

THANK GOD IT'S MONDAY

GOD IN MY EVERYTHING. DAVID BENTALL WITH KEN SHIGEMATSU.
2013 DECEMBER 01.



COLOSSIANS 3:23-24

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KEN SHIGEMATSU:

Thank you so much, John and vocal ensemble, for leading us in that beautiful piece.

Today we are completing our *God in My Everything* series, and right after this service, I'll actually be around. I'm usually not around because I usually have to head out to our Kitsilano site, but I'll be around today, and I'll be doing a Christmas book-signing of *God in My Everything*. We've been able to offer the book at a significant discount, and all the proceeds are going to World Vision and to similar missions. If you're here and you'd like to read it and the only reason that you haven't picked up a copy of the book yet is because things are financially tight for you, I would be happy – I would be honoured – to gift you with a copy of the book today; it'll be my Christmas gift to you. And so if you'd like a copy for yourself or want to pick up some copies for friends, I'd be glad to sign them for you afterwards. I'll be in the back after the service.

Speaking of Christmas, as Jade and John mentioned, in two weekends, we're going to be having our annual Christmas concert, which this year is about *The Mystery of Christmas*.

Last year, my wife and I invited to the concert a family that we had gotten to know through our son's preschool, and so they came. Even though I have confidence in the program, I'm always a little nervous when there are guests in the house, but afterwards this family said, "You know, we've never ever been to anything like this – it was so beautiful, so powerful. We want to make this part of our yearly tradition as a family." We were in touch with them this past week, and they are planning to come to the concert again this year.

As Jade was mentioning, we design our concerts for folks who don't believe in Christ, and so please do invite your friends, your family, people you know through work and so forth. It will be great, and it will be more meaningful for you as well if you have your friends here.

As I just mentioned, we're completing our *God in My Everything* series today. We've been looking at how we can experience God not only in our formal times of prayer and worship but also through our family life, through friendships, through rest – even through play, which we looked at last week. We've also explored how we can experience God as we work for justice in the world – we did so with the help of our friend Shane Claiborne, who spoke on that; he also talked about how we can bear witness for Christ in our world.

As we conclude our *God in My Everything* series today, we're going to be looking at how we experience God in our everyday work. Most of us will be spending most of our waking hours in some kind of work, whether it's at home (I noticed some parents just went outside with their young ones), at a company or at school, studying.

I did my first *God in My Everything* seminar at North Shore Alliance Church; my former colleague Mardi invited me to come and teach on it. During the Q&A, someone raised their hand and said, "I love to pray so much that I hate to stop praying and go to work." It's kind of unusual to love praying *that* much! I said, "You know, if you have a rhythm of prayer, as you obviously do, your work could be considered a prayer to God." Then I explained, as I've shared here, how this guy named John Cassian, one of the church fathers of the fourth century, taught the monks under his care to engage in simple manual labour, like weaving baskets in a cave or using a sickle to harvest

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grain in a field, and then told them, “While you’re doing this, consciously pray all the time.” Well, those monks found that prescription exhausting. A century later, Benedict came along, and he had a slightly different perspective: He taught that if you had a simple rhythm of prayer, then your work during your day – even if you weren’t consciously praying – was an act of devotion to God and, therefore, a prayer. His famous dictum is summarized: To pray is to work and to work is to pray.

The apostle Paul says something similar in Colossians 3. If you are able to do so, please stand for the reading of God’s word. Paul says:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

(Colossians 3:23-24[‡])

Let’s take a moment to pray.

Living God,

This morning, through the wisdom of your inspired Word and through the experiences and reflections of our brother David Bentall, help us to know that we do our work before your very face.

May this knowledge inspire us and sustain us in our work for you and the world.

It’s in Jesus’ name we pray.

Amen.

You may be seated.

In this text, Paul gives us a very simple and yet profound idea: that we do our everyday work before the very face of God. That’s an ennobling idea.

Can you imagine that tomorrow morning you will be doing your work – whatever it is; as a homemaker, in a company, at school – before the person you admire most in the world? Let’s say you’re an architect: Imagine you will be doing your work before the architect whom you most admire in the world. (I ran into an architect this morning on the way in who attends Tenth.) Or let’s say you’re an actor (since we’ve got some actors here at Tenth): Imagine that you’ll be acting on set tomorrow before Tom Hanks. How would that make you feel? After getting over your initial, understandable intimidation factor, wouldn’t you do your work wholeheartedly, as Paul talks about? Wouldn’t you be fully present in your work? Wouldn’t you have a heart of gratitude and do your work with love?

