

Faith and Work – The Challenge to Embrace the Church

Roger Anderson
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The Faith and Work (F&W) movement is extensive, it is growing rapidly, and it has become noteworthy to church leaders, Christian authors, and even the secular press. However, para-church ministries have led nearly all F&W initiatives up until recently. These ministries are largely led by lay leaders and operate outside of church support and sponsorship. Their conferences, workshops, and seminars are in hotels and conference centers.

Thousands of believers participate in F&W events outside of their churches, because God is speaking to their needs. However, when these events are done, they go back to churches that never talk about their work calling, usually don't understand it, or are simply unaware.

These F&W followers are a diaspora of apostles. They meet at F&W events, one or two each from numerous churches and communities throughout the world. They are inspired. They are excited. Os Hillman, founder of Marketplace Leaders, once told me, *"It scratches people where they itch"*. It is so true. At each and every F&W event, verbal and written feedback told us that the participants were inspired and energized. The message strongly connected with them.

Unfortunately, they return to communities after a F&W event where they seldom meet fellow Christians or pastors who share their enthusiasm. There are many small cells around the country, but most people feel alone in their new revelation about *Vocation Theology*. And so, their energy is not fed – and it often dies.

Kent Humphries, former President of the *Fellowship of Companies for Christ International* (FCCI), in his book, *Letters to Pastors*, said that most pastors simply don't understand Vocation Theology. *Letters to Pastors* was his last book before he recently passed away. Kent believed that only one to five percent of professional vocational ministers understand the problem and are modeling the biblical principles. Another 15 to 20% think they understand (and may even preach it), but they do not model it. The other 80%, well, they just don't get it at all.

Os Hillman also said, *"I believe pastors will be the last to really embrace this movement because it is such a new paradigm. However, ultimately, they will be the instruments God will use to make the greatest impact in the movement because of their influence in so many people in their lives"*.

Nearly all F&W leaders share this frustration, as well as the hope that pastors will soon embrace the movement. So, what is the problem?

I believe there are eleven key barriers that prevent pastors from embracing *Vocation Theology* and supporting a F&W movement in their church:

1. **Lack of Awareness** - Many pastors are simply not aware of what is going on at the grass roots level in this movement.
2. **"It's Another Program"** – They may view this as just another "special interest group" – another church program that requires significant staff time, and building/space resources.
3. **Do Not See Potential to Transform Lives** - They do not understand the huge potential for this movement to transform lives. They don't understand that many Christians lack a complete spiritual life when they do not connect their work with God's purpose. They don't understand the energy that can be released when the circle of church-family-community-work is completed.
4. **They Don't Feel Equipped** - They may also feel they are not equipped. How do they teach congregants about faith in the workplace when most have never worked in the "secular" workplace? It (the "secular" workplace) is a part of life that they have not experienced and they feel less qualified to "pastor" others about. So, they tend to avoid it.

