

Sent to the Workplace

REDEEMER EQUIPPING CLASS
CLASS WORKBOOK

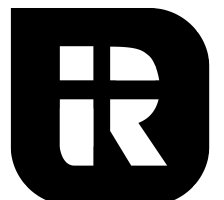


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Introduction to the Course

Welcome to the Sent to the Workplace course! We're glad you're here and excited for what you are about to learn and practice.

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Work is a big part of our lives, and that's a good thing—God created work and has Kingdom purpose for all kinds of work, from parenting to farming to serving as a pastor. This course will help us think through how to harness that part of our lives to bring him glory and make disciples of all nations.

Structure

The course has two components: 1) individual learning; and 2) live or virtual discussion groups.

- You will complete **one** lesson each week in this booklet or on Pathwright. Each lesson is about one hour of content and practice that you will do individually. Lessons include:
 - ▶ Reading and/or watching content
 - ▶ Pausing to reflect on what you've learned
 - ▶ Going and doing: applying and practicing what you've learned
- You will meet in person with your cohort **once a week** to talk through what you've learned, practice together, and keep one another accountable.
 - ▶ Your small group facilitator should be in touch with you about scheduling these meetings.
 - ▶ After each lesson in this course, there are Discussion Group #1–8 lessons that you can use and refer to during your meetings.

The course aims to do three things:

1. Give you a simple theology of work and a Great Commission vision
2. Teach you basic missional and cross-cultural skills to make disciples at work
3. Help you integrate church/faith and your work through practical, actionable steps

Let's get started!

In the Beginning: Work Is God's Idea

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See how before the fall, God called work “good,”
both for him and for us.

Work Is God's Idea

When you think about work, what comes to mind?

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Thinking of "work" might make you think of something that you love — or that brings you great frustration. You might think of going to your office, sitting behind a computer, raising your children, building a house, or leading a team. **Regardless of what comes to mind, how you approach your work is important to God — and that's why we're talking about it today.**

Work Is God's Idea

In the beginning, God created (Gen. 1:1). **The very first thing we see God doing in the Bible is creating, making, working.** He's artistic and purposeful, a thoughtful craftsman forming the heavens and the earth with wisdom at his side (Prov. 8:22–31).

Perhaps the most amazing thing about God's work is that he enjoys it. He looks on it and calls it "good" and "very good." But interestingly, **before he declares all of creation to be very good, he gives the man and woman work.** He calls them to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth, to subdue it, and to have dominion over all creatures (Gen. 1:28; 2:15).

Daily work is a gift from God; it was given to us before the fall and before sin and brokenness entered the world. It was "very good" that man and woman were given purposeful activities to fill their days. **While our work is now greatly affected by sin, it was not a result of sin.** Work was a result of God's perfect ordering and desire for humankind.

A Quick Definition of Work

Before we go any further, perhaps we should stop and make clear what we mean by work in this course. The Bible speaks of work in various ways.

Here, we will think of two kinds of work—good work and gospel work:

1. The "work of the LORD" or "gospel work" seems to be a semi-technical term in the New Testament for the work of making disciples and building up the church as followers show and tell the gospel and establish healthy churches (1 Cor. 3:9–15; 15:10–11, 58; 16:10, 15–16). Some people, like full-time pastors, spend their working days engaged fully in gospel work. Other people work at ordinary, good jobs and devote less time and energy to gospel work each week. Regardless of their work roles, all Christ-followers participate in some way in gospel work.

2. Those who do the "work of the Lord" are co-workers who help in the gospel work and mission. Paul mentions many of these co-workers. These may not have been evangelists, teachers or church planters like Timothy or Titus, but the work Paul recognizes them doing is specific, gospel-focused work that assisted Paul's apostolic mission of gospel communication and the establishment of local churches. Paul refers to these associates by a variety of terms including "co-worker" (*sunergos*), "apostle" (*apostolos*), "brother" (*adelphos*), "minister" (*diakonos*), "fellow servant" (*sundoulos*), "fellow-soldier" (*sustratiōtēs*), and "fellow-prisoner" (*sunachmalōtos*). Glance at Romans 16 for just such a list of gospel co-workers.

First Purpose of Work: Imaging God

Man and woman were created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26); they were called and created to share some of his traits. **That means that as God worked and created and held dominion over creation, so humanity also was called to work, create, and subdue the earth.** We were made to work and, if we're honest, we feel that reality—we usually feel a sense of loss when we are unable to work in some way on something.

John Stott says, "It is a recognition that what God gives is 'nature,' whereas what we do with it is 'culture' or 'cultivation.'"¹ In other words, in his work, the product God made was creation. As his image-bearers, what we do in our work is to fashion culture from that creation. We work with what God made to craft it and make stuff; we develop it; we maintain it. From Adam to Moses to David to Oholiab to Jesus to Paul to Lydia (Acts 16:14), we see people across the Bible working as farmers, judges, musicians, artists, poets, writers, shepherds, kings, carpenters, tentmakers, and fabric merchants.

And we continue that today. Tim Keller and Katherine Alsdorf write in *Every Good Endeavor* that everything from **designing a website to washing dishes to answering a phone line "further develops, maintains, or repairs the fabric of the world."** Of course, we also work to earn money or provisions, but not all work earns a salary or paycheck. Volunteer work keeps hospitals running and museums open. We also work at our roles as mothers and fathers, when we clean or maintain our bicycle or home, or when we give time and energy to our hobbies.

“ We are creative because God is creative.
We long to fix what is broken because he planned to heal this aching world.
We love to finish a task, even if it requires suffering, because Jesus finished the task of redemption, at great cost.
So the character of God shapes the character of our work.”²

— Dan Dorian, *Work, It's Purpose, Dignity and Transformation*

¹ Stott, John. *Issues Facing Christians Today: 4th Edition*. Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2006.

² Dorian, Daniel. *Work: It's Purpose, Dignity and Transformation*. Phillipsburg NJ, P&R Publishing Company, 2019.

From the Garden to Glory

Have you ever wondered how your work and your life fit into the story of the Bible? Here's one way to explain it—in Six Glorious Acts, from the Garden to Glory!

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Act 1: “In the Beginning”: God Is a Worker

The Bible tells us that God is King and Lord of all creation (Is. 37:16), and as such he owns everything. People who are followers of Jesus know he is Lord of their whole life, he is a caring God, and he uses all kinds of people to accomplish his purposes in the world. **We also know that because we are created in God's image and he is a worker, we are also made to work.**

God constantly works to sustain us. He has worked to save us, and he will work to glorify us. His son Jesus demonstrated that he was a worker, too. He said in John 9:4, “I must do the work of my Father,” and in John 5:17, “My Father is working still and I am working.”

Act 2: We are Made to be Workers, Too

We've seen already that the story of work begins in the Garden of Eden, before the fall. And like all good stories, it has at its core both a tragic crisis and a glorious rescue. After creating a perfect world, God planted a garden—a paradise. In Genesis 1:28, God commanded Adam and Eve to nurture and grow it until the entire world was a paradise too. **Their job was to take what God had begun and carry it on—to show off his glory by bringing order and developing the creation.**

Before Adam and Eve sinned, there is no indication that work was anything but satisfying, productive, and meaningful. This was God's original paradigm for all human work. The Garden of Eden was their home, their workplace, and the place where they met with God. **You and I have never experienced what they did**—a world in which the divisions and conflicts of interest between church, workplace, and family didn't exist. It was a world that didn't last long.

Act 3: Work is Hard and Frustrating

Adam and Eve were entrusted with the garden, to steward and guard it, but on both counts they failed. Satan shows up, the enemy of God and humans, and instead of protecting the garden from him, they have a conversation with him. And by the end of that conversation, instead of stewarding the garden, they try to use it for themselves, abusing their own authority and ruining it for everyone else.

They're kicked out of the garden, but they're not relieved of their responsibility. They still must work, **but the conditions of their work have radically changed.** *Because of the curse of sin, the world is now set up in such a way that they would never find full satisfaction in work.* God's judgment of their sin made work more difficult and frustrating for all of us.

Act 4: Jesus Worked, and He Changes Our Work

In John 17:4, Jesus says a remarkable thing—"I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do." Believe it or not, God gave Jesus a job to do on earth! What was it?

The Bible teaches us we are sinners who owe a massive debt to God, yet instead of working ourselves out of debt, our wages actually plunge us more deeply into it. The good news is that God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to take on himself the debt we owe to God. Standing as our substitute, in our place, Jesus lived the life we failed to live and died the death we deserved to die. He rose again from the dead, victorious over death, sin, and the grave.

How does the work that Jesus has done change all our work? Even though our work is still affected by sin, **the gospel injects changed hearts and work patterns into our work life, making it better.** Not *perfect*, but better in some significant ways, restored in part if not completely. **Work awaits complete restoration in the new heavens and earth still to come.**

Act 5: The Curse Will Be Reversed

Romans 8:23 says that the whole creation groans waiting for Jesus to return. Until he does, our coworkers will make mistakes, we'll be misunderstood, traffic will interfere with on-time delivery, rain will interfere with construction projects, and the living room will become messy again.

In the middle of all of that, sometimes we're tempted to give up on work entirely. But the gospel reminds us not to do that. **Even with its struggles, work was always intended to be a positive thing.** The Bible explains to us that work is a good gift from God. As Christians, we should value work and look toward the day that it, like everything else on earth, will be redeemed. **Work in the new heavens and new earth will take place in a sinless environment and so will be very different from what we experience now (Revelation 21:1-8).** The frustration of work is temporary! **Work in the new creation will be fulfilling and satisfying and as it was always intended by God to be.**

Act 6: Until Then, Push Hard on the Plow...With an Open Hand!

In the meantime, some progress can be made. As Christians begin to see their work as participation with God's ongoing work of creating, sustaining, redeeming, and transforming, **they will see their work as having meaning and spiritual value both to them and to God.** And as Christians work wholeheartedly unto Christ their boss, work then becomes a means of worship.

We will have a sense of purpose and fulfillment in our work, in part, to the degree in which we see our work as a reflection of God's work on the earth.

Wherever redeemed people work, they can help create a better work culture as they imperfectly image God in the workplace. **The original purpose of human work was the advancement of human flourishing to the glory of God. That's our story.** Our work is to show off the goodness and magnificence of his character as his image bearers. We do that as we cultivate our "garden" for the flourishing of the humans around us, to the praise of God's glory.

Work is first and foremost worship, so push hard on the plow, and do it with an open hand, trusting God with the results. We'll talk more about what that looks like in the next step.

Provision

A little while ago, we looked at the **first purpose of work—imaging God**. Then we traced what that looks like all the way from creation through working under the curse of sin until the day when work will be redeemed again.

Now we'll take a look at some other purposes of work, starting with how **God uses it to provide for our needs**.

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Second Purpose of Work: Provision

One of the most significant purposes of work is that God created it as a kind act of provision. Adam and Eve were called to fill, tend to, and rule over creation so that it flourished and remained a place that gave them and the other animals food, shelter, and even joy and delight.

Certainly, Adam and Eve and their sinful offspring failed to bring perfect flourishing, **but good work has not lost its purpose in bringing about food, shelter, and even joy**. Work provides money to buy clothes and homes. It brings food from the ground. It raises children that help the world be a better place. And it allows us to rest and pay for a trip to the park, campground or beach.

