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TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY
Langley, British Columbia
October 22, 1993

Who Are You? What Do You Want?

C. William Pollard, Chairman
The ServiceMaster Company
Downers Grove, Illinois

A friend of mine recently shared his experience with a telephone answering machine. As the phone was answered, the machine responded, "This is not an answering machine. It is a questioning machine. There are only two questions in life that are relevant: who are you and what do you want? Most people do not know the answers to these questions. Please give your answer at the tone."

Who are we and what do we want?

Important questions for young people preparing for the future. Important question for Christian young people who are serious about serving their Lord and Savior. What is the work of Christ in the market place? Must one continue to be trapped in the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular participating in one life and world on a Sunday or at a Bible study and another at the office? Is Christian service limited to the church, the mission field or a para church organization or does it have some applicability to a venture that makes money? Do I spend time during the week developing plans for growing a business, increasing market share and seeking opportunities for future profits, and on the weekends with my Christian friends discuss news about the evils of variant human behavior, crime and uncertainty in world events, with the inevitable conclusion that things are getting worse and that I must withdraw and protect to survive.

Francis Schaeffer's terms, "How shall we then live? Who am I? And what do we want?"

As I come to a response to these questions, I do so not as an expert in theology or philosophy, but simply as a business man who, for the past 15 years, has served in managing and leading a large public company that we call ServiceMaster. We are a company committed to growth. We have doubled in size every three and a half years for the past twenty-three years, and our customer level revenue this year will be an excess of \$4 billion. Our services today stretch from Karachi, Pakistan to Tokyo, Japan. The future and survival of our company is simply dependent upon over 200,000 people, most of them located in our customer's environment and many with different skills and talents doing what is right in providing a quality service.

There is much about our business that may be classified as routine or mundane. We are often dealing with people in entry level positions, unskilled and many times uneducated and more often or not unnoticed. The task before us is to train, motivate and develop these people so that they will do a more effective job, be more productive in their work and yes even be better people. This is both a management and a leadership challenge. It becomes more than a job or a means to earn a living. It is in fact our mission, a way of life. Our company objectives are simply stated:

2

To honor God in all we do, To help people develop, To pursue excellence and To grow profitably. The first two objectives are end goals; the second two are means goals. As we seek to implement these objectives in the operation of our business, they provide for us a reference point in seeking to do that which is right and avoiding that which is wrong.

It is a simple yet profound purpose statement that is easy to communicate and remember, but also provides the basis for a continuing dialogue of understanding, interpretation and application. There is often a creative tension between the end goals and the means goals. A manager in ServiceMaster doesn't have the option of saying, "Today I am going to honor God and not make money" or "Today I'm going to make money and I don't care about developing people." The challenge is to make a decision for advancing the firm within the framework of all the objectives. If you can't make it fit, the decision should wait.

Our first objective is not intended as a simple expression of some religious or dominational belief, be it Judaism, Protestant or Catholic; nor is it an attempt to merchandise the free enterprise system or the services we sell wrapped in a religious blanket. It is instead an affirmative statement that our beginning point, our way of doing business, starts with God. It is a rejection of the notion that the final authority is with man's own reason or that our way of seeking to do that which is right in running a business can change based upon cultural or environmental conditions. Because of this starting point, we have a view, a value system, if you will, that influences how we operate our business, how we treat people as specially created in God's image and how we seek to serve our customer.

In a pluralistic society not everyone will agree with this starting point. But few will disagree with the great potential for good as people recognize the value and worth of others ahead of their own self interest or self gratification. (Here give Harvard-My Company-the Market Place)

It provides for me as a Christian an open environment to share and live my faith as I seek excellence in my work and also accomplish an objective as secular as earning profit.

It is best summarized by that simple but profound declaration written by the Apostle Paul over 2,000 years ago and recorded for us in the book of Galatians, chapter 3, verse 26, "You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

The first part of this statement means that my beginning point is with God. He is my source. He provides the ultimate standard for my conduct and the reason for my care and concern for people.

It is His standard of rightness that applies to the way I conduct business, the way I serve customers, the way I treat employees. Manipulation of people, insider trading, diluting a service or product are not simply illegal or breaches of an agreement; they violate God's standard which is a far more serious infraction. My involvement with employees cannot be limited to a transaction of wages paid for work done. Since each person has been created in God's image and has a unique value and worth, I must take the time to understand, to love, and to serve that person with the clear objective of having the work environment become a positive influence in the process of his

3

development.

