Giftedness, Faith and Work

Part 2 of 2: Using Your Giftedness in Difficult Work Situations
with Darrell L. Bock, Bill Hendricks, and George M. Hillman
Release Date: April 2015
Darrell Bock: And sometimes people are doing things that are very useful because they may not be as valued by everybody else that there isn't a perception that what you're doing is valuable when in fact you know, it [is] very much. I love to tell the story of, think about what it takes for you to sit down to a bowl of cereal in the morning. Think about all the things that had to be done in order for your Wheaties to be in front of you and all the services that people had to perform. I mean someone had to plant the wheat, someone had to reap it, someone had to take it to be processed, it had to be in a box, the box had to be in a wrapper to protect it so that it's safe to eat, et cetera. Someone had to deliver it to the store, someone had to put the box on the shelf. I used to do that at one point when I was real, real young, and –

Bill Hendricks: Someone had to finance all those transactions –

Darrell Bock: Exactly correct, and you just think about –we don't think about how much of a web of community our world actually is to make it function. And you pull out some of those roles, in fact all it takes is someone going on strike in a given sector of our society –

Bill Hendricks: Everything shuts down –

Darrell Bock: And you immediately realize. I was reading in the paper today on the way over, they're in the midst of a train strike in Germany in which, and of course I lived in Germany so this is why I paid attention to it, in which they have upped the ante 'cause they're not only not shipping freight now, they're not hauling people. Okay, you don't haul people in Germany on trains, okay, the whole thing breaks down.

Bill Hendricks: That's like shutting down the airlines here.
Darrell Bock

Exactly right, I mean it, what a mess; I'm just contemplating what a mess that is for people 'cause most the people commute, and they commute on trains. And so think about all the jobs that are associated, so when we think about giftedness, and this is probably something we haven't mentioned that's worth mentioning, you think about giftedness but you also think about service, how you manage the world and how you make the world a better place by what you do. And there literally are all kinds of jobs that we would consider mundane, average; however you want to describe it, that really, if those jobs weren't happening our lives would be much worse off corporately as a society.

George Hillman

Well and you have to be able to help people connect the dots. So I'm hearing your warrior, I talk about this in my classes, that churches have very few boxes. We'll work with the kids, count the money, park the cars, and I always tell people we say teaching, but if you only have 12 classrooms guess how many teachers you have, you have 12. I'm a warrior; I don't fit in one of the four boxes, so all right, we tell people, "Well that's great, you do these other things but we also need you to fit in one of these four boxes." Being able to help people connect the dots and say here's my giftings, I talk about giftings, values, and passions, and here's where they connect. And that connection piece, 'cause again back to the thing, I think people take tests all day long, personality tests, but to be able to connect the dots and then go, "Here's the outlet," and then that's where the lights go on.

Bill Hendricks

Now you realize that when connect the dots for people, like in a church setting, for the vast majority of people, where those dots will connect that they need to end up is actually in service outside the church.

George Hillman

And so you have to think kingdom, you have to think broader.
Bill Hendricks

Clayton Bell who was the pastor at Highland Park Pres for years, preached a sermon once on this very issue and he said, you know, at the time we had I don't know, 5,000 people in the church. He said if we count up all the jobs we have here, volunteer work, whether it's ushers or singing in the choir or Sunday school teachers or assistants to the Sunday school teachers, or the juice carriers for the assistants to the Sunday school teachers, if we added up all those jobs there's only at most a few hundred of those jobs which means for the vast majority of you there's not anything to do here within the four walls of the church. His point was we need to deploy you out in the community to do meaningful work out there based on your gifts. And I think this is the church's great opportunity is to unleash the gifts of the people of God for the benefit of the community.

Darrell Bock

Yeah I couldn't agree more, and the churches that do this and that lift it up are really, really interesting. I hear all the time, Tim Keller's church at Redeemer is well-known for at the beginning of the school year praying for the teachers. And at a different time, praying for the bankers, praying for the lawyers, praying for the doctors, affirming what a person is doing most of their time. The way I like to state it is: God has us in our jobs five days a week, eight hours a day, you know on average, that's far longer than we're ever gonna be, than most people are ever gonna be in church. So what is it God has them doing most of the time and who are they rubbing shoulders with and how is that not a part of the, how isn't that not church? I mean that's part of the mission and the commission of the church so how do we as church leaders on the one hand, and how do we as people who are exhorting people who aren't in full-time Christian work, help them face what God has them doing most of their lives?

