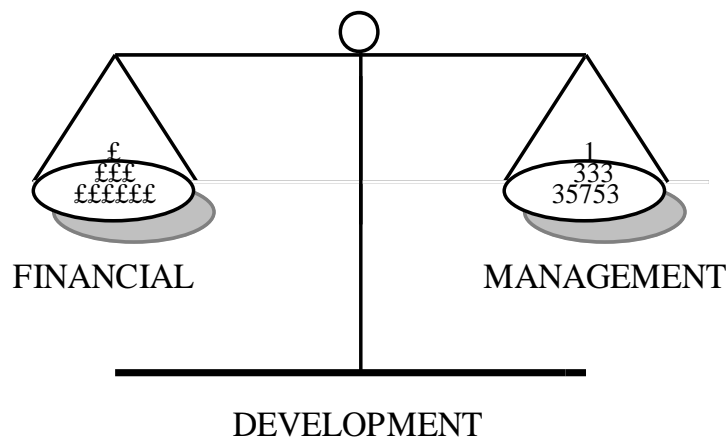


# FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

## CHRISTIAN MANAGEMENT

NO 906

### GOD AT WORK PITCHING TENTS WITH JESUS



ONE OF A SERIES OF GUIDES FOR  
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

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This is one of a series of documents produced by David A Palmer as a guide for managers on specific financial topics to assist informed discussion. Readers should take appropriate advice before acting upon any of the issues raised.

## **GOD AT WORK PITCHING TENTS WITH JESUS**

### **This paper is designed to help YOU**

- Consider the God who loves us and wants to help us
  - Reflect on how you need help from God
  - Consider how to plan prayer into what we do
  - Consider how to ask for God's help in specific situations
- and so be more ready and able to call on God's help to deal with the messy business of daily life (pitching tents).

Let's start with a common prayer for each other: "THE LORD BE WITH YOU". This is just my asking God to guide your thoughts and actions. It is my way of showing both belief in God and belief that he will help us.

### Some people ask **DOES GOD CARE?**

The prayer and this paper only make sense if you can truly answer Yes to each of the following 5 questions:

1. Do You Believe that there is a God?
2. Do You Believe He is Almighty?
3. Do You Believe He loves Humanity? (This includes You and everyone you know and meet.)
4. Do You Believe He wants to help us?
5. Do You Believe He will help us if we ask?

### **So why don't we ask more often?**

#### **God might say No... because we are not worthy**

"It is an evil and faithless generation that asks for a sign!" Matthew 12:39  
but "even the puppy dogs eat the scraps that fall from their masters' table." Matthew 15:27  
Lord I am not worthy, but only say the word and I will be healed.

#### **God might say No... because we ask for the wrong thing.**

The mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus and asked "Promise that these two sons of mine may sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your kingdom." Matthew 20:20  
This shouldn't stop us asking, because we trust in God to help us to understand his answers and accept his will. "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless let your will be done not mine." Luke 22:42

**God might say Yes if....**

"If you wish to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give the money to the poor."

Matthew 19:21

We are called to be perfect as our "heavenly Father is perfect" in Matthew 5:48; and we can be sure of the long term benefit. Carrying the cross may lead to martyrdom but St Stephen was given the grace to cope and he "saw the glory of God." Acts 7:55

**God might say Yes....and we might not benefit from the answer.**

But God only gives us good gifts; fish not snakes; eggs not scorpions; bread not stones. In fact he gives us The Gift - Himself-The Holy Spirit. Matthew 7:11 and Luke 11: 13

If we are honest we usually don't ask because we forget or because we do not think God will be interested. This is a sort of denial of God's power and a refusal to accept the implications of the incarnation. "I have come so that they may have life and **have it to the full.**" John 10:10

Jesus tells us to Ask, Knock, Pray and continue to plead.