David Bentall is a friend whom I’ve quoted a couple of times in this *God in My Everything* series. David formerly served as an executive for Dominion Construction, the company that built some of the tallest business towers in our city and also built Rogers Arena, the home of our Vancouver Canucks; he now teaches at the Sauder School of Business at UBC. David has reflected a lot on the meaning of work, both in Scripture and through his work experiences. As we conclude our series, I’ve asked David to come and share what it means to experience God in our everyday work.

David Bentall. Would you welcome our friend, David? All right! Good to have you back, David!

[‡] Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, *New International Version*[®], NIV[®].

DAVID BENTALL:

Thanks, Ken.

Well, it's a pleasure to be here.

Ken, thank you so much for your warm invitation to come and to share with you a little bit this morning.

Those of you who know my wife, Alison, and I may be aware that we sold our family home just over eighteen months ago and followed our friends Wayman and Penny's example, moving down into the False Creek area on an opportunity to buy a condo in the Olympic Village. We're virtually empty-nesters now: We have four children, and three of them have married and moved away. Our daughter Jennifer, who is a graduate of the *Cordon Bleu* culinary school in France, is the only one still living at home. I must tell you: If you're going to choose to have one of your kids still living at home, you might as well choose the one who's got an education at a renowned culinary institute!

Recently, Jen prepared a new recipe, and the three of us sat down to share a meal together in our cozy little family room. Between bites of the steaming-hot curried rice bowl, I announced that I wanted to change everything about my life. I explained to the two girls – to my wife and our daughter Jen – that since the three of us were sharing life together (at least for a while), I wanted their help with this endeavour. Jennifer looked up at me, a little bit puzzled, and said, “Dad, aren't you being a tiny bit overdramatic?”

I suppose it might have sounded a bit extreme, but it was true: I had come to a place in my life where I yearn for things to be different – not just sometimes but all the time.

Recently, I had trusted God in some new ways, and I had experienced his guidance and strength, but I wanted more in my daily experience. In the past, I had occasionally tasted a connection with God that was life-giving. Now I was searching for something more than periodic; I was looking for something constant; I was yearning for what Ken has written about in his book: I wanted to experience *God in My Everything*.

Today, I'd like to share with you what I've been learning, personally, about this concept. At the same time, I'd like to invite and encourage you to consider how you may experience more of God in *your* everything and, in particular, as Ken was saying, in whatever we call our work.

To accomplish this, I'd like to go back over my life experiences over three decades, talk about some of the things I learned while I was at university. But also I'd like to share with you some things that I've learned in more recent times, including within the last few months.

Because I'm not a pastor, my daily experience has been interwoven with my life as a student, my life as an executive and now my role as a teacher. I'd like to share with you what I've discovered about how we can invite God into every aspect of our lives but especially into our work.

In our Scripture today, as Ken read, Paul exhorts us to work with all our hearts, as unto the Lord and not for men. I'd like to explain to you how I've been seeking to apply this in my own life.

However, before we get started, I'd like to begin with three confessions.

The first confession is that I am a planner by nature. It's not such a bad thing, but as a result of my planning nature, I've tended to live in the future – and that has often resulted in my rushing through life and missing out on the richness of the present moment.

Secondly, because I am future-oriented, I've often been tempted to create needless anxiety by worrying about what

lies ahead. This has included both things that may happen later the same day but also things on the more distant horizon. In other words, not only am I capable of worrying about tomorrow, I can also worry about today.

Thirdly, I must confess to you that it's been common for me to have a judgemental attitude towards others. I used to justify this by noting that I have high standards, but I now realize the truth is that I have a tendency to be much too critical, especially towards those whom I love and am closest to.

To summarize, I'm a person who has been prone to hurry, prone to worry and prone to criticize. This triple threat, so to speak, has had a powerful impact and has robbed me of the peace and joy that I know God would like me to experience.

I suspect that most of you struggle with at least one or two of these tendencies.

