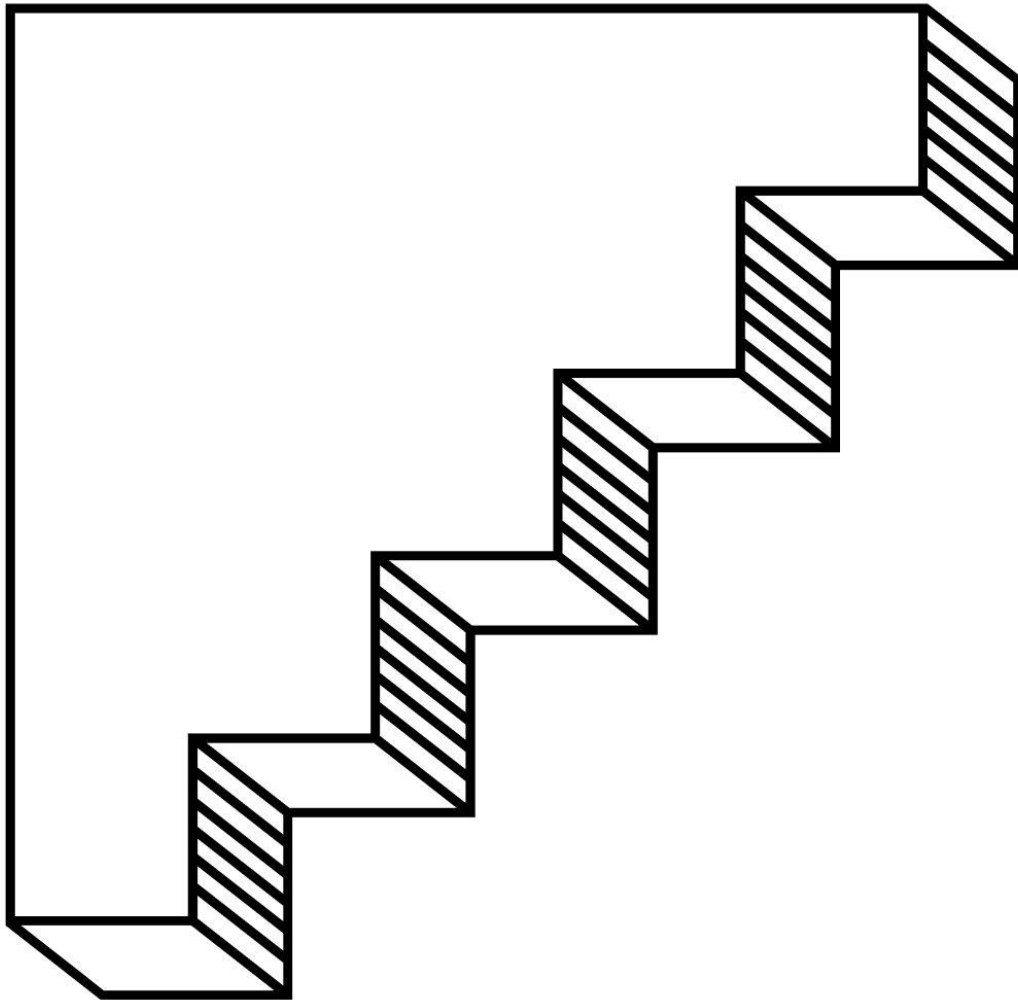


vocation

04

goal

To live out our vocation/occupation/job from our relationship with Jesus, partnering with Him to bring the order of His kingdom into the chaos of the world.



PARTICIPANT'S PACK

name





key passages

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

Genesis 2:15

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

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



practice introduction

Work is an indispensable component of leading a meaningful life. It is both a gift and command from God. We want to dismantle the dominant ideas of work as identity or that it is simply a way to make money. We want to challenge the idea that work is only meaningful if it is a social enterprise or ministry work. We desire to bring the Gospel to bear on the area of our life that consumes the majority of our time and energy.

The creation account in Genesis reveals God as the creator who brings *order out of chaos*. God is the one who takes what was “formless and void” and forms it into a breathtaking universe and fills the earth with abundant life (Genesis 1). The pinnacle of creation is mankind – made in His image. One of the ways we “image” God is by joining in His work of forming and filling (Gen 1:28). We partner with God in bringing *order out of chaos*. In other words, *work is a very meaningful part of who God made us to be*.