5. **The Business World is Tainted** – Pastors often view the marketplace as “tainted” to some degree. This view is reinforced daily by congregants who tell them about injustices they encounter at work or their inability to find jobs. Work is necessary, even welcome to produce tithes for “God’s work”, but it’s kind of messy. The “Corporate World” has a bad reputation in today’s culture, so they tend to stay away from it.
6. **It’s Not Missional** - Pastors view foreign lands and “communities” as mission fields. Pastors are excited to financially support the poor in their community or to support mission building or infrastructure programs in poor countries. But they don’t see the workplace as a mission field with the same vigor. They have subscribed to the politically correct sacred-secular divide and are uncertain about being active in the marketplace. They do not see that their largest and least expensive mission opportunity is in the workplace.
7. **It Is Missional** – Some pastors are most interested in getting congregants to spend more time in church through programs in their facilities. F&W ministry is missional and involves equipping workplace disciples to work and create activities (bible studies, prayer groups, reading groups, workshops, etc.) in offices and coffee shops in the marketplace, *not in their churches*. It is a mission of “sending out”, rather than a program to spend more time in the church.
8. **It is Initiated by Marketplace Leaders** – The impetus for a pastor to explore Vocation Theology usually comes from a lay person who is part of this F&W Diaspora. This person is typically a corporate leader who has “finally” discovered something that energetically connects him with his faith – *and hopefully with his church*. Unfortunately, pastors feel intimidated by these people and they fear loss of control by empowering them. So, they try to over-control the direction and pace of F&W initiatives. The lay leader, therefore, deals with the frustration of trying to motivate a pastor that is unable to capture the same zeal. The pastor also moves forward at a glacial pace, compared to what the lay leader is used to in the corporate world. The end result is that energy is sapped out of the lay leader and the initiatives die or interminably exist at a nominal level.
9. **Teaching vs. Equipping (I could lose control)** – Kent Humphries listed 10 observations in *Letters to Pastors* on why pastors are reticent to embrace a F&W initiative in their church. He said that pastors often confuse teaching and equipping. He also feels that they do not understand the difference between leading (teaching) followers and equipping leaders. The F&W movement requires pastors to understand that their primary job is to equip disciples to do teaching and discipleship.
Some pastors may be uncomfortable with commissioning lay people to go out into the marketplace as representatives of their own church, teaching others. Lay leaders have not been to seminary and pastors may worry that their training is inadequate, or their doctrinal thinking may not always be 100% in harmony with the church doctrine. “Who knows what will be taught?”
10. **They Have Never Seen it Modeled** – Unfortunately, there are few churches that really model Vocation Theology in their church. Redeemer in NYC and Christ Community in KC are the only ones that I am aware of. Most other churches that try to integrate F&W see this as event driven. They might have one sermon a year on F&W principles, or perhaps a sermon series. And, they might host an educational workshop or seminar on the topic. They seem to do two or three events, check the boxes, and then do the same thing the next year. My experience is that these “events” (sermons, workshops, or a conference) create a positive response from congregants that surprise pastors. But they don’t understand how to go to the next level. They believe that they have modeled F&W integration, but they are only doing a few events. Most pastors don’t have any guidance on what F&W integration should look like.
11. **Do Not See The Material Benefit to their Church** – Most importantly, they also do not see how integrating Vocational Theology into the church DNA could significantly increase their church growth and financial support. They don’t understand that a F&W movement will multiply the number of church missionaries, increase active participation and identification with the church, bring new believers and seekers into their congregation, and more deeply motivate congregants to tithe generously.

We need to overcome these barriers, because Christ works through His Church and our local churches need to be at the center of any movement by God. The new direction within the F&W movement needs to be

institutional. Para-church ministries have done much and they will continue to be important, but they are terminally handicapped when not partnered with the church and other Christian institutions.

The only way to overcome these barriers is to directly address them with pastors. Here are some thoughts about how this is being done and could be done:

Pastoral Barrier	Solution
<p>“I don’t know much about it.”</p>	<p>Basic education and awareness education on <i>Vocation Theology</i> is already underway on many fronts. In addition to the continuing events offered by para-church ministries, there are numerous conferences, workshops, and seminars more recently available from:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leading churches like <i>Redeemer</i> in NYC and <i>Christ Community</i> in KC. Many other churches are also starting to get involved. 2. Several key foundations and institutes have emerged recently that are providing grants to support pastoral education and development. Kern Foundation, Acton Institute and others are leading. Kern is also supporting <i>Made to Flourish</i>, a Pastor’s network to provide funds for <i>Vocation Theology</i> training and implementation. 3. Seminaries are creating their own F&W initiatives to develop future clergy leaders. Bethel’s <i>Work With Purpose Initiative</i> is a leading example. Gordon-Conwell, Fuller, Regent, Southwest Baptist, and others are also actively involved. Their focus is on future clergy. 4. Christian Colleges are integrating <i>Vocation Theology</i> study – Wheaton, Bethel, LeTourneau, Seattle Pacific, Kings, and others. Their focus is on future clergy and lay leaders.
<p>“It’s Another Program”</p>	<p>A strong argument needs to be made that it is <u>not</u> just another program or a special interest group.</p> <p>Christian life consists of Church, Family, Community, and Work. As such, it is an integral part of every Christian’s life. In fact, work occupies up to 70% of our waking time between “getting ready to go”, commuting, work hours, and occupation on our minds even when at home. To nominally address this sector of our lives in 5 or 10% of church ministry tells congregants that pastors don’t understand the importance. Unfortunately, it also tells them that it is not important to God.</p> <p>Additionally, a F&W priority is not a traditional program that requires significant pastoral time and church resources. Laypeople lead F&W initiatives and they operate outside of the church facilities. They are not resource intensive. They can take minimal pastoral or staff time and require little from building facilities.</p> <p>F&W training for pastors should emphasize that this is not another program. It is an integral part of congregants’ lives – one that is grossly underfed by the church.</p>
<p>“I don’t see the potential to transform lives.”</p>	<p>Pastors naturally connect their work and their faith. But many do not understand the chasm in the lives of their congregants when they do not adequately connect their faith and work.</p> <p>Congregants who do not integrate their faith and work, and do not understand that God has called them with purpose into their workplaces, live incompletely. Many live as schizophrenics who see God in their church, family, and community roles, but leave God out of their work. That does not work.</p> <p>By validating their lives in the workplace as God’s calling, congregants are able to fully integrate their life and faith. For many, this gives new meaning and purpose to work. It also makes church relevant to their lives and significantly strengthens their identity as Christians.</p> <p>F&W seminars for pastors should develop stronger arguments for how this initiative will transform lives for Christ.</p>