What I'd like to do this morning is to look at each of these threats or tendencies in turn and see if we can together discover how we can move past these things towards a new way of living.

Let's start by looking at hurry.

As a young man starting out in my career, I was impatient to make things happen. I was concerned about my goals and my future. I wanted to make my mark in my life. I was in a hurry to get on with it. Some people might say I was driven.

Over the years, I was so focused on the next thing to do that I, sadly, usually missed the present. My preoccupation with the future is one of the reasons that springtime is my favourite time of the year: As the days get longer, I'm already getting excited about summer. On the flip side, I don't enjoy summer very much because I know that fall is just around the corner. One of my waterskiing friends is also a future-oriented guy, and he says, "Spring is like Thursday night: The weekend is coming."

Through the story of my life, I've typically been so obsessed with looking forward to the next chapter that I've constantly ended up racing through the current one, madly flipping pages but barely noticing the words. When I was a youngster, I could hardly wait until I was old enough to drive; I longed to be 16. However, this preoccupation was eventually replaced by a desire to get married: "If only I could get through high school and university, find a wife – I could really live!", and my new goal became becoming 23. As soon as I was married, my focus shifted to my career: "If I could just become president of the company before I turn 40, all would be well."

Once this milestone was reached, it was replaced by my pursuit of a national waterski championship. I talked to my coach, and my coach said, "Your best chance is when you move into the Men's 4," referring to the 46-and-over age bracket. "Life will be good when I'm 46!" I came second the next couple of years, so I thought, "Okay, we're going to wait till the next bracket. Life will be good— I can hardly wait till I'm 53!"

You get the picture: I was wishing my life away. Now that I'm 58, the next big milestone will be 60, and I might be missing something, but I'm not in a big hurry to get there! After that, I'm told, the next stop is 65 – and there are some benefits, like a senior citizen's discount – but I'm not in a hurry to get there!

As I thought about this recently, I decided that I no longer want to wish my life away. I don't want to miss the preciousness of every day. Rather, it's my desire to learn how to slow down and experience the "presents": to experience *the present* and to experience more of *the presence of God in the present*.

I can vividly remember the first time I ever thought about this. It was a long time ago. I was 23, and I had been hospitalized while I was at university. I had torn the medial collateral ligament in my left knee; I had a cast from my hip to my ankle, and I was a little bit laid up as a result of that. I thought, "Well, I've been looking for a time to

have some elective surgery on my tailbone. This is a good time – I can't walk anyway.” So I went to the hospital and had surgery, and while I lay in my hospital bed, I had a lot of time to think. I wasn't used to being still for such a long period of time, and I didn't actually like it very much.

But while I was laid up, someone put in my hand a tiny little book called *The Practice of the Presence of God*, which some of you may have heard of. I was spellbound. My tattered little book, which I still have, was soon marked up with underlined words and exclamation points and crosses and stars everywhere because Brother Lawrence was writing about this habit of praying and enjoying God's presence in a way that I had been longing for. He talked about enjoying God's presence even as he was working in the dish pit. For a guy like me who'd always been in a hurry and was now being forced to slow down a bit, he offered me a window into a new and different way of experiencing life and enjoying God's presence.

Let me quote from what he has to say in his book.

We find him worshipping more in his kitchen than in his cathedral; therefore, he could pray, “Lord of all pots and pans and things . . . make me a saint by getting meals and washing up the plates!”

He went on to say, “The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament.”

Having read this about thirty years ago, throughout my whole professional career, I've been conscious of the possibility that I could enjoy God's companionship with me – but typically I've been in such a hurry that I've missed out.

When my wife, Alison, and I lived in Toronto a number of years ago, we became friends with a highly successful management consultant. He turned down an opportunity to run a national real-estate firm and established his own one-man advisory company. What impressed me the most about Jeff was that he said he didn't work alone: His business, as he explained it to me, was a partnership with God. I was attracted by this, and I knew this was something I yearned for, but I didn't know how to do that. And perhaps at that time, I just wasn't prepared to take the time to slow down and explore what it would mean to have God as my partner and let him walk with me in my career.

