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Work: Does it Matter to God?

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

PROJECT PORTFOLIO:

WORK:

DOES IT MATTER TO GOD?



IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF LEADERSHIP
PORTLAND SEMINARY

BY:

GREGORY REICH

PROJECT FACULTY:

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PORTLAND, OREGON

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**PORTLAND
SEMINARY**

George Fox University

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

To Clearwater College of Biblical Studies

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RESEARCH METHOD

This project utilizes a blended methodology that draws upon bibliographic resources, data derived from stakeholder collaboration, and human-centered design and iteration processes to create a heuristic-based, application-oriented project.

ABSTRACT

My NPO looks at how the dichotomy of secular and sacred hinders North American Christians from embracing work as ministry. It was apparent that the dichotomy of secular and sacred was deeply engrained in each participant. They had a difficult time maneuvering around it during the NPO process. Christians look to the church to assist with the integration of one's faith into their secular vocations. It clear that the local church doesn't routinely discuss ways to bridge the dichotomy of the "sacred versus secular" gap.

I currently serve as an adjunct professor at Clearwater Bible College in Canada, while pastoring a small church and working as a real estate agent in the Seattle area. After teaching a course on the theology of vocation and serving as a pastor, I have observed that the widely accepted dichotomy between sacred and secular has hindered many Christians from embracing their jobs as expressions of their service to God.

My project is a book entitled *Work: Does it Matter to God?* This book introduces the reader to a theology of vocation through the framework of kingdom theology and the lordship of Jesus Christ. The book is divided into three sections. Section one looks at what kingdom work is and why it is important. Section two unfolds how Christians are created, redeemed, and gifted for kingdom work. Section three looks at the reality of being a kingdom worker in a secular culture. The book is designed to help equip undergraduate students at Clearwater Bible College to equip them to build bridges between faith and work. Many of these students come from a rural setting in Canada and are homeschooled. The majority of the students will engage in careers in the marketplace. A small percentage of them will become bi-vocational pastors of rural churches.

INTRODUCTION

I am currently a co-vocational pastor with one foot in the business world and the other in the Christian community. I have experienced firsthand the secular and sacred dichotomy and how it frustrates Christian believers in the workplace. I have a background in vocational theology both as a master's student and as an adjunct professor. I was aware of the dichotomy of secular and sacred, but I did not have an adequate understanding of its origin. I also did not realize how engrained this dichotomy was within the lives of Christian believers.

Discover

The initial discovery workshop consisted of eight individuals: five men and three women from a variety of vocational backgrounds. The participants represented different nationalities, ethnicities, and denominational backgrounds. The participants included one pastor, four business entrepreneurs, two retirees, and one school district employee. At that time, all participants were active in their local churches. At the beginning of the discovery session, I handed out a packet of green and orange stickers. I asked the participants to look at the nine illustrations I had placed on the wall. Each depicted a vocation (doctor, church greeter, farmer, priest, plumber, mechanic, lawyer, Sunday school teacher, and pastor). I then asked the participants to place green stickers on the vocations that they thought would be secular and orange stickers on those they considered sacred. The majority of the stakeholders placed orange stickers on the pictures of the church greeter, pastor, priest, and Sunday school teacher. Green stickers were placed on the doctor, farmer, plumber, mechanic, and lawyer pictures. Three of the participants put green and orange stickers on all nine pictures stating all jobs are both secular and sacred. One of the participants, who was originally from Zimbabwe, put an orange sticker but not a green sticker on the picture

of the farmer due to his cultural belief that farming is a sacred calling, a way to provide for one's neighbor.

Before moving forward with the first post-it note process, I explained the NPO, describing how the dichotomy of secular and sacred hinders our ability to see work as ministry. Looking at the symptoms of the NPO, four categories emerged: cultural/relational, physical, spiritual, and emotional. A second post-it note process was completed by having the participants look at possible root causes of the NPO within each of the four categories. The critical insights that emerged were quite interesting. First, culture plays a bigger role than originally anticipated in our understanding of secular and sacred. The participant from Zimbabwe and the one from Guam both had a different view of sacred than those born and raised in the United States. Second, those with a Catholic and/or a more formal protestant denominational background struggled more with the idea that secular work can be a sacred calling. Third, I was surprised at how easy the root causes brought out by the process mapped into the four categories: social/relational, physical, spiritual, and emotional. I closed the session by asking, "Why do Christians tend to see their Christian life through a spiritual lens but seldom see it through a more holistic lens?" Their responses focused on three areas. (1) A lack of training within the family. (2) A lack of training by the church. (3) Secular media's constant focus on public role models that fight to keep their public and private lives separate from work.

Once the data was compiled, one-on-one interviews were held to gain a broader understanding of my NPO. My interviewees consisted of a pastor, college professor, a founder of a local non-profit, and a college president. Each participant had a different take on the discovery results, which was most likely due in part to their educational knowledge and understanding of a theology of vocation. In summation, their feedback focused on the following: (1) Modern

business methods disconnect us from community-owned businesses, which were once places where people could connect and share their faith. (2) There is a lack of understanding of what kingdom work means and what it actually consists of within the body of Christ. (3) Churches focus more on how individuals can get involved in the church instead of equipping them to be a force in the secular world. (4) A lack of understanding of our identity in Christ and God's purpose for our lives prohibits our ability to be salt and light within the community.

When the discovery process and the one-on-one interviews were complete, it became apparent that the participants of the discovery group focused more on personally felt needs and individual symptoms. The one-on-one sessions focused more on a universal understanding of the secular and sacred dichotomy. As a result of the discovery process, I realized that focusing on individual symptoms was far too broad in scope for my NPO. To assure that the symptoms didn't skew the process, three constraints were put in place. (1) All principles adopted by the NPO would be biblical in nature. (2) The foundational solution would be oriented around a theology of vocation. (3) The final project must have a practical application.

Design

For the design workshop, I chose six stakeholders: an amazon entrepreneur, a school administrator, a bi-vocational pastor, a full-time pastor, a civil engineer, and a realtor. My one-on-one group was made up of three people: a college dean, retired college president, and a state public transit safety manager. The workshop focused on five separate activities that were intended to move the participants beyond the secular and sacred dichotomy. The first two exercises, *The Five Whys* and the *Affinity Map*, helped the participants grasp the core values behind the NPO. The next two exercises, *The Blind Side* and *Mission Impossible*, helped explore the unknown questions, assumptions, and constraints surrounding the NPO. The last exercise

focused on possible solutions to the NPO. Although ideas flourished during the workshop, three notable suggestions emerged from this process: (1) Write an introductory theology of vocation book for new pastors. (2) Design a small group curriculum for local churches. (3) Start a non-profit to assist people in business to integrate faith and vocation.

The one-on-one sessions in the design segment of work proved to be invaluable. During these sessions I was able to slowly eliminate project ideas either because something similar was already on the market or because I knew certain ideas didn't ring true to the direction in which I was feeling led. One interviewee helped me to discover that a number of non-profits, focused on helping people integrate faith into work, were already in place. Another interviewee explained that writing a book first would make it easier to design a small group curriculum later. Due to my connection with a small Bible college, a book seemed like the most realistic direction. With a book in mind, I entered the prototyping segment of the program. I designed and presented a rough prototype of the book to a handful of students and selected staff at Clearwater College. Taking my current course into consideration and eliciting additional feedback from those at Clearwater College, I drafted the final design for the project.

During the designing and prototyping process, I realized the importance of staying focused and staying true to myself. Every NPO can have multiple viable solutions depending on the audience chosen. In my search for a thesis, there were no truly wrong directions, but some seemed to fit better than others. Keeping my audience in mind, I focused on the one sphere of influence that I felt would best benefit from my project: my students at Clearwater College. This project was designed to focus on that group.

The most viable project appeared to be to write a book that could be used to equip Bible college students who were preparing for pastoral ministry. Though the initial audience wouldn't

be large, the students would provide a solid test group for the finalized project. In its completed form, this book would provide a new foundational approach for my current “Theology of Vocation” course. The intent would be to provide a viable foundation for future pastors, in order that they might help others build bridges across the secular and sacred gap.

Deliver

The project scope is the content of a book on kingdom work using the framework of the kingdom of God. The project includes a proposed cover, table of contents, introduction, and eight chapters, which make up the majority of the book. The project content is divided into three segments. The first segment contains two chapters unfolding the big picture of what kingdom work is. The second segment contains the main body unfolding that we are all created, redeemed, and gifted for kingdom work. The final section focuses on the reality of a secular and sacred gap and how kingdom work can build bridges between faith and work.

I used five benchmarks during this process. (1) Flow: Does the book move smoothly from point to point? (2) Clarity: Is each section clear with stories and examples? (3) Practical: Does the book challenge the reader to apply the content? (4) Credibility: Is the content accurate and authoritative? (5) Feedback: Did the content incorporate feedback from peers? To assure that the benchmarks were met and to assure the quality of the content, I hired an editor to edit each individual chapter. The long-term objective was to finish the written content and publish the book for use at Clearwater College and for use in seminars sponsored by the college.

Evaluate Experience

The overall process was highly beneficial and thought provoking. Many of the obstacles encountered were not related to my research topic but to my personal ability to adapt and to adjust the NPO process to fit a written project. I felt the process could have been streamlined to

allow more time for the project. Because of the limited scope of my final project, there were times that the NPO process needed to be reined in and refined to keep it from wandering too far from the intended outcome. The greatest benefit I received in this entire process came from my one-on-one stakeholders, who asked great questions and gave strategic direction and feedback. They also brought a deeper understanding to the value and importance of the topic.

When looking holistically at the project, I see two distinct shortcomings. First, the theology of vocation has already been written about extensively by scholars looking at it through many different lenses. My hope is the kingdom of God framework and the contemporary style will help the younger reader who is less familiar with theology to grasp the content more easily. Second, my intended audience currently is smaller than I would like due to the small volume of students at Clearwater College. To broaden the audience, I will need to contact other Bible Colleges to see if they would be interested in using my book for their students.

By focusing on these two shortcomings, I worked hard to break down the broader complexities of a theology of vocation into an easy-to-understand format for undergraduate college students. Using the kingdom of God as the framework, this content can be easily adjusted to be used in local churches or as a supplemental source when speaking to pastors. The project is usable in a class setting as a supplement to the syllabus, but it is not ready to be published and marketed. Expanding the content and providing clearer practical application will make the book more attractive to a wider audience.

There were other viable project suggestions that could easily have been applied to the NPO. One of the suggestions was to design a church seminar educating people on kingdom work. Though a solid idea, I had already designed and initiated a one-day seminar for the pastors associated with Clearwater College. An updated seminar could easily be adapted from the

current project content. Another project suggestion was to design a small group curriculum on kingdom work. I felt a small group curriculum would be more advantageous and better received after the launch of the book. The last suggestion was starting a non-profit ministry dedicated to helping businessmen and women integrate faith and work. One of my interviewees helped me realize that there were already a number of non-profits that are currently focused on the Christian business sector. The final deciding factor for my project was my passion and hope that through this process I can strengthen the credibility and influence of Clearwater College.

Throughout this journey, I gained a surprising insight regarding my NPO. My master's degree in Theology and Culture opened my mind to the importance of understanding contemporary theology. I understood a good deal about the secular and sacred dichotomy, but I didn't truly grasp the grip it had on our understanding of work. I came to the realization that there is no way to eliminate the secular and sacred dichotomy in North American culture; but though it can't be eliminated, there are multiple ways for Christians to build bridges across the secular and sacred gap. This research journey enabled me to realize that by equipping future bridge builders, we can as Christians successfully navigate the secular and sacred dichotomy that surrounds us.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, there are a few things that are required to complete the development of my project. The book could use at least two more chapters. A chapter on work versus life balance is needed. A chapter summarizing kingdom work will help the reader to see how it fits into the broader theology of vocation. An appendix that includes an annotated bibliography will introduce specific scholars from "theology of vocation." Further research and work on developing illustrations for the book will make it more user friendly. More testimonials from

individuals currently involved in kingdom work could help drive home the overall practical side of doing kingdom work.

Prior to publication, the final content of the book will be completed. The entire transcript will be edited and sent to my peers for final feedback. After the final peer review, the transcript will be submitted to a publisher. If a publisher chooses not to publish the transcript, I may plan to self-publish. Options for self-publishing have been researched. Depending on the process that is chosen and the desired quality of the final product, the total cost of self-publishing could be between \$3,500 and \$8,500. My hope is to have the book ready for classroom use by the summer of 2023.

Conclusion

The overall research process was stretching but fulfilling. I felt there were times that the overall process wasn't as clear or well designed as it could have been. The NPO process, as it is refined and adapted, will serve future students well. Some streamlining of the process would provide for better cohesiveness within the program. I would have enjoyed exploring more deeply the secular and sacred dichotomy and how bridge building can provide a viable avenue for Christians to integrate faith and work. Surprisingly, through the project journey, I was able to formulate a framework for a theology of vocation, which I believe can easily be understood by my students.

As with any educational process, there are highs and lows. The greatest joy and deepest growth came from the leadership portion of this journey. The diversity of information, the depth of discussion, and the writing assignments proved to be invaluable. My ability as a leader, an adjunct professor, pastor, and non-profit director has increased tremendously. The intellectual property gained through these sessions has given me a much deeper appreciation for the diversity

of the body of Christ both globally and within my local community. As a whole, I believe the Leadership in Global Perspectives degree will provide me with a more strategic way to utilize my final project once it is published.

In closing, my ultimate desire for the final project is twofold. First, I want to provide a book designed for Bible college students, who are preparing for ministry. I hope that the book will help young pastors to establish a theology of vocation mindset in the early stages of their ministry. Second, I want to use both my degree and my project to broaden the influence of Clearwater College. I hope that, by providing a successful introductory theology of vocation course and better pastoral seminars to their affiliated churches, the school's effectiveness in pastoral training will be increased.

PROJECT

Introduction

I am co-vocational. I am currently a pastor, nonprofit director, realtor, and visiting adjunct professor. Merging my faith and vocation is a passion. I teach an introductory course on vocational theology at Clearwater College and hold church seminars for the college. Both platforms focus on preparing future and current pastors to adopt a theology of vocation. Graduates from the college either become small community bi-vocational pastors or enter into a secular vocation while trying to merge faith and work. My project is designed to assist Clearwater College in training students for life and ministry. Equipping new pastors to live and apply a theology focusing on representing God's kingdom as kingdom workers is vital.

NPO Statement

The dichotomy of secular and sacred hinders North American Christians from embracing work as ministry.

Project Description

The sacred and secular divide is a reality in secular culture. It can't be eliminated, but it can be bridged. My research made it apparent that people have little understanding of how to build a bridge between their faith and their vocations. Many look to the church for help. Pastors are ill equipped to help. The church is often viewed as a spiritual center on the periphery of culture lacking a theology of vocation mindset. Though a theology of vocation is discussed among scholars and academics, colleges and universities provide little training in vocational theology. My project is to write a book that will help equip young pastors bridge this gap.

I found books on this topic to be inadequate for classroom use. The majority tend to focus on a single theological trend or business. Few provide a broad viable foundation for daily living. The following content is a proposed book entitled, *Work: Does it Matter to God? An Introductory Look at Kingdom Work*. This section contains a proposed book cover, table of contents, introduction, and three of the eight written chapters. A chapter from each part of the book is included in the showcase portion. Part one focuses on kingdom work. Chapter one, “The Big Picture,” unfolds what kingdom work is. Part two focuses on the redeemed kingdom. Chapter three, “Created, Redeemed, and Empowered” discusses how we can see God’s purposes for kingdom work in our lives. Part three explores the reality of working in a secular society. Chapter seven, “A Divided Kingdom,” unfolds the secular and sacred divide we all live in. The project content in its entirety can be found in Appendix E.

Project Scope

My project scope is the content for a book on kingdom work, focusing on what it means to be a kingdom worker in a secular world. The scope includes a book cover, a table of contents, and eight chapters of a book on kingdom work. The project had five benchmarks: 1) Flow: Does the content transition smoothly? 2) Clarity: Are the content, stories, and examples clearly explained? 3) Practicality: Does the book challenge the reader? 4) Credibility: Is the content reliable and authoritative? 5) Feedback: Was feedback received from academic peers?

Documentation of Project

Book Approach

I was introduced to a theology of vocation during my master's program. At that time, I wondered why this topic of study was not available for undergraduate Bible college students. Two years later I designed a theology of vocation course for Clearwater College in Alberta, Canada. I felt that there needed to be a way to communicate a vocational theology in a way that younger college students could understand and easily relate to. Through my NPO process, it became clear that a way to build a bridge between the secular and the sacred could be through a theology of vocation using the framework of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God framework is easily grasped and helps students as future pastors to apply a theology of vocation in local church settings, thereby enabling them to help others build bridges between faith and work. Through the understanding that all Christians represent God's kingdom, it then becomes easier to see all work as kingdom work.

The flow of the content for the book has been arranged so that each chapter builds on the previous one, creating in essence a structure that will hopefully make application easier. The introduction provides a simple understanding of the kingdom of God and orients the reader toward the idea of being a kingdom worker. The book is broken up into three sections. The first section is entitled *Kingdom Work*. The second section is entitled *The Redeemed Kingdom* and the third section is entitled *Kingdom Reality*. The flow begins with defining kingdom work and why it is important. The reader then moves to the reality that, as Christians, we are all created, redeemed, and empowered to be kingdom workers. Building yet another layer, the flow moves through kingdom work as a form of culture-making, and toward the value of having a proper attitude. The flow then intentionally jumps to a look at the value of a redemptive eschatology.

This allows kingdom work not only to be connected to one's daily life, but to God's eternal kingdom as well. The intent is to help the reader see that the work people do on a daily basis has eternal kingdom value. The flow of the last two chapters is intended to bring the reader back to the reality that we work in a secular world. The intent is for the reader to understand the secular and sacred gap and realize that, by recognizing vocations as kingdom work, a bridge can be built that allows us to integrate faith and work.

The Draft Book Cover

Have you ever wondered whether your vocation really matters to God? I know I have. I have also had students, who have expressed guilt for feeling a sense of calling toward business instead of pastoring. All forms of work matter to God. With these things in mind, I decided to title my book; *Work: Does it Matter to God? An Introductory Look at Kingdom Work*. The picture on the cover was intentionally chosen to be a silhouette and not overly specific. The hope is to draw into deeper focus the question that the title is asking: does what I do in my daily work really matter to God?



Figure 1: Book Cover

Contents

Introduction: Work and the Kingdom of God

Part I: Kingdom Work

Chapter One: The Big Picture

Chapter Two: Why Our Work Matters

Part II: The Redeemed Kingdom

Chapter Three: Created, Redeemed, and Empowered

Chapter Four: Culture Making: Kingdom Influence

Chapter Five: Attitude Counts

Chapter Six: Eschatology Matters

Part III: Kingdom Reality

Chapter Seven: A Divided Kingdom

Chapter Eight: Kingdom Impact

Introduction

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.”
 Matthew 6:9-12

A new prophet is in town. His name is Jesus. His words resonate and have power. They have meaning to a nation hungry for deliverance. People are wondering. They are hoping. Is he the one? Is he the messiah? Little did they know just how radical his message would be. Jesus entered into Galilee proclaiming the gospel saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:14 -15). Jesus steps onto the scene and announces that the time is right. God has a plan and a purpose for creation, a plan to free humanity from the bondage of sin, a plan to establish God’s kingdom in the hearts and minds of those who believe in the gospel. Jesus teaches them to pray what we now call the “Lord’s Prayer,” asking God to establish God’s divine kingdom on earth, as it is established in Heaven. Our faith is often expressed through the biblical concept of the Kingdom of God, which is deeply connected to the belief that God came to earth as Jesus of Nazareth revealing God’s self to humanity. The message of the gospel goes beyond personal salvation in Jesus and his return. Jesus changes and transforms our lives on earth, causing the Kingdom of God to be expressed through the lives of Christians throughout the world and bringing gradual change to the world around us. Part of the transformation that Jesus brings is in the area of work. Work now has Kingdom meaning.

As members of God’s kingdom, we are all called to be participants and representatives, assisting in the establishment and advancement of God’s kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven.

Over the next several pages, we will discover what that participation looks like. We will learn what it means to be kingdom workers, men and women who understand that they are called to use their vocations as an opportunity to touch hearts and help change lives. In essence, we will introduce many of you to a theology of vocation that hopefully brings vitality and value to your daily work.

For those who don't have a foundational understanding of what the Kingdom of God entails, let me introduce you to why it's important and how it applies to our daily work. God's Kingdom isn't summed up in a body of people but in the rule of God in the hearts and minds of humanity. In order to experience God's future kingdom, we must first accept God and allow God to rule in our lives now, here on earth.¹ Though the Kingdom of God is part of the coming age, we realize that through Christ, there is an overlapping of what is to come and what we experience now. Through Christ, we are transformed. Though we live and work in this current age, we are no longer bound to the evil powers, fallen values, sinful ways, curses, and wisdom of this current age. In Christ, we are freed from the penalty and power of sin. We have been transferred from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of God through the Son and are now no longer servants of sin but servants to Christ. Romans 12:1-2 tells us that we are to be a living sacrifice. We are not to be conformed to this age but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. As Christians, we get a taste and glimpse of the kingdom that is to come while living on earth.²

¹ George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1959), 21.

² Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 42.

George Ladd provides a solid working definition of the Kingdom of God: “It is God’s reign, the divine sovereignty in action. God’s reign, however, is manifested in several realms, and the gospels speak of entering into the Kingdom of God both today and tomorrow. God’s reign manifests itself both in the future and in the present...”³ Jesus explains that “the kingdom of God isn’t coming in ways that can be observed...” but the kingdom of God is in our midst (Luke 17:20-21). He continues to explain that only those with the faith of a child can receive the kingdom of God (Luke 18:16-18). Paul in turn unfolds the mystery of the future kingdom in that flesh and blood will not inherit it. Upon Jesus’ return, the perishable changes the imperishable for those who are in Christ (1 Cor. 15:50-54). The exciting thing is that the Kingdom of God is not made by human hands. It is a sovereign act of God and has been entrusted to men and women of faith. Through the incarnation of Jesus, God stepped into history. As the message of Jesus was spread, so was the Kingdom of God. There are those who would reject it, but for those who believe it, it brings life and divine rule in their lives. The same power and rule that is made evident in the lives of Christians on earth will come in great glory and power when Christ returns.⁴

The church doesn’t create the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God creates the church, and it becomes the vessel God uses to spread His kingdom on earth. The church or the body of Christ is the Kingdom community in which God’s rule and reign is recognized. We are caretakers and agents of the Kingdom of God. Through Christ, we enter into and come under the rule and reign of God. God’s will is done on earth, as it is in heaven, through the members of the

³ Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 11.

⁴ Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 64.

community in their daily lives, in their families, their careers, and jobs. As kingdom members our work becomes God's work. We in essence become kingdom workers.⁵

As Christians, we must resist the temptation to reduce God's rule in our lives down to something we try to manipulate or control. When we reduce God's ruling in our lives to just the spiritual realm, we automatically limit God's interaction with the physical realm of creation. Our neglect tends to give evil, sickness, and disease free influence over humanity, leading us to believe that God sits helplessly nearby, leaving many of the miracles and works of God in scripture unavailable to Christians today. This reduction of the kingdom to be exclusively spiritual creates a dichotomy of secular and sacred, allowing people to think that God only works through extra spiritual people and makes some activities "secular," to be carried out by those people, who are unable to comprehend the spiritual realm.⁶

The dichotomy of secular and sacred goes beyond Christianity. Religions have promoted this concept for centuries, exploiting people along the way. Joshua Hopping explains: "Yet if the rule and reign of the Creator King is over everything and everyone, then the hierarchical divide is destroyed as there is no secular/sacred divide. Everything is holy and sacred as it was created by the One who made everything and keeps everything going."⁷ He continues:

The problem with this reduction (the reduction of life into secular versus sacred) is that the Scriptures plainly tell us that the people of the King are to be focused on the King and his mission. Christianity isn't about us, our salvation, our place in the afterlife, our jobs, money or even our family. Rather, following Jesus means that we are focusing on the person of Jesus and joining him as he seeks to destroy the works of the evil one. Bowing our knees to the Creator King is to join with Adam, Eve, Abraham, Deborah, David, Isaiah, Jesus, Mary, Peter, Paul, and countless other people who have gone before us in

⁵ George Elden Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 144.

⁶ Joshua S. Hopping, *The Here and Not Yet: What is Kingdom Theology and Why does it Matter?* (Ladysmith, South Africa: Vineyard International Publishing, 2017), 143.

⁷ Hopping, *The Here and Not Yet*, 145.

declaring that God Almighty is the King of Kings, and that his rule and reign has broken, is breaking, and -will break into the course of human history. The kingdom of God is about God and his rule, and not about us and our enjoyment.⁸

The Kingdom of God helps us connect all we do with being kingdom people. When we acknowledge that all of life, even work, is designed to line up with God's purpose and plan for creation, we can begin to see the true value of work.

Few people see their jobs as a way of experiencing the Kingdom of God. For people engaged in full-time Christian work, their vocations orient around the plans and purposes of God. The rest of the world seems engaged in secular vocations, whose work appears to have very little to do with God's kingdom. Jobs are often seen as a way to make money, so we can afford the things we need and enjoy. As a Christian however, everything falls within the rule and reign of God and God's kingdom. Our life doesn't belong to us. It is pledged to the King of the kingdom. No matter where we live, what we do for work, or what environment we find ourselves in, God is always working in the hearts and minds of people around us. As Kingdom representatives, we are kingdom workers participating in God's plan for creation.

The apostle Paul encourages the Colossian church to allow the word of God to teach and admonish the disciples of Jesus, saying, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:17). To the church in Corinth, he states "So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

⁸ Hopping, *The Here and Not Yet*, 151.

When we realize that we are called to do everything in the name of Jesus, embracing the now and not yet aspects the Kingdom of God, we enter into a new place in our relationship with Jesus that affects and controls all areas of our lives. We no longer walk in a secular/ sacred dichotomy. Work is no longer separated from our faith. We can now see that a kingdom-focused mindset shifts the purpose of our work away from our paycheck and onto what God is doing in and through us. That may mean that we leave one vocation for another, but at the same time, it may mean that we stay in the vocation we have. Either way, that decision is not ours to make, but rather it is the King who makes that decision.”⁹

For Christians, our work is kingdom work. Through our work, we provide for the common good of our neighbors, grow as individuals, and bring glory to God. This book is intended to introduce the reader to an understanding of a theology of work through the lens of what it means to be a kingdom worker, God’s kingdom representatives. In chapter one, I will define kingdom work. I will introduce what it means to be called, and I will discuss the dangers of seeing one’s call as hierarchical. Chapter two will look at the value and purpose of kingdom work. Work goes beyond providing for our needs. Work molds and matures us, along with providing goodness to others. Chapter three unfolds the reality that we were created, redeemed, and empowered to be kingdom workers. Work is part of God’s purpose and plan for humanity. In chapter four, I will look at how kingdom workers are also culture makers. Using Richard Niebuhr’s book *Christ in Culture* as a springboard, I will explore how kingdom work can make a difference. Chapter five discusses the topic of kingdom attitude. Kingdom work focuses on representing Jesus well. Our attitude plays a vital role in our motivation for being kingdom

⁹ Hopping, *The Here and Not Yet*, 227.

workers. In Chapter six, I will look at why eschatology matters. Kingdom work is not reliant on a redemptive new creation view of eschatology. Whether a person believes the earth will be destroyed in the coming kingdom or renewed, kingdom work still has purpose and value. I propose that an eschatology oriented around the new heaven and earth not only brings a greater value to our earthly work, but it opens up the possibility that work has an eternal purpose in God's coming kingdom. Chapter seven shifts to what I call kingdom reality. Diving into the idea that we are a divided kingdom, I will explore the impact of a secular and sacred dichotomy and how it hinders us from seeing work as kingdom work. Finally, chapter eight will look at the potential impact of kingdom work. I will look at why impact is sometimes hard to measure and how God is using our work, even if we don't always see the impact it has. I pray that the outcome of this book might be twofold: 1) that all who embrace Christ might begin to understand the wonderful role our work plays in God's kingdom, and 2) that when God uses our work for good, we all get a glimpse of the many possibilities that God's coming kingdom holds.

Section One: Kingdom Work

The first section of this book looks at two major questions and the concept of calling. The first question is what exactly kingdom work is. The second question is why it matters. Chapter one establishes and defines through a framework of the kingdom of God and the concept of calling. I try to demystify calling. Instead of seeing it a mystical burning bush experience, I try to address calling with a more practical approach. Chapter two focuses on why work is important. I look at three key purposes. The first is to help mold in us the likeness of Christ. Second, work helps mature us spiritually. Third, work is part of God's goodness for creation. Work is part of God's eternal purpose for creation.

Part One: Kingdom Work

Chapter 1

The Big Picture

This book addresses the broad and ever-growing topic of how our faith integrates into our daily work. This chapter has five primary objectives. First, we will define what work is. Second, we will look at the concept of Kingdom Work. Third, we will look at the ideas of calling and vocation, how they have been viewed throughout history, and how we can recognize our calling. Fourth, we will take a short look at some of the concerns and challenges associated with the Kingdom Work mindset. Finally, I will sum up my thoughts.

Work

What is work? What does it consist of? The definition of work varies depending on the individual. For some, work must have a sense of purpose. For others, work is anything other than what can be considered a leisure activity. For author and theologian Miroslav Volf, “Work is an honest, purposeful, and methodologically specified social activity whose primary goal is the creation of products or states of affairs that can satisfy the needs of working individuals or their co-creatures, or (if primarily an end in itself) activity that is necessary in order for acting individuals to satisfy their needs apart from the need for the activity itself.”¹⁰ Though Volf’s definition is correct and it allows for us to see work as the opposite of leisure, it is a bit too

¹⁰ Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1991), 11.

formal and complex for our purposes. A simpler definition that helps us separate work from leisure is needed. David Jensen the author of *Responsive Labor* states, “Work, most comprehensively considered, is the activities we perform, with obligation, for the sake of those relationships, for community.”¹¹ He explains, “The presence or absence of obligation helps us determine whether a specific human activity is more adequately described as work or play.”¹² Orienting the definition of work around the idea of obligation allows us to separate work from both leisure and play or the idea of sabbath. This then enables us to get a clearer understanding of what kingdom work is by seeing it not only as our obligation to God, but as a way for us to meet the needs for the good of our community.

Kingdom Work

The concept of the Kingdom of God is one of the key themes throughout scripture. The gospels reveal that Jesus did not only come to die for our sins, but hee also came to establish the Kingdom of God.¹³ The arrival of the kingdom of God in the hearts and minds of believers recognizes God’s sovereignty over creation. When Jesus arrives on the scene, we see aspects of God’s Kingdom rule begin to enter into this present age through his birth, crucifixion, and resurrection. When Jesus returns, we will experience the full realization of God’s Kingdom.¹⁴

¹¹ David H. Jensen, *Responsive Labor: A Theology of Work* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 3.

¹² Jensen, *Responsive Labor*, 124.

¹³ See Matthew 3:2, 4:17, and 6:33; Luke 4:43, 10:9, and 17:20-21; Mark 1:14-15.

¹⁴ Hugh Whelche, *How Should we Work? Rediscovering the Biblical Doctrine of Work* (McLean, VA: Work and Economics, 2012), 22.

Though we understand that God is the one establishing the kingdom, we also understand that as members of this kingdom, we have roles to play as participants in establishing that kingdom. God accomplishes this through Jesus' followers, through everything we do, including our jobs.¹⁵ I call this work "kingdom work." Kingdom work is work that aligns and advances the Kingdom of God on earth, as it is in heaven. As kingdom workers, "the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence joins us in our work guiding us, empowering us, interceding for us, and producing in us character qualities of Christlikeness such as love, humility, submission, servanthood, and sacrifice."¹⁶ It is gospel work that touches hearts and minds, work that glorifies and points people toward God the creator, work that builds community, changes cultures, and nurtures society. Kingdom work is an extension of who we are in Christ, as we live and work in the world around us. A garbage man doing kingdom work doesn't just haul garbage. He protects and serves his community from infestation and disease. He takes opportunities to show love and respect for his customers. Making sure the trash isn't scattered during the collection process, taking a moment to police that area, and placing the bins in a safe fashion, shows that people matter.

When growing up, the idea of vocation was covered in my high school career class. The class's goals included finding a job after I graduated, so that I could become a functioning part of society. The class assessed personal competencies and interests with the hope to assist students in what further education was needed for their career goals and whether they could jump right into the work force. The idea of calling was set aside for people like my brother, who were considering becoming pastors. Kingdom work was only for those in ministry. It was thought to

¹⁵ Welche, *How Should we Work*, 25.

¹⁶ Tom Nelson, *Work Matters: Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 112.

be a divine invitation for a select few, definitely not something that was needed to build a successful business career in the labor force. In God's kingdom, all work matters. Everyone one is called. Every person's vocation is a divine calling. All people, male and female, are called to live out their kingdom calling through their individual vocations as kingdom representatives.

Calling

A common concern and question that needs to be considered is our underlying expectation that we must know what we are called to do. We want to understand what our life purpose is or what vocation we will choose. Knowing one's calling and vocation are common topics in the world of Christianity. The definition is not often clear.¹⁷ In many cases, the terms "calling" and "vocation" are interchanged. The word vocation comes from the Latin "vocare" meaning "to call." When looking at the two together, it helps us to see calling as a "divine initiative" and vocation as the way the call is lived out. It is one thing to be called. It is another to respond to that call and take action to pursue that call.¹⁸

Historically, the concept of vocation or calling has bounced between being a simple job or some special divine inspiration to set one's life aside for the ministry. Concerns over what that looks like could be complex, especially if one is worried about missing their calling or making a mistake in choosing the wrong vocation.¹⁹ Generally speaking, when looking at scripture, one of the ways that "call" is used is in reference to coming to faith in Christ (Luke 5:32, Acts 2:39,

¹⁷ William C. Plancher, ed., *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom and Vocation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 1.

¹⁸ Ben Witherington III, *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2011) 68.

¹⁹ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 2.

Romans 1:5-6, 1 Thessalonians 2:13-14). The common Greek word in the New Testament is “klesis,” meaning “to call,” referring to a life of faith in Christ.²⁰ Other instances in the Bible show us that “call” is a summons to service. This can be seen in Exodus 3:4-10, in which Moses was called to deliver Israel. Exodus 31:2 shows the call of Bezalel to use his gifts of craftsmanship to build the tabernacle.

In early church history, the choice of following the call of Christ often meant leaving family and community ties and becoming an outsider. For some it meant death. One of those was Simeon bar Sabba'e, who was martyred along with others by the Persian King Sapor. Simeon prayed, “Give me this crown, Lord: you know how I long for it ... Yet I mean to preserve my vocation like a hero and to walk bravely along the path marked out for me, so that I shall still be an example to all your people in the east.”²¹ As history passed, and Christianity grew, it was no longer a guaranteed death sentence to believe in Christ. Now that it was acceptable and somewhat beneficial to be a Christian, the concern became one of how to preserve the aspect of sacrifice and cost involved in following Jesus. This led many to pursue the life of a monk or nun, consisting of a life of denying the flesh. This was intended to preserve the sacrifices seen earlier in Christianity. Christianity became the norm. Being raised in the Christian faith was commonplace. Becoming a Christian was no longer the issue. The issue surrounding vocation exclusively became a question of whether or not one should join the priesthood. The question was whether to marry and raise a family or choose the life of a priest or nun and live a life separated from the rest of society.²²

²⁰ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 4.

²¹ Michael Counsell, *2000 Years of Prayer* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1999), 15.

²² Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 6.

It wasn't until the 1500's that the idea of calling or vocation began to change and was no longer seen as only applying to clergy, nuns, or monks. Societal changes gave people more opportunities. Peasants no longer had to stay peasants. They could move to towns and find other jobs. Eventually they could start their own businesses. It was during this time that Martin Luther proclaimed the "priesthood of all believers," making every believer a priest among the protestant faith. Therefore, a calling could be that of a preacher or farmer, as well as anything else. In his German translation of the Bible, Martin Luther translated the Greek word "klesis" meaning "to call" as the German word "Beruf," which meant an occupation. For Luther, our calling was first and foremostly a job.²³ Luther's usage of "Beruf" was not to mean anything other than something done in the lives of everyday people at work. The everyday actions of loving one's neighbor constituted the Christian calling.²⁴ Many protestants agreed by pointing to the fact that Jesus was a carpenter, and the disciples were fisherman. Even Paul was a tentmaker. Luther emphasized the importance of remaining in one's station in life, while others looked at this as an opportunity to expand one's horizons and change callings over one's life span. The idea of calling changed. One's job became his or her calling, eliminating the exclusivity of calling being only for priests and nuns.²⁵

There seems to be a propensity in the United States to dream up an honorable pursuit and invite God to bless it, making it our calling in life. Often, some Christians expect God's call to be instantaneous. Part of our responsibility in understanding God's call is asking God to show us

²³ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 7.

²⁴ Karlfried Froehlich, "Luther on Vocation," *Harvesting Martin Luther's Reflections on Theology, Ethics, and the Church*, ed Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 201), 126.

²⁵ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 8.

where Jesus is already at work in society. We must yield to divine timing and wait for God's invitation. God cares about our character. God is willing to wait while the maturation process does its job. We can easily get frustrated, while we wait for the call to come. While we wait, we must trust that God knows what is needed.²⁶ "Waiting on the Lord should not be an idle time for us. We must let God use times of waiting to mold and shape our characters. We must let God purify our lives and make us into clean vessels for Jesus' service."²⁷ If we truly believe that God is at work within the culture around us, it may be good for us to ask some questions, as we are waiting on God. What is God's vision for the community we live in? What is God doing in the lives of those around us? What is our society's greatest need? Do I have the ability, or do I know someone who has that ability, to help meet that need?

When the call finally comes, and God reveals the assignment, the weight of the task often brings us to a point of crisis, in which we have to decide whether we really believe God spoke to us or not.²⁸ Os Guinness rightly states, "Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to His summons and service."²⁹

The self-help industry is full of books that teach people how to find and accomplish their life's purpose. If you can dream it up, you can accomplish it. For many, this becomes the way

²⁶ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), 121.

²⁷ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Experiencing God*, 123.

²⁸ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Experiencing God*, 223.

²⁹ Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling God's Purpose for Your Life*, 20th anniversary edition (Nashville, TN: W. Publishing, 2018), 5.

they find their calling, dreaming up something big for God, and inviting God to participate. Sadly, we have this process backwards. God invites us. We don't invite God. To follow our calling takes spiritual preparation and obedience. We often have to make major adjustments in order to accept the call. When we respond in obedience and faith, God can do amazing things through us. This is the essence of kingdom work: God working through us to meet the needs of those around us through God's power.

Calling usually resides where God's priorities, our personal gifts and talents, and the world's needs collide. Where all three intersect is a good place to look for one's calling in life. As Christians, some of us often get hung up on the more glamorous calling examples in the Bible. We look for burning bushes that talk, or some voice that tells us that we were called before we were born. We secretly hope that someone will come along telling us what we are supposed to do. Often the reality is that "vocational calling stays the same as we move in and out of different jobs and careers. Our vocational calling is directly related to the discovery of our God-given talents. Over time, we develop and hone them into useful competencies for the glory of God and the service of others, often in various jobs and occupations."³⁰

Many things can mold and create our sense of being called: the culture we live in, our family, the influences of people we respect, our likes and passions, and our skills and talents. Christians often turn to the Bible for answers. We serve a personal God, who created us in God's own image and desire to have a personal relationship with us. Os Guinness explains "Our life-

³⁰ Welche, *How Should We Work*, 79.

purpose therefore comes from two sources at once—who we are created to be and who we are called to be.”³¹ Guinness elaborates:

Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by him, to him, and for him. First and foremost we are called to Someone (God), not to something (such as motherhood, politics, or teaching) or to somewhere (such as the inner city or Outer Mongolia). Our secondary calling, considering who God is as sovereign is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live, and act entirely for him. We can therefore properly say as a matter of secondary calling that we are called to homemaking or to the practice of law or to art history. But these and other things are always the secondary never the primary calling. They are “callings” rather than the “calling.” They are our personal answer to God’s address, our response Gods summons. Secondary callings matter, but only because the primary calling matters most.³²

When we understand our calling, we have two responsibilities. First, we have the responsibility to keep our primary call as our priority. Our secondary calling shouldn’t overshadow or hinder our willingness or ability to serve God. Secondly, our primary call should lead us to our secondary calling. The danger of making the secondary call a priority is that our work becomes an idol and our work location an altar. We put more value on our work than the purpose behind our work. Our calling is first to a person. That person is Jesus. Our secondary call should line up with the first. “If we believe that our ordinary work does not have any intrinsic value in the light of eternity, since it has nothing to do with heaven and will not be saved, then it has only a secondary instrumental value for us.”³³ Keep in mind that God alone has power to issue a call and the right to command obedience. Our calling comes from an encounter with a holy and good God, not through a focus on self-discovery or personal fulfillment.³⁴

³¹ Guinness, *The Call*, 22.

³² Guinness, *The Call*, 61.

³³ Darrel Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2006), 46.

³⁴ Gary D. Badcock, *The Way of Life*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 72.

Our calling is holistic in nature with a central focus: Kingdom work. Our calling is bigger than our gifts and talents. It includes all that we are, including every relationship we have throughout our lives. Though our gifts and talents aren't the primary way we find our calling, they do help us align ourselves with other factors that help us discern our call. When we know how and where we are called, we transition from what we do for a living to doing what we are designed to do. It is wise to keep in mind that there is a certain amount of mystery behind the calling of God. We can take everything into consideration and still need ultimately to sense that God is behind the process. For some, their calling is instantly clear. For others, it feels like a process of trial and error.

We may see it as trial and error, but God doesn't waste an opportunity to deepen our faith. I was nineteen when I started to sense that God was calling me to use my passions for more than personal gain. After I got married, I moved with my wife to Wyoming to work for a natural gas pipeline company. My wife and I became active in the little community church where God began to unfold in me a desire to preach, along with a love for business. As time progressed, I knew in my heart that I needed to finish my college education if I was ever going to fulfill what I felt God was calling me to. I researched the school I wanted to attend and chose the degree. It was located in Kirkland Washington. I knew the company I was working for had a pipeline office in that area, so I put in for a transfer. In a long list of applicants, I was the twenty-ninth candidate in line of those in the company wanting to move to the Seattle area. The chances of getting that transfer seemed slim at best. Through a series of events, a position opened up sooner than I expected. Out of all the applicants, I was the only one who had the experience they needed. I loaded up my pregnant wife and three children and moved to Redmond Washington. My plan was to start school shortly after we got settled. Little did I know, the degree I wanted

was no longer offered at the school. Additionally, the company relocated me almost 2 hours from the school. Over a period of several years, through plugging into local church, working, and taking advantage of every opportunity that came my way, the reality of God's plan unfolded. I not only had opportunities to preach, but I became successful in business as well. I did finally go back to school. The majority of my education, until I started my master's program, was paid for by the company I worked for. Did I miss God's call? No. I just realized that God's call isn't always as clear cut and streamlined as I would have liked it to be. My understanding of being called broadened, and through the process, I matured, while learning to be a kingdom worker in everything I did. It wasn't a straight line, but it was the line God used to bring me the place I needed to be.

In early history, having a career or a job was not a major consideration. It was common for children to follow in the careers of their parents. The true question of calling was whether they would follow Jesus or follow the world in which they lived. Even in medieval times, people were obligated to stay in the station of life into which they were born. There was little to no opportunity to advance one's career. During this time, it was understood that peasants worked, while nobles and monarchs fought.³⁵ If lay people had a calling in medieval times, it was to assure that the population didn't decline by raising large families. The child mortality rate was high. Work was seen as way to feed the family and not about personal job fulfillment or serving God.³⁶

³⁵ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 112.

³⁶ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 113.

As humans, we are complex creatures. Our calling isn't limited to a single vocation. As a married man, I am called to be a husband, a father, and a grandfather. My calling isn't limited to what I do for money. Once I retire, my calling doesn't end. Our calling never changes, no matter what we do. This doesn't mean I choose my calling at will. Each vocation is a call from God to enter into kingdom work. God uses every aspect of our lives for God's glory. Kingdom work is not only about the work we do. It is about the fact that God chooses to use us to do divine work. Vocation is not just about discovering what God wants us to do. We also have to find what God is doing in and around us and see what part we are called to play.

"While vocation has come to be identified with occupation, the word calling invites the question "who?" Who is doing the calling? The most fundamental fact about calling and living vocationally is that we are first of all called to "someone" before we are called to do something."³⁷ Darrel Cosden points out in his book, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, that there is a challenge in seeing eternal value in the work we do. We often see pastoring or another form of clerical calling as higher than those who are called into the marketplace, especially, since one focuses more on the spiritual side of things than the other. This discrepancy is seen in all types of churches, even in some of the churches whose foundation belief is in the priesthood of all believers. Usually what unfolds through this process is the belief in a secular versus sacred dichotomy creating a gap between faith and work.³⁸

³⁷ R. Paul Stevens, *Work Matters: Lessons from Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012), 33.

³⁸ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 19.

Concerns and Challenges

When looking through the lens of a robust theology of work, concerns and challenges arise. One of these is leaning too far toward salvation by works. Another concern is to swing to the other end of the spectrum and see work as valueless and having no eternal significance. Yet another challenge that arises is the mindset that callings are hierarchical in nature. The more spiritual the call, the easier it is to connect it to kingdom work. Combine these with the question of what constitutes kingdom work, and things can get a bit messy. Some vocations are easily connected to the kingdom of God, yet others may not be. All work that serves and adds value to one's neighbor, as well as bringing glory to God, can be seen as kingdom work.

Though salvation only comes through faith in Christ, we are participants in the redemptive process. In the kingdom of God, human actions have an impact on God's good creation, as we do them for God's glory. Each human life touched through work is a sign of God's Kingdom interaction in this "now and not yet" world we live in.³⁹ The result is often the view that Kingdom work is spiritual requiring a deeper sense of spirituality, while ordinary work takes less spiritual understanding and has less meaning. Instead of both being equal in the sight of God, one is thought as better than the other.⁴⁰ This approach eventually leads to a long list of hierarchical callings that degrade kingdom work. This hierarchical sense of calling isn't just seen between those called to the church and those called to the marketplace. It is also seen within the church where a lead pastor may be considered to have a higher calling than an associate, youth

³⁹ Amy L. Sherman, *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 86.

⁴⁰ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 20.

pastor, or a missionary. We also see it when one person is in full-time church ministry compared to someone, who is either bi-vocational or co-vocational.⁴¹

It's important to point out that there is a difference between having a hierarchical structure within a church or business and having a belief that some callings are better and more spiritual than others. A hierarchical structure can allow a church or business to be more efficient and more faithful to their purpose and calling as community. A hierarchical calling tends to degrade and downplay the value and importance of one's calling. Why should a person take his or her calling seriously if it has little value and importance to the kingdom of God? A church janitor may not seem nearly as important as a pastor, but stop cleaning the bathrooms and emptying the garbage, and see what happens. We want to make kingdom work all about the spiritual aspects of life without realizing that we humans are holistic beings. When a person is hungry or cold, he or she isn't concerned with the spiritual as much as the physical. The same goes for those in emotional distress.

