

John Chapters 14-15: The Importance of Workplace Relationships

From the Theology of Work Bible Commentary on John

An emphasis on personal relationships suffuses the book of John. Jesus calls the disciples not servants, but friends. They work for Jesus, but in a spirit of friendship and collegiality. It is in the fullest sense of the term a family business. The work and the relationships intertwine, for Jesus is not working on his own. “The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (John 14:10-11). Neither will the disciples be left as orphans to muddle through the world as best they can. Through the Spirit, Jesus will be with them, and they will do the same things he has been doing.

This is deeper than it may appear. It does not mean merely that after Jesus dies, his disciples or friends can still experience him in prayer. It means that they are active participants in the work that fuels the loving relationship between the Father and the Son. The Son shows his love for the Father by doing his will, in the power of the Spirit. The disciples or friends enter into this ever-flowing love of the Father, Son, and Spirit, not only by mystical reflection but also by embracing the Son’s mission and working as he did. The call to share in the love is inextricable from the call to share in the labor. The prayer, “I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one” (John 17:23), is matched by, “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world” (John 17:18).

This can be a tremendous encouragement to project-oriented people who are sometimes made to feel unspiritual because of their reluctance to spend an abundance of time talking about their feelings. Talking with other people is a necessary activity for developing relationships, but we should not neglect the importance of doing work together. It is no accident that we spend a great deal of time working with and for other people. Modeled on God’s own work within the Trinity, we are able to find relationship in

work. Work toward a common goal is one of the chief ways God brings us together and makes us truly human.