

## **Book Review: The Three Signs of a Miserable Job**

by Carrie Cavanaugh

This New York Times best-seller, The Three Signs of a Miserable Job is an insightful and engaging read. The author, Patrick Lencioni, believes that “all managers can – and really should – view their work as a ministry.” That is,

By helping people find fulfillment in their work, and helping them succeed in whatever they’re doing, a manager can have a profound impact on the emotional, financial, physical, and spiritual health of workers and their families. They can also create an environment where employees do the same for their peers, giving them a sort of ministry of their own. All of which is nothing short of a gift from God. (253)

The Three Signs essentially point out the three main issues that managers need to address in order to make the jobs of those they oversee fulfilling and enjoyable. These issues are: anonymity, irrelevance and immeasurability (yes, he made this word up).

Lencioni’s book is unique, and favorably so, in that the majority of the book is a story illustrating the theory mentioned above. This is a wonderfully intuitive way to learn and it makes for an engaging read. The story exemplifies the importance of addressing anonymity, irrelevance and immeasurability in ways that are convincing and practical. The fable is followed by a brief overview of

the theory and then a number of case studies. The case studies apply the concepts in the book to a wide variety of different work situations and thus the book should be helpful to a broad audience. Lencioni concludes the book with some suggested action steps for managers, job seekers, miserable employees, and consultants.

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Lencioni exhibits great insight into the world of work through his analysis of the three elements that must be attended to in order to make a job a joy. They reflect both his knowledge of the way businesses work, and also how our minds and souls work. He is founder and president of The Table Group, a management consulting firm specializing in executive team development and organizational health. As a consultant and keynote speaker, he has worked with thousands of senior executives in organizations ranging from Fortune 500s and high-tech startups to universities and nonprofits. He

is the author of six nationally recognized books including this one.

A job needs to be more than a job description and a paycheck. Since we aren’t robots, we need to be known as an individual by the people we work with. Further, we cannot give our lives away to empty tasks; so, it is vital that we know how we are positively impacting other people’s lives. And finally, we need to have some way of measuring our work so that we can see what we have accomplished.

Lencioni’s principles are also biblical. Just as God has a personal relationship with each of his children; so too, managers need to approach each of their employees as individuals. Furthermore, we were created for community, so it makes sense that this should encompass the workspace as well as the home. Also, much of what lasts for eternity is that which happens in our interactions between each other, so it is good to invest in relationships at work as you toil at your earthly tasks.

The avoidance of irrelevance is biblical in that we are called to store up our treasure in heaven, so we should invest our time and strength in things that have meaning beyond earning a paycheck. Our souls were created for eternity and so they cannot be

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satisfied with shallow jobs.

Finally, it is biblical to avoid immeasurement in that we are to do all things as though we were working for Christ. That means, we don't just go through the motions, but rather we need to look and see how our work is stacking up. The parable of the talents also comes to mind. We can't just mindlessly bury our jobs and expect God to be pleased. No! We need to be wise and diligent in looking for ways to make the most of where He has placed us.

All-in-all, The Three Signs is an enjoyable and educational book that every manager and employee ought to read. We can never be reminded enough to love one another and Lencioni goes further by telling us how we can do that in the workplace.