Another challenge that arises when viewing work through a theology of work is defining what Kingdom work looks like. We have to ask ourselves not just what it means to be a Christian working in the marketplace or the church, but what it means to be a Christian businessman or woman and a Christian pastor or lay person. How should our personal faith affect how we work and how we run our businesses and our ministries? It's wise to ask whether we do our jobs ethically and legally. But as kingdom work our concern should also be whether it is ethical and legal according to God's standards. Competency, though important, should not be the dividing factor between those working for the Kingdom and those who aren't. Whether a doctor is a

⁴¹ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 22.

Christian or not, he or she needs to be competent in what he or she does. What is also important is whether faith guides and determines not only how people do their jobs but why they are doing them. We all want pastors who can lead and preach well. Church leaders should be just as concerned about how they treat their co-workers, as well as church members. They should be concerned about whether they are paying their workers well. Are they following legal compensation requirements? Or are they taking advantage of their young employees' passion to serve and not protecting them from burnout? Kingdom work encompasses every aspect of our Christian life no matter how insignificant it may seem.

Closing Thoughts

The heart of the gospel is the call to follow Christ as disciples (Matthew 16:24). The gospel transforms lives, making every believer a citizen in the Kingdom of God (John 3:3-5). This kingdom is alive in the hearts and minds of Christians (Luke 17:20-21). This transformation not only affects our personal lives, but it should affect our work as well. There should be no disparity between our faith at home and our faith at work.⁴² When we think that the use of our talents and gifts in a Christian organization is the only setting for kingdom work, we have misunderstood what the Bible depicts as kingdom work. The idea that some work has more eternal value than another, or that some work is defined as full-time Christian work, is not biblical. We need to see work through a deep understanding of a theology of vocation, so we can

⁴² Nelson, *Work Matters*, 16.

realize that no matter how simple or basic our work is, it needs to be seen as a way to glorify and honor God.⁴³

One of the fundamental beliefs in Christianity is that God has a plan in mind for each and every one of Jesus' followers. We gain comfort in believing that God has not only created us, but that God has created us for a purpose and has a plan for us. Life seems a bit less complex, when we gain the sense that our lives matter and play a role in the bigger picture that God has in mind. The challenge comes in discerning what our call looks like. We will not all have a "burning bush" experience or a "still small voice" to guide us. In reality, a common aspect of discerning our calling comes from being part of a larger community. As we spend time serving, praying, and reflecting on our own giftedness in the context of community, our sense of call begins to emerge. Often our calling is where our greatest desires intersect with society's greatest need.⁴⁴

When looking at scripture and taking into account the many Bible stories, we can't tell for sure if the characters within the biblical narratives saw their everyday lives as a sense of calling or not. But it is easy to see that God used common people in extraordinary ways. It is also wise to consider how Christianity throughout history has understood what is meant by calling or vocation, especially since vocation has changed drastically over the centuries due to the change in societies around the globe. Today, our choices of career options are vastly different than those in early human history. If you were the son of a carpenter, you became a carpenter. If your father was a metalsmith, you in turn were expected to become a metalsmith. Daughters had drastically fewer options. Even in the upper levels of society, there were few options. The oldest

⁴³ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 85

⁴⁴ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 3.

son to a king was expected to become king. Other sons after that would assume other higher roles in society. The king's daughters were married off to leverage power and to build alliances.⁴⁵

Today, many live well beyond their retirement years, so the idea of vocation takes on a certain level of suspicion. Some vocations or callings seem to bring little to no meaning in life, as other things consume and dominate our lives. Throughout history, calling has changed to mean different things. With the diversity of religions that surround us and many of the current values of the culture being oriented around gaining wealth, there needs to be a hard look at what God is actually calling an individual to be and do. I suggest that calling and vocation don't only include coming to a faith in Christ. Calling goes beyond entering the pastorate or entering a career. Part of calling and vocation should look at what a kingdom presence is in a non-Christian world. For Christians, work should be centered around the concept of kingdom work. As representatives of the Kingdom of God, all of our actions and pursuits are called to glorify and exalt the king. To see vocation solely through the lens that "God has a specific task for me do" limits the focus of work. On the other hand, if vocation or calling means that every choice is right, then what about the deeper meanings of life and purpose? A Christian's direction of life and calling need to fit into the overarching purpose God has for creation. The values of the Kingdom of God need to determine how our vocation is shaped. By seeing our work as kingdom work and understanding how it helps build the kingdom of God, we can see how valuable work can be.

⁴⁵ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 5.

Going Deeper

1. Based on your new understanding of kingdom work, how can your current vocation be used as kingdom work?
2. Assessing where you are now in life, do you have a clear understanding of God's call on your life?
3. What is the greatest need you see in the community where you currently live? Can your passions and giftings help meet that need?

Section Two: The Redeemed Kingdom

This section is the heart of the book. This section is intended to connect kingdom work to daily living. Building on chapter two, chapter three focuses on three vital areas that build the understanding that work was God's original plan for humanity. The first area looks at creation and the idea that God was a kingdom worker. Work was part of God's original purpose and plan for creation before sin corrupted it. The second area is that because Jesus died freeing humanity for sin, work now takes on a new meaning. We are created for good works that are intended to be glorifying to God. The last is that, through indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, we are gifted and empowered for good works. Chapter unfolds that as redeemed and empowered kingdom workers, we are now culture makers. Employing the views of Richard Niebuhr, the chapter explores the complexities of seeing Christ in culture. I focus the reader on the importance of daily faithfulness over the idea of changing the world. By allowing God to change us first, our work can be changed. Through our work being changed, we can then influence and create an environment for God to change others, in turn slowly changing culture in a small way. Chapter five focuses on the internal aspects of kingdom work, the importance of having a kingdom attitude. It explores certain important emotional characteristics and motivations that are needed to be successful kingdom workers. Finally, chapter six dives into the value of having a redemptive eschatology and how it broadens the possibilities of kingdom work. The "now and not yet" aspects of the kingdom of God show us that, as members of the kingdom of God, we are part of a bigger story, the return of Jesus Christ. Seeing all of creation as restored back to God, in which heaven and earth are becoming one, helps to show us that work has more eternal value than we think.

Part Two: The Redeemed Kingdom

Chapter 3

Created, Redeemed, and Empowered

Let's look at some of the foundational biblical aspects of being a kingdom worker. In this chapter, we will look at three primary areas that I believe are essential for us to understand our calling as kingdom workers. First, we are created to be kingdom workers. Though we have looked at the Genesis account in some of the other areas of this book, here we will dig a little deeper into the concept of being created in the image of God and what that has to do with “ruling” and “dominion,” as well as kingdom work. Second, we are not just created for kingdom work. We are saved for kingdom work. Here we will look into the reality that we are not saved *by* good works but saved *for* good works. Third, we will look into the idea that God has also gifted us for kingdom work. Our talents and spiritual gifts work in harmony with our calling. I will then give my closing thoughts on this chapter.

Created for Kingdom Work

The creation story is foundational for many aspects of our Christian faith. It is vital to understand not only our “cultural mandate,” but why we were created. In many cases, we as Christians see the creation story through only one lens, the origins of the universe, in order to prove God created the world. Instead, I want to look at the socio-vocational aspects of Genesis. The book of Genesis refers to humankind being made in the image of God in three places, Genesis 1.26, 5.2, and 9.6. The word “image” is defined as “likeness, i.e., that which is a

pattern, model, or example of something.” The word "likeness" is defined, “that which has similarity or comparison.”⁴⁶

What does it mean to be made in the image and likeness of God? How does this relate to the identity and purpose of humanity within the created order? Although the meaning of “the image of God” is not totally clear, it is evident that it depicts humanity in some fashion as being like God. Even if the image of God cannot be clearly defined, out of all creation the original author set man apart from the rest. This elevates us to see humanity as the most highly developed creature.⁴⁷

Over the centuries, this open-ended aspect of “the image of God” has been forced into multiple molds of every aspect of religious and philosophical thought. Ambrose believed it was the soul that depicted the image of God. For Athanasius, it was humanity’s capacity for relationship. For Augustine, it was the human’s soul, memory, and intellect. The Reformers felt the image of God was destroyed at the fall, and that it was found in the initial condition of righteousness only enjoyed by Adam. Enlightenment thought has depicted the image of God as residing in the soul. Barth admits that one can discuss which opinion sounds the best and which one seems the most plausible, but readily admits that one cannot tell which one is the correct interpretation of the text.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Bible Languages with Semetic Domains Hebrew (Old Testament)*, 2nd Edition (Logos Research Systems, 2001), 1952 and 7512.

⁴⁷ Greg A. Reich, “Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology” (master’s thesis, Northwest University, 2013), 52, EBSCOhost.

⁴⁸ Greg A. Reich, “Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology” 53.

Two words are key to understanding this portion of Genesis. The first is “dominion,” which is also defined as to rule, direct, lead, control, subdue, manage, or govern an entity, people, or government with considerable or forceful authority.⁴⁹ The second word is subdue, which can be defined as to overcome, enslave, or conquer and control an environment or people.⁵⁰ Part of being image bearers is having the power and responsibility to rule over creation and subdue the earth. It takes both bearing the image of God and fulfilling the stewardship aspects of Genesis to effectively execute God’s plan for humanity.

When placed in the context of Genesis 2, one could conclude that being an image bearer was to be done in a stewardship fashion or in a kind and benevolent way. The text does not lead one to believe that the rule of humanity is absolute. Ruling needs be in conformity and harmony to the design given by the one who delegated the responsibility. Within the text, the reader sees the value that God placed on all of creation: “it was very good.” This value leads to the conclusion that ruling is not oriented around neglect and abuse but caring and compassion. Part of what it means to bear the image of God is working in God’s creation. Man is placed in a role to serve and care for creation in the garden (Gen. 2:15). With this, came the freedom to be creative. “And whatever man called every living creature that was its name” (Gen. 2:19).⁵¹

Work was not forced on humanity; it is part of being human, as well as part of the stewardship process. Genesis depicts work as a God given task and part of stewarding the earth. Dominion isn’t the meaning of bearing the image of God. To claim that dominion means bearing

⁴⁹ Swanson, Dictionary of Biblical Languages, 8097.

⁵⁰ Swanson, Dictionary of Biblical Languages, 3899.

⁵¹ Greg A. Reich, “Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology” 55.

the image of God would be far too narrow. A broader meaning suggests that humanity was made in the image of God, in order to serve and protect creation. The power to rule comes from being an image bearer. It could be concluded that since God is the sovereign creator of the universe, humanity has been made in the image of God to rule as God's representatives. The author of Genesis clearly places humanity as part of creation but above the rest of the created order. In relation to the rest of creation, humankind serves as the "vice regent." The ruling and reigning over creation become the primary functions of being created in God's image.⁵²

It can be said that "the garden is something to be protected more than it is something to be possessed."⁵³ God intended humanity to have purpose instead of being idle. Physical labor is not a result of sin, but part of the original plan god intended for humanity's role on earth. Nahum Sarna points out in Genesis "that the image simultaneously expresses both the glory and insignificance of man."⁵⁴ Humankind has a significant role creation. Being formed by the hands of God and made alive by God's breath, humanities relationship with God unusual in comparison to the rest of creation. At the same time, it is apparent that humans are part of the created order, created from dust by the hands of the Creator.⁵⁵ Humanity was created by God and given the creativity to be kingdom workers, to nurture, guide, and watch over God's good creation. We see in Genesis 1:27 that God was a creator. God created, not because God had to, but because God chose to, because God enjoys creating. After making the whole of the earth and all the living

⁵² Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology" 59.

⁵³ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, ed. Robert Hubbard Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 171.

⁵⁴ Nahum M. Sarna, "Genesis," *The JPS Torah Commentary*, ed. by Nahum M. Sarna (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 17.

⁵⁵ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology" 58.

creatures, God made humankind in the image of God, the creator. One of the things distinctive about humankind is that we create things. As humans, we don't just create out of necessity. We create, because we desire to create. We enjoy creating. Even in our fallen state, we personify the creator's image by creating things. Part of our nature is to create.⁵⁶ Dorothy Sayers notes that "He is made in the image of the Maker, and he must himself create or become something less than a man."⁵⁷ Our work in many ways bears the image not only of the one doing the work but the one who created the one doing the work. Work is vital to God's creation design.⁵⁸

Redeemed for Work

Genesis builds a broad understanding of work. Once God made humankind, we are told that God planted a garden. God placed the man in the garden to "work it and keep it." This doesn't depict or focus on human choice but on divine design and calling. In contrast to much of our current understanding about work and personal choice, we see in creation a loving and sovereign creator who was also a divine caller. We see that humans were given a calling of stewarding creation and were commissioned to care for and nurture it.⁵⁹ But in Genesis 3, we see that the fall of humanity corrupted the process of work. Our work today is not what God originally intended. With the curse, work now includes toilsomeness and sweat. What was once a freeing endeavor, allowing God's creation to reach its full potential, now has become a weight

⁵⁶ Dorothy L. Sayers, "Vocation" in *Work in Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom and Vacation*, ed. William C. Plancher (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 406.

⁵⁷ Sayers, "Vocation" in *Work in Callings*, 406.

⁵⁸ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 22.

⁵⁹ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 25.

that humans were never intended to bear. The groaning of creation and heavy burden of work are a bleak reminder of the result of sin and rebellion.⁶⁰

What is the answer to a life filled with toilsome work? The answer is Jesus. Paul in Ephesians 3 explains that we were at one time separated from God. Sin not only cursed us, but it cursed creation and work as well. It was a package deal. But in Christ, things changed: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 3:8-10). Jesus provides through grace not only redemption from sin but a new foundation for work. We aren’t saved by our works. According to Paul, we are created and saved for good works that were prepared beforehand, so that we could play our role in God’s plan. Tom Nelson explains “Our work gives evidence of our glorious creation as well as our great estrangement from God and our need for a Savior who will redeem us from sin’s devastating curse.”⁶¹ Our calling can never be separated from the gospel. At the heart of kingdom work is the transforming power of the gospel.

Our salvation changes everything. “Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work” (2 Tim. 2:20-21). According to Paul, every household has vessels of every type. Some of them

⁶⁰ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 38.

⁶¹ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 42.

more honorable than others. Paul explains that those cleansed from dishonor are now set apart to be used by the master for every good work. It is clear that “every good work” means all work that is good. In Christ, we have been saved and set apart to be kingdom workers ready for every good work. Notice that every vessel has a purpose, and if it is cleansed, its purpose changes. No matter the size, shape, or makeup for those that are cleansed, their purpose becomes good works. Humanity was not just intended to work but to do good works that are in accordance with how we were created, designed, and best suited as God’s kingdom representatives.⁶²

Empowered for Work

Not only are we created to work and redeemed for work, but we are also empowered to do good works through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. One of the biggest misunderstandings within the church today is the assumption that the gifts of the Spirit are only meant for church. This is not the case. “Spiritual gifts are intended for all the people of God, so that they can enter into God’s beautiful work of transforming creation, culture, and people.”⁶³

When looking at the gifts bestowed on us through the Holy Spirit, it would be beneficial to look at both 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. In 1 Corinthians 12, after Paul lists the gifts of the Spirit, he proclaims, “All these are empowered by one Spirit, who apportions to each as he wills” (v11). He then, in the remainder of the chapter, discusses the correlation of the members of the physical body in relation to those in the body of Christ. In Ephesians 4, after his list of spiritual giftings, he explains their purpose, “to equip the saints to do the work of ministry” (v12)

⁶² Ben Witherington III, *Work*, 7.

⁶³ Ben Witherington III, *Work*, 40.

with the intent to build up, create maturity, and stabilize the body. It doesn't appear that Paul is just talking about church. The body is the body whether people are assembled on Sunday at church or whether they are individually at work. Every church is made up of highly talented and gifted people: lawyers, doctors, nurses, carpenters, plumbers, mechanics, janitors, singers, song writers, athletes, government workers, and the list can go on. Each one is empowered through the Holy Spirit to be a kingdom worker every day of the week. This is not just a New Testament concept. A commonly overlooked story in the Bible when discussing the gifts and talents of kingdom work is found in Exodus 35 and 36. Here we see God calling out Bezalel and Oholiab by name as men filled with "skills, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship" (35:31). In turn, God also called every craftsman to use their skills in the construction of the sanctuary. "When a member of the body of Christ has gifts needed for particular forms of service, that member has a particular calling to use those gifts in that service. The duties bound up in various services are to be fulfilled as responses to God's callings."⁶⁴

In order for work to be classified as work in the Spirit, it must be done in cooperation with God. This work goes beyond our natural talents into the gifting and empowering act of the Holy Spirit within and through the Christian believer. Through the presence of the Holy Spirit within the life of the believer, human work can be done in cooperation with God.⁶⁵ As Christians, we understand that we each have spiritual gifts given to us by the Spirit. These gifts aren't just for church. We are responsible to use them in all we do. We don't choose these gifts. We know that this is up to the giver of these gifts, the Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit

⁶⁴ Schuurman, *Vocation*, 38.

⁶⁵ Miroslav Volf, "As Cooperation with God," *Work in Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom and Vacation*, ed. William C. Plancher (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 102.

enables us to imitate Jesus in all that we do, we must realize that our work is no longer separate from our faith. It is an extension of our faith.⁶⁶

In every sense, human work is transformed into kingdom work, which builds and expands the kingdom of God, as well as provides for the common good of our neighbors. Our spiritual call is one of entering the kingdom of God through the power of the gospel and living a life characterized by spiritual gifts and the fruits of the Spirit. When we willingly use our spiritual gifts in Kingdom work, we can see powerful results. Our work brings glory to God. Honoring God should be our primary motivation when doing kingdom work. Our work helps us to love and serve our neighbors. This can be either directly or indirectly. Every time there is a storm, and the power goes out, the local power company sends workers out into some harsh conditions to restore the power. The result of restored power is part of their indirect love and commitment to their jobs. We don't always get to see the results of our work for God. Kingdom work doesn't always have to provide a practical need. Kingdom work can also enrich our lives through the sheer beauty of a craftsman's work.

When we begin to see that yielding our lives to Jesus affects all aspects of our lives, then our work, no matter how big or small, can be used to fulfill God's purposes. We are all called to discover how our lives fit into the bigger context of God's plan for creation. Life is not a series of mistakes, accidents, and/or wasted efforts. Through the redemptive act of Jesus, we can participate in the eternal purposes of God.⁶⁷ The New Testament speaks of spiritual gifts given to each believer. Though these are supernatural gifts given by the Holy Spirit to the believer, they

⁶⁶ Ben Witherington III, *Work*, 37.

⁶⁷ Schuurman, *Vocation*, 66.

are often harmonious with and strengthened by a person's natural gifts. It is often the knowledge of our natural giftedness that helps us recognize our spiritual gifts and our calling. As agents involved in God's redemption of His creation, our calling as kingdom workers is not only to the church but to the vast world outside of the church. When we know our giftedness, we can begin to see the need for our talents and gifts to be combined. We begin to see God's call take form around us.

Closing Thoughts

Growing up like so many American youth, I dreamed about having a number of careers when I finally reached adulthood. I enjoyed architecture. I had a better than average aptitude toward drafting but found I had little aptitude toward math. I still use some of the skills I learned during that time to design my own projects, but I just didn't have what it took to be an architect, especially now that everything has been computerized. I also dreamed about being a veterinarian. I was raised on a small ranch in Montana. That dream quickly ended once I started taking college level Chemistry and Physics classes. Eventually I settled in to my giftings and talents. I found that I have a better than average ability to speak in front of people and to lead large projects. In that niche, I have had the privilege to serve in churches as paid and unpaid staff, manage large natural gas pipeline projects, work in business, and head up a non-profit. In each of these jobs, I sensed the call of God. "A person's gifts form one important indicator of directions in which God may be calling that person. Although the repaid pace of change in today's society creates stress, it also provides new opportunities for aptitudes to shape one's callings."⁶⁸ We often

⁶⁸ Schuurman, *Vocation*, 145.

struggle with the misconception “that God has a rigid, highly detailed blueprint for each life. Within this blueprint, God calls individuals to a single specific place of work, and to no other... Christians who hold this view are highly anxious that they might miss their one and only chance to heed God’s call. They fear they may choose the wrong profession, or accept the wrong job offer.”⁶⁹ When we look at gifting and calling, it is often the case that God works with them in harmony. For many, God doesn’t normally call us in ways that do not include our spiritual gifts and our talents. In some cases, God’s call takes us well beyond our current abilities and causes us to learn and incorporate areas of gifting we are unfamiliar with. Needless to say, “all gifts and callings depend upon God’s grace and good will, and that God delights to take what is weak in the eyes of the world to shame the strong.”⁷⁰

From the beginning of creation, God not only designed humankind for work, but God gave us work to do. In Genesis, God commands us to subdue the earth and rule over it. God didn’t say exploit or destroy creation, but work and care for creation. Creation isn’t passed off as complete in Genesis. Part of the ever-continuing part of creation is human work. God intended that human work would help in developing and expanding creation.⁷¹ When sin enters the scene, work changes. Sweat and toil are now part of the process for the man, and pain in childbirth, part of the process of the woman. Even though work was changed, it can still be satisfying. Despite the pain of childbirth, women still find great joy in having children. Despite the changes in work due to sin, it can still be enjoyed and done readily for God. Christ redeemed us, and the Holy

⁶⁹ Schuurman, *Vocation*, 125.

⁷⁰ Schuurman, *Vocation*, 143.

⁷¹ Ben Witherington III, *Work*, 4.

Spirit continually gifts and empowers us, to be kingdom workers. Work is a form of worship that not only serves others but serves God as well.

I will end this chapter with the parable Jesus tells of the final judgment. I think it ultimately unfolds the power of kingdom work and helps drive home the ideas that we are created, redeemed, and empowered for work.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (Matthew 25:31-46).

Everything described in this parable can be seen as an act of ministry through work.

Though we are saved through faith in Christ, there is an expectation that we meet the needs of others for the sake of the Kingdom. What we do, why we do it, and how we do it has eternal value to those around us. To see work only through the lens of creation or as an act of Christian living leaves it at the center of everyday living. God's purpose for creation was not intended to be an end in itself. The purpose of creation is "bringing about the good of establishing

community and creating something of eternal value both to God and ourselves.”⁷² “In the Bible and in the first centuries of Christian tradition, meeting one’s needs and the needs of the community (especially its underprivileged members) was clearly the most important purpose of work.”⁷³ Kingdom work not only has eternal value. It has eternal ramifications as well.

⁷² Cosden, *Work and the New Creation*, 166.

⁷³ Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 149.

Going Deeper

1. Looking at your gifts and talents, how can you use these in kingdom work?
2. Can you think of a time in your Christian walk where you felt empowered by God?
3. Can you remember a time when you did something for someone in need, and you felt as if you were doing it for Jesus?

Section Three: Kingdom Reality

The intent of this last section is to help bring kingdom work into the realities of the current culture. Now that the reader is able to see the value of kingdom work and how it can be used, the section tries to ground them in the reality that we live in a secular world. In chapter seven, the reality of the secular and sacred dichotomy is exposed. This gap between faith and culture will exist until Jesus returns. By understanding how faith and work can be used to the glory of God, a bridge can be built, enabling Christians to embrace work as sacred. Chapter eight, the final chapter, takes a look at kingdom impact. This chapter focuses on the practical aspects of kingdom work and points the reader to the power of faithful presence. In a culture where it seems that bigger is always better, this chapter unfolds simple tools that make small but steady impacts in how faithful presence can provoke change.

Chapter 7

The Divided Kingdom

This chapter is dedicated to understanding the dichotomy of secular and sacred, as well as what influenced this mindset. We will look at the many historical influences starting with Emile Durkheim, along with the influence of the Enlightenment and secularism. Then we will look at how Martin Luther's "priesthood of all believers" opened doors for the differing religious opinions that influenced the writing of the 1st Amendment. Some of the questions I will be trying to answer are as follows. Where did this idea of sacred and secular come from? Why is it so prevalent in the United States today? To understand the dichotomy of secular and sacred, we will start by looking back at history to the influences that played a role in its current formation.

Historical Influences

Sociologist and philosopher Emile Durkheim (1858 -1917) looked at the common aspects of religion in the history of humanity and established that all religions see their belief system through a set of opposite lenses described as sacred and profane. Within these two independent categories lie the characteristics of religious thought. Sacred and profane are seen as completely separate categories with no commonality leading to a true dichotomy.⁷⁴ The secular and profane are from two distinct contrary worlds and are often viewed as adversaries. Due to the belief that the worlds of sacred and profane are to be kept separate, the inclination is to reject any

⁷⁴ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 36.

overlapping or commonality between the two. Within the religious sector of humanity, people are encouraged to embrace the sacred and avoid the world of the profane.⁷⁵

Durkheim tended to associate the sacred with a moral community and the profane with self-centered individual activities. Apart from the religious moral community, the sacred cannot exist. It is the common practice and belief in the sacred that forms a sense of unity. Sacred is usually oriented around a deity. Set beliefs and rituals are often protected by a set of do's and don'ts, dictating how to interact with the sacred. In contrast, the profane is the reason that religious boundaries exist, to keep anything that is profane away from anything sacred. The profane drives one deeper into a sense of individualism and is equated to the material world.⁷⁶

One of the pivotable outcomes of the Enlightenment was the liberation of both scientific and philosophical thought from religion. With this liberation came the desire to restructure and eliminate the influence of old ideas. As a result, both Europe and America started to apply this mindset politically.⁷⁷ The desire to confront the relationship between science, philosophy, and theology led to theological debates. Out of these debates came the concept of “rational belief,” which posited the view that all Christian truth needed to be factually proven. Problems soon arose, due to the fact that there were some things such as miracles and divine revelation that could not be proven, allowing for doubt and skepticism.⁷⁸ The “Great Debate” in 1860 between

⁷⁵ Durkheim, 39.

⁷⁶ Durkheim, xxii, xxiii, and 36-39.

⁷⁷ Jonathan I. Israel. *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity and the Emancipation of Man 1670 – 1752* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006), 6.

⁷⁸ Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 65-73.

Samuel Wilberforce and Thomas Huxley on Darwin's book *Origin of Species* solidified the detachment of science from the foundations of religious faith.⁷⁹

Since the onset of modernity, humanity has been placed at the top of the order as higher beings, and to some, gods. Enlightenment thought ended the age of innocent religious faith and the influence of religion on society, creating room for other possibilities of influence beyond religion and opening doors to a world of self-sufficiency without God. For the first time, religion wasn't seen as the primary guiding influence in society. Now a humanistic alternative to religion prevailed. Unbelief became a viable option.⁸⁰ In many countries, religion was now disconnected from the framework of politics. Religion became privatized, while politics became a place for nonbelievers and believers.⁸¹

Secular then became associated with public spaces that were emptied of God and religion. "Taken from another side, as we function within various spheres of activity—economic, political, cultural, educational, professional, recreational—the norms and principles we follow, the deliberations we engage in, generally don't refer us to God or to any religious beliefs."⁸²

Prior to this time, religious leaders often influenced societal norms through Sunday sermons. Today, "secular" has not only become the removal of God from public spaces. Secular has also reduced the involvement of Christian belief and practice by drawing people away from

⁷⁹ Simon P. Walker, *Leading with Everything to Give: Lessons from the Success and failure of Western Capitalism*, Book 3: "The Undefended Leader Trilogy" (Carlisle, UK: Piquant Editions, Ltd, 2009), loc 261, Kindle.

⁸⁰ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, UK: The Belknap Press, 2007), 18-20.

⁸¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 1.

⁸² Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2.

the church. This transformation shifted the environment from a time when belief in God was unchallenged to one that now questions the embracing of faith in God.⁸³

Sadly, Pandora's box has been opened. According to James Smith, there is no turning back. No amount of persistence or devotion will undo the secularism now prevalent in America. The issue at hand within the secular world therefore is how we live and navigate our faith.⁸⁴

In modernity, particularly in the wake of the Enlightenment, "secular" begins to refer to a nonsectarian, neutral, and religious space or standpoint. The public square is "secular" insofar as it is (allegedly) nonreligious; schools are "secular" when they are no longer "parochial" hence "public" schools are thought to be "secular" schools. Similarly, in the late twentieth century people will describe themselves as "secular," meaning they have no religious affiliation and hold no "religious" beliefs.⁸⁵

The Enlightenment wasn't the only influence responsible for the removal of religion from the workplace and the public forum.

The Priesthood of all Believers

When looking at the dichotomy of secular and sacred, a deeper broader religious influence needs to be considered. Unknown to some, the teachings of the Reformation heavily influenced the writing of the United States' 1st Amendment of the Constitution, which prohibits congress from establishing a single national religion. Any religion is prevented from exercising its dominance as a faith. Martin Luther's teaching on the "priesthood of all believers," an idea

⁸³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2-3.

⁸⁴ James K.A. Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2014), 11.

⁸⁵ Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular*, 20.

that was central to the Reformation, brought with it the empowerment of the individual Christian to interpret scripture. The “priesthood of all believers” not only gave the individual the right to interpret scripture but to raise questions about the church’s teaching, along with going directly before the throne of grace in prayer without the assistance of a priest.⁸⁶ “In Luther’s theology therefore, the idea of the priesthood of all believers is not primarily about ministry as such. It is concerned instead with the relationship that all have with Christ by virtue of baptism. Luther teaches there are no separate levels of grace, one for the clergy and one for the laity. Luther’s objective was to break down the “walls” of status and standing before God that were introduced into medieval theology and to replace that medieval conception with a more evangelical understanding. The priesthood of all believers was the primary conception Luther used to bring about this shift of perspective. Luther claimed, we are all priests, because we all have the same relationship to Christ. What constitutes the church is the gospel of forgiveness, in which all alike are sinners acceptable to God in Christ.”⁸⁷ Christians now had the power to approach God without the need for a mediator through the forgiving work of Christ on the cross. This removed the need for priests to have a different status than others in the church. Though the office still existed, everyone now had the responsibility to share the gospel and pronounce forgiveness.

Along with the influence of Martin Luther’s “priesthood of all believers” came the influence from the dissenting Protestant groups that immigrated to the early American colonies. Religious liberty, the assurance that all denominations had equal representation before the law,

⁸⁶ Nicholas P. Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment: Dissenting Protestants and the Separation of Church and State* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

⁸⁷ Gary D. Badcock, *The Way of Life*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 90.

became the cry of the day.⁸⁸ Born out of this mindset came a form of disestablishment created both by protestant dissenters and the Enlightenment influenced thinkers. These kinds of thinkers were founders of the American constitution. They were religious people pushing for the disestablishment of the state church concept and the assurance of equality for all religions. This line of thought, along with a diverse immigration, led to an acceptance of a pluralism of Christian denominations in early America.⁸⁹ The 1st Amendment was a product of three key factors: the doctrine of secularization born out of the Enlightenment, reformed theology, and a young nation's influx of religious pluralism.

The many historical influences that have led to the dichotomy of sacred and secular in America are complex. This dichotomy, which hinders people of faith to see their daily work as ministry, didn't happen overnight. It was a long and slow process, brought about from thoughts birthed out of deep-seated views of sacred and profane found within all religions. Three major events appear to have laid a groundwork for the 1st Amendment: First, the advancement of rational thought from the Enlightenment; second, the onset of secularism and the privatizing of religion, which removed it from public spaces; finally, the influence of the doctrine of the "priesthood of all believers," which led to religious pluralism. Though the 1st Amendment was written to assure the religious freedom of those living in the US, it appears that it also helped to solidify the dichotomy of secular and sacred.

⁸⁸ Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 152.

⁸⁹ Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 4-8.

Dualism

A separation of sacred and secular can lead to a dualistic approach to work. A dualistic approach to work conveys a message that some work is important to God, and some isn't. This type of approach can cause highly effective people to leave a vocation they are uniquely qualified for in order to obtain one conveyed as a higher calling.⁹⁰ The world tends to divide things that were never intended to be divided. Work was never intended to be separated into a secular and sacred mindset. We often see work with a mindset of higher calling and lower calling. Pastoral and church work are often thought of as sacred, whereas other work is seen as secular or of a lower calling. We can see this approach when we use certain terminology oriented around pastoral ministries. The concept of full time, bi-vocational, or co-vocational often denotes different levels of calling. As kingdom people, "there is no more sacred space than the workplace where God has called you to serve him as you serve the common good."⁹¹

Dualism has led to two very different approaches to work within the church. One approach is that if our work is to be pleasing to God, then everything we do needs to be blatantly Christian in nature. Work is always needed to be done in the name of Jesus and with other Christians in a Christian environment. The other approach, which is far more common, is the idea that people are Christians on Sunday, and the rest of the week out in the secular world, they are at liberty to accept and pursue the beliefs, values, and materialism of the culture. The first approach prohibits our ability to see work as vital for the common good of all people. The second approach fails to connect one's faith and Christian worldview with culture. The way

⁹⁰ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 45.

⁹¹ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 45.

outside of dualism is the integration of work and faith, which allows us to interact and engage with culture and with those who are not Christians.⁹² Only then can we grasp the value of being kingdom workers and break down the wall of secular and sacred that holds so many at bay.

The false but persistent notion of secular and sacred has been destructive to the church. There is a sense that we live in two distinctly separate worlds. Our personal interests and the pursuits of our everyday lives are thought to be secular, while our spiritual lives, oriented around the church, are classified as sacred. The implications of this way of thinking could lead one to believe that God cares more for the sacred portion of our lives than the secular portion.⁹³ The dichotomy of secular and sacred creates a natural hierarchical system that views Christian ministry as the highest calling. Everything else is ranked as less. This mindset has caused many Christians to isolate and see involvement within society as a necessary evil. All work is ministry. The priesthood of all believers assures us that all Christians are priests empowering us to act on behalf of God our king. For us, there is no dichotomy of secular and sacred. All work is sacred when it's done for the glory of God. All work is kingdom work when it's done in the name of the King for the advancement of His kingdom. We understand that "whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ" (Col.3:23-24). Part of working as Christians in a secular world is realizing that we are called to be cross bearers. This isn't a popular topic, but Jesus tells us in the gospels to take up our cross daily and follow him.

⁹² Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 200.

⁹³ R. Keith Loftin and Trey Dimsdale, *Work in Christian Perspective: An Introduction in Work, Theological Foundations, and Practical Implications*, edited by R. Keith Loftin and Trey Dimsdale (London, UK: SCM Press, 2018), 2.

Kingdom work is building on what Jesus did on the cross. We should expect as followers of Christ that part of work is taking up our crosses.⁹⁴ For Kingdom workers, cross bearing is an act of laying aside personal ambitions and putting the will of God first. Yielding our rights and desires to God transforms work from a selfish ambition to one of service and worship to God.

Closing Thoughts

All Christian work for the common good is Kingdom work. For many, the dichotomy of secular and sacred creates a mindset of leaving a life of success and seeking one of significance. In reality, all work is kingdom work, and all work can help build the kingdom. The dualistic mindset elevates one calling over another, reinforcing the idea that the Christian should disengage from the world, instead of faithfully engaging in his or her weekly, everyday life.

The sacred and secular dichotomy is a challenge to seeing our work as kingdom work. It hinders us from developing and adopting a strong theology of work. The dichotomy of secular and sacred has led many to believe that leisure is better than work. It reinforces the belief that the only true calling is to the church.

Andy Crouch in his book *Culture Making* helps us see that amidst the mindset of secular and sacred, there is a deeper question to be asked:

The religious or secular nature of our cultural creativity is simply the wrong question. The right question is whether, when we undertake the work, we believe to be our vocation, we experience the joy and humility that come only when God multiplies our work so that it bears thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold beyond what we could expect from our feeble inputs. Vocation – calling - becomes another word for a continual process of discernment, examining the fruits of our work to see whether they are producing that kind

⁹⁴ Witherington, *Work*, 126.

of fruit, and doing all we can to scatter the next round of seed in the most fruitful places.⁹⁵

As Kingdom workers, we need to see that all work is sacred. All work is intended to touch the heart and minds of others for the Kingdom of God. Despite what the world around us calls secular and sacred, we bear fruit for the Kingdom. When perceived in this fashion, it would be doubtful if Christians would see life so easily divided. As Christians, we realize that all aspects of our lives fall under the lordship of Christ, and all aspects of life are sacred. Many Christians have been influenced by the dichotomy of secular and sacred. Scripture promotes a holistic life before God reinforcing the sacredness of all of life.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Crouch, *Culture Making*, 256.

⁹⁶ R. Keith Loftin and Trey Dimsdale, *Work in Christian Perspective*, 3.

Going Deeper

1. How has the dichotomy of secular and sacred affected how you do your work?
2. When considering a theology of kingdom work, how can you build bridges to assist yourself and others in seeing their daily work as a calling from God?
3. What are two ways your local church can help you integrate your faith in your job?

Assessment

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Benchmark 1: Flow: Does the book smoothly move from one point to the next?</p> | <p>Specific: The content of the book was put in a strategic order to assure that one chapter builds on the other.</p> <p>Measurable and Assignable: By utilizing an editor as each chapter was written the order and flow of the content was consistent.</p> <p>Relevant: During the writing process as the flow improved in the previous chapter it was easier to create flow in the next.</p> <p>Time: The time spent having each chapter edited helped me improve the flow of the book.</p> |
| <p>Benchmark 2: Clarity: Is each section of the book clear? Does the author use examples and stories?</p> | <p>Specific: The book was broken into three parts, each part building on the other.</p> <p>Measurable and Assignable: By breaking the book into parts and utilizing an editor for each part clarity was monitored throughout the process.</p> <p>Relevant: Each example and story were intended to bring practical understanding to the topic being discussed.</p> <p>Time: Time deadlines were maintained with the editor to assure prompt feedback</p> |
| <p>Benchmark 3: Practical: Does the book challenge the reader to apply the content?</p> | <p>Specific: The content and chapter questions were specifically focused toward undergraduate bible college students and will be used in my current introductory theology of vocation course.</p> <p>Measurable and Assignable: Each chapter ends with questions helping the reader to go deeper into personal application.</p> <p>Relevant: Chapter questions were worded to help assist me in class discussions.</p> <p>Time: Further practical application pieces will be added prior to publication.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Benchmark 4: Credibility: Is the information accurate and authoritative?</p> | <p>Specific: Key sources in the current theology of vocation field were used creating this content.</p> <p>Measurable and Assignable: All content used was filtered through current theological trends pertaining to the topic to assure credibility.</p> <p>Relevant: The key sources used are the main sources currently used in my introductory course on a theology of vocation college course.</p> <p>Time: When it comes to the topic of kingdom work in a theology of vocation it is an ever-growing topic thus the need for an introductory level book.</p> |
| <p>Benchmark 5: Feedback: Did the book incorporate relevant feedback from peers?</p> | <p>Specific: Peer feedback and editor feedback was used throughout the content of the book.</p> <p>Measurable and Assignable: Each chapter was sent to the editor and key chapters to college peers with specific deadlines in mind. Peer feedback was a struggle.</p> <p>Relevant: The feedback results from the editor provided proved invaluable. Peer feedback was inadequate and not timely.</p> <p>Time: Challenges arose maintaining timely peer feedback. Further feedback will be obtained during the launch process.</p> |

Table 1: Benchmark Assessment Chart

The content of my project is a solid start toward a clear and resourceful book that can be utilized in my current college course setting. By using the Kingdom of God as a foundation for kingdom work, I believe the information is presented in a way for the students to easily grasp and apply. By avoiding the heady format and language of typical theology, undergraduate students will find it easier to relate to the topic. I believe the contemporary language and format

will help students absorb the information better than a typical textbook. My end hope is to motivate future pastors to add a kingdom work focus in their personal lives and ministry.

The benchmarks chosen are those of the typical book writer looking to create the body of a book. They helped focus the project content but wouldn't have been sufficient if the project scope was to create a complete book. Without an editor reviewing each chapter, I don't think these benchmarks could have been as effective and as measurable during the process. If I had to do it again, I would broaden my feedback scope. Peer feedback is important. What was missing until I hired the editor was feedback and clarification on certain content, which was taken for granted in the peer feedback process. The short window and quick turnaround time needed to meet the project deadline made peer feedback challenging. Now that the main body of work is complete, I think a larger window for peer feedback needs to be utilized prior to publishing.

The content in its current format is highly usable for classroom lectures but still needs to have other areas added to improve the contents for deeper clarity on the topic and further practical application. At least two more chapters are needed to assist the reader in a deeper understanding of kingdom work. At minimum, a chapter discussing sabbath and work life harmony are needed. An appendix will include an annotated bibliography of the most prevalent voices in theology of vocation, further illustrations and stories showing kingdom work in action, and available resources for readers to go further in the topic of kingdom work.

PROJECT LAUNCH PLAN

Introduction

The following launch plan for my final project includes the following information: 1) a short project description, 2) a description of the intended audience for whom this project was designed, 3) a graph showing the milestones needed to assure the completion and launch of the final project, and 4) a summary of the process that will be used to evaluate the project during the launching process.

Project Description

NPO

The dichotomy of secular and sacred hinders North American Christian's from embracing work as ministry.

Project Description

My project, in its current state, is the foundational content needed for a book entitled *Work: Does it Matter to God? An Introductory Look at Kingdom Work*. This book will introduce a theology of vocation utilizing the framework of the Kingdom of God. By using the framework of kingdom theology and the lordship of Jesus Christ, this content in its final form will be used to build a bridge for undergraduate students to see their everyday work as ministry. The project explores the fundamental concepts of what it means to be a kingdom worker in a secular society.

Audience

My selected audience is primarily undergraduate college students at Clearwater College, who are in preparation for pastoral ministry. These students have little to no access to contemporary theological concepts. Those who graduate will either become bi-vocational pastors in a small community setting or work in a secular setting trying to apply their Bible college degree to their vocational work. A secondary audience that will gain value from this project are the churches associated with the college. On a number of occasions, I have done pastoral seminars on a theology of vocation. I believe their response to this book will be positive, despite the project's focus on college students. This project is intended to be a new book to be used and supplemented with my lectures in my Introduction to the Theology of Vocation course currently taught at the college.

Development Plan

The following benchmark process will begin July 1, 2022. This timeline takes into consideration the finalization of the book manuscript, as well as two options for publishing. It also takes into consideration my current vocational workload. My hope is that the final transcript will be accepted by a publisher once submitted. If not, I have also included milestones for self-publishing.

| Milestones | Time Frame | Approximate Cost |
|---|---|--|
| Finish writing book: Chapter on work life harmony. Appendix including annotated bibliography and further examples of kingdom work. | Chapter: Work life harmony 90 days (due Sept. 1, 2022) Appendix with annotated bibliography of key voices and examples: 60 days (due Nov. 1, 2022) Total time 5 months: Completion date: Nov. 1, 2022 | No costs associated with this benchmark |
| Final Review: Peer review Research 3 publishers Edit manuscript | Peer review: 90 days (due Feb. 1, 2023) Research publishers: 20 days (due Feb. 20, 2022) Editing: 20 days (due Feb. 20, 2022) Total time 110 days: Completion date: Feb 20, 2023 | Peer Review \$0 Editing costs approx. \$500 |
| Submit manuscript: Note: If the manuscript is accepted by a publisher the final time of publication will be up to the publisher. If not see the self-publishing option. | Waiting for publisher response: 30 days (due March 2, 2023) Completion date March 2, 2023 | Costs: \$0 dependent on publishing company. |
| Self-Publishing Option: Finalize cover Format book | Finalize cover: (due March 1, 2023) | Final Cover: \$100 to \$200 |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| | Formatting: 60 days (due May 1, 2023) Total time 2 months: Completion date May 1, 2023 | Formatting: \$250 to \$1000 for a non-fiction book. |
| Marketing Publishing | Premarketing: 60 days Publishing: 60 days Total time 2 months: completion date July 1 ,2023 | Facebook and Amazon ads: \$1000 Publishing: \$2000 -\$4000 for nonfiction depending on quality Total Cost: \$3850 - \$8500 |

Table 2: Launch Plan Chart

Note: Data taken for kindlepreneur.com and self-publishingschool.com

Development Process

The intent of this project is to have it finalized in book form. Due to this being the case, the continued evaluation process will take place in four stages. The first stage will be the feedback from the peer review process once the manuscript is completed. The second stage evaluation will be from the editing process. The third stage will be publisher feedback on the submitted manuscript for possible publication. If the final manuscript needs to be self-published, a fourth stage of evaluation will be done on the quality of the final product. The final evaluation will commence after the book is provided to the students at Clearwater College in a classroom setting.

APPENDIX A—MILESTONE 1 THE NPO CHARTER

Personal Research Manifesto:

Through collaboration, research, and prayer I will with integrity, open minded deep listening; creating a safe transparent environment that embraces being wrong and is willing to express doubt while seeking to understand my NPO.

NPO Statement:

Considering the average Christian in the U.S. we discovered that our view of secular and sacred has skewed our view of who we are in Christ, and what it means to minister in His name causing an inability to see our Christian walk as holistic in nature. If solved, it would mean the average Christian would be empowered to serve God in every areas of their social engagement.

NPO Scope:

The purpose of this NPO is to write a book and/or training curriculum that will provide insight into the dichotomy between secular and sacred along with a foundational understanding of a Theology of Vocation to enable Christian believers to see their weekly activities as ministry opportunities. This project is not intended to be a comprehensive theological work nor is it intended to be a self-help guide for overcoming personal hinderances that would prevent one from pursuing their vocational calling. The costs of this research will include books, seminar fees, travel, and time to write the project. Currently, estimated costs are unknown.

NPO Context:

The NPO project will be designed to cross denominational and generational boundaries. Considering the average Christian who is seeking to find purpose in their work my hope would be to provide a format for study and discussion both for the church and for the Christian business

culture that will equip individuals to see the purpose of their careers as kingdom building ministry.

Root Causes:

The root causes associated with not seeing weekly activities as ministry appears to stem from 4 key areas. First, Christians have bought into the Modernity myth of the dichotomy of sacred and secular causing a compartmentalized mindset between religious beliefs and business practices. Second, there is a limited understanding of the Theology of Vacation and Kingdom work concept as being holistic. Third, life, education and ministry opportunities are seldom viewed in a holistic mindset between these 4 areas: relationships, physical, emotional and spiritual preventing an understanding of how these areas fit together into a Christian walk. Finally, a lack of one's identity in Christ and His desire for the healing and wholeness in the life of the believer has left people wounded, confused and afraid to be used by God.

Discovery Session Stakeholders

Pastor of inner-city Church of God in Christ and director of Directions, a program that works on equipping the poor to find work.

Businessman immigrant from Zimbabwe.

Businessman raised Catholic turned Protestant.

Businesswoman raised Catholic turned Protestant.

Retired disabled fire fighter and grandfather.

Retired housewife and grandmother.

School District employee, housewife and grandmother.

One on One Interviews:

Professor at Northwest University.

President of Clearwater College Alberta, Canada.

