a kingdom impact in the marketplace*

### **What was the context behind the formation of Christian Professional Forum?**

In the early 80s, I noticed that there was quite a number of young professionals either struggling to survive in the corporate field and many quitting their jobs and looking for a job in some Christian organization or wanting to do full time ministry. Soon it became a trend and was considered an in thing. While definitely there is a place for God's specific calling in people lives which I recognize, I realized that the real factor of a good number of them were actually running away from the challenges in their workplaces. It was a trend back then to enter into seminary training after a stint in a big company and then enter into full time ministry. Other brilliant and top notch professionals some from premier institutions too would follow suit.

### **So your disappointment is not over the fact that brilliant professionals were entering seminary training or joining ministry but because they were not able to handle the pressures of the marketplace so escaping the daily grind of professional challenges.**

We as professionals have a great opportunity to make an impact with our life as witnesses in the workplace which full time ministers don't have access to. The kind of influence they can have as salt and light cannot be taken lightly. Moreover they had the right skill sets and professional expertise that are required in the industry. I would often hear spiritual reasons of how God had called them out for full time ministry. Don't get me wrong, I am not against obeying God's call for full time ministry I am against a kind of spiritual escapism that is not willing to take the challenges of the professional world head on. I have seen people giving up because of some crisis in the workplace which they are unable to handle and then we would hear about the call of God in their lives. You see

the fundamental problem was a lack of support structure for these professionals. The other sad reality is that most of them come from churches where work related issues are not preached or taught from a biblical perspective. It's all about church programmes. There is no discipleship training for professionals at all.

### **So how did the forum took shape?**

At that point of time I had heard of the then Chairman of EID Parry Dr. Easo John, who would invite Christians in his company to gather and pray once a week in his office. Back in those days this was unheard of considering the fact that many of us were trained to think about the spiritual life and our faith only within church circles. This triggered a thought among few close friends as to why shouldn't we have a forum where we discuss and train ourselves on workplace issues and how we could support one another in the professional world. Biblically, if we really understand the full meaning of the priesthood of all believers, it should radically change how you see yourself and your role in the work. I believe that the fruit of Spirit and being salt and light are best seen in the context of our workplace.

We first started off in Calcutta where I spent over 15 years of my professional life, by holding seminars and camps, inviting friends from other faiths. We would invite several of them in our forums and invite a speaker who would speak in a non theological style and avoid Christian jargons and effectively minister to them. We saw transformation in the lives of colleagues. Many of our colleagues from other faiths wanted to know how we handled work and life related situations. I must say that we never went around preaching the gospel. I believe people respond at points of crisis and need. We can make the difference if we share the gospel in a "non threatening" way.

### **Is CPF a registered body?**

Until 1997 we did not have a formal name leave alone being registered. One of the uniqueness of the forum is that we're not a formally registered body. It's purely an organic network of professionals committed to impact the marketplace. This gives us the freedom to avoid all the official committees, positions and functionaries and other time consuming procedures. This has helped us work smoother. As a result different groups have started off in different places. The name "Christian Professional Forum" was suggested by the Ex Managing Director of LIC Home Trust Mr Paul Diamond. Our main approach is to conduct workshops and seminar breakfast fellowships exclusively for Christian businessmen and professionals either by ourselves or in partnership with other likeminded groups. Starting another formal registered organization with a formally laid down agenda was never our desire. How to support and help Christian professionals in their workplaces is our utmost concern. We offer whatever support we can to other professional group who take initiatives where we feel the Spirit of God is moving. There are individuals who are part of our forum who are creating their own professional initiatives. It's that flexible.

I must add that we don't set up CPF local chapters in different places. If we find a professional group in a region under some name we would rather support them or re-activate the existing group rather than set up CPF branches or chapters. This makes our forum flexible and low profile. Over the last 25 years there are so many groups across the nation. In a few years of my stint in Mumbai in early 2000 I was part of a group Logos Management Club started by Mr Raja Singh a leading tax consultant in Mumbai. Logos planned a 5 part series of One Day Seminar on Biblical Perspective of Management with the support of several other likeminded networks groups.