Today, we face two competing philosophies:

- Work doesn't matter. Work no longer carries an innate sacredness, not only that, we have even segregated work (white collar, blue collar) one has more seems to have more dignity than the other but generally it is simply a necessity for survival and a paycheck (OR)
- Work matters too much. We allow our job title and success to be the seat of our identity and joy. We pursue success or the ultimate job believing that that is what will bring a deep satisfaction to us.

Our culture teaches us that you have to choose – either *work to live*, or *live to work*. If you *work to live*, it means you see work as a necessary evil. It's a paycheck. It puts food on the table. It's a matter of survival. Life only happens when you're not working – when you get home, on the weekends, on vacations, or when you retire. With this perspective, work is anything but *meaningful*. On the other hand, if you *live to work*, then work matters way too much. It becomes your very identity and your obsession. Every other part of your life is sacrificed at the altar of career and accomplishment. With this perspective, work may be very meaningful to you, but at the cost of *life*.

However, our true design is when our secondary vocation (career) flows from our primary vocation (to be with God).

In addition to the bipolar attitudes our culture has about work, we Christians can feel a disconnect between our vocation and our relationship with Jesus. Does Jesus only care

about my work as far as it leads to opportunities for personal evangelism or funding kingdom activities? Is “ministry” work the only kind that really matters? This aspect of our life, which represents the most significant amount of our time each week, can feel disconnected from the meaningful life Jesus has promised us. Is this what abundant life is?

our primary vocation

Jesus knew that His primary vocation and calling was His *relationship with God* and being obedient to Him – even to death on the cross. He partnered with God in His mission to restore a broken world – to bring the order of God’s kingdom into the chaos of a world broken by sin.

What does this mean for us? We have a primary vocation – and it’s not being a mom/dad, engineer, salesman, operator, teacher, student, etc... Our primary vocation in life is our relationship with God! We are to *be with Him*, and to know Him. Consider what Jesus said eternal life *is*:

And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

John 17:3

Or consider Paul’s single-minded aim in life:

that I may know Him [Jesus] and the power of His resurrection.

Philippians 3:10

Jesus simplified our primary vocation: *To love God and neighbor*: this is not job specific, we can do this in any job, there is no sacred/secular divide. Every single one of us, regardless of our “day-job”, have the same call. To love God by being in intimate fellowship with Him and to love our neighbor. As we do this we engage in the privilege of walking in the good works that He prepared for us in advance.

our secondary vocation

Everyone is a priest of God that serves God through a vocational calling (secondary calling). We have the honor to image our creator God as we bring order out of chaos in our everyday work.

Throughout the ages people have desired a path that leads to flourishing. When we work together with other people, serve customers, care for children, provide good products and

services etc, we increase the well-being of our society. We contribute to the common good, we extend God's kingdom—God's rule and reign on earth as well as in heaven (Matt. 25:14–30). The Bible encourages “shalom”—flourishing in every direction. The resulting state of flourishing brings glory to God and produces joy, peace, and security.

Our secondary vocation, whatever it is, enables us to be STEWARDS, RESTORERS and CREATORS.

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

Do you know that you are serving the Lord Christ in your vocation? Your work matters to God! Studying for that test, folding laundry, preparing the proposal, taking inventory – all of it – *matters*.

your work matters because you do.

“IMAGO DEI” is Latin for “God’s image,” this image has been stamped on ALL humanity. In Genesis, the Hebrew word for “image” indicates far more than physical resemblance. It means humans are to embody and express the essence of God. You, not a sunset or a mountain range, are the pinnacle of God’s creation.

Understanding that when God created you (and your fellow human beings) he was elevating your value and purpose so much higher than the rest of creation. Think of a child in a healthy home, whatever that child does is appreciated and valued NOT because it is perfect but because it is done by them. That is how your Heavenly Father views you and your work.

our work matters because the material world does.

God has called all of us, in every sector of vocation, to steward His creation. That includes people and the planet. Just as much as God created you, he also created your co-worker, your client, and the world you inhabit.

