

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

PURPOSEFUL WORK | THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT

KYLE RILEY | APRIL 30, 2023

Traders Point family, how are we doing today? Good to hear. Good to hear. Good to be here with guys. I want to welcome everybody here at Northwest as well as at all of our campuses across the city.

We're going to jump right in. If you have a Bible, go ahead and turn to Genesis, chapter 1, Genesis, chapter 1. If you are just joining us for the very first time, right now we are in a series called *The Cumulative Effect*, *The Cumulative Effect*.

I don't know about you, but cumulative is not a word that I use on a daily basis. I first remember hearing about it in high school and it had a lot to do with my grades. Maybe you know where I'm going with this. There is something called your cumulative GPA.

And the concept of this is that it's not just about your grades that you get for one semester or even one year. No. They're going to look at your grades over the entirety of your high school or your college duration.

What colleges will do if you are applying to get in to college or even into the workforce, what these organizations will do is they will look at your GPA across your entire high school or college career and they will use it to measure your economic growth or your consistency.

And I know for a lot of college students, it's finals week and you're like, "Why are you bringing up GPAs right now? I get it.

The word *cumulative* can actually be defined this way:

Cumulative: increasing in quantity, degree, or force by successive additions

Does anybody believe, after the NFL draft this past weekend that this applies to our beloved Indianapolis Colts? God bless them. Can we get a good amen? Bless them Jesus.

A cumulative effect is really an effect that occurs over a long period of time. And what we've been saying is that this is exactly what our spiritual lives should actually look like.



Spiritual growth, or what we might call formation, doesn't happen overnight. It happens over time. It happens gradually moment by moment, decision by decision, day by day.

We're being formed into something or someone. And as disciples, we should be increasing in the likeness and the character of Jesus. Paul actually puts it this way in 2 Corinthians, chapter 3. We looked at this this past week. He said:

"But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being," here's the word, "transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:16-18 (ESV)

What Paul is saying here is that there comes a point in time, a point in our lives, where there was this veil that was over our faces, keeping us from seeing God for who He is. And miraculously, by His Spirit, we have this encounter with Him and He begins to change us from the inside out. We see His love. We see His compassion. We see His mercy. It changes everything.

The veil is not only removed from our face, it's also removed from our hearts and our minds. And as it gets removed, it changes everything. And I love how Paul talks about how God is the Spirit. He reminds us that this is not natural. This is actually supernatural.

As we go through this series, this isn't self-help. This is self-surrender. We're not trying to become better versions of ourselves. What we're trying to do is we're trying to become a more accurate depiction of who Jesus is.

And once we surrender to Him, His Spirit enters into us and He begins to shape and mold our hearts and He gradually transforms us to look more and more like Him one degree of glory at a time. So if that is true, if we are being transformed into the likeness and the image of Jesus, we've been saying that should change and impact every area of our lives.

A couple of weeks ago we took a look at what it means for us as parents. How does this impact long game parenting? And then last week Pastor Ryan talked about how this impacts marriage—not perfect marriages, but we should have healthy marriages because we serve a God who created and designed marriage. So we want our allegiance to be with Him. We want that to inform how we love our spouses.

Next week we're going to take a look at how this affects community and relationships and friendships. But this week we get to unpack how following Jesus impacts work. Not just any kind of work but:

Purposeful Work

A show of hands across all of our campuses, who remembers their first job. Anybody remember their first job? I'm not going to embarrass you and tell you to yell it out. But I will go first. I first worked at the Golden Arches, McDonalds. I'm getting some claps here. Yeah. Some of you all are clapping. Some of you all are staring at me with judgment. Don't judge me.

This was a unique McDonalds because it was in the Children's Museum. In the food court of the Children's Museum. And I was in middle school. I was an 8th grader. So this means that they were hiring kids to serve kids. I don't get why they were doing that.

But, this was not my favorite job. I dreaded this job. There would be loads and loads of kids coming in to this food court ordering McDonalds, mainly Happy Meals. I have never made so many happy meals in my life. I have PTSD to this day. I will not order my kids Happy Meals because I made so many of them.

