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# Who Are You and What Do You Want? (Nairobi, Kenya)

C. William Pollard

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**"WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT DO YOU WANT?"  
ATHI RIVER CHAPEL ADDRESS  
DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY  
NAIROBI, KENYA  
TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 1996**

**C. WILLIAM POLLARD, CHAIRMAN  
THE SERVICEMASTER COMPANY  
DOWNERS GROVE, ILLINOIS**

Good morning! I am delighted to be with you today.

I have looked forward to this time of sharing with you. I have come a long way-- from a different country, a different culture, with different experiences. I have grey hair. Although not yet sixty, some might call me old. So in many respects, I am very different than you are.

Yet we are the same. We are human. It is blood that provides us life. We need food and nourishment to survive. We have the potential to love and to hate, to laugh and to cry, to learn and to grow. We have choices in life, a will to do both good and bad. To listen or to ignore. So we are different, yet in many respects, alike.

And this is a special week at Daystar, a week when chapel and other sessions are focused on the subject of vocation. "Vocation" is one of those interesting English words that has a number of meanings. The most common use of the word is in relationship to an occupation, a business or a profession, the way one earns a living. It also, however, has been used to refer to a divine call to perform a specific function, to fill a certain position, especially of a spiritual nature. And at times in the history of the use of this word, it has also been used to refer to a state of union or salvation with God or Christ.

It is interesting to note then, that the history and evolution of the word represents a migration from defining a relationship with God to the common use today of a way of earning a living. Is a vocation a calling, a calling from God?

The common question asked by many college students all over the world is, "What am I going to do with the rest of my life?" How does my learning here relate to what I am going to do in earning a living, in ministering to others, yes, in serving my God?

I have had the opportunity over the past several years to visit with young people all over this world. Young people in my graduate school classes at Wheaton College, young people in business schools where I have had an opportunity to lecture. Young people in Eastern Europe who are starting their own businesses and seeking to understand what it means to make choices in their life and vocation. Young people in universities and colleges in Russia who were seeking to find truth as they were coming out of a system that was built upon deceit. Young people in Shanghai and Beijing, China who are anxious for more freedom and for the opportunity to make money. Young people in the Amazon jungles of Ecuador who were experiencing for the first time the opportunity to learn in a formal school situation.

The differences among these various groups of young people were many, but what I found in common among all of them was an eager desire to learn, a search for more freedom and choice, and a hope to accomplish something significant in their lives. I am sure that as we get a chance to know each other better and dialog together this week in classes or in other informal situations, I will find these same characteristics among the student body of Daystar.

So then, with our differences and those things we share in common, what do we do with the rest of our life?

[Here give story of answering machine]

As you prepare for a ministry, a way to earn a living, a business or profession, , who are you, and what do you want? In one sense we are all prisoners of our hope. It is our hope that sustains us and our vision for what could be that inspires us. But where is our hope? We use the term in many different ways. Some of you may be hoping that this chapel will soon be over. Others may be hoping that that beautiful young lady will say

"yes" when you ask her for a date this afternoon. Or some of you may be hoping to finish this semester with a passing grade, hoping to simply get a job when you graduate. Some of you may describe your hopes in terms of relationships. The hope of being accepted although I am different. The hope of being forgiven although I made a mistake. The hope of being loved although I am unlovely at times. It can also be used in the context of feelings or understandings. The hope of feeling secure. The hope of feeling safe. The hope of knowing joy. Simply the hope of knowing. However we use it, it always carries with it an expectation, an expectation of something more that will occur in the future.

Hope is a continuing theme in the Bible. We are reminded that Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations. For those of us who have committed our lives to Christ, our faith is described as the substance of things we hope for and the certainty of things we do not see. It is the hope of our redemption and the anticipation of more to come in life with our Lord and Savior that is at the heart of our Christian faith. This hope is described as being stored within us, a fountain of life, if you will, that confirms God's promise to us and provides an anchor for our soul that is firm and secure.

The opposite of hope is despair, hopelessness, depression, discouragement, dejection. Despair implies the utter absence of hope to the point of giving up. There is much in the world around us that is in despair.

Freud wrote that life as we find it is too hard for us. It brings us too many pains, disappointments, and impossible tasks. It doesn't take long for a person to realize that life here on earth has an ending, and the hero of our personal story always dies.

We have all had times of despair. Most causes of depression appear to be associated with loss--the loss of friendship, the loss of a job, the loss of a loved one, a broken engagement or marriage. Loss usually results in grief or mourning. The normal type of depressive reaction is relatively short-lived, self-limited, not usually requiring medical help. But many suffer depression without having incurred a loss. They are

depressed because of the disparity between what they think they ought to be and what they fear they are.

The fear of inadequacy often runs deep in highly competitive situations, including a college campus. Will I measure up? Will I be able to pass my exams at the end of this semester? Will I be able to establish a new set of friends? Will I be able to get a job? What is my vocation going to be?

The fear of inadequacy can progress to a point of hopelessness, a feeling that there is no way out. But for those of us who put our hope and faith in Jesus Christ, there can be an assurance of being accepted, of knowing that through Him we always measure up. We belong.

I rest my hope on nothing less than Jesus' Blood and His righteousness. Is this just a familiar hymn, a phrase we repeat, or does it represent reality, a reality of meaning in our life that touches who we are, what we do and what we are becoming?

But wait just a moment. What gives you, Bill Pollard, the right to speak about hope and despair? You are really not a minister, not even a psychologist or a psychiatrist. Aren't you just a business person who has spent most of his life in the marketplace earning money? How can we learn from you on this subject of hope, the hope of a calling?