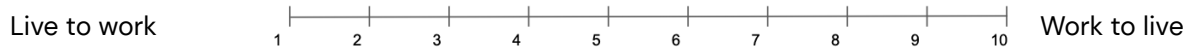
We need to actively tear down the sacred – secular divide & intellectual – physical divide.

Christianity is NOT about escaping the physical world or our physical bodies, it is about integrating ourselves, body, mind and spirit into the world that God has created for us to inhabit and steward and restore. The way we steward the planet is a direct reflection of the heart of God. We value, restore and protect it because God made it and through it, His attributes are expressed to the people that inhabit it. As sub-creators and restorers, this is our role.

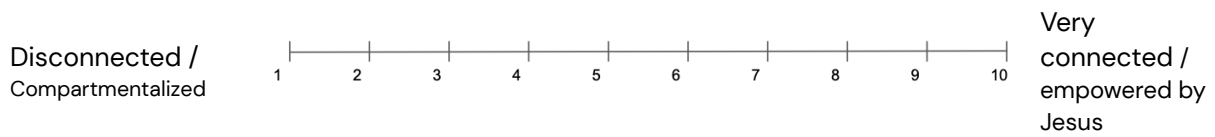
Our goal for this module is to begin living out our primary vocation *from our relationship with Jesus*. We want to take practical steps to remove the separation between our “spiritual life” and our “practical life”. We want to see Kingdom breakthrough and thriving life in our workplaces!

self assessment

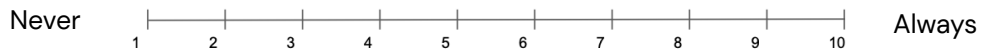
Considering the polarized cultural perspectives of work (“work to live” and “live to work”), which would you say you lean towards and why?



How would you rate your current experience of connecting your relationship with Jesus to your vocation and why?



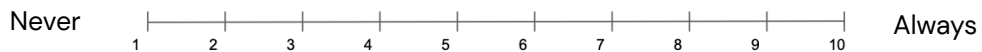
Do I view work as a necessary evil?



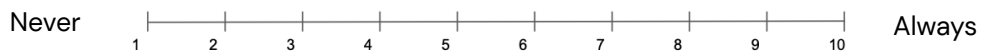
Do I derive a sense of meaning and purpose from my work?



Do I see work as a curse?



Do I feel stuck or robotic at work?



practices for week 1

intentionally engage your primary vocation.

- At the start of each workday, before you get out of the car or login. Sit in silence and meditate on this prayer:

God, remind my heart of who I am today. I am your child designed for and built for relationship with you. You love me. Before I do anything today, You love me. You've rescued me. You've redeemed me. Because of the cross I am now clothed with Christ's righteousness. I have full pardon from guilt and full acceptance from God. I am precious in Your eyes. You call me beloved. This is who I truly am.

Guard my heart today from rooting my identity in anything else – whether I succeed or fail, whether I'm wealthy or poor, whether I'm esteemed or shamed by others. At my core, my identity is not tied to being a good leader, or an effective worker, the one who completed the project, the one with the most sales, or a person who "has it all together". My identity is a beloved child of God, and I know you are with me!



work and the curse

Work is *not* a curse. As we saw last week, work is a good and meaningful part of God's design for our lives. However, when Adam and Eve sinned, God pronounced a curse on mankind – part of which affects work. God said to Adam,

...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; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread...

Genesis 3:17-19

Work is *NOT* a curse, it *IS* hard. Where there had once been nothing but fruitfulness, there is now “thorns and thistles”, “pain”, and “sweat”. Now, work is difficult. It is frustrating. It's fruitless at times. This is the reality of the fallen world we live in, and we all experience it.

It is incredibly demoralizing to experience goals not being achieved, bosses not leading well, co-workers not getting along, or an onslaught of challenges that feels like you're getting nowhere. At times it can feel like there's nothing to show for all our hard work, and it is in those times that we are most in danger of *burnout*. Surprisingly, burnout is not so much about our work being too hard, and more about our work seeming to be unfruitful. We'll talk more about this next week, but for now: if work is not a curse, what is it?

work is creative service.

