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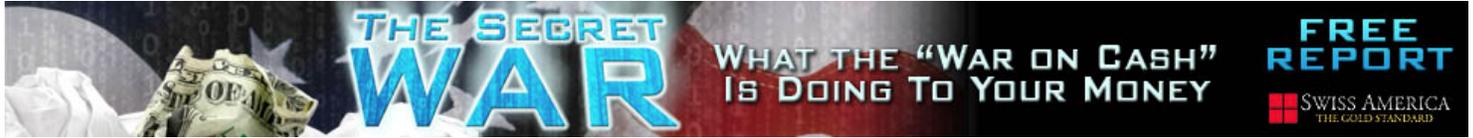
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CBN.com - Richard Blackaby has spent a lifetime in ministry. The son of noted theologian Henry Blackaby, Richard has pastored churches, led a graduate school, and has authored or co-authored 11 books, including "Experiencing God", an international bestseller. Interestingly enough, if you were to ask him where he sees God most at work today Richard would provide you with a short but succinct answer: the marketplace.

Richard is the author of *The Inspired Leader: 101 Biblical Reflections for Becoming a Person of Influence*. I recently sat down with him to discuss the biggest challenges facing Christian businessmen and women today including how you can avoid becoming a workaholic and why the concept of servant leadership is so crucial to the success of today's Christian leader.

I recently came across something where you were quoted as saying, "If you were to ask me where I see God at work today, I would tell you that that place is the marketplace." Why do you say that?

We're so fooled into thinking that it's at the church and on Sunday morning, and of course, there is a lot of activity there and good activity, but that's where the saints all gather. Jesus said in Matthew 5 we're to be salt and light, and when all the salt and light gathers together at church on Sunday, it's great, but it doesn't really do anything to the world. The world's not any brighter, because all the church people, all the church lights gathered on Sunday, but when the light and salt goes out into permeate where people live and work, which is the marketplace, that's where the



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Kingdom of God are not pastors of churches; they're business people. And we have so under-challenged them. This is typical of their involvement at church: "Would you like to pass an offering plate on Sunday? Would you maybe serve on our finance committee and meet once a month?" We give them these mundane, kind of peripheral tasks instead of saying, "God has wired you and gifted you with such ability; He's put you in an office building with a thousand people that your life could touch. You handle budgets that, at your discretion you could use to bless a kingdom of events and services, but no one's ever challenged you to stop and think about why God put you in this company and this place." That's where the action is and some of our greatest talent in the Church has been grossly underused for centuries.

What do you think is the biggest challenge facing Christian CEO's and businessmen and women today? Yes, they are there on Sunday morning, but then five or six days of the week they're out in the middle of industry and commerce.

Certainly in this economy, there's lots of challenges, but you know apart from things that would be, perhaps obvious, I think in part what I'm seeing is that, although a lot of these folks are Christians and go to church and have perhaps been Christians for years, no one ever helped them recognize the activity of God. So, they go to work Monday to Friday, and if you ask them, "While you were at work all week long, where did you see God at work?" They'd give you a funny look, like what do you mean "see God at work? I wasn't at church. I was at the office." So what did you see God do? They'd be completely disoriented to God, and that's because we've never disciplined people to actually recognize God's activities, so it's hard. You've got these talented people; often times they're willing to serve God. It's just that God's at work all around them, and they don't recognize Him. So a lot of what we do with these CEOs is to just try to help them open their spiritual eyes. Even the way we pray these days is so incorrect, you know. It's like, "God would you be with us today?" Well, God is with us today. What we need to pray is, "God would you open our eyes today so that we see just how real and present you are with us today?" Even in church we pray and invite God to join us in our worship. We need to say, "God, just like Isaiah in chapter six, would you open our eyes and let us see just how real you are." And that will radically transform the way we worship. So I would say probably the most difficult thing is if we could ever help God's people become oriented to what God's doing around them, it would revolutionize what happens in the marketplace.

