

DISCIPLING MARKETPLACE LEADERS

Six Week Bible Study:

The Four-Fold Bottom Line of Every
Believer



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Introduction



Dear Friends,

It is time for a second reformation!

The first reformation reestablished the doctrines of salvation by grace, the authority of the Word of God, and the role of every believer as priest (Exodus 19:6; I Peter 2:9). It was the revolt of the German peasants, inspired in part by Luther's teaching on the primacy of every believer as a priest, that hastened the reformation. We tend to remember and focus on the first two truths of the Reformation mentioned above and forget the latter. However, the Reformers wrote and emphasized the importance of the priesthood of every believer and the value of everyday work where every believer represented Christ in every community through their lives to serve God through their work.

The Protestant Reformation reestablished the truths of the early Church. The first three centuries of the early Church lived these truths out as part of ushering in God's Kingdom and rule. Over time church leadership as professional clergy crept back in. **Where Israel was called to be a nation of priests, it became a nation with priests.** Jesus and the early Church called for every believer to be an ambassador of the Kingdom, discipling new believers across the marketplace and around the world.

Over the centuries the church ceased to be a nation of priests and became a religion with priests. There grew a gap between the "sacred" and the "secular." Life was lived on two plains: one committed to living and doing spiritual activities, going to church, prayer, worship, and the second "secular" existed to serve and

empower the first through providing it with needed resources. Work was a “necessary evil” that existed to support the “true spiritual activity” of the first. This is lived out today where we maintain a false holiness hierarchy with missionaries and pastors at the top and businesspeople at the bottom. We have forgotten the great truth of every believer as a priest (1 Peter 2:9).

Hundreds of interviews with business leaders reveal a deep-seated frustration and discouragement about their role in the local church. The local church needs their tithes and offerings to facilitate its programs but considers what they do with most of their lives, in their work, as having no acceptable category in the activities of the local church. Interviews with pastors have shown a barely hidden disdain for “work” as something that either came because of the fall or something that is a necessary evil. While this is not universal, it is spread enough to warrant a major correction. It is time to see and understand that work, far from being evil, is the reason why God created us. It is time that the local church understands that the greatest power for reaching the world for Christ is not a new missionary movement but a return to empowering every believer to be a priest in and through their lives and work for seven days a week.

Now is the time for a second Reformation where the priesthood of every believer is lived out in their occupations, and work is the basis for Christians being the salt, light, and leaven in every community. Discipling Marketplace Leaders has taken this integration to local congregations, challenging denominations, pastors, and church leaders to disciple those involved in the Marketplace (defined as business, education, and government) as part of the fabric of the church and the point of the spear of reaching the world for Christ.

The goal of these six studies is to reintroduce you to the truth that we are a “holy nation, a royal priesthood,” representing Christ

through living out the Good News seven days a week in and through our various occupations and businesses.

Most of us understand the call to “go and make disciples,” the Great Commission. We also are aware of the need to love God and others, the Great Commandment. In this study, we would like to reintroduce the place of the Great Commitment, a call to live out the purpose for which we were created. These three “Greats” come with **four key areas** in which God has given us a four-fold bottom line. As you begin this study, we pray that God’s Word will speak to your heart and it will be a rich time of fellowship, discussion, and challenge as you allow God to lead you to commit to the **four fold bottom line** of these essential truths.

Work should be an act of worship that glorifies God when we do our work for Him!

May God richly bless you in all you do!

Yours in grace and peace,

The DML Team

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Session 1: The Great Commitment: Rediscovering a Forgotten Truth

Introduction

Most Christians are aware of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19, 20). In it, Jesus calls us to a commitment to make disciples. Most Christians are also aware of the Great Commandment (Matt: 22:37-40). We are to commit our lives to loving God and others. But few Christians understand or remember the Great Commitment. It is the first directive given to humanity by God during creation. It describes why we exist and for what purpose we were created. Sometimes referred to as the Cultural Mandate, it is often forgotten as part of the basis for which we are to live our lives.

In Genesis 1 we discover not only that God creates the world in which we live but creates all of life including you and me. In creating us, He provides us with a simple but clear job description. It is not only for certain people but for **all** people made in the image of God **for all time**. In the verses below, take the time to see our job description from a different perspective. Discover what commitment God has made to us and what commitments He expects from us. In only 34 verses, Genesis introduces us to a God who created earth on purpose and for a purpose. Too often we hasten over these verses on our way to Chapter 3, where the emphasis is on us and what we did to get into our current mess.

In 34 verses His plan for us and creation is unveiled. In the rest of Genesis and the additional 65 books, God reestablishes His rule over all creation. In the opening two chapters, we hear the answer to a question everyone asks: why am I here? What am I supposed to do? What am I created for? While the answer is broad, applying to all of humanity, it is also deep as it lays the foundation for the unique role each of us will play. This Great Commitment is the foundation on which the Great Commandment is lived out, and the Great Commission is

carried out. It provides the first step in understanding God's purpose in bringing all creation back under His rule.