“I don’t feel equipped.”

Many pastors do not feel equipped to speak into the marketplace. That’s OK. We need to help them to understand and accept this, not be threatened by it – not to feel like they lose control or authority. Their calling is to equip those lay leaders who are best equipped to reach others in the marketplace.

Kent Humphries once said to me, *“You need a reformed alcoholic to lead an AAA ministry. In the same sense, pastors cannot lead this. They need to equip and release lay leaders who live in the marketplace.”*

Pastors have two options. One, if their church can support this, they should hire someone who spent most of his/her career in the marketplace and perhaps went to seminary later, to become a *Pastor of Marketplace Missions*.

Alternatively, if a few lay leaders are called into this ministry, pastors need to come along side and support them. Kent Humphries says this may feel like shepherding wild horses, but they need to invest their faith in energizing and equipping them. Let them go.

F&W training for pastors should include discussion and planning on how they can confidently equip and empower lay people to lead this mission.

“The business world is tainted.”

Theology of Work education should put more time into showing pastors that the business world is no more tainted than the rest of the world – and that God’s first plan for us was to be co-workers. Our mission is to impact the business world and redeem it as best as we can.

Of course the business world is tainted. However, it still serves a wonderfully designed purpose. It exists to meet mankind’s needs. God wishes for our needs to be met, so every time someone performs an honorable transaction with a good product, it pleases God! Paul glorified God by making good tents, on time, at fair prices. Scripture does not need to tell me those details. If he did not make good tents, on time and at fair prices, then unhappy customers would have heckled him in the marketplace. His testimony would have been ruined.

I agree that our world is tainted. But that equally affects our family life, our community life and it even affects our churches. The workplace is no different, despite the current media bias against “corporate America.”

We need to help pastors to understand that the workplace is no different, better or worse. It is a part of God’s rhythm of life. In fact, it was our first calling.

“It’s not missional.”

Missionary support is often focused on evangelistic missionaries or infrastructure programs in foreign lands. Secondly, it usually includes reaching the impoverished, the imprisoned, and the addicted in our own communities. The common thread is to reach people who are deprived and broken.

The marketplace does not meet this definition in many minds. Businesspeople are employed. Some are even affluent.

But that view is incomplete – even wrong. Despite socio-economic measures, many in the workplace are ill and impoverished in their personal and spiritual lives. They surround us in our work lives and some are sitting among us in church services. We are not meeting their needs.

The F&W movement is missional. It reaches out to the lost in the marketplace. It offers to fill a gap in their lives. It brings people to Christ.

Even for believers it is missional. It fills the same gap in their life. It gives them purpose. It energizes them. It reconnects them with a church that speaks to their own needs.

