

7:30PM Sutherland Hall

By Bob Malouf

Next play, elephant over left tackle. Bam. No gain. Right at the lane of scrimmage, get into the huddle for the defense, and the squirrel says, who tackled that guy? Centipede says, I did. Third play, water buffalo. Right through the middle. Bam. No gain. Right at the line of scrimmage. And the defensive huddle gets together, and the squirrel says, who tackled that guy in A? Centipede says, I did. Squirrel says, where in the world were you in the first half? Centipede says, I was in the locker room taping up my ankles.

Men and women, are you going to be in the game or are you going to be in the locker room? The game I'm talking about is God's plan for the world, and that is that men and women will become more like Jesus and that those same people will be willing to share that good news with whomever God chooses to put in their path. Where are you going to be? I've been asked to come tonight and talk about the role of the man or woman who doesn't go into full time "Christian work," and become a missionary or a pastor in the traditional sense.

The problem is that I am a missionary, and I've been called to a foreign field, just as many of you will be. My foreign field is the home building community of Central Phoenix, and I've had to learn the native language of that foreign field. Would you like to hear some of those foreign words? We talk about discount points and basis points. We talk about the PSI of concrete, covenants, conditions, and restrictions. We talk about lateral stress and glue lamb beams. We call them lambs. It's a very foreign language in a very foreign field.

I have two questions tonight for you and as also for me. The first one is, what foreign field are you going to go to? A person who's a Christian is a part of that unbelievable call that Jesus gave in Matthew 28 when He said, was to go and make disciples. And if that doesn't apply to everybody here tonight, then the greatest thing that will have happened is that America Quest got \$90 of my money. All the rest was a waste. And because some of you will be sent to the same foreign field that I serve on, I want to give you some pre-assignment tours. I want you to take out your camera and snap some pictures of what it means to be on this foreign field.

What does the terrain look like? What do the natives look like? What do they say? How do they talk? And just maybe, you'll get some ideas on how you can serve the Lord and bring the love of Christ to those people who have no light and who are starving for the truth.

Now, as a home builder, I tend to see things in structures. So picture, if you will, a two story building. On the top floor are our secular activities, and on the bottom floor are our sacred activities. And that's how many of us see our Christian lives. Many of us have been taught to compartmentalize everything. And I remember hearing from a Christian speaker, telling me that my business as a day-to-day just business person, my secular work had no intrinsic value whatsoever for the purposes of God and that was the only thing that had any value.

Secular work is only there to meet our survival needs and it's really only a part of our fall in Genesis 3, and as a consequence of sin. Otherwise, my work really had no particular value. Because of thoughts like that, the missionary committee for this conference felt that there should be a businessman on the docket for your mission conference. And to their credit, they wanted to

do something to help us see our lives as an integrated whole. And I'm that something and I'm really glad to be here. Many times I've heard a well-meaning person say, at least in our church, in a missions conference, if God hasn't specifically called you to stay in America then you ought to be on a foreign field.

Then they're quick to say, some of you need to stay home and raise the money. But there never seems to be any real value to the people who are staying home except to raise the money. And they're very happy to do that. But for all the rest, we ought to be on a foreign field. Now, did you know that the second largest major here at Biola is business? And not all of you who are business majors are going to be the treasurer of a foreign missionary team someplace outside the United States.

I think it's pretty safe to say that most of you who are communications and business majors are going to find your earning here in the United States doing something. And many of you who are doing that are going to have to live with guilt for a whole bunch of years because you've been told that somehow you missed God's best for you and you didn't go to a foreign field someplace. You're going to be led to believe that your work is second rate in terms of the Christ Kingdom because you didn't become a full time missionary or a pastor someplace. After all, they sacrificed for Jesus.

The problem is that there isn't any place on the planet any more foreign than Phoenix or Pomona or Philadelphia or wherever you live. It's my firm belief that the American workplace is one of the most strategic arenas for Christianity today. Anywhere in the world. And that that arena has

worldwide influence and worldwide power. And one of the greatest needs, in my opinion, in the American workplace today is for Christians whose lifestyle and work style are so integrated and so put together that the people with whom they work want to know what makes you tick and why are you the way that you are.

