



The Adventures of Mike and Mandy

Part 3 – The Joy in a Job Well Done

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I'm getting to talk about something that I'm passionate about and that is work. The title of this message is *The Joy of a Job Well Done*. For some of us, we have taken heed to Ted's warning to not be eye rollers during this series. But, for me, this happens to be kind of my wheelhouse. I am absolutely in love with this generation, with Mike and Mandy. I've actually had the fortunate opportunity over the last ten years... And I had to do a little math here, but I have been a part of a director team or a director who has hired and managed over 3,000 Mike and Mandys in the last decade. So, I have a little bit of experience rubbing elbows with these young people. I want to tell you that I believe in them to know end.

We've got an amazing generation that is coming up the ranks. They are different than the generations that came before us, but let me tell you this: They are hungry and they are ambitious. When you give somebody who is hungry and ambitious proper lanes to run in, if you give them guidance and management and then, within those boundaries, give them a clear focus... If you manage them well, encourage them, train them up, they are going to be absolute work horses.

We're going to jump into this together. I think you're going to find that our conversation is not only going to be healthy for Mike and Mandy, but for all the supporting generations standing around them. It's going to be healthy for us as we place things in context.

I would like to lay out my goals for the message this morning right off the bat. First of all, I want to take work and put it in the proper context. We're going to reposition it in God's economy so we have a clear view of what work is in God's eyes, so that we know how to approach and attack our work lives. Then we're going to talk about character and competency, the two things that you need. They are essential to being successful throughout your career. We're going to take a look at those things together and I would invite you to apply these principles to your own life, but also to think through how you can understand Mike and Mandy's generation and then work to support them and empower them to be successful as they are building a career. Y'all with me on that? Okay, awesome.

I want to tell you a little bit about **Mike and Mandy** in the workplace. As they start their careers, there are a couple of things you need to know. **They want more than just a source of income. They are looking to be a part of something bigger than themselves.** The next thing is **they long for their skills to add value to a team or an organization.** For many of the generations that came before them, when you would give them an instruction, the expectation was a "Yes Sir or a "Yes ma'am" and they would turn around and go off and do what they do.

We still value that and we're going to talk about that later, but what you'll find with Mike and Mandy is if you give them the why behind what they're doing, they are going to emotionally attach to the mission and their role within that mission and it's going to become personal to them. As an employer or a leader, if you can make a mission personal to those you are leading, your objectives are going to be obtained so much faster and with so much passion and excellence. So, the way that they are built, if we can get our arms around how to manage them, they're going to produce amazing things.

Work and Worship

As I said, I want to talk about context. We're going to start our conversation with the idea of work and worship. I want to introduce you to a Hebrew word found over and over again in the Old Testament. It's *abad*. *Abad* means labor, work, or service of God. You'll see this hundreds of times in the Old Testament. You'll see that this word *abad* is interchangeable when talking about work and worship. Let me give you a couple of examples from the scriptures.

Exodus 34: 21 is God speaking to Moses to go out and give instruction. These are God's words. **21 "You shall work (abad) for six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest..."**

The next passage is Exodus 8: 1. Again, this is God speaking to Moses, preparing him to go to Pharaoh. **Let my people go, so that they may worship (abad) the Lord.** So, you see the same word used for work and worship.

A third reference is Joshua 24: 15. **"But as for me and my household, we will serve (abad) the Lord."** So, you see work, worship, and service are all the same word. Isn't that interesting?

As I think about this a little bit and how this applies to my personal life, I realize that **worship is much more than just singing praise music on Sunday mornings**, right? If you look at the story of Cain and Abel, Cain and Abel both brought a sacrifice to the Lord. Cain brought a fruit salad. He worked the ground and so he brought the fruit of the earth. Abel was a shepherd and he brought one of his sheep. They each brought a different sacrifice, both of which were actually appropriate in this situation.

But, the scripture says that God accepted Abel's sacrifice, but rejected Cain's. Here's the difference between the two sacrifices. Cain had a sour heart. So, with the sacrifices, while both acceptable when they were presented before the Lord, God looks beyond the sacrifice itself and he looks into the state of the heart. He saw that Cain's heart was sour. He had a lack of faith or a disdain towards God and so his sacrifice was rejected.