Founder of Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.

Pastor, past President of Life Pacific College.

Academic Resources:

My efforts this next semester will be to review some of the latest works in the Theology of Vacation. Some of the main voices in this area are R. Paul Stevens, Ben Witherington and Darrel Cosden. I will also be looking at Theology and Culture and some of the thoughts on how Christians should engage the communities we live in. D. A Carson is an influential thinker in this area. I will also research the theology of The Kingdom of God. I will start by looking into the writings of Putty Putman. I will also research literature that explores the dichotomy between the sacred/secular in contrast to a holistic life mindset.

Main Appendix

NPO Discovery Report:

Discovery Session

The stakeholders met on November 5th, 2019 from 11:00am to 2:00pm. Lunch was provided. Eight stakeholders were present, 3 females and 5 males. Once the room was set up, I greeted the stakeholders and went over the NPO process. After introductions I went over the schedule. I introduced the NPO process and topic explaining we were looking at the dichotomy between secular and sacred by asking the question “Why don’t we see our weekly jobs as ministry?” I did a simple exercise asking the stakeholders to look at 9 illustrations of different careers I placed on the wall (doctor, church greeter, farmer, priest, plumber, mechanic, lawyer, Sunday school teacher and pastor). I gave them each green and orange sticker and asked them to

place a green sticker on any picture they considered secular and an orange sticker on those they considered sacred. Most all stake holders placed orange stickers on the pictures of church greeter, pastor, priest and Sunday school teacher. Green stickers were placed on the doctor, farmer, plumber, mechanic and lawyer pictures. Three of the stakeholders put green and orange stickers on all the pictures stating they were all secular and sacred. One stakeholder from Zimbabwe put a green and orange sticker on the farmer pictures due to his culture viewing farming as a sacred calling. The purpose of the exercise was to give me an idea of where each stake holder stood with their understanding of the dichotomy of sacred and secular. I then read aloud the following bible verses: 1 Cor. 10:31, Col 3:17, 1 Timothy 6:1-2 and Ephesians 6:5-9 to provide a biblical foundation for moving forward with the NPO process.

NPO session:

Audience:

The stakeholders were asked to consider who the NPO audience would be by placing yellow sticky notes on the audience sheet. The audience, ranging from teens to anyone willing to listen. After a short discussion the stakeholders all agreed that the audience should be all Christians.

NPO:

The question was asked to what the needs, problems and opportunities were around this topic. Due to the lack of understanding of the NPO process by the stakeholders we did not do the yellow note process but had a group discussion oriented around the topic. Feedback was given and documented both in my notes along with on the board. Blue post it notes were used to identify the items that indicated the symptoms of the problem. As I began to put the indicators into groups it became clear to me that they could be broken into 4 distinct groups of

cultural/relational, physical, spiritual, and emotional. Pink post it notes were used to identify root causes of the problems. The 4 groups were confirmed as I grouped the root causes next to the symptoms. To clarify the process, I drew a grid on the poster board with the following 4 groups; social(relational), physical, spiritual and emotional. I then took the sticky notes and placed them on the grid. I then asked the stakeholders if this made sense. All of the stakeholders agreed that the grid enabled them to see the process more clearly.

Discovery Statement:

Considering all Christian believers, we discovered that our understanding of secular and sacred has skewed our view of who we are in Christ, and what it means to minister in His name, which is caused by our lack of understanding that our Christian walk is holistic in nature. If solved, it would mean we could better advance the kingdom of God.¹

Critical Insights from Discovery Session

There were four interesting outcomes of the discovery session. First, culture plays a bigger role than anticipated in our understanding between the secular and the sacred. One of the stakeholders is from Zimbabwe and his culture views farming as a sacred calling since it provides food for the community. Secondly, those stakeholders who were raised Catholic and are now Protestant believers, struggled with the dichotomy between secular and sacred far more than those raised in a protestant faith. Third, the identification and the root causes that were discovered easily mapped over into a holistic grid grouped by social (relational), physical, spiritual and emotional.

¹ I feel the aspect of the advancement of the Kingdom of God may be too broad. A holistic Christian walk with a clear understanding of ministry can bring a life full of purpose, and an appreciation for work as ministry. It could bring fulfillment in an individual's career and a better understanding of a Theology of Vocation

Finally, the question was raised as to why there was a lack of understanding of our Christian life being viewed through a holistic lens apart from a spiritual lens alone. The answers oriented around a lack of training by the church and a lack of training by the family, as well as a focus on worldly role models that separate their private life from their public life.

One-on-One Interview discoveries: (see appendix for detailed summaries of interviews)

To gain a broader understanding of my NPO question I did 4 one-on-one interviews. All interviewees stated that they thought the NPO results were on track but felt hesitant to agree or disagree with the data accumulated since they were not part of the group nor familiar with the NPO process. Each one of the interviewees had a different take on what was missing in the discovery group results. This may be due in part because they were chosen for their educational knowledge and business backgrounds in the area of Theology of Vocation. Because of this each one brought a deeper understanding of the NPO results. In summation, a lack of community promoted by modern business methods has disconnected us from community functions such as family farms and local businesses that were once formats to connect and live out our faith. There was also a lack of understanding of the meaning of what Kingdom work truly is and what it means to be the body of Christ. Can the body of Christ truly be the body without weekly work? Many Christians see work as part of the fall. Some people see themselves as unworthy and unusable making them hesitant to reach out to others in need. The church is focused more on how individuals can serve the church instead of how God has shaped an individual to be a force in the world. Many Christians suffer from a lack of identity in Christ and purpose for life. These all play a role in why most Christians don't see their weekly jobs as a form of ministry.

Synthesis:

Comparing the results from both the discovery session and the one on one interviews it became apparent that the discovery session insights were focused on individual symptoms, as well as individual root causes of the dichotomy of secular and sacred. The one on one interviews focused on a broader universal understanding of the dichotomy of secular and sacred. This may have been due to the fact that all one on one interviews were from business, church or Bible College leaders. The focus on how cultural changes have removed the daily connectedness to communities that enabled people to minister to one another was helpful in looking at the deep changes that play a role in a more self-centered mindset. A loss of the meaning of Kingdom work and a more wholistic approach to the body of Christ has led to a segmented lifestyle. Along with the self-focus of many churches and the lack of understanding of identity in Christ and purpose has led to an inability to see what it means to be salt and light within society.

Next Steps:

In the theological arena, there is a pressing theological need to define what it means to do Kingdom work and what it means to be the body of Christ within the framework of a Theology of Vocation. A look into theology and culture focusing on what it means to be salt and light in a post Christian culture² may shed light on the challenges of seeing work as an opportunity to minister. It also may clarify what the churches role is in culture. A study in the concept of flourishing may also be beneficial. Research into the social cultural changes in community and how it has affected our ability to connect with people could be enlightening. Due to the emotional and spiritual root cause issues that showed up during the discovery process a look into

² A post Christian culture can be defined as the loss of a primary Christian world view that once dominated Western society for other less Christian world views.

our identity in Christ, along with exploring how to get beyond emotional hurt is a possibility. Finally, a holistic approach when considering a Christians life purpose could speak to some of the root causes that showed up during the discover session.

NPO Report Appendix:

The following data is compiled from both the NPO process and the one-on-one interviews. The NPO question: When looking at the dichotomy of secular and sacred why don't people see their weekly activities (jobs, careers etc.) as ministry?

Needs, Problems and Opportunities:

An open discussion was used during this part of the process instead of yellow post it notes due to some confusion by the stakeholders of what was expected. The comments made where that there was a lack of understanding of what it meant to be called. There was a lack of training in the family and from the church on what ministry and calling are.

Symptoms:

List of symptoms by grouping

Emotional:

Depression and anxiety (work and home)

Dissatisfaction with work and life

Lack of appreciation for others and their careers

Lack of love and compassion for fellow workers

Fear of being fired

Spiritual:

People not working in job areas and activities they could be effective in

People not seeking jobs/careers they could be good at

Lack of understanding of how God is calling us and how should we respond

Social/Culture:

Certain jobs are clearly dictated as ministry and others aren't in some culture

Employers dictate behaviors on the job and may discriminate against the workers

Government and state employees are expected to maintain a separation of church and state at work.

Cultural understandings of secular and sacred differ

Root Causes:

List of Root Causes by groups

Spiritual:

Lack of faith (in how God can use us)

Lack of trust that God can make us in His image

Lack of training from family and/or church

Not knowing who we are in Christ

Sin/ disobedience

Not willing to pursue one's calling

Believing Satan's lies about our lives

Emotional:

Hurts/ wounds/ brokenness and fear prohibiting us from moving forward

Negative personality, pessimistic outlook

Lack of compassion for people

Unaccepting of others and their job

Personal bias toward others

Social/ Culture:

Being raised in a denomination that determines what ministry looks like

Poverty

Technological influences affecting how we view life

Limited money and resources

Culture dictating behavior

Putting it Together:

My NPO statement: Considering all believers. We've discovered that our understanding of secular/ sacred has skewed our view of who we are in Christ and what it means to minister for Him. Which is caused by our lack of understanding that our Christian call is holistic in nature effecting everything we do. If solved it would mean that we could better advance the kingdom of God.

My thought of possible outcomes that would be more specific and still result in the advancement of the kingdom would be: If solved we would be more affective in our careers. If solved, we could enjoy life in a deeper way and walk in the calling God has for us without guilt or shame.

My takeaways from the discovery session:

- People have a hard time seeing work and weekly interaction with others as ministry due to a diverse group of reasons.
- A theology of vocation needs to be holistic in nature.
- The dichotomy of secular/sacred is often reinforced and supported by life experiences.

- Emotional wounds, culture and an individual's faith play a role in why they do not engage in a theology of vocation mindset.

Bible verses used during the introductory process:

1 Corinthians 10:31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

1 Timothy 6:1-2 All slaves should show full respect for their masters so they will not bring shame on the name of God and his teaching. If the masters are believers, that is no excuse for being disrespectful. Those slaves should work all the harder because their efforts are helping other believers who are well loved.

Ephesians 6: 5-9 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free. Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don't threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and he has no favorites.

Summaries of One-on-One Interviews:

Interview #1: Businessman, Founder of Hospitality Corner and Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability

There was very little discussion and input around the following two questions.

When looking at the NPO results what do you agree with? When looking at the NPO results what do you disagree with? S.M was surprised by the one of the root causes being fear of being fired when we live in a vocationally mobile society that allows us to jump from job to job.

The greatest focus was on what was missing. What was missing is the understanding of community around food. Today food is a commodity that is provided by large agricultural firms. People have no understanding or relationship with who grows the food or provides the meat. The food process was once relational in nature and is now a disconnection from the community process. In the past people could relate to what it took to provide food for the family through relationships with local farmers. They could relate to the meat slaughtering process because it was often done locally. There was a realization of the slaughtering process being part of the “blood sacrifice” process.

At a 30,000-foot level a lack of connection with people is what causes the dichotomy of secular and scared. We work for companies whose very business is designed to disconnect us from one another. We live an economy built on technology designed to isolate instead of building a true sense of community. A theology of vocation is an act of worship. In the Old Testament animals sacrifice was an act of worship where the people were connected to the process by raising the animal and giving it up for sacrifice.

According to S.M. the purpose of work is to bring people together. People aren’t asking the question how my work can be redemptive. Most work is designed to create relational factors not redemptive relationships. Shalom and flourishing are outcomes of community. An understanding of hospitality should be part of every career.

Question: What can the church do to assist people in this process?

Answer: If cultural relevance is the focus stop trying to be relevant maybe it's time to be irrelevant. In other words, it may be time to provide alternatives to our current societal trends. People should be focused on how their lives and jobs are being redemptive not relevant. Is reconciliation happening with people, with creation and our natural resources?

Interview #2: Professor of Theology @ Northwest University

How do we understand the Kingdom of God? What do people mean by Kingdom and kingdom work? What is sacred activity? Kingdom = God's desires all creation to flourish therefore all activity that helped the creation flourish is kingdom activity. The objective is to help people to have a broader understanding of vocation. The problem is that things are categorized between secular and sacred. This may be due to a lack of imagination within the church. Paul uses the metaphor of the "body": Greek political theory recognized the individual and its value to the body. Currently an individual's gifts serve as a secular function but not a body function. The church needs to reimagine what it means to be the church. The concept of kingdom and calling are closely tied together. Our understanding of Kingdom defines our understanding of calling.

Interview #3: Past president of Life Pacific College, men's pastor at Motion Church

Focused on 3 areas:

1) Most people don't have a solid theology of work. It is either twisted by thinking work is a result of the fall or it is nonexistent. Work existed before the fall. A good theology of work brings us to the understanding that work is our assignment.

2) People are broken with untended wounds, so they see themselves as "less than." They see themselves as unusable and think God is disappointed in them. "Brokenness is not a disqualification but a qualification" for ministering to people.

3) Most people do not see themselves as “open for business.” Meaning they are not open to being used by God.

At the core is this myth of a separation between secular and sacred. As well as a lack of understanding being placed in Christ. A Christian is “a person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells.” Stewardship is tied to the Theology of Vocation in that it is how we invest ourselves into the Kingdom of God.

Interview #4: President of Clearwater School of the Bible, Alberta CA.

The Interviewee found the stakeholder comments both interesting and accurate.

What was missing was identity and purpose. Does the average believer know who they are and why they were created? What is the purpose of being salt and light in the world? We tend to shape people in how they can serve the church instead we should be helping them see how God has uniquely shaped them to be a force in the world. Is the way we do church supporting a Theology of Vocation? Church is all about meetings that gather at church instead of how we live in the community. Does a society that mandates a separation of church and state create confusion in the minds of believers around their call? How does our light shine through work? What is the difference between Christian and non-Christians and their work? Shouldn't be the hard skills, all employees should be qualified and competent. It is most likely in the soft skills: motives, intent and actions.



Figure 2: Appendix A- NPO Charter (a)



Figure 3: Appendix A- NPO Charter (b)

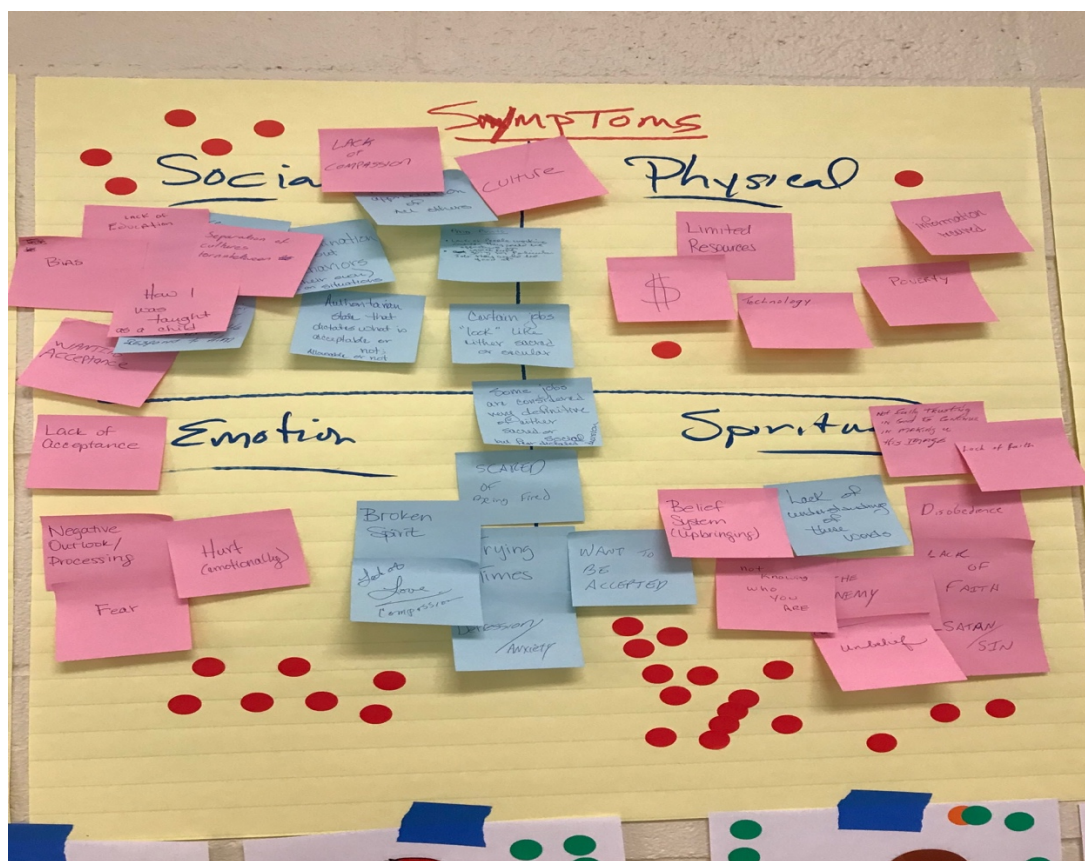
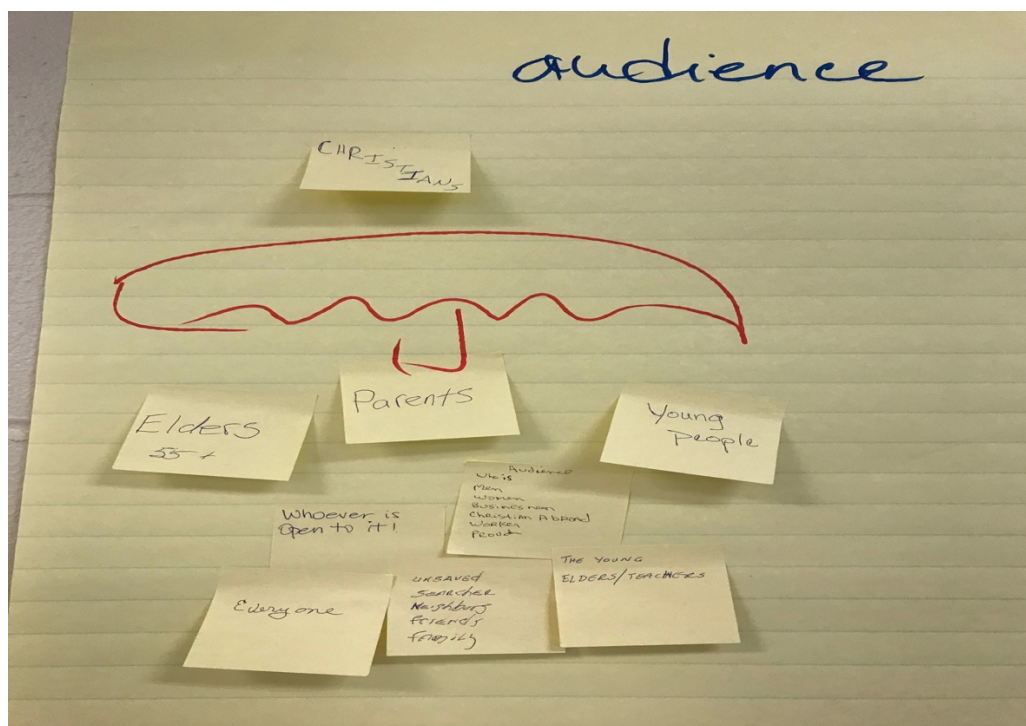


Figure 4: Appendix A- NPO Charter (c)

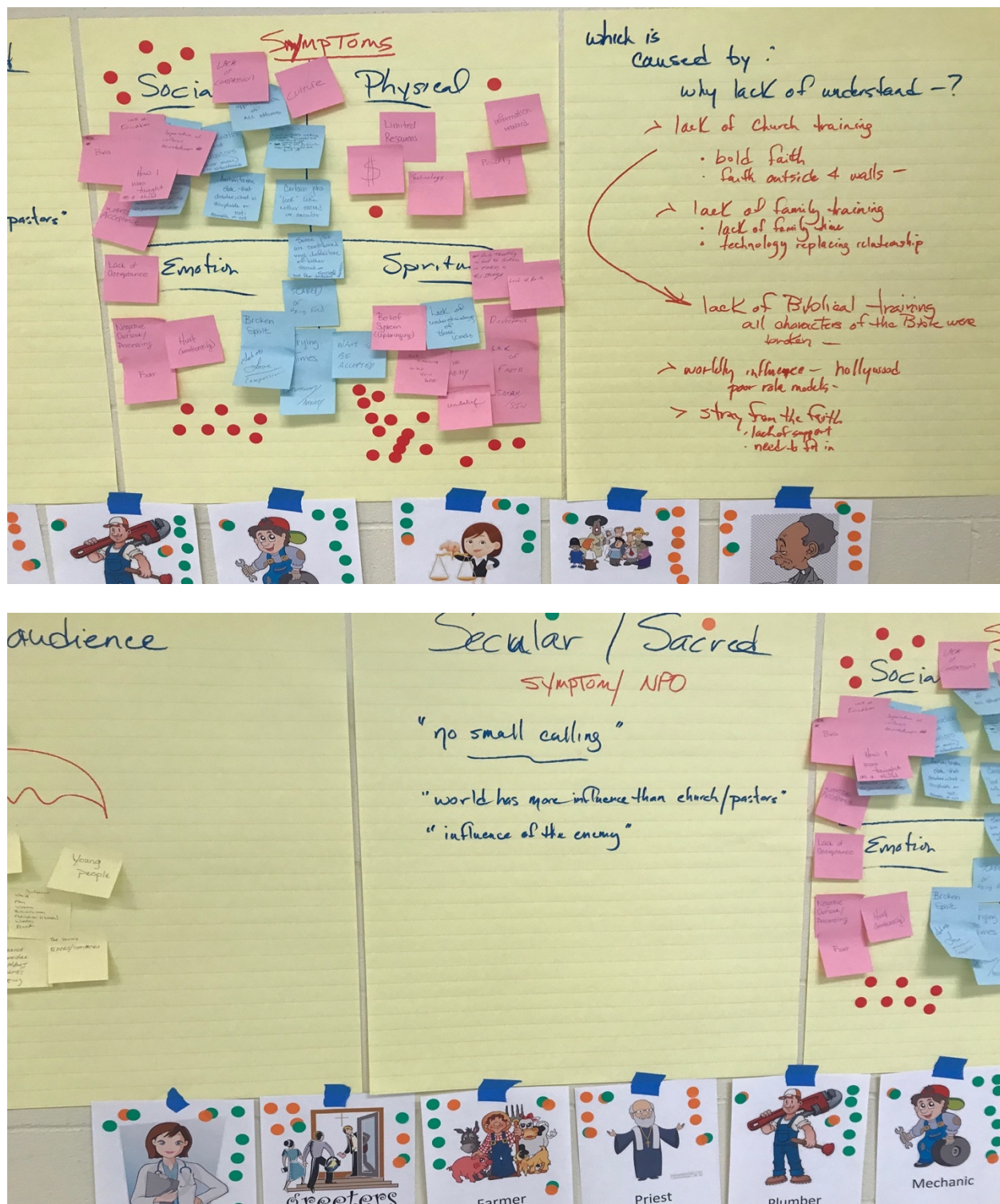


Figure 5: Appendix A- NPO Charter (d)

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

CONSIDERING — ALL BELIEVERS

WE'VE DISCOVERED that our understanding
of secular/sacred has skewed ~~into~~ our
view of who we are in Christ

WHICH IS CAUSED BY our lack of
understand that our christian call
is holistic in nature —

IF SOLVED, IT WOULD MEAN
Advancement of the Kingdom !

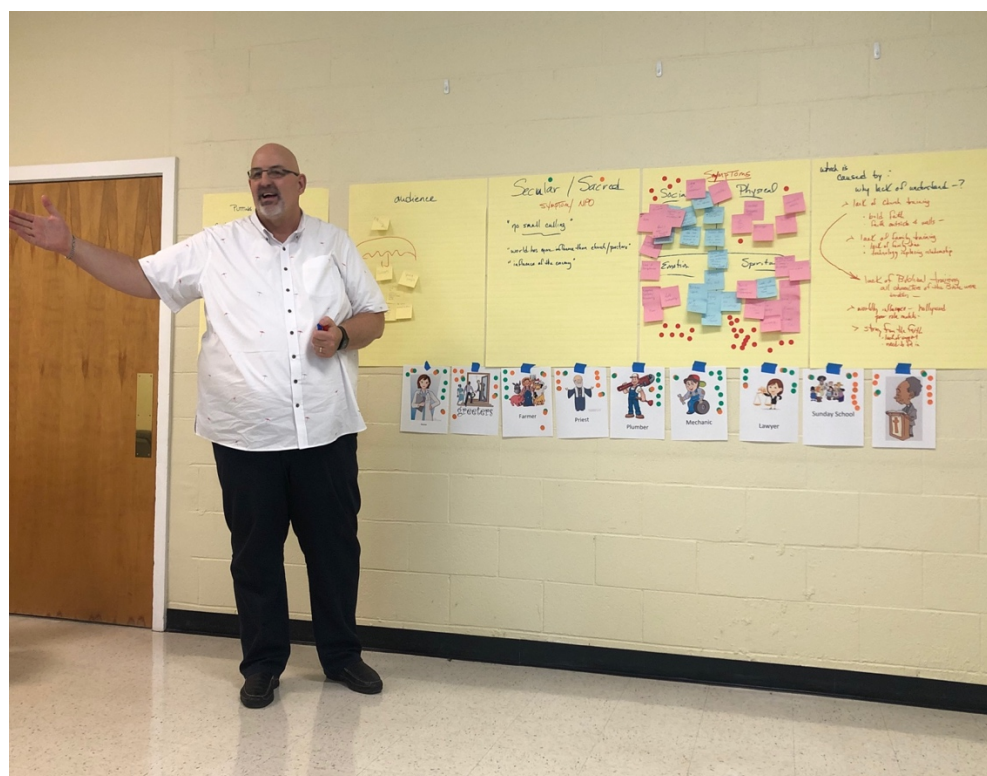


Figure 6: Appendix A- NPO Charter (e)

APPENDIX B—MILESTONE 2 NPO TOPIC EXPERTISE ESSAY

Seeing work as part of the Christian faith can be challenging. Part of this disconnect is due to the dichotomy of secular and sacred. To understand how this dichotomy affects our lives within the United States, we will look at four different areas. First, the biblical and theological foundations concerning work, as well as the command to be holy and separate from the world in service to God. Second, I explore the history of secular and sacred and the historical influences on the writing of the First Amendment. Third, prominent voices are discussed that can shed light on this dichotomy and why seeing work as ministry is part of every Christian's life. Finally, I look at the agreements, tensions and gaps this research has brought to the surface.

Biblical and Theological Foundations

Biblical Foundations:

When considering how the dichotomy of secular and sacred may discourage Christians from seeing work as ministry, it would be easy to call anything with a church theme, sacred, and anything with a worldly theme, secular. Sometimes the dichotomy between secular and sacred is necessary. One may not want the church writing tax law. It also may not be a good idea for government to dictate church policy. When we intentionally divide our lives into secular and sacred categories, we risk making Sunday the day we commit to God and the rest of the week we live as we please.

Even though the bible does not directly categorize things as secular and sacred, it does command Christians to be separate from the world. In Matthew 5:13-14 Jesus calls His followers be the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world”. In 1 Peter 2:9 Peter tells his audience “you are a CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PREISTHOOD, AND A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR

GOD’S OWN POSSESSION.”¹ Throughout scripture God commands His people to be holy or separate from the world. In the Old Testament the word *Qadhash* is used to mean sacred, selected, pure, holy and consecrated. The first time this is used is in Exodus 19:6 where we see that God separated Israel from other nations for His service. Israel was commanded to be holy because God was holy.² The New Testament carries over this theme in the word *Hagios* meaning to be holy, set apart and consecrated.³ Being set apart or being holy was a mandate directed to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the command to be holy or set apart has been broadened and is directed to all believers in Christ, not just Israel.

Textual Discussion:

In this section I will be looking at three specific scriptural references regarding the concept of work. The first scriptures are Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15. The intent shows that work is part of humanity being created as image bearers and part of the original plan of creation. The second is Jeremiah 29:5-7, showing that even in exile God saw that the purpose of work was seeking the welfare of Babylon, and in turn the welfare of Israel. Finally, I will look at Colossians 3:17, 23, discussing how our work is part of doing things in the name of Jesus.

Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15

1:26 Then God said, “Let us make man in Our Image, according to Our likeness: and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over birds of the sky and over cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

¹ All Scripture is taken from the New American Standard Version unless otherwise noted. Capital letters taken directly from 1 Peter.

² Warren Baker ed. *The Complete Word Study: Old Testament KJV*, (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1994), 2359.

³ Spiros Zodhiates ed. *The Complete Word Study: New Testament KJV*, (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1991), 867.

²⁷ And God created man in His own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female He created them.

²⁸ God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

^{2:15} Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

The Genesis creation account has four key descriptions of humanity that have strong implications when forming a theology of work. First, mankind alone is said to be created “in the image of God.”⁴ Second, out of all of creation mankind alone is given a role that included work.⁵ Third, mankind is given the responsibility to “rule” over creation. This can also be translated “dominate, lead, direct control of, subdue, i.e. manage or govern an entity.”⁶ Finally, mankind is told to “subdue,” meaning to “overcome, enslave, i.e. conquer and control an environment or people.”⁷ According to William Messenger, with the image of God comes the official function of responsibly taking dominion over the earth.⁸ One could argue that as image bearers part of subduing and ruling is to live as faithful stewards and representatives of God. Messenger further states that mankind is called to be faithful to His purposes, not ours. The idea is that man was not working against creation but working to benefit it.⁹ Messenger points out that “Through our

⁴ For a deeper understanding of the image of God refer to W. Sibley Towner, “Clones of God: Genesis 1:26-28 and the Image of God in the Hebrew Bible,” *A Journal of Bible and Theology* 59, no.4 (Oct. 2003) :341-56 and David J.A. Clines, “The Image of God in man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968) 53-103.

⁵ William Messenger ed, *Theology of Work Bible Commentary; Genesis through Deuteronomy*, (TWBC; 1. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2015), 9.

⁶ James Swanson. *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Prod. Electronic ed: Logos Research Systems Inc., Oak Harbor, 1997), 8097.

⁷ Swanson. *Dictionary*, 1997, 3899.

⁸ William Messenger ed., 11.

⁹ William Messenger ed., 11-12.

work God brings forth food and drink, products and services, knowledge and beauty, organizations and communities, growth and health, and praise and glory to himself.”¹⁰

Once sin entered the world, humanity was introduced to “toil”, “thorns and thistles”, as well as sweating in labor as shown in Genesis 3. It is clear that all work is affected by sin. With work being toilsome it is easy for us to feel that we exist in exile. Without a deeper understanding of God’s purpose for work, we are all confronted daily with the drudgery of work and a sense of hopelessness.

Jeremiah 29:4-7

⁴ “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, ⁵ ‘Build houses, and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce. ⁶ Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease. ⁷ Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.’

This scripture intended to bring things into perspective for Israel; it was God who is responsible for Judah being in exile. God commanded the exiles in Babylon to work, build houses, grow gardens and eat the fruit of their labors. They were to marry and raise families; increasing in number. Living in community helped to maintain a sense of identity and provided for those in exile to work for the welfare of the country in which they were exiled. Finally, they were commanded to pray for the welfare of Babylon so they in turn would have welfare.¹¹ The word used for welfare in Jeremiah 29 is *shalom*, which could be translated as completeness,

¹⁰ William. Messenger ed., 15.

¹¹ Gerald L. Keown and Pamela J. Scalise and Thomas G. Smothers, *Jerimiah 25-52*; Word Biblical Commentary. (ed. John D. W. Watts; Dallas: Word Books.1995), 71.

soundness or peace.¹² God intended for Israel to thrive in Babylon and for many of the exiles Babylon would be their only home. Their success would be tied to the success of Babylon. By the exiles using a variety of skills and talents in their work, the welfare or *shalom* of Babylon would be assured, maintaining their own peace in the process. Though it was Israel's disobedience that put them in exile, it would be God's faithfulness that would assure their survival.

Workers today may feel they are in some form of exile where they work. They may not sense the presence of God even though they know God is always with them. Messenger reminds us that just as God called Israel to work for the welfare of the community where they lived, we are called to use our work for the welfare of the communities that surround us. Our work is not intended just for our benefit but for the benefit of all.¹³ When looking at the biblical context of work, Jeremiah 29 shows that there is "an assurance of divine blessing, which makes human life possible, houses stand, crops grow, children are born and grow up, work has tangible results."¹⁴

Colossians 3:17, 23.

¹⁷ "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." ²³ "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,"

¹² Francis Brown, D.D. D. Litt. *The New Brown-Driver- Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody; Hendrickson, 1979), 1022.

¹³ William Messenger ed., *Theology of Work Bible Commentary Isaiah through Malachi*, (5 vols. TWBC; 3, Peabody: Hendrickson Publisher, 2015), 48.

¹⁴ Keown. 80.

Paul speaks directly to Christians instructing them to lay aside everything that belongs to their earthly nature by setting their minds on things above. In turn, the correct course of action is to let the “peace of Christ rule in our hearts” (15), and “let the word of Christ” dwell within them (16). In verse 17, Paul summarizes that everything we do is to be done “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” In verse 23, after discussing the household codes of conduct,¹⁵ he again instructs the reader: “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as to the Lord...”¹⁶ For Paul, the fulness of the Christian life - “word and deed” - stems from an understanding that our lives are a form of worship toward Jesus Christ. There are at least two implications when considering that we believe we are called to do all work in the name of Jesus. First, we must understand that we are representatives of Jesus wherever we work. How we treat others and how we do our jobs matters. Second, it “implies we live recognizing that He is our master, our boss, the one to whom we are ultimately accountable.”¹⁷

This dichotomy of secular and sacred affects how we see our work. Genesis shows us that work has been part of God’s plan from the beginning of creation. Though sin has distorted work, it is still a vital part of being a bearer of the image of God. Jeremiah 29 shows us godly work assures the welfare and peace of the community. Colossians challenges us to see that everything we do reflects on our relationship with Christ, including our work. Robert Wall sums it up well, “Whether we punch in or out on time or whether we appear competent to our co-workers and

¹⁵ In Colossians 3 Paul is discussing the household code for husbands, wives, children and slaves. Slaves specifically were challenged to see their daily service as an opportunity to worship God.

¹⁶ F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Publishing: 1984), 160.

¹⁷ William Messenger ed., *Theology of Work Bible Commentary Romans through Revelation*, (5 vols. TWBC; 5, Peabody: Hendrickson Publisher, 2015), 130.

bosses is not at stake for those who think of work as an act of worship. To work in order to bring pleasure to God is sufficient motivation to be fruitful stewards of our talents and opportunities.”¹⁸

The importance of looking at our call to holiness along with a biblical understanding of work will now allow me to look at the broader dichotomy of secular and sacred seen within the American society. Understanding the history and creation of this dichotomy will give me a deeper understanding of the problem of categorizing and how it prohibits us from seeing work from a biblical perspective.

Secular and Sacred a Brief History:

In order to understand the dichotomy of secular and sacred in Unites States of America it would be valuable to look back in time to the influences that played a role in its current formation. The intent of this section isn't to bring an in-depth understanding of these influences, but to show how this dichotomy has developed historically. This section will be organized in the following order: First, an examination of the influence of Emile Durkheim's study of religious life. Second, a brief look at the influence of Enlightenment thought and Charles Taylor's work on secularity. Finally, the religious and theological influences on early American writing of the First Amendment which is commonly equated with the separation of church and state.

¹⁸ Robert W. Walls. *Colossians and Philemon*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series. (ed. Grant Osborne; Downers Grove: IVP Press, 1993), 162.

Sacred and Profane:

Sociologist and philosopher Emile Durkheim (1858 – 1917) looked at the common aspects of religion in the history of humanity and established that all religions see their belief system through a set of opposite lenses described as sacred and profane. Within these two independent categories lie the characteristics of religious thought. Sacred and profane are seen as completely separate categories with no commonality leading to a true dichotomy.¹⁹ The secular and profane are from two distinctly contrary worlds and are often viewed as adversaries. Due to the belief that the worlds of sacred and profane are to be kept separate, the inclination is to reject any overlapping or commonality between the two. Individuals within the religious sector of humanity are encouraged to embrace the sacred and avoid the world of the profane.²⁰

Durkheim tended to associate the sacred with a moral community and the profane with self-centered individual activities. Apart from the religious moral community, the sacred cannot exist. It is the common practice and belief in the sacred that forms a sense of unity. Sacred is usually oriented around a deity. Beliefs and rituals often protected by a set of do's and don'ts dictate how to interact with the sacred. In contrast, the profane is the reason that religious boundaries exist to keep anything that is profane away from anything sacred. It is the profane that drives one deeper into a sense of individualism and is equated to the material world.²¹

¹⁹ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 36.

²⁰ Emile Durkheim, 39.

²¹ Emile Durkheim. xxii, xxiii and 36-39.

Enlightenment and the secular:

One of the pivotal outcomes of the Enlightenment was the liberation of both scientific and philosophical thought from religion. With this liberation came the desire to restructure and eliminate the influence of old ideas. As a result, both Europe and America started to apply this mindset politically.²² The desire to confront the relationship between science, philosophy and theology led to theological debates. Out of these debates came the concept of “rational belief”; the view that all Christian truth needed to be factually proven. Problems soon arose as there were things such as miracles and divine revelation that could not be proven, allowing for doubt and skepticism.²³ The “Great Debate” in 1860 between Samuel Wilberforce and Thomas Huxley on Darwin’s book *Origin of Species* solidified the detachment of science from the foundations of religious faith.²⁴

Since the onset of Modernity, humanity has been placed at the top of the order as higher beings, and to some, gods. Enlightenment thought ended the age of innocent religious faith and the influence of religion on society, creating room for other possibilities of influence beyond religion, and opening doors to a world of self-sufficiency. Religion was no longer seen as the primary guiding influence in society and there was now a humanistic alternative to religion. Unbelief became a viable option.²⁵ In many countries’ religion is now disconnected from the

²² Jonathan I. Israel. *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity and the Emancipation of Man 1670 – 1752*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 6, accessed March 14, 2020, ProQuest ebook Central.

²³ Jonathan I. Israel, 65-73.

²⁴ Simon P. Walker, *Leading with Everything to Give: Lessons from the Success and failure of Western Capitalism*, Book 3, The Undefended Leader Trilogy (Carlisle: Piquant Editions Ltd, 2009) loc 261, Kindle.

²⁵ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2007), 18-20.

framework of politics. Religion became privatized, while politics became a place for nonbelievers and believers.²⁶

Secular then became associated with public spaces that were emptied of God and religion. “Taken from another side, as we function within various spheres of activity - economic, political, cultural, educational, professional, recreational—the norms and principles we follow, the deliberations we engage in, generally don’t refer us to God or to any religious beliefs.”²⁷

Prior to this time, religious leaders often influenced societal norms through Sunday sermons. Today, “secular” has not only become the removal of God from public spaces. It has also reduced the involvement of Christian belief and practice, drawing people away from the church. This transformation shifted the environment from where once a belief in God was unchallenged to one that now questions the embracing of faith in God.²⁸

Sadly, Pandora’s box has been opened. According to James Smith there is no turning back, no amount of persistence or devotion will undo the secularism of America. The issue at hand within the secular world is how we live and navigate our faith.²⁹

In modernity, particularly in the wake of the Enlightenment, “secular” begins to refer to a nonsectarian, neutral, and religious space or standpoint. The public square is “secular” insofar as it is (allegedly) nonreligious; schools are “secular” when they are no longer “parochial” hence “public” schools are thought to be “secular” schools. Similarly, in the late twentieth century people will describe themselves as “secular,” meaning they have no religious affiliation and hold no “religious” beliefs.³⁰

²⁶ Charles Taylor, 1.

²⁷ Charles Taylor, 2.

²⁸ Charles Taylor, 2-3.

²⁹ James K.A. Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 11.

³⁰ James K.A. Smith, 20.

First Amendment Influences:

The Enlightenment wasn't the only influence responsible for the removal of religion from politics. There is a broader religious influence that needs to be considered when looking at the writing of the First Amendment of the Constitution prohibiting congress from establishing a single national religion or preventing one from exercising their faith. Martin Luther's teaching on the "priesthood of all believers" - an idea that was central to the Reformation - brought with it the empowerment of the individual Christian to interpret scripture. The "priesthood of all believers" not only gave the individual the right to interpret scripture but to raise questions about the church's teaching and going directly before the throne of grace in prayer without the assistance of a priest.³¹

With the influence of Martin Luther's "priesthood of all believers" also came the influence from the dissenting Protestant groups that immigrated to the early American colonies. Religious liberty, the assurance that all denominations had equal representation before the law, became the cry of the day.³² Born out of this mindset came a form of disestablishment created both by protestant dissenters and the Enlightenment which influenced thinkers that were founders of the American constitution. Religious people pushed for the disestablishment of the state church concept and the assurance of equality for all religions. This factor along with a diverse immigration led to an acceptance of a pluralism of Christian denominations in early America.³³ The First Amendment was a product of three key factors: the doctrine of

³¹ Nicholas P. Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment: Dissenting Protestants and the Separation of Church and State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

³² Nicholas P. Miller, 152.

³³ Nicholas P. Miller, 4-8.

secularization born out of the Enlightenment, reformed theology, and a young nation's influx of religious pluralism.

The many historical influences that led to the dichotomy of sacred and secular in America are complex. This dichotomy, which hinders people of faith to see their daily work as ministry, didn't happen overnight. It was a long and slow process brought about from thoughts birthed out of deep-seated views of sacred and profane found within all religions. Three major events appear to have laid a groundwork for the First Amendment. First, the advancement of rational Enlightenment thought. Second, the onset of secularism and the privatizing of religion removing it from public spaces. Finally, the influence of the doctrine of the "priesthood of all believers" leading to religious pluralism. Though the First Amendment was written to assure the religious freedom of those living in the United States, it also helps to solidify the dichotomy of secular and sacred.

Key Voices

We have taken a brief look into the complex history of the dichotomy of secular and sacred and how it has influenced Christian in the United States. Moving forward, we will take a look at the key voices that bring deeper understanding of this complex dichotomy. The intended purpose of understanding the secular/sacred dichotomy is to see how it affects the United States' ability to see work as ministry. To get a better understanding why work should be viewed through a ministry lens, we will also be looking at key voices in the area of Theology of Vocation. For clarity and organization, the key voices will be broken up into three categories. The first will be the secular and sacred, then First Amendment influences, and finally, the key voices in Theology of Vocation.

Secular and Sacred:

When looking at the dichotomy of secular and sacred in the United States, there are three insightful voices that I find the most influential: Emile Durkheim, Charles Taylor, And Pippa Norris.

Emile Durkheim:

Though the formal science of religions is fairly new (19th Century), the fascination and history of religious studies is much older. Each individual made their own assertions as to why religions play a prominent role in society, either by looking at its history or at its essence.³⁴

When looking at the area of religion, a critical voice that rises to the surface is of the French Sociologist Emile Durkheim. He is best known for his views of religion and his dichotomy of sacred and profane. His focus on religion started while looking at what links people to society. His attention was constantly turning toward the social dynamics of religion. His dichotomy of sacred and profane came to the forefront when studying the functions of totems - the symbols that are used to represent belief and society.³⁵

For Durkheim, the formation of religious beliefs is what creates a moral community. It is this moral community that brings definitions to what is sacred and what is classified as profane. The sacred is what unites the community. In turn, the profane is that which is outside of the moral community. Sacred quickly becomes anything related to the moral community. On the other hand, profane becomes oriented around aspects of the private and individual life

³⁴ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. William R Trask, (New York: Harcourt Publishing, 1959), 216-32.

³⁵ Scholars disagree about the influence of Totemism in religion. My intended focus on Durkheim's totem concept was due to his original view of the dichotomy of sacred and profane. For a deeper look into Totemism; <https://www.britannica.com/topic/totemism-religion>.

experienced outside of the moral community. The sacred and profane dichotomy required life to be divided into two levels. First, the public level, which is focused on the moral community and the common good of others. Second, the private level, which is classified as profane due to its focus on personal self-interest.³⁶

Charles Taylor:

Another key voice in the category of secular and sacred is Charles Taylor. Taylor is a Canadian philosopher whose work mainly focuses on the modern self. His book *The Secular Age* brings understanding of where the dichotomy of secular and sacred stems from. When discussing secular and secularization, Taylor focuses on understanding three forms of secular. The first and most common is the elimination of God from public spaces. Second, is the decline in the belief of God and church attendance is obsolete. Thirdly, he looks into the conditions of belief and unbelief. Taylor explores the reasons behind the understanding that an individual's belief in God was once an expectation and now has become one of multiple possibilities. For many, the aspect of unbelief is now an option.³⁷ One theory of secularization³⁸ states that the more secular a society becomes the less religious the society should be. Taylor is not convinced this is the case and focuses on how believers, as well as unbelievers, experience this secular age.³⁹ When

³⁶ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman, (New York: Oxford Press, 2001) xii-xxii.

³⁷ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2007), 2-3.

³⁸ Secularization refers to the decline of religious influence and authority within society. The many theories associated with secularization try to explain and bring understanding to this decline. Though still valuable when looking at the dichotomy of sacred and secular, secularizations many theories are slowly losing credibility. For further investigation: <http://sociology.emory.edu/home/documents/profiles-documents/lechner-secularization.pdf>.

³⁹ Charles Taylor, 21.

looking at Taylor's work, James A.K. Smith⁴⁰ sees a way for us as Christians to access how we live within this secular age. Since the secular is everywhere, Taylor looks beyond its beginnings and looks at how it permeates all it touches, changing beliefs and giving reason for unbelief. For Smith, the value of Taylor's work is using it to understand how we as Christians can resist the influence of the secular in our lives.⁴¹

Pippa Norris:

An additional voice in this discussion is that of Pippa Norris. She is a political scientist and co-author of *Sacred and Secular: Politics Worldwide*. One of the purposes of her study is to understand the inaccuracy of sociologists' predictions that secularization will cause a decline in religion. Despite the trends of secularization, there appears to be a rise in traditional religious views in some countries, including the United States. Though Norris's focus is primarily on the comparisons of secularization worldwide, she admits that the United States is an oddity and that current research needs to take into consideration a larger more diverse set of religious beliefs.⁴² Norris commits an entire chapter trying to understand why the United States' religious involvement hasn't declined as much as other post industrial countries.⁴³

⁴⁰ James A. K. Smith is a Canadian Philosopher and Philosophy professor. Many of his books are intended to build avenues of communication between academia, the church and society. *How (Not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2014) is a valuable resource that brings clarity to Taylor's *A Secular Age*. For a better understanding of Smith's many works, his website jameskasmith.com is a good place to start.

⁴¹ James K.A. Smith, 18.

⁴² Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4.

⁴³ Pippa Norris, 83-110.