A few years ago, I set up my own one-man shop, consulting to families in business. Like my friend, I wanted this to be a partnership with God. Having worked for twenty years in our family company, I was now being exposed to other families in business who were looking for my help to assist them in integrating family in business and vice versa. One afternoon, while I was attending a conference, without any preparation, I was unexpectedly thrown into a situation where I was asked to advise two successful family-business owners. They'd established a very successful company in Quebec, with fifty retail outlets all over the province. I met with them and their wives and their children. They didn't know I had no prior experience advising families in business. Frankly, I felt a bit like an impostor as I facilitated our first couple of family meetings together. Thankfully, I was able to help them a little bit, but I realized that if I was going to help other families, I probably should get some proper training first. So I did. I enrolled in a few courses, I took a mentor to assist me, and within a few years, I received some formal credentials from the International Coach Federation and from the Family Firm Institute.

In rapid succession, I morphed from impostor to apprentice, from apprentice to journeyman, from journeyman to what some people started to call me: an “expert.” This startled me because just a short while ago, I'd been an impostor; now people are calling me an expert. But it stroked my ego to hear people call me an expert. I didn't like that feeling. I knew that I wasn't much of an expert, and I didn't know what to do with these feelings. I was

nervous about the prideful feelings I was having about people referring to me as someone who is a so-called expert in this field.

One Sunday afternoon, I phoned my waterski coach in Florida. We were talking about the waterski season coming up, and I told him that I was concerned about these people who are respecting me, calling me an expert. I wanted to avoid getting a swell head, and I said to my coach, “Can you give me any advice on how to deal with that?” His reply startled me. “That’s dead easy, David. I know what you can do,” he said. “Where did you get your brain?” And I replied, “Well, that would be a gift, Jet.” And he asked, “Where did you get your experience?” I said, “Well, you could see that as a gift.” “Precisely, David,” he said. “You’re meeting with families and you’re sharing with them gifts. What is there to be proud about that?” His logic was compelling to me. He added, “As long as you recognize that you are simply someone who’s delivering gifts, you’ll be fine.”

I thought about it. Does a courier with UPS get all puffed up when they’re delivering a package? He knows he’s not the source of the value that he’s carrying. Similarly, I’m not the source of any wisdom or insights I’ve been able to offer. Rather, these are all gifts that God has graciously given to me.

Suddenly, I could see how I could partner with God in my work: I was going to deliver gifts to others. I was going to be his courier.

Over the past several years, this perspective has steadily been transforming how I look at my work. I’m no longer alone in my career: God is with me. I’m his co-labourer. I’m his junior partner. The gifts that I’ve been given, I am privileged to pass on to others.

These days, as I begin work with a new client, I understand how I can invite God to be with me in the endeavour. I can ask God to give me wisdom so that I can help them. If I get on a plane or get in the car to drive to be with a client, I’m learning to see myself as the King’s courier – no longer alone, no longer in such a hurry. God is with me, and I have the privilege of being his representative in the marketplace.

Rather than succumbing to the temptation to worry, I’m discovering more about how to be present. Like Brother Lawrence, I’m discovering more about how to bring God into my washing up of the plates; to live more humbly, moment by moment: dependency.

Let’s move secondly to talk about this idea of worry.

As I’ve mentioned to you, I’m prone to worry. Let’s explore how to deal with that.

Unfortunately, worrying is another advantage of being future-oriented: Not only can I make the mistake of missing the present, but I can also worry about the future. In other words, I will often import tomorrow’s worries and make them today’s problems.

As a young boy, this created some challenges for me, and I could become frightfully anxious prior to soccer games or rugby games or even high school dances. In fact, I got so nervous before my first eighth-grade sock-hop that, just after I arrived at school, I literally threw up. Everyone assumed that I’d probably had too much to drink. The truth is I hadn’t had a drop; I was just too frightened of the girls!

A few years ago, one of my coaching clients went 364 days between jobs. Needless to say, he was worried about his future. I asked him if he knew that God commands us to not steal or murder. He said, “Of course I do.” I followed that by asking, “Do you know that the Bible also commands us to not worry?” He said, “Where does it say that?” I pointed him to Philippians 4:6, where Paul states, “**Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything**” (NLT). I love this verse because although it contains a command regarding what we’re not to do, it also points out

what we are to do.

You've probably heard that it's impossible to break a habit. Instead, if we want to get rid of a habit, we need to replace it with a new one. For example, if we want to get rid of the habit of drinking pop, the answer isn't to stop trying to drink Coke; instead, we need to cultivate the habit of drinking something else, perhaps by making a habit of drinking water.