F&W education for pastors needs to emphasize the importance of the marketplace as a mission field – even that lay people are missionaries. They should commission them, just as they would commission foreign missionaries.

“It is missional.”

However, for some churches, pastors might view the F&W initiative as “too missional.” It is tradition to send out a few people to foreign mission fields and check in with them from time to time.

However, mobilizing a significant number of church members to work in missions *outside of the church facilities* could be contrary to their church building plans. As mentioned earlier, F&W missions operate largely outside the church walls.

Too many churches are focused on maximizing the time that congregants spend in the church – filling the halls and rooms.

Dennis Peacocke, author of *“Doing Business God’s Way”* and *“Winning the Battle for the Minds of Men”* rails against churches who encourage what he calls a “Christian ghetto” – a church where programs are offered nearly 24/7 to provide opportunities for believers to “hide out” in their facilities until Christ returns to “fix things.”

F&W education for pastors needs to put more emphasis on the role of clergy to equip and “send out”, rather than measuring success by programs that fill (and expand) the facility.

“It is initiated by marketplace leaders.”

Pastors often seek to create relationships with business executives because they recognize their well-developed skills in organizational management, change management, strategic planning, and a host of other leadership areas. They are interested to learn from these lay leaders, but they are also fearful to empower them. Kent Humphries wrote, *“they are intimidated by strong leaders.”*

However, it is usually these very corporate executives and business leaders that introduce F&W ideas to pastors. These are some of the highest potential individuals in the congregation for church purposes, and they also have the greatest need to connect their work calling and their faith. The F&W message especially resonates with their lives. They have a mission that finally rivals the energy in their corporate work.

But pastors want to shepherd them like sheep, rather than train and release them like the wild horses that they are (I borrow from Kent Humphries’ analogy in his book, *Shepherding Horses*).

Unfortunately, these conflicts result in loss of energy and interest by the business leader. Their initiatives die or atrophy.

F&W training for pastors should focus much more on encouragement and training to embrace marketplace leaders – to meet them at least halfway, to enable their sense of purpose and urgency and to release them to organize and lead.

“I could lose control.”

F&W initiatives in churches are largely led by lay people and mostly occur in the marketplace. They may have less regular oversight by pastoral staff than other activities.

This is a concern. The pastor might have empowered an energized layperson that he/she trusts to lead this mission, but now this layperson is empowering other laypeople in the congregation to do work in the name of the church out in a marketplace where many pastors seldom visit. It is also moving at a more rapid pace than the church is accustomed to!

Panic. *“Have I lost control?”* This is a real risk. The pastor needs to be in control without being controlling.

F&W training for pastors should focus on equipping them to set up reasonable guidelines for periodic reporting by the lay leader and jointly develop parameters for qualifying lay people that participate in F&W ministry roles.

“I’ve Never seen it Modeled.”

I believe that pastoral education on *Vocation Theology* needs to include church modeling. Case studies should be done on the experiences at *Redeemer* and *Christ Community*. These case studies should track how this evolved, what it includes, and what impact they have seen.

Additionally, pastoral education might include some detailed models at different levels:

- Level one might include basic education on *Vocation Theology* for pastors and a few lay leaders.
- Level two might add suggestions for a calendar of activities to broaden congregant understanding – workshops, sermon series, special speakers, maybe a conference.
- Level three might include the addition of specific ministries in the workplace – Bible studies, affinity groups, reading clubs, office visitation ministry, workplace prayer groups, etc.
- Level four might include a major strategic commitment (like *Redeemer* and *Christ Community*) that fully integrates this into staffing, leadership teams, on-going education, commissioning of marketplace missionaries, etc.

It's not sufficient to educate pastors on the meaning of *Vocation Theology*. They need to see practical models on how it can be developed, what it consists of, and what the expected outcomes are.

“I do not see the benefit for my church.”

This is the #1 barrier, though it is hard to admit. It is also the #1 one opportunity. When it comes down to it, many of the issues surrounding acceptance by pastors of the F&W movement are imbedded in “*How will it affect my church? Will it cost money? Will it increase attendance? Will it increase tithing?*”

The great news is that it has the potential to transform the church!