### **Besides businessmen what are the kinds of professionals you are reaching out to?**

We have also been encouraging and affirming the roles of promising believers in different sectors of the marketplace. Within the professional world there are some professionals who have initiated groups in various cities. Over the last 10 years in Chennai, CPF has helped teachers, journalists and doctors conduct a workshop and get-together under CPF initiative. More recently there was a request from a section of senior government officials to set a fellowship for them. This was most effectively done by partnering with the group. CPF model is to set up and pass on the fellowship to the group so that they can handle the same on their own. It does not matter whether a group is under CPF or not, which does not matter. Like we call it – "Build, Don't own,

Transfer ( like the BDT).

### **There are several professional groups in India, is there anything unique to how CPF operates and helps professionals and businessmen?**

First we do not do church. I recollect a meeting of International Christian businessmen group that came and invited select Christian Businessmen to discuss business ventures together. but it turned out to be a praise and worship session coupled with a mini bible study at the end. That is already taken care of in the church. We have a time specific program( start on time and end on time ) and get to discussing core issues that is of importance to professionals and businessmen. In a CPF meeting we spend large part of the time ( 90%) in dealing with issues where the rubber hits the road. Its more interactive.

One thing I noticed over the last 25 years is that God has blessed a lot of Indian professionals and businessmen and Women who take their faith seriously, who have grown in wisdom and are effective communicators in the field of authority they are placed in. We can see God's hand of blessing on Indian professionals and businessmen. So we believe that it should be "For professionals and businessmen and by professionals and businessmen". There is no space to fill the hall in the last minute by others.

One other point if you want to call it uniqueness is all sessions are done by Indian professional or businessmen as speaker. The fact is God has touched the Indian Christian businessmen and has raised some top quality trainers and Seminar speakers from within the Indian professionals and businessmen who have developed best business practices based on Biblical principles. I have met at least a dozen of them who have developed excellent seminar modules. We need to use these gentlemen in the pool of Resource Speakers for the businessmen.

Foreign guest speaker should be more of a facilitator to the main speaker and I am certain that this will be taken in true Christian spirit as we share this in brotherly love. Internationals more often than not seldom understand our context and don't make the right connections with the right people. I'd rather listen to a top banker in India talk on finance rather than a globe trotting international who may not understand our context. In most of our events we see to it that Indian professionals directly address issues rather than fly in some international celebrity to talk to us. We do invite guest speakers from abroad but the programe is run in CPF style with an Indian Professional rounding up the session.

About 3 years ago we were approached by a businessmen's group to partner and help plan a Christmas Dinner for the Parliamentarians. As they had the door of opportunity, CPF coordinated with all other groups to make this a blessing. So for the last 3 years we networked with all the professionals and businessmen's groups to come together and jointly support this initiative. So for the first time about 70 to 80 professionals and businessmen met at Delhi on the same day of the Christmas Dinner for a time of prayer and fellowship lunch. We then participated in the big event in the evening where many parliamentarians attend. The Vice President of India Shri Hamid Ansari, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and Shrimati Sheila Dixit were present among other dignitaries. The Christmas message at the dinner is shared by a professional or businessman.

We do maintain a strong network with key professionals across their country. Praying for one another's needs while in meetings or while negotiation of deals or awaiting approvals. There is also an online e-group started by Michael

**Over the last 10 years in Chennai CPF has helped teachers, journalists and doctors conduct a workshop and get together under CPF initiative. More recently there was a request from a section of senior government officials to set a fellowship for them.**

of Mumbai through which we connect with one another and share our professional concerns and pray for them, so we encourage this. For example, a Christian professional in a big company shares his disappointment of his performance appraisal in the e-group, or a businessman who shares about his deep financial crisis. Immediately there'll be encouragement and professional counsel pouring in from other Christian professionals across the country. He realizes that he's not alone in his struggle and that there's a whole community of other professionals who empathize with him and who'll be upholding him in prayer. There are times when prayer concerns are shared about the failing business of a non Christian, for which prayer intercessions are made. It's amazing how God ministers to other professionals by using the struggle of one professional. In response, another person in the network would share how he handled the crisis with some measure of success. There is a feeling of

solidarity and oneness that comes with it. I see it as the body of Christ in action.