It was like bus loads of kids coming off of the bus coming into the food court. I don't know who dropped the ball on having kids pack sack lunches. That's not a thing anymore. It's like, no. They all came in 30, 40, 50 plus kids and every single one of them wanted a kids' meal. So, if you can imagine, this impacted the way that I viewed that job. I did not like it. It was not purposeful.

Maybe you can relate. Maybe you had a series of jobs over your lifetime. Maybe you can say that that's your reality right now. You're like, "Kyle, honestly I don't see my work as purposeful." In reality, all of us long to be in some sort of work environment to have our life count, where it's meaningful.

We long for satisfaction. We long for our lives to make a difference. We long to have purpose. But we don't want to do that at the expense of losing ourselves in that job. We don't want that to take away from us being able to enjoy life.

I actually saw these two elements and truths as we did our Easter surveys. You remember a couple of weeks back on Easter you got to fill out these surveys to give us some input, some data, on ways that we can serve you better.

And one of the questions was: Hey, what is a helpful topic that you could see us teaching on that would help you right now in your life?



And there were a number of responses. Some of you checked off a book of the Bible or another topic. But one of the main responses that I saw was, "Understanding my purpose." And this didn't just come from teenagers, which you would probably think would be the case. This came from people in their 20s and 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s. It was like, "Hey, I need help in understanding my purpose."

And then we asked a second question. It was an open-ended question: Tell us what the most pressing issue is, the most challenging thing in your life right now. Some of you remember that question. And there were lots of responses. But at the top of the list were: marriage and parenting and my health. But also, what crept up to the top of the list that was very surprising to me was stress at work and work-life balance, which shows me that this is a significant area in our lives.

And there may be a camp of people here who are like, "Maybe I do see my work as purposeful. I'm signing up to follow Jesus and I want Him to impact every area of my life including where I work. But I'm struggling with that. That is challenging for me."

And I often get the question from people, "Kyle, how do I live out my faith in the workplace?" Anybody ever wrestle with that question? Maybe that is you right now, "What do I do to live out my faith, show people that I am a follower of Jesus at work?"

"Do I pull up into the parking lot blasting worship music? Steven Curtis Chapman or Mass City where everybody can hear and know that I am a Christian? Do I just do the Chick-fil-let thing and respond with 'My Pleasure' every time somebody says, 'Thank you'?"

Don't do that.

"Do I put Scripture as my screen saver at work so that when people walk by they see that I am a Christian?" Maybe you've played out that scenario in your life, "I just pray that Ashley from two cubicles down walks by and sees it. And then corners me in the lunch room and says, 'Hey, I saw the screen saver. You're a Christian. How can I get to heaven? Would you please tell me the gospel?'" It's not that easy.

And I understand that many of us have this desire at work to live out our faith. I wouldn't say that that is incorrect. But I would say that it is somewhat incomplete. Because before we can actually begin to live out our faith in the workplace, I think that there is something that God wants for us that's a little bit more substantial, a little deeper than that.

He wants to reframe our thinking. Here's what He wants to do. He wants to give us a healthy theology of work. And that means that He wants us to have a biblical understanding of what work is to begin with. And He wants us to understand His heart behind work.

So to do that we're going to be in the first book of the Bible in the very first chapter, Genesis, chapter 1. And for the sake of time... I don't have the ability or the time to really unpack all of the Creation Story. But here's what happened at a high level. We see that God is an artist. Before YouTube, Tic Toc, or Instagram, God was the content creator and He had to speak creation into life.

He breathed and He spoke. And out of nowhere you see things start to get formed. You see things that contrasted one another, but they also complemented one another at the very same time.

You see heaven and earth formed and then you see the sun and the moon, night and day, and you see the birds of the air and then the animals of the land. You see all of these different things begin to be formed that contrast but also complement one another.

He gets to that and then He says, "Okay, there is still something missing. There is still something missing that I'm going to create in order to bring what I want fully into fruition. And that's where we're going to pick up in verse 26 of chapter 1. This is what it says:

"Then God said, 'Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.' So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." Genesis 1:26-27 (NLT)

So looking at everything that God has done up until this point, God says, "I've got it. I'm going to create humans. And these humans are going to be unique. They are going to be distinct. They are going to be unlike anything that I have created up to this point. Here's why. They are going to bear My image. They are going to be My representatives on earth. I'm going to give them a sense of..." here's the word, *identity*. "I'm going to give them a sense of identity."

