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## CHRISTIAN FAMILY

## Ministering in the Workplace

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### Faith at Work

Richard Simmons founded the faith-based Center for Executive Leadership in Birmingham 17 years ago, to teach and mentor young men and leaders in the business community. From his first breakfast meeting with 60 men to more than 400 in attendance at those same breakfasts today, Simmons's team has influenced countless numbers of men to approach their work as their ministry. "I am seeking to equip men in the workplace so they can go out and build up the body of Christ," he says.

Throughout the years, Simmons has encouraged leaders to pray for God to open up opportunities for servant leadership within the workplace. "This is the way God designed the church to work," he explains. One of those individuals Simmons encouraged was Paul Barber, who was recently tapped by EBSCO Industries as the new president of its insurance division, S.S. Nesbitt. After 25 years as an insurance executive with McGriff, Seibels & Williams, Barber retired and spent the past year working alongside Simmons to mentor young leaders. But then Barber felt drawn back to the workplace, back to the industry he knows so well and back to doing what he was teaching others to do. "Jesus was a small contractor—in the Jewish faith you became a man at 13, so he had 17 years to learn what it meant to love your neighbor as a businessman," Barber explains. "Exercising our faith in the workplace by being good stewards of our gifts and giving our employers a good return on our investment are all things that are living the Christian life."

Barber shares how the former CEO at Protective Life Insurance Company, Drayton Nabers, inspired his transition. Speaking at one of Simmons's early morning breakfast meetings, Nabers recounted how he would begin each Monday morning with a group of other believers at the company in prayer, sharing scriptures that invoke the business world. "We would hit those key issues confronting us that week," recalled Nabers of his time spent with employees in prayer. Nabers weekend prayer time included a more extensive prayer list, often naming up to 100 employees at a time.

"The best leaders are servant leaders," Barber says. "My job here is to serve every employee as they serve our clients." Simmons agrees. "Executives need Christ as much as anyone else does," he says. "I tell guys all the time that the apostle Paul says to pray that God will open doors for service and I encourage them to do that."



*S.S. Nesbitt executive, Paul Barber, approaches his work as his ministry.*



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