"Ask and it will be given to you." Matthew 7:7

"If you have faith, everything you ask for in prayer, you will receive." Matthew 21:22

In Luke 18 Jesus tells us of the widow who refused to stop pleading with the unscrupulous judge. and says "'Now will not God see justice done to his elect if they keep calling to him day and night even though he still delays to help them? I promise you, he will see justice done to them, and done speedily."

We must persevere in prayer:

1. Ask
2. Have expectant faith that God will respond
3. Believe that the response will be helpful (and help from God is help indeed!)

Through the power of the Spirit the Word became flesh. This is the true mystery of our faith and is unique to Christianity. There are many myths of "Gods" who disguised themselves as humans and many stories of superheroes; but only in Christianity do we have the God who loves us so much that He became one of us, and not content with that, he lived and died as one of us.

"Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death." (Philippians 2:6-8)

**"...Hands that flung stars into space, to cruel nails surrendered. This is our God. The Servant King. He calls us now to follow Him. To bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to The Servant King."** (Graham Kendrick).

In John 1:14 it says "The Word became flesh and lived amongst us." The actual Greek word used means "tabernacled" or "dwelt in a tent". Thus Jesus "pitched his tent among us." Anyone who has ever put up a tent knows it is not easy. God has come to participate in the muck and bullets of our everyday lives. He is not remote. "Christ is for life not just for Christmas." (Me)

Three sorts of people are described in the Bible as living in tents: shepherds, travellers and soldiers. Jesus was a carpenter, some people have even wondered if he wore a symbolic wood shaving around his ear, just as dyers wore a coloured rag or scribes a pen. We know nothing about how he looked but we do know he was a real human, he did human things, he met human people.

Yes of course he performed miracles; and he said that his followers would do even greater miracles in John 14:12, so we have a duty to do so, but he also did ordinary things and we often underestimate their impact.

In his meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-42) Jesus converts a whole town. "Many Samaritans of that town believed in him on the strength of the woman's words of testimony." (39) They begged him to stay with them and "...many more came to believe on the strength of the words he spoke to them."

Later he is in the Samarian borderlands and he heals ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19). "As they were going away they were cleansed." (14-15) But "...only one of them turned back praising God at the top of his voice..." and there is no mention of any conversions, just Jesus' final words "Stand up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you."

Unless you are a doctor or a nurse you may not heal many lepers next week, but the chances are you'll have a beer or a cup of tea with someone, or even meet them at the water cooler at work.

Apparently the actor Alec Guinness ascribed his conversion to Catholicism to the way he was treated by a small boy when he was dressed as a priest for a film. He was so touched by the boy's faith and his enthusiasm and joy.

### **YOU HAVE A UNIQUE ROLE IN THIS WORLD, THAT OF BEING YOU.**

Our Works, Witness and Words are outward signs of inward grace. We may be the only Gospel people read. As Christians we are asked to be in the world but not of it. We are asked to sanctify everything, make it Holy. This is an awesome task. Everything we do may bring people nearer to God or drive them away. We need help. Who can we turn to but God?

God knows and watches all that we do, not as a Policeman but as a loving parent. He is waiting to be asked to help.

**Proverbs 16:3 "Commend what you do to the Lord and what you plan will be achieved."**

That is an awesome promise! We need help to know what to plan. And if we need guidance, we should turn to God. Ask and listen: especially to Scripture. "All Scripture is inspired by God and useful for refuting error, for guiding people's lives and teaching them to be upright." 2 Timothy 3:16  
"Your Word is a lamp unto my feet." Psalm 119:105  
"The Word of God is alive and active." Hebrews 4:12

**Do you start every day, every action, every journey, every meal, every meeting, every conversation with a prayer?**

Psalm 139:1-4

"Lord, you examine me and you know me, you know when I sit, when I rise, you understand my thoughts from afar.

You watch when I walk or lie down  
you know every detail of my conduct.

A word is not yet on my tongue  
before you, Lord, know all about it."

Deuteronomy 4:7 "The Lord our God is near to us whenever we pray to him."