Creation was God modeling order out of chaos. The mandate to name the animals was modeling creativity and authority. We are, as J. R. R. Tolkien said, *sub-creators*. We can take wood and make a table or a house. We can take metal and make a tool or a musical instrument and so on. We don't have the capacity to create something out of nothing. It may not feel that way but every aspect of work has some creativity involved, the challenge is that what someone else does always seems easier, more fun or more meaningful. You have the opportunity to creatively serve in a way that images God! *“Today I am on assignment to serve someone else”*. If we hold this value; it matters less *what* we do, and it is the *“how”* that becomes more significant.

Don't think of yourself as what you do but as what you bring. What am I creating, restoring, adding, securing, stewarding? Whether it is farming, software engineering, music composition, parenting, we take what is there already and use our creativity to remake, restore, and to steward.

This is who you are: creators, connectors, cultivators, protectors and restorers. You are cleverly disguised as roofers, dental assistants, dancers, musicians, producers, teachers, stay at home parents, cashiers, designers, doctors etc.

work is a sanctifying tool.

As redeemed people, God is actively at work in our lives – transforming us to become more and more like Jesus! When we experience frustrations at work, it can be easy to feel like God is against us, or the world is stacked against us. But in those moments, it is most important to remember *God is for us* (Romans 8:31). He is the God who works *all things* together for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28). God uses “thorns and thistles” to make us more like Jesus! He is teaching us to be patient with people. He is working selfishness out of our hearts. He is giving us opportunities to extend grace to people we don't think deserve it. He is actively empowering us to deal with a heavy workload. God is using difficult work situations to reveal areas in our lives where the gospel is not being applied.

work is a space where God is glorified.

When we face even the most difficult work environment, we can glorify our God with how we work. Paul tells us that everything we do can glorify God!

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

An ungrateful boss, an over demanding client is an opportunity for us to model the kingdom and thereby bring glory to the one who enables us to keep our cool, to fulfill that unreasonable request and not have our soul shriveled as a result. Work itself can be worship to Him. When we posture our hearts to trust Him and depend on Him, He is glorified! When we take on each day, each task, by His strength, He is glorified! When we experience the joy of His presence in the midst of our workday, He is glorified! When we entrust ourselves to God at work, *He is glorified even when our work doesn't produce the results we expected or hoped for.*

practices for week 2

build kingdom culture in your workplace.

This week, take intentional steps to build kingdom culture in your workplace. Here are some ideas:

before work

- Are there ways that you could be more intentional about stewarding, restoring and creating at work?
- Is there a situation or person at work where God is using them/it to sanctify and shape you. Ask God for help not to push against it but to learn from it.

at work

- Invite co-workers to lunch and/or coffees to intentionally build real friendships with them. Show off God's value for relationships.
- Buy lunch for your team. Show off God's value for generosity.
- Ask others how you can help them with their work or other situations. Show off God's value for family.
- Encourage at least one co-worker each day.



when work seems meaningless or fruitless

¹⁷So I hated life, because the things that happen under the sun were TROUBLESOME to me. Definitely, everything is pointless—just wind chasing. ¹⁸I hated the things I WORKED SO HARD FOR [TOILED] here under the sun, because I will have to leave them to someone who comes after me.

Ecclesiastes 2:17, 18 (CEB)

Sometimes work can appear to be fruitless or meaningless. It is incredibly hard to deal with when we can't achieve our goals, we are frustrated by our bosses, coworkers, and the environment. There are times when the hard work, creativity and dedication we are sowing doesn't seem to grow, but the thistles and thorns of frustration gain momentum. There seems to be no harvest. Work can appear **meaningless** (I am achieving my goals but what does it matter?) or **fruitless** (I am not achieving my professional goals).

When this happens we can be in danger of burnout. Burnout is not as much about work that is long and difficult, it is about work that is not fruitful. Jonathan Malesic in his book: The End Of Burnout says: *"burnout- is the chronic experience of being stretched between your ideals for work and the reality of your job."*

It is not about how hard you work, you can continue to work hard when you see fruit, but it is soul destroying when you are working long and hard and the outcomes you expected are not fulfilled.