The book of Proverbs is filled with general principles about how the world works as God designed it: the sluggard will taste poverty, the one who works hard and with integrity will gain treasure. God has built work into the created order (Prov. 13:4, 20:4, 21:25). **Our good work is one way that God brings about his will in the world; it's how he helps provide and care for the creation.**

Martin Luther often talked about how the milkmaid who milked the cows and baker who baked bread were actually the “fingers of God” because their service provided food and drink to humanity. A truck driver carrying supplies, a nurse administering medicine, and a mother cooking dinner are the “fingers of God” because their hands are the channels through which God gives life, sustenance, and favor to the world. All work matters to God.

Pause / Reflect

Consider the following questions in your own life.

- How do you see your work as the “fingers of God”?
- How do you see your job as caring for, sustaining, and stewarding creation (humanity, nature, society, culture, etc.)?
- How does your job fit into the network of service as an expression of love to neighbor?
- How is your work good work that serves the common good, justice, and mercy in society?

Sanctification

The purpose of work we read about in the last step—provision—focuses more on meeting our practical, physical needs. Now we'll look at the **third purpose—sanctification**—which focuses on our deep spiritual need to become more like Christ.

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Third Purpose of Work:

God Transforming our Character Over Time

In the aftermath of the Fall, work now provides a context for our sanctification, a place to be “remade” into the image and likeness of a holy God as we seek to relate to others in a Christ-honoring way.

In a backwards sort of way, the things we find frustrating remind us of who we were created to be before sin entered the world. God’s image in us all has been distorted by sin but not totally eliminated. **We naturally expect an almost Eden-like workplace, and it takes effort to adjust to the weedy, thorny existence we find wherever we work now.**

Work is the context where we live out the Great Commandment (Luke 10:27) and the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20) and where God’s grace grows us as disciples. **When work is not easy, then Christ followers learn to lean into Christ, depending upon him for help and wisdom.** Work is often where and how God grows us as his children, molding our hearts, teaching us perseverance, asking us to live in integrity even if we have to stand alone. We learn to endure, to obey, to live under Christ’s kingly rule in the challenges of a workplace affected and infected by sin, including our own.

We are not always the godly workers in Christ that we could be. We lean into Christ and remember that he forgives us our sins as we confess them and as we forgive others. (Matthew 6:12, 1 John 1:9) Work matters because it’s part of the life circumstances God appoints for Christ followers in order to make us more like Jesus.

“ 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.

”

——Colossians 3:23–24

Sanctified in Our Perspective on Work

In this present age before all things are made new, our attitude or perspective on work and our workplaces often needs adjusting. Sinful workers get it wrong in a couple of ways. **We sometimes make an idol of our work and look to work for our sense of identity, for ultimate satisfaction**—we give our all to work and expect it to give back.

But God has made us for himself, not for work. As Augustine put it, “our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God.”³ As Christ followers, made in God’s image, we should begin to see God behind all the good work that we do. We work ultimately for our Creator. We offer God our life as a sacrifice, holy and pleasing to him, and we keep him in mind as we work.

In our modern culture, we are often focused on finding that job that fulfills all of our passions, desires, and giftings. “Get a job that you wake up every morning happy to do!” culture tells us. Our society pushes us to find our “why,” our Enneagram number, our Myers-Briggs configuration, our DISC, etc. These instruments when used well can be helpful, **but we have not been designed to find our perfect job in this life, but to find contentment and joy in our Creator through faith in Christ**, whatever jobs we may have during the course of our lives.

“ For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him.
He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. ”

—— Psalm 62:2–7

³ St. Augustine’s Confessions (Lib 1,1-2,2.5,5: CSEL 33, 1–5)

Representing God's Kingdom

There's a **fourth purpose of work**—and it has to do with **helping others know Christ better**. Let's take a look at that now.

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Serving Others and Making Disciples

Though work shouldn't be our identity, it is a big part of where we live out our lives—and can be leveraged with disciple-making purpose. You spend a lot of time at work, and it's where God is calling us to be representatives of his kingdom. It is where you show and tell the gospel to a colleague, nurture your children in the Lord, or live as a light to your boss. You are a **“sent one”** from God to wherever he has placed you during your work week.

“ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you... ”

——Matthew 28:19–20

Right before the resurrected Jesus ascended, he ordered his disciples to get going and make still more disciples by baptizing them and teaching them his commands. This commission is given to us and we fulfill it in our workdays. As a believer, **you are sent to the workplace**.

Whether you're a baker, a doctor, a stay-at-home spouse, a CEO, a COO, an engineer, a waitress, or a customer-service rep, you are sent. God has you exactly where he wants you for now. You are called to represent the values of the King to those around you. (We will talk more about these values in later lessons). You are sent to make disciples of all nations, whether it's someone you've known your whole life or an expat who just moved to the U.A.E. for work or school.

When you surrendered to Christ, your work is not only about you or for you anymore. It is now the context through which you serve people working as if for Jesus, and as you go about being faithful in your workplace, you can also lead others to your King.

In some churches, people may think that their only role in the mission of God is to make money so that they can tithe well and support missionaries. “Sure, I have a job, but the gospel work is for the pastor or missionaries,” you may think. Yes, your job has meaning and value as you love God and neighbor through that work! But you are also called to make disciples, to be a light and to share the gospel with those around you. God doesn't assign gospel work only to pastors and missionaries and everyone else just supports them financially.

Your job gives you access to people and groups that no pastor or missionary could ever reach. You have the same Spirit filling you that fills the missionary in urban centers in Bangladesh or remote areas of Burma. You have the same Scripture that your pastor explains. No, all work matters to God, and as we shall see, all Christ-followers are to be doing gospel work.

And here's the thing—**the more you sign on to Jesus' commission of seeing your workplace as a mission field, the more you'll be satisfied in your work.**

Pause / Reflect

- Take a moment and reflect on how you see both the blessing and challenge of work in your current roles. How is there opportunity to image God by serving and working unto Him?
- Do you see yourself as having a role in gospel work? Why or why not?

Go + Do

- This week, look intently and catch moments when you're aware that your work is being "the fingers of God." Try to see how you affect others meaningfully in your work.
- Write down your observations—you'll share them with your discussion group this week.

The Fall: Why Work Is Hard

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Identify sin as the reason we struggle with
difficult relationships or idolatry at work.

The Fall and Its Effect on Work

“ ...cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return...”

——Genesis 3:17–19

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Have you felt this? Do you feel this? The work that we are designed to do and called to enjoy with fruitfulness as we image God now often feels like a chore. Outside the garden, we labor and sweat in a workplace taken over by thorns and trials.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sought freedom from God’s good design, sin entered our world and workplace. **Sin has corrupted the heart of every human, and our sinful nature affects every aspect of our lives, including work.** Even our good work feels hard sometimes. And so Paul says in Romans that we workers groan alongside the creation awaiting the full redemption that will finally come in the New Heavens and the New Earth (Rom. 8:23).

Pause / Reflect

Last week, we asked you to think through **three** frustrating aspects of your work. What were they? How do those relate to the Fall? Do you see how sin affects the good work God has given you?

Work Under Sin

We find ourselves groaning under the effects of sin at work, even though we don't always see sin for what it is. Instead, we see the problem right in front of us—the difficult co-worker or the paper jam in the printer. **Let's talk a little about what our day-to-day struggles can look like as workers here on earth. From there, we'll be able to talk about where we find hope.**

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Sin Affects Workers

It's important to remember that most work itself isn't sin or a result of sin. Much of the sin and difficulty we experience in the workplace and in our work efforts is there because **all workers are sinful, and we bring ourselves to work.** If we were perfectly godly and all our coworkers were perfectly godly and we all worked with perfectly godly attitudes and a holy perseverance then work would feel really different.

Often this looks like relational conflict. We come into work self-centered or with selfish ambitions. We are unkind and unfair to one another. We envy and compare ourselves to our coworkers. We speak rashly and hurt others. We don't make an effort to work with those who are different from us culturally. The sins of others hurt us and create difficult circumstances. The list could go on forever.

Sin Affects the Workplace

But work is also hard because the creation, the stuff of work, is also affected by sin and doesn't quite work properly some of the time or even most of the time. **Entropy (a gradual decline into disorder) is a real thing in this fallen creation universe. We shouldn't be surprised at this.** As Christ-followers sent to the workplace, we are not exempt from living in a fallen, sinful world, but we do have a different perspective on workers and the workplace.

Because every worker comes in with sin, the systems and cultures of our workplaces also break down. Deals are broken, corners are cut, people lie, coworkers forget deadlines, and integrity is tested. We also experience friction between races, genders, supervisors and direct reports, etc. All of this systemic brokenness comes from our sin.

Sin Affects Work Itself

And sin, of course, affects our work experiences. Work feels futile and purposeless at times. We struggle to find meaning and muddle through frustrating days or repetitive boredom.

Tim Keller and Katherine Alsdorf write in *Every Good Endeavor* that often we work to bring home a paycheck so we can enjoy “real life,” but that makes work itself into a pointless grind, a kind of necessary evil that's a means to a good end. Keller and Alsdorf call these misguided motivations. When our motivation and perspective on work are wrong, we often end up physically and emotionally exhausted.

We also can miss out on an opportunity for sanctification if we don't see our work in the right way. We often resist and seek to escape from the opportunities God has placed before us. Like Daniel who was sent to a workplace in Persia, we now live and work in “Babylon” as resident aliens (Dan. 1:3-6; Alsdorf⁴). Many workplaces are filled with workers who don't get along and whose ethics and morality do not align with Christ's Kingdom values. Even Christian businesses and non-profit organizations with Kingdom vision and values can only hire people in process, sinful persons already justified in Christ but not yet perfectly transformed.

Like Daniel, we are to seek the welfare of the people around us. We are to relate to others as Christ's representatives, not perfectly, but definitely differently because we're serving the King of Kings in our daily jobs. (As we continue through this course, we will talk in detail about what that looks like.)

Sin Affects Our Choices

When we read the New Testament, we see that Christians are free to do almost any job that doesn't require them to sin. Dan Doriani reminds us in *Work: It's Purpose, Dignity and Transformation* that “Every morally good task has dignity, whether the laborer sweeps floors or runs a company.” Christ calls people to turn, trust, and be transformed but not necessarily to change jobs. **In other words, your faith may not be your ticket out of a difficult workplace.** For instance, you may be the only honest employee in your factory, but if you are not required to sin, perhaps God has placed you there as an example of an honest worker living for Christ.

Sin also makes some jobs off limits. There is work that is not morally good, jobs like assassins or human traffickers or abortionists or thieves or jobs that simply exploit people. Some work is unethical and immoral even if it's legal. Christ-followers are not free to work in jobs that require them to sin. In addition, sometimes our jobs and companies are legal and good, but we may be asked to do something morally questionable or unethical within them. If this happens, the Christian is called to abstain from, decline, and refuse to do that which goes against Scripture. Unfortunately, there may be consequences to our refusal, and that's when we deeply feel the fallen world in which we live.

Long story short, sin can make the work environment around us difficult. **But it can cause us internal battles too. We'll talk more about that in the next step.**

⁴ Kathleen Alsdorf, “Why Faith at Work is Important,” Faith at Work Summit (<https://youtu.be/eFcOzWTRtbU>)

Work and Idolatry

Idolatry is essentially misplaced values and misguided kingship. We fill the throne with someone or something besides the Great King, our Lord. **In other words, we seek after something other than God, whether a work promotion, wealth, weekends, retirement, fame, comfort, or reaching our performance goals again and again.** When we choose idols over Jesus, we live for ourselves rather than for Christ. And we know that's not the life we're supposed to live as Christ-followers. We see that truth below in **2 Corinthians**.

“ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

”

——2 Corinthians 5:14–15

Sadly, we often resort to idolatry in work. We seem to think that we can find satisfaction in our approaches to work apart from the Creator who has purposed that **we can never find ultimate satisfaction apart from Him**.

Idolatry can look like **under-work** when we prize comfort or ourselves or seek escape from the challenges or persistence of work life. Idolatry can also become **over-work** because we prize recognition, wealth, identity, and status. The workplace can present the opportunity for us to idolize even ourselves as we lord our role or authority over others and pursue our private, personal agenda with work and workers in a way that serves only our selfish ambitions. This is worldly wisdom and is actually devilish according to **James 3**.

“ Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

”

——James 3:13–16

Particularly in our Western culture, we may be tempted by role identity idolatry. We value too much what others may think of us when we answer this question: “What do you do?” Tim Keller notes that our self-worth or self-acceptance is frequently based on our identity. **When our work**

becomes our identity, then we may toggle back and forth between pride in our role and work accomplishments and shame when things are not going well for us at work. This can result in an exhausting cycle of ups and downs. Christ-followers have a secure identity because God has accepted us in Christ, so we can accept ourselves as already forgiven sinners who are in the process of becoming more like Christ.⁵

In Christ, we are always first and foremost adopted children of the living God! We belong to Christ now and are his representatives or ambassadors in this world. We've been chosen by God and set apart for His good purposes. **We live for Him now! We work for a new Boss as we await his appearing in glory when he will make all things entirely new.**

Good News for Our Work

The truth is that only the gospel of Christ effectively smashes the idols of our heart. God's loving kindness humbles us as we turn from sin and rebellion. **When we see that we are fully accepted in Christ, we rest on Christ's work—not ours—for acceptance and a secure identity.** If you measure your worth and acceptance by your performance then you'll always come up short. When you compare yourself to others, your superior performance leads to arrogance and pride which is itself a failure of performance and something God says that he hates and even opposes (Proverbs 16:5, James 4:6). Instead, rest in the perfectly finished work of Christ.

Life in the workplace can be different for Christ-followers. We work with confidence in Christ, not in ourselves or our company or our bosses. The gospel changes our hearts so that we put Christ on the throne at work, at rest, and at home.

Pause / Reflect

- What idols have you been holding in your heart? In what ways do you work for self instead of living for Christ? What do you desire? What do you think about a lot? What do you seek after and put energy into? The answers may point to some potential idols.

⁵ Tim Keller & Katherine Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2012).

- Where is your identity settled right now? Are you feeling accomplished and successful? Bring thanksgiving to the Lord for his help. Are you feeling you have little worth? Do you feel like you have failed? Find your identity in Christ and not your performance. Remind yourself of truth.
- Have you trusted in the work of Christ for you, or are you still trying to find acceptance with God through your work?

Redeemed: See Work Through the Gospel

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Learn to work in freedom because Jesus' work purchased your identity.

What Jesus Did

At this point in our journey, let's take a moment and review the highlights of the Bible's big story and where we are in that story. **God created a perfect world, made Adam and Eve in his image, and gave them meaningful work to do. But then they sinned, and the world—and work—changed forever.**

All of life was affected.

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People went from bad to worse until **Noah's** family was rescued through the flood judgment. God quickly announced his promise to rescue people through Adam and Eve's offspring (Gen. 3:15). God explained that Abraham's offspring would bless all kinds of people!

Later, he renewed this promise to **Abraham**, making it still clearer. God explained that Abraham's offspring would end up blessing all kinds of people! God's promise was still alive in **Isaac**, who was eventually born to Sarah and Abraham in their old age. Then **Moses** delivers Israel and God explains to them how to live the good life, but they fail again and again. Neither charismatic **judges** nor a series of **kings** can keep Israel from her idolatrous ways.

All throughout the Old Testament, the sinful heart of man kept turning from God's created order. The **prophets** finally come and announce judgment on Israel but also point to a new era when the **Messiah** will come and rescue his people.

Then when the New Testament opens up, a baby named **Jesus** is born to a virgin named Mary who was married to Joseph. **This second Adam would succeed where the first Adam failed.** As a carpenter, he never cut corners while making a table. He thought carefully and spoke powerfully. He loved God with all his heart and loved both men and women well. **Jesus came to be all that we failed to be, even at work.** And on the cross Jesus, the perfect sacrificial lamb, took our shame and faced God's wrath for our sin.

The risen Jesus would explain to his followers that all the Scriptures were about himself and fulfilled in him (Luke 24:27). Just before going again to God the Father, the Son of God empowered and sent his followers to be his witnesses until the end of the age when he would return. Paul and Peter and John and others explain in the **New Testament letters** that God intends to bring all things under the Lordship of Jesus, His Son, at some future date.

“ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. ”

——Titus 2:11-14

That's where we who are Christ-followers today are located in this story—we live between the resurrection and the return of Jesus. We work for good in this world, but we also wait in hopeful expectation, aware that Christ alone can restore and renew the earth and the heavens.

The Kingdom has already come in Christ but is not yet fully here as it will be in the New Heavens and the New Earth. **God has chosen to send us as his representatives (2 Cor. 5:17-21) to announce the good news and make disciples of all nations.**

We are not sent alone into this broken world: Jesus promised to be with us in the power of the Holy Spirit. Yes, we are currently living outside of Eden in a broken world among broken people, but we are sent to be and make disciples in this broken world, living as transformed people of hope who work differently. He left us that commission after he did his work here on our behalf.

“ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. ”

——Acts 1:8

What Jesus' Work Does

“ 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. ”

——Ephesians 2:8–10

We've talked a lot now about how Christ's work changes the way we live. Because of what he did, we can work in freedom without having to earn our identity. We can live in our purpose. **As Ephesians 2 notes, we were created for good works that God prepared for us and equips us to do.** Let's talk now about what that looks like.

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All of Life is Worship

The gospel is not simply a message of forgiveness for the past, comfort for the present, and hope for the future. **It is directly related to the way we glorify God and share in the fulfillment of his plan by devoted service in everyday life.** He is Lord over all of our lives, including our work habits and work relationships. That's a freeing reality for us. We work out of gratitude for what he's already done.

In Romans, Paul spends 11 chapters describing the mercies of the gospel (Romans 1:16-17). Then in chapter 12, he calls Christians to worship God reasonably with all of their life and be faithful in all of their circumstances.

“ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. ”

——Romans 12:1–2

We offer ourselves with our whole life oriented towards honoring Christ; we no longer live for ourselves but for him who loved us (2 Corinthians 5:15). **Those of us who are sent to the workplace have one goal in mind—to present ourselves to God in a whole-person**

commitment to worship God all the time in every situation. We are sent to the workplace to "show and tell" the gospel. We share the gospel verbally and we demonstrate the affects of the gospel by living lives that are pleasing to God and that align with Scripture (more on this in Lesson 4).

It's not always an easy task—because we're still here where things are broken; we live and work among people and ideas that are opposed to Christ's Kingdom values. There are all kinds of pressures to conform at work, both social pressures and organizational pressures. Paul understands this and tells us to resist that pressure. Paul instructs us to have our minds continuously renewed so that we can worship God acceptably at work. No matter where we find ourselves, this is our calling: **to think and live differently as recipients of God's gospel mercy in Christ.** No matter where we find ourselves, that is our calling.

And here's another part of our calling—we are sent ones to the place where we work. As Christ followers, we are to be disciples who serve and love others and please God in our daily work life and habits. And it doesn't stop there—we are sent to make disciples as we share the gospel message with others.

All Change Comes from Jesus

To be clear, if our heart changes for the better at our workplace, it's because of this one thing—our heart has been changed by Christ. Changed actions alone aren't enough—they will never produce lasting fruit. **Only new hearts cause us to love God with all that we are and love our neighbor as ourselves.**

What does it look like to live at work with hearts changed by the gospel? We love the people we meet at work. We seek their well-being and not just our own. We live in kindness and harmony with all people in our workplace, both friends and enemies. We worship God at work in how we love others and seek to do them good.

We see the actions of a changed heart illustrated in these verses:

- **Romans 12:9**—"Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good."
- **Romans 12:14–18**—"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."

“ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. ”

——Psalm 19:14

New King, New Boss

When we put our faith and trust in Christ, it means we come under a new rule and a new King. Our allegiance is now not to our boss, to ourselves, our family, or our country, but to Christ alone.

King Jesus gives us direction, and we submit and follow as grateful servants. Our identity now is to be disciples who make more disciples.

Pause / Reflect

Where in your life or work is it hard to trust and follow Jesus as your King? Consider reading all of **1 Thessalonians** to see how Paul relates to ordinary believers with jobs in a challenging life and work environment. Ask the Holy Spirit to encourage you and show you what needs to change in your life. Expect His help.

What Jesus' Work Will Do

We've now seen how, when it comes to our identity, Jesus has already done all the work for us. Because of him, we're free to let our work be pure worship—we work out of our gratitude, not to earn his favor. His work on our behalf will stand for eternity.

And that brings us to our last point of this lesson—what Jesus' work will do in the future.

New Goal

Remember that last act of the Bible? The final renewal and restoration is accomplished by Christ's redeeming work. Our hope is in him, finally, not in our efforts to make a difference or promote good among humanity.

When Jesus changes our hearts, he realigns our future hope. Our hope is not in a bigger house, a perfect job, comfortable savings, but a new creation in which all sin, death, tears and brokenness are removed. **Our new hope is that suffering related to our work will be removed by Christ when he comes in power.** The whole creation groans, says Paul in Romans 8:19–21 — “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

When doing work with excellence and integrity becomes tiring, we remember that we are living for the next age, the life to come. **We work as unto Christ and are being transformed through our work experiences.** The good you are working toward will not always be evident in this life. Life is always going to be frustrating this side of Revelation 21–22, including your work life.

Go + Do

This week, look to see ways in which your work is worship, or can be worship.

- Who are the people you can love as Christ loves you?

- In what ways can you work differently from your coworkers? For example, how will you display integrity and excellence in work this week?
- How does your changed heart equal changed action?

Flourish: Transform Work in Light of the Gospel

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Learn to work with excellence and maintain joy in all situations

Disciples Think and Act Differently

We're not perfect, and we never will be this side of the New Heavens and New Earth. But that doesn't mean we can't be transformed kingdom representatives who help our workplaces flourish. As followers of Jesus, we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves. Christian love is not an abstract feeling. It acts in concrete situations, not perfectly but meaningfully, not self-righteously but self-sacrificially. Christians seek to bring the ethics and truths of Scripture into their workplaces as far as they are able.

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What does it mean to flourish at work?

Jesus is our picture of a flourishing life. Andy Crouch⁶ says, "He brought flourishing everywhere he went. Everyone around Him was transformed by an encounter with Him." Crouch points out 4 things that flourishing is based on Jesus' life:

1. Profound truthfulness to God and other people
2. Consistently attended to and cared for whoever God placed in His life
3. Life that multiplied itself in more and more lives
4. Life that gave itself away

Flourishing for each of us comes from knowing Christ and being reconciled to God. With Christ at the center of our lives, we are able to work in a broken world and workplace while keeping our eyes fixed on the vision Scripture provides of a new heavens and a new earth that will be filled with flourishing.