What that makes me think about, introspectively, is how I look at my work and the attitude with which I approach my work, understanding that it is a sacrifice before the Lord. Now, that's both awesome and terrifying at the same time because how many times have I had a sour attitude when I'm doing a job or working? I have to be honest. That happens on a daily basis. I find myself grumbling or complaining about things that... And most of it's in my mind, but God knows what's happening in my mind and in my heart. I don't want to waste my opportunities to honor and bless God.

Work is an act of worship. So, Mike and Mandy, one of the best scriptures... I think this is the best one out there. If you're going to take a Bible verse and hang it as the banner over your career or your work life, I'd take you to Colossians 3: 23. **"Whatever you do..."** Whether you're a local farmer or your working in the produce at Country Mart or teaching math in the 11th grade or you're working as a custodian or groundskeeper. Whatever you do, **"do you work heartily, as for the Lord rather than men."** That's good for all of us to hear, isn't it? Whatever you do. That means not just the part of my job that I really enjoy, but even the parts that are a grind and that are difficult for me. Whatever I do, I want to engage in those, understanding that as I play it out, I can offer worship or a pleasing sacrifice to God as I approach my work life.

I think it's important for us to understand, as we approach our careers and our work, that **part of being a godly man or woman is being a good worker.** If you look at the scripture all the way at the beginning in Genesis, in six days, God makes his creation and he makes a beautiful creation and he says, "I don't have anybody to cultivate the land," so he decides to make man on that sixth day. And he creates man and in Genesis 2: 15, he takes that man and he puts him in the garden in the middle of his creation. Adam had a responsibility. His responsibility was to cultivate the earth. God gave him stewardship. So, you think, even before the fall, even before sin came into the scenario, man was created to work. It wasn't until the fall when the curse came... So, sin is introduced into the world, the curse comes behind it where work becomes toil, where thorns and thistles grow up and you eat by the sweat of your brow.

The thing that is so awesome even today, when we grind and we have to feed ourselves by the sweat of our brow, when we do hard jobs, that's what we get paid for. That's kind of the way I like to think about it. When I'm working and it gets tough, I want to remind myself that this is how I'm feeding my family. I'm getting paid to do this. So, we know without a doubt that for man, that is woven into who we are to be.

For those of us who are struggling with being slothful or not getting a job or living off mom and dad or the government or whatever it might be, there's going to be a hole in your heart, an emptiness because you were made to work and if you're not working, you're going to miss out on the way that God created you. You're going to miss out on joys that were built into the fabric of your being.

Then we turn our gaze upon the woman. In Proverbs 31, there are 21 verses devoted to a godly woman. As I studied through those verses, I found that 11 of the 21, so more than 50% of this text, is talking about the woman's work ethic. That was surprising to me. I kind of knew in my mind that a good chunk of that was related to work, but when I finally got in there and I started counting the verse, I realized when you look at a woman of godly character, a huge piece of that puzzle is her work ethic. So, we know that for both man and woman, that we were created to work. In that, we find joy and fulfillment that we can't find otherwise. It's how God made us.

There are two big ideas when we're considering work: **Character and Competency.** We going to start with the competency piece. Competency is just what type of work you do. So, competency is your ability or your skills that you bring to the table. Sometimes, you'll walk into a job or a career and you bring along God given skills that automatically apply. Other times, you walk into a situation of work or a career where you don't have those skills and you have to learn that competency or build the

competency over a period of time to become excellent at it. In either case, they're both important and they're both relevant.

When you're looking for a job, you want to find a job where you're God given skillset, your personality, your spiritual gifting is tapped into. That's when you are going to function at your highest level, but you must understand "I've got a lot to learn." And if you come at it with an attitude of knowing "Yeah, I might be good at this, but I also recognize that I have so much to learn." And whatever your gifting is, you need to understand it's like a pencil, you've got to continue to sharpen it.

You've probably seen this in my life as a communicator. It is probably a gift that God gave me, but I have fumbled around so much over the years and just little by little, each time I learn a little bit more. I want to approach communicating with humility so that I can continue to grow in that gift. So, competency is something that we need to be aware of and we really need to lean into.

I want to talk about Mike and Mandy's value in the workplace. I think it's really important for everybody in our congregation to understand the value that they bring to the table. You see, eighteen to thirty year olds... And it's not just in this phase of time. I think it has been and always will be this way. For eighteen to thirty year olds, whatever they are consuming will determine the direction of market and the direction of culture.