As we already covered, F&W initiatives are not cost intensive. Lay leaders, with nominal guidance and oversight by a pastor, can largely lead them. Their activities largely take place outside of church facilities, as well – in offices and coffee shops.

However, churches often decide to host F&W conferences, seminars, and workshops. For many churches, such events, if well planned, generate revenues in excess of costs! There are also grants available to cover costs from some of the organizations mentioned earlier. So, costs should not be a barrier.

The fruit of the F&W ministry, however, can be in church growth. I believe that this will happen on two fronts:

1. **Membership Growth** - F&W ministry not only connects congregants closely with their faith, but it makes disciples in the workplace. Releasing these ministries in the market multiplies the people who are representing the local church. Marketplace Bible studies, prayer groups, affinity groups, or even the congregant who just feels more released to talk about his faith – they are all opportunities to invite a person to attend local church services to continue in their faith journey.
2. **Engages Men** - Church services might consist of nearly a 50/50 mix of male/female congregants. Yet church work, participation, and leadership from Monday to Saturday is probably 20/80 – males in the vast minority. Men connect their identity more closely with work than women do. When the church does not talk about work they especially alienate the men. Numerous authors have written about how the church has lost men, especially the leaders – *Shepherding Horses* (Kent Humphries), *Winning the Battle for the Minds of Men* (Dennis Peacocke), *Why Men Hate Going to Church* (David Murrow), and *The Feminization of the Church* (Kaye Ashton). I believe that the F&W movement uniquely connects men. If the church does not help them to understand the importance of their work to God, the church becomes irrelevant to the largest part of their life. I believe that the F&W movement has the potential to energize men in their faith and to view church as integral to their work. I believe it will result in higher involvement in other church activities, service and leadership.

Secondly, I believe that the F&W movement could significantly increase church tithing. People tithe to support causes that they believe in. However, they are more

highly motivated to support causes that also *help* them – and especially causes that *involve* them. When F&W integration engages the many workplace leaders (especially men), they are more likely to be motivated to give back to the institution that has given them more meaning in their faith, especially if they get involved in the ministries.

Finally, I believe that adoption of *Vocation Theology* messaging will result in many marketplace leaders who feel freed and motivated to engage with the pastoral staff. Senior pastors are as lonely as senior executives. By dismissing the sacred-secular divided and the clergy-laity hierarchy, senior pastors will discover the opportunity to develop deep relations with marketplace leaders. Those opportunities will be mutually beneficial and enjoyable to pastors and business leaders alike.

The Faith and Work movement is growing and reaching many, but para-church ministries and, more recently, higher education institutions have led it. It is particularly slow to take hold in the local churches.

There are many initiatives and organizations now focused on creating awareness among pastors about this movement of God. However, the workshops and speakers generally focus on basic pastoral education about Vocation Theology. That is a great start, however, these programs need to be more focused to pointedly address the specific barriers and points of resistance evident among many pastors. A compelling vision on how to practically implement this into the DNA of churches (and the expected outcomes) is also needed to generate commitment and energy at the local church level.

About the author:

Roger D. Anderson (BA Economics, Wheaton College; MBA, Oregon State University) has studied literature and history at Oxford University and international economics in Holland, in association with the University of Leiden.

Mr. Andersen began his career with PepsiCo, working there from 1976-1989. He held numerous positions in strategic planning and finance, including Corporate Strategic Planning Manager, Finance Director for Australasia, and Senior Finance Director for Canada, Latin America and India. Following his career at PepsiCo, Mr. Andersen served as Chief Financial Officer for Tonka/Kenner/Parker Brothers International (1989-1991), Rollerblade (1992-1996), Pepsi General Bottlers (1996-1998) and Young America Corporation (1998-1999). He became President and Chief Executive Officer of Young America, the largest consumer promotion fulfillment services company in North America in 1999, and served in that capacity until 2006.

Mr. Andersen "retired" from his corporate career in 2006. He has remained active in Board governance roles and consulting, but plans to devote more of his time to lecturing and workshops on the subject of integrating business leadership with Christian faith.