First Amendment Religious Influences:

In the dichotomy of secular and sacred in the United States, we must consider the role the First Amendment may have played in this process. Has it affected why we have trouble seeing work as an extension of ministry? When examining the First Amendment and its early beginnings, Nicholas P. Miller and Alister McGrath will be my primary voices. William R. Estep and Chris Beneke will be secondary voices.⁴⁴

Nicholas P. Miller:

Nicholas P. Miller is an Associate Professor of Church History. In his book *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment* he brings a well-balanced approach of the major influences on those penning the First Amendment. Nicholas recognizes that the secular aspects of the Enlightenment may have influenced some aspects of the First Amendment. According to Miller, a major influence on the first amendment was that of dissenting Protestants and their views of Martin Luther's "priesthood of all believers." These influences, along with the growing pluralism in early Colonial churches, played a much bigger role in the desire for religious freedom than the Enlightenment.⁴⁵ Miller's interaction with key players leading to the writing of the First Amendment helps solidify the Protestant influence.

Alister McGrath:

Another primary voice is Alister McGrath, a historian and theologian who provides a much-needed look into the historical impact of Protestantism on the world. In his book

⁴⁴ The works of William Estep and Chris Beneke can easily stand alone. Nicholas Miller draws on their work to support his own. My use is to bring a clearer understanding of Millers work.

⁴⁵ Nicholas P. Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment: Dissenting Protestants and the Separation of Church and State*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1-14.

Christianity's Dangerous Idea, he focuses partially on the foundational aspects of the reformation and how Protestant thought has shaped the United States society. His review of Martin Luther and his theology of the “priesthood of all believers” helps expand the views of Nicholas P. Miller. Beginning with Luther, McGrath shows how “Protestantism took its stand on the right of individuals to interpret the Bible for themselves.”⁴⁶ Throughout history, subtle changes took place that set the stage for the First Amendment. One of those changes was the view of church polity within the Puritan church shortly after arriving in America. This change was from a hierarchical view to an independent church view.⁴⁷

William P. Estep and Chris Beneke:

To bring a clearer understanding and a balanced approach to the religious influences on the First Amendment, alongside Alister McGrath and Nicholas Miller, are the secondary voices of William R. Estep and Chris Beneke. Estep’s book *Revolution Within the Revolution: The First Amendment in Historical Context 1612 – 1789* reveals his approach. Though Estep’s ultimate objective is to unfold the history that led up to the First Amendment, his primary focus is the early intolerance of religion in colonial America and the birth of the Baptist denomination.⁴⁸ Chris Beneke’s book *Beyond Tolerations: The Religious Origins of American Pluralism* looks into the birth of a nation that desired a level of religious conformity and yet how it yielded to a broad sense of diversity brought on by the theology of Martin Luther. The concept of the “priesthood of all believers” became the “right of private judgement,” which eventually evolved

⁴⁶ Alister McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution: A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First*, (New York: Harper One Publisher, 2007), 3.

⁴⁷ Alister McGrath, 153.

⁴⁸ William R. Estep, *Revolution Within The Revolution: The First Amendment in Historical Context 1612-1789*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), x-xi.

into religious liberty and the equality of all religions.⁴⁹ McGrath, Estep, and Beneke bring a much-needed understanding of the specific aspects of the religious influence explored by Miller.

Theology of Vocation:

Martin Luther:

Martin Luther is a primary voice for two reasons. First, the influence of the reformation (specifically Martin Luther's "priesthood of all believers"), has had far reaching effects not only on Protestant thought but on political thought as well. Secondly, Luther's views on vocation are often the starting point for current writers. His usage of *Beruf*⁵⁰ (work) becomes synonymous with Christian work. Vocation is removed from the idea of occupation and includes all aspects of life which Luther refers to as "life stations."⁵¹ For Luther, vocation is a way of showing the love of God to others and becomes God's way of caring for and loving His creation through the acts of others.⁵²

Beyond Luther there are many voices that explore the theology of vocation. With the NPO in mind three distinct theological voices will be used. R. Paul Stevens, Ben Witherington III, and Darrell Cosden each bring a distinct focus to the topic of work.

R. Paul Stevens:

⁴⁹ Chris Beneke, *Beyond Tolerance: The Religious Origins of American Pluralism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 31-48.

⁵⁰ The German word *Beruf* has multiple meanings around the aspect of work but in the writings of Martin Luther is taken on one primary meaning; Christian work.

⁵¹ Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen, (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1957), 3-4.

⁵² Gustaf Wingren, 8-9.

R. Paul Stevens is a professor of marketplace theology and leadership at Regent College. In his book *The Other Six Days*, he challenges the traditional view that asserts a separate calling for full time ministers and those classified as laity. His “One God - One People” concept removes the barriers made by the clergy versus laity calling mindset. “One God - One People” concept brings a sense of unity around the idea of being the people of God.⁵³ In a world steeped in dichotomies, the understanding of a common kingdom-oriented calling with different roles brings value and importance to everyday work.

Ben Witherington III:

Ben Witherington III is a professor at Asbury Theological Seminary. His book *The Rest of Life: Rest, Play, Eating, Studying, Sex from a Kingdom Perspective* focuses on our normal activities of life and how they should be done to the glory of God. Witherington attempts to bring an understanding that the reign and rule of God exists even in the everyday no-frills aspects of life. Using the New Testament writers, he brings us face to face with the need to see even everyday ordinary mundane life from a Kingdom perspective.⁵⁴ Since most of our lives are lived in what many would be considered the secular, Witherington’s simple and straight- forward approach brings a sense of kingdom meaning to things we otherwise take for granted.

Darrell Cosden:

Darrell Cosden is the senior lecturer in Theology and Ethics at Pacific Theology College. His book *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation* looks at an otology of work. Cosden unfolds a three-fold nature of work focusing first on the instrumental purpose of work that goes

⁵³ R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 50-65.

⁵⁴ Ben Witherington III, *The Rest of Life: Rest, Play, Eating, Studying, Sex, from a Kingdom Perspective*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), vii-ix.

beyond the need for survival and work as part of what makes us spiritually mature. Second, he looks into the relational aspects of work looking at social structures and the humanness of work. Since work is part of creation, Cosden attempts to find its deeper meaning and purpose in the concept of the new creation and what part it plays in God's economy.⁵⁵ The great value of Cosden's work is his search to find eternal meaning in work, along with work being part of what it means to be human. Looking through a lens of the new creation helps us see beyond the daily grind into the eternal value of work.

Each voice enables a unique deeper understanding into the complexities surrounding the dichotomy of secular and sacred and how it influences our ability in the United States to see work as ministry. The slow effects of the secularization of society, the removal of all things religious from the public, and the privatization of religion over time, stand against Durkheim's study of religion. The belief that the common good of the community was sacred and the private self-interest was profane has apparently shifted 180 degrees. Despite the advancement of secularism in the United States, it seems that there is still a consistent participation in religion.

Synthesis and Conclusion:

Thus far, this project explored the question of how the dichotomy of secular and sacred influences a Christian's ability to see work as ministry in the United States. The first section looks at the Biblical foundations, at how a call to holiness for every believer solidifies the dichotomy of secular and sacred. The second section - the historical foundations, looks into the influences that created a sacred and secular mindset and how they led to the writing of the First

⁵⁵ Darrell Cosden, *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation*, (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004), 4-18.

Amendment, creating a separation of church and state. The third section looks at the key voices in the sacred and secular debate, along with current voices in the Theology of Vocation. In this final section I will look at areas of agreement, tensions and limitations of the research that has been complete so far.

Areas of Agreement

There are four primary areas of agreement that have surfaced from this research. First, the dichotomy is solidified in both the Old and New Testaments. Israel in the Old Testament is commanded to be holy and set apart. In addition, all New Testament believers are not only called to be holy and set apart. They are commanded to glorify God in all things. Second, things associated with religion naturally become sacred. Everything not associated with a life oriented around religion becomes secular. Third, where once the moral community was at the center of the public forum it has now been moved to the outskirts. Religious beliefs may have always had a propensity toward the personal and private, but in practice were commonly oriented around the community benefiting the welfare of others within the public forum. Secularization has blurred the open connection to public community. Religious communities tend to be private, existing on the outer boundaries of public life. Most religious practices are focused inward toward the members of the private community instead of outward toward the public forum. Fourth, though the Enlightenment and Secularism may have influenced some of the authors of the First Amendment, many of them were governed by deep-seated spiritual convictions. The influence of Martin Luther's "priesthood of all believers" cannot be overstated in creating a format for Protestant dissenters to voice their right to their religious beliefs.

Tensions, Disagreements and Pressure Points

There are three main tensions that have surfaced from this research. First, the biblical purpose and value of work as an extension of one's faith is in direct contrast with work as a secular enterprise void of any Christian significance. Second, a tension seems to exist between how the "priesthood of all believers" led to the separation of church and state, and Luther's view that all human work is God working to benefit His creation. The first appears to reinforce the sacred and secular dichotomy hindering work being seen as ministry. The later establishes that all work is ministry before God. Third, secularization theory believes that the more secular a postindustrial society becomes, religion should eventually disappear. Though religious practices have been forces on the outer fringes within the United States, they haven't disappeared.

Gaps and Limitations

Five notable gaps have been noticed thus far through my research. First, there appears to be limited data on the influence of secularization on church practices within the United States. Second, how has the secular consumerist mindset changed our understanding and the purpose of work? A deeper look into what Taylor calls the Modern Moral Order and the rise of secular humanism may help. If Durkheim is correct and all religions create a system of the sacred and secular, secularism may not be so much a removal of God from the public places, as a replacement of God with a new religion. A study on secular humanism may assist in a deeper understanding of how humanity currently views religion and the role work plays within American society. Third, little research was done on how spiritual and emotional wholeness influences our ability to see work as ministry. A sense of inadequacy and unworthiness may reinforce the sacred and secular dichotomy. Fourth, within the Theology of Vocation there is a

need for a broader understanding of what Kingdom work entails and a format of practical application. A bridge is needed between vocational theology and those working in the secular business world.

Conclusion

When it comes to seeing work as ministry in the United States, the effects of the dichotomy of sacred and secular are complex and diverse. The secularization of society pushed religion to the outskirts of the public forum. It also appears that the First Amendment, often viewed as a separation of church and state, may hinder Christians from embracing work as ministry. When examining the sacred and secular dichotomy through the New Testament mandate of doing all things for the glory of God, the line between sacred and secular is shifted. Things that at one time may have been considered secular could very well be seen as sacred in light of this New Testament command. Work itself can now be seen as a sacred act of ministering to others for the benefit of the community. In the contrast between the works of Taylor and Durkheim one can see the influence of secularization on the Christian Community within the United States. What was once part of everyday life is now dictated to an individual's personal preference and practice on Sundays. Christian beliefs were once accepted and almost expected within the United States society but are now seen as one of many possible personal preferences. Instead of Christianity being at the center of the public community, it seems to have become just another optional personal choice.

APPENDIX C—MILESTONE 3 DESIGN WORKSHOP REPORT

Introduction

Christians in the United States on a weekly basis spend more time at work than in church. “Never permit a dichotomy to rule your life, a dichotomy in which you hate what you do so you can have pleasure in your spare time. Look for a situation in which your work will give you as much happiness as your spare time.”¹ Learning to embrace work as ministry and overcoming the dichotomy of secular and sacred has the ability to help them live out their faith in a more effective way.

NPO Statement

The dichotomy of secular and sacred hinder American Christians from embracing work as ministry.

NPO Scope and Constraints

The scope of this NPO will be Christianity within the United States with an initial focus on the pacific northwest.² Financial costs are unknown at this time. As the prototypes are explored costs will be assessed. There are three primary non-negotiables. First, all principles adopted by the NPO will be biblical in nature. Second, the foundation solutions will be based on a theology oriented around vocation. Third, the practices and processes promoted must be practical and based on legal business practices.

¹ “dichotomy quotes,” A-Z Quotes, Accessed December 4, 2020
<https://www.azquotes.com/quotes/topics/dichotomy.html>.

² Though the focus will initially be on the U.S. there will be a small overlap into Canada due to the fact that I am a visiting adjunct professor at Clearwater Bible College teaching vocational theology and a seminar speaker for churches affiliated with the college.

NPO Context

This NPO will look through three distinct lenses of Christianity within the United States. Each lens will focus on the prototypes I will be exploring. The first lens will focus on undergraduate bible college students. The second lens will be adult education within the local church. The third lens will be Christian entrepreneurs focusing on adult of working age between 18 to 65 primarily within the Pacific Northwest Region.

Root Causes

The current NPO workshop focused on getting Christians beyond the dichotomy of secular and sacred. The workshop grouped the root causes into four main areas: first, a lack of practical experience, second, a lack of commissioning from the church in all aspects of ministry third, a better need to understand one's aspect of calling, and forth, a lack of training. Discussion points within these areas were first, humans tend to categorize life into holy and unholy. Second, the church has a tendency to raise itself up above all other forms of Christian activity. Third, there is a lack of teaching and training on the theology of vocation within the church.

Definition of Done

The ultimate outcomes and objectives are to provide training and understanding for working Christians so they can realize that part of God's call is seeing work as ministry.

Three Ideas

The prototype ideas are as follows. First, write a college textbook for my current undergraduate introduction to theology of vocation course. Second, create a small group study equipping the church in a theology of vocation. Third, a nonprofit organization assisting Christian entrepreneurs and employees to see their jobs as a form of ministry.

Three Napkin Pitches

Textbook:

Big Idea: Write a college textbook on the theology of vocation for undergraduate students.

Audience: Undergraduate college students.

NPO: The theology of vocation is seldom offered in undergraduate bible college programs.

Benefit: New pastors will be better equipped to assist their congregation in ministering beyond Sunday. I will acquire a textbook for my current college course.

Approach: Provide a textbook designed for undergraduate courses in vocational theology providing introductory level concepts.

Risks: Christian Colleges may not adopt the textbook or offer an introductory level course on vocational theology.

Assumptions/ Hypothesis to test: Will writing and using the textbook in my current introductory to vocational theology course better equip my students to get beyond the dichotomy of secular and sacred?

Benchmarks of Success: The academic dean of the bible college must approve and adopt the book. I will need feedback from current students.

Other Approaches: I don't know of a textbook specifically designed for an introductory undergraduate program on vocation. Current books specialize in different aspects of vocational theology.

Small Group Curriculum:

Big Idea: Create a small group curriculum about the theology of work.

Audience: Adults within the local church.

NPO: Many local churches do not have a formal program to equip and train adults to effectively minister at work.

Benefit: Those participants will gain the ability to apply their faith in their weekly jobs.

Approach: A 12-week small group program introducing a theology of work and how to apply it on the job.

Risks: Churches may not adopt the curriculum and people may not find it valuable.

Assumptions/ Hypothesis to Test: Can a small group curriculum assist Christians in getting beyond the dichotomy of secular and sacred?

Benchmarks of Success: A test group for the curriculum and their feedback as to how it affected their views on work as ministry.

Other Approaches: The Navigators currently have a 9-week study on calling/vocation. My small group study will be an extension of the textbook I hope to write.

Nonprofit:

Big Idea: Start a nonprofit ministry assisting Christian entrepreneurs in experiencing work as ministry.

Audience: Christian businesses and entrepreneurs.

NPO: To provide Christians in business a safe place to discuss and discover biblical business principles.

Benefits: Christian businesses can have a location to network and learn with other Christians how to navigate business in a secular society.

Approach: A nonprofit providing small group discussions and a training forum with Christian business principles and one-on-one coaching around a theology of vocation.

Risks: Some Christian businesses may not value it. Nonprofit status takes time and preparation.

Assumptions/ Hypothesis to Test: Will a nonprofit business that provides training and supports Christian businesses assist entrepreneurs in embracing work as an aspect of ministry?

Benchmarks of Success: Buy-in from local business owners. A successful small group of businessmen/women discussing current business challenges.

Other Approaches: There are currently formats for Christian executives in business to gather and talk. My approach focuses on Christian entrepreneurs.

Stakeholders

There were five stakeholders. An amazon entrepreneur, a bi-vocational pastor/businessman, a fulltime pastor, a civil engineer, an office administrator and a Realtor.

One-on-One Interviews

Three people were interviewed. A bible college academic dean, a retired bible college president/entrepreneur and a safety manager for public transit.

Annotated Bibliography

Lepionka, Mary Ellen, Sean W. Wakely, and Stephen E. Gillen. *Writing and Developing Your College Textbook: A Comprehensive Guide*. 3rd ed. Fountain City: TAA, 2016.

The book *Writing and Developing Your College Textbook* is a comprehensive guide for starting and developing your own college textbook focusing on the complex aspects of writing and publication. Sean Wakely is the founder and principal advisor for Academic Author advisors. Stephen teaches Media Law. Mary Lepionka is a retired publisher and textbook developer. The book guides writers through the complete process of creating a college textbook helping them navigate its many requirements including finding and working with publishers. This book provides the understanding needed for me to write a textbook for my current Introduction to a Theology of Vocation college course.

Mancuso, Anthony Attorney. *How to Form a Nonprofit Corporation: A Step-by-Guide to Forming a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit in Any State*. 14th ed. Berkley: NOLO, 2019.

How to Form a Nonprofit Corporation is a complete step-by-step guide to the formation of a nonprofit 501(c)(3) including sample of common tax and legal forms. The author is an attorney, author and expert in LLC law. He wrote this book to guide and instruct entrepreneurs in creating a nonprofit business. Mancuso has a thorough approach to walking the reader through the many challenges of establishing and navigating the nonprofit process. This book provides insights needed to establish a nonprofit and is a needed foundation block in my research on equipping entrepreneurs to embrace work as ministry through a nonprofit ministry setting.

Smith, James K.A. *How (NOT) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014.

How (NOT) to be Secular is a much-needed companion to Charles Taylors *A Secular Age* assisting the reader into the complexities of Taylors research on the secularization of America. James K. A. Smith is a professor of Philosophy at Calvin College and the author of multiple books. He wrote this book to assist the reader in understanding what it means to be faithful to one's Christian belief within a secular age. Smith's approach is to consolidate Taylors work on the secular age and provide a map of how to live in a secular society. This book provides important insights to my research helping to explain how secularization helped create the secular and sacred dichotomy and the disconnect of Christian beliefs within a public forum.

Wingren, Gustaf. *Luther on Vocation*. Translated by Carl C. Rasmussen. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004.

This book, *Luther on Vocation* presents a concise and strong understanding of Martin Luther's vocational theology. The author had a PhD in theology and was a professor of Systematic Theology at Lund. He wrote the book to analyze and unfold Martin Luther's many thoughts on the doctrine of vocation. Wingren's work is considered the prime resource of Luther's vocational studies and is intended to bring a deeper understanding to vocational theology. This book provides key insights to the foundational Protestant understanding of vocation and helps ground my research on embracing work as ministry in a foundational view of vocational theology.

Appendix:

General Summary of NPO Brain Storming Session, Date: 10/24/2020

NPO Statement: The dichotomy of secular and sacred hinder American Christians from embracing work as ministry.

Question considered: How do we get Christians beyond the dichotomy of secular and sacred and embrace work as ministry?

The purpose of the brain storming session was to break the NPO down further and to come up with particle ideas on how to resolve the problem.

5 Exercises were done during this process.

First Exercise: The 5 Whys

Each individual was asked to ask why to the question being considered. When the why was answered they were then asked to ask why about the answer they gave. Each member continued to ask why 5 times to their original response. After the exercise the group then combined the ideas and came up with a group answer.

Group why exercise: Looking at why there is a need to get people beyond the dichotomy of secular and scared and embracing works as ministry. After each participant did the initial why exercise and placed them on the board the group was asked to choose the best 5 whys and create and come up with an ultimate set of whys.

- 1st why: because humanity it broken and needs Jesus
- 2nd why: because God has provided healing through Christ
- 3rd why: because all humanity is created for fellowship
- 4th why: because God has called believers to a divine purpose
- 5th why: because God values people

Second Exercise: Affinity Mapping and Pains and Gains

Each individual was asked to do a brain dump of ideas or comments around the NPO question on sticky notes. They then were asked to explain their statement and put it on the white board. After all the items were stuck on the white board the group was asked to put the ideas in groups and give the groups titles.

4 groups were created for core issues:

Group 1: hands on/ practical (personal ways to use work as ministry)

Group 2: commissioning (ways the church can send out people into everyday work)

Group 3: heart of God (calling and purpose to meet the needs of others)

Group 4: Teach/ Education (thinks that equip)

After this process I gave an imaginary scenario of a person in business coming to Christ and realizing that they were called to see their everyday job as a form of ministry. We then did the Pains and Gains exercise. What pains will a person go through to see work as ministry? What gains will a person experience when seeing work as ministry?

Pains:

Working under a different value system

A change in the bottom line, people over money

Biblical ethics versus secular ethics

Money is not the driving force

Economic persecution possible

Gains:

More fulfillment at work.

Eternal perspective of work.

Respect due to integrity.

Holy Spirit guidance and comfort.

Church Support.

Third exercise: The Blind Side

4 questions were asked about the NPO question.

What do I know that I know?

Responses:

God created work, work is a need and it was cursed at the fall.

Work brings fulfillment.

God has given me skills, talents and personalities to be used for him.

Everything I do for God is called to be holy

What do we know that we don't know?

Responses:

Christ will return and I will give account for my stewardship, we just don't know when.

Work is part of his plan, but we don't always know how he will use it.

Work may be a physical action, but we don't know its spiritual effect on others.

What don't we know that we know?

Responses:

We don't know how our gifts and talents will bring God glory, but they will.

We don't know the economical ramification of our choosing to serve God at work, but we know he will provide.

What we don't know that we don't know?

We don't know how God uses our work and we don't know the impact it will have on people.

Fourth Exercise: Mission Impossible

This exercise looked at assumptions, constraints and obstacles surrounding the NPO.

Assumptions:

A pastor calling is the highest calling.

Some callings are more spiritual than others.

Work is a secular activity.

It is illegal to minister to people at work.

There is nothing holy about work.

Constraints:

We are called to do our work according to God's purposes.

The bible is our guide.

People matter most.

We must love the way Jesus loved.

Obstacles:

Persecution

Preconceived ideas of serving God.

Personal traditions

Expectations of financial blessing

Fifth Exercise: Brain Writing

Taking a piece of paper each participant listed a possible solution and then passed the paper to the right. Then each person looked at the idea and either added a new idea or expanded on the first idea. The paper was passed until each person added everyone else's original idea. The group then voted on what they thought were the best ideas.

Top ideas:

- Create an apprenticeship program in the church passing skills from generation to generation.
- Start a non-profit ministry to assist businesses to learn and use a theology of vocation.
- Create an adult small group curriculum on a theology of vocation.
- Design and provide adult education programs to assist business owners in the church to succeed.
- Design a business newsletter designed for Christian Entrepreneurs
- Write a college Introductory to the Theology of Vocation textbook for undergraduates.
- Design a series of short seminars for pastors and church leaders.

Post Workshop message to stakeholders

Due to COVID I was either on the phone or zoom with each stakeholder, so my scheduling was done via zoom or phone. Once the interviews were scheduled I sent two of my stakeholders an email attaching the exact information that is above. The last stakeholder was sent the summary attachment by text via his request prior to our meeting. Below are email copies.

From: Greg Reich <g.a.reich@comcast.net>

Sent: November 3, 2020 1:42 PM

To:

Subject: NPO notes

Doc,

My current plan is to call you Thursday evening. I am attaching for you some the notes from my last needs, problems and opportunities brain storming session with a group of stake holders. Please take a quick look. Our call will be focusing on this information with your input of what you think is missing and needs to be added. What is irrelevant and what are some practical ideas for a doctoral project. What I am hoping is my project will benefit the school and the local churches (FCA) in some way!

Thank you,

Greg Reich
(253)677-9283

From: Greg Reich <g.a.reich@comcast.net>

Sent: November 3, 2020 12:35PM

To:

Subject: NPO notes

P,

Here is the information I gathered on my last NPO brain storming session with a group of stakeholders. Take a look and tell me what is missing, what needs to be added and then what practical ideas do you have for a doctoral project answering the NPO question.

Please see attached and let me know when the best time is to chat. I can do this next week if that works better.

Thank you,

Greg Reich
(253)677-9283

One on One Stakeholder summary

Interview #1:(Academic Dean)

After reviewing the workshop findings Doc quickly pointed out that the concept of stewardship was missing from the NPO workshop. The point was made that stewardship was not just a concept of using one's resources wisely for God but was also an aspect of honoring God in all that we do, including work. Out of all the practical ideas around my NPO Doc was highly supportive around the needed for a college level textbook oriented around a theology of vocation.

Interview #2: (Safety Manager)

After reviewing the workshop findings D. explained that though this information was needed in the Christian community, in a government-controlled industry the work as ministry approach needed to be much more subtle. It needed to be oriented more on how people are treated and how one can be a place of safety for each employee. He did not see a way to integrate my NPO ideas directly into a government-controlled business. D did express an interest in the small group study approach for individual Christians wanting to understand more about getting beyond the dichotomy of secular and sacred while learning more about a theology of vocation.

Interview #3: (retired college president and non-profit entrepreneur)

P immediately stated how impressed he was with the data gathered. He felt the insights were invaluable. He did not see any need to add to the data. His greatest interest was focused on how a college textbook and a small group curriculum would be a great building block to assist both future pastors and the local church in learning more about a theology of vocation. He also voiced a desire to see me explore the possibility of providing some information for the local church on the influence of secularization and how it influenced the creation of the dichotomy between secular and sacred.

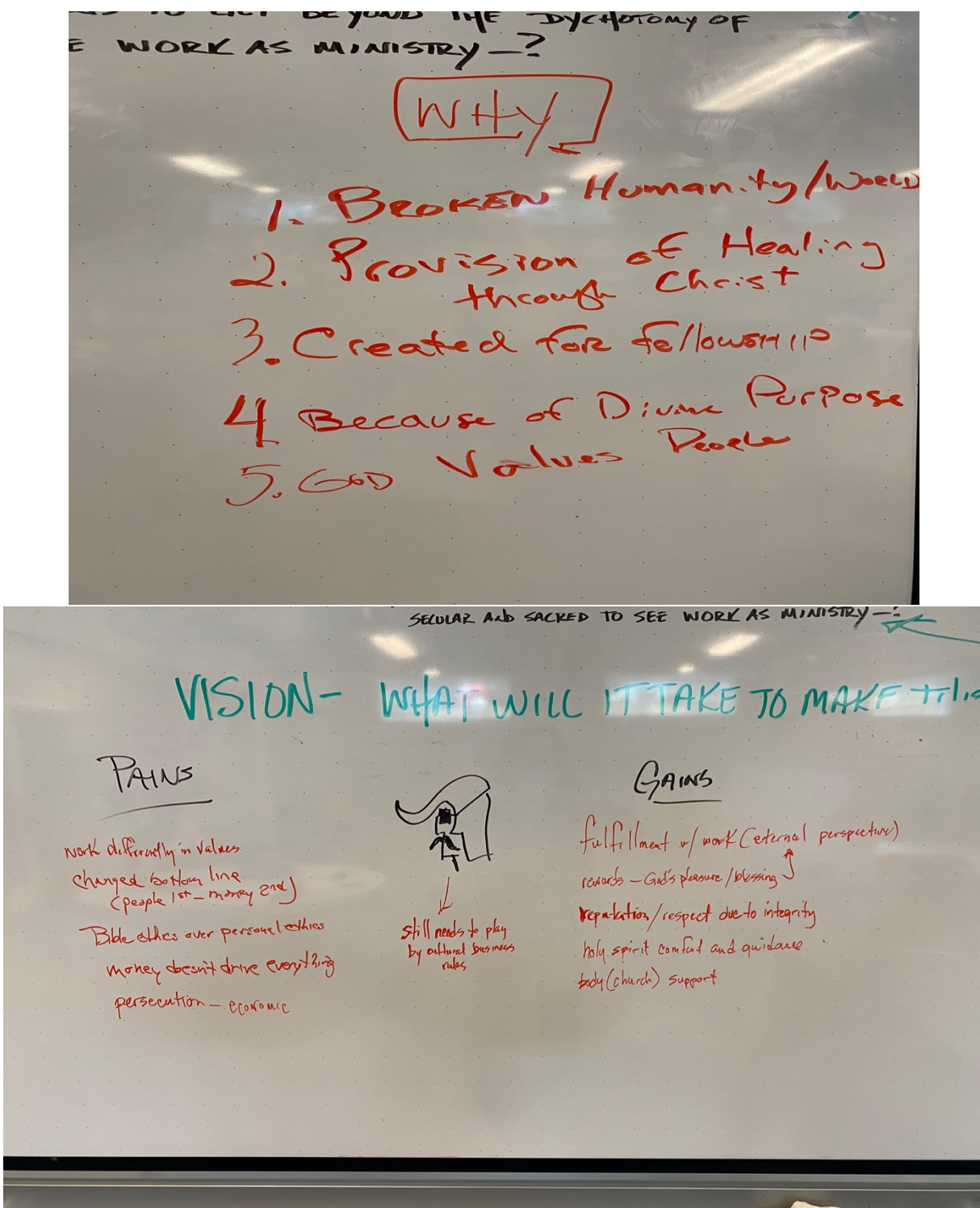


Figure 7: Appendix C Design Workshop (a)

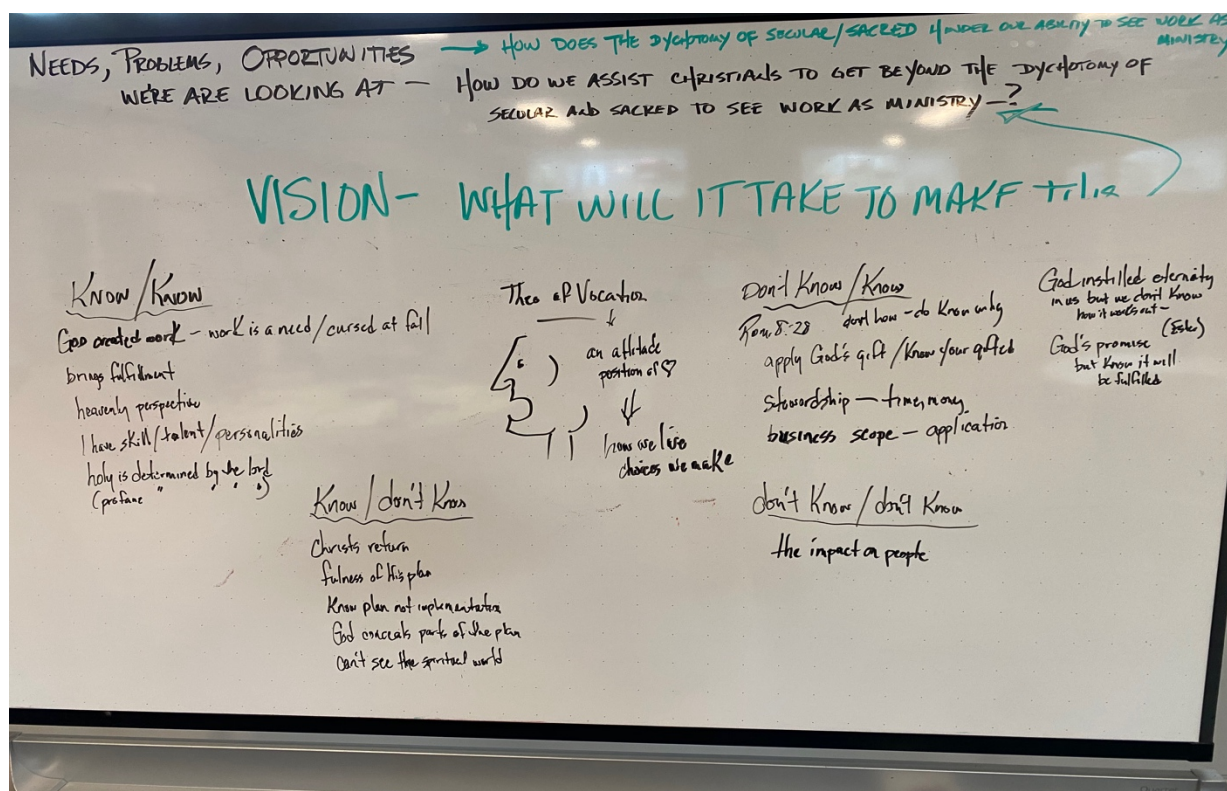
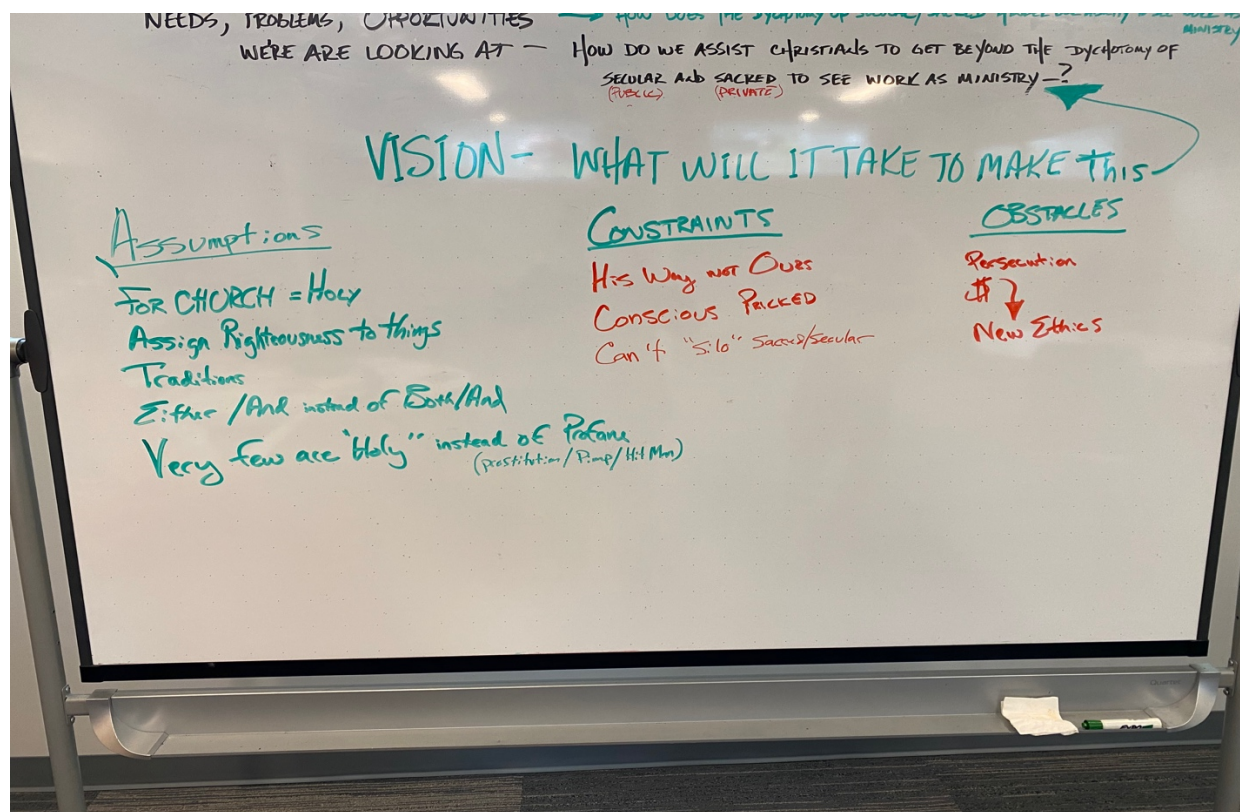


Figure 8: Appendix C Design Workshop (b)

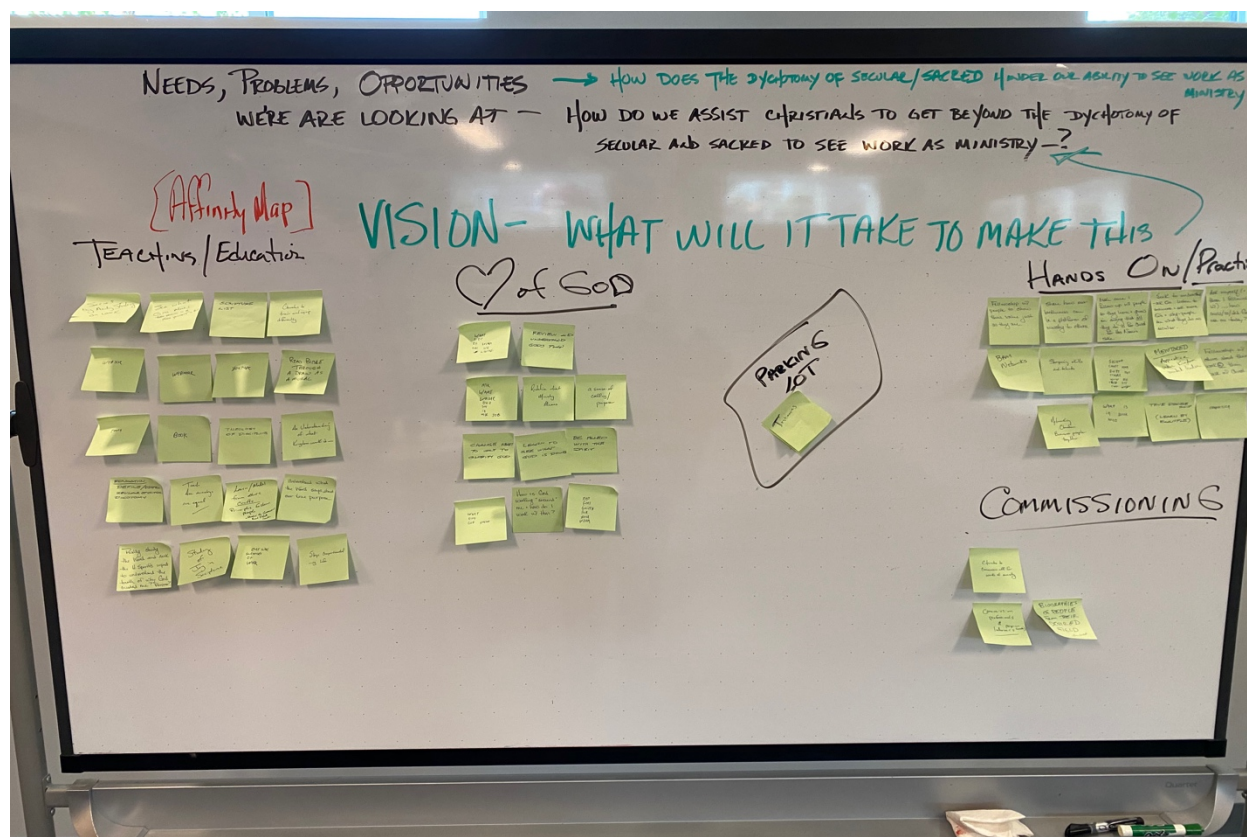


Figure 9: Appendix C Design Workshop (c)

APPENDIX D—MILESTONE 4 PROTOTYPE ITERATION REPORT

Introduction

After much research on the dichotomy of secular and sacred, it is clear that a broader understanding of vocational theology is needed. This is an opportunity to assist me in my current theology of vocation course and fill an apparent need. Conferring with my project advisor and the director of the program a single concept prototype was agreed on. The prototype would be a book on theology of vocation. The prototype process would focus on two main objectives: first, what content makes sense, and also to explore this content and conceptualize a framework for a book.

The primary audience in mind is bible college students and pastors. My hope is to design and write a book that may in the future help me to benefit my secondary audience, Christian business owners. To better understanding what is needed, a variety of interviews were held. The first set of interviews was with four college students who recently took my Introduction to Theology of Vocation course. A second set of interviews were done with four Christian professionals who have experienced in college academics, pastoral ministry and Christian business.

Conceptual Prototype

Prototype description: The prototype is a rough layout of a book. It includes a cover and a rough table of contents with suggested chapters.

Goldilocks Quality Strategy: Keep the design simple to provoke discussion and imagination. Leave blanks in the table of contents allowing for suggestions. Use open-ended and specific questions.

Research Question: What is the needed content and preferred format for a book exploring work as ministry?

Assessment Benchmarks: The conceptual prototype was designed to assess and gain insight for writing a book on theology of vocation. The intent was to gather solid feedback on suggested chapter content, as well as to gain insight on design preferences.

Participant Demographic: Four of the participants were Bible College students. Four of them were Christian professionals, experienced in college level academics or Christian business and non-profit sectors.

Summary of Learning:

What worked: Keeping the interviews to under 30 minutes kept people focused while also allowing opportunity for expansion. Sending the prototype and questions to each participant one day prior to the interview gave time for more thoughtful responses. The two-stage question process asking open-ended life experience questions relating to the topic followed by questions about the prototype worked well.

What needed improvement: A description of each chapter topic would have been beneficial to the prototype to help with chapter content.

What mattered: Each individual could instantly relate a story about faith and work to the prototype.

Important discovery: The reason a dichotomy of secular and sacred prohibits us to see work as ministry, is in part due to a lack of a vocational theology.

The Viability of Prototype

There are two primary factors that led me to conclude that the book prototype is the best option. First, I currently teach an introductory level course on the theology of vocation. Second, my NPO research appears to show that the reason a dichotomy of secular and sacred prohibits us to see work as ministry, is due in part to a lack of vocational theology. It was obvious during the prototyping process that each participant had a personal example of the need for faith at work. There was also a deep interest in the topic. Each participant concurred that for many it is difficult to clearly see work as an extension of ministry.

An abundance of resources on vocational theology at an upper academic level are already available. There are also a number of ministries and opportunities available for Christian businesses in the area of integrating one's faith at work. But it appears there is little at the undergraduate bible college level that prepares future pastors to equip the local church in vocational theology. A book explaining vocational theology, as well as practical application both in the church and the community, appears to be viable. My education in theology and culture, along with a background in business and college academics, gives me a unique perspective to write this type of book.

The bigger issue is the fairly short timeline and the length of the book. The interviews unfolded the topics' complexity and wide spectrum. They showed that a theological view on vocation is not enough. The many influences and specific challenges related to applying the theology need be considered as well. Though the prototype is viable in many aspects, the entirety of the book will need to be considered due to the limited timeline. The question is not whether the book is needed, but can it be written within the time frame allotted? It can, as long as the

scope and breadth of the book are clearly defined. The next step may be to write a concise clear summation of each chapter.

Appendix:

Story Board:

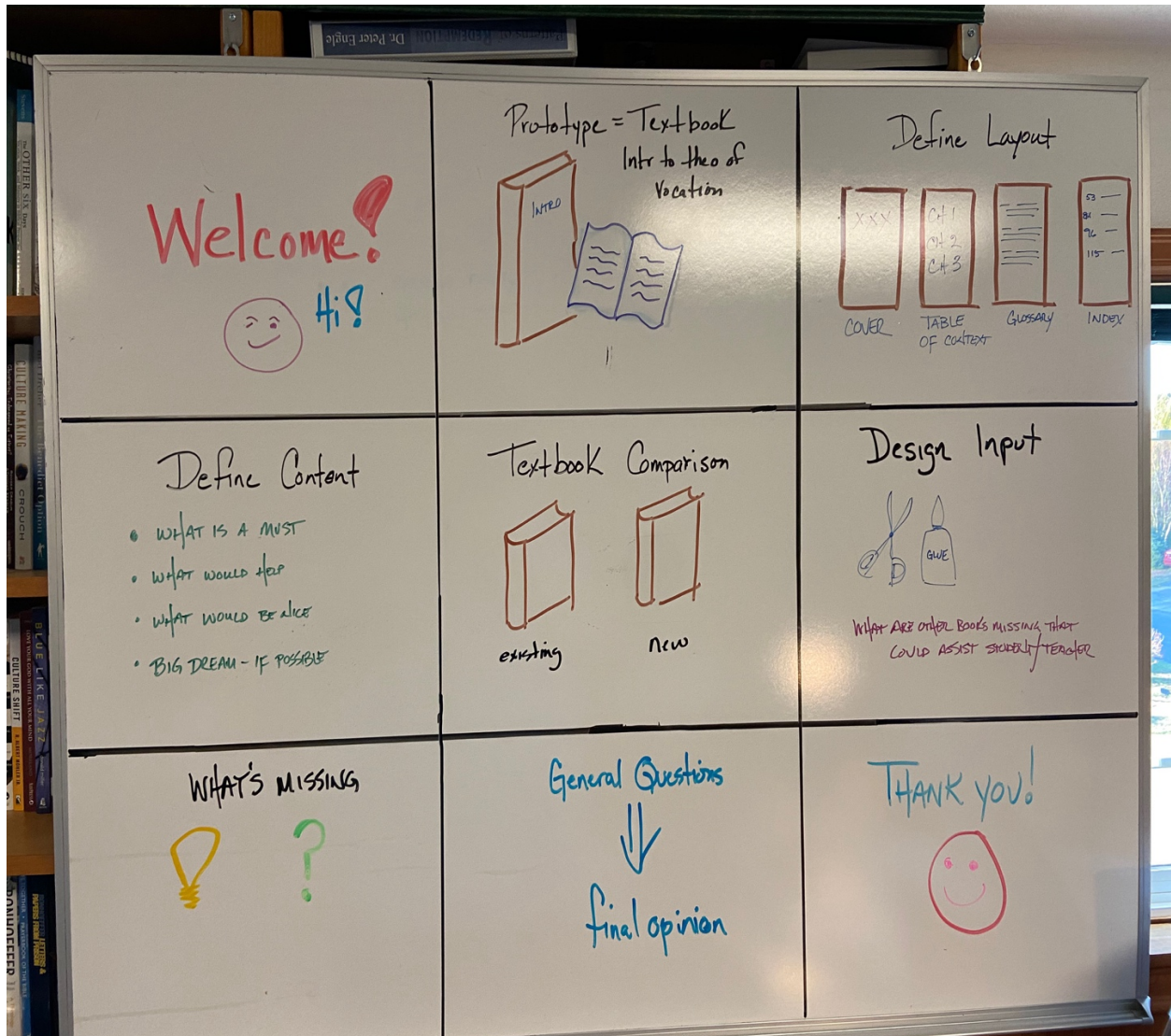


Figure 10: Appendix D Prototype Story Board

Recruiting Screener:

Recruiting Screener for Conceptual Prototype

| Who do you want to talk to? | What exact criteria will identify the people? | What screening questions will you ask? |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Undergraduate Bible College Students. | They are currently in Bible School. | Where are you attending Bible College? |
| Bible College Professor. | Currently teaching at Bible College. | Where are you currently teaching? |
| 18 years or older. | 3 to 4 aged 18-25 2 aged 30+. | Age ____? |
| A mix of students and professors. | 3 to 4 students and 3 professors. | What is your current role in Bible College? |
| Who do you want to exclude? | What exact criteria will identify the people? | What screening questions will you ask? |
| Non- Bible College Student. | Attending a Bible College. | Are you currently attending a Bible College? |
| Non-Bible College Professors. | Teaching at a Bible College. | Are you currently teaching at a Bible College? |
| Non-college age. | Less that 18yrs old. | Age ____? |

Table 3: Appendix D Prototype Recruiting Screeners

Interview Script:

Group #1:

Audience: 4 Students chosen from this year's Introduction to Theology of Vocation course.

Prototype: A mockup of a book. A mock cover and a rough table of contents was provided.