George Hillman

Well, I would even say one of the things is who's on stage, what are the stories that are being portrayed on stage on a Sunday? I hear the missionaries, I hear these things. I want to hear the story of here's a banker and here's how his Christian worldview is affecting ethical decisions that he's making. I think we need to have more of those stories, more of those role models –

Darrell Bock

That's a great observation –
The Table Podcast  Giftedness, Faith and Work

George Hillman  Up there, I think that's a key thing as well. And then being able to again, I think it's in what we preach, I think it's in what we teach, I think it's in what we model with ministry. I think the other thing too, I know this is a sticky subject, is that we get people so busy inside the four walls of the church that they don't have time to go and do these other things. And so to be able to free up maybe that church schedule a little bit, say, "I want you involved in the local community to do those things." So I think to give them some role models, I think we do need to be teaching some of those things, and then as I said I think there's just some logistics of being able to free up the schedule so that people can go and serve.

Bill Hendricks  And Darrell you had a pastor from DTS who spoke at The Table conference last spring –

Darrell Bock  Yeah, Tom Nelson.

Mr. Bill Hendricks  Tom Nelson, and this is exactly the model that he's building his church around.

Darrell Bock  Yeah, out at Kansas City and I'm sure we're gonna have him, in fact I've already scheduled him, I have him in chapel next spring. And to talk about how he, this shift revolutionized how he does ministry, when he realized that his goal in ministering to people wasn't to turn them into Bible students, if I can say it that way, to have them have wonderful Bible knowledge that operates within the church and so they're interacting and able to survive well in Bible studies and that kind of thing. Now his goal was to equip people for life and give them, the way I like to say it is, give 'em a theology that shows itself in life. Theology is designed to help us live life effectively, to have us live life the way we're designed to live it in whatever station or port that God puts us in. And so when we teach and preach with that in mind, that means that the illustrations aren't just about what happens in church or not just what happens in the mission field, it's what happens at the bank, it's what happens at school, it's what happens at home. It's what happens when there's conflict in the workplace, all those kinds of things.
What happens when you face a difficult ethical choice that your work is putting upon you, the judgments that you make, how you have that conversation with that colleague who may or may not be a believer, who's come to you for help, all kinds of things. And Tom said it's just changed the way he did his ministry. He said one of the things that changed his pastorate, this is an interesting story, is he started to visit people in their workplaces, to see what their life was like on a day-to-day basis to get to know what it is that they're facing, to have his person who's sitting in the pew walk him through his plant and say, "This is what I'm dealing with."

**George Hillman**

And it's just communicates so much value to that person –

**Darrell Bock**

Exactly right, and so you look at that and you go, "Man, that's faith and work working together," I mean that's bringing together, that's “connecting the dots” to use the phrase.

**Bill Hendricks**

And earlier Darrell, you mentioned the connection between the Great Commission and the Christian mandate is often lost. This whole issue of calling and giftedness is actually a tremendous opportunity for outreach. The reason I say that is because the vast majority of people in the workplace are not in jobs that fit them, and we have all the statistics on this from Gallup who since 2000 has been keeping track of what they call Employee Engagement which means the extent to which somebody enjoys their job and feels an emotional connection to their job. The most recent statistics for 2012 were that 30 percent of people feel engaged in their work, but that means 70 percent don't feel engaged. Fifty-two percent are what they called unengaged which means yeah, they go to work, but it's just a job, their heart's not in it.

**Darrell Bock**

They're earning money to do something else.
Bill Hendricks

Yeah, but then 18 percent are what they call actively disengaged which means they're mad about it, they hate their job, and they actually undermine and sabotage the work that the engaged workers are doing. Now if that's the case A- that means that a lot of people who are already in churches and are already believers are probably in jobs that don't fit 'em, but it means that a lot of their friends and neighbors and coworkers are in that same boat. It's never dawned on them that there's actually some truth from scripture that speaks into use a person, why you're here, what you should be doing for work and with your life. And we have this tremendous opportunity to speak into a known and felt need on behalf of people 'cause if you're in a bad job fit like you're hating life, and you may not even know that that's the source of your stress, that's the source of your conflict when you come home because you bring this distaste about your job into your family, it poisons your relationship, you're giving your kids a negative view of work as they watch you slug through every day. This is a tremendous opportunity for the church.

Darrell Bock

You know it's interesting 'cause this is the one question I had about the book when I read it that I thought, that I'd love to get your feedback on and that is you know there are a lot of people who are in jobs that don't fit them or they're in the job that they selected and for the cultural pressures that we mentioned at the start or whatever, they're in a place that isn't a fit and there really are two scenarios that I think you have to deal with for someone who’s in [this]. The first is well, if you have an opportunity to find something that fits then go there, that's wonderful, if you can figure out what that is and then land there, that's wonderful.