In our workplaces we are able to flourish when:

- We trust God and work for God with integrity and righteousness.
- We view our superiors and colleagues as well as clients as fellow image-bearers of God.
- We work for the betterment of the company and the betterment of each person in our lives.

In summary, we flourish at work when we display our love for God and love for others in the way we do our work and how we relate to everyone God places in our lives.

Christ-followers are to aim for this—to live out the values of the Kingdom and strive for relational holiness as a life of worship to God and love for neighbors. Work is where we spend most of our waking hours. We are to work at becoming more like Jesus in the ways we talk, think and work.

So, what does that look like? We'll talk more about it in the next step.

⁶ Any Crouch, *What Does "Human Flourishing" Mean for Christians?* (<https://youtu.be/3jcWlUoBGaw>)

How the Gospel Changes Our Work

Remember, the workplace is one place where God is at work enabling us to live lives more pleasing to him. Sometimes this progressive process is called **sanctification**. We see that described in 2 Peter 1:5–8:

“ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” ”

Let's talk about what some of these virtues look like in our workplace.

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Hard Work

The first characteristic we see of a changed heart at work is that **we work hard at our jobs**. **Colossians 3:23** says so:

“ 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.” ”

Excellence

Gospel living also means **we strive to work with excellence**. Dorothy Sayers has said, “The only Christian work is good work well done.”⁷ It's that simple. Our ministry is one of growing competence; we should do what we do well and always be seeking ways to grow and improve. After all, we are serving the Lord Christ in our jobs. Excellence at work is also an incredible testimony to a watching world. When we aim to work heartily for the Lord instead of seeking recognition or status, that is a kind of public worship that others may notice.

[Perfectionists take note: Working with excellence does not mean always giving our literal best effort to every work task or situation. Working wisely would seem to require that sometimes we choose to give a good enough effort to some tasks, in order to aim for overall excellence on higher priority tasks. Always doing our best would mean constant effort to improve, and sometimes in a fallen world we make a strategic decision that a good effort is enough. Not a sloppy effort but a good effort. Example: To paint a Rolls Royce automobile requires 100 pounds

⁷ Sayers, Dorothy. "Why Work?" Letters to a Diminished Church, 1942.

of pain applied in 5 separate coats. But does a 20-year-old vehicle with only 25,000 miles of lifespan remaining really need 5 coats of paint?]

Excellence also means we work with appropriate effort, integrity, and faithfulness. It means you choose to do the right thing every time, even if it's the hard thing. Integrity also means that you are consistent; the way you act and work in public is the way you act and work in private. And that involves faithfulness to your current job, day and in and day out, even if it's not a job that you love. Faithfulness means you don't just show up, you work hard and give your best, because it is what your King has put in front of you for this day.

Joy

Our work should also be **characterized by joy**. Certainly, there are and will be hard, long and stressful days, but ultimately, we are able to put the weight of work onto Christ who bears our burdens with us. We have joy because we know this isn't all there is! Our light and momentary troubles at work can be achieving for us a glory that far outweighs today's challenging interaction with coworkers, broken heating pipes, or flat tire (2 Cor. 4:17). We are going to have some hard days for sure, but the New Heavens are coming!

Love of Others, Worship of God

We also desire our work to be of **loving service to others and worship of the Creator**. For even the King did not come to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45). As Christians sent to the workplace, we should always see our coworkers, clients, and workplaces through the lens of service. How can you serve your boss today? How can you serve the client? How can you serve your children or next-door neighbor? This is the way we offer ourselves as living sacrifices and turn our work into worship. The Holy Spirit gives us a new attitude about our workplace and the people in it.

Now new in Christ, you see others as fellow image-bearers who deserve dignity, respect, kindness, and love. Your love for them and service to them is not based on whether you like them or not, or if they've been nice to you or not. Instead, you see their inherent dignity as a creation of your King, made in the likeness of God, however fallen they may be. You are kind to them, look out for them, show gratitude to them. You love as you have been loved.

Remember that what you do is one means through which God feeds, keeps, provides for, and cares for creation. Your hands, mind, feet, muscles, creativity, and skills are all part of the "fingers of God." And, recognize that God loves and keeps you through the work of other people as well. If you hold to this understanding of work, you never look down on anyone's work—all work that doesn't require us to sin has meaning. There's no place for job snobs!

Workers directed by a Christ-transformed heart find ways of **loving well our neighbors at work**. We volunteer and seek out charitable work not to check the box of "charity" but because we long to see our communities flourish more as we love people well.

And when God has given us authority to make policy or set direction, we love our neighbor at work by making just and fair company policies that treat employees with dignity and value their contributions. We promote flourishing.

You're Entering a New Culture

Through all-of-life worship, your role now is to cross the cultural barriers and go into your workplace as an ambassador, a representative, an agent of the King and his kingdom. When you become a child of God, you are transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13).

“ You are now no longer of the world, but you are still in it, learning to meet people where they are, building relationships with them, and sharing the gospel.” ”

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You are now a light, a faithful witness to people who look like you, to people who look different from you, but to all who are not yet in the kingdom. This is the Great Commission. This is gospel work, and it's a part of every Christian's job description. It's not something extra for a few full-time pastors or missionaries. Whether pastor, mechanic, or stay-at-home mom, it's for all workers, all followers of Christ.

That's what Kingdom representatives do, according to Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:20–21:

“ “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” ”

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The Sent One's Gospel Mindset

So now that you know you are a sent one, take that mindset with you to work. When you walk into your workplace, imagine walking into a different culture with people whom you may need to get to know in order to understand them better so that you can love them well and accurately communicate the good news of the Coming King. When you sit in a meeting, you will likely be among citizens of another kingdom. When you work at the store register, you are an ambassador not of the store only but of your King. When you meet the needs of your children and serve neighbors, **see that as a way to worship God and seek to make that worship acceptable and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1–2).**

You're not just a parent taking care of your children, you are a Christian parent serving God and your children as you disciple your children in the truths of the Bible. You're not just a doctor helping the physically sick, you also want to speak to your patients' spiritual sickness. Offer yourself at work in service to God and understand that as worship.

And while you worship, open your eyes and ears to the various nationalities, social tribes and cultures that are around you in your community and area of work. Flourishing can increase when different cultures interact and value their differences. When all kinds of people work together with mutual understanding, the workplace becomes a better place to spend our time.

“ A “tribe” is “any social grouping in which members might find a sense of identity and belonging.” It’s a group of people that have regular, ongoing, meaningful interaction that helps provide a sense of identity. It’s how people develop a sense of “us” vs.”them.” The resulting connections eventually develop into subcultures with their own sets of norms (“This is how we do things around here”). Tribes serve to help people process information about the world around them (“What do we think about this?”). ”

——Caleb Crider, *Tradecraft*

And as you go through life, encourage other Christ-followers in their mission too. When you participate in the regular gatherings of local church worship, look around at all the other sent ones and seek to edify and be edified as you exalt Christ and speak and show and tell the gospel to one another in gathered worship.

Our hope is that you would partner with your local church to start reaching the people in your workplace. (We will talk more about this in the next lesson *Connect Your Work and Church*.) We want you to be better equipped to share the gospel in the cultures of your workplace, your neighborhood, your gym, your grocery store.

Connect Your Work With the Church

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Get your church involved with your weekly mission to reach the nations at your job.

Gathered and Scattered

When we get a changed heart, work becomes about two things—worship and mission.

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It's vertical and horizontal. We do our work well as an offering to God and in honor of Him. But, we also do our work missionally, seeking to make a difference in our workplaces and to build relationships that lead to gospel conversations.

It's something we all were meant to do together as Christ-followers all over the globe. **The local church is God's instrument for reaching the nations with the good news of Jesus Christ.** The relational community of the local church (not the building itself) is the context for growing as disciples of Jesus Christ who multiply by making more disciples.

Before the gospel changes the way we see our work, we tend to think being a Christ-follower and disciple is about what happens on Sundays or when the church gathers. With that comes the belief that work has one purpose—to make money to give to pastors and missionaries so that they can fulfill the Great Commission. But the truth is that discipleship happens all of the time. The gospel means our lives from Monday-Saturday are now filled with new purpose. **The Great Commission is accomplished as ordinary church members live as disciples sent to the workplace to make disciples of Christ among all peoples wherever they are found.**

In the New Testament, Paul often writes letters to churches, not just to *the full-time staff*.

First Thessalonians is a great example of how the church is connected to work and to workers who do gospel work and also work with their hands:

“ We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ...your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. ”

——1 Thessalonians 1:2–9

Later in 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul notes the transforming power of the gospel in these believers who apparently work in manual labor as well as in the work of telling the gospel. The gospel has no place for job snobs who look down on others because of their current job roles:

“ But we urge you, brothers, to do this [love one another] more and more, and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to

work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.

—1 Thessalonians 4:10–12

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The Thessalonians were both working with their hands and doing the work of faith by “going forth everywhere.” Like the Thessalonians, church members can be informal missionaries, sent out as chaplains ready to do the work of the Lord with people from their workplaces.

Bring Work to Church and Vice Versa

We bring our work to church as we pray for wisdom, invite co-workers, and hear the ministry of the Word as it relates to our workplace challenges and opportunities. We also bring our workplace challenges and relational conflicts to church gatherings for prayer, burden bearing, biblical instruction, and insight. We gently ask pastors and leaders to equip us for living as sent ones to the workplace in the preaching, teaching, and small groups of our local church.

As a workplace chaplain, invite fellow church members and even your church leaders to visit you in your workplace for a meal or special events. Help establish the God-given connections between the people where you live, work, play and worship corporately.

Scattered

In other words, the church sends out its member disciples every week to work purposefully as unto the LORD, making a difference in the community. **Think of the local church gatherings as a kind of Bible saturated, Spirit-filled jump start as we scatter to the places God has sent us to be and make disciples all week long.** Disciples are then sent out of the church into the workplace where they spend most of their waking hours.

At work, we share the hope of Christ. We remind people not to work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life. Loving our coworkers well means we invite them to turn and believe when we explain that there is nothing you can do that makes you acceptable to God. We announce that the work of God, according to Jesus, is actually no work at all. It is to believe in Jesus whom God has sent! We gladly identify with Jesus who talks about his work in this way—
“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”

“ Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”

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—John 6:27–29

When we are called as disciples of Christ, we are sent to make disciples among the nations. That may mean moving or it may mean staying put. The Great Commission is not for a select few, but for all disciples. Wherever you work, it's a mission field. But you don't go it alone. We'll talk more about that in the next step.

Get Equipped Together

When we read the letters written to the churches, we see how many different people were doing gospel work along with Paul, Peter, and John.

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Perhaps the best example is Epaphroditus, who served Paul as a kind of first century logistics courier when Paul was in prison (Phil. 2:25, 4:18). We may also read of Lydia, the merchant in whose house the church in Philippi first met (Acts 16:14), or Phoebe, who is mentioned in Romans 16:1-2 and who was prosperous enough in her work to be a benefactor for Paul's gospel work. All these and many more who are not named in the New Testament connected work and church and church and work. **Gospel work was part of their job description.**

When our churches also see us as sent ones to the workplaces, then gospel ministry will not feel so much like "one more thing" to add to our busy schedules. Instead, we function like chaplains or representatives of Christ and our local church as we work hard, work well, and do gospel work with people in our workplaces. We do this as we go about living our lives in the workplace—as we share a ride to or from work, have a work break, talk during lunch breaks, take a walk during lunch, exercise together after work, travel off site, get a cup of coffee.