### **THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS**

A glance at the Gospels gives an indication of some aspects of Jesus' approach to daily life. He quoted scripture. He prayed. He did what His Father told him to do. He went out and met people. He did things: some ordinary, some extraordinary.

He prayed before choosing his team. Luke 6:12

He prayed and people were healed.

He gave us the Perfect Prayer - the Lord's Prayer which asks for "Daily Bread".

### **WHAT WILL YOU DO NEXT WEEK?**

Where will you be?

What meetings are arranged?

Spend some time thinking of all the people your life will impact on.

Don't ignore the casual encounters or communication by phone, post, e-mail. Be prepared to respond. Ask for God to guide you.

### **HOW CAN YOU MAKE TIME TO PRAY - BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER?**

Should you say a prayer for each person?

Make the sign of the cross ✠ on your head, lips and heart to ask God to guide your thoughts, words and feelings (Catholics do this before the Gospel at every Mass).

Think of ways to sanctify what you do. When I was at school I was taught to start every piece of work with "Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam" (To the Greater Glory of God) and finish with "Laus Deo Semper" (Praise be to God always). It would be interesting to see the reaction if every exam paper answer was framed like this!

**Ask Christ to be in what you do or don't do, in what you say or don't say.**

Be realistic - Grace builds on nature. God multiplies our talents -  
Sampson used his strength  
Bezalel used his skill to build the ark

Whatever you do, do it well.

## **CONSIDER THE THREE READINGS ON EASTER TUESDAY**

### **Acts 2:36-41**

Peter said "The promise that was made is for you and your children, and for all those who are far away, for all those whom the Lord our God will call to himself".

### **Psalm 15**

"The Lord fills the earth with his love."

### **The Gospel John 20:11-18**

"Supposing him to be the gardener, she said "Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him."

## **God is with us in all we do - even in the way we talk to "grave robbing gardeners"!**

We need to remember that Almighty God is able and willing to help us in all that we do, not just in the difficult times, not just to perform miracles and evangelise, but also in the simple things of life like putting up a tent or sharing a beer or a cup of water.

It is worth taking time to look at the practicalities of how we might bring God more closely into our daily lives and thereby not only become more Holy ourselves, but also fulfil our Christian duty to sanctify the world.

We are a "Living Sacrifice" The word Sacrifice means to MAKE HOLY.

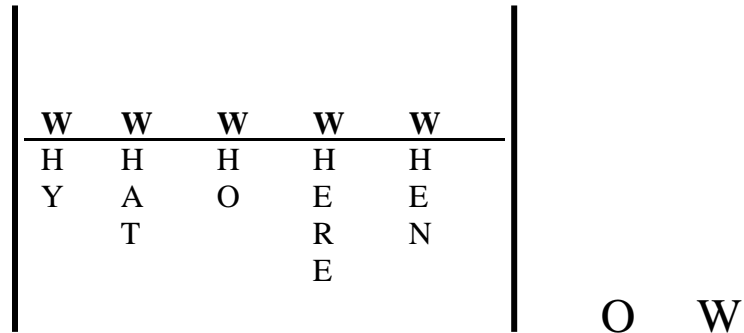
## **COMMEND WHAT YOU DO TO THE LORD**

We should make use of God's help because "Apart from me you can do nothing" John 15:5

"This life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is maintained by the spiritual helps common to all the faithful, chiefly by active participation in the liturgy. Lay people should make such a use of these helps that, while meeting their human obligations in the ordinary conditions of life, they do not separate their union with Christ from their ordinary life; but through the very performance of their tasks, which are God's will for them, actually promote the growth of their union with him. This is the path on which lay people must advance, fervently, joyfully, overcoming difficulties with prudent patient efforts. Family cares should not be foreign to their spirituality, nor any other temporal interest; in the words of the apostle: 'Whatever you are doing, whether speaking or acting, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through him.' (Colossians 3:17). A life like this calls for a continuous exercise of faith, hope and charity." Apostolate of Lay People (Vatican II 18/11/1965 paragraph 4)

Treating incidents in our lives like a project may help:

**Five Seagulls on a Rugby Post:**



- Why** - To help others or ourselves (including earning money, or relaxing)
- What** - Doing, Meeting, Travelling, Eating, Resting
- Who** - People we meet, work with, live with, see in a car, on a train
- Where**- Anywhere but particularly Here
- When** - Always but particularly Now
- How** - With God’s help (Jesus said I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.)