But the scenario I had in the back of my head when I was reading, you know it's coming, is the person who's in a job, it doesn't fit him, but it's hard to know if he has another place he or she can go, that's where they are. You know a lot of people particularly as they get later on in life, because of the way medical plans work, et cetera, they don't feel the freedom to be able to pick up and head somewhere else. They've got to make do with where God has them. What do you do in that kind of a circumstance where you know I'm here, I'm not gifted to do this, but this is where God has me right now?
Bill Hendricks

You know the question that you're asking is one I get asked a lot and I've had to think about this for years and it is: is giftedness a luxury? Like it's great for those of us who have education, live in upper-middle class America and we have options, but what if you're a rice farmer in North Korea? What if you're working the trains in Germany right now and that's the only job you could find? Well, I say giftedness is not a luxury; it's a reality. In other words I understand the problems of trying to deploy and employ your giftedness. That doesn't change the fact that it simply is what it is. God has made people the way He's made them, and we ignore giftedness to our peril. And so finding the best fit does not mean the best fit conceivable, it means finding the best fit achievable under the context you're in. Now I know that you're writing a book called Life, Liberty, and –

Darrell Bock

Loving your Neighbor –

Bill Hendricks

Loving your Neighbor, and I have recently been reflecting on the phrase, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," from the Declaration of Independence. The word “happiness” there if you really get into it and study it, what those guys were talking about was this whole idea of people being able to do what they felt was right for them to do, in other words to pursue the path that was best for them. It's really what we would call pursuing their giftedness. And of course hand-in-glove with that right which is called "unalienable from the Creator" is the right for freedom. And so wherever you have found freedom for people to pursue that which God's put in them in this world, you find cultures flourishing.

And so I'm all for let's give people as many options as possible and let's not put you know, laws and structures and certain kinds of governments in place that impede people from living out that gifting. There's a group that does microlending all over the world that I have been involved with recently and what you discover is that the giftedness is all there, like it's all there even though these people live in terribly impoverished circumstances. All they need is an opportunity to unleash that and so this group comes along and for $100.00 loan this guy buys a bike and next thing you know he's able to take bananas into the village and sell 'em and he's making some money.
This lady buys a sewing machine and she's making clothes and feeding her family, and all these gifts are flourishing. And there it is, it's like wow, we gave the gift some breathing room and here it came. And so wherever we find people that they don't have options, I say well let's figure out ways to give them opportunities. But in the meantime just because you're not in the greatest job fit doesn't give you an excuse to go, "Well then I don't really have to put my heart into my work."

Darrell Bock  
Yeah I think here are two questions and that is are you suited for what you're doing, which is one way to do it, but the other question is how am I in the midst of doing what I'm doing? You know there's the whole, you know we all know the people who we've met who have very mundane jobs, but they've worked hard because of their personality or whatever to make that job seem special. The thing that pops in my mind immediately are some of the stewards that you meet on Southwest Airlines, you know who've managed to be very creative about some very simple things. Most of us probably have seen the variety of YouTube things that have circulated around about the gal who gives the announcement about fastening your seatbelt on a plane.

About as mundane a thing as you can do, it happens all the time, I fly enough that I think I could do it backwards if I had to. I understand that if that oxygen thing ever drops down I'm supposed to do it first then worry about my kids. The bag, I know the bag isn't supposed, I know all that stuff. And you watch some people, how they do this very mundane task and by injecting their giftedness and their creativity and how they go about that, they transform the way in which it's done. And even more interestingly the way in which people perceive it –

George Hillman  
Their experience of it –

Darrell Bock  
Yeah, they end up, everyone who's heard that announcement 600 times is engaged in that particular example because it's so fresh, and it's been so personalized. So I think sometimes we think of giftedness as where I am but sometimes giftedness is thinking about how I'm doing what I'm being asked to do.
George Hillman: Two things that go in that vein as well: I'm thinking one aspect is I think sometimes we get too wrapped up in paid employment too. I mean we go to the same church, the individual at our church that runs our divorce care ministry; he sells furniture by the day. That pays the bills, he just lights up with talking about what happens with marriage ministry and doing the job pays the bills so he can actually do what he loves. And yeah there's people in this world that are fortunate enough to get paid for what they love to do with their giftedness, but for others maybe it is just the job. But then to have that, the sad thing is the person who never has the outlet to be able to express this in the church, in their family, with the community –

Darrell Bock: Somewhere –

George Hillman: And so some of the most gifted people in your churches, they've got mundane jobs, and there's people in my church. I don't even know what they do for a living but I know what they do at the church, and they just shine and you find out later, oh this guy sells furniture, this guy does this or that. The other thing I would say is no job is perfect.