Because I was in the habit of worrying, I suggested to my client – because he also was in the habit of worrying – that perhaps he should consider replacing that with a habit of prayer. Whenever he was tempted to worry about his job, I encouraged him to talk to God about the problem. Certainly, I encouraged him to put together his résumé and make sure he distributed it so as to do his part to try and network and find a job. But after he'd done everything he could do, I invited him to trust God and quit his worrying. Not only is this how God commands us to live, but it also just makes sense: Our worrying doesn't help anything anyway.

Fifteen years ago, after I sold all my interest in our family company, I had *absolutely* no idea what I was going to do for the rest of my life. When the phone didn't ring off the hook with new opportunities, I began to worry about my future, just like my client. Initially, I decided to take a one year sabbatical, but as the months wore on, I became more and more concerned about my professional prospects. The more anxious I became, however, the more I turned to God with my worries. Gradually, I became a man of prayer, replacing worry with prayer.

This concept of trying to replace worry with prayer has had a dramatic impact in every area of my life. Being a future-oriented person, I'm still inclined to worry about my marriage or my children or my career and everything else, but I believe God wants us to replace the worry habit with the habit of prayer.

In addition, I want us to look at the fact that God also wants us to include thanksgiving in our prayers. If you look at latter end of Philippians 4:6, it says, “[W]ith thanksgiving, present your request to God.” In other words, we're not just to tell God about our worries; we're to accomplish our request by offering thanks.

Initially, I was quite puzzled by this idea. I wondered if this meant that I needed to thank God for my challenges or the problems that were causing me to worry. I concluded that would probably require more faith than I had. I also thought it was something somewhat contradictory: How is it possible to be thankful when we're worried? It seemed that this would require a split personality or at least a multitasking approach to prayer. Thankfully, a few years ago, a good friend of mine helped me to understand what I think God is after. Let me explain.

This friend of mine and I were down in Florida at a waterski tournament, and I was scheduled to ski twice that day. After the first round, we were walking by the lake together, and I was obsessing about the next round, talking about what I needed to do to ski better. My friend, Jim, grabbed me by the arm and said, “David, how many birds do you hear singing?” I thought he was losing it, but he was so earnest, so I thought I'd pause and listen – and the trees were alive with sounds! I could hear at least six different birdcalls. Tutoring me, he said, “Why don't you let go of your preoccupation with skiing and enjoy the day? Focus on all the things you could be thankful for.” In a word: Be grateful. At first, it seemed absolutely absurd. Didn't he realize that I had an important event to prepare for? Over time, I came to understand that it was I who didn't understand.

Prior to the next round of the tournament, my friend invited me to try a new approach. He said, “When you're standing on the dock, getting ready to ski, take notice of the birds and trees. Notice the lush surroundings and thank God for them. Cultivate an attitude of gratitude.” I decided to trust his advice. In the moments leading up to my next event, I lifted up my head and contemplated the beautiful palm trees swaying in the light breeze. I thanked God for the day and for the privilege it was to compete.

You might not be surprised that as I took my eyes off my performance and put my eyes on God and the beauty around me, the peace of God overcame my fears. This is actually what God promises in Philippians 4. If we do our part – which is to pray and give thanks – then he will do his part, which is to give us peace. To quote Philippians 4:7: “[T]he peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Isn't that what we all really want: to have God's peace? Moreover, don't we long to have this in our heads and in our guts? Don't we want to have this in our hearts and in our minds?

You might find it interesting that the latest neurological research has discovered that it's not possible for our brains to simultaneously worry and be thankful – our brains can't do it; they can't multitask those two things. It's no wonder God instructs us to *replace* worry with thankfulness – it's not possible to do the two at the same time. I think it's quite interesting that the world's most advanced brain scientists are now discovering what Paul taught the early church about two thousand years ago: Don't be anxious; instead, be thankful.

How about work? How do we apply this to our professional lives?

For me, it's actually been easier to apply it to my professional life than it's been to apply it in my skiing. Let me give you a quick example.

