

**Jonathan:** Alright welcome to the Metron Manager Podcast, my name is Jonathan Nowlen, I'm your host, and today we have the privilege of having Phillip Pennestri with us. He is a long-time friend and I'm grateful you could join us for this episode of The Metron Manager podcast. It will be good to talk with him, get his input on this whole project and the Theology of Work and his experience in the Marketplace. Phillip, give us a little information about yourself, where you're from, what you do, family, let's get familiar with you a little bit.

**Phillip:** Thanks Jonathan, I appreciate you taking the time and having me on the Podcast. So, yeah, I'm about 50 years old, currently living in California, born and raised in New York City. I came to Christ through my uncle when I was about 19 years old, and it's been an amazing journey ever since. I've gravitated towards *The Word* and *Believing God for His Word*, and then actually living it out. I haven't always been successful but I take *His Word as Truth* and if He wrote it down then it's good enough for me to stand on it.

**Jonathan:** Amen to that!

**Phillip:** Ya, It's been an exciting 25-30 years of doing that, walking out on that. I have a beautiful wife and three beautiful healthy children, they are 11, 13, and 15 years old. My wife is a recent Colon Cancer survivor, and I remember the day that we got that call and the shocking news of that, right. That night I put everyone to bed, prayed over my family and stayed out in the living room then I literally got down on my knees in the kitchen and said "OK God, this is one of those times I really need You to show up here." I felt like that night He put on me "don't worry about it, I got this one." Two years later she is cancer free and I will never forget that conversation. Again appreciate you for having me on the show, I am real grateful Jonathan, for the Managing your Metron, really appreciate what you have done here and looking forward to taking the next steps with it.

**Jonathan:** Ya, Amen, sounds like you're coming out of a lot of personal life the last few years, with your wife, it's a blessing and a miracle that she is doing well. Praise God. So for our listeners sake, what sort of industry, what context do you work in?

**Phillip:** I'm in Real Estate and Construction, I have several different businesses - the primary business is general contract and construction, commercial and residential, primarily in California. But we do work pretty much all over the United States. My next company is a Realestate Development Company, so we do land deals and real estate deals. In terms of development for other people we do *buy and holds* for ourselves, and my third company is a Consulting Firm, where I have blended my experience and expertise in project management and have become a gun for hire so to speak. It kind of took off on it's own, where clients and associates that I deal with on a regular basis have companies and businesses that are stuck or can't see beyond the problem or their efficiency or their production isn't what it once was. So I bring a little shape and format to that, and some procedure to it, and put it into a short term consulting, I come in, I identify what the issues are, I create an action plan, I execute those additions then I go away.

**Jonathan:** That's great. It definitely seems obvious you have a wide perview in the marketplace and different industries and sectors. A lot of professional experience, bringing that into the consulting arena. So as you have worked in all these diverse areas, met a lot of

diverse people, do you come across a lot of believers in these sectors, or at least people that are open or that you are aware of that are Christians in these circles of your work?

**Phillip:** You know I find that more professing Christians are in the Trades than are in the so to speak White Collar arena. I still don't really know what or why that is. In the professional arena I have come to find that, especially the higher up the chain of command and the seats that you go, like the COO the CEO -- the higher you go the more quiet they are. But the one-on-one environment which is really my gifting, to sit across from a person one on one and dive deep into their lives, that's where I am able to draw it out or they profess it at that point. But it's not as prevalent in the corporate structure.

**Jonathan:** Ya I would see that for sure. In those kind of conversations and engagements do you ever hear voiced by believers, whether it's in the trades or various professions or even in college circles, a passion or understanding about work or anything in the context in connection with their faith. Or is that a discussion that doesn't really happen, or maybe isn't on people's minds? What have you observed?

**Phillip:** I am very specific about this based on my own wandering so to speak. I am always curious and I'm always intentionally asking and pushing that button. The majority of the time, and that is literally 90% of the time there is no correlation at all. It's complete separation. "This is what I do", it's complete separation.