In the past, work was to provide for the things and experiences that made life meaningful. The whole idea of "working for the weekend." If I accumulate enough money to buy toys that I can use on the weekend, or go on trips and adventures, then I can make my life meaningful. Today we have a desire and expectation that *our work itself* must be meaningful, and in and of itself important. If I have a job that I feel called to, that is making an impact socially or religiously then there will be less thorns and thistles. "If you love what you do, you will never work a day in your life" is not true. It may be for a while, but it will not insulate you from thorns and thistles.

We think that an environmental change is what we need, and though that may be true in some circumstances, it is often not the answer because the problem is more internal than external. "The grass is greener where you water it" - anon. A different job in a different city will not insulate you from thorns and thistles.

Just because you cannot realize your highest aspirations in work does not mean you have chosen the wrong profession and that you should spend your life looking for the perfect skill, desire, people and location match.

We spend too much time looking for a “field without thorn or thistle” but we need to spend more time intentionally searching for the fruit when we feel like we are in a sea of thorns. Often this fruit is not that obvious, it may be hidden by the thorn. It takes intentionality and faith. Remember your vocation is also shaping and sanctifying you and *that* may be your biggest fruit.

cynic or idealist

Human beings are primarily designed for relationships not output. No matter the output, it will not be enough to satisfy the God given desire to be fully known, pursued and loved.

We need to resist the urge to engage our vocations as idealists or cynics. *Idealism* embraces the idea that once I find the perfect job I will never experience fruitlessness or lack of meaning.

The *cynic* says that nothing ever changes, nothing matters, just put your head down and do it.

We must remember that what makes work meaningful is that I AM MEANINGFUL, my work matters because I matter. WE dignify work, WE shape its character, and WE give it purpose in our lives. As you commit to bringing order out of chaos, to reflecting your creator, and contributing to the common good, regardless of what you do, you are building a kingdom that cannot be shaken, that is pregnant with meaning and hope and will last forever.

We currently live in the tension of faith and reality. The already not yet of the kingdom of God. We understand that until Jesus returns to fulfill his inaugurated kingdom, we need to learn to live with seasons of frustration and fulfillment, with boredom and breakthrough.

As Christ followers, regardless of what we do, we are part of the greatest truest narrative: We have been rescued by grace, placed in his family and have the privilege of joining God as he brings the restoration of all things. Because we are *sub-creators* with Jesus in his kingdom, our temporary discouragement will never be final. How I carry myself, love others and bring order out of chaos in a seemingly meaningless, fruitless and boring environment is an opportunity for Jesus to be glorified. Our temporary discouragement is an opportunity for God to both shape us and to display us to a world that is so desperate for meaning and so fearful that there is none.

practices for week 3

contemplate

- Spend 3 mornings this week, intentionally asking God to show you fruit over thistle in your work.
- Make a list of fruit in your job. This can be the way the job has shaped you, your relationships, your output, think more broadly as you categorize “fruit”



work as mission

It is not an accident that we have the vocation that we have. It's not just random chance that puts us in proximity and relationship with the people we work with. God is behind it. He has placed us right where we are, with all our unique relationships and connections. We are uniquely positioned by God to reach certain people that *no one else can*. God wants to use us to be a compelling witness to the people He has placed in our life, and many of those people are found in our workplace.

Our workplace is also a mission field for the gospel. It is often the place where we have the most opportunity to build real friendships with people. Our lives should be a compelling witness. We should live and work in a way that *draws* people who are far from God, just like they were drawn to Jesus. And in the context of relationships, we *tell* people about the hope we have in Jesus – the hope that makes us the compelling people we are in Christ. Peter tells us, *always [be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect 1 Peter 3:15–16*

Here are a few perspectives on how we can be a faithful witness in our workplace:

model integrity and diligence.

We image God as creative and restorative by the way we engage our work. That means working hard with integrity, and being reliable and dependable. By being integrous we display God's truth even when it's inconvenient and difficult. By working diligently and being reliable in our workplace, we display God's faithfulness and reliability. However, If we complain and grumble, or if we are lazy and lack integrity, we will not be a compelling witness. We won't display the power of the gospel to change lives. Part of growing in our relationship with Jesus means becoming more dependable and effective workers.