Key Verses

- ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." **Genesis 1:26 (ESV)**
- ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." **Genesis 1:28 (ESV)**
- ³ Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. ⁴ Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. ⁵ Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Revelation 21,22 and Then answer the questions from the specific verses below.
Deuteronomy 28:3-5 (ESV)
- Please take some extra time and read through Genesis Chapters 1, 2 and 9

Discussion Questions

1. Why did God create humanity? Gen. 1:26
2. Genesis 1:28 provides a commitment from God and five key commands describing what we are to be committed.

a. God committed to **ble**ss humanity. What does that mean in the context of the verse?

b. Write out a definition for each of the commands.

i. Be Fruitful:

ii. Multiply:

iii. Fill:

iv. Subdue:

v. Reign:

3. Read Deuteronomy 28:3-5

a. What different types of “fruit” are mentioned in the verses?

b. The fruit described is far more than having children. God desired that His people would be blessed with fruitful lives that would enable them to flourish. To be fruitful is both adding value to what you have and

creating new things that you need. What kind of things do you think Adam and Eve created to help them accomplish God's commands?

- c. The triad of "be fruitful, multiply, and fill" are often quickly interpreted as having children. While children are certainly needed to fill the earth, what other things would need to be "created" to make a growing population possible?
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- 4. After the flood God made a covenant with Noah in Genesis 9. Genesis 9 mentions this covenant five different times in one chapter. What parts of this covenant is different from Genesis 1:28 and what parts are the same or similar?
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- 5. The history of humanity is one of discovering, creating and expanding the potential of humanity around the globe to serve the purposes of God. As humanity "fills" the earth there is a growing economic capacity and social integration permitting more and more people to experience increased prosperity. What role does the economy play in helping people experience the "blessing" of God?

6. Want to see what God's finished product looks like? Read Revelation 1 and 2. What surprises you most in these concluding chapters?

7. While Gen. 1 is the broad overview of creation, Gen. 2 gets more specific. What was the job God gave to Adam (Gen. 2:15)?

8. How is Gen. 2:15 related to your life?

Key Verse Insights

God created humanity and proclaimed all creation "very good" (Genesis 1:31). God created humanity to rule and steward His creation (Genesis 1:26,28). This was not a static realm, but one ever expanding as the population fulfilled its destiny to spread around the earth. Genesis 1:28 begins with God's blessing. God's blessing is the grace to accomplish what He had given humanity to do. Humanity, created in the image of God, (Genesis 1:26) shared with God the capacity to create through repurposing¹ what God made into new products and services from what God had created from nothing. This creativity was fueled by the need to develop both social systems and economic systems as the population

¹ God created out of nothing so that we might add value to creation by creating new things that God left for us to do. In this way we are taking the tree and repurposing it as tables and chairs, ears of maize and repurposing it as flour for cooking, sheep's wool and repurposing it into clothes, etc., etc.

increased and spread around the globe. In these few verses God, the creator of the Universe, invites His special creation, made in His image, to join Him as co-creators whose task is to repurpose out of creation products and systems that make human flourishing possible. This is done as humanity “works” in the global village (Genesis 2:15) fulfilling God’s call to fill the earth.

Personal Application²

1. As an image bearer of the creative God, how will you approach your work differently because of this study?
2. God committed to bless us (empowerment) to care for creation. What two things can you begin doing that will demonstrate your stewardship of creation?

Closing Thoughts

When reading a book, we seldom think about the pages as we read. Our focus is on what is written: the letters, words, and paragraphs. But without the pages, there would be nothing to read. When we look at Genesis 1:26 and 28, we see the pages on which the unfolding of God’s grand narrative is recorded. Adam and Eve worked the Garden - that is what God created them and us to do. Creation and work provide the place and task on which to live out our lives. The Great Commitment of Gen. 1:28 is the first directive given to all humanity. It is repeated in Gen. 9 as God enters a covenant with Noah and all humanity through the ages. God gave Adam a job: to cultivate and care for the garden. In the same way, God has given you and me a similar call. We are to live out our lives on the pages of creation and work. We are to care for creation while working with creation to see all creation flourish. God

² Be sure to make these a SMART goal- Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely

calls us to be fruitful, which certainly includes having children. But as the image bearers of God, He has empowered us with the creativity to make out of creation those things that permit us to multiply and fill the earth. Within the first man and woman are the seeds of hundreds of generations, capable of creating, exploring, building, discovering, and developing a society that both increases and honors God. It is in the work God has given us that we discover the capacity for all to be co-creators with God. He created the universe out of nothing that we can create everything necessary to see cultures, societies, and communities multiply and expand to fill the earth.

The Fall of Genesis 3 does not shift the responsibility of Genesis 1:28. As we look at the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, we discover a profound truth. God is in the process, through Jesus, of reconciling all creation, including humanity to Himself. His goal is to restore the original vision of seeing the Kingdom of God on earth (Matthew 6:10). The Apostle John gives us a glimpse of the future in Revelation 21 and 22. Where humanity began in a garden, they will end in a city; the heavenly Jerusalem will come to earth. From Genesis 3 to Revelation 20 we have the unfolding story of God's redemption and restoration. Jesus redeemed us, giving us the ability to have a right relationship with God the Father, with one another and with the rest of creation. In Revelation 21 God completes the work of reconciliation, bringing all of creation under His authority.

This story all unfolds on the pages of God's creation and call to work and care for the world we live in. While filling and caring are universal, as Christians, we are also given the command to love God and others (The Great Commandment) and to make disciples obedient to the commands of Jesus (The Great Commission). These directives are also written on the pages of creation and work. If we fail to grasp the significance of the creation/work paradigm, we are left trying to share the Good News without the context. The creation/work paradigm gives us the pages on which to write our own story of following Jesus and being ambassadors of the Good News, a royal priesthood, sharing how God has redeemed all things. We deliver the Good News while being salt, light, and leaven

through the Great Commitment to work and care for God's created world!