What if we prayerfully and intentionally tried to use some of the commuting, break times, or lunch times at work for gospel ministries of mutual encouragement, listening to lost people to really understand them, and then sharing our testimonies? **What if we partnered in prayer together with other Christians at work asking God for more opportunities to explain the gospel?**

And what if the church equipped its members to be more ready as sent ones? What if your church promoted a plan for workers to listen to the Word and memorize it during their commutes? And what if you and your fellow church members as a body put effort into holding each other accountable for how you're stewarding your time at work for the sake of the gospel? We should thank God together when we hear from others how God is helping them share the good news with a Hindu or enabling them to be a supportive listener to a colleague in crisis. For those who work at home caring for children or family members, what if they were more connected to local church prayers and partnership?

Pause / Reflect

How is your local church equipping its members to see their world and workplace as contexts for all-of-life worship and gospel work?

Go + Do

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Rest Is Vital

A local church home is vital in our lives not only for equipping us and giving us community, but also in reminding us to rest.

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One of the most beautiful parts of the gospel in relation to our work is that we can rest. This doesn't mean of course that all of our stress and deadlines go away, but it does mean that we stop looking for fulfillment, satisfaction, and identity in our work. We image God as we live out rhythms of work AND rest.

This brings great freedom. Now that we have experienced grace, we are able to extend that same grace and forgiveness to our coworkers when they treat us poorly or make work difficult.

Because we know we are forgiven and seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6), we are able to give ourselves grace when we make mistakes at work. We can even choose to rest and be refreshed when the project is still unfinished or the checklist still has a few items. There are times when we choose to work overtime, but then we do take time to enjoy God's good gift of rest.

As followers of Christ we also have the privilege of physical rest, a pausing of our work, that is a good gift from God. **Taking a sabbath—a weekly, intentional rest from work—also is a humble admittance of our finiteness and God's infiniteness.** We often have to leave some work undone to remind us that we aren't able to do it all. We pause our work knowing that our labor and busyness does not uphold the universe, but God does.

Ponder this story from Tim Keller and Katherine Alsdorf's book, *Every Good Endeavor*:

After finishing her psychiatry residency, a young doctor was working at a New York City hospital. She was friends with a doctor who was a few years ahead of her and who was pregnant with her second child. "Do you know what I love most about being pregnant?" the older doctor said to her friend one day. "I love being pregnant because it's the only time where I feel productive all the time. Even when I'm sleeping, I'm doing something!" It struck the young M.D. that her friend based her self-regard so completely on productivity that she seemed relieved to finally find a task she could do incessantly. She reflected, "For many of us, being productive and doing becomes ... an attempt at redemption. That is, through our work, we try to build our worth, security and meaning." Many people are trying to get a sense of self through productivity and success—but that burns them out.

Pause / Reflect

Is there a situation in your life and work that makes it hard for you to stop and rest? Why is that?
Is there a prayer concern to share?

You Are a Chaplain

“ The workplace is one of the few places where believers and non-believers spend much time together and get to know each other deeply...Many people form some of their closest friendships at work. Friendships at work then become friendships outside of work. ”

——Lausanne Statement (*Mission in the Workplace*, 2013)

More and more church-based or public evangelism is forbidden, restricted, or not so effective, but sent ones have opportunities to relate to and talk to people in and around work all the time—in other words, **relational evangelism**. God has placed us in particular workplaces for His purposes (Acts 17).

Samuel Chan⁸ suggests the idea of being the unofficial chaplain to people at work. Sent ones identify early and often as followers of Jesus in appropriate ways at work. Chaplains are people known to be “connected with God” and in times of challenge and need, lost people will often reach out to the chaplain to pray for them and minister to them. Unofficial chaplains are like Christian resource people in the workplace.

Listening well to people in this day and age is a great way to love them. Chaplains do a lot of listening so that when it comes time to speak, they have established trust and are valued as spiritual people with something valuable to say. It can be unwise to “spend company time” sharing the gospel in the workplace, but look around and pray for opportunities to listen around the “water cooler,” to have lunch with people, to listen as you walk into the building, to find opportunities “off the clock” to show and tell the good news. You are there to work but you are also a representative of Christ. Prayerfully seek to establish trust as a serious, caring Christ-follower. You talk about Jesus boldly but carefully and point people in appropriate ways toward new life in Christ.

Pause / Reflect

When aiming to be the chaplain or welcomed spiritual conversation partner, pray and consider these things:

- Am I building trust with those around me?

⁸ *Evangelism in a Skeptical World: How to Make the Unbelievable News about Jesus More Believable*, Sam Chan. See also Samuel Chan Podcast *Becoming their Go-To Chaplain at Work*.

- Do they seem to be interested in God or spiritual things? What questions might my co-worker be asking about God, life, Christianity?
- What troubles or issues are my co-workers facing? How can I come alongside them?
- Are they already following Jesus? Can they join us as one sent to the workplace, praying together once a week or every day?
- How can I bless my coworkers?
- How can I and some fellow church members invite them to a “safe place” to talk more about Christ and meet other Christ-followers? For many, a Sunday church gathering will not feel like a “safe place” at first.
- How am I inviting non-Christians to be a part of my community?

Reach All the Nations

“ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. ”

—1 Peter 2:11–12

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As a believer, secured as a citizen of heaven, you are dwelling now on earth as a sojourner and exile. We pass through our lives as pilgrims and seek to call others to join us on our journey to the goal, eternal life. **So, though you may look like those around you, you are actually living and working in a different culture.** Therefore, as Peter urges, we are called to live in an honorable way among the “Gentiles,” those who are culturally different, who do not follow the one true God. Your workplace may have few or no fellow believers. Among your colleagues there may be some who oppose Christ and his people. We are still called to show such good deeds among them that there is no room for (true) accusations, and to be such a testimony that they in fact come to know God and worship him at his coming.

Adopting the mindset of a sent one means that we seek to make disciples in all places of all kinds of people. Even if our coworkers are from our own city and neighborhood, as long as we work among them, we are sent out as Christ’s ambassadors to them. **Begin to see your workplace as a foreign land and yourself as sent there to learn about them and love them well as you work hard alongside others.** Think of yourself as a resident chaplain at work. Do your good work well; Don’t neglect gospel work.

Spreading the blessing

In Genesis 12:1-3, God calls Abram to leave his family and go to the land that he would show him. He promises that he will make Abram’s family into a great nation, that he will bless him and that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed. Abraham of course becomes the patriarch of Israel, and through Israel Jesus comes as the Savior of the world and salvation is extended to Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female. **The blessing that God promised to all nations is fulfilled in Christ and spreads to all the families of the earth through his disciples, through you and me.**

Part of our job as believers is to spread God’s promised blessing, salvation and relationship with Him, to all nations. This includes those who talk and dress like you and those who don’t look like you. “The nations” doesn’t mean geopolitical entities, but rather ethnic or cultural groupings of people. As humans, we also naturally form “social tribes” and communities centered around our

cultural upbringing, a hobby, work, a neighborhood, a shared passion, etc. Look around for social tribes at work.

Social tribes will be groups that interact regularly and have a shared sense of identity. They often have developed subcultures that partially define how they will think and act. **God calls each of us to different social tribes and communities, so that all can hear the good news.** We seek to understand those around us and learn their cultural values and worldview as a means of building relationships and trust that leads to gospel conversations.

In Revelation 7:9-10, near the End we are looking forward to, we see around the throne a great multitude of people from every nation, tribe, and language worshipping God for his salvation and presence. This is the consummation of God's promise to Abram back in Genesis 12. **The incredible thing is that we as God's children have the privilege of bringing the nations to the throne.** We of course don't save people or change hearts; that's the work of the Spirit, but we do get to be a witness, be a messenger of the gospel, be a light in dark places.

Pause / Reflect

- What are the social tribes God has placed you in? By birth, experience, or choice?

- What are the social tribes in your workplace? How might you begin to listen and learn about one of those work tribes?

In the next lessons, we will begin to learn practical ways to be a sent one and a trusted chaplain. These are labeled as steps, because there is progression as we learn how to reach our co-workers with the gospel. But many of these things can and should be done simultaneously. The goal is to grow in our missional, sent one skills.

We'll go ahead and start with Step 1 in this lesson—pray. That's on the next page.

Step 1: Pray

Though all the steps are important when it comes to reaching the nations at your workplace, this one is where it all begins.

Nothing gets done without this first step—prayer.

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The first and continual step in being a sent one is prayer. **Prayer is the way that sent ones declare their dependence upon the Creator who gives us work to do and assigns us the places where we live and work.** In Scripture, God invites us to communicate with him about everything. In the Lord's prayer, we are encouraged to worship God in prayer and to long for others to recognize his greatness. We see Paul, who was a tentmaker, praying for opportunities as a sent one, asking for boldness, ability and opportunities in gospel work.

Before you can do anything else, before you start your workday, and every moment—pray.

First, pray for opportunities. Colossians 4:2–4 - Ask that God would divinely create times to talk, that he would be working on and opening the hearts of those around you, that he would cause them to trust you and be willing to ask you questions. The Lord alone creates these gospel opportunities.

Second, you need to pray for boldness. Ephesians 6:18–20 - It may be that suddenly a dozen opportunities to build relationships and share the gospel come up, but our flesh often gets scared or weak. We need to pray that the Spirit would give us boldness when the time comes to speak up.

Third, you need to pray for ability. When an opportunity presents itself and we have the boldness to speak, then we also need to pray that the Spirit enables us to say the right things in the right way. Only God knows each person's heart and what they need to hear in each moment.

Below is a simple checklist called the **My Opportunities Routine (MORE tool)** that you should go through at the beginning of each day or each week to simply remind yourself to be praying for these three things. If it helps, grab an accountability partner and talk through the checklist together.


Pause / Reflect

As you begin to see your workplace as people and cultures to whom you are a sent one:

- Ask God to give you opportunities at or around work to build relationships with those who seem far from Him.
- Ask God to open your eyes to internationals at work and to those who come from a different cultural context (or social tribe) than you.
- Start praying in Jesus' name with friends at appropriate times and in appropriate ways.

Go + Do

The prayer cards on the next page are printable or can be downloaded and added to your phone as a daily reminder to pray. Use the prayers cards at least 3 days this week and send the prayer cards to some friends at your local church. Then, invite them to pray with you next week. Consider printing the card to place in your Bible or daily journal.



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PRAYER : 1
CARD

Lord Jesus, thank you for finishing the work the Father gave you to do. Help me work today with joyful hope, confident of your acceptance of me, whatever may happen.

Lord, help me to work hard and with excellence for you today. May I remember whether it is a hard day or good day - that I am serving you and not men. *Col. 3:23-24*

Lord, give me opportunities today to make a positive difference at work and do the good works you have for me in my workplace. Remind me today that the quality of my work is a reflection of you to those around me.

Help me love others, serve others, and show kindness to others, just as you have loved, served, and shown kindness to me.
John 13:31



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PRAYER : 2
CARD

Great God, when things get challenging today, remind me that you are working to make me more like Christ as I remember that you are at work in me. *Phil. 2:13*

Today, I pray for opportunities to share my faith with others. Lord, give me boldness and ability to share your gospel clearly when those opportunities arise.