Introductory Questions:

- 1) What is your name?
- 2) Where are you currently attending or teaching school?
- 3) Student: What year of school are you in?

Prototype Questions: Student:

- 1) When looking at the title on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the best), how do you like the title? When you read the title, what do you think the book is about?
- 2) When looking at the prototype layout of the book, does anything stand out to you?
- 3) When looking at the table of contents, what topics strike you as odd? Why?
- 4) What topics are missing?
- 5) How important would practical examples and testimonies be to you in this course?
- 6) What aspects of previous textbooks did you find especially helpful, that could be incorporated in this book?
- 7) Which ones did you find unhelpful and cumbersome?
- 8) Taking into consideration that you are entering ministry, what could be added to the book to assist it in becoming a future reference worth keeping around?

Group #2:

Audience: 1 professor/ ministry entrepreneur, 1 pastor/adjunct professor, 1 academic dean/professor and 1 Business leader

Prototype: A mockup of a book. A mock cover and a rough table of contents was provided.

Introductory Questions: Professor Questions:

- 1) What is your name?
- 2) Where are you currently teaching?
- 3) Teacher: How long have you been teaching?

Prototype Questions: Professors and Business leaders:

2-part approach: First is open-ended; second, a look at my prototype ideas.

Open-ended:

- 1) What is your experience in this area that college students need to know?
- 2) What do you think the church needs to know?
- 3) What do you think people in business need to know?
- 4) If you could go back to the beginning of your career, what is an important concept that you would teach your younger self?

My ideas:

- 1) On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), what do you think of my title?
- 2) Does the title convey the message of the book?
- 3) Looking at the content I am proposing, what looks good to you?
- 4) Looking at the content I am proposing, what should be removed?
- 5) What appears to be missing?
- 6) When you think of a book that highly impacted you, was there a particular style or format that made a difference?
- 7) How important is it to include suggested applications and practical examples?

Documentation of Prototype:

Note: All interviews were done either via zoom or over the phone. The prototype was designed to be emailed to each person being interviewed prior to our meeting.

Work: Does it Really Matter to God?



Written by Gregory Reich

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Introduction

Forward

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The Big Picture

Chapter 1 What is theology of Vocation

Chapter 2 Why does it matter?

Chapter 3 ???????

PART TWO

Culture – Why it matters

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PART FIVE:

A Practical Perspective

Chapter 12 Building theology of vocation in the church

Chapter 13 Theology of vocation in business

Chapter 14 Entrepreneurship and theology of vocation

PART SIX:

APPENDIX

Further Study

Glossary

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Bibliography

About the author

One on One Interview Notes:

Please note that all notes are condensed and compiled from rough handwritten notes taken during the interview process. For better clarity, each response was concisely put in blue font below each question.

Student Interviews:

Student 1:

Introductory Questions:

What is your name? *A.A.*
 Where are you currently attending?
Clearwater Bible College.
 What year of school are you in? *Senior.*

Prototype Questions:

- 1) When looking at the title on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the best), how do you like the title? When you read the title what do you think the book is about?
The title is ok! I would give it a 6 or 7. The book is obviously about doing work for God.
- 2) When looking at the prototype layout of the book, does anything stand out to you?
Seems to be well organized. The chapter on secular and sacred looks interesting. Why are there blanks in the table of contents?
- 3) When looking at the table of contents, what topics strike you as odd? Why?
The chapter on the New Testament needs to be changed to Biblical Perspectives so it can trace the overarching themes of the topic in both the old and new testaments.
- 4) What topics do you see that are missing?
A section to aid pastors to help them assist people in the church to discover their calling.
- 5) How important would practical examples and testimonies be to you in this course?
They are very important to help apply the theology. I like application examples, so I have a place to start when applying things to my life.
- 6) What aspects of previous textbooks did you find especially helpful that could be incorporated in this book?
No comment, little or no interaction.
- 7) Which ones did you find unhelpful and cumbersome?
The more practical the book, the better. Don't make it too complicated to read.
- 8) Taking into consideration that you are entering ministry, what could be added to the book to assist it in becoming a future reference worth keeping around?
A section of further references for a deeper study. Also a section on practical ideas and application topics.

Student 2:

Introductory Questions:

What is your name? *C.P.*
 Where are you currently attending?
Clearwater Bible College.
 What year of school are you in?
Senior.

Prototype Questions:

- 1) When looking at the title on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the best), how do you like the title? When you read the title what do you think the book is about?
I like the title! I would give it a 6 or 7. Since we just finished a similar course with you it is about work as ministry.
- 2) When looking at the prototype layout of the book, does anything stand out to you?
Seems to be well organized. What are the blanks in the table of contents for?
- 3) When looking at the table of contents, what topics strike you as odd? Why?
The topic on the dichotomy of secular and sacred seems out of place. I am not sure why this is part of vocation.
- 4) What topics do you see that are missing?
A section to aid Christians going into business and how the theology of vocation applies to business.
- 5) How important would practical examples and testimonies be to you in this course?
They are very important! They should be intermingled into each chapter.
- 6) What aspects of previous textbooks did you find especially helpful that could be incorporated in this book?
Be clear and concise when using different perspectives. Don't over emphasize one perspective over another.
- 7) Which ones did you find unhelpful and cumbersome?
Big theological words need a glossary. It may be helpful to have a few questions at the end of each chapter to help solidify the chapter.
- 8) Taking into consideration that you are entering ministry, what could be added to the book to assist it in becoming a future reference worth keeping around?
A section of impactful meaningful examples of how this is being used.

Student 3:**Introductory Questions:**

- What is your name? G.P.
Where are you currently attending?
Clearwater Bible College.
What year of school are you in? Senior.

Prototype Questions:

- 1) When looking at the title on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the best), how do you like the title? When you read the title, what do you think the book is about?
I don't pay much attention to titles we use in school. The title seems adequate. The book is obviously about doing work for God.
- 2) When looking at the prototype layout of the book, does anything stand out to you?
I can't think of anything at this time.
- 3) When looking at the table of contents, what topics strike you as odd? Why?
I think you should separate the chapter on vocation and calling. Since they are a bit different, I would give them each a chapter.
- 4) What topics do you see that are missing?
A section on how technology has changed how we see our vocations and do work.

- 5) How important would practical examples and testimonies be to you in this course? *I personally find examples and testimonies helpful when trying to apply information.*
- 6) What aspects of previous textbooks did you find especially helpful that could be incorporated in this book?
No comment. Little or no interaction to this question.
- 7) Which ones did you find unhelpful and cumbersome?
No comment. Little or no interaction to this question.
- 8) Taking into consideration that you are entering ministry, what could be added to the book to assist it in becoming a future reference worth keeping around?
A section on further reference for a deeper study, especially in the areas of theology. Also a section on practical ideas and application topics.

Student 4:

Introductory Questions:

- What is your name? *V.L.*
 Where are you currently attending?
Clearwater Bible College.
 What year of school are you in? *Senior.*

Prototype Questions:

- 1) When looking at the title on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the best), how do you like the title? When you read the title what do you think the book is about?
Good title, I'd give it an 8. The book is about theology of vocation. Right?
- 2) When looking at the prototype layout of the book, does anything stand out to you?
Nothing really stands out to me.
- 3) When looking at the table of contents, what topics strike you as odd? Why?
The cultural section. I never gave culture much thought when it came to work.
- 4) What topics do you see that are missing?
A section on practical step by step suggestions for a pastor who wants to instill this in the church.
- 5) How important would practical examples and testimonies be to you in this course?
They are very important and helpful.
- 6) What aspects of previous textbooks did you find especially helpful that could be incorporated in this book?
Little interaction on this question.
- 7) Which ones did you find unhelpful and cumbersome?
The more practical the better. Lots of examples are good.
- 8) Taking into consideration that you are entering ministry, what could be added to the book to assist it in becoming a future reference worth keeping around?
- 9) *Since am going to be a pastor it would be nice to have bible study and sermon topics. It would also be nice to have a section of practical application ideas.*

Audience: Academic Dean/Professor and police chaplain

Prototype: A mockup of a book. A mock cover and a rough table of contents were provided.

Introductory Questions: Professor Questions:

- 1) What is your name? Dr. P.
- 2) Where are you currently teaching? Academic Dean and Professor at Clearwater College.
- 3) Teacher: How long have you been teaching? 30 plus years.

Prototype Questions: Professors and Business leaders:

2-part approach: First is open-ended; second, a look at my ideas.

Open-ended:

- 1) What is your experience in this area that college students need to know?
All students should learn what it means to do all things as unto the Lord. No compartmentalization, but all things in every area done for God, 365 days a year.
- 2) What do you think the church needs to know?
Every believer has a calling in Christ. Mark 13:34
- 3) What do you think people in business need to know?
Every business needs to be done 100% from a kingdom perspective.
- 4) If you could go back to the beginning of your career, what is an important concept that you would teach your younger self?
What I am doing now is not the end, but part of the kingdom building process. We need to grow through the process.

My ideas:

- 5) On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), what do you think of my title?
I love the title and cover photo. I wouldn't change it.
- 6) Does the title convey the message of the book?
Yes, it draws my interest.
- 7) Looking at the content I am proposing, what looks good to you?
The content looks good!
- 8) Looking at the content I am proposing, what should be removed?
Nothing needs to be removed.
- 9) What appears to be missing?
Suggestion for chapter 3: All work done unto God
Change the title of chapter 6 to "How now shall we live."
Add chapters 15 and 16. Chapter 15: Work as Ministry. Chapter 16: Ministry and Work Balance.
Recommended providing annotated bibliographies for further study along with the typical bibliography.
- 10) When you think of a book that highly impacted you, was there a particular style or format that made a difference?
Kenneth Boa's book *Conformed to His Image*, Zondervan, 2001. Get it and read it!
- 11) How important is it to include suggested applications and practical examples?
Don't go overboard on application or examples. Try to keep the book to under 250 pages. Application is important but don't sacrifice the content for it.

Audience: College Professor/ Ministry Entrepreneur

Prototype: A mockup of a book. A mock cover and a rough table of contents were provided.

Introductory Questions: Professor Questions:

- 1) What is your name?
- 2) Where are you currently teaching? Professor at Clearwater College and founder of Plumblin Ministries.
- 3) Teacher: How long have you been teaching? 30 plus years.

Prototype Questions: Professors and Business leaders:

2-part approach: First is open ended; second, a look at my ideas.

Open-ended:

- 1) What is your experience in this area that college students need to know?
All students need to understand call and divine purpose along with solid biblical foundations.
- 2) What do you think the church needs to know?
Solid biblical foundations are needed, and tools to releasing people to be salt and light at work. Tools given to give people so they can vision and dream in the workplace.
- 3) What do you think people in business need to know?
They need to recognize and appreciate how gifts and calling benefit others, both in a corporate and a collective way. They need to learn how to lead with Christian principles, fair pricing and biblical practices. They need to know the difference between the world's ethics and Christian ethics.
- 4) If you could go back to the beginning of your career, what is an important concept that you would teach your younger self?
I wish I was taught how the image of God looks in terms of work.

My ideas:

- 5) On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), what do you think of my title?
I like the title! I also like that you used a question.
- 6) Does the title convey the message of the book?
Yes.
- 7) Looking at the content I am proposing, what looks good to you?
The content looks good! I especially liked the big picture and 'why it matters' section. I also liked the application section. Stories can be powerful in solidifying the content.
- 8) Looking at the content I am proposing, what should be removed?
Nothing needs to be removed.
- 9) What appears to be missing?
He suggested swapping section 3 and section 4; put biblical section before theological section. He also suggested adding chapters on what Christian work looks like for entrepreneurs, small business owners and corporate leaders. Also add a section to talk about work life balance. Adding stories after each chapter would help. Add glossary for bolded words. Diagram all concepts if possible.
- 10) When you think of a book that highly impacted you, was there a particular style or format that made a difference?
Nothing discussed.

- 11) How important is it to include suggested applications and practical examples?
 Anything to prompt persona growth would be valuable.

Audience: Lead Pastor and Adjunct Professor

Prototype: A mockup of a book. A mock cover and a rough table of contents was provided.

Introductory Questions: Professor Questions:

- 1) What is your name?
- 2) Where are you currently teaching? Lead Pastor and Adjunct Professor at Northwest University.
- 3) Teacher: How long have you been teaching? Teaching 5 years, Pastor: 30 plus years.

Prototype Questions: Professors and Business leaders:

2-part approach: First is open-ended; second, a look at my ideas.

Open-ended:

- 1) What is your experience in this area that college students need to know?
 All students need to understand about good work ethics. They need to know all gifts and abilities are to be used to glorify God.
- 2) What do you think the church needs to know?
 All that you do, do it unto the Lord. They need to be taught a holistic approach to life and to seek God's approval, not man's approval.
- 3) What do you think people in business need to know?
 Honor God and be willing to go against the typical work culture. Use biblical ethics in business.
- 4) If you could go back to the beginning of your career, what is an important concept that you would teach your younger self?
 I wish I had been taught how not to listen to the people in the bleachers.

My ideas:

- 5) On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), what do you think of my title?
 I like the title! Another possible title could be: Work matters to God, should it matter to you?
- 6) Does the title convey the message of the book?
 Yes, I love the graphic. It is culturally relevant in the northwest.
- 7) Looking at the content I am proposing, what looks good to you?
 The content looks good! I especially liked the chapters on kingdom work and the dichotomy between secular and sacred. I also find the theology section as important. Most bible colleges don't discuss this topic when discussing theology.
- 8) Looking at the content I am proposing, what should be removed?
 Nothing needs to be removed.
- 9) What appears to be missing?
 Nothing seems to be missing.
- 10) When you think of a book that highly impacted you, was there a particular style or format that made a difference?
 Books that take complex ideas and make them simple. Books that are clear and concise.

- 11) How important is it to include suggested applications and practical examples?
 Anything to prompt personal growth would be valuable.

Audience: Business Leader and Christian Entrepreneur

Prototype: A mockup of a book. A mock cover and a rough table of contents was provided.

Introductory Questions: Professor Questions:

- 1) What is your name? E.K.
- 2) Where are you currently teaching? Not a teacher; Business leader and Christian Entrepreneur.
- 3) Teacher: How long have you been teaching? N/A.

Prototype Questions: Professors and Business leaders:

2-part approach: First is open-ended; second, a look at my ideas.

Open-ended:

- 1) What is your experience in this area that college students need to know?
 That God cares about work, especially since we spend so much time at work.
- 2) What do you think the church needs to know?
 Encourage people to take Jesus to work. Work is more than provision for our physical needs.
- 3) What do you think people in business need to know?
- 4) Training leaders to create spaces to encourage leaders. They need to learn to do their jobs consistent with scripture. Each business should have a workplace chaplain for their employees.
- 5) If you could go back to the beginning of your career, what is an important concept that you would teach your younger self?
 I wish I was taught what a servant's heart was.

My ideas:

- 6) On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), what do you think of my title?
 I like the title.
- 7) Does the title convey the message of the book?
 Yes
- 8) Looking at the content I am proposing, what looks good to you?
 Be sure of your audience. If your audience is business your chapters may need to change. If the audience is students, pastors and church leaders these may do well.
- 9) Looking at the content I am proposing, what should be removed?
 I would be very cautious when using the word theology, it can be divisive. But again it depends on the audience.
- 10) What appears to be missing?
 A focus on business and a particular perspective.
- 11) When you think of a book that highly impacted you, was there a particular style or format that made a difference?
 Nothing discussed.
- 12) How important is it to include suggested applications and practical examples?
 They are vital, especially for the individual in business.

Observation Notes:

Half of the interviews were done via zoom and the other half were done over the phone. After discussing the conceptual prototype with Loren Kerns, it was decided that recording the interviews was not needed. During these interviews I made five distinct observations. First, all those interviewed - though very gracious - were tired of COVID and burnt out on technology. I don't believe this altered the outcome for the interviews with the professors, pastor and business professional. It did definitely affect the students' ability to process and engage in the process. Second, each person entered the conversation at different levels of understanding about theology of vocation. Third, once the conceptual prototype of the book was introduced, every individual laid it aside and didn't refer to it during the questioning process. Most likely this was due to giving each interviewee several hours lead time to interact with the prototype. Fourth, there was a noted difference in the level of enthusiasm and interest between the student interviews and the others. The student interviewees obviously had little life experience to draw from which could be noted in the lack of enthusiasm during the interviews. Finally, it was obvious that the life experience of each one interviewed played a part in how they responded to the content.

APPENDIX E—SUPPLEMENTAL PROJECT DOCUMENTATION

New Book Proposal**Proposed Title:** Work: Does it Matter to God? An Introductory Look at Kingdom Work**Author:** Gregory Reich**One Sentence Draw:** Let's discover how to bridge the sacred and secular gap through seeing all work as kingdom work!**Book Type:** nonfiction, religious studies, theology**Descriptive Summary:** This book focuses on what it means to be a Christian worker in a secular setting. By using the kingdom of God framework, the reader will learn that as a representative of God's kingdom, all work is kingdom work. The beginning chapters lay a foundation for defining kingdom work. The second part of the book broadens the reader's understanding of the topic and provides a deeper connection to what it means to do kingdom work. The last part of the book helps readers face the harsh reality of the sacred and secular gap in which they work and instructs on how to bridge that gap.**Audience:** The primary audience will be undergraduate Bible college students. A secondary audience will be pastors desiring to build a theology of vocation mindset in their churches.**Unique Contribution:** Though there are plenty of books on a theology of vocation, few of them are written using a kingdom of God framework. Fewer still are written with the undergraduate student in mind with a limited theological background. This book is written with them in mind.**Author Platform:** My current social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. I pastor a small Four-Square Denominational Church with statewide connections within the Four Square Denomination. As a visiting adjunct professor at a small Non-denominational Bible College in Canada, I am connected with the Alberta Fellowship of Christian Assemblies.**Marketing Plan:** Marketing will take place in two online formats, as well as through personal connections. I will market on Facebook and Amazon via video post and by using testimonials from beta readers. The current total number of students, who would purchase the book is quite small. But I am a regular speaker at the Fellowship of Christian Assemblies doing seminars on contemporary theology topics, which will create a much broader audience than my current student audience. To broaden the audience, I plan to market both my "Introductory to Theology and Vocation" course and the book to the Christian Colleges in the Pacific Northwest. I have solid connections at Northwest University, a private Christian liberal arts college in Kirkland Washington. I am hoping to present my course and book to them as the book is published.**Competing Works:**Guinness, Os. *Rising To The Call*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003.

Guinness, Os. *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling God's Purpose for your Life*. 20th Anniversary Edition. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2018.

Keller, Tim. *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2016.

Os Guinness' books are written to the seeker and Christian believer, who are trying to fulfill God's purpose for their lives. His book adds deep practical insight into what it means for Christians to be called. Tim Keller is a well known pastor and theologian, who has oriented his entire ministry around a theology of vocation mindset. His book *Every Good Endeavor* does a good job of taking a fairly complex topic and making it simple. He also does a good job connecting those in business to faith and work. Both have general audience platform which may be an advantage.

My proposed book is initially intended for a narrower audience. Though I can see it may have appeal to a more general audience, my intended audience is undergraduate Bible college students and young pastors, who have little or no exposure to any form of theology of vocation. I hope to slowly create a bridge-building mindset within pastors to help them equip their congregations to integrate their faith at work. Using the familiar Christian framework of the kingdom of God, the book builds an introductory look at theology of vocation around kingdom work and being a faithful presence within culture. My intent is to build a foundation for new pastors, so they can enter ministry understanding the need for a theology of vocation mindset within the church.

Potential Endorsers: Dr. Peter Ingles at Clearwater Bible College and the Alberta Fellowship of Christian Assemblies in Canada; Paul Reich professor at Clearwater College and founder of Plumline Ministries; Kaj Martin, district pastor in the Washington International Four Square Association, as well as Northwest District Missions lead for the Four Square denomination; and Kevin Reich, lead pastor at Relevant Life Church and an adjunct professor at Northwest University Salem.

Details:

Format: paperback

Page Count: 100 -130 pages

Permissions Needed: At this time no permissions are needed.

Deadline: July 1, 2023 or sooner.

About the Author: Greg Reich is a co-vocational pastor. He has extensive experience in business management. He currently pastors at River of Life Fellowship in Aberdeen Washington and is the Director of Ignite, a nonprofit transitional living foster care program. Greg is also a Visiting Adjunct Professor with two courses, "Life Management" and an "Introductory of Theology of Vocation" courses at Clearwater Bible College in Alberta, Canada. He is married to his wife of forty-two years, Val. He has four adult children and five grandchildren.

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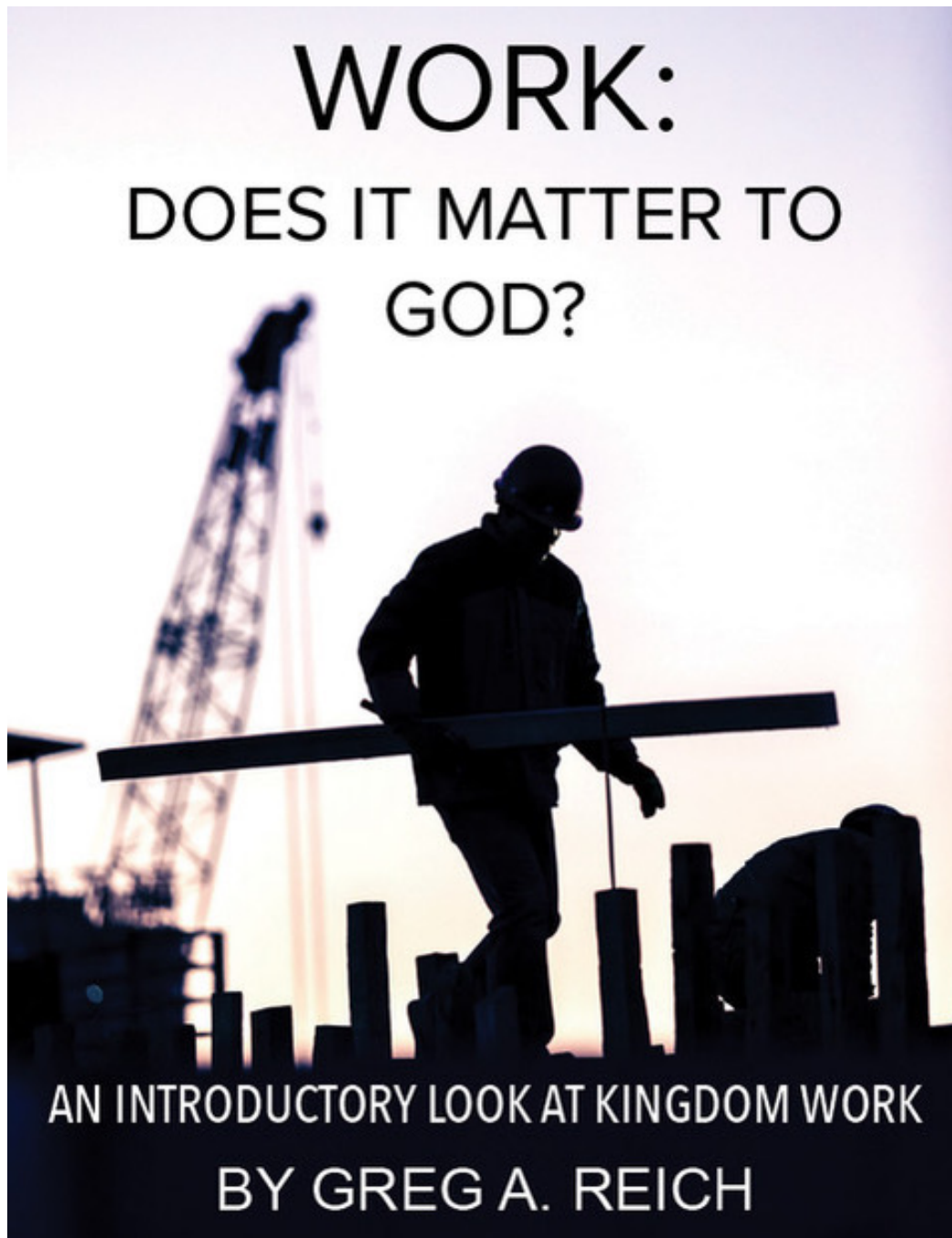


Figure 11: Appendix E Final Project Book Cover

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Introduction

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.”
 Matthew 6:9-12

A new prophet is in town. His name is Jesus. His words resonate and have power. They have meaning to a nation hungry for deliverance. People are wondering. They are hoping. Is he the one? Is he the messiah? Little did they know just how radical his message would be. Jesus entered into Galilee proclaiming the gospel saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:14 -15). Jesus steps onto the scene and announces that the time is right. God has a plan and a purpose for creation, a plan to free humanity from the bondage of sin, a plan to establish God’s kingdom in the hearts and minds of those who believe in the gospel. Jesus teaches them to pray what we now call the “Lord’s Prayer,” asking God to establish God’s divine kingdom on earth, as it is established in Heaven. Our faith is often expressed through the biblical concept of the Kingdom of God, which is deeply connected to the belief that God came to earth as Jesus of Nazareth revealing God’s self to humanity. The message of the gospel goes beyond personal salvation in Jesus and his return. Jesus changes and transforms our lives on earth, causing the Kingdom of God to be expressed through the lives of Christians throughout the world and bringing gradual change to the world around us. Part of the transformation that Jesus brings is in the area of work. Work now has Kingdom meaning.

As members of God’s kingdom, we are all called to be participants and representatives, assisting in the establishment and advancement of God’s kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven.

Over the next several pages, we will discover what that participation looks like. We will learn what it means to be kingdom workers, men and women who understand that they are called to use their vocations as an opportunity to touch hearts and help change lives. In essence, we will introduce many of you to a theology of vocation that hopefully brings vitality and value to your daily work.

For those who don't have a foundational understanding of what the Kingdom of God entails, let me introduce you to why it's important and how it applies to our daily work. God's Kingdom isn't summed up in a body of people but in the rule of God in the hearts and minds of humanity. In order to experience God's future kingdom, we must first accept God and allow God to rule in our lives now, here on earth.¹ Though the Kingdom of God is part of the coming age, we realize that through Christ, there is an overlapping of what is to come and what we experience now. Through Christ, we are transformed. Though we live and work in this current age, we are no longer bound to the evil powers, fallen values, sinful ways, curses, and wisdom of this current age. In Christ, we are freed from the penalty and power of sin. We have been transferred from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of God through the Son and are now no longer servants of sin but servants to Christ. Romans 12:1-2 tells us that we are to be a living sacrifice. We are not to be conformed to this age but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds. As Christians, we get a taste and glimpse of the kingdom that is to come while living on earth.²

¹ George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1959), 21.

² Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 42.

George Ladd provides a solid working definition of the Kingdom of God: “It is God’s reign, the divine sovereignty in action. God’s reign, however, is manifested in several realms, and the gospels speak of entering into the Kingdom of God both today and tomorrow. God’s reign manifests itself both in the future and in the present...”³ Jesus explains that “the kingdom of God isn’t coming in ways that can be observed...” but the kingdom of God is in our midst (Luke 17:20-21). He continues to explain that only those with the faith of a child can receive the kingdom of God (Luke 18:16-18). Paul in turn unfolds the mystery of the future kingdom in that flesh and blood will not inherit it. Upon Jesus’ return, the perishable changes the imperishable for those who are in Christ (1 Cor. 15:50-54). The exciting thing is that the Kingdom of God is not made by human hands. It is a sovereign act of God and has been entrusted to men and women of faith. Through the incarnation of Jesus, God stepped into history. As the message of Jesus was spread, so was the Kingdom of God. There are those who would reject it, but for those who believe it, it brings life and divine rule in their lives. The same power and rule that is made evident in the lives of Christians on earth will come in great glory and power when Christ returns.⁴

The church doesn’t create the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God creates the church, and it becomes the vessel God uses to spread His kingdom on earth. The church or the body of Christ is the Kingdom community in which God’s rule and reign is recognized. We are caretakers and agents of the Kingdom of God. Through Christ, we enter into and come under the rule and reign of God. God’s will is done on earth, as it is in heaven, through the members of the

³ Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 11.

⁴ Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 64.

community in their daily lives, in their families, their careers, and jobs. As kingdom members our work becomes God's work. We in essence become kingdom workers.⁵

As Christians, we must resist the temptation to reduce God's rule in our lives down to something we try to manipulate or control. When we reduce God's ruling in our lives to just the spiritual realm, we automatically limit God's interaction with the physical realm of creation. Our neglect tends to give evil, sickness, and disease free influence over humanity, leading us to believe that God sits helplessly nearby, leaving many of the miracles and works of God in scripture unavailable to Christians today. This reduction of the kingdom to be exclusively spiritual creates a dichotomy of secular and sacred, allowing people to think that God only works through extra spiritual people and makes some activities "secular," to be carried out by those people, who are unable to comprehend the spiritual realm.⁶

The dichotomy of secular and sacred goes beyond Christianity. Religions have promoted this concept for centuries, exploiting people along the way. Joshua Hopping explains: "Yet if the rule and reign of the Creator King is over everything and everyone, then the hierarchical divide is destroyed as there is no secular/sacred divide. Everything is holy and sacred as it was created by the One who made everything and keeps everything going."⁷ He continues:

The problem with this reduction (the reduction of life into secular versus sacred) is that the Scriptures plainly tell us that the people of the King are to be focused on the King and his mission. Christianity isn't about us, our salvation, our place in the afterlife, our jobs, money or even our family. Rather, following Jesus means that we are focusing on the person of Jesus and joining him as he seeks to destroy the works of the evil one. Bowing our knees to the Creator King is to join with Adam, Eve, Abraham, Deborah, David, Isaiah, Jesus, Mary, Peter, Paul, and countless other people who have gone before us in

⁵ George Elden Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, revised edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), 144.

⁶ Joshua S. Hopping, *The Here and Not Yet: What is Kingdom Theology and Why does it Matter?* (Ladysmith, South Africa: Vineyard International Publishing, 2017), 143.

⁷ Hopping, *The Here and Not Yet*, 145.

declaring that God Almighty is the King of Kings, and that his rule and reign has broken, is breaking, and -will break into the course of human history. The kingdom of God is about God and his rule, and not about us and our enjoyment.⁸

The Kingdom of God helps us connect all we do with being kingdom people. When we acknowledge that all of life, even work, is designed to line up with God's purpose and plan for creation, we can begin to see the true value of work.

Few people see their jobs as a way of experiencing the Kingdom of God. For people engaged in full-time Christian work, their vocations orient around the plans and purposes of God. The rest of the world seems engaged in secular vocations, whose work appears to have very little to do with God's kingdom. Jobs are often seen as a way to make money, so we can afford the things we need and enjoy. As a Christian however, everything falls within the rule and reign of God and God's kingdom. Our life doesn't belong to us. It is pledged to the King of the kingdom. No matter where we live, what we do for work, or what environment we find ourselves in, God is always working in the hearts and minds of people around us. As Kingdom representatives, we are kingdom workers participating in God's plan for creation.

The apostle Paul encourages the Colossian church to allow the word of God to teach and admonish the disciples of Jesus, saying, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:17). To the church in Corinth, he states "So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

⁸ Hopping, *The Here and Not Yet*, 151.

When we realize that we are called to do everything in the name of Jesus, embracing the now and not yet aspects the Kingdom of God, we enter into a new place in our relationship with Jesus that affects and controls all areas of our lives. We no longer walk in a secular/ sacred dichotomy. Work is no longer separated from our faith. We can now see that a kingdom-focused mindset shifts the purpose of our work away from our paycheck and onto what God is doing in and through us. That may mean that we leave one vocation for another, but at the same time, it may mean that we stay in the vocation we have. Either way, that decision is not ours to make, but rather it is the King who makes that decision.”⁹

For Christians, our work is kingdom work. Through our work, we provide for the common good of our neighbors, grow as individuals, and bring glory to God. This book is intended to introduce the reader to an understanding of a theology of work through the lens of what it means to be a kingdom worker, God’s kingdom representatives. In chapter one, I will define kingdom work. I will introduce what it means to be called, and I will discuss the dangers of seeing one’s call as hierarchical. Chapter two will look at the value and purpose of kingdom work. Work goes beyond providing for our needs. Work molds and matures us, along with providing goodness to others. Chapter three unfolds the reality that we were created, redeemed, and empowered to be kingdom workers. Work is part of God’s purpose and plan for humanity. In chapter four, I will look at how kingdom workers are also culture makers. Using Richard Niebuhr’s book *Christ in Culture* as a springboard, I will explore how kingdom work can make a difference. Chapter five discusses the topic of kingdom attitude. Kingdom work focuses on representing Jesus well. Our attitude plays a vital role in our motivation for being kingdom

⁹ Hopping, *The Here and Not Yet*, 227.

workers. In Chapter six, I will look at why eschatology matters. Kingdom work is not reliant on a redemptive new creation view of eschatology. Whether a person believes the earth will be destroyed in the coming kingdom or renewed, kingdom work still has purpose and value. I propose that an eschatology oriented around the new heaven and earth not only brings a greater value to our earthly work, but it opens up the possibility that work has an eternal purpose in God's coming kingdom. Chapter seven shifts to what I call kingdom reality. Diving into the idea that we are a divided kingdom, I will explore the impact of a secular and sacred dichotomy and how it hinders us from seeing work as kingdom work. Finally, chapter eight will look at the potential impact of kingdom work. I will look at why impact is sometimes hard to measure and how God is using our work, even if we don't always see the impact it has. I pray that the outcome of this book might be twofold: 1) that all who embrace Christ might begin to understand the wonderful role our work plays in God's kingdom, and 2) that when God uses our work for good, we all get a glimpse of the many possibilities that God's coming kingdom holds.

Part One: Kingdom Work

Chapter 1

The Big Picture

This book addresses the broad and ever-growing topic of how our faith integrates into our daily work. This chapter has five primary objectives. First, we will define what work is. Second, we will look at the concept of Kingdom Work. Third, we will look at the ideas of calling and vocation, how they have been viewed throughout history, and how we can recognize our calling. Fourth, we will take a short look at some of the concerns and challenges associated with the Kingdom Work mindset. Finally, I will sum up my thoughts.

Work

What is work? What does it consist of? The definition of work varies depending on the individual. For some, work must have a sense of purpose. For others, work is anything other than what can be considered a leisure activity. For author and theologian Miroslav Volf, “Work is an honest, purposeful, and methodologically specified social activity whose primary goal is the creation of products or states of affairs that can satisfy the needs of working individuals or their co-creatures, or (if primarily an end in itself) activity that is necessary in order for acting individuals to satisfy their needs apart from the need for the activity itself.”¹⁰ Though Volf’s definition is correct and it allows for us to see work as the opposite of leisure, it is a bit too

¹⁰ Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1991), 11.

formal and complex for our purposes. A simpler definition that helps us separate work from leisure is needed. David Jensen the author of *Responsive Labor* states, “Work, most comprehensively considered, is the activities we perform, with obligation, for the sake of those relationships, for community.”¹¹ He explains, “The presence or absence of obligation helps us determine whether a specific human activity is more adequately described as work or play.”¹² Orienting the definition of work around the idea of obligation allows us to separate work from both leisure and play or the idea of sabbath. This then enables us to get a clearer understanding of what kingdom work is by seeing it not only as our obligation to God, but as a way for us to meet the needs for the good of our community.

Kingdom Work

The concept of the Kingdom of God is one of the key themes throughout scripture. The gospels reveal that Jesus did not only come to die for our sins, but hee also came to establish the Kingdom of God.¹³ The arrival of the kingdom of God in the hearts and minds of believers recognizes God’s sovereignty over creation. When Jesus arrives on the scene, we see aspects of God’s Kingdom rule begin to enter into this present age through his birth, crucifixion, and resurrection. When Jesus returns, we will experience the full realization of God’s Kingdom.¹⁴

¹¹ David H. Jensen, *Responsive Labor: A Theology of Work* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 3.

¹² Jensen, *Responsive Labor*, 124.

¹³ See Matthew 3:2, 4:17, and 6:33; Luke 4:43, 10:9, and 17:20-21; Mark 1:14-15.

¹⁴ Hugh Whelche, *How Should we Work? Rediscovering the Biblical Doctrine of Work* (McLean, VA: Work and Economics, 2012), 22.

Though we understand that God is the one establishing the kingdom, we also understand that as members of this kingdom, we have roles to play as participants in establishing that kingdom. God accomplishes this through Jesus' followers, through everything we do, including our jobs.¹⁵ I call this work "kingdom work." Kingdom work is work that aligns and advances the Kingdom of God on earth, as it is in heaven. As kingdom workers, "the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence joins us in our work guiding us, empowering us, interceding for us, and producing in us character qualities of Christlikeness such as love, humility, submission, servanthood, and sacrifice."¹⁶ It is gospel work that touches hearts and minds, work that glorifies and points people toward God the creator, work that builds community, changes cultures, and nurtures society. Kingdom work is an extension of who we are in Christ, as we live and work in the world around us. A garbage man doing kingdom work doesn't just haul garbage. He protects and serves his community from infestation and disease. He takes opportunities to show love and respect for his customers. Making sure the trash isn't scattered during the collection process, taking a moment to police that area, and placing the bins in a safe fashion, shows that people matter.

When growing up, the idea of vocation was covered in my high school career class. The class's goals included finding a job after I graduated, so that I could become a functioning part of society. The class assessed personal competencies and interests with the hope to assist students in what further education was needed for their career goals and whether they could jump right into the work force. The idea of calling was set aside for people like my brother, who were considering becoming pastors. Kingdom work was only for those in ministry. It was thought to

¹⁵ Welche, *How Should we Work*, 25.

¹⁶ Tom Nelson, *Work Matters: Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 112.

be a divine invitation for a select few, definitely not something that was needed to build a successful business career in the labor force. In God's kingdom, all work matters. Everyone one is called. Every person's vocation is a divine calling. All people, male and female, are called to live out their kingdom calling through their individual vocations as kingdom representatives.

Calling

A common concern and question that needs to be considered is our underlying expectation that we must know what we are called to do. We want to understand what our life purpose is or what vocation we will choose. Knowing one's calling and vocation are common topics in the world of Christianity. The definition is not often clear.¹⁷ In many cases, the terms "calling" and "vocation" are interchanged. The word vocation comes from the Latin "vocare" meaning "to call." When looking at the two together, it helps us to see calling as a "divine initiative" and vocation as the way the call is lived out. It is one thing to be called. It is another to respond to that call and take action to pursue that call.¹⁸

Historically, the concept of vocation or calling has bounced between being a simple job or some special divine inspiration to set one's life aside for the ministry. Concerns over what that looks like could be complex, especially if one is worried about missing their calling or making a mistake in choosing the wrong vocation.¹⁹ Generally speaking, when looking at scripture, one of the ways that "call" is used is in reference to coming to faith in Christ (Luke 5:32, Acts 2:39,

¹⁷ William C. Plancher, ed., *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom and Vocatio* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 1.

¹⁸ Ben Witherington III, *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2011) 68.

¹⁹ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 2.

Romans 1:5-6, 1 Thessalonians 2:13-14). The common Greek word in the New Testament is “klesis,” meaning “to call,” referring to a life of faith in Christ.²⁰ Other instances in the Bible show us that “call” is a summons to service. This can be seen in Exodus 3:4-10, in which Moses was called to deliver Israel. Exodus 31:2 shows the call of Bezalel to use his gifts of craftsmanship to build the tabernacle.

In early church history, the choice of following the call of Christ often meant leaving family and community ties and becoming an outsider. For some it meant death. One of those was Simeon bar Sabba'e, who was martyred along with others by the Persian King Sapor. Simeon prayed, “Give me this crown, Lord: you know how I long for it ... Yet I mean to preserve my vocation like a hero and to walk bravely along the path marked out for me, so that I shall still be an example to all your people in the east.”²¹ As history passed, and Christianity grew, it was no longer a guaranteed death sentence to believe in Christ. Now that it was acceptable and somewhat beneficial to be a Christian, the concern became one of how to preserve the aspect of sacrifice and cost involved in following Jesus. This led many to pursue the life of a monk or nun, consisting of a life of denying the flesh. This was intended to preserve the sacrifices seen earlier in Christianity. Christianity became the norm. Being raised in the Christian faith was commonplace. Becoming a Christian was no longer the issue. The issue surrounding vocation exclusively became a question of whether or not one should join the priesthood. The question was whether to marry and raise a family or choose the life of a priest or nun and live a life separated from the rest of society.²²

²⁰ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 4.

²¹ Michael Counsell, *2000 Years of Prayer* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1999), 15.

²² Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 6.

It wasn't until the 1500's that the idea of calling or vocation began to change and was no longer seen as only applying to clergy, nuns, or monks. Societal changes gave people more opportunities. Peasants no longer had to stay peasants. They could move to towns and find other jobs. Eventually they could start their own businesses. It was during this time that Martin Luther proclaimed the "priesthood of all believers," making every believer a priest among the protestant faith. Therefore, a calling could be that of a preacher or farmer, as well as anything else. In his German translation of the Bible, Martin Luther translated the Greek word "klesis" meaning "to call" as the German word "Beruf," which meant an occupation. For Luther, our calling was first and foremostly a job.²³ Luther's usage of "Beruf" was not to mean anything other than something done in the lives of everyday people at work. The everyday actions of loving one's neighbor constituted the Christian calling.²⁴ Many protestants agreed by pointing to the fact that Jesus was a carpenter, and the disciples were fisherman. Even Paul was a tentmaker. Luther emphasized the importance of remaining in one's station in life, while others looked at this as an opportunity to expand one's horizons and change callings over one's life span. The idea of calling changed. One's job became his or her calling, eliminating the exclusivity of calling being only for priests and nuns.²⁵

There seems to be a propensity in the United States to dream up an honorable pursuit and invite God to bless it, making it our calling in life. Often, some Christians expect God's call to be instantaneous. Part of our responsibility in understanding God's call is asking God to show us

²³ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 7.

²⁴ Karlfried Froehlich, "Luther on Vocation," *Harvesting Martin Luther's Reflections on Theology, Ethics, and the Church*, ed Timothy J. Wengert (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 201), 126.

²⁵ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 8.

where Jesus is already at work in society. We must yield to divine timing and wait for God's invitation. God cares about our character. God is willing to wait while the maturation process does its job. We can easily get frustrated, while we wait for the call to come. While we wait, we must trust that God knows what is needed.²⁶ "Waiting on the Lord should not be an idle time for us. We must let God use times of waiting to mold and shape our characters. We must let God purify our lives and make us into clean vessels for Jesus' service."²⁷ If we truly believe that God is at work within the culture around us, it may be good for us to ask some questions, as we are waiting on God. What is God's vision for the community we live in? What is God doing in the lives of those around us? What is our society's greatest need? Do I have the ability, or do I know someone who has that ability, to help meet that need?

When the call finally comes, and God reveals the assignment, the weight of the task often brings us to a point of crisis, in which we have to decide whether we really believe God spoke to us or not.²⁸ Os Guinness rightly states, "Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to His summons and service."²⁹

The self-help industry is full of books that teach people how to find and accomplish their life's purpose. If you can dream it up, you can accomplish it. For many, this becomes the way

²⁶ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), 121.

²⁷ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Experiencing God*, 123.

²⁸ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Experiencing God*, 223.

²⁹ Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling God's Purpose for Your Life*, 20th anniversary edition (Nashville, TN: W. Publishing, 2018), 5.

they find their calling, dreaming up something big for God, and inviting God to participate. Sadly, we have this process backwards. God invites us. We don't invite God. To follow our calling takes spiritual preparation and obedience. We often have to make major adjustments in order to accept the call. When we respond in obedience and faith, God can do amazing things through us. This is the essence of kingdom work: God working through us to meet the needs of those around us through God's power.

Calling usually resides where God's priorities, our personal gifts and talents, and the world's needs collide. Where all three intersect is a good place to look for one's calling in life. As Christians, some of us often get hung up on the more glamorous calling examples in the Bible. We look for burning bushes that talk, or some voice that tells us that we were called before we were born. We secretly hope that someone will come along telling us what we are supposed to do. Often the reality is that "vocational calling stays the same as we move in and out of different jobs and careers. Our vocational calling is directly related to the discovery of our God-given talents. Over time, we develop and hone them into useful competencies for the glory of God and the service of others, often in various jobs and occupations."³⁰

Many things can mold and create our sense of being called: the culture we live in, our family, the influences of people we respect, our likes and passions, and our skills and talents. Christians often turn to the Bible for answers. We serve a personal God, who created us in God's own image and desire to have a personal relationship with us. Os Guinness explains "Our life-

³⁰ Welche, *How Should We Work*, 79.

purpose therefore comes from two sources at once—who we are created to be and who we are called to be.”³¹ Guinness elaborates:

Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by him, to him, and for him. First and foremost we are called to Someone (God), not to something (such as motherhood, politics, or teaching) or to somewhere (such as the inner city or Outer Mongolia). Our secondary calling, considering who God is as sovereign is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live, and act entirely for him. We can therefore properly say as a matter of secondary calling that we are called to homemaking or to the practice of law or to art history. But these and other things are always the secondary never the primary calling. They are “callings” rather than the “calling.” They are our personal answer to God’s address, our response Gods summons. Secondary callings matter, but only because the primary calling matters most.³²

When we understand our calling, we have two responsibilities. First, we have the responsibility to keep our primary call as our priority. Our secondary calling shouldn’t overshadow or hinder our willingness or ability to serve God. Secondly, our primary call should lead us to our secondary calling. The danger of making the secondary call a priority is that our work becomes an idol and our work location an altar. We put more value on our work than the purpose behind our work. Our calling is first to a person. That person is Jesus. Our secondary call should line up with the first. “If we believe that our ordinary work does not have any intrinsic value in the light of eternity, since it has nothing to do with heaven and will not be saved, then it has only a secondary instrumental value for us.”³³ Keep in mind that God alone has power to issue a call and the right to command obedience. Our calling comes from an encounter with a holy and good God, not through a focus on self-discovery or personal fulfillment.³⁴

³¹ Guinness, *The Call*, 22.

³² Guinness, *The Call*, 61.

³³ Darrel Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2006), 46.

³⁴ Gary D. Badcock, *The Way of Life*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 72.

Our calling is holistic in nature with a central focus: Kingdom work. Our calling is bigger than our gifts and talents. It includes all that we are, including every relationship we have throughout our lives. Though our gifts and talents aren't the primary way we find our calling, they do help us align ourselves with other factors that help us discern our call. When we know how and where we are called, we transition from what we do for a living to doing what we are designed to do. It is wise to keep in mind that there is a certain amount of mystery behind the calling of God. We can take everything into consideration and still need ultimately to sense that God is behind the process. For some, their calling is instantly clear. For others, it feels like a process of trial and error.