Why is customer service so important to you? Why do you operate with a team in your business when it really doesn't have any advantage for you personally? Why do you have joy in the midst of all the pressure that's going on around you? Why do you treat people differently than the folks that are working with you?

Now, I happened to be in the home building business. As I've said, this is a very tough business to be in. Somebody asked me, how many people work for you? And I said about half of them. We have one fellow in our company who really has an attitude. This guy is the third one over on the evolution chart. He'll never wear out because he has no moving parts. He hates work. Last week he called in Dead. Last year he made an honorable mention in the obituaries eight times.

So my question is, how do you build a Christian distinctive in a homebuilding business? Well, you work really hard to build a reputation that would be as close as possible to the one Jesus would have if He was in the home building business. You make your product the best that you possibly can. You treat people with integrity and trust. You demonstrate a genuine care, and you prove it by what you do and what you say and that you prove that you're not there just to take their money and run.

One of the things you do is you become a customer service fanatic. And quite frankly, at least for me, you do it out of an outpouring of your faith in Jesus Christ and your relationship with Him. Now, understand me, please. When you're hired by a company to be a marketing director or engineer or a teacher, you're to be the best marketing director, engineer, or teacher that you possibly can. You're not hired to be an evangelist. You can go there and be the spirit of Christ, but you won't need to advertise Jesus. It's going to be real obvious by the way you walk and the way you talk that there's something about you that's different. And believe me, there's a tremendous amount of darkness out there and you will look like a light in the middle of that darkness.

My friend Ron Ritchie summed it up for me. He was teaching out of 2 Corinthians 2 about the New Covenant and said we're supposed to be the aroma of Christ in the world. Do you remember that passage? He said we're supposed to live so that those around us will say, I know your name is Bill, but somehow I think I've been with Jesus. I know your name is Judy, but I think I've been with Jesus. We're not always successful in that. I know that I'm not. And sometimes I think there's a possibility that people leave my presence and say, Jesus, who have I been with?

I have to stop here and tell you a story. Mary, my wife, and I were in San Francisco on a business trip, staying in a little boutique type of hotel, wonderful little place. And one of the things I liked about it is that they serve croissants and coffee in the morning down in the lobby. Serve yourself, but come down. And they were fresh, and it was wonderful. So we went down there in the morning and we had a cup of coffee and a croissant. And I looked around, and every person in the room--and there must have been 15 of them in this little lobby--every single person in the

room had a newspaper in front of their face. It was just a wall of newspapers. And I needed another cup of coffee. And so I got up to get my cup and said, I'll see what happens around here. And I grabbed that coffee pot and I started pouring coffee for people all over the room. One guy put his paper down and said, Jesus, thanks a lot. I said, I've made it. I finally arrived.

How does all this work when you're not in, "full time Christian work"? What kind of a ministry do you have? People say that your life is a witness, and I agree with Tony from this morning that that doesn't sound very proactive. It is somewhat proactive, but not enough for us. For most of us, I think that for most of you, somebody told you about Jesus with words when you came to Christ. And I think it's important that we realize that we must use words when we talk to people about Christ. And in a business environment, I am finding over lots of years that there's immense opportunities, many, many opportunities to talk to people about the meaning of life and why life with Jesus is the best that there is.

I lead a Bible study on Thursday nights. You can't believe how many times I tell people that I can't meet late on Thursday because I teach. And you know what the next words out of their mouth? What do you teach? So I tell them over it happened last week. Somebody asked me, can you meet late on Thursday? No, I teach. What do you teach? Well, I teach a Bible study. You're kidding. What do you mean? So then I sit down and explain to them what I do. And can you imagine how many times I had opportunity over the last two weeks with my own staff when I told them I was coming here tonight and why I was coming?

And when it becomes known, and it will, that you're a Christian, people watch. They think they know what Jesus teaches about ethics and morals, and they want to see if your walk and your talk matches what they think a Christian ought to be. And I want to tell you, you start to feel the pressure of having your reputation and Jesus' reputation somehow tied together. Now for just a moment, I want to share my heart about something here. I want to talk to you who are going into business. I've learned a really important lesson over the last few years and I thought it would be important to share it with you. I used to be really concerned about the reputation of Jesus and what would happen if something happened to our business and it wasn't successful. And I learned that being a Christian is not a guarantee of prosperity, no matter what anybody tells you. And Christian businesses can go down.