**What are some future plans for the forum?**

To form an umbrella body, "Businessmen's & Professionals Forum of India" (BPMFI) to unite all the groups ministering to professionals and businessmen so that we can compliment one another. This will enable us to build a stronger and effective Christian professional and businessmen network in India to compliment each other and not to duplicate a group in a city if one already exists

While the need is large and each year we find that a new group is started in various cities with the vision and purpose overlapping. Very often the members are almost the same in 2 to 3 groups. Many a time an international group comes with a view that there is no work among businessmen or professionals in India and want to start a group. Such a team does a whirlwind tour of 3 or 4 Metro cities and get together and announce the group is formed.



It has been my observation that at the end the meeting is a get-together of various church members and Christian organizations. Thereafter, we'd hear little from the group and soon it takes a back seat. Having interacted with most of the leaders of the businessmen's groups I am convinced that we need to facilitate the active group in a particular city. Dr Pinto and Gul Kripalani have shared the same opinion that we should focus on starting new groups in second level cities and smaller towns where there are no groups. As the main focus of all the groups are more or less the same ie "Using Biblical principles at workplace and in our business".

Our focus is to maximize results to reach the Christian businessmen and professionals in India and strengthen them.





## GENERATION NEXT MARKETPLACE LEADERS

### Natasha & Manisha

While working overseas, we both had life changing encounters with the Lord in 2002, and were impressed by the Lord to return back to India with a promise from the Scripture.

A lack of such an outlet in North India, strategically led us to start the Bookstore in Chandigarh in 2003. Isaiah 55:11 is key to our strong emphasis on using this business as a platform for ministering the Word into people’s lives.

We are a Religious & Charitable Trust operating (since 2003) to serve individuals, churches, and ministries through sale and distribution of high quality Christian literature and music from all around the world in Chandigarh, North India.

Under the Religious Trust, we operate the Christian Bookstore in the city of Chandigarh in North India. This is a bookstore ministry to serve believers and non-believers, where they are built and strengthened in God’s word.

Our business model is based on some key principles:

- Low operating & administrative costs.
- Employees with maximum productivity.
- Streamline operations by simplifying complex working procedures, thereby increasing efficiency & cutting costs in operations.
- Creating ‘Spread The Word’ as a brand name in the Christian/secular world.
- To be a one stop shop for various publishers and authors in the Christian world.

Key is to impact peoples’ lives by operating a chain of Christian bookstores in India and abroad, which deal not only with the distribution of books and music but also provide a very personal and life changing experience through the ambience and above all presence of God.

If an enterprise is ministry based, in other words, if we think we are here to serve first, there is a guarantee your enterprise will never fail. We strongly follow this principle and it has never failed us.

Under the Charitable Trust, we support orphans, elderly people, alcoholics, drug addicts and the physically disabled or handicapped.

Our Business ethics are based on Kingdom ethics. They are Bible based. We and our employees will never practice anything which goes against the word of the Lord Jesus Christ. What sets us apart - Maintaining an honest and integral relationship, according to the Word of God, with all our customers and suppliers.

At Spread The Word, we have special counseling sessions with our customers who desire to grow in God’s word and are in need of encouragement and hope.

One of the challenges we face is finding professional employees who have a calling for such a ministry and are dedicated to their call.

Our distribution base has expanded. When we started operations, our distribution was within the city whereas now we are covering the states of Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttaranchal.

Many lives have been transformed; the Word of God has been extremely beneficial in renewing those who had lost their passion for the Lord. Many people are encouraged by our own lives and are pursuing their God given desires.