We may see it as trial and error, but God doesn't waste an opportunity to deepen our faith. I was nineteen when I started to sense that God was calling me to use my passions for more than personal gain. After I got married, I moved with my wife to Wyoming to work for a natural gas pipeline company. My wife and I became active in the little community church where God began to unfold in me a desire to preach, along with a love for business. As time progressed, I knew in my heart that I needed to finish my college education if I was ever going to fulfill what I felt God was calling me to. I researched the school I wanted to attend and chose the degree. It was located in Kirkland Washington. I knew the company I was working for had a pipeline office in that area, so I put in for a transfer. In a long list of applicants, I was the twenty-ninth candidate in line of those in the company wanting to move to the Seattle area. The chances of getting that transfer seemed slim at best. Through a series of events, a position opened up sooner than I expected. Out of all the applicants, I was the only one who had the experience they needed. I loaded up my pregnant wife and three children and moved to Redmond Washington. My plan was to start school shortly after we got settled. Little did I know, the degree I wanted

was no longer offered at the school. Additionally, the company relocated me almost 2 hours from the school. Over a period of several years, through plugging into local church, working, and taking advantage of every opportunity that came my way, the reality of God's plan unfolded. I not only had opportunities to preach, but I became successful in business as well. I did finally go back to school. The majority of my education, until I started my master's program, was paid for by the company I worked for. Did I miss God's call? No. I just realized that God's call isn't always as clear cut and streamlined as I would have liked it to be. My understanding of being called broadened, and through the process, I matured, while learning to be a kingdom worker in everything I did. It wasn't a straight line, but it was the line God used to bring me the place I needed to be.

In early history, having a career or a job was not a major consideration. It was common for children to follow in the careers of their parents. The true question of calling was whether they would follow Jesus or follow the world in which they lived. Even in medieval times, people were obligated to stay in the station of life into which they were born. There was little to no opportunity to advance one's career. During this time, it was understood that peasants worked, while nobles and monarchs fought.³⁵ If lay people had a calling in medieval times, it was to assure that the population didn't decline by raising large families. The child mortality rate was high. Work was seen as way to feed the family and not about personal job fulfillment or serving God.³⁶

³⁵ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 112.

³⁶ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 113.

As humans, we are complex creatures. Our calling isn't limited to a single vocation. As a married man, I am called to be a husband, a father, and a grandfather. My calling isn't limited to what I do for money. Once I retire, my calling doesn't end. Our calling never changes, no matter what we do. This doesn't mean I choose my calling at will. Each vocation is a call from God to enter into kingdom work. God uses every aspect of our lives for God's glory. Kingdom work is not only about the work we do. It is about the fact that God chooses to use us to do divine work. Vocation is not just about discovering what God wants us to do. We also have to find what God is doing in and around us and see what part we are called to play.

"While vocation has come to be identified with occupation, the word calling invites the question "who?" Who is doing the calling? The most fundamental fact about calling and living vocationally is that we are first of all called to "someone" before we are called to do something."³⁷ Darrel Cosden points out in his book, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, that there is a challenge in seeing eternal value in the work we do. We often see pastoring or another form of clerical calling as higher than those who are called into the marketplace, especially, since one focuses more on the spiritual side of things than the other. This discrepancy is seen in all types of churches, even in some of the churches whose foundation belief is in the priesthood of all believers. Usually what unfolds through this process is the belief in a secular versus sacred dichotomy creating a gap between faith and work.³⁸

³⁷ R. Paul Stevens, *Work Matters: Lessons from Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012), 33.

³⁸ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 19.

Concerns and Challenges

When looking through the lens of a robust theology of work, concerns and challenges arise. One of these is leaning too far toward salvation by works. Another concern is to swing to the other end of the spectrum and see work as valueless and having no eternal significance. Yet another challenge that arises is the mindset that callings are hierarchical in nature. The more spiritual the call, the easier it is to connect it to kingdom work. Combine these with the question of what constitutes kingdom work, and things can get a bit messy. Some vocations are easily connected to the kingdom of God, yet others may not be. All work that serves and adds value to one's neighbor, as well as bringing glory to God, can be seen as kingdom work.

Though salvation only comes through faith in Christ, we are participants in the redemptive process. In the kingdom of God, human actions have an impact on God's good creation, as we do them for God's glory. Each human life touched through work is a sign of God's Kingdom interaction in this "now and not yet" world we live in.³⁹ The result is often the view that Kingdom work is spiritual requiring a deeper sense of spirituality, while ordinary work takes less spiritual understanding and has less meaning. Instead of both being equal in the sight of God, one is thought as better than the other.⁴⁰ This approach eventually leads to a long list of hierarchical callings that degrade kingdom work. This hierarchical sense of calling isn't just seen between those called to the church and those called to the marketplace. It is also seen within the church where a lead pastor may be considered to have a higher calling than an associate, youth

³⁹ Amy L. Sherman, *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 86.

⁴⁰ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 20.

pastor, or a missionary. We also see it when one person is in full-time church ministry compared to someone, who is either bi-vocational or co-vocational.⁴¹

It's important to point out that there is a difference between having a hierarchical structure within a church or business and having a belief that some callings are better and more spiritual than others. A hierarchical structure can allow a church or business to be more efficient and more faithful to their purpose and calling as community. A hierarchical calling tends to degrade and downplay the value and importance of one's calling. Why should a person take his or her calling seriously if it has little value and importance to the kingdom of God? A church janitor may not seem nearly as important as a pastor, but stop cleaning the bathrooms and emptying the garbage, and see what happens. We want to make kingdom work all about the spiritual aspects of life without realizing that we humans are holistic beings. When a person is hungry or cold, he or she isn't concerned with the spiritual as much as the physical. The same goes for those in emotional distress.

Another challenge that arises when viewing work through a theology of work is defining what Kingdom work looks like. We have to ask ourselves not just what it means to be a Christian working in the marketplace or the church, but what it means to be a Christian businessman or woman and a Christian pastor or lay person. How should our personal faith affect how we work and how we run our businesses and our ministries? It's wise to ask whether we do our jobs ethically and legally. But as kingdom work our concern should also be whether it is ethical and legal according to God's standards. Competency, though important, should not be the dividing factor between those working for the Kingdom and those who aren't. Whether a doctor is a

⁴¹ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 22.

Christian or not, he or she needs to be competent in what he or she does. What is also important is whether faith guides and determines not only how people do their jobs but why they are doing them. We all want pastors who can lead and preach well. Church leaders should be just as concerned about how they treat their co-workers, as well as church members. They should be concerned about whether they are paying their workers well. Are they following legal compensation requirements? Or are they taking advantage of their young employees' passion to serve and not protecting them from burnout? Kingdom work encompasses every aspect of our Christian life no matter how insignificant it may seem.

Closing Thoughts

The heart of the gospel is the call to follow Christ as disciples (Matthew 16:24). The gospel transforms lives, making every believer a citizen in the Kingdom of God (John 3:3-5). This kingdom is alive in the hearts and minds of Christians (Luke 17:20-21). This transformation not only affects our personal lives, but it should affect our work as well. There should be no disparity between our faith at home and our faith at work.⁴² When we think that the use of our talents and gifts in a Christian organization is the only setting for kingdom work, we have misunderstood what the Bible depicts as kingdom work. The idea that some work has more eternal value than another, or that some work is defined as full-time Christian work, is not biblical. We need to see work through a deep understanding of a theology of vocation, so we can

⁴² Nelson, *Work Matters*, 16.

realize that no matter how simple or basic our work is, it needs to be seen as a way to glorify and honor God.⁴³

One of the fundamental beliefs in Christianity is that God has a plan in mind for each and every one of Jesus' followers. We gain comfort in believing that God has not only created us, but that God has created us for a purpose and has a plan for us. Life seems a bit less complex, when we gain the sense that our lives matter and play a role in the bigger picture that God has in mind. The challenge comes in discerning what our call looks like. We will not all have a "burning bush" experience or a "still small voice" to guide us. In reality, a common aspect of discerning our calling comes from being part of a larger community. As we spend time serving, praying, and reflecting on our own giftedness in the context of community, our sense of call begins to emerge. Often our calling is where our greatest desires intersect with society's greatest need.⁴⁴

When looking at scripture and taking into account the many Bible stories, we can't tell for sure if the characters within the biblical narratives saw their everyday lives as a sense of calling or not. But it is easy to see that God used common people in extraordinary ways. It is also wise to consider how Christianity throughout history has understood what is meant by calling or vocation, especially since vocation has changed drastically over the centuries due to the change in societies around the globe. Today, our choices of career options are vastly different than those in early human history. If you were the son of a carpenter, you became a carpenter. If your father was a metalsmith, you in turn were expected to become a metalsmith. Daughters had drastically fewer options. Even in the upper levels of society, there were few options. The oldest

⁴³ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 85

⁴⁴ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 3.

son to a king was expected to become king. Other sons after that would assume other higher roles in society. The king's daughters were married off to leverage power and to build alliances.⁴⁵

Today, many live well beyond their retirement years, so the idea of vocation takes on a certain level of suspicion. Some vocations or callings seem to bring little to no meaning in life, as other things consume and dominate our lives. Throughout history, calling has changed to mean different things. With the diversity of religions that surround us and many of the current values of the culture being oriented around gaining wealth, there needs to be a hard look at what God is actually calling an individual to be and do. I suggest that calling and vocation don't only include coming to a faith in Christ. Calling goes beyond entering the pastorate or entering a career. Part of calling and vocation should look at what a kingdom presence is in a non-Christian world. For Christians, work should be centered around the concept of kingdom work. As representatives of the Kingdom of God, all of our actions and pursuits are called to glorify and exalt the king. To see vocation solely through the lens that "God has a specific task for me to do" limits the focus of work. On the other hand, if vocation or calling means that every choice is right, then what about the deeper meanings of life and purpose? A Christian's direction of life and calling need to fit into the overarching purpose God has for creation. The values of the Kingdom of God need to determine how our vocation is shaped. By seeing our work as kingdom work and understanding how it helps build the kingdom of God, we can see how valuable work can be.

⁴⁵ Plancher, ed., *Callings*, 5.

Going Deeper

1. Based on your new understanding of kingdom work, how can your current vocation be used as kingdom work?
2. Assessing where you are now in life, do you have a clear understanding of God's call on your life?
3. What is the greatest need you see in the community where you currently live? Can your passions and giftings help meet that need?

Chapter 2

Why Work Matters?

Why should work matter? Why make a big deal about our calling, about kingdom work? Besides work is just that, work. Right? If it was meant to be fun, we would call it play and wouldn't get paid for it! In many of our lives, work is just a way to make a living. Instead of work being a response to God, who is always working on our behalf, it becomes a compelling impulse to stay in touch with the society around us. Depending on the job, different things motivate us. Depending on one's age and generation, the motivation may be money, power, influence, adventure, social justice, or the empowerment of others. None of these are wrong, but as Christians, we are called to so much more. For many, their work is nothing more than an act of redundancy. It is unsatisfying, oppressive, and boring. When we fail to see work as a calling and part of God's provision for God's people, we fail to see its value. Work should never be just a means to an end. It is a way to distribute the abundance of God's kingdom. Work can be a gift to be shared and enjoyed, as well as a way to experience the fullness of God with others.

In this chapter, we will look at the importance and value of kingdom work. Kingdom work molds and matures us as people. It provides goodness to others. It is unfair to see work only as something we're paid to do. Whether done by a professional during the week or a hobbyist on a weekend, the work is the same.⁴⁶ Whether I hire a carpenter to do work for me, or I find enjoyment in doing it myself, it is still hard work. Due to many technological advances,

⁴⁶ Mark Greene, *Thank God it's Monday: Ministry in the Workplace* (Queensway, UK: Scripture Union, 2005), 33.

work can now take place at any time and place. There are times when we are compensated for our work, and times we are not. We often question whether our work makes a difference.

Whether it does or not, one thing is clear: our work shapes who we are and the world we live in.⁴⁷ Work is a combination of many things: 1) It enables us to provide for our daily needs and for those we love, 2) Work can discipline and refine us as individuals, building our character, and 3) Work is essential in creating relationships, establishing community, and creating culture.⁴⁸

Work Molds Us

Work isn't done in a vacuum. Not only should our Christian beliefs mold us and affect how we do our jobs, but we need to realize that our jobs mold and affect us as well. We seldom work in isolation. The work we do as individuals is often done in the context of community. This community shapes us in many ways. Sometimes for good, sometimes for not so good. The work we do shapes the way we think and how we perceive life. Those called to be farmers or ranchers perceive and experience work totally differently than artists, teachers, or assembly workers. As Christian workers, we need to realize that our work is kingdom work, not only because we represent the King, but because our work contributes to those around us as well. Work touches our lives for good and bad whether we like it or not. Work becomes part of who we are. When we meet someone, we not only ask their name, but we often inquire about what they do. This question allows us to understand something about the individual's life, as well as about their life experiences and behavioral makeup.

⁴⁷ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 14.

⁴⁸ Darrel T. Cosden, "Work and the New Creation," in *Work: Theological Foundations and Practical Implications*, edited by R. Keith Loftin and Trey Dimsdale (London, UK: SCM Press, 2018), 169.

When looking at work and faith in America, we can see a “Sunday to Monday gap” within the church. Sunday services often add little relevance to what people deal with on a daily basis at work. We seem to live two separate lives with little to no connection between our weekend faith and our weekly work.⁴⁹ Work has both a horizontal aspect as well as a vertical one. Our work not only provides for the common good of creation, but it also provides a way for us to glorify our creator. Worship is not just something we do on Sunday. Our work is an expression of worship as well.⁵⁰ “Work is the primary context for our spirituality. Most children’s play is practice for adult work. We play our way into adult work; our games are apprenticeships. The spiritual life begins, seriously begins, when we get a job and go to work.”⁵¹ Because of this, work not only changes us. It can change those around us. When we use the Bible as the way to understand the value of work, we become aware of the correlation between loving our neighbors and loving God. Work becomes a way to participate in stewarding God’s creation, as well as doing good works that benefit those around us.⁵² “Martin Luther made the seminal point that while God doesn’t really need our good works, our neighbor clearly does.”⁵³ Luther saw work as a way to provide for the common good of others by helping others to flourish. Work becomes a way we can live out Christ’s chief commands of loving God and loving people. As kingdom workers, we can’t truly love God without loving one another. On the other hand, we can’t truly love one another, unless we love God.

⁴⁹ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 15.

⁵⁰ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 27.

⁵¹ Eugene H. Peterson, *Leap Over a Wall: Earthly Spirituality for Everyday Christians* (New York, NY: Harper One, 1997), 27.

⁵² Nelson, *Work Matters*, 92.

⁵³ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 125.

There comes a time when we all need to decide whether we are in the right place vocationally. Though my call hasn't changed over the years, how I live out that call has. Over my life, I have worked as a carpenter, cowboy, hunting guide, a natural gas utility worker, a natural gas pipeliner, manager, businesses owner, pastor, youth pastor, life coach, and a realtor. In each of these areas, my calling to touch hearts, change lives, and represent the Kingdom of God has always stayed that same. My primary calling is to God and to God's kingdom. I have been both lucky and fortunate that in my secondary calling, I have sensed God's direction and guidance in every one of my vocational choices. I haven't been the best in everything I have done, but I do my best in everything I do. In each job, I have been able to use my spiritual gifts, my physical talents, and my passions for life to meet a need and impact a life. In each one, I have matured and accumulated knowledge. I have been molded in both my faith and in skills that make me a better kingdom worker. I have also gained a deeper sense of understanding of what it means to be part of the kingdom of God.

Work Matures Us

Work not only molds us as individuals by the abilities and skill we acquire, but it helps us access how we are maturing and growing as people. We are constantly being shaped by our work and by the people we work with. Martin Luther believed that one's vocation or calling not only serves others, but it also causes us to look to God. Kingdom work when in motion can change the world, spreading God's mercy and grace throughout humanity. Through one's vocation, God can be present to all of humanity.⁵⁴ Through our work as kingdom workers, those around us can be

⁵⁴ Gustaf Wingreen, *Luther on Vocation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 33.

moved closer to God. Work becomes a way for the Holy Spirit to work in and through us to draw others to Christ. Work also creates opportunities for us to grow in our faith and as individuals.

When we view our work as given to us by God, it has meaning. The “deepest meaning of one’s work comes from faith: to believe that God has placed you in this particular place for this particular time, to use your gifts and opportunities to express gratitude for God’s great gift of salvation by serving God and your neighbor through your work that is true meaning, the source of real satisfaction and joy.”⁵⁵

Even the simplest and least skillful work can have great value when aligned with one’s faith. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul, when looking at the gifts of God unfolds through his analogy of the body, reveals that even the plain and simple aspects of the body play a vital role. “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’” On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor...” (v21-3). It is common to consider one type of work as better and having more value than another. It would be easy to say that doctors have a more valuable position than truck drivers due to their education and the type of work being done. But when we realize that the majority of our material commodities are shipped via truck throughout the nation and that our national economy relies heavily on those commodities, things are no longer so clear. Even pay doesn’t always predict a job’s value, especially in a world where the average truck driver makes more money than a teacher, or where a software engineer makes as much if not more than a medical professional. We seem to place more value on a pastor than we do a social worker. Both are vital to humanity,

⁵⁵ Douglas J. Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004), 163.

and both can reach and influence people that the other cannot. When looking at work through the lens of kingdom work and the vital role that faith plays in using our talents and gifts for God, we don't have to look at the value of work through worldly standards.

Our faith also influences the context of our work. Some work may seem to have little meaning, but for a Christian, it can be seen as an act of worship. Work can provide opportunities for prayer and reflection, bringing value and meaning to one's work. Work also provides for community and relationships, which can make the most tedious jobs enjoyable. Kingdom workers understand that by expressing love to our fellow workers, we are also expressing our love for God.⁵⁶ At one time, while working in business, my daily commute was over 3 hours per day. At first, I thought driving was a waste of time, thinking only about the money I was making. One day, it dawned on me that this was the perfect opportunity to pray for those in need, to catch up on the leadership blogs that I felt were vital to being a good manager, and to decompress before reaching my home. Looking back on the several years I spent commuting, I realized that those hours of commuting not only improved my leadership skills, but the time I took to decompress and process my day made me more affective at home as a father and a husband. I also remember the joy I felt when those I had prayed for expressed thanks and appreciation for my prayers during their times of need.

Another area in which our faith affects our work is in the area of productivity. When we know we are serving the king of kings, we try that much harder to accomplish what we are called to do. Combine our desire to please God with the knowledge that the fruits of our labors provide

⁵⁶ Schuurman, *Vocation*, 165.

for the needs of our fellowman, and there is a sense of deep meaning and satisfaction in what we do. By providing for those in need through what we do, we help God care for creation. Since the needs for humanity are so vast and numerous, there is enormous potential for kingdom workers to meet the needs of others while representing the kingdom.⁵⁷

The Goodness of Work

After each stage of creation, God stated, “it is good,” and on the sixth day once the work was done, God said, “it is very good” (Genesis 1). We see in Genesis that work at its very nature can be good. It also is hard wired to provide for the good of others. This is the essence and value of kingdom work. In today’s world of computers and technology, some vocations may seem as though they would be hard pressed to fit into a kingdom work concept. We need to realize that for a Christian, work that is done in a way that is pleasing to God is key. It takes all forms of work to make the world function. Kingdom work looks at what can be good for us, what is good for the world, and what is glorifying to God.⁵⁸

Kingdom work can be redemptive in nature. Whether it is done by a pastor or an artist, an element of redemption can be woven into one’s work. As humans, we are sub-creators in the image of God. Human work is a form of that creative power. Architects, carpenters, welders, and musicians, as well as a multitude of other vocations, can help create and fashion our world. Work is part of God’s way of sustaining and providing for humanity. Farmers, fireman, police officers,

⁵⁷ Schuurman, *Vocation*, 168.

⁵⁸ R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans, 1999), 124.

biologists, and scientists, to name a few, all do work that are part of God's plan to sustain and provide for creation. Governments, judges, and law makers are part of God's plan to maintain justice in the world. Medical professionals, social workers, and counselors, along with many others, help do works of compassion to bring healing and wholeness to God's people. Preachers and teachers, along with educators and others, are part of how God familiarizes us with the truth.⁵⁹

We live in a fallen world. Sin has affected everything we do. As Kingdom workers, we can understand the value and goodness of work, but we must also reject the worldly view of the futility of work. Making lots of money doesn't equate to success. Our vocations should never become an idol to be worshiped or a trophy to be exploited. The dichotomy of secular and sacred tends to raise the value of one person's work above another's.⁶⁰ In the Kingdom of God, all callings are equal. A pastor's calling is not a higher or greater calling than that of a carpenter or a doctor. They are all important and vital to the kingdom of God. In a world that tries hard to separate one's faith from the mainstream of life, Christians need to fight hard to see how our faith integrates into everything we do. Being Christian is more than a belief. It is a way of life that should filter in who we are and all that we do.

Looking back at a long history of work in multiple vocations, I realize there were times I took work for granted. This was usually because I didn't see the value and goodness of the job at the time I was working. There were times that I was unable to work due to being laid off, or I had physical limitations and could no longer perform the job. It was during these times that 2

⁵⁹ Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, 103.

⁶⁰ Chapter 7 will discuss the dichotomy of secular and sacred in greater detail.

Thessalonians 3:10 would haunt me: “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.” Paul condemned idleness and the stress it placed on the community. He encouraged those who were working to do their work quietly and not grow weary in doing good (v12-13). There is more value to work than we realize.

The significance of human work, however, goes far beyond providing human beings with the necessary means of sustenance. We not only live from what we do, but to a large extent, we also are what we do. Although there is an important sense in which this statement is not true, one can hardly deny that we cannot understand ourselves anthropologically (i.e., who we are as human beings) and sociologically (how our societies are structured and how they function) without taking into account the ways in which we go about doing our daily work.⁶¹

Closing Thoughts

Today more than ever, when providing for the needs of humanity, work takes many forms. It can be done for pay or as an act of service toward one another. The key factor is that the purpose of work extends far beyond our need for money or material goods. Work is a form of ministry. It is one of the ways we love God and love our neighbor. Seeing work as a form of ministry enables us to fill others' needs far beyond a typical job description. It would be naive to think that God or God's expectations for believers changes when we enter work. The Holy Spirit isn't oblivious to a dichotomy of secular and sacred. “Sadly, a great deal of the shabbiness and shadiness of many Christians' work is directly related to an inadequate and often distorted theology of vocation.”⁶²

The story of Esther appears to show us that some callings may not be a perfect fit or even a personal choice (Esther 2:7-9). But jumping from job to job trying to find that perfect fit may

⁶¹ Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 26.

⁶² Tom Nelson, *Work Matters*, 95.

not be the best plan either. We need to keep in mind that God has a divine purpose for our lives. The vocation and location we are currently in may be part of God's timing just like it was for Esther. Sometimes the place to start is to be a kingdom worker right where we are. We can trust that if God has something else in mind, God is more than able to let us know what that is. Until then, be faithful, glorify God, and continue to represent God's kingdom.

There are times when we don't know or will never know the impact that we have on those around us through our work. Needless to say, whether we realize it or not, those around us are being influenced by how we do our work. One of the vital aspects of every job is being aware of the hearts and minds of those we come in contact with. As kingdom workers, it is important to remind ourselves that the most appreciable asset of our work is people. To show the importance and value of work in the lives of those around us, I end this chapter with a true story taken from *Saving the World at Work* by Tim Sanders.

A few years ago, I gave a lecture at a technology conference about the dangerous high-tech/low-touch management style in which e-mail replaces face-to-face contact, even when the manager's employees work in the same building.

It's possible, I argued, that you could work for months without real human contact with your coworkers or your boss. I explained how dangerous this isolation can be when coupled with a lack of recognition—too many managers fear that if they give specific praise to an employee who is later laid off, the compliment could fuel an employee lawsuit for unjust dismissal.

This pattern leads to workplace depression, I continued, presenting research showing how depression in turn leads to ill health, poor productivity, and low morale. I argued that everyone in the audience needed to rescue their people from such unnecessary pain and suffering, and that that task was a vital component of good management and saving the world at work.

I concluded my talk with this thought: "If there are people in your life who are important to you, and you haven't given them sufficient recognition in the last three months, shame on you. If you've reduced your relationships to e-mail threads, shame on you. If you acted like this toward your children, I would tell you that you were not a good parent. If you did this to your friends, I would tell you're not a good friend. If this is your management style, I would tell you're not a good manager.

Then I invited the audience to ask me questions or share stories.

A few days later, I received an e-mail from someone I'll call Steve, manager at a software company. In the note he admitted, "I'm guilty as charged. I'm exactly the type

of manager you described. I have nine software engineers who report to me. We all work in the same building, and I've seen only one of them face-to-face in at least three months. We do everything over e-mail and instant messenger.

"Worse than that, I haven't praised anyone since last year's annual review. Yet all nine of my engineers are great workers and good people, and they don't deserve to be treated this way. What should I do?"

I told him to take immediate action by spending time thinking about the contributions each one of his nine employees made to the company and told him. Meet with them in person, I said, and give them the recognition they deserve. The rest will take care of itself.

A week later, Steve sent me a note I'll never forget as long I live. The subject line of the e-mail was "Xbox Story." The following tale is somewhat graphic, but I have to tell it in full to convey its power and show why it changed my life.

Steve told me that he'd met with all nine of his engineers that making one positive personal and one positive professional comment.

Days later, one of his engineers (whose real name he disguised as Lenny) entered Steve's cubicle just as Steve was arriving at work. Carrying a box wrapped in brown paper and topped with a bow, Lenny told Steve he wanted to give him a gift.

Steve unwrapped the box and found a remarkable prize: an Xbox gaming system and a copy of the John Madden Football video game Steve was thrilled.

It wasn't his birthday or a special occasion, and Steve hadn't given Lenny a raise for as long as he could remember. On top that, all of his engineers had been grumbling that they could hardly make ends meet on their meager salaries. So Steve asked Lenny where he got the extra money for such a lavish gift.

Lenny looked him straight in the eye and said words no manager expects to hear: "I sold my chrome-plated 9mm semiautomatic."

Lenny told Steve that though he had worked at the company for two years, in all that time Steve had never asked Lenny a single question about himself. Now he wanted to answer the questions Steve had never asked.

Lenny had moved to town from Denver the day after he buried his mom, who had died suddenly. Lenny's mother was his only close friend and only real confidante. "She understood my nerdy ways," he said.

So Lenny moved to a new city and took a job at a company where he thought he would find other nerds and make new friends. But, he said, "People here aren't very friendly. No one ever speaks to me in the halls or the lunchroom."

When Steve looked surprised, Lenny continued, "I've worked here two years, and if I died, you'd only find out from payroll, because the direct deposit wouldn't go in. That's how disconnected I thought you were from me."

"I don't have a single friend in the company. I come in every day, log in, and spend my life looking at a computer screen."

Lenny said that his only friend in the world was the Internet. So he logged on daily to look for solutions and found several. "Suicide chat rooms," he said. "They're filled with other people just like me. And they told me what to do. They told me about 'the program.'"

"The first step is to buy a gun so beautiful that you want to come home from work every day and admire it. It helps you get over being afraid of it."

Lenny saved up for several months and bought a chrome-plated, 9mm pistol, which he stored in a Cohiba cigar box. Every night when he got home from work, he'd open the box and look at the gun.

A few months later, he started the program's next step. After work he'd put on the right mood music, which in his case was Kurt Cobain, and then get up the courage to take the gun out of the box and practice holding it in his hand.

Steve, silent, let Lenny spill his story.

"There's another step, called teething," Lenny explained. It's a difficult but important part of the program. Here you get used to the sensation of the barrel of the gun sitting on top of your teeth, because they teach you right away in the chat room that you've got to put the gun inside your mouth and not upside your head, otherwise You'll only graze yourself and it won't work."

"And it takes a while," Lenny added, "to get over the shakes."

Another step is called "the final approach," which was where Lenny had recently arrived. "You load the gun. You take the safety off. You put the barrel of the gun inside your mouth and put some pressure on the trigger. Each night, same routine, more pressure. I was getting closer and closer and closer. I was almost there."

And then, the other day, Lenny continued, "you freaked me out. You come into my cubicle, you put your sweaty arm around me. And you tell me that you admired the fact that I turned in every project one day early and it helped you sleep at night. Which, by the way, Steve, is my style. You also told me that I had an incredible sense of humor over e-mail, and that I made the whole group laugh when times were stressful."

Moving closer to his boss, Lenny whispered, "But then you told me, Lenny, I'm glad you came into my life."

At that minute, I was off the program. I shut the cigar box and put it in my backpack. I called in sick yesterday' because I wanted to sell the gun immediately. I took it back to the pawnshop that sold it to me, and they gave me a few hundred bucks. I thought to myself, "What do I want to spend this money on?"

"Then I remembered that you had been bellyaching for a month on e-mail that your financial controller at home, aka your wife wouldn't let you buy the new Xbox gaming system because you had a new baby."

With tears streaming down his cheeks, Lenny said, "Sir, in exchange for my life, my soul, this gift is for you."⁶³

⁶³ Tim Sanders, *Saving the World at Work: What Companies and Individuals Can Do to Go Beyond Making a Profit to Making a Difference* (New York, NY: DoubleDay, 2008), 228-33.

Going Deeper

1. How has your work molded you in the past two years? Has it been for good or for bad? Why do think that is?
2. How has your work helped you grow as an individual? As a Christian? As a kingdom worker?
3. Looking at the story by Tim Sanders is there someone, whom God may be laying on your heart to encourage this week?

Part Two: The Redeemed Kingdom

Chapter 3

Created, Redeemed, and Empowered

Let's look at some of the foundational biblical aspects of being a kingdom worker. In this chapter, we will look at three primary areas that I believe are essential for us to understand our calling as kingdom workers. First, we are created to be kingdom workers. Though we have looked at the Genesis account in some of the other areas of this book, here we will dig a little deeper into the concept of being created in the image of God and what that has to do with “ruling” and “dominion,” as well as kingdom work. Second, we are not just created for kingdom work. We are saved for kingdom work. Here we will look into the reality that we are not saved *by* good works but saved *for* good works. Third, we will look into the idea that God has also gifted us for kingdom work. Our talents and spiritual gifts work in harmony with our calling. I will then give my closing thoughts on this chapter.

Created for Kingdom Work

The creation story is foundational for many aspects of our Christian faith. It is vital to understand not only our “cultural mandate,” but why we were created. In many cases, we as Christians see the creation story through only one lens, the origins of the universe, in order to prove God created the world. Instead, I want to look at the socio-vocational aspects of Genesis. The book of Genesis refers to humankind being made in the image of God in three places, Genesis 1.26, 5.2, and 9.6. The word “image” is defined as “likeness, i.e., that which is a

pattern, model, or example of something.” The word "likeness" is defined, “that which has similarity or comparison.”⁶⁴

What does it mean to be made in the image and likeness of God? How does this relate to the identity and purpose of humanity within the created order? Although the meaning of “the image of God” is not totally clear, it is evident that it depicts humanity in some fashion as being like God. Even if the image of God cannot be clearly defined, out of all creation the original author set man apart from the rest. This elevates us to see humanity as the most highly developed creature.⁶⁵

Over the centuries, this open-ended aspect of “the image of God” has been forced into multiple molds of every aspect of religious and philosophical thought. Ambrose believed it was the soul that depicted the image of God. For Athanasius, it was humanity’s capacity for relationship. For Augustine, it was the human’s soul, memory, and intellect. The Reformers felt the image of God was destroyed at the fall, and that it was found in the initial condition of righteousness only enjoyed by Adam. Enlightenment thought has depicted the image of God as residing in the soul. Barth admits that one can discuss which opinion sounds the best and which one seems the most plausible, but readily admits that one cannot tell which one is the correct interpretation of the text.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Bible Languages with Semetic Domains Hebrew (Old Testament)*, 2nd Edition (Logos Research Systems, 2001), 1952 and 7512.

⁶⁵ Greg A. Reich, “Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology” (master’s thesis Northwest University, 2013), 52, [http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib,sso&db=cat08405a&AN=wu.139804\\$site=eds-live&scope=site](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib,sso&db=cat08405a&AN=wu.139804$site=eds-live&scope=site).

⁶⁶ Greg A. Reich, “Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology” 53.

Two words are key to understanding this portion of Genesis. The first is “dominion,” which is also defined as to rule, direct, lead, control, subdue, manage, or govern an entity, people, or government with considerable or forceful authority.⁶⁷ The second word is subdue, which can be defined as to overcome, enslave, or conquer and control an environment or people.⁶⁸ Part of being image bearers is having the power and responsibility to rule over creation and subdue the earth. It takes both bearing the image of God and fulfilling the stewardship aspects of Genesis to effectively execute God’s plan for humanity.

When placed in the context of Genesis 2, one could conclude that being an image bearer was to be done in a stewardship fashion or in a kind and benevolent way. The text does not lead one to believe that the rule of humanity is absolute. Ruling needs be in conformity and harmony to the design given by the one who delegated the responsibility. Within the text, the reader sees the value that God placed on all of creation: “it was very good.” This value leads to the conclusion that ruling is not oriented around neglect and abuse but caring and compassion. Part of what it means to bear the image of God is working in God’s creation. Man is placed in a role to serve and care for creation in the garden (Gen. 2:15). With this, came the freedom to be creative. “And whatever man called every living creature that was its name” (Gen. 2:19).⁶⁹

Work was not forced on humanity; it is part of being human, as well as part of the stewardship process. Genesis depicts work as a God given task and part of stewarding the earth. Dominion isn’t the meaning of bearing the image of God. To claim that dominion means bearing

⁶⁷ Swanson, Dictionary of Biblical Languages, 8097.

⁶⁸ Swanson, Dictionary of Biblical Languages, 3899.

⁶⁹ Greg A. Reich, “Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology” 55.

the image of God would be far too narrow. A broader meaning suggests that humanity was made in the image of God, in order to serve and protect creation. The power to rule comes from being an image bearer. It could be concluded that since God is the sovereign creator of the universe, humanity has been made in the image of God to rule as God's representatives. The author of Genesis clearly places humanity as part of creation but above the rest of the created order. In relation to the rest of creation, humankind serves as the "vice regent." The ruling and reigning over creation become the primary functions of being created in God's image.⁷⁰

It can be said that "the garden is something to be protected more than it is something to be possessed."⁷¹ God intended humanity to have purpose instead of being idle. Physical labor is not a result of sin, but part of the original plan god intended for humanity's role on earth. Nahum Sarna points out in Genesis "that the image simultaneously expresses both the glory and insignificance of man."⁷² Humankind has a significant role creation. Being formed by the hands of God and made alive by God's breath, humanities relationship with God unusual in comparison to the rest of creation. At the same time, it is apparent that humans are part of the created order, created from dust by the hands of the Creator.⁷³ Humanity was created by God and given the creativity to be kingdom workers, to nurture, guide, and watch over God's good creation. We see in Genesis 1:27 that God was a creator. God created, not because God had to, but because God chose to, because God enjoys creating. After making the whole of the earth and all the living

⁷⁰ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology" 59.

⁷¹ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, ed. Robert Hubbard Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 171.

⁷² Nahum M. Sarna, "Genesis," *The JPS Torah Commentary*, ed. by Nahum M. Sarna (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 17.

⁷³ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology" 58.

creatures, God made humankind in the image of God, the creator. One of the things distinctive about humankind is that we create things. As humans, we don't just create out of necessity. We create, because we desire to create. We enjoy creating. Even in our fallen state, we personify the creator's image by creating things. Part of our nature is to create.⁷⁴ Dorothy Sayers notes that "He is made in the image of the Maker, and he must himself create or become something less than a man."⁷⁵ Our work in many ways bears the image not only of the one doing the work but the one who created the one doing the work. Work is vital to God's creation design.⁷⁶

Redeemed for Work

Genesis builds a broad understanding of work. Once God made humankind, we are told that God planted a garden. God placed the man in the garden to "work it and keep it." This doesn't depict or focus on human choice but on divine design and calling. In contrast to much of our current understanding about work and personal choice, we see in creation a loving and sovereign creator who was also a divine caller. We see that humans were given a calling of stewarding creation and were commissioned to care for and nurture it.⁷⁷ But in Genesis 3, we see that the fall of humanity corrupted the process of work. Our work today is not what God originally intended. With the curse, work now includes toilsomeness and sweat. What was once a freeing endeavor, allowing God's creation to reach its full potential, now has become a weight

⁷⁴ Dorothy L. Sayers, "Vocation" in *Work in Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom and Vacation*, ed. William C. Plancher (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 406.

⁷⁵ Sayers, "Vocation" in *Work in Callings*, 406.

⁷⁶ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 22.

⁷⁷ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 25.

that humans were never intended to bear. The groaning of creation and heavy burden of work are a bleak reminder of the result of sin and rebellion.⁷⁸

What is the answer to a life filled with toilsome work? The answer is Jesus. Paul in Ephesians 3 explains that we were at one time separated from God. Sin not only cursed us, but it cursed creation and work as well. It was a package deal. But in Christ, things changed: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 3:8-10). Jesus provides through grace not only redemption from sin but a new foundation for work. We aren’t saved by our works. According to Paul, we are created and saved for good works that were prepared beforehand, so that we could play our role in God’s plan. Tom Nelson explains “Our work gives evidence of our glorious creation as well as our great estrangement from God and our need for a Savior who will redeem us from sin’s devastating curse.”⁷⁹ Our calling can never be separated from the gospel. At the heart of kingdom work is the transforming power of the gospel.

Our salvation changes everything. “Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work” (2 Tim. 2:20-21). According to Paul, every household has vessels of every type. Some of them

⁷⁸ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 38.

⁷⁹ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 42.

more honorable than others. Paul explains that those cleansed from dishonor are now set apart to be used by the master for every good work. It is clear that “every good work” means all work that is good. In Christ, we have been saved and set apart to be kingdom workers ready for every good work. Notice that every vessel has a purpose, and if it is cleansed, its purpose changes. No matter the size, shape, or makeup for those that are cleansed, their purpose becomes good works. Humanity was not just intended to work but to do good works that are in accordance with how we were created, designed, and best suited as God’s kingdom representatives.⁸⁰

Empowered for Work

Not only are we created to work and redeemed for work, but we are also empowered to do good works through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. One of the biggest misunderstandings within the church today is the assumption that the gifts of the Spirit are only meant for church. This is not the case. “Spiritual gifts are intended for all the people of God, so that they can enter into God’s beautiful work of transforming creation, culture, and people.”⁸¹

When looking at the gifts bestowed on us through the Holy Spirit, it would be beneficial to look at both 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. In 1 Corinthians 12, after Paul lists the gifts of the Spirit, he proclaims, “All these are empowered by one Spirit, who apportions to each as he wills” (v11). He then, in the remainder of the chapter, discusses the correlation of the members of the physical body in relation to those in the body of Christ. In Ephesians 4, after his list of spiritual giftings, he explains their purpose, “to equip the saints to do the work of ministry” (v12)

⁸⁰ Ben Witherington III, *Work*, 7.

⁸¹ Ben Witherington III, *Work*, 40.

with the intent to build up, create maturity, and stabilize the body. It doesn't appear that Paul is just talking about church. The body is the body whether people are assembled on Sunday at church or whether they are individually at work. Every church is made up of highly talented and gifted people: lawyers, doctors, nurses, carpenters, plumbers, mechanics, janitors, singers, song writers, athletes, government workers, and the list can go on. Each one is empowered through the Holy Spirit to be a kingdom worker every day of the week. This is not just a New Testament concept. A commonly overlooked story in the Bible when discussing the gifts and talents of kingdom work is found in Exodus 35 and 36. Here we see God calling out Bezalel and Oholiab by name as men filled with "skills, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship" (35:31). In turn, God also called every craftsman to use their skills in the construction of the sanctuary. "When a member of the body of Christ has gifts needed for particular forms of service, that member has a particular calling to use those gifts in that service. The duties bound up in various services are to be fulfilled as responses to God's callings."⁸²

In order for work to be classified as work in the Spirit, it must be done in cooperation with God. This work goes beyond our natural talents into the gifting and empowering act of the Holy Spirit within and through the Christian believer. Through the presence of the Holy Spirit within the life of the believer, human work can be done in cooperation with God.⁸³ As Christians, we understand that we each have spiritual gifts given to us by the Spirit. These gifts aren't just for church. We are responsible to use them in all we do. We don't choose these gifts. We know that this is up to the giver of these gifts, the Holy Spirit. Because the Holy Spirit

⁸² Schuurman, *Vocation*, 38.

⁸³ Miroslav Volf, "As Cooperation with God," *Work in Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom and Vacation*, ed. William C. Plancher (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 102.

enables us to imitate Jesus in all that we do, we must realize that our work is no longer separate from our faith. It is an extension of our faith.⁸⁴

In every sense, human work is transformed into kingdom work, which builds and expands the kingdom of God, as well as provides for the common good of our neighbors. Our spiritual call is one of entering the kingdom of God through the power of the gospel and living a life characterized by spiritual gifts and the fruits of the Spirit. When we willingly use our spiritual gifts in Kingdom work, we can see powerful results. Our work brings glory to God. Honoring God should be our primary motivation when doing kingdom work. Our work helps us to love and serve our neighbors. This can be either directly or indirectly. Every time there is a storm, and the power goes out, the local power company sends workers out into some harsh conditions to restore the power. The result of restored power is part of their indirect love and commitment to their jobs. We don't always get to see the results of our work for God. Kingdom work doesn't always have to provide a practical need. Kingdom work can also enrich our lives through the sheer beauty of a craftsman's work.

When we begin to see that yielding our lives to Jesus affects all aspects of our lives, then our work, no matter how big or small, can be used to fulfill God's purposes. We are all called to discover how our lives fit into the bigger context of God's plan for creation. Life is not a series of mistakes, accidents, and/or wasted efforts. Through the redemptive act of Jesus, we can participate in the eternal purposes of God.⁸⁵ The New Testament speaks of spiritual gifts given to each believer. Though these are supernatural gifts given by the Holy Spirit to the believer, they

⁸⁴ Ben Witherington III, *Work*, 37.

⁸⁵ Schuurman, *Vocation*, 66.

are often harmonious with and strengthened by a person's natural gifts. It is often the knowledge of our natural giftedness that helps us recognize our spiritual gifts and our calling. As agents involved in God's redemption of His creation, our calling as kingdom workers is not only to the church but to the vast world outside of the church. When we know our giftedness, we can begin to see the need for our talents and gifts to be combined. We begin to see God's call take form around us.

Closing Thoughts

Growing up like so many American youth, I dreamed about having a number of careers when I finally reached adulthood. I enjoyed architecture. I had a better than average aptitude toward drafting but found I had little aptitude toward math. I still use some of the skills I learned during that time to design my own projects, but I just didn't have what it took to be an architect, especially now that everything has been computerized. I also dreamed about being a veterinarian. I was raised on a small ranch in Montana. That dream quickly ended once I started taking college level Chemistry and Physics classes. Eventually I settled in to my giftings and talents. I found that I have a better than average ability to speak in front of people and to lead large projects. In that niche, I have had the privilege to serve in churches as paid and unpaid staff, manage large natural gas pipeline projects, work in business, and head up a non-profit. In each of these jobs, I sensed the call of God. "A person's gifts form one important indicator of directions in which God may be calling that person. Although the repaid pace of change in today's society creates stress, it also provides new opportunities for aptitudes to shape one's callings."⁸⁶ We often

⁸⁶ Schuurman, *Vocation*, 145.

struggle with the misconception “that God has a rigid, highly detailed blueprint for each life. Within this blueprint, God calls individuals to a single specific place of work, and to no other... Christians who hold this view are highly anxious that they might miss their one and only chance to heed God’s call. They fear they may choose the wrong profession, or accept the wrong job offer.”⁸⁷ When we look at gifting and calling, it is often the case that God works with them in harmony. For many, God doesn’t normally call us in ways that do not include our spiritual gifts and our talents. In some cases, God’s call takes us well beyond our current abilities and causes us to learn and incorporate areas of gifting we are unfamiliar with. Needless to say, “all gifts and callings depend upon God’s grace and good will, and that God delights to take what is weak in the eyes of the world to shame the strong.”⁸⁸

From the beginning of creation, God not only designed humankind for work, but God gave us work to do. In Genesis, God commands us to subdue the earth and rule over it. God didn’t say exploit or destroy creation, but work and care for creation. Creation isn’t passed off as complete in Genesis. Part of the ever-continuing part of creation is human work. God intended that human work would help in developing and expanding creation.⁸⁹ When sin enters the scene, work changes. Sweat and toil are now part of the process for the man, and pain in childbirth, part of the process of the woman. Even though work was changed, it can still be satisfying. Despite the pain of childbirth, women still find great joy in having children. Despite the changes in work due to sin, it can still be enjoyed and done readily for God. Christ redeemed us, and the Holy

⁸⁷ Schuurman, *Vocation*, 125.

⁸⁸ Schuurman, *Vocation*, 143.

⁸⁹ Ben Witherington III, *Work*, 4.

Spirit continually gifts and empowers us, to be kingdom workers. Work is a form of worship that not only serves others but serves God as well.

I will end this chapter with the parable Jesus tells of the final judgment. I think it ultimately unfolds the power of kingdom work and helps drive home the ideas that we are created, redeemed, and empowered for work.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (Matthew 25:31-46).

Everything described in this parable can be seen as an act of ministry through work.

Though we are saved through faith in Christ, there is an expectation that we meet the needs of others for the sake of the Kingdom. What we do, why we do it, and how we do it has eternal value to those around us. To see work only through the lens of creation or as an act of Christian living leaves it at the center of everyday living. God's purpose for creation was not intended to be an end in itself. The purpose of creation is "bringing about the good of establishing

community and creating something of eternal value both to God and ourselves.”⁹⁰ “In the Bible and in the first centuries of Christian tradition, meeting one’s needs and the needs of the community (especially its underprivileged members) was clearly the most important purpose of work.”⁹¹ Kingdom work not only has eternal value. It has eternal ramifications as well.

⁹⁰ Cosden, *Work and the New Creation*, 166.

⁹¹ Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 149.

Going Deeper

1. Looking at your gifts and talents, how can you use these in kingdom work?
2. Can you think of a time in your Christian walk where you felt empowered by God?
3. Can you remember a time when you did something for someone in need, and you felt as if you were doing it for Jesus?

Chapter 4

Culture Making: Kingdom Influence

My interest in culture has drastically increased in the last decade or two. This may be due to the rapid rate of change that is happening around us on a global scale. For those of us with several years of experience behind us, culture may seem like a revolving door. One fad fades away while a new one comes in all without missing a beat. If you have been around long enough, even some of the old fads come back around. Take cell phones for instance. They didn't exist when I was young. I was in my early thirties before I got my first cell phone. It was what was called a Motorola bag phone. At that time, the convenience and prestige of having a mobile phone for work outweighed the fact that it was the size of a shoe box. Over time, phones got smaller, and their technology became more powerful. I was ecstatic the first time I purchased a flip phone that was about the size of a deck of cards. Lately, it seems that as technology has increased once again, so has the size of the cell phone. Now that we can make phone calls on our laptops, it does not take much to realize that phones are back to being as big as shoe boxes. What does this have to do with theology and culture or kingdom work? As society changes and advances, so does the culture, sometimes for the better, sometimes not so much. One of the greatest challenges Christians face today is figuring out how to engage in a culture that is constantly shifting and changing. Keeping with the theme of kingdom work in this chapter, we will look at the idea that part of being a kingdom worker is understanding and engaging in our culture. First, we will look at Genesis and what is considered the "cultural mandate." Second, we will take a solid look into Richard Niebuhr's work on Christ in culture. This provides a good

jumping off point as we move forward when we discuss what it means to be culture makers. Finally, will look at a few of the challenges Christians face when engaging culture.