You might wonder if that's really true. Years ago, there was some kid that was a freshman at Pi Beta Phi and he put on his freshman 15 and started a band. All of the sudden tight pants and Amish beards are back in style. Today there are 55-year-old pastors that are rocking that style all around the country. It's not happening in Branson because apparently, we are like the fashion black hole of the universe or something. But, generally, what young people begin to consume, especially on the East and West Coasts, will begin to infiltrate into the Midwest. I think we must be the center of the country, but it will eventually come to us and then it will take over our culture.

Think about simple things like Facebook. Facebook was started for college people. By a show of hands, how many grandpa and grandmas are on Facebook? My granny will be watching this tomorrow on her iPad in Joy, Illinois, population 200. Do I need to argue this anymore? It's a pretty powerful point.

Rarely do next-generation ideas and innovation come from the previous generation. As leaders and employers, you would be wise to understand this. The better job we do of stewarding Mike and Mandy in our workforce, the more innovative our company or our ministry or organization is going to be. If we put them in the box and we just have them grinding on menial tasks, you're going to miss out on the evolution of your product or of your company or of your organization.

Here's the reality. As an organization, if you don't evolve, culture is not going to stop. It's always going to change, it's always going to ebb and flow. And if you do things the way that you've always done them, you will eventually become phased out. Mike and Mandy present incredible value. If you bring them in and listen to them and empower them, they will help you stay relevant for years to come.

Employers: Don't be a Seagull Leader. I got this from Andy Stanley. The idea is this. A seagull leader is somebody who will swoop in on their Mike and Mandys in the workplace who are dreaming and ideating and innovating and they'll poop all over their awesome ideas. So, don't swoop and poop. Don't be a seagull leader.

I want to help you with that. If you swoop and poop and you basically say all the reasons why their awesome idea isn't going to work, if you stifle Mike and Mandy, these young **innovators are going to leave and take their next generation ideas with them.** So, instead of stifling Mike and Mandy, you want to simulate them. Granted, every idea isn't going to be a homerun, but if you want to tap into the creativity of Mike and Mandy, you can't pooh on their ideas because they have to have the freedom to throw out some ideas that don't work. If there is fear that every single idea that you speak out must work well, ideation and innovation is going to be stifled and creativity is going to go out the window.

So, here's a little nugget for employers out there: **Trade How for Wow.** When you walk into that situation and there is creativity happening, rather than asking how or, again, putting up those barriers, pull back the logistics just for a moment and allow creativity to flourish. Instead of saying how, say "WOW! That's an amazing idea! Keep vetting that out. Talk about that amongst each other. Put together a proposal; I want to look at it." And, Mike and Mandy, it's okay for your employer to say "no." But, it's important for the employers to continue to say, "This one might not work, but I want you to keep dreaming. Don't stop dreaming because one of these ideas is going to pop."

Great leaders aren't looking for their best idea, they are looking for THE best idea. I think that cutting edge companies and organizations are ones that harness Mike and Mandy and they are picking up their best ideas. That's requires humility as a leader, but if that humility is in place, it's only going to benefit the organization and the mission in front of you.

Understanding Mike and Mandy's value, now I want to turn back to Mike and Mandy and make sure we have a proper perspective of things.

Mike and Mandy: Don't expect that all of your ideas will be strategic initiatives overnight. Every idea isn't a grand slam. It's important for Mike to remember "You don't even know how to change a diaper, bro! Or a tire!" So, you have to be humble enough to know, "I am young. And my ideas, I'm going to keep coming up with them, but I've got to understand and have a sober understanding that all my ideas... I don't have the 30,000-ft. view, I don't have the experience, but I want to continue to swing for the fences on behalf my employer on behalf of my leaders and they can vet out the ideas and decide what is great or what is not."

And if you find yourself in a stifling situation, before you quit your job, go get another job. Once you've signed on the dotted line, then you put in your two weeks' notice, you finish your two weeks, and then you move on. Do it the right way without burning any bridge. Do it with honor and kindness, thanking them for the lessons that you learned along the way. Amen?