**Jonathan:** Does that seem to cause people to feel like a void or emptiness about their work? What's their sense about it. Obviously some people are very passionate about what they do or they enjoy the profitability, while they are applying their talents and education, but do they see there is kind of a vacuum there, a bit of a hollowness about their work, or how does that come across?

**Phillip:** A giant hollowness where it's echoing, imagine a person in a box by themselves and the echoing. There is a lot of regret, I see a lot of regret, I see a lot of aimlessness, I am talking about smart people, people that are much smarter than I am and in industries that I could hardly understand what they do, or what they produce, and there's a longing there. It's an actual hollowness there. They've completely missed that mark or didn't quite grab somewhere along the line a full and true understanding of their vocation and having it linked to their belief.

**Jonathan:** It's like we're obviously designed for meaning and purpose, we're designed with that God shaped hole, and even for believers, if they don't see that their work seems relevant to their faith or to their eternal condition, and that it doesn't matter to God, it must seem like that it's hard for it to matter to them individually, to that person. That must leave them very hollow.

**Phillip:** Exactly. One of the things I have seen in the last 4 or 5 years as the economy has really taken off and people have a bigger sense of financial freedom these last couple years. I have heard more than 10 times which is a lot, in my circle- again I am intentionally poking and asking these questions, the answer that I am getting is the same and that is "I am so far down this path, whether it be my age or or the amount of income I am living on, I can't change careers, I hate what I do, I'm so far down I'd better ride it out."

**Jonathan:** It's almost like being trapped in your perspective on work or your career choices.

**Phillip:** That's right, and this is from believers. Not your random person.

**Jonathan:** Based on those kinds of perspectives, do you think that having encountered an actual theology of work early in these folks' trajectory would have changed the course of the outcomes? How would that affect them, say they read my book 15-20 years ago, is that a fair question, how that would play out?

**Phillip:** Absolutely. You know after reading your book, again I got it on Amazon and read it in one sitting. I read the whole thing in one sitting. And again for me, not only was it poignant but it was extraordinarily meaningful and life changing the instant that I read it, because this is something that I have been dealing with since I was a Sophomore in High School. I was so frustrated as a Sophomore in High School because my best friend knew from the minute he was born he wanted to be a doctor. I didn't have that. I always felt like I should have that. I think that's a common feeling, a common thought. So from that point I have chased every dream, jumped every fence to greener pastures, wasted a lot of time in my life. To answer your question Yes. The sooner someone could get this information and get the perspective at least explained to them, then all the advancement in their lives starts to take shape in terms of a road map. A compass heading. There's purpose, there's meaning, there's understanding, if I can understand what it is then I can get my arms around it and at that point take some action. And so it's a critical bit of information that every human being needs to hear and then have it explained to them so they can fully understand what it is.

**Jonathan:** One of the things that stood out in my mind is "how different would life be if people realized that they are actually co-laboring with God on their job. Not just something to kill time until eternity came around, but that they are actually co-laboring together with God, working together on purpose on something that really mattered to God." It's kind of like the idea of a father/son business, well I call it the father/son kingdom enterprise, or father/daughter kingdom enterprise. Where you get to work with your dad on stuff that matters to him. He designed it to matter and to have a role for you in it. I can only imagine the difference that would make in the amount of meaning it brings to even things that seem trivial sometimes or jobs that seem pretty low-end. When we get started in the work world, we've all had those kinds of jobs. With the broader church circles or traditional Christian ministry circles, is theology of work - is that even a topic that comes up or is it a topic you have heard in your traditional church experience?

**Phillip:** No not at all. I've been in Calvary Chapel for 20 years now, which it's always been where we lived, an evangelical Christian Church - it's never been mentioned. Outside of, you know, the traditional thought of 'well when you work, work as if you're working for God not working for your boss', you know we've all heard that a thousand times. But no, no mention of this whatsoever not even a hint that there is something like this that exists, that is on God's mind. Regardless that you put it in the book that He specifically addressed it in His Word. Not even a broad stroke has it been addressed.