But what does that mean? That means that you are not here by accident. You are not here by happenstance. That means that you are not just here to exist. It means that you have the very image of God on you. That you are intentionally and beautifully and uniquely designed and sent into this world.

So because of that God says, “You have inherent worth. You have inherent dignity. You have inherent value. And don’t let anybody else tell you anything different. I created you. I put My image on you. I gave you your identity.”

Our identity comes from God. So if that is true, then that means if your identity is rooted in anything outside of God, your accomplishments, your role, your marital status, your sexuality, your job title—man, you are misaligned and you are missing out on a divine relationship where God says, “I want to give you so much more.”

You have a heavenly Father who says that before anything else, before the labels that society places on you or the label that you even place on yourself, “Let Me tell you who you are. You are my child.” God’s identity is stamped on you. And you need to know that.

So not only did He give Adam and Eve identity, but He gave them this command. He gives them something else. Look at what it says in verse 28. It says:

“Then God blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply.’”

One of my favorite commands if you ask me. Can I get a good amen from all of the husbands across all of our campuses? Oh, my wife is cringing right now. I love you, babe. He says:

“Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.” Genesis 1:28 (NLT)

So not only did God give them identity, here’s the second thing that He gave them. He gave them a sense of purpose. He said, “I’m not just going to tell you who you are, I’m going to tell you why you are here.” He says, “Hey, fill the earth. Govern it. Reign.”

I love that word *reign* because in the original language it means to have dominion—have dominion. It’s almost like king language. They would use that word a lot with kings we see in the Bible who have dominion over territories. And we have this opportunity to partner with God to reign and to have dominion over all of the earth.

I love the way that one Hebrew scholar translated it. It means to actively partner with God in taking the world somewhere. That’s what all of us have been called to do—partner with God to take the world somewhere.

And we get a deeper sense of this, actually, in Genesis, chapter 2. Chapter 1 is really kind of like the 30,000-foot view of the creation narrative. And then in chapter 2 the

author almost double clicks on the Creation Story and we get to zoom in and see some of those specifics.

In chapter 2, verse 4 this is what the author describes. It says:

“When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth,” and then look at this, “...there were no people to cultivate the soil. Instead, springs came up from the ground and watered all the land.

“Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man’s nostrils, and the man became a living person. Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made.”

And then later on in verse 15 it says:

“The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden,” here it is, “to tend and watch over it. Genesis 2:4-8, 15 (NLT)

It’s the very same concept we get of reigning and having dominion and subduing the earth. To tend it and to watch over it.

So God created, we see that in verse 4, but there was nobody to take care of what He had created. There was this void. Something was missing. Everything was good, but it wasn’t perfect just yet because there was nobody there to bring cultivation and to bring dominion over what He had created—to govern and to reign over it. To partner with Him in order to bring order out of chaos so that society could flourish the way that God really wanted it to happen.

So what does that mean for all of us? What does that mean for you and for me? All this talk about gardening and trees and cultivating? Many of us are not professional landscapers. I was doing yard work this last weekend and let me just tell you that is not my ministry. Thank God He didn’t place me in the garden. I would have messed everything up.

No. You’re probably thinking, “Kyle, I’m a teacher.” Or, “I’m an accountant.” “Kyle, I’m a stay-at-home parent.” What does any of this have to do with me?

Listen. It has everything to do with you. All of us have been called to cultivate in our respective environments, to partner with God and to cultivate in our everyday work life. We’ve all been called to use opportunities that we have right in front of us to bring chaos



into order and to help humanity flourish, whether it's at a construction site, in a classroom, a cubicle, or at your very own kitchen table.

This is what that means. It means that you are not just a teacher. No. You are actually cultivating the minds of people through education. That means that you are not just an accountant. You're cultivating order and balance in finance.

That means that you are not just a stay-at-home parent. Never, ever diminish that. What you are doing is you are cultivating the spiritual growth and the character of your children. That is so deeply important. Don't ever minimize your responsibility. All of us have been called to cultivate. Here's what we can take away:

God created us to intimately know Him and partner with Him in ruling the earth

God created us to intimately know Him and partner with Him in ruling the earth no matter what your occupational field is. All of us have been called to cultivate.