Entitlement reeks. Your humility and tact will open up doors to add value to your team or organization. This is one of the things where I want to encourage Mike and Mandy to look in the mirror. If you hear yourself justifying in your head how you've been wronged or how awesome you are or how your ideas just aren't understood, you need to quiet yourself. I have to tell you that I'm right there with you. I'm an idea machine; I'm creative by nature. One of the things I have to quiet in my heart and soul is I've got to rebuke that justification in my mind. My natural, fleshly inclination is to begin all this negative talk in my head towards those who have squashed my idea or whatever it might be. But, in that moment, I want to clothe myself in humility. I have to choose it.

In 1 Peter 5, Peter writes, ***5 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."***

The solution to entitlement creeping in a becoming a part of your character – which we'll get to in a moment – is I want to rebuke that, I want to ask God's forgiveness, I want to ask God to help me take that away, to get it out of my head, and then to choose to put on humility. Every morning when I put on my britches, I want to put on humility before I walk into the workplace, knowing that I'm young, but I'm valuable.

Your humility intact is going to open up doors to add value to your team or your organization. Again, in working with 3,000 Mike and Mandys over the years, one of the most attractive qualities in young people is humility. I think the reason it's so attractive is because it's probably so rare. But, when you see that and you see somebody working hard and choosing humility in those moments and grinding and being faithful, what it does for me as the employers is it makes me want to empower you. I want to throw doors of opportunity open for you. I want to make you a better leader. I want to give you more opportunity.

Are there employers and leaders out there that agree with that? Absolutely. That's truth. So, know that even though choosing humility is hard, it's going to add value to your team and those doors of opportunity are going to fly open. You just be ready for them when they do.

Another scripture in James says, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God and he will lift you up in due time." So, when the time is right, God himself is going to be the one to exalt you and give you those new opportunities. As a follower of Christ, I get to trust him in that process.

Employers: Hire Work Ethic and Train Competency. Another word for competency in the Christian faith is discipleship. You get the opportunity to build into them, to invest into Mike and Mandy. One of my favorite quotes and Ted's... Ted was talking to a young counselor who worked for Joe White. This is the kid's quote. He is speaking of Joe. He said, "He called it discipleship; I called it manual labor." Joe is the master of turning manual labor into discipleship. But you get to come elbow to elbow with them and teach them and build into their career.

Mike and Mandy, I want to encourage you to be patient and to stay ready to walk through the doors of opportunity when they open. Set out to earn the respect of your leaders through you character.

Speaking on character, if we were to define it in the midst of this working conversation, I would define it this way: how hard you work. I want to make sure that both character and competency are valuable and we have the ability to grow in both. You may not have a great work ethic, if you're honest with yourself. But, you don't have to stay that way. In fact, you can wake up tomorrow morning and you can crush tomorrow. You can absolutely crush Monday. That's a simple decision that you can make. "To grind it out for eight hours, I'm going to give it everything I've got and I'm going to do better than I did last week."

Proverbs 12: 11 - ***He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who pursues worthless things lacks sense.*** This "pursues worthless things," is talking about chasing fantasies. If I were to sum this up for Mike and Mandy, I would just say, "Don't be a dumb dumb." If you want to produce, if you want to provide for your family, if you want to attract a female so that you can date her and someday marry her, you need to work hard. And God's going to honor that.

One of the leading reasons for the delay of marriage and for cohabitation is that Mike doesn't have a good work ethic. I'm going to respond to that just by simply reading Proverbs 6: 6-11. ***6 Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, 7 which, having no chief, officer or ruler, 8 prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest.*** So, that means I'm working for something that's coming in the future. I might not be able to grasp it now, but I'm going to keep grinding faithfully. ***9 How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?*** If you're sleeping more than eight hours every night, you need to set your alarm and get up and get another job. ***10 "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest"—11 Your poverty will come in like a vagabond and your need like an armed man.*** I don't even need to say anymore on that.

I want to encourage Mike and Mandy to **be a "Yes Sir" employee.** Again, in some ways this is a thing of the past. I was a northerner that moved to the south and I've been so pleasantly surprised by young men and women who retort "Yes Sir." In fact, Ashley and I are hammering that into our children. We want them to be "Yes Sir," "Yes Ma'am" kiddos. As an employer, it's so refreshing to walk up to a young man or a young woman and ask them to do something and have them look you in the eyes and say, "Yes Sir" and turn around and go do it. I can't tell you how much I value that. It's incredible. Be a "Yes Sir" or a "Yes Ma'am" employee.