Lord, help me to see my co-workers as fellow Image Bearers and give me grace to represent Jesus and His Kingdom values today. Lord, help me listen well and value the people around me.

Lord, I know that I am sent to the workplace and you are present with me in all I say and think and do today. Help me to work that way.

Give me humility to see myself and others accurately and be willing to learn from and about others.

Sent to Your Workplace

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Become a “regular” and learn about the people around you for gospel purposes.

Step 2: Observation Skills and Awareness

At the end of the last lesson, we looked at Step 1 of being a sent one in the workplace—**pray**. The next step flows from there—after we **pray** for opportunities, we **look** for them.

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One of the most important steps in being a sent one in your home, neighborhood, stores, and workplace is to **look**. Learn to observe others in the workplace appropriately.

We learn so much by observation. By watching, we pick up skills, nuances, behavior, cues, etc. Whether you realize it or not, when you meet a new person or group, your brain does a lot of automatic observation: how does this person look? What is their body language? (Open and hugging? Reserved and arms folded?) What are they doing? Are they asking me questions? We learn a lot about someone by simply watching them. And we respond to the other person based on what we observe.

If you want to build good relationships with those around you, then you first have to observe. This doesn't mean that you're just watching them without saying a word to them. Don't do that. It does mean though that as you're beginning the relationship, you are doing active observation to catch behavior, attitude, culture, and skills. See your workplace(s) as places to observe and learn purposefully, seeking to understand with gospel purposefulness.

Go + Do

This Saturday morning, or some other time this week, spend two hours in a coffee shop, the mall, or a park (preferably somewhere you may not have been before and that you know will be busy with lots of people). You'll be asked to share about your experience in the next discussion group. Take a journal with you, buy a cup of coffee, observe the people around you, and answer the questions below:

- How do people greet/leave one another?

- Do some speak a different language when with one another, or when talking with family or friends on the phone? Which language is it?
- How are people dressed? What clues does this give for the person's place in daily life?
- What do their tattoos mean?
- How do couples interact? Families? How are coworkers or colleagues interacting?
- What activities are happening on the street?
- What types of buildings or commerce are around you?

- What function does the coffee shop or park (or wherever you are) seem to serve for the people here?
- What do people order? What do they do with their leftovers or trash?
- How long do people stick around?
- How do people pay? Do they leave tips?
- What type of activities happen in which places? What am I curious to know more about?
- Who looks particularly troubled? Serious? Worried? Happy? Busy? Pray appropriately for the people that you see.

After you've done this, consider visiting a cultural site or place that is outside of your normal culture or routine. Visit a mosque, a Jewish temple, a Hindu temple or meditation center or a Chinese New Year festival, for example.

In view of social distancing, consider "touring" these cultural sites virtually:

- Virtual Tour of a Mosque: <https://youtu.be/bv116rwlYrE>
- Virtual Tour of a Buddhist Temple: <https://youtu.be/6C-HgonZgfc>

Prior to your visit, look at the questions below so that you can more easily answer them afterward.

Questions to ask after a cross-cultural site visit:

1. Describe the people and what they were doing. Were children involved? Did anything you observed surprise or confuse you? What was it? Did you ask questions of anyone you saw?
2. Describe your surroundings: What did you smell? What did you hear? What did you see? How were the people dressed? Did they do anything unusual? Were all the people alike or were there different kinds of people?
3. How did you feel when you were there? Did you feel nervous? Did you feel welcome?
4. What did you learn about yourself and your reactions to cultural differences?

These activities can help you get in the habit of being an active observer, something that can translate over into your workplace with some intentionality. **We'll talk more about that in the next step.**

Step 3: Become a Regular

In the last step, you had a spot in a coffee house you used to observe the people around you. In this step, you'll find places at your work where you can regularly go to try to build relationships. We call that being a "regular," and it can pave the way for gospel conversations.

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The difference between being a distant colleague or just another employee and becoming an "acceptable outsider" is usually a matter of **frequency**. In your workplace, if you interact with people only once a month, you're probably not on their radar. But if you interact weekly (or daily!), the likelihood of you becoming a significant influence in their life is greatly increased. You get to know them and trust can begin to be built.

As part of your daily or weekly work rhythms, we suggest that you practice becoming a **"regular."** This means finding a place or way where you can have casual interaction with the same people every day at work. This should be a time and place "off the clock," like breaks or lunch times or walking to and from the parking lot. Some jobs provide opportunities to talk and work or talk while traveling together to a job site. **Good Regular spots at work are those places where there is time and permission from the boss for conversations.** Regular spots at work are places where it's not weird for you to hang out (even for just a few minutes). Choose a time and place that isn't too far removed from the rest of your daily or weekly work routine. Be prayerfully intentional about that time.

Examples of good "regular" times and spots at work:

- Cafe just before the morning rush
- Lunch or break times, break rooms at work, the lunch truck, a park near work
- On the way in and out of work, to and from the parking lot
- Bus or metro stop every morning or evening
- Fitness centers: same time, every day
- Same seating section of a few lunch spots each day

The "regular" place or time is where you hang out, ask questions, hear their story and tell your story, especially how you fit into God's Story in Scripture. It's also a place where you can ask for their help as well as be the spiritual chaplain that provides help, listens to other people's stories and offers prayers in Jesus' name. As you pray the MORE opportunities prayers, commit to intentional, regular presence in this place every day for one week and see if the Lord provides opportunity for fruitful conversations.

You can also do this if you work **virtually**. Always get on the video call early and visit with people. Stay on a call for a few minutes to get to know others. Invite others to a virtual coffee break for 15 minutes before, between or after meetings. You can establish regular “places” and times even if you work remotely.

Go + Do

As you pray the MORE opportunities prayers, commit to intentional, regular presence in a place every day for one week and see if the Lord provides opportunity for fruitful conversations.

One week probably isn't long enough for you to become a known regular, but this is a great way to develop this good habit. You'll know you're on the right track when:

- The co-workers open up a little bit to you
- When people stop to chat with you or remember your name or ask about your life
- When people start inviting YOU to lunch or an after-work activity

The goal is to become "somebody" trusted (a chaplain) in the lives of people at work so that your presence, prayers, and gospel proclamation might become personal. Part of earning that trust is developing a learner's posture. **We'll talk more about that in the next step.**

Step 4: Learning Ourselves and Learner's Posture

By being a regular, as we learned in the last step, we can begin to have a presence in people's lives. Once we gain that presence, it's important to be intentional about the next step—listening and learning well.

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Learning About Ourselves

As sent ones, we should have a growing awareness of our **cultural blindspots** and seek to become more flexible in ways consistent with Scripture and our conscience (Romans 14–15). Do you relate to any of these things below?

- I may talk too much; I don't listen as I should, so I don't really learn about other people or hear their stories. (Direct/Indirect Communication)
- I'm too quick to judge other customs or cultural practices. When I see or hear something different, I don't often pause to pray and respond or to seek wisdom in Scripture and talk to others. (Suspending Judgment)
- I often get impatient even outside of work time when others don't pay careful attention to starting or finishing times. I don't take time for small talk because it seems to be a waste of time. (Time or Event focus)
- I don't often have people in my apartment or home. In fact, I don't often spend time with people outside my family or existing group of friends. (Hospitality)
- I'm easily annoyed when others stand too close or too far away from me. I have a specific personal space zone that I don't like others to enter. (Personal Space)
- I tend to be inflexible in my thinking about many categories that Scripture doesn't exactly determine, like modest dress for example or healthy eating. (Category Width)
- I speak English, and they speak English, so we must be culturally close.

Go + Do

If you have a good friend who knows you well and whom you trust, take time to ask them if they have noticed any blind spots you have. We all have blind spots, so don't be embarrassed or defensive about what they say. Know that what they say is for your good, it's so that you can grow in Christ.

Learner's Posture

As believers we are always called to humility. **We are called to be learners, because we know as finite and sinful humans, we can't ever know all things.** Thus, we are called to constantly be learning. Here are some ways to do that:

Be curious about “the nations,” not condemning of religious differences. Have a learner's posture about people at work, especially (but not only) the “nations.”

Listen well. Ask them about their favorite music. Listen to it and try to understand it. Make them a work-appropriate playlist and share that with them. Ask them their favorite snacks or foods and include something besides “donuts or bagels” in the morning or meeting snack offerings. International foods can be really interesting snacks!

Even if you ordinarily like to eat alone, **prayerfully plan lunches with others** to hear their stories. Include colleagues, especially internationals, in after-work hobbies, exercise, trips to the park with your family, meals and other non-work activities. Then practice thinking and acting like a sent one with them by asking lots of questions and staying curious.

Step 5: Culture Map Introduction

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If you work among many ethnicities, diving into the Culture Map resources can be very helpful to you. Erin Myers, the author of Culture Map, explores the diversity of cultures and how they affect business relationships and work.

Here's a brief explanation of Culture Map: https://youtu.be/qf1ZI-O_9tU

If you'd like to learn more or see more videos like the one below, check out the appendix on the Culture Map (Page 79).

Video — Getting to Yes Across Culture: <https://youtu.be/iSPeLrKJLYo>

Step 6: Basic Worldview Skills

As you learn more about your co-workers, you may learn more about their **worldview, or the lens through which they see the world**. Understanding their lens can be a huge help in building bridges to share the gospel. We'll talk more about that in this step.

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How do we interpret what we see in nature, on TV, in government? How do we view ourselves? What do we see as the purpose of life? How am I supposed to interact with others? The answers to these questions are determined by our worldview.

Worldviews are complicated and nuanced, but it can be extremely helpful to know the basics of the worldview that a co-worker, neighbor or boss holds. An excellent resource on learning the basics of worldviews is Dare to Share, which gives you an outline of a number of different worldviews such as Muslim and Mormon. Two of the most helpful resources you'll see there are **questions to ask someone with this worldview and aspects of the religion you can admire**. Both of these are very helpful when having conversations with your friends.

Choose the worldview of the co-worker you are trying to reach and learn something about it! You can even download the app and have it ready to reference in the moment you need it.

Dare 2 Share: <https://www.dare2share.org/resources/worldviews/>

There are a lot of factors that influence someone's worldview; a big one is the person's culture. But you can learn more about that too for the purpose of building bridges. We'll talk more about that next.

Worldview Summaries

If you'd like brief summaries on some of the world's most popular religions, download the pdfs below on **Animism, Buddhism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, and the Postmodern worldview**.

Step 7: Cultural Curiosity

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Exegesis is the act of studying something (text, art, language) and extracting meaning from within. Cultural exegesis is when we study a certain culture and seek to understand its meaning. **We try to understand the meaning so that we can speak into it appropriately with the gospel.** In Acts 17:22-23, when Paul is in Athens, he “perceived” (i.e. he watched and learned) that the Athenians were religious. **He observed, commented, and then told their own story back to them in light of the gospel.**

Cultural exegesis doesn’t mean you have to go to another country to find a culture different from yours. Those who sit right beside you may live in a different neighborhood, have a different family than yours, have a different background and story, and may be from a different city, state or nation. In fact, each family produces its own nuanced culture. The nice part about doing cultural exegesis in your “home culture” is that you may be able to study it and understand it more easily than if you were doing this overseas.