So what that means is following Jesus doesn't mean that we are existing here waiting to go to be with Him one day when we die. No. It means that we get to actively participate in what God is already doing around us and using every day ordinary, mundane opportunities where we work, and learn, and live to continue what He has already started—to cultivate the soil in your work environment.

But first I think we have to kind of shift our frame of thinking. We can kind of gloss over what we saw in Genesis, chapter 1, verse 28 and if we do so we miss out on the key component of what work actually is. So if you go back to verse 28, before God ever gave them a command, right before it says this. It says:

“God blessed them...”

God blessed them and then He said, “Be fruitful and multiply.” God blessed them and then He said, “Go and cultivate. Go and reign and have dominion over the earth.”

And that word *blessing* there is actually a weightiness to it, there is a strongness to it. It means that you have permission from your Creator to go and to create life and well-being from something. God blessed us with work. So because that is true, here's what we can take away. Here is the first principle that we can actually apply when it comes to viewing work:

Work is a gift.

Work is a gift. And so often, church, we relegate work to just being a grind, just something that we have to do to pay the bills. We dread waking up in the morning and going to work. We are counting down the hours until it is time for us to clock out or waiting out our days until it's Friday, if we can just get to the weekend. And we think that work is just a grind. That's not the way that God designed work.

Now, don't get me wrong. Yes, it consists of daunting and mundane tasks at times. And, yes, it can be hard and exhausting. And, yes, you can have people at your job who are extremely difficult to get along with. Can I get a good amen?

You said that a little bit too loud, my man. I'm kidding.

But at the end of the day, work is not a grind, work is a gift. So, if it is a gift, here's what we have to do. We have to treat it as such. Again, shift our thinking, "I don't have to go to work. I get to go to work. I get to show up and I get to make a difference. I get to do what I do to the best of my ability. I don't care how small or insignificant a task it is.

"It's a gift to be able to do what I get to do. So, I'm going to do it with pride. And I'm going to do it with passion. Why? Because I get to partner with God in cultivating. And not just that, man. I get to do it with excellence. And I get to do it with a good sense of quality because that matters to God."

There is a great quote by the theologian Martin Luther. He says this. He says:

"The Christian shoemaker does his duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes because God is interested in good craftsmanship."

That's true. God cares about good craftsmanship. He cares about quality and excellence in what we do. Not perfection. Not striving to out perform and out compete with everybody else to make ourselves look better. No. It's just showing up with a willingness to say, "I'm going to do my best. I'm going to put good quality into what I do."

It reminds me shortly after grad school I entered into the workforce and I had this job where I was working in sales for an insurance company. It was not my favorite job. It was very difficult and it was a job that involved working with people.

And oftentimes there would be people calling in wanting a quote on their car insurance. And you had some people who enjoyed being on the phone and you had people who were cussing you out and saying, "I'm just here for this quote. Don't talk to me. Don't talk to me, don't do your thing."

But I would have to show up with this willingness to be good at what I did. I wasn't trying to be the top salesman. I wasn't trying to out perform everybody else. But I wanted to be good so I worked at it and I studied. I studied in my craft and figured out a way that I could be better.

And it wasn't just a transactional thing for me. I was actually caring about the person I had on the other side of the phone, asking questions to determine their needs. And I was building trust and rapport. And I was hitting them with kindness and dignity.

Not before long my supervisor began to notice it. And he began to say, "Kyle, there is something different about you. You have a different disposition when you come in here, different than anybody else. It's like you're not just caring about the bottom line of the company, while that is important. But you're actually showing up motivated by something different? What is that? Why do you do what you do?"

It's almost like he was asking me, "How do I get to heaven?" I had an opportunity not to explicitly lay out the gospel for him, but this really... I'm going to tell you all, this is a gift. This is an opportunity. I wanted to steward it well, "I'm going to show up and I'm going to make a difference. I want to be good at what I do."

It reminds me of Proverbs, chapter 22, verse 29. The writer says:

"Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men." Proverbs 22:29 (ESV)

Listen. God is interested in your good craftsmanship. He cares about what you do. Why? Because you are representing Him as you do it. Don't diminish that.