In the studies that follow, we will be introducing the four key objectives, bottom lines, that are critical for every individual or business. While the Bible provides the pages on which to write, the four bottom line objectives are the ink with which the Grand Narrative of God unfolds. On this journey, we would ask that you pray about what you can do to fulfill each of the "bottom lines" of the following Bible studies.

Prayer

Forgive me, Lord for thinking of work as a necessary evil that we endure as we seek to "make disciples." Forgive me for not being obedient to care for creation as you care for each of us. Thank you for blessing me and giving me the grace to carry out the Great Commitment, the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Open my eyes Lord to see the pages of my everyday life on which your Grand Narrative, and my life, is unfolding.

Session 2: Living to Flourish: An Economic Bottom Line

Introduction:

As we learned in Session 1, we have been created to worship God by being co-Creators with God. As we have been made in His image, we learn in Genesis one that our God and Father is a Creative God who loves to work. We looked at Genesis 1:28, which reminds us that we are to be fruitful, multiply, fill, reign, and subdue the earth. Each of these words has a specific meaning that we are committed to carrying out. We were given a garden with the capacity to become cities, states, and nations. Without the contribution of our labor, the garden does not grow, without our contribution as priests, the message of reconciliations is not heard, without hearing there is no transformation.

Reformation leader John Calvin challenged believers “to work, to perform, to develop, to progress, to change, to choose, to be active, and to overcome until the day of their death or the return of their Lord.”³ But what is your work? What is your specific role in being fruitful and multiplying?

We know that God has given us over 60,065 species of trees.⁴ Isn't that amazing? God has chosen to show us his beauty in so many ways, and that includes how you and I are made! You have gifts and talents that are unique



³ Marshall, Paul. *A Kind of Life Imposed on Man: Vocation and Social Order from Tyndale to Locke*; University of Toronto, 1996.

⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-39492977>

to you, and fulfills an aspect of the character of God, in whose image you have been created!

The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 and the parable of the minas in Luke 19 remind us that God is looking for us to multiply what he has given – it is not enough to simply protect or preserve it. And the reward for those who do this work well is MORE WORK! That’s because our Heavenly Father sees work as a blessing – it is what we were made to do! When done unto God, it is an act of worship!

Key Verses:

- ²⁶ *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”* ²⁷ *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God, he created him; male and female he created them.* ²⁸ *And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”* **Genesis 1:26-28 (ESV)**
- ¹⁷ *Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’* ¹⁸ *You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.* **Deuteronomy 8:17-18 (ESV)**
- *To one, he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’... For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.* **Matthew 25:15, 21, 29 (ESV)**
- *But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.* **Jeremiah 29:7 (ESV)**

Discussion Questions:

We have each been given three key resources: time, treasure, and talent (gifts/skills).

1. What are you doing to develop and multiply your talents?
2. Are there things you need to be improving or learning? Make a list of things you believe God wants you to learn.
3. What are you doing to develop and multiply your treasure (finances)? Are you helping it to grow or simply conserving it? List ways in which you are growing your income other than work.
4. Are you being a good steward with your treasure? What can you do differently?
5. You can't multiply your time. It is the only non-renewable resource of the three. But you can redeem the time (Ephesians 5:16). Are you using it in a way that honors God? List the things you do with the money that honors the giver of all things.

Stewardship includes taking care of your health.

1. Sleep is an important part of stewardship and a cause for many issues. Are you getting the sleep that you need to be productive (7-8 hours per night)?

2. Are you eating the food that will keep your temple (my body) healthy and productive?
3. If you answered no to any of these discuss with your group some changes you think would be helpful to maintaining good health.
4. We are told to do all things “as unto the Lord” (Colossians 3:23). By doing it for the Lord, we turn it into an act of worship. As we do our work as worship, God multiplies its impact on our lives and the lives of those around me. What are the jobs/tasks in your work that you have a difficult time doing with your whole heart, as unto the Lord?
5. Discuss in your group how you might change your perspective to be more “worship” focused at work?
6. In Deuteronomy 8, Moses gives a warning to the people about remembering. List the things He tells the people to remember.
7. Moses states the result of God’s intervention while in the desert. What were the practical benefits Moses lists in having God provide for their needs?

8. In your group, discuss the negative impact of not working on the children of Israel. How does not having a job affect you or those you know?

9. The Promised Land was filled with all good things. But now the people would have to work for their needs. Moses assures them it will be a good land. Moses also gives them a warning beginning in verse 11. Write out that warning in your own words (17).

10. Do you think this has application today? What is the connection between wealth and dedication to God?

Key Verse Insights

What God did in the six days of creation is amazing. But what is equally amazing is what He did NOT do. He made a tree but did not make a table, chair, or bed. He made wheat but expected us to make bread. He put copper in the hills and iron in the rocks (Deut. 8) but expected us to discover how to extract and use it to help people flourish. Work in all spheres can be done to complete what God started AND can help point to the Maker and Creator of all things AND can be done with a motivation to help people flourish. When Judah was taken into captivity Jeremiah, the prophet told them to carry out their work for the welfare of the city, and then their welfare would also be granted (Jeremiah 29:5-7). The Apostle Peter says that we are strangers and sojourners (1 Peter 2:11). Like the heroes of Hebrews 11, we are looking forward to a city whose builder is God when the heavenly Jerusalem descends on top of Mt. Zion (Rev. 21,22). Until then, we are

called by God to help the city in which we live and work flourish (Genesis 28:19, 20) and so fulfill the Great Commitment.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we see God using the heroes of the Bible through their businesses and work. God knew when He made Adam and Eve that a successful economic system was essential to fulfilling the call to expand to fill the earth. Each of us has a responsibility to enter that same call to enable our city, and its citizens flourish. Thus, we have an economic bottom line as part of our call to serve God.