**THE POWER OF PRAYER**

**Pray Before** for guidance....."Lord lead me into opportunities to do your will" makes a change from the more commonly used "Lead us not into temptation." A sign of the Cross for protection; The sign of the cross ☩ on your head, lips and heart to ask God to guide your thoughts, words and feelings; a Hail Mary for each person you will be meeting (especially if you believe it may be a difficult meeting); Pray in tongues if you have no set things to pray for, asking God for his blessing.

**Pray During** for wisdom and guidance - silently praying in tongues can help.

**Pray After** in thanksgiving and as a way of continuing your request for the blessing of people, activities and outcomes.

**but**

Prayer is not a surrogate for action. Jesus prayed, spoke and did ...normally in that order. God has asked us to be in the world for a reason. For some of us our main task may be prayer, but even St Therese of Lisieux, the Patron Saint of Missionaries who spent much of her short life praying in the convent, also wrote "The Story of a Soul".

St Benedict said "To work is to pray".

See James 2:14-26 which finishes "As a body without a spirit is dead, so is faith without deeds."

"All Christians by the example of their lives and the witness of their word, wherever they live, have an obligation to manifest the new person which they have put on at Baptism, and to reveal the power of the Holy Spirit by whom they were strengthened at Confirmation."  
(CCC 2472)

As individuals we know when we have done something well – fit for purpose, to the best of our ability. Our lives are an offering to God. “Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1). Our “bodies” includes our work – and we should offer it unblemished. We join with the Priest at Mass when we say Amen to “This is my Body..... This is my blood.....” by offering ourselves, our lives and our sorrows to God.

"There is a time for every occupation under heaven." (Ecclesiastes 3:1)  
God is in all that we do.

## **PROCESS**

Do not be too ambitious:

"Lord for tomorrow and its need, I do not pray  
Keep me my God from stain of sin, just for today.  
Let me both diligently work, and duly pray  
Let me be kind in word and deed, just for today."  
(Sister M. Xavier)

Pray and plan ahead.....a sort of advance examination of conscience. In the Little Catechism Question 355 Asks: How should I begin the day? I should begin the day by making the sign of the cross as soon as I awake in the morning, and by a short prayer, such as, "O my God, I offer my heart and soul to you."

NOT "Good God! Morning" BUT "Good Morning God."

Who might I meet today?  
Where and under what circumstances?  
What areas do I want to ask for God's help, guidance, protection (especially from myself in terms of my weaknesses e.g. Lord help me not to be impatient, unforgiving, unaware of others' needs)?  
How can I be more like Christ - in what I do and in how I do it.

"If you can't be a Christian where you are you are unlikely to be able to be a Christian somewhere else."

Let's start at home. "Go first to the lost Sheep of Israel" (Matthew 10:6) or a modern version:

**"Go down in the city, go into the street and let's give the message to the people we meet."** (from Colours of Day Sue McClellan et al)



**PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT**

Satan will try to mess up what you are doing. But that is nothing new and should not discourage us. Even saints like Saint Paul had thorns in their flesh. Saint Benedict and St Francis both rolled in thorn bushes to overcome lust. Remember: "Do not be Afraid, for I am with you."

(Genesis 26:24, Isaiah 43:5, Mark 6:50, Matthew 28:20 and all through the Bible.)

Do not be down hearted if things do not go according to plan, even when you pray.  
"God writes straight with crooked lines."