I love what pastor and author John Mark Comer said in his book *Garden City*. He says that a genuine, authentic love of excellence isn't rooted in greed or narcissism or materialism, that's dualism talking. It's rooted in love. Love for God and love for others. It is a desire to serve God and His world well.

Do you have that? Do you have a genuine, authentic love of excellence in what you do? Not to climb the ladder to make yourself look better. Not to pump up your own ego or to get the attention or recognition or the power. Not to post on social media that you are killing it at your job. No. It's because you have a genuine desire to love God and to love others around you. You truly want to honor Him with the gift that you have been given.

So what does that mean? That means that if you are creative, you create with passion and you create with this authenticity, you create with this desire not for other people's approval but you create because you already have the approval of the ultimate Creator.



You write the song, you write the poem, or you create the video—you create with passion and purpose and good quality because God cares about this.

That means if you are in office administration, man you organize the Outlook calendar, you send the email with clarity, you speak clearly and you help to organize all of the different things in the office for the company. Why? Because God is a God of order and He cares about this.

That means that if you are a barista, you make the best coffee here in Indiana. You do the latte with the little art and the trees and the hearts and all of that. Especially if you work at Provider in downtown Indy. But I'm not biased. They didn't pay me to say that. God cares about that. God is an artist. So for a coffee maker, you're an artist too. And you show up giving it everything that you have.

Here's my point. Oftentimes before we can tell people we work with about Jesus, man, we have the opportunity to show why we do what we do. Before you can have the explicit conversation about Jesus and the gospel, people are looking at why you are doing what you are doing. How do you show up and why do you show up? You have an opportunity with your actions, "Man, this is a gift. This is a gift that I get to steward, that I get to cultivate. I get to do something that brings light and joy, not just by what I do, but *why* I do it."

First you have to see work as a gift from God, not just a grind to get through. That's number one. Work is a gift. Here's the second one:

Work is ministry.

Work is ministry. And sadly, we have relegated ministry to something that just happens within the walls of the church, "Oh, that's for pastors. That's for people in full-time ministry."

I strongly despise that phrase *full-time ministry*. What does that mean? I get what people mean by it, people who work vocationally as a pastor or maybe in a non-profit organization.

And I have to fight myself from being sarcastic when people ask me the question, "How long have you been in full-time ministry?" Sometimes they will ask me that and they work in the marketplace and I'll be tempted to respond with, "You know I've worked in full-time ministry for several years. How about you?"

And they are like, "No. I work in IT."

“I know. How long have you been in full-time ministry?”

Listen. Everybody, if you are a follower of Jesus, you are in full-time ministry. You’re in ministry just like I am. Do you know what ministry means? Ministry, translated, means service. It means to serve people. But we kind of like have this sacred/secular divide where people relegate ministry as strictly what happens within church services and church activities.

But guess what? We never read that in Scripture. What we see in Scripture is we see people using their everyday, ordinary lives, every day work opportunities as a way to serve other people.

Exhibit “A” Jesus. He was a carpenter. He was a carpenter longer than He was a Rabbi. And in the Greek the word *carpenter* actually comes from this word called *tehton*. Everybody say, “Techton.” Techton just means worker. It means worker. It can be translated like handyman, contractor, maybe even a construction worker. It was likely these jobs that Jesus was actually entering into. He was doing that.

Can you imagine Jesus showing up to fix your house? I know if it was me, I’m getting really selfish, “I know I called you about fixing this leak in the ceiling, but I actually need you to touch and multiply all of this square footage. Upgrade in Your name. Okay? Do it.”

He didn’t have a secular job. No. This was ministry. This was equally as spiritual for Him as it was for Him going around and healing people and preaching the Word of God. That doesn’t mean that it was more important. It was just equally spiritual.

I imagine there were times when Jesus came home after a long day’s work, He worked hard, it was grueling, and He was tired. But He didn’t look it as less significant.

Let’s see people throughout the Bible. Daniel. Daniel worked in politics. The Apostle Paul was a tent maker. He used the gifts that he had to build tents for people. Luke, the gospel writer Luke—he was a physician. And you can see in all of his writings how detailed he is and how specific he writes, in only the way that a doctor can.

We see this woman named Lydia in Acts. She is the first European convert, the first European person to begin to follow Jesus. And the Scripture says that Lydia was a merchant, a seller of purple cloth.