Pause / Reflect

There are a few aspects we should watch for as we do cultural exegesis. Think about the person/co-worker/boss/client/neighbor you are wanting to share the gospel with and answer the following questions:

1. **Values and Customs**—What is important to them? How do they spend time, money, energy? (Family, work, group, money, power, respect, might, land, independence)
2. **Conflict/Needs**—What challenges their values? What tension do they feel? (war/peace, social issues, oppression, natural disasters, enemies, economy)
3. **Outlook**—Positive or negative? Victor or victim mentality? Hopeful or hopeless? (socialism, capitalism, progress, class systems, educated, religious, tradition)
4. **Stories**—What movies, books, TV, mythology, folk tales, music do they consume? (Themes of redemption, overcoming, oppression, hope, good vs. evil)

5. **Idols**—What do they worship? What are their dysfunctional saviors? (religion, tradition, systems/structures, technology, money, materialism, education)
6. **Fears**—Look at the cultural extremes. What do they run from/defend against/avoid? What are they anxious about? (war, oppression, others, themselves, loss of status, loss of culture, disease, shame, loss of job)
7. **Narrative**—How do they make sense of the world around them? (Think back to the worldview steps.)
8. **Social Tribes**—How do they organize socially? Where do they find their social identity? (subcultures, affinities, clubs, neighborhoods, stereotypes, friends, cliques)

You'll want to share this list with your discussion group.

You have learned in this lesson how to start becoming a trusted chaplain. **We now want to look more in depth into how to bring conversations to the gospel.** Once you have deeper relationships, how do you open others up to spiritual conversations? We'll talk about that in the next lesson, but before we head there, let's get one last quick look at why cultural understanding matter in the next step.

Cross-Cultural Videos

We won't always have perfect cross-cultural understanding, but it's so important that we do the best we can to know how the tribes and people groups we're interacting with think and operate. Even banks like HSBC understand it's vital to be able to communicate well across cultural lines—so much so that they put together the series of funny video ads you'll see below.

As you watch them, think through these questions:

- What are the misunderstandings between each party?
- What are some ways they could've been avoided? What questions could the person who wasn't a part of the host culture have asked beforehand, or what kind of research could they have done?
 - ▶ HSBC 'Eels' Ad: https://youtu.be/6_WAmt3cMdk
 - ▶ HSBC Italian Flowers: <https://youtu.be/sdCyLMWiDWU>
 - ▶ HSBC Wedding Present: <https://youtu.be/w-KYII-qLXY>
 - ▶ Orbit White Cow Ad: https://youtu.be/JsTU_dO0Rz0

Chaplain: Moving to Gospel Conversations

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Plan ways to be hospitable and get equipped to share truth as you meet.

Level One Hospitality

In the last lesson, you looked at how to become someone who was regularly available to co-workers. **Now we're going to look at how to invite people in for deeper conversations, and as we did with the last lesson, we'll do it in steps or levels.** This structure is simply meant to help you think through ways to engage your coworkers a little more all the time so that your relationships will be fruitful. We'll start right here with level one hospitality.

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The first step is simply to get to know your co-workers or your neighbors in your neighborhood. Think of this as your “public space”—it’s a less intrusive way to get to know them because it’s where you naturally gather, meet, and talk. **You are not inviting them anywhere they would not normally go but simply being more intentional in those places.** This includes your “regular” place or places.

When someone new is hired, be the first to welcome and assist the new hires. As sent ones to the workplace, accept and value cultural differences in appropriate ways. **Make people feel accepted even when you can’t agree with their values or beliefs.** After all, they are fellow humans made in God’s image. Assume that you have been sent to be a witness to them!

Go + Do

This week, make an effort to “invite” a coworker into a shared, public space. This may mean inviting them over to your desk or taking a few extra minutes at their desk (before or after work or on a break—don’t take away from valuable work time!). It may mean inviting them to sit at your table at lunch. Maybe it’s asking questions over the fence when you see your neighbor.

- Think through your “Level One Hospitable Act” for this week and DO it!
- Consider including a partner from your local church to pray with you or participate in your “Level One Hospitality Act.”

Use the Basket of Relationships handout, and think of the 1-5 friends you know in your spheres who need to hear the gospel. Choose from the blue boxes on the top to describe which “basket” your friend currently fits into. Then think through the next steps you want to take in moving that friend into a deeper relationship with God.

Level Two Hospitality

The second “level” of hospitality is a semi-private space for deeper conversation once trust is established. This is intentional hospitality in your home, at a coffee shop, or a restaurant for a meal.

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As you grow in friendship with those in your workplace, and feel closer and more comfortable with them, **start to invite them to join you and your family at your home, to the park, or at a coffee shop.** Host a backyard cookout or a group meal with several couples in your home. If you need to keep social distance, pack picnics and blankets and head to the park. Bring a summer intern to coffee and ask them questions. Use a guest pass and invite a co-worker to join you at the gym or fitness center. Maybe they also are interested in Zumba classes, a bicycling group or walking for exercise. It can often be better if both you and your friend start something together rather than bringing a novice into a situation where they might feel uncomfortable. Let prayerful wisdom guide you.

Pay close attention to the overseas hires who have recently moved, are missing their family and are in search of friends. Consider going out to a variety of restaurants, especially those of different cultures and ethnicities; break out of the normal spots. And as always—be culturally aware.

Think through your invitations, especially in a cross-cultural setting with other ethnicities:

- What types of food do they like to eat and what types are they restricted or unfamiliar with eating, perhaps because of their religion?
- Can both genders participate in what you’re inviting them to?
- What is an appropriate time or place to invite them to? Do they prefer the morning or evening?
- Sometimes it’s best just to ask them about their values or food preferences: Would they prefer vegetarian? Do they drink caffeinated beverages like coffee or would an herbal tea work better? Do they have any particular religious food restrictions?

Ask Questions

Once you’ve invited your co-workers or neighbors in, the goal is to grow in your understanding of them as you go deeper in conversation and relationship. This happens best by simply asking questions. Questions show curiosity and a willingness to learn. Listening well also shows true interest in and love for the other person. **It’s vitally important that you get to know the person,**

not the national culture you read about online or have heard about that this person comes from. National culture generalizations are helpful but do not apply to every individual from a country.

Here's an easy question to ask:

- What religion did your family raise you to have?
- Possible response: “Interesting, tell me about that...” / “What was that like?” / “How has that made a difference?” / “How did/does that make you feel?”
- Possible response: “Now that I’ve heard your story...”

Practice asking different kinds of questions that invite people to tell you their story so that you can get to know them and their story.

Level Three Hospitality

As a quick recap, level one hospitality invited people into your public space, the place where you're a "regular." Level two brought them into your more personal space as a guest to your gym or a dinner at your home. **When we speak of level three hospitality, we mean that you've grown comfortable with the other person and have a trusted relationship that can lead to gospel or spiritual conversations.**

Since you have identified early and often as a follower of Jesus, when it's time for the gospel conversation, it should feel natural. The gospel conversation could be the first time you talk, or it might be after level one and level two hospitality and time spent together. Christ followers are sent out with the Holy Spirit, who comes alongside us to give us boldness and wisdom in gospel communication.

Speak Confidently

As you speak, remind your co-worker that Jesus is the most important person in your life, that in Christ you are connected to true life. Share that God gives life to those who turn and trust in the one and only Savior. Explain the Bible story and where you fit in during this time between Jesus' life, death and resurrection and the return of Christ and the new Heavens and Earth. (We will learn a few ways to share the gospel in the next steps.) Share kingdom values or tell parables of Jesus or gospel accounts that highlight Jesus' person and work.

By this time your friends at work know you are a resource person (an informal chaplain) about the Bible and Jesus. You have prayed for them; you seem to be a person of faith, hope and love. Though far from perfect, you acknowledge your mistakes, apologize and seek forgiveness appropriately even at work. Your speech has been gracious and you talk differently, both in what and how you speak and the conversations that you choose not to join. You have likely mentioned what you heard at church on Sunday or how your local church community works and what a difference Jesus has made in your life.

You have **partnered with people in your local church** who have sent you to the workplace. They know about your work and pray for you and specific people in your workplace.

Maybe your friends at work speak English better than they understand English. If language has been a barrier, you now know which language your new friends speak best and so you can find online resources to share with them in their language. You may even be able to show them a video gospel presentation in a different language. There are many online like this one, which has a 9-minute gospel explanation called the Prophet's Story (<https://youtu.be/jnPRhBnK8kk>), or this one for Hindus (<https://youtu.be/2pPrb1FQNbQ>).

Be encouraged—you're not alone. Every day, your brothers and sisters in Christ are at their jobs and trying to find places to share the gospel just like you.

Gospel Fluency and Your Testimony

Gospel fluency is an essential skillset for those sent to the workplace—it's how we get to the heart of the matter. Many of us may speak English fluently but we don't have gospel fluency! As you pray and practice **MORE** prayers, commit to growing in gospel fluency.

This means more than just repeating a gospel outline. **Gospel fluency is being able to listen well and ask good questions.** It's getting fluent at listening to genuine questions and really understanding where you have not made the good news clear to your friend. Learning to genuinely express care and acceptance of a person and explain the gospel fluently in a variety of ways takes time and practice.

The starting place for gospel fluency is knowing your testimony and being able to share it passionately, clearly, and in many different ways.

Go + Do

"Salting" Your Testimony for the Workplace

Use the Testimony Worksheet to work on how to share your story. This worksheet will help you know what to say and ask you to have a 30 second, 3 minute and 30-minute version of your story.

- Remove all of the Christianese from your story that a co-worker may not understand.
- End your testimony with a question. Does that make sense to you?
- Later, refine your testimony for people of other worldviews. (Remember what you learned from Dare to Share!)
- My Faith Story Worksheet is another helpful resource: (<https://bible.org/seriespage/my-faith-story-worksheet>)

Three-Step Dance

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You can aim for gospel fluency in English as you grow in the skill of **really listening, trying to understand, and using a variety of Scripture to explain the gospel**—how God’s kindness and patience shown to us in Jesus pulls us to Christ, and how God’s story in Scripture helps us understand reality.

Think of this longer conversation as a kind of three-step dance.

- **First, ask them a question and then listen to their story.**
 - ▶ This can be about their life, their story, their experience, a current challenge, a future decision, a spiritual question, etc.
- **Second, tell your story.** (You should have a flexible testimony now.)
 - ▶ What parts of your testimony will be particularly meaningful in this situation?
- **Third, choose a short story or parable (1–2 minutes) from the Bible** that will make sense to them and communicate the good news as it relates to their situation.
 - ▶ This means you need to know Scripture!
 - ▶ Tell Jesus' story with concrete examples and a clear turning point.

Conversation Starters and Bridges

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To get from where you are in a conversation to where you want to be (the gospel), you often need a bridge—something to move you to a spiritual topic. **Building bridges, or transitioning naturally to the gospel within a conversation, is another gospel fluency skill.**

So how do you build them? And how do you know when it's a good time? Let's talk about that now.

How To Build Bridges

You might gently use things like workplace challenges and general human brokenness as bridges to the gospel. For example:

The Bible story explains why work is hard—sin and the fall. It also tells us Jesus experienced work but He FINISHED the work perfectly on our behalf. It is finished!

The Bible story explains why relationships are hard. Sin and the fall explain why people have to work at getting along, respecting one another, forgiving one another and working collaboratively rather than selfishly. In Christ, we can begin to relate more lovingly at work.