Personal Application

1. My work should reflect the God who created me. List the aspects of your work you think best reflect God?

Now list at least two things you could do to better reflect your creator at work.

2. During the week, take stock of personal economics. Do you see this as part of God's stewardship? List at least two ideas on how you could better reflect God's stewardship of your finances.
3. Your resources include time, money and your gifts or talents. Which of the three do you struggle most in giving over to God? List two things you could do to help become a better steward in this area.

Closing Thoughts:

Someone once said that the word “Christian” is a great noun and a poor adjective. There is no such thing as Christian music because a song can’t be Christian – only the songwriter. The same is true for a Christian school, Christian business, Christian art, etc. Having this false division reinforces the idea that there is a “sacred” and a “secular” arena, when in fact all is spiritual. We are to be Christian (to act as followers of Christ) in all that we say and do. There is no sphere outside of God’s control or interest, and that includes wealth creation and a growing economic bottom line. When we do our work “as unto the Lord,” we do it for the purpose of being a blessing to others and to the glory of our Creator. We are reflectors of His image, a fragrance of His grace (2 Cor. 3:18). How we live matters and should cause people to turn to see the original of which we are the image. But let us always remember who gives us the ability to produce this wealth and what the Creator’s ultimate goal would be with it, remembering that we cannot serve two Masters.

Prayer

Our Father in heaven, you have created us in your image. You are a working, creative God. You desire me to be like you – loving my work, loving how you have created me to do something special and unique that will cause people to flourish, and knowing you better. Help me to live into that in my day to day activities. And help me never to cling more to the things that my work gives me than what my work can do for your people.

Session 3: The Environmental Bottom Line: Stewards of Creation

Introduction:

1.3 billion tons per year of solid waste are created in the world; that number is expected to increase to 2.2 billion tons by the year 2020. Those are difficult numbers to understand as they are so big. To break it down, each person produces approximately 1.2 kg of solid waste per day, and that will increase to 1.4 kg by 2020. Only about 40% of this ends up in a landfill. The rest is dumped in oceans, on roadsides, or burned (releasing toxins in the air).

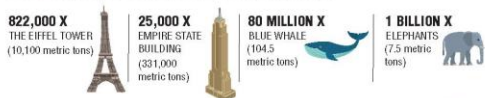
This is having a negative effect on our environment, as plastic is being found in the water we drink, the salt we eat, and the fish we eat.

The good news is that Africa is taking the lead in banning plastic products. More than 38 African countries have banned plastic bags, and Rwanda is seeking to be the first single use plastic free country. As can be seen in the chart, some of the plastic we use (plastic bottles, disposable diapers) can take upwards of 400 years to decompose. That means the

A clearer picture of plastics

Humans have created about 8.3 billion metric tons of plastics to date, outgrowing all man-made materials other than steel and cement.

How heavy is 8.3 billion metric tons?



The rapid rise of plastics

A world without plastics seems unimaginable today, yet their large-scale production and use only dates back to around 1950.

GLOBAL PLASTIC PRODUCTION ESTIMATES



HOW LONG UNTIL IT'S GONE?

Estimated decomposition rates of common marine debris items

Item	Estimated Decomposition Rate
Foamed Coffee Smoothie	2 weeks
Foamed Buoy	50 years
Wool Socks	1-5 years
Fishing Line	600 years
Styrofoam Cup	50 years
Tin Can	50 years
Plastic Grocery Bag	10-30 years
Plastic Bottle	450 years
Plastic Beverage Holder	400 years
Cigarette Butt	1-5 years
Disposable Diaper	450 years
Photo-degradable Beverage Bottle	6 months
Glass Bottle	undetermined
Aluminium Can	200 years
Cigar	2-5 months

*Estimated individual item lifetimes, depend on product / manufacturer and environmental conditions.
Source: NOAA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Woods Hole Sea Grant, US Geological Survey (USGS), Plastic Pollution Research Center, 2018

- *The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. **Genesis 2:15 (ESV)***
- *¹² “You shall have a place outside the camp, and you shall go out to it. ¹³ And you shall have a trowel with your tools, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig a hole with it and turn back and cover up your excrement. ¹⁴ Because the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you. **Deuteronomy 23:12-14 (ESV)***
- *⁶ May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth! ⁷ In his days may the righteous flourish, and peace abound, till the moon be no more! ⁸ May he have*

dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth! Psalm 72:6-8 (ESV)

- ⁹ *I hereby confirm my covenant with you and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. Genesis 9:9-10 (ESV)*
- *“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Isaiah 55:12 (ESV)*

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean in Genesis 9 that the covenant is with all living creatures, not just humans? This is mentioned five different times in Genesis 9.
2. Does creation itself know how to worship God? If so, what does that mean, and how do we relate to that?
3. Deuteronomy 23 is very explicit about how to keep our camp clean. Even though Jesus has died for our sins, God is still the same, desiring to draw near to us if our “camp” is kept holy. How is this text relevant to us today, assuming we have indoor plumbing and bathrooms? Does it relate to the tons of waste we produce?

4. In Genesis 2:15 humanity is tasked with the work of “tending and watching over” the Garden. How would you relate “watching over” in regard to ecology? What does it mean and what are the implications?