That’s just a way to say that Lydia had some money. She was wealthy. She had bread. She would use her resources to help finance and to steward some of the opportunities that Paul and others would have to be able to preach the gospel.

We see people using their everyday, ordinary occupations as a way to serve other people. And that's what we have been called to do. You have been called to do the same. So don't for a second think that because what you do is not in the church building, it is not spiritual. Here's another way that I want to put it:

Working outside the walls of the church doesn't mean you work outside the kingdom of God.

Just because you don't work within the walls of the church doesn't mean that you're not working within the kingdom. You are a kingdom worker. What you do is no less spiritual than what I do.

Now, I say that with a caveat because I know that there are some industries that are not God honoring. And maybe you're in an industry like that and you've been thinking about that and praying on it.

And maybe God could be calling you out of that industry or maybe He's calling you to be a light within that industry. I can't answer that question for you, but I will say that for the most part if what you do is not illegal and immoral or inhumane then you've been called to work within the kingdom.

You take ministry wherever you go. That's why when we gather here in our worship gatherings, we gather and then we say that we scatter. We gather. We encourage each other. We fill each other up. We worship. We rub shoulders with one another. And then we scatter and we take ministry wherever we go—where we work, live, and play.

If you are a follower of Jesus, guess what? You are in full-time ministry. I now dub thee. You are commissioned. You go.

So what does that mean? That means that your job is not just a job. That means that it is a calling. It's a calling to minister to people, to help them, to love them, to lead them, a call to serve people in whatever capacity that you're in right now. You have to reframe that thinking.

I love the way that Tim Keller puts it. He says, "Our daily work can be a calling only if it is conceived as God's assignment to serve others." So maybe you need to do some reconceiving. Maybe you need to reconceive your job as an assignment from God to serve others.

And if you really want it to be purposeful, man, look at it as God's assignment to serve the people that you rub shoulders with every day. Wrestle with that this week. As you're going to work you're praying, "God would You give me an opportunity with somebody



else, not with my own agenda, not to get anything in return, but to truly care about the interest of other people?

“God, give me the opportunity to build relationships with people. Help me to slow down enough to see what You are already doing around me and help me to have the desire to partner with You to serve other people by the way that I show up to work.”

So the first one is that work is a gift. The second one is work is a ministry. And here’s the third one:

Work is worship.

Work is worship. We work as an act of worship. Not the other way around. We do not worship our work. That’s idolatry. That causes us to take a good thing like work and actually make it an ultimate thing. Something that is the most important thing in our lives.

When we take that heart posture, man, it causes us to take things into our own hands and we do anything and everything that we can do to get ahead. We work long hours and we push other people down so that we can come up. And really what we are desiring is to fulfill our own mission, to build our own empire.

No. We don’t worship our work. We work as an act of worship.

I love the way that our Downtown worship pastor, Mark Hofstrom, reminds us of this in a way that only he can. He says, “Worship isn’t just about music. Worship is a lifestyle. That means that we embody worship in our every day lives. We embody it in the way that we live. It’s presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, holy and acceptable to Him. And whatever He wants to do in us and through us, we’re available, including our work.”

I don’t know if you’ve ever heard of the famous composer Johann Sebastian Bach. He wrote a lot of famous musical compositions. He was very famous, very well known. He was actually a follower of Jesus. And I was reading about him recently. What he would do after he would finish writing a piece of music, he would often sign it with two sets of initials. He would sign it with his own, he would sign JSB and the second initials he would write would be SDG.

SDG which means, Soli Deo Gloria. And that is Latin for God’s glory alone. For God’s glory alone. What was Bach doing? He was saying, “Hey, this isn’t mine. I’m not doing this to become famous. I’m not doing this to draw attention to myself. No. Soli Deo Gloria. This is only for the glory of God.



And all of us have the opportunity to show up and to kind of take that same premise when it comes to our work, “I’m not showing up to build myself up. I’m not showing up to make it about me. No. This is an act of worship to God.”

We’re actually encouraged to do that by the apostle Paul. I love what he says in Colossians, chapter 3. He says:

“Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.” Colossians 3:23 (NLT)

Work willingly at whatever as if you’re not working for people, you’re working for the Lord. That means that you’re not just working for your company. You’re not just working for your boss. You are actually working for God. And that means it’s not just about what you do but it’s about who you are as you do it.