A few months ago, I was in Toronto, preparing to give a speech, and I was going to be speaking to the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners. As I left my hotel just before noon, it dawned on me that soon there were going to be 700 lawyers waiting to hear me speak. I began to worry. What did I have to say that they would find of value? I started to wonder if they were going to have me for lunch. As I faced the long walk across a bridge to the ballroom, I remembered God's invitation to give thanks. In place of my worries, I started listing all of the things for which I was thankful: my loving wife, our four amazing kids, their spouses, our grandkids, our good health, our beautiful home, our friends, my work – the list is endless. As I became lost in a torrent of thankfulness, my anxiety vanished.

If you, like me, are tempted by anxious thoughts, especially in your professional life, I urge you to remember that we are *commanded* to not worry. Instead, we are to pray and to give thanks.

The third and final challenge I want to talk to you about today is my natural temptation to judge others or to be judgemental. In its place, God has been teaching me how to be more loving.

My sister Mary first helped me to gain a fresh insight into this topic. One afternoon, I was enthusiastically telling her about this discovery that the brain scientists had made that it's not possible to be anxious and to be thankful at the same time. She then told me that the same neurologists have also concluded that our brains can't be judgemental and loving at the same time. Think about that.

It's not possible to be judgemental and loving at the same time.

Being judgemental, frankly, has been a challenge for me in my marriage and my work. This has partly been because I'm guilty of assuming that I usually know more than everyone else. Let me give you an example.

Back in 1986, when my wife, Alison, and I just moved back to Vancouver, we were having breakfast one morning at the White Spot on Broadway, and I was going through a very difficult time with my uncles, who were the majority owners of our family company. I was struggling with them, and Alison and I were really struggling in our marriage together. It was a tough time, and I was complaining to Alison about my uncles, and she interrupted my diatribe to say, “I think that I'm having the same problem with you that your uncles are having!” When I asked her

what she meant, she noted, gently but very perceptively, “You think you’re always right.” I said, “What’s wrong with that?”

At that time in my life, I was living in a world of make-believe. Because God has given me a good mind and because I tried to approach problems in a logical fashion, I actually did believe that I was almost always right. This created in me a judgemental attitude and a very critical spirit, especially towards Alison. Let me give you an example.

Shortly after our third child was born, Alison was struggling to regain her pre-pregnancy figure. One day, she lamented to me that she was feeling fat and ugly. Mustering all of the logic and sensitivity I could, I said, “You’ll continue to feel fat and ugly unless you get out and run.” I could give you more examples but I think that proves the point!

Thankfully, Alison and I have been married now for 35 years, and we’re enjoying each other more and more with each passing year. But, as you can see, this has been a gift from God because, like most men, I’m a selfish, self-centered human being; as you can see, I’m prone to be judgemental.

During the past years, when we struggled deeply in our marriage, I read a lot and this helped me to retain my sanity. As I was thrashing around trying to figure out what to do, I ended up reading a book by Dr. Ed Wheat, who says that there should be absolutely no room in a marriage for criticism on the part of the husband. This seemed like a radical idea, but I decided that I would give it a try. After a couple of minutes, I criticized Alison again. I took a vow to not criticize her again, and it lasted about five minutes! Thankfully, over the last number of years, I’ve been learning to move away from criticism towards loving my wife more.

Recently, Alison and I were in a Bible study with a few other couples. I’d never told Alison about my commitment to God to not criticize her anymore; I had just hoped that she might one day notice. Twenty years later, at this Bible study, on Valentine’s Day, we’re going around the table, and I said to everybody, “Why don’t we share one thing we appreciate about our spouse?” And Alison said, “You know what I appreciate about David? He never criticizes me; he’s always affirming.” It took 20 years! I’m actually not sure she’s right because I think I still slip up occasionally. My hope is that one day I’ll be known as Alison’s number one fan – not her number one critic.

In my professional life, I’ve also found it difficult to not judge others – those whom I work with or, even worse, my clients. Every year, as I’m getting to know my MBA students, I tell them that I know what an MBA stands for: It’s not a Master of Business Administration; it’s Money, Brains and Arrogance! I explain to them that when they graduate and they’ve got this big brain that, when they go into a meeting, if they know the answers to all the questions before people ask them, it’s going to be tempting for them to be arrogant. I know this because that’s what I was like. It was probably my arrogance that resulted in me losing my chance to run our family company 25 years ago; it was a painful lesson.