Prayer is a skill and trainers know that with most skills there are four levels at which learning takes place. The analogy of learning to drive may help:

**Unconscious Incompetence**

Before you start you really have no idea of how to do it and you think it's easy.

**Conscious Incompetence**

After a few attempts you recognise that you have a lot to learn.

**Conscious Competence**

After a lot of lessons and constant practice you find you can drive the car if you think carefully about all the controls.

**Unconscious Competence**

You have now passed you test and can drive without thinking too hard.

You then go on an advanced drivers course and find out that you haven't a clue about real driving!

Or in the case of prayer you read about Saints and you resolve to try to imitate them.

In Henri Nouwen's book "In my own Words" he says:

**To Pray is to Become**

"Compassion lies at the heart of our prayer for our fellow human beings. When I pray for the world, I become the world; when I pray for the endless needs of the millions, my soul expands and wants to embrace them all and bring them into the presence of God. But in the midst of that experience I realise that compassion is not mine but God's gift to me. I cannot embrace the world but God can. I cannot pray but God can pray in me. When God became as we are, that is when God allowed all of us to enter into the intimacy of the divine life, it became possible for us to share in God's compassion. In praying for others I lose myself and become the other, only to be found by the divine love which holds the whole of humanity in a compassionate embrace."

For me just remembering to pray whenever I get into a car that I will consider others is an achievement. Just imagine how much safer the roads would be if all drivers made this prayer before setting off!.

**BE PREPARED**

WWJD What would Jesus do? We need to know him to love him to serve him.  
Read about Jesus and "ponder it in your heart" as Our Lady did.

Be prepared to act on God's prompting:  
Phillip ran up to the Chariot of the Ethiopian Treasurer. Acts 8  
Peter went to the house of Cornelius. Acts 10  
Paul went to Macedonia. Acts 16

**PRACTICE**

Try a brief SWOT ANALYSIS and pray for help to use your strengths, counter your weaknesses, maximise on opportunities and avoid threats.

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats

**TAKE TIME TO CONSIDER THE PEOPLE YOU WILL MEET AND THE SITUATIONS YOU WILL ENCOUNTER TOMORROW/NEXT WEEK AND PRAY FOR GOD'S HELP TO DO AND SAY THE RIGHT THINGS IN THE RIGHT WAY.**

**Start Now:**

**Tomorrow/ Next Week:**

I will be.....

I need to.....

I need to avoid.....

I ask for God's grace to.....

**NOW PRAY FOR THE GRACE AND COURAGE TO DO IT.**

The Prayer to the Holy Spirit by Cardinal Mercier is ideal for a daily consecration of "All that I am and All that I do" to God. "We do well always and everywhere to give God thanks and praise," but it is also good to make a specific time to consecrate the day to God.

**The Secret of Sanctity and Happiness**

For five minutes every day, keep your imagination quiet, shut your eyes, close your ears and withdraw to the sanctuary of your soul, which is the Temple of the Holy Spirit and say (and pray and mean it):

**Holy Spirit, Soul of my soul; I adore You; enlighten, guide, strengthen and console me. Tell me what I ought to do and command me to do it. I promise to be submissive in everything that you ask of me and to accept all that you permit to happen to me; only show me what is Your will.**

**CONSIDER THE THREE READINGS ON EASTER FRIDAY**

**Acts 3:11-26**

Peter and John were interrogated "By what power have you done this?" Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit addressed them....."If you are questioning us today about an act of kindness to a cripple, and asking us how he was healed, then I am glad to tell you....."

**Psalm 117:**

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his love has no end."  
"This day was made by the Lord; we rejoice and are glad."

**The Gospel Matthew 21: 1-14**

.....Jesus called out, "Have you caught anything friends?".....  
"Throw the net out to starboard and you will find something"  
"Come and have breakfast."

We do not know if Jesus was good at his job of being a carpenter, but I bet that breakfast was worthy of a Masterchef!