The bible describes Daniel as someone with an "extraordinary spirit." He's trustworthy. He's not guilty of any negligence or corruption. Daniel had jealous colleagues looking over his shoulder, watching his every move, and they couldn't find anything wrong with him.

“Our job is to mirror and mimic what God is like to the people around us — to show the world what God is like. ... God is hardworking, so we should be hardworking. God is joyful and eager and proactive, so we should be cheerful and show up 10 minutes early for our shift and volunteer when something difficult needs to be done. God is honest and true, so we should be full of integrity, even when it means less money or no promotion, because we are made in the image of God — here to make the invisible God visible. You’re the priest of your office or classroom or home or jobsite. You’re God’s representative.”

John Mark Comer

be prayerfully dependent.

Unfortunately, most of us function on auto-pilot at work, not considering or believing that God, through His Spirit is able to help us with our anxiety, give us wisdom in this interpersonal issue, insight before this presentation and creative new ideas at work.

“The world has succeeded in opposing intelligence to goodness . . . And today any attempt to combine spirituality or moral purity with great intelligence causes widespread pangs of ‘cognitive dissonance’ ... He(Jesus) is not just nice, He is brilliant. He is the smartest man who ever lived ... He always has the best information on everything and certainly also on the things that matter most in human life.”

Dallas Willard

Do we believe this? Do we ask Him? Or do we unconsciously believe that work is not an area where Jesus, through His spirit, can help us directly.

Prayer is crucial in helping us root our identity in our primary vocation, to deal with thorns and thistles and to be effective on mission. As James says, “you do not have, because you do not ask”. The power to live differently at work and be a faithful witness comes from *prayer*.

Daniel prayed three times a day. Prayer shaped who he was. Even when the “anti-prayer” law was passed in Babylon, he wasn’t anxious or afraid. He simply continued to live the way God called him to live, and he entrusted himself to his faithful Father. If we live a life shaped by prayer in our workplace, we can face even intense opposition with power and peace from God. We can continue to shine like lights in a dark world, as Jesus has called us to do.

tell people about Jesus.

Finally, we must be ready to actually tell people about Jesus. The old saying “preach the gospel at all times, if necessary use words” is *not* the whole truth. Jesus and the apostles repeatedly tell us that we must preach the gospel with *words*. Paul says,

And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?

Romans 10:14

This is perhaps the hardest step for many of us. The enemy loves to fill our hearts and minds with inflated fears of rejection. But the reality is that people are much more open to talking about their spiritual beliefs than we expect. If we build a bridge of friendship, then telling about what Jesus is doing in our lives is part of being *known* by the other person. Otherwise, we would be hiding a very important part of our lives from them. If we pray for opportunities to share about our hope in Jesus, God is faithful to answer that prayer! Then, by the power and courage of the Holy Spirit, we can tell about all Jesus has done for us.

Daniel was faithful to tell king Nebuchadnezzar about the power of his God. When he accurately interpreted the king’s secret dream, Daniel plainly said that it was the power of God and not his own wisdom. When we live a compelling life before a watching world, we too can plainly testify that it is Jesus at work in our lives and not our own doing.

Part of being an effective witness is learning to LISTEN. We need to practice really listening to our co-workers so that we are able to speak words of hope and life through the gospel. People’s hearts open to us when they know that they are seen and heard and not some religious project.

practices for week 4

bring prayer into your workplace.

This week, take intentional time *at work* to pray. Here are some practical ideas:

- Take a 10 minute break and walk through your workplace praying silently to yourself. Pray for people you see. Pray for God's presence to impact your organization. Pray for problems your business may be facing.
- Look at your schedule for the week and set an alarm before any important meetings reminding you to pray and invite Jesus to work in that meeting.
- Identify a difficult colleague or boss. Pray for them.

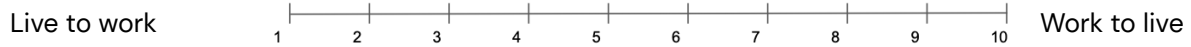
step into living as an empowered witness.