**Jonathan:** Wow what a loss. I guess that's why I settled on that tagline for the Metron Manager Project "recovering the dignity and mission of vocation." I feel like, so many people, I would say it's the majority of the people in the body of Christ who are working hard at their day job, working hard at being parents, you know whatever it takes to do life and do life well, just feel like they're are somehow living in sin or their day job is in the way of doing something spiritual for God. Or at a minimum they don't feel any recognition or a

championing of what God's called them to do, as far as vocation. I think that's one of the biggest things that's been on my heart is to really recover the dignity of vocation, because that's God's original design. There's very few people that are called into professional Christian ministry so to speak, or paid vocational ministry service, but it doesn't mean we are off the clock when it comes to doing our role and contributing to the Kingdom of God. I'm excited when I see the impact on people, all the way from High Schoolers who are learning to serve well in their homes and value their vocation of school they are involved in at the time and then all the way onto entry level jobs. How people do their college studies, how to manage relationships, how to manage all the aspects that are in their Metron, their delegated sphere of influence, do you see that as important as well, looking at the younger generation, getting started early on this?

**Phillip:** I do. I couldn't believe in this project more. I am so, again it strikes a personal chord with me because I felt I have wasted so much of my life searching and chasing things just because my mindset was not right. I grew up at a time when secular and spiritual work were divided. You can witness at work but that's as far as it went, I'm a plumber, or I'm an accountant, but I volunteer at the local church or I go on a missions trip every summer. It was divided, there was no assigned purpose like *God has me here for this mission, to accomplish this task, and as it relates to my vocation and He's super interested in it.* All of the points you address in your book, the sooner a human being gets their arms around that the sooner specifically the believer gets their arms and minds around that, their life takes an immediate- an immediate- change. And it changes their trajectory of their life's path. I mean the impact is generational on this thing.

**Jonathan:** Ya I think so. One of the things I see as well is people have really struggled to have an intimate, true, close, knowing, relationship with God, and compartmentalize that into select available timeframes, rather than having an integrated spirituality into the marketplace and the workplace, not realizing that every time they set a new pipe system on a house that can be an act of worship, that can be done as something that emanates up as worship to God and cultivates that personal connection with heaven. Even in the midst of a dirty grimy job, that can be the best time of their day. I see so many people avoid work, trying to be spiritual, and try to find other times to do other spiritual things, or maybe I should go to both church services on Sunday, I'm really aspirational! Rather than try to live an integrated naturally supernatural work-as-worship lifestyle. I Guess that's one of the things that have really grieved me is how people have felt so set-back or so isolated by their work rather than viewing it or using it as an opportunity to worship and engage with God. Regardless of what other people think around them.

**Phillip:** Right. It's as old as time and yet it's so revolutionary, it revolutionizes your thinking. It just gets me crazy. I am so angry that I missed this all these years, and I've been mentored by some very prominent and solid leaders and men who have really changed some continents because of their commitment and service to God. I've been fortunate enough to be mentored by them and this is one thing that was never discussed.

**Jonathan:** Interesting. Wow I would have never thought. It is encouraging in some ways how these ideas are becoming more mainstream and more engaged in the body of Christ, but as I travel and speak and communicate in a lot of different circles I do find that it is an off topic that is on the outer edge and isn't heavily discussed for multitude of reasons, but I see it as a key to the way forward. Right now in this season of history with the covid situation and all the challenges with the economy, all the unknowns and uncertainties, obviously the workplace,

jobs, financial security, all these things are first and foremost in people's minds. How am I going to get through this, am I going to have a job, what's the economy going to look like. Hopefully what we are doing with the Metron Manager Project, the book, and future training materials that are coming out, are really going to give people some solid stones to add into their foundation, some stuff to really solidify their foundation as they go forward, to bring at least a theological certainty and purpose and some peace into a lot of unknowns. Would you say that's a value point that could come out of this?

