Session 1

The Crisis in the Leader’s Soul

The Inside Job Workbook by Stephen W. Smith & Steven C. Forney
ExPLANation

Our work has two dimensions: One is our inner work—our soul work, the other is our outer work—the actual work we do with our hands, minds and bodies. The Inside Job is about doing both our inner work as well as our outer work.

Our inner work is often the unexplored dimension of our vocational journey. In life, we acquire skills, education and experience to help us ready ourselves for meaningful work. But work that focuses only on the amassing of information, skills and training neglects our true work—the work of integrating all that is within us with all that we do for a living.

The story of the Woodcarver, based on the poem, “The Woodcarver”, helps us understand our efforts to participate in our own Inside Job where we integrate our inner and outer worlds.

EXCERPT

LONG AGO a Chinese man began his career making bell stands for the huge bronze bells that hung in Buddhist temples. This man became prized and celebrated for making the best, most elaborate and enduring bell stands in the entire region. No other person could make the bell stands with such strength and beauty. His reputation grew vast and his skill was in high demand. One day the celebrated woodcarver was asked, “Please tell us the secret of your success!” He replied, “Long before I start making and carving the bell stand, I go into the forest to do the work before the work. I look at all of the hundreds of trees to find the ideal tree—already formed by God to become a bell stand. I look for the bows of the tree to be massive, strong and already shaped. It takes a long time to find the right tree. But without doing the work before the work, I could not do what I have accomplished.”
EXCAVATING QUESTIONS

• According to the Woodcarver, what is the secret of his success?

• What all is required of the Woodcarver “to find the right tree”?

• For the Woodcarver, “doing the work before the work” was a significant element in his success. Think of some examples of how your preparation (your Inside Job) assisted in encountering accomplishment. In what ways do you wish you had been better prepared?

• In what ways do you feel drawn to do your Inside Job at this particular time?

ENGAGING THE SCRIPTURES

Read 2 Peter 1:5-11...

Peter’s ongoing dramatic conversion is fully reflected throughout the gospels. Not only do we see Peter’s conversion from business owner to church leader, we also see his repeated successes and failures in following Christ: walking on the water, catching a miraculous amount of fish, defending Christ and then denying Him. Such stories give us a rich backdrop as we approach Peter’s letters (1 Peter and 2 Peter) written thirty years after Christ’s resurrection. At that time, Peter was the leader of the Church, working with others to grow and build up the body of believers. In his letters, we recognize that Peter is much older, much wiser and sharing from his deep knowledge of the human condition and his life with God. Keep this in mind as we move into this study.

“Seven Deadly Sins”

Wealth without work
Pleasure without conscience
Science without humanity
Knowledge without character
Politics without principle
Commerce without morality
Worship without sacrifice

—Mahatma Gandhi,
The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi
Consider the following questions:

• 2 Peter 1:3 tells us that God has “given us everything we need for life and godliness.” That statement is a big one. Explain what you think Peter meant here.

• Peter tells us that we “participate in the divine nature” and we can “escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” What does it look like for a person to “participate in the divine nature”? What does a person actually do to participate in this way? What does a person refrain from doing?

• Here is a list of Peter’s virtues that we will study in Inside Job. Circle the ones that seem compelling, needed and intriguing to you at this moment. Put a check by the virtues you believe are most needed in the workplace today.

  □ faith    □ goodness    □ knowledge
  □ self-control    □ perseverance    □ godliness
  □ brotherly kindness    □ love

• As we discuss the Inside Job, we’re talking about the difficult task of developing the above virtues. From your experience, what is involved in acquiring and developing them?

EXTERNAL VOICES

Each year I sit down with my boss for a performance evaluation and I’m always prepared to hear at least one question: “What does success look like for you?” I’m ten years into my career and I still cannot answer that question. Sure, I’ve got some answers in my hip-pocket prepared for my boss. I can say a few things I know he’d like to hear; a few work milestones my organization has printed on a developmental timeline. I usually even sprinkle in some personal anecdotes to make it sound genuine. But inside my heart, I’m not convinced. I’m not even convinced I should stay in this job!

To be honest, I feel like I can’t pin down who or what would even define success in my life. Does my wife determine that? If she is happy
and cared for and loved, can she make the final call at some point and say “You’ve made it!” Certainly my kids will have a say, won’t they? Perhaps I should use their feedback as my scale. Is it my professional cohort? Do I simply need to reach a certain position or rank and ride off into retirement? Maybe the answer is on that blog I recently read about retiring at age 40.

Defining success is difficult and I’m sure there is not just one answer for everyone. But I’d like to have a goal, a destination, something to aim for now, and to work towards as I grow older. I tend to think that the destination is defined more by my relationships than it is by my career achievements. But without a way to clearly articulate that, I don’t think I’ll be ready with a convincing answer next time I sit down with my boss and he asks the one question I know is coming.

Blake
US Army Officer

“&It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare.” —Mark Twain

EYEWITNESS STORIES

- Tim has been developing his own business for years now, working long hours to ensure that deliveries and budgets are met. On a weekend getaway that his wife scheduled, Tim realized how much his demanding work routine had impacted his home life. Not long ago he’d been able to relax and stop thinking about work. Now he couldn’t break free from it. Such loss of control was unsettling to Tim. Being unsure of what to do, he brought it up to his wife. Surprisingly, she didn’t mention more vacations or time away, but instead thought meeting up with a pastor or some friends might reveal more as to what is going on. Tim is not sold on revealing all his thoughts to a friend just yet, but he is starting to think this isn’t just a simple fix.

- Is Tim’s inability to stop thinking about work a common issue? What sorts of issues do you find difficult to stop thinking about?

- In what ways might your work routine be impacting your overall life (your attitude, your thoughts and your desires)?

- Do you believe the advice from Tim’s wife will help? What can be gained by looking deeper within ourselves?
EXTRA SOURCES

- Google the phrase “Crisis in Leadership”. The following are just a few of the articles related to the lack of effective leadership within our country and our world.


- As you read through these, what thoughts or phrases speak to you as to why leadership is so difficult?


- Read the following excerpt:

  “Work, among all its abstracts, is actually intimacy, the place where the self meets the world. Work is intimacy and discovery even through the boredom, even through the imprisoning necessities of toiling for another, even through the traumas of rejection and dissatisfaction, even through being badly recompensed... Work is freighted with difficulty and possibility of visible failure, failure to provide, to succeed, to make a difference, to be seen and to be seen and to be seen... Work is the inside made into the outside.”


Work as intimacy may be a perspective for you that requires some time to consider. How might the description of work as intimacy change your perception of your daily routine?