Simply put, my friend, my life has been filled with hope and some despair. I have been called to be a lawyer and then an administrator, professor at a college, and then a businessman to make money. The trappings of any success, whether they be title, recognition, or wealth, do not necessarily mean a lack of despair or the ultimate in hope or success. The answer for me keeps coming back to fixing my eyes upon Jesus, the perfecter of my faith, who, for the joy set before Him endured the cross. Jesus a person, tempted in all ways like me, yet God. Jesus the servant, who became like me so that I may know Him and in so doing He set an example of a servant who acted upon what He knew. A servant who took the towel and the wash basin and washed His disciples' feet

saying, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth; no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than one who sent him. Once you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." In this one simple act of service, Christ confirmed for all of us that our hope is not in the abstract. Nor is it simply in the knowing of truth. But it is in the reality of doing, of serving, of implementing our faith.

And guess what, my friends. We all have an opportunity to implement our faith day by day in the way we earn our living, our vocation. This subject is truly a spiritual one.

Thus, the doing side of the equation provides a reason for my active involvement and a care and concern for others in my work environment. My relationship with fellow employees cannot be limited to a transaction of wages paid for work done. Since each of them have been created in God's image and has unique value and worth, I must take time to understand, to love, to serve them with a clear objective of having the work environment become a positive influence in the process of their development. In so doing, I confirm both my hope, my faith and realize my calling.

It must also affect my relationship with my family. It is His standard that I love and cherish my wife. I am not the superior. She is not the subordinate. It is not my checkbook, my house, my way. We have become 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 the rough edges. There is always a hope for something more in our marriage.

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

Although each child is different and our role has changed with their maturity, we have a continuing responsibility for their development and growth and for the acceptance

and love of their choice of a life partner. And now also for the expanded love of our ten grandchildren. They are all God's children as well as our children.

For me there have been times of doubt and despair and especially through those difficult teenage years and sudden death of my father when I was a freshman in college. There followed the challenges of finishing college and law school and seeking to establish a home, support a family and finance an education. There were those feelings of inadequacy and concerns about whether I would measure up.

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 health condition. This was followed by a dramatic change in my life, the renewing and reordering of my service to my family and to Him. A career change meant leaving the practice of law and coming to serve as an administrator and faculty member at Wheaton College in 1972. It was during this phase of my life that God began to teach me lessons of balance and spiritual maturity.

In 1977, my path took another turn as my task at Wheaton was over and I joined the management team at ServiceMaster. There I have had the opportunity to work with many colleagues, including my partner Carlos Cantu as we work to manage and lead a fast growing business. We are more than 20 times larger than when I joined the company, and we employ or manage over 200,000 people with our services stretched from Karachi, Pakistan to Tokyo, Japan. We are a public company listed on the New York Stock Exchange. And yes, I live in one of those pressure cooker environments where revenue and profits must be reported quarter by quarter and where revenue and profits have been up every quarter for the past 25 years. The shareholders to whom Carlos and I are responsible as leaders vote every day on our leadership. They have the choice to buy, hold, or sell.

But the measure of my success as a leader is not in the value of our shares or the profit we produce. My hope comes from the opportunity that my work provides me to live and implement my faith.

There is much about our business that may be classed as routine or mundane. We are often dealing with people in entry-level positions, unskilled and many times, uneducated. And more often than 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 a fact, our mission, our way of life. Our company objectives are simply stated, "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 dialog of understanding interpretation application. There is often a creative tension between the end goals and the means goals. A manager in ServiceMaster does not have the option of saying, "Today I am going to honor God and not make money." or "Today I am 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 these objectives. If you cannot make it fit, the decision should wait.

Our first objective is not intended as a simple expression of some religious or denominational theme, be it Judaism, Protestant, or Catholic. Nor is it an attempt to merchandise the free enterprise system with 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 man's

own reason or what our way of seeking to do that which is right in running a business can change based upon cultural or environmental conditions. Because of the starting point we have a view, a value system, if you will, that influences how we operate our business, how we treat people, and how we seek to serve our customers. In a pluralistic society, not everyone will agree with the 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 case study example.]

It provides for me as a Christian an open opportunity to share and live my faith as I seek excellence in my work and accomplish a result as secular as earning money.

We are not a Christian company. Many of our officers are Christian, but we also have officers who are Muslim, Jewish, or of no professed faith. We are sometimes criticized for mixing God and profit but seldom for our performance. These objectives set the standard for those of us who profess Jesus Christ as we seek to walk the talk. Yes, not only to integrate our faith with our learning, but to integrate our faith with what we do, with our actions, and with our work with others.

Yes, the market place can become a ministry; a vocation, if you will, of serving Christ. This is the grand experiment of ServiceMaster. As Christians, we have an opportunity to lead, to lead by example and service. It has been an environment that for me is a constant reminder of who owns me, that my hope extends myself. Who are you and what do you want? Where is your hope? I trust that all of you have put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ and as you seriously consider what He wants you to do, what your calling is, what your vocation is, that you have first made this commitment. He is calling you to serve, to be a steward of the gifts and talents He has given you, and to be a witness of your faith. A beacon, if you will, to the world around you. Yes, God is not just in the pew on Sunday or in the chapel at Daystar. God has a place for you. It might even be in the world of business, making money. His ministry is everywhere. He makes

no distinction between the sacred and the secular as He calls you to be a witness and servant in your work.

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