5. Isaiah 55:12 states that one day we will live in peace and joy. The consequence is that the hills will burst into song and the trees of the field will clap their hands. What does it mean when the physical creation rejoices? What might that look like?

Key Verse Insights

When we read the Bible with a “lens” of creation care, it is remarkable to see how much God loves and delights in His natural creation. We also see a Creation that loves and delights in its Maker, with the trees of the field clapping their hands, with the rocks being able to break forth in praise, and with all of creation working in harmony to help people and creation flourish. We see a God who makes it very clear that His covenant is not just with people but with ALL living creatures. We have been given dominion of the earth and are to reign in a way that will allow the earth to flourish. But too often we act as if we have been given the right for domination, without care for the future inhabitants or even our own future family members. We are told in Genesis 2:15 that we are to work AND care for creation. “Caring” or “watching over” have to do with an idea of protection for preservation and replication. This is also a critical part of why we have been created to be stewards.

Unfortunately, much of the church is focused on making sure people get to heaven without being concerned about the status of the earth in the meantime. We need to make sure people

understand God and salvation (the Great Commission), but they also need to understand how to fulfill Genesis 1:28 (reigning, subduing) and Genesis 2:15 (The Great Commitment) for the short time that we have on earth. The Church should be the first to step up and advocate for Creation Care. The Church should be the first to be reducing the amount of single use plastic. The Church should be the first to educate people on how to care for their environment. But too often we have relegated that work to the government or the United Nations or to NGOs. People have said that Christians are “so heavenly focused that they are no earthly good.” This needs to change. We need to fulfill the care of the earth which God has committed to us, and therefore fulfill our commitment to God.

Personal Application Questions:

1. Make a list of what you can do with your family to reduce the amount of land fill waste (especially of single use plastic) produced by your family (this would be a good time to introduce this topic to the whole family)? What is your plan to implement at least four of the things you listed.
2. List three things that you do to care for the environment. Now list three things you will begin doing in the coming week to care for the environment.

Closing Thoughts:

The words in Genesis are not an option as it relates to creation care. And with the growing population on earth, the need for vigilance and changed behavior is upon us. While people are creative in solving problems, it is incumbent upon all of us to change our lifestyle to remember the commitment to care and watch over the earth. Let us not be found wanting in this area, having focused only on ourselves and the personal convenience of take-away food, disposable diapers, and endless numbers of water bottles. Let us be committed to making small sacrifices in our own homes and “constantly preach” through the actions of our love and commitment to the creation. The ecological bottom line is part of the Great Commitment (Gen. 2:28) and is God’s expectation of us as stewards.

Closing Prayer:

God, you have entrusted this earth to us and have commanded us to work and care for it. We confess that we have failed to do that in many ways. Where you have asked us to have dominion, we have acted like you have given us the right for domination. Creation is groaning as it awaits the day when you return and restore the new heavens and new earth. In the meantime, we desire to keep our camp holy so that you may draw near. We desire to reign as benevolent kings that desire to be a blessing rather than a detriment to our environment. We pray that you give us the courage and wisdom to do what is right with this earth that you have committed to us. We know that we may not be able to change the world, but we can start with ourselves and our homes. We thank you for the world that worships you. We too desire to worship you in all we do. Thank you for entrusting this world to us. Thank you for your forgiveness as well as the promise of your Holy Spirit to spur us on to do what is just and right. In Jesus name, we pray, Amen.

Session 4: The Great Commandment: A Social Bottom Line

Introduction

Most decisions in the business world are made based on how the outcome will affect the company's finances, its bottom line. Profit is an essential element of running any business. Without a profit, a business cannot continue. This "fruit" is an essential part of life. We can eat because plants produce fruit, we are able to be generous because we make a profit (a fruit of the business). Jesus was a tough critic of a tree that failed to produce fruit. In Luke 13:6-9 such a tree ended up in the fire for failing to do what it was intended to do, produce fruit. But profit is not the main Biblical focus for work or life.

The most profitable products or services that outlast competitors and remain at the top of the chain are those with a different focus. All successful businesses are in response to a real or perceived need. It is the focus of meeting a need and continuing to meet a need that allows a business to make a profit. But in God's economy, there is another critical component: love. When we shift the focus from "monetary gain" to work as an act of worship: our focus shifts from simply making money to seeing work as an act of love that meets a need. When done as unto the Lord, it is an act of worship. When love is the driving force of why we work, start a business, serve others, we shift from self-interest to an interest in doing all things as unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23). In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus answers the question, "what is the greatest commandment?" He makes it clear that loving God and loving others is the central point of our lives in Christ. Business and work can and should be driven by love for others in the community. It is not enough to provide a job or income. God wants us to work in such a way that our love for Him is evident, and our love for others is clear. This begins with those who work for my business and/or those who are my

fellow workers. It is then extended to include the customers whom I serve by what I produce or the service I provide. There is a “social” bottom line that is part of the “good service” God calls me to offer. This social bottom line is built on the realization that all those around me are my neighbors.

In today’s study, the emphasis is to understand the power of love as it impacts our lives at work, in my business, and throughout my life. We call this a social bottom line. It is where our emphasis shifts from work as a means for making money to work as a platform for loving God and others.