The Cultural Mandate

Culture making was instilled in us at creation. It is part of who we are, for better or for worse. We engage in culture making whether we are doing kingdom work or not. We can see in Genesis that we are called to create a culture that mirrors our creator. As we will see, culture building can separate us from God instead of drawing us closer to God. Part of culture making is knowing how to deal with sin and its many influences: “To put it most boldly, culture is God’s original plan for humanity, and it is God’s original gift to humanity both duty and grace.”⁹²

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth (Genesis 1:26-28).

When looking at the creation account in Genesis prior to the mandate to subdue and have dominion over the earth, God pronounced a blessing. This became the foundation and covering for everything that followed.⁹³ Part of understanding Christ in relation to culture is understanding God’s mandate for humanity during creation. Part of being made in the image of God is being

⁹² Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 175.

⁹³ William Edgar, *Created and Creating: A Biblical Theology of Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2017), 166.

given the power to rule and have dominion over creation (Genesis 1:26, 28). Within this idea of ruling, having dominion, or reigning is an implied level of responsibility instead of an overt exertion of power.

Scholars have debated for years as to the full meaning of being image bearers.⁹⁴ Some believe it has to do with humanity's ability to think rationally. Others see it more as an implication of being God's representatives on earth.⁹⁵ Part of the creation story includes what I call kingdom work in the ruling, reigning, and flourishing process: "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). In this text, God unfolds the responsibility of cultivating and caring for creation. Part of what is happening in Genesis 2 is God's invitation to humanity to be involved in the continuous process of creation. Part of humanity's divine destiny includes being image bearers, co-creators, and kingdom workers in culture making. God in his genius gives Adam the freedom to name the animals and care for creation. William Edgar points out in his book *Created and Creating* that this freedom to have dominion doesn't equate to selfish control. It is meant to be done in harmony with God's design and desire for creation. Part of this process includes spreading God's blessing over creation as we rule.⁹⁶ William Edgar explains "Blessing the earth, God's gift, procreation, populating the earth, dominion, all of these institute what is sometimes known as the "cultural mandate."⁹⁷

Nancy Pearcey sums up the Genesis account nicely:

The first phrase, "be fruitful and multiply means to develop the social world: build families, churches, schools, cities, governments, laws. The second phrase, "subdue the

⁹⁵ Crouch, *Culture Making*, 102-03.

⁹⁶ Edgar, *Created and Creating*, 167.

⁹⁷ Edgar, *Created and Creating*, 170.

earth,” means to harness the natural world: plant crops, build bridges, design computers, and compose music. This passage is sometimes called the Cultural Mandate because it tells us that our original purpose was to create cultures, build civilizations—nothing less.⁹⁸

Part of the cultural mandate can be fulfilled by a fallen and broken world. For those, whose hearts are under the rule of God, the cultural mandate takes on a new and more redemptive meaning. This doesn’t mean that we sit back and let the world decline. Transformation is part of the heart of God. But only God has the power to transform. As Christians, we are only participants in this process. Since we are powerless apart from Christ in the transformation process, we also have no business taking any of the credit or glory for any transformation taking place. This victory belongs entirely to God. Our responsibility comprises obedience to the mandates of God. God is responsible for the outcome. Theologian James Hunter asserts that “to be Christian is to be obliged to engage the world, pursuing God’s restorative purposes over all of life, individual and corporate, public and private. This is the mandate of creation.”⁹⁹ Cultural engagement is part of our daily calling.

Niebuhr’s Christ and Culture

When we as Christians look at culture, the question is not so much how we can change culture due to the fact that culture is always changing, but whether we influence it or not. The question should be, what is our role within the culture we live in? Richard Niebuhr in his book

⁹⁸ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 47.

⁹⁹ James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: Irony, Tragedy, & the Possibility of Christianity in the Modern World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4.

Christ and Culture seems to be pondering a similar question. Much of what we see, when looking at the importance of Christians integrating and influencing culture, starts with Niebuhr's work. His intent was to answer the problems that exist due to the differing of opinions within Christianity. He breaks the Christian views of Christ and culture into five separate categories. First, Christ against culture; second, Christ of culture; third, Christ above culture; fourth, Christ and culture in paradox; and last, Christ the transformer of culture. According to Niebuhr, "Christ and Christians threatened the unity of the culture in both their radical monotheism and a faith in the one God that was very different from the pagan universalism which sought to unify many deities and many cults under one earthly or heavenly monarch."¹⁰⁰

Andy Crouch provides one of the clearest overviews of Niebuhr's work:

At one end of Niebuhr's scale are those who see Christ against culture and see the Christian duty as withdrawal from the world; at the other are those who see culture as fully agreeing with Christ that they make him a Christ of culture. A more moderate version of the first is to see Christ and culture in paradox - to acknowledge the corruption of culture but still to believe that Christian life can and must be lived faithfully in it. A more moderate version of the second is to believe that while culture is good in and of itself, it cannot lead us all the way to a Christ who is above culture. Niebuhr's fifth type, Christ transforming culture, takes culture's fallenness seriously but hopes for "conversion" within it.¹⁰¹

The topic of Christ and culture at best is complex and sometimes speculative. To be fair, it is easy to misread and criticize Niebuhr's work due to his typology of Christianity. It is important to keep in mind that these categories are not cast in stone nor intended to be seen as complete. His intent is to create a place to discuss how the Christian faith has reacted to the dominate culture around it. When interacting with a pluralistic society, Christian monotheism

¹⁰⁰ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*. 50th anniversary edition (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1975), 8.

¹⁰¹ Crouch, *Culture Making*, 179.

and its claims about Christ and God are not always well received. According to Niebuhr, “it deprives social institutions of their cultic, sacred character; by its refusal to condone the pious superstitions of tolerant polytheism it threatens social unity.”¹⁰²

When defining culture, Niebuhr states that human process and civilization imposed on nature is made up of human beliefs, values, languages, processes, customs, and social structures. He goes on to say that all of culture is based on human accomplishments, which are a product of both human intelligence and physical effort, both as individuals and as a community. Culture in turn defines the idea of value. Human achievement usually focuses on the good of humanity. The purpose of culture then becomes the service of good for all humanity. This makes work a primary focus in culture. Religion and God are okay, as long as they advance and benefit human life.¹⁰³

The main concern of culture is with earthy and material pursuits oriented around humanity’s physical existence. Even the immaterial side of culture is expected to have a link to something tangible, such as feelings and intellectual imagination. Culture is often characterized by pluralism, since its values are vast, due to the sheer number of human interests represented in the culture. Each individuals’ interests are special and complex in regard to spiritual things.¹⁰⁴ “The cultures are forever seeking to combine peace with prosperity, justice with order, freedom welfare, truth with beauty, scientific truth ‘with moral technical proficiency with practical wisdom, holiness with and all these with all the rest.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 9.

¹⁰³ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 32-35.

¹⁰⁴ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 37.

¹⁰⁵ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 38.

Christ Against Culture

The first of Niebuhr's categories is Christ against culture. This view stems from the belief that Christ does not share authority over the Christian believer, and there is to be little to no loyalty to the culture. This appears to be logical, due to the common Christian view of Christ's Lordship over the believer, most likely stemming from 1 John 2:15-17. The writer of John explains that believers are not to love the world or the things of the world, since the world is fleshly and prideful. The world is passing away, but those in Christ will live forever. Since Christ came to overcome the world and is the only one who has the ability to bestow eternal life, the loyalty and allegiance of all believers must be toward the things of Christ and not the things of the culture.¹⁰⁶

Niebuhr interprets the command to love one's neighbor as loving other Christians. 1 John becomes a warning against getting involved in the social dynamics of the culture. The responsibility of every believer is to reject the world and its desires and cling to the things of God. This led to a withdrawal from culture by most Christians. Those who did engage in their culture responsibly were thought to be overly concerned with gaining wealth and were named as idolizers of the material world.¹⁰⁷ It is impossible however to completely disconnect from culture and from our needs for culture. Despite culture's conflict with Christian beliefs, one must still interact with it. Eventually, we need to understand that there is a "now and not yet" aspect of the Christian faith. Despite the brokenness of the world, Christians will eventually learn how to maneuver and relate to their culture.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 48.

¹⁰⁷ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 68.

¹⁰⁸ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 73

D. A. Carson points out the inadequacy of the Christ against culture position. Even the most devout Christians utilize and take advantage of at least some aspect of their culture in which they live.¹⁰⁹ “Christians themselves inevitably constitute part of culture. Is it not grossly misleading to try to sort out the relationship between ‘Christ’ and ‘culture’ if there are not two entities, but only one?”¹¹⁰ Christians as people, in one aspect or another, are deeply ingrained in their culture. Everything we do and everything we are as humans is influenced by culture.

Christ of Culture

The second category Niebuhr looks at is the Christ of culture. This is where all tension between Christ and culture is removed. This group is not concerned with integrating Christ into all aspects of culture. Their desire is to separate the rational Jesus from the historical myths. They see Jesus as a great educator.¹¹¹ Thomas Jefferson and others saw Jesus as a philosopher and enlightener. A great teacher, person of reason, and moral educator, he helped advance the morals of society. This Jesus wasn’t the infinite son of God as depicted in the New Testament. Their Christ belonged to culture and would never ask anyone to forsake their worldly desires but would join them in the pursuit of meaning in their daily lives.¹¹²

Albrecht Ritschl, a protestant culturalist, sought to elaborate the Christ of culture mindset. Though he desired to establish his thoughts on Christ of culture based on the New Testament Jesus, his true starting point when looking at culture was man’s dominion over nature.

¹⁰⁹ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 15.

¹¹⁰ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 75.

¹¹¹ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 84.

¹¹² Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 92-3.

His focus wasn't so much on Jesus, but on how humanity was radically different from the rest of creation. Life for humanity was an end in and of itself. Every aspect of culture was in a constant struggle against nature to establish God's kingdom. Ritschl felt that most Christians didn't really understand God due to poor critical methodology in understanding God and forgiveness.¹¹³

Many of Ritschl's cultural concepts were filled with dualities. Though he agreed with the forgiveness of sins, he felt that it was the responsibility of all Christians to work toward creating a perfect society. He saw no conflict between Christ's mandate to build the church and being part of the cultural community. To him, ethical society was just an extension of the church. The only way to be an example of Christ and fulfill one's kingdom calling was to seek the common good of others through civic service. Ritschl saw Jesus not only as a prophet but a moral hero and the founder of the Christian community. The kingdom of God wasn't about the authority of God over the life of the believer but the moral actions of humanity that transcends nature.¹¹⁴

The Christ of culture members appear to be fence sitters. They believe Jesus to be the answer for what ails society but believe that he is not the judge over society. They are comfortable seeing little or no conflict between Christianity and the culture.¹¹⁵ Sooner or later, one has to come to the recognition that Jesus is more than a moral teacher and a prophet. He was God incarnate, the risen savior, the son of God. His call to humanity is more than a call to straighten out society and ease human oppression. The kingdom of God is a group of moral

¹¹³ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 95-96.

¹¹⁴ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 97-98.

¹¹⁵ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 16.

individuals trying to make society comply with their personal depiction of God's purpose and plan. As members of God's kingdom, we are obedient participants in His redemptive plan for creation. Though our work is an extension of Jesus' lordship in our lives, it is not what establishes heaven on earth. Human effort will never create a world free from sin. The Kingdom of God, the new heaven and earth, can only come through the work and return of Christ, not through human work.

Christ Above Culture

The third group is Christ above culture. Niebuhr calls this group the "church of the center." This group doesn't side with either of the previous groups. Humanity's problem lies in the sinfulness of humankind and its separation from God. This group's theological approach starts with Jesus being the Son of God, the creator. Culture can't be all bad, since it comes from the goodness of creation, created by God. God and Christ are one. Obedience to Christ is lived out in the daily lives of believers. True obedience cannot happen apart from interacting with culture. The group attempts to synthesize the New Testament with the demands of everyday life. Advocates of "Christ above culture" want to both appreciate culture and show their loyalty to Christ.¹¹⁶

Niebuhr shows that the Christ above culture group finds a balanced combination of concepts in order to reach a cohesive approach that is attractive and widely accepted. The need for unity is deeply engrained in humanity, and humankind cannot be at one with itself, while rejecting culture in an effort to follow Christ. Culture is needed if Christians are going to follow

¹¹⁶ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 117-118.

the command to love one another. This leads to a form of reconciliation between Christ and culture without having to deny either one.¹¹⁷

Christ and Culture in Paradox

A fourth group is Christ and culture in paradox. This group is considered another central group and is in opposition to the “Christ above culture” group. Though this group stems out of a similar approach to the Christ above culture faction, they take a more dualist approach. They try to have clear boundaries between their loyalty to Christ and their cultural responsibilities.¹¹⁸ They focus on an understanding of God’s grace over the sins of humanity leading to a changed life. Their belief in the unmerited favor of God brings them to a place of repentance. This doesn’t blur the fact that grace comes from God, while sin is innately part of humankind. The act of reconciling humanity back to God happens solely due to God’s grace.¹¹⁹ In this dualism, we realized that humanity “belongs to that culture and cannot get out of it, that God indeed sustains him in it and by it; for if God by His grace did not sustain the world in its sin it would not exist for a moment.”¹²⁰

Niebuhr sees Martin Luther as a good example of the dualist approach. Christ deals with the moral side of humanity, but man constructs a culture, in which humans carry out their daily lives through work. Luther frees people from special vocations within monastic communities and places them within relationships with their neighbors through ordinary work. All areas of life

¹¹⁷ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 141.

¹¹⁸ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 149.

¹¹⁹ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 151.

¹²⁰ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 156.

become places that provide opportunities to serve one's neighbor and obey God. Luther did not see this freedom as the freedom to pursue culture but the freedom to choose one's calling in order to accomplish the command of loving God and loving people.¹²¹

Christ the Transformer of Culture

The final group Niebuhr discusses is Christ the transformer of culture. This group is also considered a central group. Much like the other two central groups, their focus is on Christ the redeemer. They accept their position in society and recognize that Christ will someday judge the world. They start from the primary position that Christ's desire is to convert or transform culture.¹²² This group has a less negative and more hopeful view of culture. This group holds three main convictions. The first focuses on Christ in God as the creator in Genesis empowering man through Christ's redemption to have the creative power to change culture as part of a daily calling.¹²³ The second conviction is that the fall of humankind is moral and personal, not physical. Though the fall of humanity has its physical ramifications, the primary aspect of the fall was the corruption of humanity. The third conviction is that history of humanity depicts the rise of Christian culture and the demise of pagan culture. This group realizes that they are living in an in-between time in human history.¹²⁴

One of the dangers of embracing the "Christ transforming culture" mindset is that we soon make it "Christians transforming culture," distracting from the fact that only Jesus has the

¹²¹ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 174.

¹²² Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 190.

¹²³ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 192.

¹²⁴ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 194.

power to change lives. Another concern is the assumption that through our limited understanding of scripture, we can speculate at what Jesus thinks of our current culture. This is not the only challenge. Christianity in turn assumes that they can, by their own efforts, establish what they think Jesus wants by taking things into their own hands.¹²⁵

Niebuhr concludes his study with the knowledge that his results are not conclusive. Each believer needs to struggle with the Christ and culture process. He explains that the conclusions are limited, because our faith is limited and won't be complete until the return of Christ.¹²⁶ He doesn't draw any final conclusions, nor does he seem to offer a great deal of hope as to a solution to the different views, other than that our faith needs to focus on God as ultimate authority.

The challenge with Niebuhr's understanding of Christ in culture stems from a broad and inclusive concept of who Christ is, especially if he is trying to limit his understanding to those who confess Christ and are trying to live under scriptural authority.¹²⁷ To Niebuhr's credit, he doesn't take a blind approach to the center groups, who have synthesized aspects of culture and their religious beliefs. This group doesn't seem to acknowledge the daily aspects of human life. All groups in one fashion or another are conditioned by the culture they live in. When looking at the dualist group, Niebuhr realizes that by pronouncing judgment on all society as sinful and corrupt, they are pronouncing judgment on themselves as well. The dualist group looks at this judgment and relies on the sustaining grace of God.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Crouch, *Culture Making*, 181.

¹²⁶ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 253.

¹²⁷ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 10.

¹²⁸ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 22-23.

As Christians, we cannot look at Christ in culture without acknowledging the effects of the fall on all of creation. We are a people in tension of the “now and not yet.” The reality remains that we are sinful and corrupt. We are called as Christians to walk in holiness before God. We cannot forget our need for the grace and mercy of God in Christ. It is through the gospel of Christ that we can engage in our culture and become lights amidst the darkness. If this is the case, whether we want to or not, we must recognize that influence is multidirectional. Christianity can influence culture, and in turn, culture influences Christianity. Niebuhr tends to limit culture to a system of values gained by human achievement. Niebuhr’s culture openly embraces beliefs and values. Christianity isn’t openly embraced in a post-Christian world, though Christ may be. This makes a study of Christ and culture difficult. Culture is equal to the world in Niebuhr’s definition, which in reality is culture without Christ. In his transition of groups, Niebuhr eventually gets to Christ transforming culture but with such a broad analysis of culture, it is hard to tell how and when the culture is being transformed.

Culture Makers

“Culture making requires shared goods (shared and beneficial to all). Culture making is people (plural) making something of the world—it is never a solitary affair.”¹²⁹ Since culture making is part of why we were created, it can’t be done alone. It requires shared goods. This shows that work is part of culture making, especially when work becomes kingdom work. Is there a difference between being a culture maker and a world changer? Do I really think

¹²⁹ Crouch, *Culture Making*, 40.

Christians as individuals can change the world? My answer to both questions is yes and no. Only God has the power of transformation, and only God can truly bring eternal change to the world. But I do believe that part of kingdom work is being a divine influence on the world around us. Our job isn't to change the world. Our job as a kingdom worker is to allow God to change us, which in turn will in some way influence how we do our work, how we treat others, how we live our lives, and hopefully create an opportunity for someone else to be changed by God. In this way, when Jesus changes the life of another through our involvement in their lives, we become culture builders and world changers.

As kingdom workers, I suggest that we don't focus our efforts on being world changers. It is more effective to focus our efforts on a local scale. We need to focus on being faithful in our daily lives and influencing others, one life at a time. Part of culture making is stewardship, not just with our money, but with our time and with work. Being a good steward is a vital part of kingdom work. We pay homage to culture when we bow down to it, looking and acting like it. As Christians, our allegiance is first to the kingdom of God.

Culture is "a world in the sense that cultural texts create a meaningful environment in which humans dwell both physically and imaginatively. Culture is the lens through which a vision of life and social order is expressed, experienced, and explored; it is a lived worldview.... Culture is the software that determines how things function and how people relate in a given society."¹³⁰ When we become Christians, our priorities change. Our allegiance and responsibility is to seek first the Kingdom of God. This doesn't negate our cultural responsibility. It transforms culture's importance and value into something with eternal significance. The kingdom of God is

¹³⁰ Kevin Vanhoozer, "What Is Everyday Theology? How and Why Christians Should Read Cultural," in *Everyday Theology*, ed. Vanhoozer, Anderson, and Sleasman (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 27.

simply the establishment of the rule and reign of God within the lives of believers. Our focus is taken off of ourselves and placed on God and God's purpose for creation.¹³¹

Within our culture, we will find ourselves living in a state of conflict. John Hunter points out that “we are confronted with a paradox. Culture – making something of the world, moving the horizons of possibility and impossibility – is what human beings do and are meant to do. Transformed culture is at the heart of God's mission in the world, and it is the call of God's redeemed people... as it turns fully embracing this paradoxical reality is at the very heart of what it means to be a Christian culture maker.”¹³²

Much of culture incorporates the values or moral preferences of the majority of the people within a society. Individuals within that culture manifest these values through their daily activities. Our values, what we believe is the truth, our views of right and wrong, all form in us a worldview. The choices and discussions we make are based on our worldview. As Christians, our worldview is called to be founded on the kingdom of God, and the only way that can happen is if it is grounded in the Bible.¹³³

Challenges

As kingdom workers there are challenges working in a post-Christian culture. One of the challenges that we need to struggle with is not whether we have adequate faith to influence the culture where we work, but how our surrounding culture has been formed. Part of our spiritual formation involves being conformed into the image of Christ, while living in a post-Christian

¹³¹ Edgar, *Created and Creating*, 104.

¹³² Crouch, *Culture Making*, 189.

¹³³ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 6.

culture. When we come to Christ, we are not just saved from our sins. We are called to be representatives of God's Kingdom to the world in every aspect of our lives. We are not only called to a church community. We are called to the world. This is part of the "Great Commission" in Matthew 28: 19-20: "All authority in heaven and earth has been given me (Jesus)." Jesus commands us to go about the business of being kingdom representatives, discipling, baptizing, and teaching. This isn't done in a vacuum. It is done as we live our daily lives, engaging in our culture through work, play, family, friends, and in spiritual formation. "Formation is about learning to live the alternative reality of the kingdom of God within the present world order faithfully. Formation, then, is fundamentally about changing lives."¹³⁴

Another challenge to consider is that, depending on where they live, Christians tend to emphasize different aspects of the Bible. For example, one group may emphasize evangelism and yet another social justice. It is inevitable that, depending on where Christians are located throughout the world, their understanding of scripture will be influenced by their culture. Christians in some areas of the world are undergoing persecution for their faith. They will relate to certain Bible stories differently than those who live in an area where religious freedom makes persecution almost nonexistent.¹³⁵

Timothy Keller, a theologian and pastor, brings up a vital point when looking at the difficulty of prioritizing God's kingdom and engaging in culture. This can be seen when looking at the many injustices occurring in our current culture. On one side, some American Christians, when looking at culture, see the need for social reform, citing their biblical views, while standing

¹³⁴ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 236.

¹³⁵ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 84.

against others who don't share their beliefs. On the other side, there are Christians, who avoid social justice issues altogether, with a desire to avoid acting like the world.¹³⁶ Many Christians and non-Christians have a passion to engage and shape culture. For Christians, the mark that is left behind should be for the betterment of creation and the world we live in.¹³⁷

When looking at culture, it is wise to consider the influence of secularization on culture. Secularization systematically pushes religion out to the periphery of the mainstream and into the private sector. For the most part, as long as religion is kept private, the dominant trend doesn't object. But when one's religion interacts and makes claims on culture, the dominant trend is less tolerant. Christianity, even when privatized, is often seen as a threat to cultural norms. Privatization can go too far. It can cause one's faith to become invisible and ineffective. This also makes a Christian's engagement with culture in a positive way difficult.¹³⁸

The concept of Christ and culture is some ways dependent on the culture and circumstances we find ourselves in. Whether one lives in a culture that embraces freedom of religion or one lives in a culture of fear and persecution, in some way, it affects how we see Christ within culture. Many other things affect our perspective as well. This may be the reason why it is so challenging to draw clear lines in the categories of Christ and culture. The kingdom of God shouldn't be reliant on the culture, as much as it relies on the hearts of each individual believer.

¹³⁶ Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (New York, NY: Dutton, 2010), 162.

¹³⁷ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 3.

¹³⁸ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 16.

Closing Thoughts

Part of our calling on earth is characterized by culture. Culture shows both our commonality, as well as our differences. There are both positive and negative sides to culture. Some aid humanity and others hinder humanity. The cultural mandate to be taken seriously takes a willingness to walk in obedience to God. This is not intended to be a burden but a natural extension of who we are as believers. This is also what makes the gospel message so powerful. We are invited to join forces with Christ, laboring with him in the restoration of God's good creation. This process isn't for the elite and powerful. It is for those who have a desire to serve. Jesus states in the gospel of Mark that the greatest among us are the servants. Even he himself didn't come to be served but to serve and give up his life for others (Mark 1:43-45).¹³⁹

The desire to serve is a big part of a kingdom worker's heart. Linking our skills and talents to Christ and his plan for creation is what infuses our work with dignity. My intention in discussing Christ in culture is not to explain or insinuate that as kingdom workers, our primary focus is to be world changers. This is not to say that Christians shouldn't be part of social reform. My concern and purpose is to help Christians recognize that Kingdom work is influential in culture. It not only molds and shapes us; it shapes others around us. For some, social reform is kingdom work. For many others, it means being a faithful presence slowly engaging and creating change through daily obedience. We get a sense of what it means to be a culture changer, when we play a part in changing lives through Christ. Changed lives eventually change culture.

¹³⁹ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 3.

Going Deeper

1. Out of all of Niebuhr's Christ and culture groups, which one(s) do you relate to?
2. Do you see yourself as a culture maker? If so, why? If not, why not?
3. What is your greatest challenge when trying to be a kingdom influencer where you live?

Chapter 5

Kingdom Attitude

In an earlier chapter we focused on the concept that we were not only created for work, but we were redeemed and gifted for work as well. Every church has the responsibility to teach and promote a deeper understanding of what it means for disciples to be kingdom representatives in the work force. A solid theology of vocation is essential for the church to fulfill its gospel calling. It is vital for us to remember that the “primary work of the church is church at work.”¹⁴⁰ As Christians, we spend much more time at work than we do at church. Our work should be an extension of what it means to be representatives of God as kingdom workers. Paul proclaimed, “For you remember, brothers our labor and toil: we worked night and day that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God” (1 Thess. 2:9). Paul worked hard as a tent maker to avoid being a financial burden to those with whom he was sharing the gospel. Paul didn’t see tent making as a lesser calling. He saw it as an avenue to touch hearts and share the gospel. He saw the work of his hands as an act of faithful service to God that allowed him to spread the gospel wherever he traveled.¹⁴¹

In this chapter, we will look at what I call Kingdom attitude. Like it or not, our attitude is a one of the deciding factors that determines whether we are successful in life or not. The truth is, “there is very little difference in people, but that little difference makes a big difference. The little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative.”¹⁴² I will first

¹⁴⁰ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 190.

¹⁴¹ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 191.

¹⁴² John C. Maxwell, *The Winning Attitude: Your Key to Personal Success* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 35.

touch on the idea of the faithful presence of God and the faith presence of a kingdom worker.

Next, we will look at some of the key attitudes and mindsets that are important to Kingdom work. Let's keep in mind that this list is not intended to be exhaustive. In my closing thoughts, I will look at Jeremiah 29 as an example of a faithful presence in kingdom work.

Faith Presence

We often fall prey to the idea that in order to advance the kingdom of God, we have to be pastors or missionaries. Paul saw his vocation as a way to live out his calling. When we faithfully see our vocations as kingdom work, we live out the gospel every day in ways that can reach people, who aren't always reachable by pastors. We need to realize that all callings, whether as pastors, business leaders, janitors, or ditch diggers, are a high calling. Each one of us is called to be a reliable example of what it means to live daily life as a person of God.¹⁴³

John Hunter, in his book, *To Change the World*, unfolds the important truth of God's faithful presence. Hunter discloses four attributes of God, oriented around faithful presence. In God's faithful presence, we see how God pursues us, how God identifies with us, and how God offers us life and sacrificial love. God's faithful presence and these four attributes will be the springboard for the remainder of this chapter.

The first aspect of God's faithful presence is God's never-ending pursuit of us. John 15:16 says "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name,

¹⁴³ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 191.

he may give it to you.” God, through his love, facilitates a relationship with us.¹⁴⁴ No matter how much we make a mess of our lives and the things around us, God still desires to fellowship with us. It takes us a while for this to sink in. When we come to Jesus in faith, we often tell people that we found God. It has always been a bit humorous to me, and I am often tempted to say, “I didn’t know God was lost,” since it is we who were lost and not God. When God found us, despite our brokenness, God saw potential. God chose us and appointed to us to the task of bearing fruit. Our fruit should be enduring and stable. It is in this ability of stable endurance that we are given the assurance of God’s provision.

The second aspect of God’s faithful presence discussed by Hunter is that God identifies with us. God knows all aspects of creation. Through the incarnation, God experienced all the joys and challenges of humanity.¹⁴⁵ There was a popular Christian song in the 1980’s by Benny Hester entitled, “Nobody Knows Me Like You.” It was a song oriented around the idea that when we come to Jesus, we really don’t realize just how much we really need him.

All of my secrets to You I tell
 You saw each time that I slipped and fell
 And all of my faults, yes, You know them well
 But You've never turned me away, no, no, no.

Nobody knows me like you,
 You put your arms around me, you bring me through,
 There's many times I don't know what to do,
 Though some know me well, still nobody knows me like you.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 241.

¹⁴⁵ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 242.

¹⁴⁶ “Nobody Knows Me Like You,” *Personal Best* (album), accessed January 13, 2022, https://www.newreasetoday.com/lyricsdetail.php?lyrics_id=21371.

It is not uncommon for us to question whether we are fully understood. Part of being human is the need to be known. As part of God's faithful presence, we are fully known. God understands who we are. Proverbs 18:24 lets us know that "there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother." That friend, his name is Jesus.

The third aspect of God's faithful presence is the offer of life for those who believe in Jesus. The life God offers is a life "marked by goodness, peace, truth, beauty – joy, fruitfulness... the shalom of flourishing."¹⁴⁷ In the "Sermon on the Mount" Jesus acknowledges that the needy should be cared for, that prayer is important, that serving two masters is impossible, and that much of life produces anxiety. But He says, above all, focus on finding the Kingdom of God: "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (6:33). Life really matters. The concerns of the world are real, but without embracing and pursuing kingdom priorities, we have few answers to offer the world around us.

The final aspect of God's faithful presence is His sacrificial love. The book of Hebrews tells us that God intentionally suffered on our behalf, taking on our punishment for sin, so we can be set apart, made holy for him.¹⁴⁸ John 15:13 says this: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." God knew that the ultimate proof of divine presence was the death of his son Jesus. Sometimes I wonder if the church can't learn a few things from military boot camp. I am not saying it should be as abusive or as demanding, but there is something to say about the fact that the military can take strangers, who have little to nothing in common, and build in them a willingness to sacrifice their lives for their country. Over a period

¹⁴⁷ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 242.

¹⁴⁸ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 242.

of weeks, men and women, total strangers, are broken down, and then built back up again with a new understanding of honor and respect for others. Somehow during this process, a willingness is instilled in them that could cause them to throw themselves on a grenade for their fellow soldiers. There is something about the power and presence of sacrificial love that captures even the hardest of hearts. “Pursuit, identification, the offer of life through sacrificial love—this is what God’s faithful presence means. It is a quality of commitment that is active, not passive; intentional, not accidental; covenantal, not contractual.”¹⁴⁹

For kingdom workers, faithful presence starts on two fronts, first in the family, secondly in the church. “If Christians cannot extend grace through faithful presence within the body of believers, they will not be able to extend grace to those outside.”¹⁵⁰ Whether working as a pastor, coach, or businessman, I have explained to more than one person that you can’t export what you haven’t imported. An attitude of faithful presence is vital when doing kingdom work. In Christ, through our work, we can pursue relationships with others, we can listen to their stories, and we can find a common ground to identify with. We can offer hope and express unconditional love. As a kingdom worker, I have adopted a list of non-negotiables that help me navigate how I work. Two of these non-negotiables were instilled in my life more than thirty years ago, as I listened to John Maxwell talk about leadership. The first is that “people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” The second: “Never ask for a hand unless you’re willing to touch a heart.” As a kingdom worker, I understand that the most appreciable asset is people. Our attitudes toward people matter, and those attitudes will dictate how we treat them.

¹⁴⁹ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 243.

¹⁵⁰ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 244.

Kingdom Attitudes

When looking at the attitudes that are key for doing kingdom work, at the top of the list is a love for God and a love for people. When Jesus was asked in Matthew 22 what the greatest commandment was, he boiled it down to two: Loving God and loving people. The priority that is set up by Jesus is love. Later Jesus added a new command: “love one another.” This love will be proof of our discipleship (John 13: 34-5). Kingdom workers strive to live lives of love.

The next attitude is a desire to be teachable. Since all work for Christians has value to the Kingdom of God, as faithful stewards, there is a need to gain a level of expertise and excellence in whatever we do. There should be a desire to grow and expand one’s knowledge and understanding that allows for greater opportunities. This provides a greater platform for kingdom influence in the world.¹⁵¹ “Vocational stewardship involves making an inventory of one’s skills and then asking, “For whom could I deploy these?” Thinking creatively and prayerfully about the answer to that question can open up new avenues of service.”¹⁵² No matter how much we think we know, each challenge we face is an opportunity to learn.

Kingdom workers have a heart and desire to serve. Kingdom workers are called to be servants. Our calling is to use our talents and skills to fulfill the mission of Christ and to bring an understanding of what it’s like to live in God’s coming kingdom.¹⁵³ Paul’s first letter to the church in Thessalonica unfolds the importance of seeking the good of others. “See that no one pays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone” (5:15). Doing good becomes an act of service. “God’s purpose for our vocation is to love and serve our

¹⁵¹ Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, 121.

¹⁵² Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, 125.

¹⁵³ Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, 130.

neighbors. The outcome is a “divine division of labor,” where there is a continuous flow of serving one another in love.”¹⁵⁴

Being a Kingdom worker takes an attitude of courage to face and act responsibly in a world filled with injustice and pain. There are times when we have to make decisions that won’t be popular in today’s culture. This means that we sometimes make decisions that are contrary to the cultural norm. Sometimes being courageous isn’t going to assure safety.¹⁵⁵ As kingdom workers we often find ourselves confronted with opportunities to be a voice for the voiceless and disenfranchised.

Being both courageous and a good steward takes a level of humility, especially if a person has a significant amount of influence. Stewarding that influence needs to be done with humility and grace. The largest part of our lives is lived while working. This provides us the greatest opportunity to represent the King.¹⁵⁶ “Believers can and should think differently from everyone else in our culture about all aspects of life, especially work. Because we celebrate human creativity as evidence of our being made in the Creator’s likeness, Christians must encourage one another to do work worthy of our best efforts and worthy of our highest calling.”¹⁵⁷

An area of encouragement that appears to be lacking in the United States is toward our elderly. An attitude of longevity may not be considered vital in a culture that seems to see old age as a disadvantage. “The problem we have in America in discussing our work is that our

¹⁵⁴ Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *God at Work* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 40.

¹⁵⁵ Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, 133.

¹⁵⁶ Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, 135.

¹⁵⁷ Welchel, *How Should we Work?*, 5.

approach and attitudes about work are grounded in unbiblical myths of various kinds.”¹⁵⁸ Many of us see work as a specific season in life. Once we reach the end of that season, we feel we have paid our dues and deserve to retire comfortably. The problem is that the Bible doesn’t offer retirement for kingdom work. A vocation may end; but being active in kingdom work never does. As a leadership life coach, one of the things I discovered when coaching leaders is how many of us have our identities and lives structured and oriented completely around our jobs and careers. I am a true believer in having a life mission statement oriented around who and what God has called us to be. This statement needs to be holistic in nature, not job focused, but life focused. This statement should sum up what it means to be a kingdom worker. For example my mission statement reads, “I will daily encourage myself and others to live a life of authenticity and excellence.” This is who I am. This is how God made me. Knowing my calling and my life mission enables me to see whatever I do for the Kingdom of God as kingdom work. If my calling was oriented strictly around my career, then what happens to my calling when I no longer have that career? If it is oriented around being productive, then what happens to my calling when I can no longer be productive?

My grandmother spent the last years of her life in a rest home with a feeding tube, unable to speak. During that time, I asked her how she spent her time. She pointed at the letters on her spelling board: P-R-A-Y-I-N-G. I then asked her for whom was she praying. The first word she spelled was Y-O-U. She spent some of her time praying for me. As we communicated that day, she divulged a long list of people she prayed for, including her room mates and their families. Before she passed, she had thirteen roommates. All thirteen roommates came to know Jesus

¹⁵⁸ Ben Witherington III, xxi.

before they died along with a large portion of their families. My grandmother's prayers, as well as the love of my mom and aunts who visited her on a regular basis, all played a part in touching the lives many people. My grandmother knew her calling. She knew that even though she was bed ridden and couldn't speak that she could pray. As Christians, we need to see our calling as going beyond our ability to produce within our jobs. Our calling is not what we do. It is who we are, and whose we are, that matters. Kingdom work, no matter how minuscule it seems, is vital to the Kingdom of God. "Work is not a secular activity; it is a sacred one originally ordained by God, and so it must be undertaken in holy ways."¹⁵⁹

An attitude of humility is a must when taking on kingdom work. There are few things more challenging when dealing with an attitude of entitlement and arrogance when working. There are just times when we feel the need to tell people exactly what we think or show them what we are capable of. Peter tells us to dress ourselves with humility towards others. Not only must people resist pride, so does God. God gives grace to those who are humble. We are to humble ourselves before God, casting our cares on our creator. God cares for us and will exalt us in God's own time (1 Peter: 5:5-7). Humility is not a weakness; it doesn't mean we don't care or aren't motivated. Humility is a willingness to trust and yield our lives to God.

An attitude of worship is a vital aspect of kingdom work. "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ." (Col. 3:22-24) We are called to give every task our wholehearted attention, no matter how minor it may seem. God sees, when

¹⁵⁹ Witherington, *Work*, 15.

no one else does, that we are working “as for the Lord.” We are not only called to serve others through our work, but work is also an act of worship before God. If God didn’t see work as vital to the kingdom, it wouldn’t be logical that God would ask us to do it wholeheartedly. The work we do may not be important to those around us, but it is important to God. As Christians, we need to be careful not to reduce work to a simple means of economical exchange, a day’s wage for a day’s pay. By turning work into a commodity to be sold, some types of work are considered more valuable than others. The unpaid tasks of daily living like house cleaning and childcare have little to no value. The concept of Kingdom work needs to be seen through the understanding that God sees human labor as part of God’s plan for humanity.¹⁶⁰

Work has a way of exposing what is truly important to us. Idols take on many forms. They can shape our lives and mold our behaviors both at work and at church. They can prohibit us from being as productive as we can be. They can cause us to adopt work practices that hurt and harm others. Sadly, it is far easier to see the idol that drives others and not the ones that drive us.¹⁶¹

It may seem strange to think that a healthy attitude toward failure is valuable when doing kingdom work. Why? Because we are human. We make mistakes. We are all broken, and failures are a fact of life. The question is not will it happen, but when will it happen. Failure will come. How we deal with failure is key to how well we rebound after we fail. No one likes to fail, so it’s important for us to remember that failure is not a person. It’s an event, a place in time that

¹⁶⁰ Jensen, *Responsive Labor*, 3.

¹⁶¹ Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2016), 131.

will pass. Our “attitude toward failure determines our altitude after failure.”¹⁶² Failures are thresholds of opportunity to something greater, as long as we are willing to learn from each one. We can always find reasons to believe that we are failures, but despite our feelings, kingdom workers persevere.

Work should be seen as an opportunity. Keep in mind that salvation is a gift from God. Work neither saves us, nor does it obligate God to us. God’s will for all who serve Him is for us to become like Christ. Work plays a part in the process known as sanctification. Part of sanctification is doing God’s will, and part of God’s will for us is work. As Christians, our identities shouldn’t be defined by our work. We are image bearers and new creations in Christ. This is our identity. What we do should never overshadow who we are.¹⁶³ What good is it if we do things well but are terrible human beings? The heart and soul of being a kingdom worker is the desire to serve and please God. This should show in our attitudes.

Closing Thoughts

I have always loved Jeremiah 29:11. Unlike several people I know, I don’t see it as a life verse, but more like the reason God calls each Christian to take kingdom work seriously.

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. For thus

¹⁶² John C. Maxwell, *Failing Forward: Turning Mistakes into Stepping Stones for Success* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson), 141.

¹⁶³ Witherington, *Work*, 82.

says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the LORD. “For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope (Jer. 29:4-11).

Israel could have taken on a number of wrong attitudes and cast blame on their surroundings. It was clear they were in Babylonian exile, because a loving God sent them there. Despite their location, God gave them kingdom work to do. They were to go about life by building houses, planting gardens, getting married, and raising families. In essence, they were to work hard. They were told to pray and seek the peace of those who captured them, and in turn, they would also be at peace. They were told to seek the welfare of the city in which they lived. Why? Because God had plans for good and not for evil for Israel. When we embrace our call to be workers for the kingdom and see our work as kingdom work, we can rest in the idea that as we work for the common good of those around us, we will benefit as well. “A theology of faithful presence means a recognition that the vocation of the church is to bear witness to and to be the embodiment of the coming Kingdom of God.”¹⁶⁴ In exile, Israel was representing God’s purpose and plan, a plan that was for good and not for evil, a plan for all to flourish.

In the church, it is common to assist others in discovering their spiritual gifts. This in and of itself is not a bad thing. Trouble comes when the awareness of one’s spiritual gifts leads us down the path of selfish ambitions and self-gratification instead of stewardship and responsibility for kingdom work.¹⁶⁵ Pride and arrogance are temptations to be avoided. How much we make,

¹⁶⁴ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 95.

¹⁶⁵ Guinness, *The Call*, 78.

how popular we are, or what our position is at work should never be how we evaluate our success as kingdom workers. How well we do the job, whether we do it with integrity, and whether it glorifies God, should be the final arbitrators of the value of our work.¹⁶⁶ Kingdom workers seek what's important to God and make that part of their priorities. When this happens, we learn to see what parts of our work will endure positively, affecting those around us. Our attitudes toward what is important and valuable can shift over time. Think about it. When one's toilet is functioning correctly, the importance and value of a plumber is not seen. But when it backs up and sewage is flooding the bathroom, the work of a plumber is truly kingdom work. When working for someone else, we don't always have the ability to alter what we do or control how our product affects others. But we do have the ability to choose our attitudes, to do our work well, and to treat others with dignity and respect. A kingdom attitude and mindset push back the ever-present onslaught of the toilsomeness of work and exposes us to the unlimited possibilities of how work can be used to represent the kingdom of God.

¹⁶⁶ Witherington, *Work*, 83.

Going Deeper

1. When reflecting on this chapter, where do you need an attitude adjustment?
2. Can you remember a time when someone else's attitude affected how others saw them as Christians?
3. Think of an example from the gospels of how Jesus' attitude affected others around him. Why do you think Jesus responded the way he did?

Chapter 6

Eschatology Matters

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

What does eschatology or the study of the end times have to do with kingdom work? In the previous chapters, one of the recurring themes about the kingdom of God mindset in kingdom work was the coming of the new creation. In this chapter, I hope to broaden our understanding of eschatology and show how a more redemptive view has the ability to guide and support a theology of work. My intent is to explore a redemptive eschatology that will motivate and empower kingdom workers to see the eternal value of kingdom work. We will view it first through a historical Jewish view and then how it was formulated in the early church. A redemptive eschatology has the ability to connect the biblical understanding of work as being part of the past, present, and future.

An eschatology of hope and the new creation helps us see the value of what we do in the present by looking toward the future of God's eternal promises for this world. Kingdom work is not dependent on a specific view of eschatology, so the annihilation of creation or the restoration of creation does not negate the value of work. If one's eschatology sees earth's destiny as being totally destroyed, the significance of work still has meaning and benefit to the individual worker and the community. Though an annihilation mindset can be compatible with some views of

work, I don't believe it fits with the redemptive heart of God. The idea of total destruction makes it hard to see the value and goodness of both creation and work.¹⁶⁷

A Redemptive Eschatology

Let's begin this section with the understanding that eschatology has a much broader meaning than simply the study of "last things." Eschatology is not just about end times, the return of Jesus, and God's judgment over evil. It also includes the belief that God is directing history toward a promised new world that eliminates evil and holds healing for all creation. I believe that biblical eschatology doesn't anticipate the destruction of the earth, but rather it tells of a transformation of the earth into a complete "new creation." A more redemptive view of eschatology can be grounded in a "theology of hope" that looks to the future. By focusing on the return of Christ and the coming kingdom, as well as a new heaven and new earth, we can see the possibility of changing the present, even while looking forward to the coming kingdom of God.¹⁶⁸

Neither Peter nor Paul see the world as destroyed but purified. God's restoration of the original creation and God's exposing of our work implies that there may be eternal value in the work we do. In 2 Peter 3 we read, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed" (10). "But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (13).

¹⁶⁷ Cosden, *Work and the New Creation*, 173.

¹⁶⁸ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology" 17,

Peter does not see a world that is completely destroyed, but that the world will be purified. Paul confirms this using the concept of fire in his depiction of the judgment as a form of purification rather than total destruction. “Each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done” (1 Cor. 3:15).¹⁶⁹

Eschatology is not merely a separate portion of Christian theology but the foundation of all Christian theology. Eschatology can be summed up as the “doctrine of Christian hope.” It begins with faith in the resurrection of Jesus and looks forward to the future promises of the kingdom of God, hope in the future which has the ability to transform the present. The only true problem within the context of theology is “the problem of the future.”¹⁷⁰

Early Jewish Eschatology

A clear eschatology is rooted in the desire to view theology through the historical backdrop in which it was framed. It is difficult to take a clear look at eschatology apart from the historical understanding of first century Jewish beliefs and their worldview. Throughout history, it was their God who created the universe. With this God, they were in covenant. Their God would end the dominance of other countries over Israel and free them from tyranny. The belief in one God and their belief that they were chosen by God contributed to Israel’s eschatology. An

¹⁶⁹ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 72.

¹⁷⁰ Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, translated by James W. Leitch (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publisher, 1967), 15.

essential part of Jewish eschatology stems from Jewish monotheistic beliefs. It was vital for Jews to understand that they worshiped the one true God, and all other gods were merely human fabrications. Israel's hope was based on their belief in God's plan to liberate them from all aspects of oppression. They believed in the restoration of the land and their ultimate return from exile. This expectation is expressed in the present age and the age to come. The present age depicts Israel's suffering, the new age to come depicts their restoration.¹⁷¹ This hope of Israel underscores the importance of kingdom work, which sees a restored earth as part of God's future promise. This is why eschatology cannot come from a mindset based in Greek thought. Eschatology must be understood through the idea of the promises found in the Old and New Testaments, discovered by looking at the faith of Israel.¹⁷²

Israel's view of salvation didn't consist in escaping the destruction of the world but in the restoration of Israel as a nation. Having been rescued from their enemies, they were freed to live peacefully in their land. The kingdom of God was not some abstract truth. It was seen as the coming reality of the restorative power of God over evil and the establishment of God's authority on earth. For Israel, the true return from exile and subsequent forgiveness of sins were not separate issues. They were in essence the same thing showing the fulfilment of God's promises to Israel.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology" 18 -19.

¹⁷² Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology" 25.

¹⁷³ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology", 20.

