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By **Deborah Willoughby**
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The biblical story of the Samaritan woman at the well has a message for Christians in the business world, according to the Rev. Henry Blackaby, who talked Sunday evening in Montgomery about the concept of workplace ministry.

Blackaby, author of "Experiencing God," told 1,500 people at Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church that "most of the activity of God is in the marketplaces of the world."

He talked about the woman at the well in the book of John. Jesus spoke to a Samaritan woman who was drawing water from a well, and she was transformed by his message. When she shared her story with other villagers, they ran to see Jesus and his disciples and also were transformed.

To Blackaby, the story of the woman at the well could take place in any workplace on any given day. Someone in the marketplace could share his or her beliefs with another, starting a chain reaction of Christian faith.



Members of the congregation of Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church pray Sunday during an address by the Rev. Henry Blackaby on the importance of workplace ministry.

-- Photos by Karen S. Doerr Advertiser

It's a practical point, Blackaby said. The nonbeliever is more likely to hear about Christianity from someone at work than from a preacher in a pulpit. The role of a workplace minister is to understand God's message and be able to share it with someone who does not attend church.

On Sunday night, about 1,500 people at Frazer stood to convey their willingness to be workplace ministers. The church is beginning a program called Frazer@Work to help members live their faith in the workplace. Frazer@Work will include online materials, training, practical strategies, resources and community building.

To people who attended Blackaby's service on Sunday, religion isn't something that's reserved just for church and family time.

"When you're treating people like the Bible tells you, it makes a better work environment," said Jimmy Parsons. "At Colonial Bank, we have a monthly men's gathering. I do believe that God's next big move is in the workplace."

Kate Thomas teaches quality engineering for the University of Phoenix. She said she sees frequent opportunities to tie her faith in with her work.

"Quality engineering has real deep philosophical roots in the Gospel: What are my problems? What do I need to fix? It's easy to carry over to the Gospel," Thomas said. "It's a good fit for me."

MORE INFORMATION

For more details about the Frazer@Work program, log on to the church's Web site, www.frazerumc.org

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Bill Pavelec of Auburn recalled a time when he was able to make a difference in the lives of his employees.

"At the company I was running, the warehouse employees were from a pretty rough area, and I basically brought them the work of Jesus," Pavelec said. "I had them praying and crying and listening to God's word. I think it was a place God wanted me to be at that time."

Doug Spada, founder of a ministry called His Church at Work, told participants at the Sunday service, "You have a full-time ministry -- not just a job, but a ministry."

Spada said, "Our vision is 1 million followers of Christ influencing 10 million unchurched. Frazer is going to be one of those churches leading the way."

Blackaby talked about the early Christian church, when the word was spread by ordinary people who became Christ's followers and disciples.

"Amos was a farmer. David was a shepherd. What was Abraham when God called him? The most successful businessman of his day. Peter, James and John were fishermen. Matthew was a tax collector," Blackaby said. "These ordinary people in the workplace were part of God's ultimate plan to turn the world upside down."

Blackaby asked the workplace ministers "to just be normal and natural." Opportunities to bear witness will arrive, he said. For example, a workplace minister can be someone who promises to pray for a co-worker who has suffered a tragedy.

"God has placed each one of you strategically. You can add something in the workplace," Blackaby said.



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