Key Verses

- *³⁷ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”*
Matthew 22:37-40 (ESV)
- *By this, we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. **1 John 3:16 (ESV)***
- *Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love. **1 John 4:8 (ESV)***
- *⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, **Titus 3:4-5 (ESV)***
- *¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. **1 Corinthians 13:10-13 (ESV)***
- **Read Luke 10:25-37 (The Good Samaritan) and I Corinthians 13.**

Discussion Questions

1. In a few lines state your definition of love.
2. 1 John 3:16 says we are to lay down our lives for others. Describe three ways you think you could “lay down your life” for people at work?
3. What is the point Paul is driving at in 1 Cor. 13:1-3?
4. In Titus 3:4,5 it talks about the goodness and loving kindness of Jesus. These virtues motivated Jesus to save us. How would you define these terms?
 - a. Goodness:
 - b. Loving kindness:
5. Read Luke 10:25-37 and answer the following questions
 - a. What prompted Jesus to tell the story of the Good Samaritan?
 - b. What motivated the Samaritan to stop and help?
 - c. Jesus did not answer the question asked him. What questions did he answer (:36)?

- d. List the qualities of the Samaritan businessman that enabled him to help.

Key Verse Insights

Love is a word that is thrown around without a clear operational definition: we love our pets, our shoes, our cars, and our parents. God's love is not about what I have but about focusing on others and their needs. God's call for us is to love Him and our neighbors unconditionally. It is the kind of love that is willing to do anything for those being served. But it is always with the purposes of God in mind. We are told that we are to "love God" with everything we have and our "neighbor as we love ourselves." When asked "who is my neighbor" Jesus answered with a story about "what a good neighbor is" (Luke 10:25-37). His focus was on how a good neighbor loves those around him, regardless of their attitude towards him. Jesus shared how the despised Samaritan had "compassion or pity" (a family type love) on the injured Jewish man (Luke 10:33) who probably would not help him.

The Samaritan businessman was well equipped to love. He had compassion for the injured man. But he also had the capacity to help. Those of us blessed to run businesses or hold good jobs are called on God to use our "blessing" to help care for those less fortunate (Matthew 25:32-46). Love is not self-focused, but "other" focused. The Samaritan businessman also had competence, which enabled him to provide first aid for the hurt man. Love takes what we have, gives it to God who multiplies it in order for us to provide a portion to others. Finally, the businessman had a courageous love. He did what others were not willing to do. It potentially could have ended badly for him should the authorities arrive and find the "foreigner" standing over their compatriot. But courage acted without regard to the consequence.

Love treats others with dignity, honor, and respect due to all people who are made in the image of God. This comes by treating employees as partners, customers as friends, and profit as a means to meet needs that help others.

Personal Application

1. Look at the following areas and identify at least one person from each group that needs an expression of love from you. List the person's name and what you will do to express love to them in the coming week.
 - a. Your family
 - b. Your business/work
 - c. Your church
 - d. Your community
2. Work takes up most of our days during the week. Describe two ways for each category in which your work or business can express love to the following:
 - a. Your family:
 - b. Those you work with:
 - c. Customers
 - d. The community

3. This week work out how you can express a social bottom line as part of your personal life, your family life and your work/business.

Closing Thoughts

A social bottom line is about relationships: between us and God, us and others and us and creation. To love others is to honor and respect them as image bearers of God. It is an expression of love that seeks to know the other person, to serve them well. However, the loving sacrifices for others made on this journey are never in vain. They are seeds we sow that produces fruit for the Kingdom of God. When we use our occupation or business as a platform for loving others, we bring the Kingdom of God into focus. Our business or job can now be seen as our parish for loving others. Our work is the platform for serving and loving others.

The real challenge of applying the social bottom line is understanding the opportunities God gives us every day. Every day we are confronted with the reality of the lost, poverty, emotional hurts, etc. We need to align with Jesus and ask ourselves, “What does it look like for me to be a good neighbor?” How do we express Jesus to a customer in need? Or to an employee working in your organization? The question we must answer daily is who is in need around us, and what are they in need of? If we can accurately answer this question, then our love will be profitable for the Kingdom as well as our business.

Scripture reveals a truth that our distorted, or should I say, *over* spiritual, explanation of love has prevented us from seeing. We see and talk about the sacrifice of love but not often, about the reward. In scripture, love does not end with sacrifice. There is always restoration of all that is lost or surrendered in the pursuit of love. The sacrifice of love has a purpose, a joy, gain, as Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 13:3 (ESV). The

Lord endured suffering that He may bring many sons to glory (Hebrew 2:10). Paul became all things to all men, suffered shipwreck, hunger, persecution and many other afflictions (2 Corinthians 4:17-18) that he might bring some into the glorious liberty of the sons of God (Romans 8:21). In Isaiah 53:11, we read that Christ will see the reward of His soul, and He shall be satisfied.

Prayer

Father, we pray that as we look at our businesses, occupations, and connections with others that we will see them from your perspective. You are more in tune with the needs around us than we would ever be. Open our eyes, Lord, to see the people you have sent us to serve, as you see them. Fill us with your love for them and enable us to go the extra mile in bringing them into the glorious liberty that you died to provide for them. Gave us the grace, the enablement, and the resources we need to be excellent and effective in our service. May our interactions with our community be a cause of celebration. And we ask, O Lord, that as we sow love, may it yield an increase that will enable us to abound to every good work (2 Corinthians 9:6-15). We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Session 5: Discipleship: A Missional Bottom Line

Introduction

Before departing, Jesus commanded His disciples to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19,20). Many have interpreted this phrase as a missionary calling. The “go” preceding the command is used to motivate more missionaries for the foreign field. But this is more than a missionary verse; it is a “missional” verse. It is a command that all of God’s people should be living all the time as part of all their lives. God tells us we are to “go” into the world around us and make disciples. This includes our neighbors across the street as well as the people groups around the world. If we follow the missional call from the beginning, it was always about two things – the blessing to the nations (Genesis 12:1-3) and God’s glory (Psalm 67). Matthew 28:18-20, is God’s call to all believers to partner with Him to take back what the enemy has stolen, to enable the flourishing of humanity and all of creation, to the praise of His glory.