He has been married to the same wonderful woman for 38 years and has two beautiful daughters. He enjoys golf, fishing and upland bird hunting with his dog, Jackson.

Partial List of Faith & Work Organizations in the US

CEO Groups

C12 - www.c12group.com
Convene - www.convenenow.com
Fellowship of Companies for Christ - www.fcci.org
CBMC Forums - www.cbmc.com
Truth at Work - www.truthatwork.org
CEO Forum

Faith & Work Evangelism/Discipleship/Equipping

Cru - www.cru.org
Navigators - www.navigators.com
InterVarsity MBA Ministry - www.ivmba.org
CBMC - www.cbmc.com
Marketplace Leaders - www.marketplaceleaders.org
4word - www.4wordwomen.org
Alpha in the Workplace - www.alphausa.org/workplace
At Work on Purpose - www.atworkonpurpose.org
Work Matters - www.workmatters.org
Worklife - www.worklife.org
Christian Strategic Services - www.gostrategic.com
Lance Walnau - www.lancewalnau.com
Faith and Work Life - www.faithandworklife.org
Called Into Work - www.calledintowork.com
Wise Counsel - www.askwisecounsel.com

Leadership Development

Master's Program - www.themastersprogram.org
Lifework Leadership - www.lifeworkleadership.org
Lead Like Jesus - www.leadlikejesus.com
Halftime - www.halftime.org
Nehemiah Project - www.nehemiahproject.org
Primemovers - www.primemoversonline.com

Faith, Work, & Culture Groups

Centurions - www.centurionsprogram.org
Pinnacle Forum - www.pinnacleforum.com
Barnabas Group - www.barnabasgroup.org
New Canaan Society - www.newcanaansociety.org
Salt & Light Leadership Training - www.sallt.com

Conferences

Willow Creek Leadership Summit - www.willowcreek.com
Leadercast - www.leadercast.com
Redeemer CFW Conference - www.faithandwork.org
Believers in Business Conference - www.bibconference.org
Work as Worship - www.workasworshipconference.com

Next Gen

Campus Transformation Network	Cru	
CCO	Navigators	
InterVarsity	Q	
Christian Union	Veritas Forum	Worldview Matters

Women's Initiatives

4word - www.4wordwomen.org
PURE - www.thepureconference.com
Women Doing Well - www.womendoingwell.org

Global/Multicultural/Business As Mission

Marketplace Advance – www.marketplaceadvance.com
Call2Business - www.call2business.org
Lausanne Global Workplace & BAM Network Partners Worldwide - www.partnersworldwide.org
Global Advance - www.globaladvance.org
NewVo BAM Network - www.newvobusiness.com

Media/Online

Theology of Work Project - www.theologyofwork.org
Right Now Media - www.rightnowmedia.org
Two Ten Magazine - www.twotennmag.com
Christian Business and Professional Magazine – www.christianbusinessmagazine.com
Integrity Magazine – www.integritymagazine.ca
The High Calling - www.thehighcalling.org
Patheos - www.patheos.com

Church/Seminary/Workplace Mobilization

Acton Institute	Institute for Faith Work & Economics
Kern Foundation	Gospel Coalition
Theology of Work Project	Foundations for Laity Renewal
Redeemer Center for Faith & Work	

Churches

Redeemer Church (NYC)	Willow Creek (Chicago)
Summit Church (Raleigh)	Perimeter Church (Atlanta)
Christ Community Church (KC)	FBC Concord (Knoxville)
Calvary Church (State College, PA)	

Seminary Faith & Work Initiatives

Bethel Seminary	Regent College
Gordon Conwell	Reformed Theological Seminary
Southwestern Baptist Seminary	Fuller Seminary

College/University Faith & Work Initiatives

Bethel University	Charleston Southern
Wheaton College	The Kings College
Seattle Pacific	Houston Baptist
Princeton University	Regent University
LeTourneau College	Crown College
Biola University	

Workplace Chaplaincy

Corporate Chaplains of America - www.chaplain.org
Marketplace Chaplains - www.mchapusa.com

Faith & Work Legal Initiatives

Pacific Justice Institute - www.pacificjustice.org
Christian Legal Society - www.clsnet.org