

“WORK: Redeeming Our Labor” - Blog #5

Christin, Board Certified Behavior Analyst

This blog series is a part of our sermon series “WORK: Redeeming Our Labor”. We hope this set of interview style blogs is encouraging to our church family as we strive to be faithful in our labors and put our vocation into the story of God, for His glory, our good, and the benefit of the world around us.

**Answers have been lightly edited for grammar and spelling.*

***Due to HIPPA regulations, we were unable to include a photo of Christin working for this blog.*

1. Tell us what you do and how long you've been doing it.

My job title is BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst). I do ABA therapy which is behavior therapy for kids with autism, and I have worked in the field for a little over 2 years. I started as a RBT (Registered Behavior Technician) and became a BCBA in April 2021. As an RBT, I worked directly with kids implementing therapy under the direction of a BCBA. As a BCBA, I create interventions helping kids with autism develop communication skills, daily living skills, fine/gross motor skills, social skills, and reduce harmful challenging behaviors.

2. What are some of the highlights or things you enjoy about your job?

One of the things I enjoy most about my job is watching kids make progress or reach a new developmental milestone that at one point seemed unreachable. I have watched kids go from nonverbal to talking, be able to attend school after staying home for many years due to severe challenging behaviors, or go from needing constant assistance with things like showering, eating, etc to a more independent lifestyle. I especially love watching parents get excited when their child progresses or shows a new skill. The joy that comes with watching a mom hear her 5 year old child say “mama” for the first time is unmatched. The kids I work with are also easily some of my favorite humans on the planet. I find myself amazed almost daily at the things these kids can do and the way their minds work.

3. What are some of the more frustrating parts of your job?

One of the hardest parts of my job is interacting with the families of the kids I work with. Almost every home and situation I walk into feels very broken. I have sat with parents in tears over the frustrations and challenges that come with having a child on the spectrum. I have seen parents take the brunt of severe aggression from their own child or wonder to me why their eleven year old can't speak. While many kids do make a lot of progress through ABA, some kids do not or the progress is minimal. Parents often have expectations that are hard to meet, expecting miracles overnight that are just not feasible. This is especially hard for me and can sometimes feel overwhelming as I want to help and serve these families as best I can, but there are many aspects out of my control. I often find myself frustrated at the end of the day wondering how I can do more or wishing I could change these family's situations entirely.

4. How do you see your work as "joining God in cultivating the world?"

One of the ways I see my work as "joining God in cultivating the world" is through the opportunities I have to work with individuals who I think sadly tend to be cast aside or even viewed as outcasts by society. I think a lot about how Jesus sought out widows and orphans, ate with tax collectors and sinners, and ultimately humbled himself in the most magnificent way by coming down from heaven to live amongst sinners and give up his life. As followers of Christ, we are called to love and serve all people around us. Not just the ones who are easy or convenient, but all people. My work has humbled and challenged me in the most convicting ways because it allows me to love and serve a group of people I think my sinful self could otherwise be tempted to not acknowledge. It has given me a deeper understanding and appreciation for what Jesus did by giving up his life in heaven to come save and be in relationship with sinners on earth. I have also seen such a mission field open up with the parents of the children I work with. I have heard numerous parents say things to me like "Why is my child like this? I am a good person," and have been humbled by the opportunities God has given me to just love these people and be a listening ear or source of encouragement.

5. How does the gospel of Jesus impact your work?

I see the gospel in such a clear way with my work. There are days where I have been hit, scratched, bitten, etc by a child I am working with who wants absolutely nothing to do with me, yet my job duty is to continue to pursue the child and work with them. I think this has such a cool parallel to the gospel and what Jesus did on the cross. Jesus not only faced pain and persecution from people he loved, but did it knowingly and did it so that sinful people could experience eternal life. The little bit of pain or rejection I face through my job is nothing compared to what Jesus did on the cross, but it has made what Christ did that much more real to me. On top of this, God pursues us in this same way. We reject him, run from him, or some days might want nothing to do with him, yet he still loves us and pursues us. This reminder encourages me daily as I interact with kids, families, and my coworkers. My job constantly shows me my need for grace and constant reliance on the Lord alone in the midst of my own weakness.

6. What are some current prayer requests you have with your job?

A current prayer request for me is that the families I work with would see and feel the love of Christ. My company has strict policies about the boundaries between employees and clients, and I have struggled a lot with how to have gospel conversations with families, if it is okay to do this, how to follow up, etc. I am not allowed to invite families to church or interact outside of a work setting, so I would love prayers for wisdom and discernment on how to still be on mission within these parameters..