The Bible Story explains why we don't naturally feel close to God—Our sin has separated us from God. Life doesn't quite work right in God's creation when we are out of sync with our Creator God.

When To Build Bridges

You've been praying the **MORE** prayers and doing your job faithfully and looking out for opportunities. You have adopted a learner's posture and have learned about your co-workers' interests, culture and some differences in how they might live outside of work and even at work. Now you are ready to have that conversation. Of course, you want to trust God to help you be wise in recognizing the opportunities he is giving. Everyone is different, but the short list below might serve as a guide for you to see the opportunities he is giving.

"Safer" opportunities for starting that conversation:

- ▶ You are one on one or with a small group over a meal or coffee break.
- ▶ You are with peers at work.
- ▶ You have established a friendly relationship already.
- ▶ The context is relaxed; there's plenty of time to listen.

- ▶ You have some understanding of communication style differences.
- ▶ This is not the first time talking about yours and their culture/customs.

"Less Safe" opportunities for starting that conversation:

- ▶ You are with a large group of people.
- ▶ You are with the boss or supervisor(s).
- ▶ This is the first conversation.
- ▶ The context is high stress or high stakes (business deal, contract, decision).
- ▶ You are not sure you can communicate your question clearly.

David Livermore has a similar list in his article *A Guide To Asking Culturally Intelligent Questions As You Travel* for asking cultural questions in a work environment. (<https://davidlivermore.com/2020/05/26/a-guide-to-asking-culturally-intelligent-questions-as-you-travel-2/>)

Multiply: Summary, Review, and Application

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Look back over what you've learned and plan to share it with others.

Model and Multiply

Do you feel like you think differently about your work now than you did at the beginning of this course? We know work isn't perfect—we see why in the pages of Scripture (the Fall), and we see the effects of that every day. **But hopefully we also see now how our work can be a perfect place to reach the nations with the gospel.**

Here are some ways you might be thinking, acting and praying differently about the place where you spent a large part of your week:

- You see yourself as one sent to the workplace.
- You embrace a job description that includes good work and gospel work.
- You are understanding better how to love God and neighbor at work.
- You can see how your work serves others in God's "supply chain" to sustain creation and bless others.
- You pray regularly as you seek to live all-of-life worship at work, rest and play.
- You've partnered with someone as you seek to do good work and gospel work that connects to your local church.
- You are getting better and better at the informal chaplain role and learning more and more about the people in your workplace.
- You've taken some steps to be a hospitable sent one in your workplace.
- You are regularly praying the MORE prayers and making the most of opportunities to do some gospel work every week.

What's Next?

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So, now you have completed this Sent to the Workplace course, **how can you connect with others to equip them to better be and make disciples?**

Here are some ideas:

- Consider working through this course again with a few people and serving as the facilitator.
- Share this course with your church leadership and ask about making the course a regular part of the equipping curriculum.
- Choose a couple of learning aids or visuals and explain those to another Christ-follower.
- Begin to explore taking your job overseas. Enlist some partners to pray with you.

We hope you walk away from this course feeling more aware of the fact that **God placed you in your very job so that you could be a light to people around you** who may not be familiar with Jesus or what a real Christ-follower looks like. We also hope you **feel more equipped to build relationships strategically and ease comfortably into spiritual conversations whenever possible.**

Before you go, take a few minutes with these last Reflect and Change prompts and commit to keep using what you've learned as you go to the mission field of your workplace each week.

Pause / Reflect

- Prayerfully consider colleagues from other cultural backgrounds at your workplace; how can you learn more about them and their culture and religion?
- How might you grow as a listener?

- Where do you need to grow in gospel fluency?
- Who in your church might be able to help you grow in your chaplaincy skills at work? Is there anyone doing this well? Who might mentor you? Who will partner with you in praying for you as you grow?
- As God gives faithfulness, practice the three-step dance.

Additional Resources

More About Myer's Culture Map Book

Want to go deeper in what you've learned in this course? One additional resource is a very helpful book by Erin Myer on navigating cultural spaces in workplace contexts, particularly in business contexts.

Culture Map is a great guide in understanding how cultural differences can affect communication. Myer takes standard cultural categories like direct and indirect communication or whether cultures are people-focused or task-focused and maps them in layers of business situations.

She provides a multi-layer, 8-scale continuum map of basic cultural categories and how they overlap in different contexts and national cultures:

1. **Communicating**—simple, direct, and clear, or high context with rich meaning subtly or indirectly communicated
2. **Evaluating**—negative feedback given directly, or indirectly and discreetly
3. **Persuading**—specific data and cases, or big picture
4. **Leading**—egalitarian flat structure or hierarchical
5. **Deciding**—build consensus, or use top-down directive
6. **Trusting**—relational or results based
7. **Disagreeing**—avoid confrontations, or deal with them quickly and directly
8. **Scheduling**—is time a clearly defined point, or is time more a flexible range

It's a more nuanced explanation of cultural differences than most. As Myer states often, culture is too complex to be explained or accurately understood in just one or two dimensions. Its layered and cultural preferences or defaults may actually change in the SAME culture when there is conflict. Ordinarily direct communicators may choose indirect communication when faced with a serious disagreement at work. And vice versa. How that disagreement is communicated may depend on levels of trust and the culturally preferable leadership dynamics between the parties in disagreement. Throw in cultural defaults and modes of persuasion and you can see how basic cultural categories can get complex fast in the context of a serious disagreement.

Myer provides a basic profile of “national cultures” mapping them in her layered approach. The key, she said, is to compare profiles and use multiple perspectives in seeking to understand. What matters is not a single profile but how close that profile maps to your own default cultural profile. The closer they map, the more likely you will understand one another's communication, verbal and non-verbal. What matters is where various “national cultures” fall on the map in relation to one another. In business environments, there may be 4 or 5 or more cultures perceiving one another, all very differently. This is where having the basic culture map Myer provides in her book

and being aware of multiple perspectives can really help sort out complex interactions and potential misunderstandings.

In Culture Map, Myer reminds us that in most situations at home and abroad, national cultural preferences will trump organizational culture. That is to say, people, even leaders, are likely to default to national cultural styles no matter what the stated organizational culture is supposed to be. The more we interact with different cultures, the more we need the awareness of these layers and the various perspectives on cultural differences. According to Myer, globalization does not seem to be eliminating these layers and differences, though the national maps are changing. Young Chinese are more direct communicators of disagreement than their parents but American youth are less direct in their disagreement. So there is cultural movement but not towards some mono-cultural standard. The one exception would be in international business communication where low context communication seems to be the standard more and more. When some international businessmen leave the workplace, however, they are likely to switch back to the high context cultural communication outside the international workplace.

Additional Video Resources:

- Getting to Yes Across Cultures — Negotiating Video:
<https://youtu.be/iSPeLrKJLYo>
- The Language of Negative Feedback:
<https://youtu.be/lwBPfbEeynw>
- Low Context vs. High Context Societies:
<https://youtu.be/9oYfhTC9IIQ>
- Difference Between High Context and Low Context Culture:
<https://youtu.be/9oYfhTC9IIQ>
- How Cultural Difference Affect Business:
<https://youtu.be/zQvqDv4vbEg>
- Erin Meyer: Yes or No Questions When Working Internationally:
<https://youtu.be/PrSDRA3zMdo>
- How to Lead a Successful Global Team:
<https://youtu.be/DgbU7pP5QRc>

Work and Mission Resources

You can explore the following resources and articles to learn more about being missional at work:

- **"Mission in the Workplace"** by Lausanne Global Movement
<https://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2013-06/mission-in-the-workplace-encouraging-access-and-transformation-through-workplace-ministry>
- **"What Do We Mean by Missional Living?"** article
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5851d4ed1b631b55ebaed251/t/58a37f8517bffc153c67b3d9/1487110022428/WhatDoWeMeanByMissionalLiving.pdf>
- **"Following Jesus in His Mission: Integrating Faith and Work"** by Stacey Croft
<https://soundcloud.com/cpc-nashville/following-jesus-in-his-mission-integrating-faith-and-work>
- **Message from Christ Presbyterian Church**
<https://soundcloud.com/cpc-nashville/following-jesus-in-his-mission-integrating-faith-and-work?in=cpc-nashville/sets/missional-living-basics>
- **"Your Workplace is a Mission Field"** by Work Matters
<https://workmatters.org/your-workplace-is-a-mission-field/>
- **"30 Simple Ways to be Missional in Your Workplace"** on the Verge
<https://www.vergenetwork.org/2011/08/16/30-simple-ways-to-be-missional-in-your-workplace/>
- **Urban Social Tribes**
<https://readymag.com/u68064584/501127/>
- **Lausanne statement on Mission in the Workplace 2013**
<http://lausanne.org/content/lga/2013-06/mission-in-the-workplace-encouraging-access-and-transformation-through-workplace-ministry>
- **Lord-Focused Work**, by John Piper.
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/lord-focused-living-at-work>
- **Christian Workplaces Institute.** This organization is committed to helping promote flourishing in the workplace. The link takes you to their Flourishing Blog articles.
<https://www.bcwainstitute.org/blog/>
- **"Why Work?"** by Dorothy Sayers
[https://www1.villanova.edu/content/dam/villanova/mission/faith/Why Work by Dorothy Sayers.pdf](https://www1.villanova.edu/content/dam/villanova/mission/faith/Why%20Work%20by%20Dorothy%20Sayers.pdf)

A classic article by the famous novelist written in 1942 to the "diminished church." This work is helpful more because of the questions it raises than the answers it provides.

Helpful Books

Work Matters Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work (2011), Tom Nelson

A helpful book providing a basic understanding of work from a Christian perspective. Insightful without getting too heavy.

Work: Its Purpose, Dignity, and Transformation, Daniel M. Doriani

Doriani's book is thoughtful and thorough and addresses all kinds of work, not just work for pay or salary. He interviewed many people over several decades before writing this book.

Every Good Endeavor: Connecting our Work to God's work (2012), Tim Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf.

A helpful theology of work with interesting examples mostly taken from professional , executive or knowledge work.

Revolutionary Work: What's the point of the 9 to 5?, William Taylor

A short book based upon a series of talks by William Taylor from Australia. He argues that all Christians should also do some gospel work in addition to ordinary good work.

Fruit at Work, Mixing Christian Virtues with Business Chris Evans

Evans writes as an experienced entrepreneur seeking to make a difference through business. There is a helpful website also: www.fruitatwork.org

The Gospel at Work: How Working for King Jesus Gives Purpose and Meaning to Our Work by Greg Gilbert and Sebastian Traeger

Gilbert and Traeger's book addresses a number of common topics related to work. The Gospel at Work confronts both our idleness at work and our idolatry of work explaining that who we work for is much more important than what we do.

What's Best Next?: How the Gospel Changes the Way You Get Things Done by Matt Perman

This very helpful book is not just about a God-centered approach to productivity. The chapters on Love as The Guiding Principle for All of Life and on Clarifying Your Roles are all about our work life. and Also has a helpful website by the same name: What's Best Next.

Evangelism in a Skeptical World: How to Make the Unbelievable News about Jesus More Believable, Sam Chan

Sam Chan is a pastor, a physician and also a college and international outreach speaker in Australia. This is a great book to read if you want to grow in your gospel communication skills and understanding.

God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life, Gene Edward Veith, Jr.

The title explains what this book is all about. It's an engaging, compelling explanation of our vocation or God-given callings in our lives.