Joy in a Job Well Done. Again, you were created for work and I think most people know this. On a good day, when we attack a hard job and we finish it and we walk away and we take a look at it, it feels good, doesn't it? I cleaned out our refrigerator yesterday and I just keep opening it like "Man! This look fantastic!" I love it. Really; I was glowing this morning. The joy in a job well done. It's not rocket science, but it's real, isn't it? We've all experienced it and you can identify with that.

One of the Robbins family values... Again, we brainwash our children with godly things. One of the Robbins Family values is work hard, play hard. It's something that we talked about all the time in our family and we believe that God created us to both work hard and play hard. He wants us to work hard, he wants us to grind, he wants us to sweat, he wants us produce, but he also wants us to enjoy life, to laugh and to play and to go on great adventures. Sometimes, I think when you approach work with a godly attitude, the two can combine. Isn't that an awesome thing?

My little buddy, the Knox man... I have a picture for you; it's just going to bless your socks off. It blesses mine. Look at that guy! He's scrubbing that pan and he's got a big smile on his face. He doesn't even know he's not playing right now. Isn't that great? So, we work hard and we play hard. They know that when we work together and, Mommy and Daddy, we do it together. Frankly, I believe in that. I believe in that servant leadership not only in the home, but also on the job. If you're going to be a great leader, you get in there and you get your hands dirty too. I don't care how high up you are on the ladder... I can't tell you how many tennis courts I've painted with Joe White. He outworks everybody. It's unreal, but it's such an inspiration because he's always been right there beside us.

This is even better. Look at him! Look at how happy he is! He is thrilled! I walk in there and I say, "Wow, Knox, great job, buddy!" You know, this is actually generational. My mom grew up... She loves to clean the toilets. That's weird, right? Then I kind of like to clean them and now the Know man... third generation. Isn't that awesome.

Your joy in your job is directly connected to your commitment in faith. This is really piggybacking off Ted's message last week that your commitment to your faith is going to dictate how much joy you have in your job.

Your personality, your gifts, experiences, passions, and joy are in full bloom when you have a clear conscience and you're walking by the spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. All those things... I have to sing it because I can't remember it when I don't sing it. All of those awesome aspects of the fruit of the Spirit blossom when you walk with God in your job. No matter how hard it is, no matter how much of a grind... In fact, the harder the job, the greater the testimony. If I can approach the grind with joy in my heart, people look at me and wonder what is wrong with me. And then I tell them. "I have joy in my heart because Jesus takes up residence there."

This clear conscience piece is really important. When we have sin, when it's hidden, whether it's related to the job or not, it's always going to dampen the fruit of the Spirit. It's going to be like a wet blanket on our fire that burns for Jesus. Are we going to make mistakes, folks? We are. No matter how long we walk with Jesus, we're going to make mistakes, but the awesome thing about our God is that each morning when we wake up, great is thy faithfulness, his mercies are new every morning. And I get to run to him and say, "Lord, I'm so sorry; please forgive me." And if I've offended somebody in the midst of that sin, I get to go to them, reconcile, and then I'm set free.

In summation, **The Joy in a Job Well Done:**

- Work is worship and when you love God, it fills you with joy to be a blessing to him. No matter how hard it is, no matter what you're doing, you can find joy in being a blessing to him because he's watching. Whatever you do whether in word or in deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Character and Competency are essential to building a great career. And it's important to remember that we have a responsibility to grow in both.
- True joy in the workplace comes when your gifts are flourishing as you walk with God.

Father, thank you so much for taking one of the things that we spend the most hours in our entire waking life and designing it so that work can be a blessing, full of joy and honoring to you. It is a joy, it is a blessing to honor you.

I want to pray over Mike and Mandy and, in particular, the young folks sitting down here in the front row. I pray, God, that you would ignite their passion and their gifting and that you would drop them into a position where they could thrive and grow and build an amazing career and an amazing family and be a blessing to their community.

I pray, God, that as a church body, individually we could grasp these biblical truths and then we could turn to Mike and Mandy – our eighteen to thirty year olds – and we could be a blessing to them by discipling them and investing in them and putting them in situations where they can grow and add value to a team and a mission.

God, we worship you and we're excited to go to work on Monday morning. It's in Jesus' name we pray... Amen.