As part of your ministry, you regularly counsel prominent leaders in the marketplace, and many of these folks are from Fortune 500 companies. What challenges do these people face at work that your average business person doesn't encounter? Is there any common thread?

When you're the boss at whatever level, people tend to want to tell you what you want to hear, and they want to build you up, and they want to ingratiate themselves with you, instead of telling you what you need to hear, and that's always a challenge. At any level ask yourself, "Have I surrounded myself with people that I know will be honest with me? I don't want to be in the dark here and assume everything is fine.



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CEO of a publicly traded company, you may face a lot of the same challenges as someone in a smaller business, but just on a higher scale. If you get paid a lot of money in this new job offer, does that mean that it's God? If you're going to get a significant raise in pay, you just assume that that must be of God, and yet some of these folks have turned down lucrative offers, because of what it would have done to their family, or how it would have made them relocate from the church where they were very active and being fed. At whatever level, even startups, young people just getting their first jobs, a lot of times we just assume whatever pays the most is where we should go, but I would always say don't short circuit the seeking of God just because they're paying a decent salary. Go through the whole routine of seeking God, and you might be surprised when God says, no, don't take the job that pays the most, take the one that actually pays the least but offers you the most potential in the future, or puts you next to a Christian boss instead of a very carnal, atheist boss.

One of the reasons why people don't have peace in the workplace is, sometimes they work too hard. As someone who works with a lot of business people, what can Christians do to avoid burn out, or becoming a workaholic?

I tell people that God never burns people out, but a lot of Christians are burning out. So if it's not God that's doing it, I think it's pretty important that we think through how it's happening. And typically, people are taking on things that God never told them to. And we assume that, if we're Christians and if we mean well, that whatever we undertake, God's going to give us the strength to do it. But God never promises us that He will enable us to do whatever we put our heart and mind to do. He commits to help us accomplish whatever He calls us to do, and if we're doing His will, we get His power. But everything we're doing in our will, which has to come out of our power. So, there's an inexhaustible amount of power available when you're doing God's work, but there's very limited power when it's in our own strength. When I see someone burning out, I immediately know here's a person who has involved themselves in activities that God has chosen not to enable. So, how do you know God's will? How do you know His voice so that you don't waste your time in engaging in things that God doesn't even want you to be a part of? To me, that's just the key. If you're in relationship to Him and you're doing what He guides you to do, there will always be enough strength, there will always be enough rest, but if we also want to add a few more things and do it our way, then we're going to be feeling ourselves drained all the time.

Final question, the concept of servant leadership is not new but for whatever reason it sometimes takes a backseat to more contemporary models of how to be an effective leader. How important is it to not only be a leader, but to also be a servant?

I think it is very important in two ways. One is we always have to remember we're a servant first, in Christ. He's the one we're really serving, and He's the one we owe our ultimate loyalty to. But also, I think it's important to realize that we are there to make our people better. We're there to bless our people. When a leader leaves an



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and unfortunately, too many leaders don't see it that way. They look at their people as, "Your job is to make my dreams come true. Your job is to make sure I reach my goals, and you're a tool, a pawn. You can be replaced if you don't work as hard as I want you to, and a very callous attitude toward a lot of people, instead of—a lot of times when I speak at leadership conferences, people ask me questions; you get the impression that what a lot of the leadership conferences are about is helping leaders figure out how to manipulate their people to do what they want them to do. Instead of saying, how can I help make the lives of my employees better? How can I have better morale here so that people feel refreshed and invigorated at having worked at this place? Sometimes I think we kind of get the wrong notion that being a servant leader means you basically follow your people. I would say, no, that's not leadership. You're the leader, but what servant leadership means, number one is, you're really a servant of Christ, and He's going to guide you to do some things, because He loves those people, and He's going to use you to care for them. But a lot of what servant leadership is about is to see your people as your primary calling, to minister to these people and equip them so that they can be effective. And if you've got great, healthy, effective people, you're going to have a great organization.

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