This week, in your time with God each day, pray for opportunities to be an empowered witness in your workplace. Pray for ideas and creativity to open up opportunities for the gospel. Then take action and trust God to use you. Here are some ideas for actions you can take:

- If you know of challenges your co-workers are facing, spend time praying for those challenges, then ask them how things are going and tell them that you have spent time praying for that situation.
- Get lunch with a co-worker and ask them about their spiritual beliefs. LISTEN, and look for connection points to your own life. DO NOT bait an switch. The person needs to feel heard. Create a follow up opportunity where you can share your journey and your hope.
- Invite your co-workers to hang out with you and other strong believers that you're friends with. This opens up more connection points with fully devoted Christ followers. It also often helps with inviting them to church because they will know more people. This also helps nonbelievers see that Christians can be fun and authentic people.
- Find other Christians in your workplace, and talk to them about how you can be empowered witnesses. Invite them to pray with you before work for opportunities to share the gospel.

self re-assessment

Do you lean towards “work to live” or “live to work”? Why?



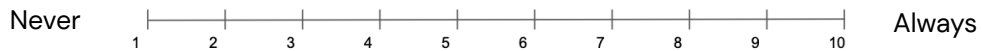
How would you rate your current experience of connecting your relationship with Jesus to your vocation and why?



Do I view work as a necessary evil?



Do I derive a sense of meaning and purpose from my work?



Do I see work as a curse?



Do I feel stuck or robotic at work?



In the previous assessment, you imagined what it would look like to live out your job/work/occupation living fully empowered by Jesus. What steps have you taken towards making that reality?

evangelism – sharing the gospel at work (overview)

Article / Produced by TOW Project

The suggestion that every Christian is called to share the gospel is unsettling to most Christians, since most of us don't feel gifted as evangelists. Although it is thrilling to be part of someone's journey to faith, broaching a spiritual conversation with colleagues at work can arouse no small amount of angst.

a workable definition of evangelism

Evangelism is ... the organic process of intentionally engaging individuals in their spiritual journey joining the Holy Spirit watching for where he is already at work to help these individuals take one step closer to God and new life in Christ, becoming the unique reflection of the image of Christ as the resurrected, glorified persons God intended.

Success in evangelism is consistently taking the initiative, using the gifts and opportunities God gives us, to help individuals move one step closer to Christ.

This might be true of you—and for a lot of understandable reasons. You might feel unprepared to answer the questions you fear colleagues will throw at you. You might feel like broaching spiritual conversations is inappropriate for the workplace—or that's what you've been told. You might feel a bit intimidated by hostile attitudes toward Christianity held by some coworkers. You might think that sharing your faith could create conflict and generate bad feelings with colleagues. You might feel unqualified because—well, you know your faith isn't very exemplary at work.

But what if we understood that being part of someone's journey to faith in Jesus could begin with something as simple as having a cup of coffee with a colleague, encouraging someone who has had a rough week at work, or offering a helping hand to a boss or coworker under stress? What if we truly believed Jesus' words about sharing the gospel with others?

- What if we believed that Jesus authorizes us to act on his behalf to fulfill our calling as his witnesses at work that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (**Matthew 28:18**)?
- What if his promise is true that “the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you” (**John 14:26**)?

- What if we were confident in Christ's presence—that he is with us always and everywhere, in every situation (**Matthew 28:20**)?
- What if even in brief interactions and causal mentions of our faith, we knew the Holy Spirit was at work in the hearts and minds of people to “prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment” (**John 16:8**)?
- What if we knew we didn't have to be perfect and say just the right things—that it was God's work to draw people to himself that “no one can come to me unless drawn by the Father” (**John 6:44**)?
- What if we understood that simply doing a good job at work can turn on the light for coworkers “so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (**Matthew 5:16**)?

This is what early Christians believed and how they saw their role in fulfilling the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations—and it changed the world. It's the greatest communication success story in human history—how the gospel spread across the Mediterranean world and ultimately to every corner of the earth. Just before his ascension, Jesus outlined his strategic plan for reaching the entire world with the good news of God's kingdom. He told his followers, “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” (**Matthew 28:18–20**) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (**Acts 1:8**) First-century disciples embraced this mission, and followers of Jesus grew from a few hundred before the day of Pentecost to over six million by the end of the third century[1]—considerable growth by anyone's calculus.