Our particular business is one that is highly leveraged. And if you're in a normal subdivision kind of business you can be borrowing at the bank to the tune of millions of dollars. And we were. And I want to tell you when the home building environment in Phoenix went down and we saw our business, and our own personal fortunes begin to fade, and then people talk to us about well, you could lose everything. I want to tell you something. Men and women, we saw zero go by so fast that we just went right through zero and right on down, way down below zero. Your business can fail. And how you walk and how you talk in the midst of all of that will be very important.

How's your faith going to hold up under those kind of circumstances? What if you can't be the one who stays home and raises the money anymore? You're just staying home. You're not raising any money because there isn't any to raise. Is your effectiveness for Jesus going to be over? The

homebuilding business in Phoenix went through a blood bath five years ago and our business went with it. And during some unbelievably difficult negotiations with our bank and what we're going to do with all these loans we were asked on numerous occasions by our bankers, by our attorneys, by our employees, by the title company, by all kinds of people that we were involved with, how come you're responding differently than the rest?

During those many months that my brother and I were working with the bank, we spent literally hundreds of hours with our attorney whose name is Jerry Jacobs. Now you can tell from his name that Jerry is not a Christian. He's a very high powered Jewish real estate lawyer. When Jerry was in school, the teacher asked him, Jerry what's 4%? And Jerry said, not enough. One day Jerry told us about his--he handled a whole bunch of homebuilding clients, big companies. And he said that most of his homebuilding clients, the vast, vast majority of the guys in those companies who were going through what we were going through, which was almost everybody in Phoenix, those guys were not talking to their partners. They weren't hardly talking to their lawyers. And most of them were divorcing their wives. They just couldn't handle the pressure of their image being so severely damaged.

And somewhere during those grueling eight months of negotiating with our bank, Jerry asked us how we were able to maintain our commitment to each other, my brother and I, to our wives, to our family. And we had this amazing opportunity to tell Jerry about our own sense of worth and that it was not dependent on the success of our business. Now, that doesn't mean that the loss wasn't unbelievably painful, and there were lots of dreams that were dropped off along the way, but not our sense of who we are. We knew that we were children of the king.

I told Jerry in so many words, and my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus Christ. Actually, what I told him was that we believe in the Old Testament prophecy of Jeremiah. When God said to Jeremiah, I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord. Plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope. And we said, Jerry, we have a hope. It isn't dependent on our business. The business vanished, but the hope stayed.

And during those months of negotiations, my father died. In the middle of all of that. Jerry and his wife came to our memorial service for my father, and I had a chance to speak at that service. The next morning, Jerry called up and said, four years ago, my father died. I could never say what you said. Could we talk? I said, I think we could talk. So we went to the Phoenix Country Club. How's that for a mission field? And we spent 3 hours while I talked to Jerry about his Messiah. It was wonderful. We're going out with them, with the Jacobs this Friday night. We're just going to a movie. They are a mission field for us. That's just one of many.

But I will tell you that there are lots of opportunities to talk about your faith in Jesus Christ. You have to look for them. You have to be ready for them. You have to be looking for them. But they come if you're ready. Interesting. Another way that it works in the context of my father dying, we got a whole bunch of registered letters from attorneys and that kind of stuff going through probate. And the mail lady brought the mail to our door one morning because she had to get a signature for a registered letter. Her name was Ophelia.

Mary offered her a glass of cold water. That sound familiar? I mean, literally, a glass of cold water. And the lady said, you know, you get a lot of religious mail, and we do. She said, Maybe you could help me. I have a problem, and I really need a counselor. Mary said, can you come in? She said okay. She said, I'd love to introduce you to a counselor. I've known Him for a good long time, and His name is Jesus. And that day that lady kneeled down in our living room and accepted Jesus into her life. It was wonderful.