All Christians are called on to live missional lives. As Christians, we are on a mission where we live, where we work, and in the kind of life we live. This includes businesses and jobs in the marketplace. To be on mission for God is to take the Good News to every corner of the marketplace and around the globe, to every nation: to be light and leaven in every community where God leads us to live. As Christians we have been given the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18), declaring the Good News that in Jesus we have redemption and reconciliation with God, one another and all of creation. The Great Commission is not simply a program in the local church but the mission of every believer. It is the call to be light as the Church in every community, not simply the building where we gather. It is as we live lives as unto the Lord and understand our work and businesses as the key platform for our faith that we have the opportunity to fulfill the Great Commission. We move out from the four walls of the building where we gather as the Church to fulfill our calling as priests in the

marketplace where we are to be “making disciples” as the Church scattered.

Key Verses

- ¹⁸ *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* **Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)**
- *And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.* **Mark 16:15 (ESV)**
- *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 (ESV)**
- *Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.* **Acts 8:4 (ESV)**
- **Read also:** Luke 22:42-43, Philippians 2:5-11

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus declared that all authority under heaven and earth was his. What were the implications of the authority in the lives of the disciples? How do we see his authority working in and through our lives? (See Luke 22:42-43, Philippians 2:5-11).
2. The command in Matthew 28:19,20 is to make disciples. List what the verse says about “how” we are to make disciples.
3. Mark 16:15 tells us that we are to “preach to all creation.” How can we “preach to all creation?”

4. Acts 8:4 follows the beginning of persecution that scattered believers throughout the Mediterranean. Jesus told the disciples in Acts 1:8 they were to go to the “utter most parts of the world.” How do you think the scattered Church used their work to spread the Gospel and make disciples?
5. Acts describes how many businesspeople were used to fulfill the Great Commandment. Find at least one example of businesspeople used by God and explain what business they were in and how it was used to make disciples.

Key Verse Insights

At the heart of the Missional Bottom line is a commitment to use all aspects of our lives to make disciples. Jesus was given “all authority” to fulfill that call and has passed on to us the authority to reclaim the lives Jesus has redeemed. We call this process discipleship, and it is the process of seeing the authority of God once again ruling in the hearts of all humanity. The primary platform God has given us for this purpose is our businesses and occupations. As we take back the marketplace from the enemy, we also reach out to take back all those lives in the marketplace that have been redeemed, but not reclaimed.

In disobeying the command of God in the garden, Adam yielded the delegated authority to govern and shape the earth, in accordance to God’s design, to the devil (Gen. 1:26-28; Gen. 3:1-6; Luke 4:6). When Jesus, as the second Adam (1 Cor. 15:45-49), yielded to God’s will and followed through with that obedience unto death, He was given back that authority (Phil 2:5-11; 4:8-10; Rev. 1:18) and passed it on to us.

Based on His position as the Alpha and the Omega, Jesus invites and empowers all believers to legally push back and reclaim from the reign of darkness what Jesus has redeemed. By making disciples, we enter the process that establishes the rule of God in people's lives.

To "go" into the marketplace in His name and by the authority of Jesus, is to act as His representative, an ambassador of His Good News, a royal priest whose parish is the influence of their business or job. Jesus demonstrated the model, disciples who make disciples. The first step is the proclamation of the Good News of reconciliation. From there, it is a process of sanctification, seeing our lives become more and more like the life of Jesus.

While there is always a place for sending out missionaries as special emissaries of King Jesus, the process calls for every Christian in every occupation to be on "mission" proclaiming the message of reconciliation even as they fulfill their call to work as an act of worship. It is in work Monday through Saturday that we have the greatest potential for making the greatest number of disciples.

Personal Application Questions

1. The Great Commitment (Genesis 1:28, 2:15) gives Christians their platform for the missional call to make disciples. The early Church shared their faith everywhere they went (Acts 8:4), including their work in the marketplace. What three things could you do this week in the workplace to take the first steps towards "making disciples?"
2. This coming week look for an opportunity to pray for at least two of your coworkers. When we show concern for others and love, it is often the first step in the process of discipling them.

3. What two things will you commit to doing this week that will help you become “salt and leaven” in your workplace?
4. At work, identify two Christians with whom you could discuss your faith and pray for those in your workplace.

Closing Thoughts

To be missional is to live for the Glory of God 24/7, it is to take the opportunity that our work affords to make disciples. As we step out and see the workplace as our “garden” (Genesis 2:15), we begin to understand what Peter meant when he said that we are a “royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9). Every priest has his/her parish. For those of us involved in day to day business, our parish is where we work and conduct business. Matthew 28:18-20 is God’s invitation to be empowered to be part of the transformation of the marketplace, seeing our society change as we make disciples. By so doing, we reclaim the marketplace and bring it back under the Lordship of Christ, we cause our societies to flourish, and we bring praises to our God!