My beginning point with God also affects the relationship I have with my family. It is God's standard that I love and cherish my wife. I am not the superior and she is not the subordinate. It is not my checkbook, my house, my way. We are a partnership that is based upon mutual love and trust. Judy and I are committed to each other and must continue to work at the joining together of our separate and distinct personalities. It requires a constant attention to the smoothing of rough edges.

The single most important product of this love is the children God has given us. Our role has been to provide a home for their development, spiritual nurture, and admonition.

We are learning that this role changes with the growth of our children. As our oldest daughter, Julie, and her husband, Chris, raise their own family, we have learned the joy of grandchildren and sharing as they develop and grow as a separate family unit. As our son, Chip, and his wife, Carey, establish their home and experience the tensions and hard work of Chip's profession as a young lawyer, there is a special role of extended love and providing a listening ear, as I remember my early years as a young lawyer. For Brian, and his wife Sue, who are both developing their careers, there is a need to counsel and support as they develop, grow, and seek balance in their life. Amy is our youngest and as she and her husband Mark establish their home they need our support, but not direction, as they grow and develop together.

Although each child is different and our role has changed with their maturity, we have a continuing responsibility for their development, growth, and our acceptance and love for their choice of a life partner. They are all God's children as well as our children.

But a beginning point with God and a desire to follow His standards is not enough. I must also know God and have a relationship with Him. you see, the second part of that statement by the Apostle Paul is that a relationship with God can only come through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became man and through His life, death, and resurrection assumed the penalty of sin and eliminated the cause for any separation between man and God. This work of Christ is available to all. But, like any offer, it cannot become a completed transaction in the life of an individual unless there is a corresponding choice of acceptance and trust by that individual.

Some use the scriptural term, born again to refer to this point of commitment. It is a spiritual rebirth, a conversion experience. For me, this point of commitment came as a young boy by my mother's knee, seeking to learn from her what must be done to start a relationship with God. Her life and example was and continues to be a great inspiration for me.

But as I refer to this point of faith and commitment, let me pause for a moment and emphasize that it was only a starting point. There have been times of doubt, especially through those difficult teenage years, and the sudden death of my father when I was eighteen. There followed the challenges of college and law school and seeking to establish a home, support a family, and finance an education. Then there was the drive for success which allowed my law profession to become a jealous mistress, only to be stopped by God's intervention with a serious

4

health condition. This was followed by a dramatic change in my life, a renewing and reordering of my service to my family and to God, and a career change that allowed me to serve as an administrator and faculty member at Wheaton College. It was during this phase of my life that God began to teach me lessons of balance and spiritual maturity and provided the opportunity to receive guidance and inspiration from a man of great spiritual insight Hudson Armerding.

My career took another turn in the fall of 1977 as my task at Wheaton was over and I joined the management team at ServiceMaster. In these intervening years of seeking to learn, lead, and serve a large public company, I have come to understand the great benefits of working with others who have a common goal, to honor God in all they do, and I have learned from my partner, Ken Wessner, and colleague, Ken Hansen, who have made their lives a witness and example of the Lord they love and who have invested themselves in me and my development.

So you can see, my life has not been a simple, logical, predictable sequence of events. God has chosen many different people and circumstance to break, mold, and develop me, and the most exciting thing about the process is that it is continuing. There are not answers to every question. In fact, in this growing relationship with God there will always be some unknowns.

But, as I continue to choose for Him, my faith and relationship grows with the objective and purpose of an eternal glory that will far outweigh any momentary doubts or troubles.

The result of my living faith, then, is to serve my Lord and Saviour and to spend myself in the lives of others. God has the ultimate ownership of all I am and have, and it is my responsibility to be a faithful steward.

Who are you and what do you want? Listen carefully to the message of this story of "Midnight Games."

Midnight Games

Last night at a late hour
two men, unknown to each other,
sat brooding over fifty-five years of life.
There are those moments
when the proper ingredients of mood--
time, silence, fatigue, accomplishment
of failure---
cause minds to gaze
across the sweep of existence,
playing a strange and ruthless game called
"What it's all about?"
Such ingredients being at the critical stage
forced my two acquaintances
so to begin play.
One man sat at his desk
amongst paneled royalty