Now, I've told you about the foreign field of the home building community of Central Arizona. Mary and I have also been privileged to serve on another foreign field. And on this one, this is two foreign fields at the same time. And on this foreign field, not only do you have to learn the language, you got to learn some of the tribal dances. And there are a lot of assignments on this field. We've been involved in young life for 29 years. We did direct club work in our house with Arcadia High School in Scottsdale for 18 years. And now we both have positions of teaching leaders, how to teach and how to lead.

I currently mentor nine men between the ages of 30 and 32. All are married, most have children, and all are young life leaders. And we've had the privilege of teaching hundreds of kids how to grow up spiritually over a whole lot of years. What an excitement to be involved in a ministry of multiplication right there in Arcadia High School and to watch the kids that we've been involved with over all these years grow and now serve all over the world, serving Christ.

Now, let me tell you about the frosting on the cake on top of all of these foreign fields that we're involved in. One of the remarkable opportunities about being a Christian business person is the

privilege of serving on boards and committees. We have had the chance to sit around the table with the Kai's family and with Floyd Wilkerson and others, Bill Rapier, and talk about what does it mean to share Christ not only in the United States, but across the world. You get to grow up the church and its vision.

So let me reiterate my first question for tonight. Every Christian is called to be a missionary. It's not just a cliché, it's the truth. You can be effective for Christ wherever God calls you. So which foreign field are you going to? Some of you will be called to the foreign fields outside the United States. Some of you will be called to foreign fields inside the United States. But all are called. Some to the marketplace, some to Madagascar, some to the business world, some to Bombay, some to teaching, some to Turkey, some to teaching in Turkey, some to just be in Turkey. I don't know.

Well, I hope you had your camera out and you snapped the whole roll of film about this mission field in the business community. For my second question tonight, I want to take a picture of you. Assume for a moment I have a frame, but there's no picture inside. And what the picture I'm looking for is you in five years. And my question for you tonight is, where are you going to be in five years? I come here tonight with a really deep concern. All this talk about what it means to be a Christian missionary or a Christian business person or a Christian homemaker is academic.

Men and women, if we're not following Jesus, my friend Bart Turman, who is a chaplain at another institution up north about 100 miles, he did an extensive study of the men and women who graduated from Westmont, and he told me of the unbelievable pain for him of realizing that

after five years, over 50% had tubed it in terms of their relationship with Jesus Christ. There wasn't anything particularly active. They weren't growing. They were Christians. That's what I believe, and I'm sure they do too.

But there wasn't any growth. They were just kind of sagging out in terms of their relationship with Jesus Christ. I believe that number is probably not true at Biola. But you know what? I think it's higher than you think. We went to our 25th college reunion a couple of years ago. We spent the whole weekend counseling couples from our class who were really struggling in their relationships. But more importantly, what we figured out as they were struggling with their relationship with Jesus.

I sit in the pews at our church with many people who can only talk about their excitement about Jesus Christ from the past. Matthew 22:14 says, many are called and few are chosen. If I took a snapshot of my peers, this is really hard for me to tell you this, but if I took the snapshot of my peers, that would read many are called, few are chosen. Most are frozen in terms of spiritual growth. Most of the men and women I know are frozen in the same place they were ten years ago.

So the issue is not whether you're going to go or not. The issue is whether you're going to grow or not. It's not so much where you go. You can be God's man or woman anywhere you go. The question is, who are you going to be when you get there? So how's it going to be for you? Where are you going to be in five years? Where are you going to be in 15 years? You could still have a dynamic faith. Are you going to be growing in your relationship with Jesus? How well will you

know Him? Will you be a missionary or a spectator? Job tells us that God's plans for this world are not going to be thwarted. Are you going to be a part of the plan, or will you be in a locker room taping up your ankles?

You've heard it said before, the Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint. But you know what? You can't run a marathon well and only do the last 100 yards. This is perhaps the major problem in the church today. Many people are active in the church. They're just involved in all kinds of activities, but they aren't growing up spiritually. Look at the writings of Paul, the later writings of Paul, the pastoral epistles and the prison epistles. Why do you think it was so important for Paul to talk to those people about persevering, to continue to develop their relationship with Jesus and to each other?