Bill Hendricks: No, none at all.

George Hillman: And because of the fall every one of our jobs have those limitations. We just got out of a committee meeting, sitting there for an hour –

Darrell Bock: My favorite committee, DPR.

George Hillman: You know there's things I love about what we do but there's other things, it doesn't matter what job you have there's some mundaneness that you have to do no matter what the job is.

Bill Hendricks: My dad always used to say every job has its bedpans.

Darrell Bock: He had a way of expressing of himself –
**Bill Hendricks**

But it's true you never find the perfect job, the perfect fit this side of heaven, and that's okay because that builds your character. What I try to help people avoid is where there's such a mismatch between who they fundamentally are, what's being expected, that they're given all this energy out but they're getting none back, and that's just a recipe for burnout.

**Darrell Bock**

And they go empty, that's right, yeah, I mean that even happens with pastors. I mean –

**Bill Hendricks**

Absolutely, I saw a survey oh about a year ago now, from Leadership Network, and they were rebroadcasting a survey that asked why pastors quit. And I looked down the list of ten things, the top ten reasons, and I mean at least seven of 'em were the same symptoms that I see in lawyers, bankers, doctors, accountants, anybody else who's burning out and it's signs of misfit. And you're thinking, "Gosh I wonder if this guy was supposed to be in the pastorate in the first place." And I think at the seminary we actually do a service to people if we help them come to grips with the fact you know, I love the ministry as a concept, but I realize God really didn't wire me to do that vocationally. Maybe I should be in engineering, maybe I should teach but not in a church setting. It does the world a much bigger favor to steer somebody into work that really fits them and they can make a contribution than to go into something that –

**George Hillman**

Well I'll, begin, I've been here 13 years, I think one of the students who had the greatest gift of evangelism, he's an accountant. He came here thinking, "I'm gonna go to a church," and he says, "I hate hanging out with Christians all day." And he's working with one of the big accounting firms and he has an impact not just here in the US, he's working with expats all around the world and he has an incredible gift of evangelism. And yeah that type of thing of being able to unleash.
Darrell Bock: Yeah, I think there really are two elements to this that are important, and one of them is the fit of doing, and your book does spend a lot of time helping people kind of discern what is it you like to do, what do you do naturally, what motivates you, what intrinsically when you do, it's what I call getting lost in what you're doing. You dive in and you know there are times my wife will say the world ceases to exist sometimes when I'm sitting down and writing. When I'm at a certain point in my writing and things are really going well and until you're through, and I'm lost, and I'm in it and I look up and I've been there, sitting there three hours and I thought I'd been there maybe ten minutes.

Bill Hendricks: And you feel energized.

Darrell Bock: Exactly right because it's been creative and that kind of thing. I actually had a moment like that this morning, and so that really is invigorating to watch that happen. So there's that dimension, and I do think this other dimension is undervalued and that is all right, I'm not in the best place, you know, I'm in the middle of this DPR committee meting, it's not the most thrilling set of handouts I've ever had to evaluate in my life, that kind of thing. But the activity that we're actually engaged and trying to do, which is to improve our education is important, and this is the mundane part of getting there.

Bill Hendricks: But you do it –

Darrell Bock: So you do it and you realize yeah, this isn't the funnest part of what we do, but you also realize that by investing in it and taking it seriously you actually are helping to accomplish and make better those times when you are doing what you want to do, and you're making it more effective in doing so. And so it has value and so you make the best of it. I'm sure every stewardess in the world says, "I wish we weren't mandated to tell people how to fasten their seatbelts on every flight." I mean I think about how boring it is for me, imagine for the person who has to say that all day long, every flight they're on, that's the thing they're gonna be telling people. And you sit and there and you go, "Man, I mean," when I'm in my good moments I go, "I think I have it bad, think about the person that has to do this all the time." And yet there's a way of doing it –
Bill Hendricks  You mentioned Southwest Airlines, you gave 'em some free advertising. You mention an enlightened employer, there's an employer that realizes that very issue, and you know one of the mission statements of Southwest Airlines is have fun. And for all the years they've been in existence they have actually done that, that to me speaks to anybody who's listening to this who's an employer. You have an opportunity to shape the nature of the work that people are doing. You can either make it a joy or you can make it drudgery and you have a lot of control over that culture. And what an enlightened employer does is take something that's very menial and somehow invest it with meaning and significance and almost makes a game out of it that people love to play and that encourages people then to bring the best of who they are to it.