New Creation Eschatology

Early Christians did not abandon creational or covenantal monotheism. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ brought the worship of Jesus into the monotheistic structure. What separated Jewish eschatology from that of the early Christians was that in Jesus all of God's promises were fulfilled. Early Christianity's view of reality was discernibly a variation of the Jewish world view. Though early Christianity was in a sense Jewish Christianity, as time passed the gentile influence within Christianity would change this focus.¹⁷⁴

In view of the early Christian conviction that Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promises, four things began to take shape. First, Paul, building on Jesus' resurrection, taught of a new bodily resurrection taking place in a new earth, a place where both heaven and earth would become a physical reality. Second, Christians anticipated Jesus' return. All hope for the present and future was placed in Jesus. Third, Jesus, taking the future upon himself, would now be raised to a place of power. Jesus' return, the renewal of creation, and his judgment go hand in hand. Forth, the future would not mean escaping the world but being an active part of the renewed creation where evil no longer exists.¹⁷⁵

Christian hope should not be based on an escapist mindset, in which heaven is the end. Our hope is in a new heaven and a new earth, a hope that is found in the resurrection of Jesus. God's Kingdom is not a place, sought out in a postmodern world. It is the reality of a God sovereignly ruling and reigning on earth as God reigns in heaven.¹⁷⁶ "Heaven, in the Bible, is not

¹⁷⁴ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology" 21.

¹⁷⁵ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology" 19.

¹⁷⁶ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology" 22.

a future destiny but the other, hidden, dimension of our ordinary life – God’s dimension. God made heaven and earth; at the last he will remake both and join them together forever.”¹⁷⁷ This is depicted in Revelation 21, in which a new heaven and new earth come together. At that time, God will again be with God’s people.

One of the important aspects of the belief in a bodily resurrection is its association with the belief in the messiahship of Jesus. It was beyond comprehension that Israel’s Messiah was going to die, let alone rise from the dead. The messiah was supposed to liberate Israel from their enemies, not die on a cross. Jesus wasn’t what the Jewish people were expecting.¹⁷⁸ When looking at the concept of resurrection through the lens of first century Judean Christian beliefs, it is important to note that early Christians were not talking about “life after death,” but about something beyond life after death: “life after life after death.” Heaven was not so much a location as it was a condition of being in the presence of God after death, while awaiting the future reality God promised to unfold.¹⁷⁹ This “life after life after death” concept depicts eternal life for the believer in Christ. It also allows us to see the value of kingdom work. If part of God’s plan in creation is for man to work, is it possible that God’s eternal plan may also contain work, as we rule and reign with him? This is something worth considering when looking at “life after life after death.”

Christians who say, “This world is not our home; we’re just passing through,” have not taken stock of the theology of new vocation at the end of the Bible, which reminds us that the finishing line for all of us is here on earth, not somewhere out there in a disembodied

¹⁷⁷ N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York, NY: Harper One Publishing, 2008) 19.

¹⁷⁸ Greg A. Reich, “Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology” 23.

¹⁷⁹ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 51.

state in heaven. God, as it turns out, is an ecologist, and he intends to renew and redeem the earth, not just the earthlings. A part of our legitimate work on earth should be to fore shadow that renewal in the way we treat the earth, tend the garden, nurture the soil, clean the air, purify the waters, and “go Green” in our use of renewable energy sources.¹⁸⁰

Promise in the yet to exist future is what allows an individual to find a future hope. In this aspect of promise, the human mind finds unrest in the present. Because much of Christianity is based on the promises of God, we must understand what the promise of God means. Promise proclaims a future that is not yet a reality. The future promise enables Christians to poise their hearts toward the fulfillment of that same promise in the future. When it comes to the promises of God, the future lies not within the ability of man, but in the power of God. The idea of promise has the ability to link humankind to the future, while at the same time allowing for a sense of history. This provides meaning and links the past and the future. In turn it produces faith despite the tension created between reality and what is promised.¹⁸¹

The value of looking at eschatology as a fulfillment of God’s promises is that the promise cannot be separated from God. Fulfillment of these promises then doesn’t fall upon human effort but upon God’s ability to fulfill them. Once an individual begins to understand the possibilities of God’s promises, he or she cannot help but become restless looking toward the future for their fulfillment. With each aspect of fulfillment that takes place in the present world our expectation toward God’s promises increases.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Ben Witherington III, *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 201), 18.

¹⁸¹ Greg A. Reich, “Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology” 25.

¹⁸² Greg A. Reich, “Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology” 26.

“Our hope in the promises of God, however, is not hope in God himself or in God as such, but it hopes that his future faithfulness will bring it also the fullness of what has been promised.”¹⁸³ This hope is not just in the return of Jesus, but in the establishing of his kingdom on earth. It comes from the belief that God is faithful to God’s word, and God’s word will be fulfilled. Apart from this faith, looking into the future becomes nothing more than “speculation.” “It is not our experiences which make faith and hope, but it is faith and hope that make experiences and bring the human spirit to an ever new and restless transcending of itself.”¹⁸⁴

A foundational belief in 1 Corinthians 15 is the hope for a bodily resurrection. Paul points out: “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised” (12,13). Much of what Paul is saying is oriented around the new creation of Genesis 1-3, not a creation heading for total annihilation and abandonment. Paul contrasts the differences between a corrupted body bound to decay, and our future incorruptible bodies that are never to experience decay again. The contrast is not between something material and immaterial but between corruptible and incorruptible physical attributes of the human body. This belief in the bodily resurrection leads one to believe that what is accomplished in our present physical state has eternal value. This contradicts the view that after death, we would be in a constant state of worship in heaven. If we are given new bodies to rule and reign in a new creation, then it makes

¹⁸³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 119.

¹⁸⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 120.

sense that we will have responsibilities and work to accomplish. This also implies that the skills and talents we accrue in this present age will serve a purpose in the age to come.¹⁸⁵

Within the heart of eschatology lies the expectation of the kingdom of God. Eschatology consists of history drawing closer to the return of Jesus under the direction of the Spirit, as well as God actively moving toward humanity from the future. It is through the Spirit, not the advancements of humanity, God's new creation will be brought forth. Though the ultimate reality of the new creation and God's coming resides in the hands of God, this negates the responsibility and value of seeing all work as kingdom work. Representing God in our work prepares us and others for the coming kingdom. It also has the ability to give those around us a glimpse of what is to come for those who are in Christ. The promises of God can only be brought into reality by God interacting with His creation giving us a glimpse of God's coming kingdom. Christians have a responsibility to participate in the coming kingdom, as God reveals the potential of developing that kingdom. As we walk in obedience building God's kingdom God in turn unfolds more of the coming kingdom.¹⁸⁶

The "now and not yet" theology propels our faith into the future, oriented around God's promise. This very aspect of promise leaves the future open to us. Without this openness, hope looks into world limitations and is gnostic in nature. Without hope, people look for ways to cope with and escape the present.¹⁸⁷ Promise is not the fulfillment of a of the unknown. Promise is the announcement of the "not yet" aspect of God's kingdom. The "not yet" makes the future of

¹⁸⁵ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology" 24.

¹⁸⁶ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology", 28.

¹⁸⁷ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology", 30.

God's promises go beyond the expected into the unfolding of God's intent for the new creation.

The idea of future is that which brings fulfillment to the promises of God. Promise does not bring to light an existing reality. Promise is intended carry us beyond reality, bringing with it the future God intended for all of creation.¹⁸⁸

With the resurrection of Jesus comes a new expectation of God's Kingdom as well as, the anticipated return of Jesus. God's Kingdom is not the transformation of this present evil age, but a kingdom that calls things into being that do not yet exist. This gives the Kingdom of God a much broader and comprehensive meaning. Through the resurrection of Jesus the kingdom takes on a Christological meaning. The Kingdom message becomes more universal, the same God who created the universe is the same God who reconciled all things back to God's self.¹⁸⁹ A mindset oriented around resurrection and new creation brings with it a hope that all things are to be made new, even work. Work can now take on a whole new meaning, as we focus on the coming kingdom of God.

When looking at eschatology through the new creation and coming kingdom, it is inappropriate to see heaven as the final resting place for all Christians. Seeing the new creation as the purification of our existing creation helps us to see how kingdom work is involved in the unfolding of the new creation as promised. Seeing the existing creation as part of the new creation enables us to develop a theology of kingdom work from two key points. First, humanity is called to work in cooperation with God taking care and being good stewards of creation. Second, humanity has a role in cooperating with God in bringing forth the new creation. What humans do, has eternal significance that is far more meaningful than simple personal human

¹⁸⁸ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology", 30.

¹⁸⁹ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology", 31

edification. Sin doesn't prohibit our ability to cooperate with God in bringing in the new creation, but it does limit it. God's new kingdom will be a gift not gained through human effort. This acknowledgment does not negate the opportunity humans have in actively serving the Kingdom of God. To participate in bringing forth God's coming Kingdom is not a contradiction to the expectation of His divine promises coming to pass. Through the power of Holy Spirit, we participate in building the kingdom in service to others.¹⁹⁰

If salvation is just a way to get to heaven, then kingdom work becomes just about saving souls, but if we look at salvation through the eyes of God's promises being fulfilled through a new heaven and new earth, our focus is much broader than saving souls for heaven. The consequences of our present actions take on an entirely new meaning. Salvation becomes the saving of an entire individual, not for his or her sake, but for the sake of what God plans to do through that person in the future.

When God saves people in this life, by working through his Spirit to bring them to faith and by leading them to follow Jesus in discipleship, prayer, holiness, hope, and love, such people are designed—it isn't too strong a word—to be a sign and foretaste of what God wants to do for the entire cosmos. What's more, such people are not just to be a sign and foretaste of that ultimate salvation; they are to be *part of the means by which* God makes this happen in both the present and the future. That is what Paul insists on when he says that the whole creation is waiting with eager longing not just for its own redemption, its liberation from corruption and decay, but for God's children to be revealed: in other words, for the unveiling of those redeemed humans through whose stewardship creation will at last be brought back into that wise order for which it was made.¹⁹¹

The new creation will be brought forth not by human effort but by God's power and his God's divine timing. God alone will sum all things up in Christ. Human effort will not assist in

¹⁹⁰ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology", 33.

¹⁹¹ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 200.

this process. Our obedience under the direction of the Holy Spirit will prepare us for the Kingdom of God. Kingdom work is not some futile attempt prior to the destruction of the earth. Every spirit-led act of love and service through kingdom work brings glory to Christ. It is not wasted but will enhance the new creation that God will establish.

Final Thoughts

It is challenging to look at a theology of kingdom work only through the lens of biblical history. To truly understand kingdom work, it must also look into the future. In light of our eschatological view of God's coming kingdom, there is great value in seeing how the creation narrative fits into eschatology. The creation narrative is compatible with God's desires to make all things new, as well as God's desire to dwell forever in creation.¹⁹² The overarching narrative is the redemption and restoration of creation back to God. The Bible starts with God walking in the cool of the evening in his creation with Adam and Eve. In Revelation, we see a combined new heaven and new earth. God will again dwell and walk amidst a redeemed and restored creation along with all who dwell in it. Kingdom work needs to be viewed as both creation and eschatology. "For the significance of secular work depends on the value of creation, and the value of creation depends on its final destiny."¹⁹³

Any work that cooperates with God cannot be seen as a necessary evil or punishment from the curse. Work was part of the design of creation, as well as part of the new creation. Work's purpose is to help design and shape us into Kingdom of God people who will forever be

¹⁹² Cosden, *Work and the New Creation*, 171.

¹⁹³ Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 6.

with God in the new earth.¹⁹⁴ Meanwhile, part of kingdom work will help to bring order into a chaotic world. Our everyday work in cooperation with God through the power of the Holy Spirit is the heart of Kingdom work. Since God created humanity, it makes sense that the wellbeing of humanity depends on God. We didn't create ourselves, and as much as we may believe that there is nothing humanity can't accomplish, we are still reliant on God. Despite what secularism has told us about religion, we as Christians still have the mandate to represent the Kingdom of God and mold the world through our work. There are times when God stays behind the scenes using kingdom workers to do God's will. At other times, God steps in, and in those times, we get a clearer understanding of what God's Kingdom will truly look like.¹⁹⁵

Humanity is good at trying to create heaven on earth apart from God. It's not wrong to have a vision of a better world. Without seeing our future based in God and His kingdom, our hope for the future can easily be corrupted and based on futile human effort. Without God and God's kingdom in focus, our visions become misdirected and will eventually end badly.¹⁹⁶ The basis and focus of the Christian faith is grounded in eschatology, as well is every other aspect of Christianity, along with work. Eschatology shouldn't be seen as the end of creation, but seen as a new beginning, the full appearance of God's Kingdom. Kingdom work becomes part of the hope for God's future, instead of part of a doomsday outlook awaiting the destruction of earth.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Cosden, *Work and the New Creation*, 172.

¹⁹⁵ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 98.

¹⁹⁶ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 108.

¹⁹⁷ Greg A. Reich, "Constructing an Eco-Theology through the Framework of Eschatology", 27.

Going Deeper

1. When thinking about the “Lord Prayer” and your Christian walk, what does “thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” mean to you?
2. How should the “Lord Prayer” affect the way you work?
3. When thinking about redemptive eschatology, how do you feel this should motivate your work?

Chapter 7

The Divided Kingdom

This chapter is dedicated to understanding the dichotomy of secular and sacred, as well as what influenced this mindset. We will look at the many historical influences starting with Emile Durkheim, along with the influence of the Enlightenment and secularism. Then we will look at how Martin Luther's "priesthood of all believers" opened doors for the differing religious opinions that influenced the writing of the 1st Amendment. Some of the questions I will be trying to answer are as follows. Where did this idea of sacred and secular come from? Why is it so prevalent in the United States today? To understand the dichotomy of secular and sacred, we will start by looking back at history to the influences that played a role in its current formation.

Historical Influences

Sociologist and philosopher Emile Durkheim (1858 -1917) looked at the common aspects of religion in the history of humanity and established that all religions see their belief system through a set of opposite lenses described as sacred and profane. Within these two independent categories lie the characteristics of religious thought. Sacred and profane are seen as completely separate categories with no commonality leading to a true dichotomy.¹⁹⁸ The secular and profane are from two distinct contrary worlds and are often viewed as adversaries. Due to the belief that the worlds of sacred and profane are to be kept separate, the inclination is to reject any

¹⁹⁸ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Carol Cosman (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 36.

overlapping or commonality between the two. Within the religious sector of humanity, people are encouraged to embrace the sacred and avoid the world of the profane.¹⁹⁹

Durkheim tended to associate the sacred with a moral community and the profane with self-centered individual activities. Apart from the religious moral community, the sacred cannot exist. It is the common practice and belief in the sacred that forms a sense of unity. Sacred is usually oriented around a deity. Set beliefs and rituals are often protected by a set of do's and don'ts, dictating how to interact with the sacred. In contrast, the profane is the reason that religious boundaries exist, to keep anything that is profane away from anything sacred. The profane drives one deeper into a sense of individualism and is equated to the material world.²⁰⁰

One of the pivotable outcomes of the Enlightenment was the liberation of both scientific and philosophical thought from religion. With this liberation came the desire to restructure and eliminate the influence of old ideas. As a result, both Europe and America started to apply this mindset politically.²⁰¹ The desire to confront the relationship between science, philosophy, and theology led to theological debates. Out of these debates came the concept of “rational belief,” which posited the view that all Christian truth needed to be factually proven. Problems soon arose, due to the fact that there were some things such as miracles and divine revelation that could not be proven, allowing for doubt and skepticism.²⁰² The “Great Debate” in 1860 between

¹⁹⁹ Durkheim, 39.

²⁰⁰ Durkheim, xxii, xxiii, and 36-39.

²⁰¹ Jonathan I. Israel. *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity and the Emancipation of Man 1670 – 1752* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006), 6.

²⁰² Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 65-73.

Samuel Wilberforce and Thomas Huxley on Darwin's book *Origin of Species* solidified the detachment of science from the foundations of religious faith.²⁰³

Since the onset of modernity, humanity has been placed at the top of the order as higher beings, and to some, gods. Enlightenment thought ended the age of innocent religious faith and the influence of religion on society, creating room for other possibilities of influence beyond religion and opening doors to a world of self-sufficiency without God. For the first time, religion wasn't seen as the primary guiding influence in society. Now a humanistic alternative to religion prevailed. Unbelief became a viable option.²⁰⁴ In many countries, religion was now disconnected from the framework of politics. Religion became privatized, while politics became a place for nonbelievers and believers.²⁰⁵

Secular then became associated with public spaces that were emptied of God and religion. "Taken from another side, as we function within various spheres of activity—economic, political, cultural, educational, professional, recreational—the norms and principles we follow, the deliberations we engage in, generally don't refer us to God or to any religious beliefs."²⁰⁶

Prior to this time, religious leaders often influenced societal norms through Sunday sermons. Today, "secular" has not only become the removal of God from public spaces. Secular has also reduced the involvement of Christian belief and practice by drawing people away from

²⁰³ Simon P. Walker, *Leading with Everything to Give: Lessons from the Success and failure of Western Capitalism*, Book 3: "The Undefended Leader Trilogy" (Carlisle, UK: Piquant Editions, Ltd, 2009), loc 261, Kindle.

²⁰⁴ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, UK: The Belknap Press, 2007), 18-20.

²⁰⁵ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 1.

²⁰⁶ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2.

the church. This transformation shifted the environment from a time when belief in God was unchallenged to one that now questions the embracing of faith in God.²⁰⁷

Sadly, Pandora's box has been opened. According to James Smith, there is no turning back. No amount of persistence or devotion will undo the secularism now prevalent in America. The issue at hand within the secular world therefore is how we live and navigate our faith.²⁰⁸

In modernity, particularly in the wake of the Enlightenment, "secular" begins to refer to a nonsectarian, neutral, and religious space or standpoint. The public square is "secular" insofar as it is (allegedly) nonreligious; schools are "secular" when they are no longer "parochial" hence "public" schools are thought to be "secular" schools. Similarly, in the late twentieth century people will describe themselves as "secular," meaning they have no religious affiliation and hold no "religious" beliefs.²⁰⁹

The Enlightenment wasn't the only influence responsible for the removal of religion from the workplace and the public forum.

The Priesthood of all Believers

When looking at the dichotomy of secular and sacred, a deeper broader religious influence needs to be considered. Unknown to some, the teachings of the Reformation heavily influenced the writing of the United States' 1st Amendment of the Constitution, which prohibits congress from establishing a single national religion. Any religion is prevented from exercising its dominance as a faith. Martin Luther's teaching on the "priesthood of all believers," an idea

²⁰⁷ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2-3.

²⁰⁸ James K.A. Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2014), 11.

²⁰⁹ Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular*, 20.

that was central to the Reformation, brought with it the empowerment of the individual Christian to interpret scripture. The “priesthood of all believers” not only gave the individual the right to interpret scripture but to raise questions about the church’s teaching, along with going directly before the throne of grace in prayer without the assistance of a priest.²¹⁰ “In Luther’s theology therefore, the idea of the priesthood of all believers is not primarily about ministry as such. It is concerned instead with the relationship that all have with Christ by virtue of baptism. Luther teaches there are no separate levels of grace, one for the clergy and one for the laity. Luther’s objective was to break down the “walls” of status and standing before God that were introduced into medieval theology and to replace that medieval conception with a more evangelical understanding. The priesthood of all believers was the primary conception Luther used to bring about this shift of perspective. Luther claimed, we are all priests, because we all have the same relationship to Christ. What constitutes the church is the gospel of forgiveness, in which all alike are sinners acceptable to God in Christ.”²¹¹ Christians now had the power to approach God without the need for a mediator through the forgiving work of Christ on the cross. This removed the need for priests to have a different status than others in the church. Though the office still existed, everyone now had the responsibility to share the gospel and pronounce forgiveness.

Along with the influence of Martin Luther’s “priesthood of all believers” came the influence from the dissenting Protestant groups that immigrated to the early American colonies. Religious liberty, the assurance that all denominations had equal representation before the law,

²¹⁰ Nicholas P. Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment: Dissenting Protestants and the Separation of Church and State* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

²¹¹ Gary D. Badcock, *The Way of Life*, 90.

became the cry of the day.²¹² Born out of this mindset came a form of disestablishment created both by protestant dissenters and the Enlightenment influenced thinkers. These kinds of thinkers were founders of the American constitution. They were religious people pushing for the disestablishment of the state church concept and the assurance of equality for all religions. This line of thought, along with a diverse immigration, led to an acceptance of a pluralism of Christian denominations in early America.²¹³ The 1st Amendment was a product of three key factors: the doctrine of secularization born out of the Enlightenment, reformed theology, and a young nation's influx of religious pluralism.

The many historical influences that have led to the dichotomy of sacred and secular in America are complex. This dichotomy, which hinders people of faith to see their daily work as ministry, didn't happen overnight. It was a long and slow process, brought about from thoughts birthed out of deep-seated views of sacred and profane found within all religions. Three major events appear to have laid a groundwork for the 1st Amendment: First, the advancement of rational thought from the Enlightenment; second, the onset of secularism and the privatizing of religion, which removed it from public spaces; finally, the influence of the doctrine of the "priesthood of all believers," which led to religious pluralism. Though the 1st Amendment was written to assure the religious freedom of those living in the US, it appears that it also helped to solidify the dichotomy of secular and sacred.

²¹² Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 152.

²¹³ Miller, *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment*, 4-8.

Dualism

A separation of sacred and secular can lead to a dualistic approach to work. A dualistic approach to work conveys a message that some work is important to God, and some isn't. This type of approach can cause highly effective people to leave a vocation they are uniquely qualified for in order to obtain one conveyed as a higher calling.²¹⁴ The world tends to divide things that were never intended to be divided. Work was never intended to be separated into a secular and sacred mindset. We often see work with a mindset of higher calling and lower calling. Pastoral and church work are often thought of as sacred, whereas other work is seen as secular or of a lower calling. We can see this approach when we use certain terminology oriented around pastoral ministries. The concept of full time, bi-vocational, or co-vocational often denotes different levels of calling. As kingdom people, "there is no more sacred space than the workplace where God has called you to serve him as you serve the common good."²¹⁵

Dualism has led to two very different approaches to work within the church. One approach is that if our work is to be pleasing to God, then everything we do needs to be blatantly Christian in nature. Work is always needed to be done in the name of Jesus and with other Christians in a Christian environment. The other approach, which is far more common, is the idea that people are Christians on Sunday, and the rest of the week out in the secular world, they are at liberty to accept and pursue the beliefs, values, and materialism of the culture. The first approach prohibits our ability to see work as vital for the common good of all people. The second approach fails to connect one's faith and Christian worldview with culture. The way

²¹⁴ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 45.

²¹⁵ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 45.

outside of dualism is the integration of work and faith, which allows us to interact and engage with culture and with those who are not Christians.²¹⁶ Only then can we grasp the value of being kingdom workers and break down the wall of secular and sacred that holds so many at bay.

The false but persistent notion of secular and sacred has been destructive to the church. There is a sense that we live in two distinctly separate worlds. Our personal interests and the pursuits of our everyday lives are thought to be secular, while our spiritual lives, oriented around the church, are classified as sacred. The implications of this way of thinking could lead one to believe that God cares more for the sacred portion of our lives than the secular portion.²¹⁷ The dichotomy of secular and sacred creates a natural hierarchical system that views Christian ministry as the highest calling. Everything else is ranked as less. This mindset has caused many Christians to isolate and see involvement within society as a necessary evil. All work is ministry. The priesthood of all believers assures us that all Christians are priests empowering us to act on behalf of God our king. For us, there is no dichotomy of secular and sacred. All work is sacred when it's done for the glory of God. All work is kingdom work when it's done in the name of the King for the advancement of His kingdom. We understand that "whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ" (Col.3:23-24). Part of working as Christians in a secular world is realizing that we are called to be cross bearers. This isn't a popular topic, but Jesus tells us in the gospels to take up our cross daily and follow him.

²¹⁶ Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 200.

²¹⁷ R. Keith Loftin and Trey Dimsdale, *Work in Christian Perspective: An Introduction in Work, Theological Foundations, and Practical Implications*, edited by R. Keith Loftin and Trey Dimsdale (London, UK: SCM Press, 2018), 2.

Kingdom work is building on what Jesus did on the cross. We should expect as followers of Christ that part of work is taking up our crosses.²¹⁸ For Kingdom workers, cross bearing is an act of laying aside personal ambitions and putting the will of God first. Yielding our rights and desires to God transforms work from a selfish ambition to one of service and worship to God.

Closing Thoughts

All Christian work for the common good is Kingdom work. For many, the dichotomy of secular and sacred creates a mindset of leaving a life of success and seeking one of significance. In reality, all work is kingdom work, and all work can help build the kingdom. The dualistic mindset elevates one calling over another, reinforcing the idea that the Christian should disengage from the world, instead of faithfully engaging in his or her weekly, everyday life.

The sacred and secular dichotomy is a challenge to seeing our work as kingdom work. It hinders us from developing and adopting a strong theology of work. The dichotomy of secular and sacred has led many to believe that leisure is better than work. It reenforces the belief that the only true calling is to the church.

Andy Crouch in his book *Culture Making* helps us see that amidst the mindset of secular and sacred, there is a deeper question to be asked:

The religious or secular nature of our cultural creativity is simply the wrong question. The right question is whether, when we undertake the work, we believe to be our vocation, we experience the joy and humility that come only when God multiplies our work so that it bears thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold beyond what we could expect from our feeble inputs. Vocation – calling - becomes another word for a continual process of discernment, examining the fruits of our work to see whether they are producing that kind

²¹⁸ Witherington, *Work*, 126.

of fruit, and doing all we can to scatter the next round of seed in the most fruitful places.²¹⁹

As Kingdom workers, we need to see that all work is sacred. All work is intended to touch the heart and minds of others for the Kingdom of God. Despite what the world around us calls secular and sacred, we bear fruit for the Kingdom. When perceived in this fashion, it would be doubtful if Christians would see life so easily divided. As Christians, we realize that all aspects of our lives fall under the lordship of Christ, and all aspects of life are sacred. Many Christians have been influenced by the dichotomy of secular and sacred. Scripture promotes a holistic life before God reinforcing the sacredness of all of life.²²⁰

²¹⁹ Crouch, *Culture Making*, 256.

²²⁰ R. Keith Loftin and Trey Dimsdale, *Work in Christian Perspective*, 3.

Going Deeper

1. How has the dichotomy of secular and sacred affected how you do your work?
2. When considering a theology of kingdom work, how can you build bridges to assist yourself and others in seeing their daily work as a calling from God?
3. What are two ways your local church can help you integrate your faith in your job?

Chapter 8

Kingdom Impact

Sometime when you're feeling important;
Sometime when your ego's in bloom
Sometime when you take it for granted
You're the best qualified in the room,

Sometime when you feel that your going
Would leave an unfillable hole,
Just follow these simple instructions
And see how they humble your soul;

Take a bucket and fill it with water,
Put your hand in it up to the wrist,
Pull it out and the hole that's remaining
Is a measure of how you'll be missed.

You can splash all you wish when you enter,
You may stir up the water galore,
But stop and you'll find that in no time
It looks quite the same as before.

The moral of this quaint example
Is do just the best that you can,
Be proud of yourself but remember,
There's no indispensable man.²²¹

²²¹ Saxon Whiter Kessinger, "Indispensable Man," Apple Seeds, accessed January 19, 2022, http://www.appleseeds.org/indispen-man_saxon.htm.

I can't imagine anyone, whether a Christian or not, who in some way doesn't want to have his or her life make an impact. Saxon Kessinger's poem has always been a sobering reality check for me. It reminds me that apart from God, I can do nothing impactful. Yet I am not indispensable. This chapter is about Kingdom impact. If we looked up the word impact in a dictionary, it would say something about the ability to influence or have an effect on someone or something. Kingdom work is hard, and the impact is often hard to measure. In the church, we try to measure impact by the number of salvations, baptisms, growth in attendance, or various other criteria. I am not so sure if this shows the true level of impact or effectiveness of a church ministry. In the secular business world where most Christians spend the majority of their lives, defining and measuring kingdom impact cannot be accomplished by the number of converts, income, popularity, or success. So what is kingdom impact and how can it be measured? I'm not sure it can be, at least not in the way we like to measure things. In reality, the impact of Kingdom work may depend on the view of the recipient, and not the person doing the work.

In this chapter, it would be easy to fill pages with a large number of motivational stories describing the joys of kingdom work in action. They may be beneficial as examples for us to follow, but in this chapter, I want to focus on four primary areas. First, I want to look at the disconnect that often exists between the church and the world of business. I will make some practical suggestions on how to bridge that gap. Second, I want to look at the cost of being a kingdom worker through the conversion story of Peter. Third, I want to look at Ephesians 6, drawing some practical applications that we can apply to kingdom work. Finally, I will sum up my thoughts on kingdom work and its potential impact.

The Church Work Disconnect

We have a deep connection to work. In many ways, it controls our lives. It is the place we utilize our skills and gain a level of identity. We look to work as a way to fulfill our dreams and goals, as well as to get positive reinforcement of our social value.²²² Work is one of the foundational aspects of many economies. The hope for jobs undergirds many political candidates. Our jobs as a whole, both as individuals and a society, have become our key to survival. It has been engrained in us as children that it is important to climb beyond our parents in the social class system.²²³ This pursuit of social status defines our understanding of work and life. We see work and jobs, not by the value they add to others, but by the cost of the service and the income these create. This causes us to see some work as more valuable than other work. This creates a false understanding of what work is valuable and what work is not, leading to over valuing some and undervaluing others.²²⁴

In my experience, Christians find it hard to connect their life of faith and their work. The higher a person climbs in corporate America, the bigger the gap seems to be. In reality, “church could be one of the strongest resources we have for leading a balanced and effective business life. In most cases, it is not. It could provide spiritual and ethical insight about work that would revolutionize business life.”²²⁵ For some, work becomes a person’s identity. Yet for others, this is not the case, especially if one doesn’t particularly agree with the mission and vision of the

²²² Ellen Ruppel Shell, *The Job: Work and Its Future in A Time of Radical Change* (New York, NY: Currency, 2018), 1.

²²³ Shell, *The Job*, 2.

²²⁴ Shell, *The Job*, 6.

²²⁵ Nash and McLennan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday: The Challenge of Fusing Christian Values with Business Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001), xxiv.

company they work for. In many cases it is obvious. What we do for work has little to do with how we feel about the work we do. Meaningful work appears to be more dependent on personal preference and experience.²²⁶ Research by Laura Nash and Scotty McLennan in their book, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, shows that many people struggle in connecting their Christianity to their careers. They sense a less than acceptable attitude from the church toward their role as business leaders. The research shows that people in business are not happy with their relationship between their religious lives and their everyday work and feel little confidence in looking to the church for answers.²²⁷

In contrast, the 21st century work environment normally will not promote or endorse one religion over another. Compared to most religions in recent years, Christianity has lost popularity. The idea of spirituality is welcome in the workplace, but Christianity is not. Spirituality has been secularized and is intentionally pluralistic.

Today's so-called secular spirituality is not about secularism in the normal sense of the term (meaning rational, modern scientific thinking), but rather about a spirituality that is not governed by the ecclesiastic elite of a specific confessional Judeo-Christian religious tradition. Secular spirituality is a term that the Dalai Lama uses, for example, to describe Buddhist practices and generalized beliefs that are accessible to all people, without the strict religious order of Tibetan Buddhism in its institutional form. In fact, today's spirituality is to be found equally in the mystical and the mundane, the scientific and the irrational, the therapeutic and the pedagogical, the personal and the universal.²²⁸

Business openly accepts that there is spiritual side to humanity and that it cannot be disconnected from who we are. But secular spirituality is all about feeling good about oneself

²²⁶ Shell, *The Job*, 12.

²²⁷ Nash and McLennan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, xxiii.

²²⁸ Nash and McLennan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, 15.

and becoming empowered with hopes to increase a worker's productivity and business success. Job interviews become an attempt to personify oneself as a team player. Employers want to know that team players can learn to exhibit a passion for a set of career goals and desires that match those of the employer. Work becomes more about individual chemistry rather than calling or giftedness. Personal value plummets, and a game of self-blame begins if said candidates don't get a job, even if many of the reasons they didn't get the job are out of their control.²²⁹ Secular spirituality places a greater emphasis on job fit, which can reduce the effectiveness of the work force and create a culture that cannot readily perceive problems or discuss potential solutions. This can also prevent the hiring of a broader trained work force. The biggest problem with the concept of finding workers who "fit" is that the concept of fit often means that qualified employees look a lot like and think like the employer.²³⁰ This may not seem bad for those who want to work for a Christian business owner with all Christian employees. But when fit becomes more important than calling or giftedness, businesses can suffer. There can be a noticeable difference between hiring team players, who are both called and gifted, and creating a team of clones, who all think and look alike. The opportunity exists for the church to equip disciples in the expanding of their spiritual gifts and talents, assisting them to be better team players in their daily vocations.

For those Christians who cannot find spiritual support oriented around their work at church, it is tempting to seek support in the pluralistic spirituality of the workplace. Nash and McLennan found in their research that "despite all this spiritual interest, mainstream Christianity

²²⁹ Shell, *The Job*, 28.

²³⁰ Shell, *The Job*, 31.

has not been a notable force in the businessperson's pilgrimage. Traditional mainstream religion, it seems, has failed to deliver on the desire for experiential, personalized ways of knowing God in one's work."²³¹ Their research goes on to explain that many protestant churches are made up of people who spend the majority of their lives in business and are looking for ways to integrate their Christian faith at work. Many have found little support other than superficial advice from the church. Nash and McLennan "argue that the church should help businesspeople develop a process for personally engaging their faith in the management arena."²³²

Bridging the Gap

Part of the problem that has caused this gap is that over the centuries, a theology of vocation was dismantled into a list of Christian living concepts, absorbed into one's private life and disconnected from work. God never intended us to be broken down into multiple identities.

We are holistic creations. Faith and work belong together. Churches in general are primarily concerned with spiritual and family issues. Christian businesses, though concerned about ethics, are more concerned about profits and growth. Kingdom work is both a spiritual issue and a business issue. They cannot be separated. One of the most beneficial things a church can do is to embrace a robust theology of vocation that helps focus attention on the idea that all work is ministry. A solid theology of vocation creates natural connections between faith and work, which will assist those in business to see a deeper meaning to their work.

²³¹ Nash and McLennan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, 5.

²³² Nash and McLennan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, xxiv.

Helping Christians make a connection between work and the Kingdom of God is another way to bridge the gap. For many, work is an everyday reality, and the Kingdom of God is something not yet here. I question whether pastors are prepared to engage in culture at the level most of their church members deal with on a daily basis. I also question whether most pastors are willing to learn about the influences that are actually molding their people in the workplace. As a pastor and businessman, I believe that the majority of ministry should happen outside the walls of the church. My educational responsibility goes beyond knowing how to preach and mentor council members of the church. I also need to be aware of how the culture is educating and influencing my flock. This isn't done sitting in an office; it takes involvement in the community. I advise pastors to keep up with social trends and influences. This can't be done by just reading the Bible. What if more pastors immersed themselves in their congregation's "secular and community life?" I think there would be a different understanding for the mandate to "equip the saints for works of ministry."

Bridges are built from both sides. Christians in business can help bridge the gap by becoming strategically active in their churches. I wonder what it would be like if Christian business owners hired a workplace Chaplain as part of their benefits package. What if Christian investment advisors or tax experts offered free classes in the church? Christian mechanics could gather in force and once a quarter perform free oil changes and minor repairs for the less fortunate in the community. Part of the problem on both sides of the gap appears to be a lack of empowerment and imagination. Kingdom work is taking everyday work and touching hearts in the name of Jesus. It's not magic; it is service to those in need.

A kingdom worker understands that he or she lives out a spiritual life through daily work. Pastors can help by at least understanding what each member of the flock does for a living, so

they have a better idea of how to help equip them for ministry. I am not saying a pastor needs to provide specific business training opportunities in the church. But there are plenty of possibilities to provide opportunities in areas of financial responsibility, apologetics, and both personal and work ethics oriented around scripture, personal disciplines, spiritual disciplines, relationships, and boundaries. Each and every one of these can be beneficial in every area of life. The challenge is getting people to knock down their compartmentalization mindset and realize that Christianity is a holistic endeavor.

When contractor Kimberly Renner was asked if she thought her work was a higher calling, she said this. Her perspective is refreshing:

It's my desire that how I spend this many hours of my life is worth more than just the construction of a house. And, what I've experienced is that when I approach my work as though it were a high calling, that the work is better and I'm happier. And, the result of it seems to go beyond the work itself into some incredible relationships, community building, and neighborhood restoration, which all does seem higher than the actual compilation of sticks and stones of our work on the job site.²³³

The Price of Kingdom Work

Kingdom work can come at a cost. The cost isn't always in money, time, or influence. A great deal of our current economy and social community is based on work. Work that benefits the whole is seen as good and is thought to help reduce conflict, encourage creativity, and ensure dignity for that individual.²³⁴ Skills and qualifications are only part of a consideration for finding a job and often don't secure the position. In the United States, jobs focus on whether a person will fit into the corporate culture. Employers not only want skilled workers. They want loyalty to

²³³ Kim Renner, "Is Your Work a High Calling?" accessed January 18, 2022, <https://www.theologyofwork.org/resources/is-your-work-a-high-calling-contractor-kimberly-renner>.

²³⁴ Shell, *The Job*, 14.

the institution. An individual no longer needs to focus mostly on “work ethic, experience, and skills – one must also come across as the right sort of person.”²³⁵ This tends to play havoc on an individual’s self-worth and enforces that work is not so much who you are, but who your employer expects you to be. This makes it difficult for a person to disconnect his or her individual identity from the job. An emphasis on fitting into a specific job culture and having one’s personal identity constantly on exhibit can create a negative attitude toward work. The concept of “fit” is often just another way to assess whether a future employee will “adapt to the core beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that make up a particular organization.”²³⁶ Each kingdom worker who maintains a job within the secular business realm faces the possibility that the vocation they chose may at times conflict with their personal beliefs. Their loyalty to God may conflict with the expected loyalty to the company. An employer’s expectations may seldom take into consideration who you are or what you believe. Though work is important to the Kingdom of God, it is not an end unto itself. “If Christian faith claims that work matters, it also prohibits us from attributing too much significance to our earthly labors. Though we are made to work, work is not our chief end.”²³⁷

The conversion story of Peter provides a good example of how becoming a kingdom worker can be costly. In Luke 5, we see Peter tending his nets after a night of fishing. He’s tired and looking forward to some sleep before he goes back to work. Jesus comes on the scene with the normal crowd of people pressing around him. In this case, there were so many people wanting to get close to Jesus that Jesus got into Peter’s boat and had him push off a little from

²³⁵ Shell, *The Job*, 27.

²³⁶ Shell, *The Job*, 30.

²³⁷ Jensen, *Responsive Labor*, x.

shore. When Jesus finished preaching, he asked Peter to launch out to deeper water and lower the nets. Peter complied, but not without first complaining that he had just come in from an all-night excursion after caught nothing. The result of Peter's cooperation was a record catch that not only filled Peter's boat but also the boat that was called out to help haul in the catch.

In hearing the story initially, it sounds like there was little cost to Peter. A few less hours of sleep brought a great bounty. This bounty may have allowed Peter to pay all his debts, expand his business, hire more employees, or buy a new house. But Jesus had different plans. He invited Peter to take on a new career. Leaving everything behind, Peter followed Jesus. Kingdom work cost Peter a business and a sizable income. In reality, this may not be the case for many people who come to Jesus and accept the call to being a kingdom worker. Most of us will not walk away from our business. The two greatest costs associated with all who embrace kingdom work are identity and priorities. Kingdom workers identify with God's plan for creation and God's priorities. This may not mean walking away from a successful career. But it may mean that instead of spending that next big raise to buy a new car or a nicer house, God asks you to give toward helping someone less fortunate. It may be that instead of using the next vacation to lay on a beach in Hawaii or ski at Park City that you use it to help your neighbor build a fence or paint a house. Kingdom workers understand that they are stewards of their time and possessions, not owners.

The Bible as Guidance

Kingdom work is not a make it up as you go process, as long as we look to the Bible for guidance. For example, Paul's discussion of household codes in Ephesians can provide insight for both employees and employers:

Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him" (6:5-9).

Slavery in Paul's day wasn't race driven. In many cases, people entered a form of slavery known as bondservants to pay off debt. In modern times, the closest thing we have that relates to this is the employee-employer relationship. Paul tells the reader to treat the master with fear, trembling, and a sincere heart. Work is not done with the intent to be a people pleaser or only when the master is watching. Work is service done with good will as unto the Lord. Masters are told to treat their bond servants in the same way as others and not threaten them, showing no partiality.

A good place for all employees to start is to have respect not only for their boss, but for the position of authority they hold. Arrogance and pride have no place in the work life of a kingdom worker. An employee shouldn't just work hard when the boss is looking. They should work hard all the time. Don't be a people pleaser. Be a God pleaser. Paul tells us the motivation behind the work is doing the will of God from the heart. Employers know authenticity when they see it. A fake can be easily spotted. On the other hand, employers should treat their workers with the same value and respect that they expect to be treated. They shouldn't threaten their employees or show favoritism for one employee over another. Class distinction means nothing to

God, and it should mean nothing for a Christian employer. Paul doesn't openly say that employers should show appreciation and respect for the skills and talents an employee brings to work, or that they should honor the employee by paying a fair wage. But a pure heart would most likely include generosity and appreciation.

Paul in Romans 12 equates the Christian life to a living sacrifice (v1), a life of service filled with zeal and a fervent spirit (v11). In many ways, Paul is describing what is known as faithful presence. "Faithful presence in the world means that Christians are fully present and committed in their spheres of influence, whatever they may be: their families, neighborhoods, voluntary activities and places of work."²³⁸ A big part of kingdom impact requires faithful presence.

Seeking to live out a faithful presence in our workplaces means that we incarnate the gospel by doing good work and being exemplary workers, it means that we extend common grace to our coworkers and our customers and seek their good. As image-bearers of God, who is a worker must remember that our work has intrinsic value in itself to be an act of worship. We also must grasp that our work has instrumental value in that it provides for our economic need. It allows us to care for the needs of others and creates a sphere of influence for the gospel to be lived out and shared.²³⁹

Part of Kingdom impact through faithful presence rests in the understanding that you may not be able to see the instant impact of extending grace to someone or the true value of the goods we provide. It takes faith and trust that our acts of obedience and faithful presence matter. A stock person at a local grocery store may not see the relief on a person's face when they feel ill and they finally find the medicine they need. They may not see the glee on a child's face when

²³⁸ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 247.

²³⁹ Shell, *The Job*, 80.

they find their favorite cereal. They don't see the satisfaction it brings when someone buys a bag of groceries and delivers it to a sick friend. What they can realize is that as they stocked the shelves with a prayerful heart in praise and worship to God. They played a role in meeting the needs of others. For some, kingdom impact is nothing more than knowing that their work is "primarily a way to please God by doing his work in the world, for his name's sake."²⁴⁰ Martin Luther King Jr. explains it this way: "If it falls to your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, like Shakespeare wrote poetry, like Beethoven composed music; sweep streets so well that all the host of Heaven and earth will have to pause and say- "Here lived a great street sweeper, who swept his job well."²⁴¹

Closing Thoughts

When I think of kingdom impact I don't realistically think of an earth-shattering event. Much of Kingdom work isn't earth shattering. A lot of Kingdom work is just a faithful presence in a world that knows nothing about the Kingdom of God or how it works. The "now and not yet" aspect of the kingdom of God informs us that kingdom of God resides within the hearts and minds of Christians. For the most part, we as Christians live in an invisible kingdom. We get glimpses when lives are changed, when people come to Christ, when people are healed, or other forms of miracles happen. The initial impacts of these events are instantaneous and easily seen. Kingdom impact isn't always created by huge boulder events creating a massive ripple effect at impact. These events happen, and when they do it is inspiring. For the most part Kingdom

²⁴⁰ Keller, *Every Great Endeavor*, 220.

²⁴¹ "Facing the Challenge of a New Age," in *A Testament of Hope: Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.* (New York: HarperCollins, 1986), 139.

impact happens in small events where the ripples, though visible, aren't always perceived. A kind word to a dying man. A small gesture of kindness by offering a person in a hurry your parking spot. A quiet prayer for a co-worker, or a quick text of encouragement to a friend under stress. The list can go on forever. Small, repeated events add up to big events over time.

Repeated small acts of kindness can create a longer lasting impression than one large one.

I have been married for forty-two years. Over that time, my wife has done some pretty amazing and wonderful things to show her love and appreciation. Interestingly, the one that I remember and appreciate the most is that for forty-two years, unless she is gone, she turns the bed down for me every night. This doesn't seem like much, but this small insignificant repeated act of kindness done over and over again for forty-two years has made a huge impact on the health of our marriage.

It would be an injustice to portray a theology of Kingdom work in a way that leaves the reader believing that the results are instantaneous and easily measured. This is difficult for some to grasp, especially those who are looking for a step-by-step approach to how it all fits together. Like much of the Christian faith, kingdom work is a daily decision to be faithful in the things of God. It is not an issue of competency or skill. Competency and skill should be expected from every worker whether Christian or not. Without it, an individual or business doesn't survive long. Kingdom work is more about what motivates the person doing the work and why they do it. It's about glorifying God, representing and advancing His kingdom, as we work through our actions, our attitudes, how we treat people, and with a level of service and excellence often missing in workers today. Kingdom workers, when choosing a vocation, aren't about money or prestige. They are called.

I close with this example of kingdom impact. Over the years, I have had one foot in business and another in pastoral ministry. At the time of this writing, I am less than 3 months into a part time pastoring position at a church that had gone through some very painful events. Their pastor of 18 years left, and their building was dilapidated to the place of being condemned. Things were a mess when I came on board. The majority of the people left. Some stopped going to church. Others went to other local churches. The remaining remnant is older, and the church has never had a budget. They were spending more than they brought in. It wasn't until I accepted the call that I found out, the previous pastor had started a state-funded program serving in-living and transitional living foster teens under the church's nonprofit status. This was unknown to the majority of the church. I had four employees I didn't know I had. Researching the contract and the limited records it was obvious that we weren't in compliance with the state contract. After meeting my new team, it was apparent that despite the organizational chaos, they had a heart and passion for the program. In my mind, I couldn't imagine that we were being effective without policies in place, records in order, and a limited budget. The only honorable recourse was to inform the state of our situation, leaving the future and fate of the employees and the program in the hands of the state representative. Upon full disclosure of our situation, the representative explained that she would give us the time needed to straighten out the mess for the very reason that our program was one of the most impactful in the state. Lives were being impacted not because of a well-organized or well-run program. It was because of four Christian individuals, who despite the lack of leadership and organization, were a faithful presence in the lives of teens who needed help. They weren't allowed to mention the name of Jesus. They never told anyone they were Christians. They just did their jobs, representing the king of kings with as much love and grace that they could muster and with every ounce of skill they could put forth. This is what

kingdom work is all about. This is why kingdom impact isn't easily measured. These teenagers benefited from kingdom workers doing whatever they could do to advance the kingdom of God in a small and impactful way.

Going Deeper

1. Who was the person (not including Jesus), who has made the greatest impact on your life? How did that person affect the way you live your life?
2. Has there ever been a time when someone told you that you made a difference in his or her life? If so, how did that impact you?
3. How can being a kingdom worker impact those around you?

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