Prayer

Thank You, Father, for inviting me to partner with you in transforming my community and nation. Open my eyes to see where you are at work and how I can participate in your work through my daily work. I submit all that I am and all that I have to your rule and pray that Your will, will prevail. Just as You gave the apostles courage, grant me courage this day, oh Lord, to live out kingdom principles in the marketplace. I pray for all those I encounter that through our interaction, I will move them closer to living under Your reign. In Jesus’s name, I pray, Amen.

Session 6: Work as Worship: All Things unto the Lord!

Introduction

‘Work as worship’ is a catchy phrase, but what does it really mean? Does its usefulness stop at simply dedicating all we do to the glory of God, or is there more to it? The purpose of this study is to dig into the scripture and look for the answers to these questions. To do this, we will be exploring a specific word in Hebrew and how it is used through the Old Testament. That word is עָבַד or ‘Avad’. In Hebrew, the root of this word can be used to make nouns and verbs. The verb means “to work, perform, serve, worship,” and the noun means “service, work, labor, worship.” The words ‘servant’ and ‘slave’ also come from this root—and they are the exact same word. The difference is context—the Children of Israel were ‘slaves’ in Egypt but delivered out of bondage to become ‘servants’ of Yahweh, both using the same exact word, but very different context. Keep that in mind as we think about whether we have seen work as a slavish task master in our lives, or as a grand opportunity to serve God Almighty.

Key Verses

- *The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. **Genesis 2:15 (ESV)***
- *He said, “But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.” **Exodus 3:12 (ESV)***
- *And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” **Joshua 24:15 (ESV)***

Discussion Questions

1. What comes to your mind when you think of worship? List at least four ways you “worship” in the course of a week.
2. What prompts the translators to translate “work” to “worship?” What context changes?
3. In Exodus 3:12 the people were going to worship God at the mountain. What in the context causes translators to translate “work” to “worship” in this verse?
4. In Joshua 24:15 Joshua declares that his household would “serve” the Lord. Again, it is the same word translated as work and worship. Why do you think it is translated “serve” in this verse?
5. How would you translate what you do at your job? Is it work or is it worship? What would shift if from “work” to “worship?”
6. Let’s go back to Gen 2:15. God put man in the garden to work the land and take care of it. We can safely say that this was Adam’s first job. What if we use the word *worship* in that verse? What would that look like? Write your version of the verse reordering the words so work become worship:

Key Verse Insights

We will start with three verses that use this word 'avad.' The first one is Gen 2:15: "And the Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to **tend** and care for it." Tend in this verse is often translated 'till' or 'work.' It is interesting to note that the two words translated here as tend (avad) and care (keep or guard), are often used together in reference to keeping the law. Next, let's read Ex 3:12: *"Then God told him, 'I will be with you. And this will serve as proof that I have sent you: When you have brought the Israelites out of Egypt, you will return here to **worship** God at this very mountain."* Worship: avad. And lastly, Josh 24:15b: "But as for my family and me, we will **serve** the Lord." Serve avad. Again, note that tend/work, worship, and serve are all the same word in Hebrew. The key to unlocking the specific translation and/or understanding is the context in which it is written.

Personal Application Questions

1. What kinds of attitudes or actions are keeping you from being able to worship God in your work? List some of the attitudes.
2. List two to four practical steps you could take to change those attitudes.
3. Are you honoring God's work/rest rhythm? If not, what do you need to do in order to begin to?

4. What job has God given you to do? Write a version of this verse with you and your job replacing Adams. One version might be:
And the Lord God gave me the opportunity to worship Him through teaching and writing. Now, your turn!

Closing Thoughts

One of God's great gifts to us is fulfillment and dignity that come in and through work. As is His way, He gives us this gift and delights in us as we give it back to Him, then He gives more back to us! We can never out give Him or worship Him too much in and through our lives. As we do this with and in our work, God is glorified. Don't be surprised if avenues of creativity and new opportunities aren't opened up to you along the way of discovering work as worship!

John Piper said that *mission exists because worship does not*.⁵ How much greater would be our worship of God if we turned what we do most of the week from "work" to "worship?" Too often, we separate our worship from our work. It is something we do on Sundays. But God is the author of work and it the greatest of all workers. We are made in his image to work in such a way that it brings honor and glory to Him. Think how much worship would increase if all Christians did their work as an act of worship? Join us as we move from work as task to work as worship.

Lastly, we would be remiss to forget that God Himself installed a rhythm of work and rest into creation. When we ignore it, we are ignoring Him and His ways. Duet 5:12-15: "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Six days a week are set apart for your daily duties and regular work, but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day, no one in your

⁵ Piper, John *Let the nations be Glad*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993/2003), 17

household may do any kind of work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants...” and so on, including all your animals!

Observing the Sabbath is a kind of fast from work; we rest from our ability to make provision for ourselves, reminding ourselves that God alone is our source of strength, creativity, energy and all other provision. Our ability to worship Him with excellent, joyful, healthy work will grow thin and weak if we ignore this command. Sometimes our Sabbath ‘Sunday’ can be one of our busiest days, and not restful at all. Isaiah 58:13 exhorts us to ‘enjoy the Sabbath.’ The Hebrew word here means ‘exquisite delight. It is important to see and understand the place of Sabbath rest in our routine of life and work.

Prayer

Father, we thank you that you have given us the privilege to work; to be occupied with worthwhile endeavors that reflect your love and care for us, our families, and our community. We pray that you will open our eyes to see your glory in the work you have given us to do. We pray that we will glorify you by giving back to you our ‘whole soul’ as we worship you in our work. Amen.

Notes:



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