Darrell Bock  You know another corporation that I think fits that bill very much is Interstate Battery; I think through the commercials that Norm Miller used to do with Joe Gibbs. You know here's the owner of the company and a former NFL football coach in the backseat of a racer having fun in the 30 seconds or the minute that they get to advertise about Interstate Battery, and they have fun with it, and you can see that and you sense it and that spirit runs through the company. And you see it take place and so I think it's a very, very important, the whole atmospherics if you will, of what a company is very, very important.

George Hillman  Well and they're just pure economics as well. When I empower my employees more stuff gets done.

Darrell Bock  That's right –

Bill Hendricks  And you need less management.

Darrell Bock  Yeah, well it's an interesting world to think about how giftedness works and even when there's a mismatch what the potential is. I think that sometimes we get locked in the thinking of I'm not where I ought to be and that becomes like a box in a prison simultaneously and you're just, you're locked in. And maybe the flip side of that at least initially is to think through, "Well how can I make, okay I'm here, how can I make this better, how can I make this work, how can, what can I do to do creative stuff?" I'll tell another story that is an example of this kind of thing, when I was growing up one of my first jobs was I worked in a mailroom of a bank, just become a Christian –
Bill Hendricks: That really sounds like a great fit for you –

Darrell Bock: Yeah that's right, it was a great job, and you know it was how I was earning my summer money and you know how you go in and you just, it's these old mail machines that put stamps on envelopes, And one thing the bank used to have to do was a lot of envelopes. And there was a lot of filing that was involved, everyone was filing stuff, checks and that kind, you know it was before automation and that kind of stuff, so this is a dinosaur story, but still. But in the midst of that I thought well, there are a lot of people sitting around, they're just filing their stuff all the time, there's not much going on here, place is pretty quiet.

You know every now and then there's a conversation, maybe there's something we can do to stir up a conversation. So there was a employees' board that was located in the middle of where we were located and so one day I said, "I think I'm gonna do a think called a verse for the day, just to see if people'll talk." And so the first one was "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." And at the bottom I put "On the tower at the University of Texas at Austin," which is where I was going to school. Well actually that isn't what I did, I had the verse and I said, "Does anyone know where this is prominent?" That's the way I said it, and so, and "Do you know where it comes from?" Okay, so two questions, and people were walking by and they were going, "Yeah I've seen that on the tower at University of Texas."

And I said, "Well do you know where it comes from?" And of course boom, some people, a lot of people didn't know and so and what is the truth you know, and boom, and they're, all these people filing, you know, just kind of doing, all of a sudden the workroom kind of lights up and people are talking about stuff. And so I kept doing it and then one day I decided I'm just gonna skip, I'm not gonna put up the verse of the day and see what happens. That was a bad move. "Where's the verse of the day?" 'Cause what I used to do, I used to put up a lot of Proverbs 'cause Proverbs inevitably invoked a lot of conversation for reflection and that. It changed the dynamic of the room –

Bill Hendricks: That's so neat.
Darrell Bock You know, it totally changed the dynamic of the room and you're sitting here going, and it made job fun and what's even more interesting is you got to know the people you were working with through those conversations. I mean a job that was about checks and stamps on envelopes and you know, who gets to lick the stamp today, you know. All of a sudden there was interaction happening and it changed the way things were.

Bill Hendricks It's humanness taking place, humanness.

George Hillman The relationships are huge, my wife works at a counseling office and you know she enjoys the work; she loves the relationships that she has with the other ladies that she works with. That's, I mean Dallas Seminary, we do great things. I love the relationships that are here.

Darrell Bock Yeah I do too, we work with great people.

George Hillman And so it's the relationships that even in the midst of using my giftedness, back to that context of community, in the midst of using my giftedness with other people, that's where the ministry is.

Darrell Bock Yeah, so I think that the giftedness is a challenge, helping people find their gifts is a challenge. It's an important aspect and we've barely even scratched the surface of how you get there, so we've had fun doing other things –

Bill Hendricks I guess you'll have to have me back.

Darrell Bock That's right, we'll have to have you back and do more detail, but I do think that a important question to work with because so many people do feel like they're mismatched or not happy where they are, is wrestling with the question, okay that's where I am but does each day become a dirge or is there a different way to think about how I go about what I'm doing in such a way that maybe my personality and my giftedness can express itself and create a different kind of interaction and dynamic with what I'm doing in my life?

Bill Hendricks Absolutely.
And that has terrific potential to change what otherwise would be the very same thing. Well, I thank you guys for coming in and being a part of this and for interacting with us on it –

Thanks for having us.

Love to do it.

It's a first go around on this, this is a good topic, and we'll be coming back to it and we just thank you for being a part and we thank you for being a part of The Table and hope that you'll be with us again soon.