As I’ve been learning to trust God with my work, as I’ve been learning to seek to be loving towards my clients, God has been replacing that judgemental attitude. Let me give you just a quick glimpse of my professional life.

Recently, I was talking on the phone with one of my family-business clients. Sadly, in spite of my best efforts to the contrary, this family of four siblings seemed to be intent on hurting each other, both financially and professionally. When I got into the car with our daughter Stephanie, I started blurting out about how this family was crazy-making together. When we got home, I was talking to our daughter Jennifer, and I disgorged more of my disappointment about my client. Jennifer said to me, “Dad, you’re getting kind of shrill in your description of your client.” Her comment caught my attention. As I reflected on that, I realized I was being drawn into the negative emotions of my client. Even worse than that, I was also judging and criticizing my client. I began to pray

for my client. Perhaps more importantly, I began praying about my attitude towards my client. I asked God to help me abandon my judgementalism and to replace it with love. Since that day, I've been consciously praying before and during my interactions with this client. I'm seeking to be more Christ-like in my interactions with my client, and this approach has been making a huge difference in my work with these four siblings.

Subsequently, I remember setting aside a full day to prepare a report for a family client, a new client. I was not feeling adequate for the task, and so I set aside time to pray before I started. The report I was preparing is something that I do for all of my clients: I do confidential interviews with all of the members of the family, and then I meet with the family to have the first family meeting; in between, I prepare a report for them to try and have enough courage to put on the table the things that they really need to talk about, and it's a balancing act between being courageous and being sensitive in terms of how I have to do that. Every time I finish these reports, my secretary, Caroline, proofreads them just to check for the tone – to make sure that I'm not poking somebody in the eye by how I put certain concerns on the table. I prayed, I worked on the report, and I sent it off to Caroline. A couple of days later, I got an amazing response from her. Caroline, who did not know that I'd prayed before working on this particular report and who'd prepared fifty of them in the past, said, "I liked this report. It had a completely different tone."

I think that God, when invited, is able to help me in my work. I think he's able to help all of us – if we let him in.

As we conclude, I want to take you back to that family-room conversation I had with Alison and Jennifer, where I told them I wanted to change everything about my life.

When I struggled to explain that I wanted to take a different approach to everything, I listed three components. I talked about how I wanted to discard my future-orientation and replace it with being more present. I told them how I wanted to get rid of the worry and be more grateful. And I told them how I wanted to replace my judgementalism with love.

Jenny, who loves tennis, summed it all up for me, saying, "Dad, what you want is a new ready stance, like a tennis player who is ready to receive the serve from their opponent. You want to have a new ready stance. You want to be present. You want to be grateful. You want to be loving."

She was right. I wanted a new approach to anything that *life* served up to me.

Now, as I approach each day and especially as I approach my professional life, I want to be present and thankful and loving – God being my helper, this is my desire. May it be yours as well.

As we conclude, may I invite you all to stand? Let's just pray and ask God to help us in this way. I've written out a prayer for us that might enable us to do so. Let's read this all together in an attitude of prayer:

Dear heavenly Father,

We ask you to be in our everything.

Have your way in every aspect of our lives.

Be present with us in our own work, whatever it may be.

Teach us to celebrate your presence; tutor us as we learn to pray;
and enable us to love as you have loved us.

For we pray in the Saviour's name.

Amen.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How can we experience God in our work?

RECOMMENDED READING

Keller, Timothy. *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*. New York: Dutton-Penguin, 2012.

Shigematsu, Ken. "Thank God It's Monday." *God in My Everything*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013.

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APA Bentall, D., & Shigematsu, K. (2013, December 1). *Thank God It's Monday*. Transcript of sermon delivered at Tenth Church, Vancouver, BC. Retrieved [Month D, YYYY], from [URL]

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MLA Bentall, David, and Ken Shigematsu. "Thank God It's Monday." *God in My Everything* Sermon Series. Tenth Church. Vancouver. 1 Dec. 2013. *Tenth.ca*. Web. [D Mon. YYYY]. Transcript.

TURABIAN Bentall, David, and Ken Shigematsu. "Thank God It's Monday" (Transcript). Sermon, Tenth Church, Vancouver, December 1, 2013, [URL] (accessed [Month D, YYYY]).