5

in his private den
surrounded by quadrophonic noise.
In such opulence, he thought.
The other rested callous hands
on a scratched kitchen table.
No sound afoot except
for the deep breathing of sleeping children
in the next room
and a humming wife,
preparing for bed.
"Tally the card,"
that part of man's being
which searches for accomplishment
said.
"Count the score," it cried; "make a report
you two men,
separated by railroad tracks,
square footage, horsepower, and clout."
And so the first of the two began.
For openers, I own a home, he said,
with three garages, each filled with imported cars.
(I might as well say it)
the spread is lavish
nothing spared to make it the best
all around.
I own it all; it's paid for.
You could say that it's an estate.
I own a business, and
I own three hundred persons who work for me.
(I might as well own them)
I tell them when they must come to work;
I tell them when to eat,
How much they'll earn
How hard they'll strive
They call me "Mr.;" some call me "Sir;"
Yes, you could say that I won them.
I own a wife
(I might as well say it).
I've capped her teeth,
imported Paris' finest,
paid for weight reduction,
exercise lessons, club memberships.
I've purchased her cosmetic beauty.
Yes, you could say that I own her.
I own my kids

6

(I might as well say it)
I've paid for the college,
the car, the orthodontist,
the dentist and the doctor.
I've set them in motion
with trust funds,
European vacations
and front page weddings.
Yes, you could say that I own them.
I own my investments:
my property, my stocks,
my directorships.
(I might as well say it)
I own my broker too.
Without me he'd go
from broker to broke
Yes, you could say that I've got
everything I own under control.
I own a reputation;
some say hardnosed, others shrewd.
(I might as well say it)
I am respected, if not loved.
But I never started out to be loved;
rather that men might tremble
at my word and decision.
I have my reputation;
Yes, you could say that.
I guess I own just about everything.
Why then am I so empty of spirit
as I play this midnight game?
Why do I sit here
wondering:
 why my wife is not here
 why my children chose other things to do
 if my company will survive
 if my reputation is secure
 if anyone likes me.
Why must I wonder
when I own it all?
Second half of match;
please leave that impressive scene;
cross the tracks
count the score,
tally the card
of a second man

7

who plays the game.
My house is old; my car rusting out,
and I wonder, he thinks,
if the furnace will last the winter.
But (I might as well admit it)
This place owns me.
It calls me to itself each evening
As I walk three blocks
from the bus stop.
It beckons with memories
of Christmases, crisis,
giggles and prayers.
I am gladly owned by its warmth.
My job...is a job, humbling;
its income modest
But (I might as well admit it)
It kind of owns me--
its opportunities to serve others,
to fix things,
 make them go and click
to make something
 with these hands of mine
some sense of accomplishment
producing finished things from raw
You could say I like what I'm doing.
My wife, listen to her hum off key,
was not a cheer leader,
and Wellesley is not her background.
But (I might as well admit it)
she owns me; I belong to her.
 so compelling her affection
 so deep her insight
 so broad her perspective
 so eternal her values
 so compassionate her caring.
I gladly give myself to her
You could say that I am possessed,
nothing held back.
My children; hear them toss in troubled sleep,
average students,
reasonable competitors.
They (I might as well be frank about it)
own me.
I cannot withhold my time from them,
my unrestrained enjoyment as

they discover life and allow me
 to join them as both
 player and spectator.
 The birth certificates say they are mine
 But my heart says they own me.
 As to my assets,
 I own nothing Wall Street admires.
 (I might as well admit it)
 A few things perhaps,
 but largely unredeemable.
 All my holdings are in love,
 in friendship,
 in memories and discoveries
 about life.
 You could say that I am glad to be alive,
 even if
 my estate
 is pure sentimentality.
 Reputation?
 No man knows me or fears me
 Unless, you count my friends
 And (I might as well lay it on the table)
 they own me.
 Why I'd jump to their side
 should occasion arise.
 I'd laugh,
 I'd cry,
 I'd give,
 I'd die,
 I'd hold nothing back from them.
 You could say my friends own me;
 I have no regrets.
 Tally the card; count the score
 the souls of two men cry out.
 One owns, the other is owned.
 Who is winner?
 Are you as confused as I,
 As we watch two men
 extinguish the lights
 and go to bed?
 One face is smiling,
 and humming off key.
 The other is frightened,
 listening to silence.
 Perhaps we counted wrongly?

9

Perhaps we didn't know soon enough,
it was a different game
with different rules
and a different judge,
mounting to different and
very high stakes.

10

The story, of course, could have been written from the opposite view with the man of modest means seeking to control his destiny and the wealthy man knowing the joy of serving and being owned. Who are we and what do we want? The answer, I believe, is found in who owns us.

2 Cor. 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Col. 3:22

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for men. It is the Lord Jesus that you are serving.

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