Why was it so important for him to tell them to forget what was behind and press on, keep moving forward? Why do you think it was so important that you tell them that he had won the race and he had fought the good fight? Why did he have to tell them that? Because after just a few short years, he knew that a whole bunch of those people were frozen right where they were when he first talked to them. They weren't growing anymore. And the pressure and the persecution and the dichotomy between their faith and the world around them was causing them to pull away from a vibrant faith in Jesus.

My experience tells me that something must be happening in your life right here at Biola. You must learn to feed yourself spiritually. Most people in America rely on spoon feeding. Every week they get 2 hours on Sunday morning of spoon feeding. They come back to back, two

completely different sessions back to back, and then they go home. I'm telling you. And these are people, many of whom graduate from Christian colleges and universities. And that may be a shock to your system, but I want to tell you, I'm going to ask you to go back to your churches and look.

When you go home, look in your churches of the people. Look where they are five years after college. And if you don't learn to stop spoon feeding and learn to feed yourself, you're going to have the same problem as a baby who's spoon fed. You know what happens when the spoon stops if they haven't learned to feed themselves? They die. That's what happens. You have a really unique opportunity, and I just came the night to encourage you.

I'm not a theologian. I don't have any big flowery words. I just came to encourage you. You can learn some things now that will begin to set patterns for your whole life which will give you a huge advantage in being faithful to the call. You can learn to grow up on your own. And my encouragement to you is, please go for it. Go for all the growth you can get in the years that you're here. The motivation that I have had and the specific knowledge that I learned about feeding myself spiritually, I learned at a Christian college. And for most of you, those patterns and the excitement for your own growth will begin here, and it will carry you the rest of your life if you can establish those patterns.

]There are some principles for spiritual growth that you can learn here and exercise here, better probably than any place else you'll ever be.

You're in the environment of some of the finest professors in the world, you ought to take advantage of it. You're in a Christian environment that encourages you. That's why you're here tonight. This is amazing that you would come out here to hear this broken down Lebanese businessman talk to you. I'm impressed.

I asked Mary, what has kept us going. We just kind of processed together what's kept us going and growing in our Christian lives over the last 30 years, since we left college. So here's a partial list of some of the things we came up with. We committed to marry for life. We committed to marry a Christian. We learned in college to feed ourselves by using good tools and studying our Bible. You know what those tools are? They're the great commentaries, the great Bible dictionaries. Let me tell you. Not in my notes, but I'm going to tell you.

I did a class and I've decided I'm not going to just teach anymore. I'm going to teach people how to use tools. And so we do that in a Sunday school class that I'm privileged to facilitate because I don't teach it, I just facilitate it. And what I do is give them outlines and let them use tools. And I was walking out of Sunday school last Sunday and a man said to me, I've been a Christian for 15 years. I've never even known this kind of stuff exists, these books and these commentaries. He didn't have the privilege of coming to a school like Biola. He says, I go to a Christian bookstore. I just can't help myself. Just browse for hours, looking at all this stuff that I can use for my own Christian life. He had no idea. Do you realize what a privilege you have? You're getting it now. He had to wait 20 years.

We learned in college the importance of worship and community, and we've never stopped with that. We developed relationships that encourage us to grow up and to persevere. We learned how to use our spiritual gifts. Are you learning that? Are you doing it? So what are you going to remember about tonight? That there was this crazy Lebanese camel jockey that came over here and said, what foreign field are you going to go to and what are you going to look like in five years?

Michelangelo was only 14 years old when he came into contact with Bertolo the Giovanni who became his teacher. It was already obvious that Michelangelo had enormously gifted talent. One day, Bertolo came into the studio and found Michelangelo working on a piece of sculpture far beneath his abilities. Grabbing a hammer, Bertolo stomped across the room and smashed the work into teeny pieces, shouting his unforgettable message. Michelangelo, talent is cheap. Dedication is costly.

The story is told of a great pianist who, after finishing one of the most magnificent concerts of his life and taking the vows, was just standing in the eaves nearby. And a lady came up to him and said, maestro, that was the most beautiful music I've ever heard. I'd give my whole life to be able to play like that. He looked at her and said, madam, I have. Thank you.