**Phillip:** Oh yeah. Absolutely. I mean you're talking about, this excites me, this whole concept and the book and the actual scriptures that revolve around this. To answer your question Yes, it's critical but to go a step further, to understand as a believer that God is in control of all things, yes conceptually we get that. It brings a certain level of peace. But specifically as it relates to a person's vocation, a believers vocation, you hit on it, you hit the nail on the head in your book. Where I believe you titled it "Designed and Assigned" and there was a quote in there that really stuck out to me, how God has designed and assigned the perfect Metron for us. And how that Metron or garden that is designed and assigned to us, absolutely needs us there to be tended, to be protected...when I read that I had to put the book down for a second because I was having heart palpitations. I was flooded with "I wasted my life up until this point" and now all the sudden I've got this information, and the perspective shifts and now I have the rest of my life and lets go. Now we gotta go to work.

**Jonathan:** Amen to that it's never too late to start. It matters to you, obviously it matters to God, it matters to people around us, how we engage with our Metron, how well we manage our Metron and take responsibility, it matters tremendously, the condition of the garden, the condition of the world around us. On a more practical sense on a day to day basis, have you developed any sort of measures, what you would call a win or a success, even in a day, a relationship or a job, when it comes to representing Christ well and cultivating that Metron that's around you, that sphere of influence, like in a faith way, a biblical way, a heavenly outcome. What does that look like to you in your work in the world?

**Phillip:** There's a comment that I have heard recently several times now, that people have said about me and it's the measuring tool that I commonly use. And that is people said "I want what you have." And I have heard that 3 times now. I attribute that to the mindset unto which I now operate under. For someone to tell me 'I want what you have' then that's my measuring stick and that's a home run, right? I'm an intentional guy, so I move intentionally, but one of the things I started doing was taking a step to the side and looking at my garden or my Metron. Is it tended well, is it flourishing? Right? All of the things. And what needs to be addressed, from my time with my children, am I listening to my wife and caring for my home and my homelife, and serving them, and managing well my businesses and my employees and my clients and the money that i make, and all those things fall into my garden, my Metron. And individually I'm actually keeping track of those intentionally, keeping track of each one of them. How am I doing with this? Whereas before I was like "Oh it's time to make payroll, do I have money in the bank, I don't know." Or "Oh man I have to go to my son's soccer game." Every now and then I pick a couple weeds and sprinkle some water on the garden and whatever happens happens compared to now "Tuesday at 3 o'clock we're watering, 10 a.m we're picking weeds." You know, incredibly different.

**Jonathan:** That's an awesome example because when I think back just in the natural sense, of a beautiful garden, who doesn't want to hang out there? Who doesn't want that in the backyard. Who doesn't want to meet the owner of the incredible garden, what a pavillion.

That's attractational, and I really think that's how God intends the kingdom of God to be. So well cultivated that people want in. They want in and I write in the book if people encounter the kingdom they want to meet the King. It's the ultimate evangelistic tool, the ultimate wonderful representation of how God originally designed creation to work, our role of managing relationship with God, managing out into creation, bringing order out of chaos, everybody loves that. Nobody rejects somebody bringing order out of chaos, that's a testimony in and of itself. People would die to have that in their world, you know. Most people's gardens are just overrun and disordered and left to the elements. I think that's a refreshing testimony and a really great description of a Metron and how the kingdom should operate. So Phillip, thank you for your time and your discussion on this, and your great insights. I really appreciate your feedback on the book and the curriculum that is available now, and hopefully we will be able to continue this discussion in future podcasts and get more insights together as we go along.

**Phillip:** I appreciate you. Thank you for having me, I will say that this project that you have literally been blessed with, has generational impact, so keep it up! Keep going, keep developing it and keep pouring into people's lives. Like I said this is going to change generations.

**Jonathan:** Amen that's wonderful, thanks Phillip.