What does that mean for us as followers of Jesus? That means when we show up, we’re showing up on time. That means that we are operating with a sense of integrity in what we do. That means that we treat people with dignity and respect.

Why? Because of what we read in Genesis 1. Every single person that you lock eyes with is made in the image of God. Every single person is somebody that God created and He died for. So if that is the truth, then I’m going to treat them with dignity and respect and value.

That means that we’re honest in what we do at work. That means that we are not cutting corners or we are not doing things unethically. That means that we honor leadership. We honor our supervisors and our boss. Many of you are like, “Pray for me. You don’t know my boss. That’s a little difficult for me to do.”

No. We come with a sense of worship. Don’t forget that. And because of that, because work is an act of worship, then God gets to define—listen to this—God gets to define what success looks like at work.

I know that you have goals and metrics and things and guidelines that you probably have to abide by. By all means, please do. But some of us need to reframe the score card which we have when it comes to work.

NEW SCORECARD FOR WORK SUCCESS (adapted from Emotionally Healthy Discipleship)



So I just want to take a moment and walk through a few ways that we can look at work differently. A new score card that we can have. What I did is I adapted these from a guy named Pete Scazzero who wrote an incredible book called *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*.

I even have these printed above my desk so that God reminds me of what matters most, "God, help me not to be focused on things like the numbers and what success can look like within the ministry. No. This leads out with what ministry actually is, what work actually is.

Maybe you take a picture of these or write them down and you lay them over your own life and see how you can grow in some of these. Here's the first one. New scorecard for success. One:

- I live healthy rhythms of being with Jesus, embracing my God-given limits.

Embracing my God-given limits. Guys, we are running so fast in our world, in our society. Business has actually become a virtue. It's actually a good thing to say, "I'm busy." Every time you ask somebody, "How are you doing?"

"Good. Busy."

We are constantly moving. And it's almost like, if I'm productive then that means that I'm successful. But God gave us limits. God says, "No, no, no. You weren't actually designed to be a machine to run 24/7. No. I created you with a healthy sense of limits."

If you go back and reread the Creation Story, God creates everything in five days—everything that is on the earth. On the sixth day He creates humans and gives them an identity and a purpose that we talked about—go and be fruitful and multiply. And then what is He doing on the seventh day? He rested.

So put yourself in Adam and Eve's shoes for a second. They get this command: be fruitful, multiply, go reign, subdue the earth. And then they were like, "Okay. We're going to get a good night's sleep because we've been given this command. And in the morning we're going to wake up and we're going to kill it. And they wake up and God's resting. And they were given this command just to rest.

Here's what the word is, it's to *sabbath*, which means that we don't work in order to rest on the weekend. No. We intentionally rest so that we can be filled up in a health way and commune with God so that we can go into the workplace in a healthy way and to work with intentionality and purpose.



I've tried to implement this in my own life. I don't get it right every time. But we try to set a time of purposeful, 24-hour periods, as a family to sabbath. We've got three young kids. We try to make it fun. Our sabbath is from Friday 6 p.m. usually to Saturday at 6 p.m.

I'll pick my kids up from school. We go get slushies. We go pick up food and we come home Friday night and we have movie night. This has been our way to kick off our sabbath. Then we wake up Saturday morning. We're sleeping in. We're not setting an alarm clock. We're actually being very slow and methodical about how we go about our day.

We all cook a big family breakfast. And our kids love it. We're not rushing off to different errands, or traveling for sports and all of these things. There is nothing wrong with that, but we're trying to intentionally slow down and just have a regular rhythm of rest. We take naps and we get outside and we try new things in our life.

So what does that look like for you? How can you begin to implement a sabbath or a period of rest? Maybe, realistically, you can't do a 24-hour period. Just carve out whatever that looks like for you and say, "How can I slow down and how can I remind myself that I'm made in the image of God, but I'm not God. And I want to practice presence over productivity.

So, what are your God given limits? Live within those. Here's the second one:

- I actively listen to Jesus as I lead and serve.

I actively listen to Jesus as I lead and serve. How are you taking Jesus with you into your work environment? What are you meditating on earlier in the day or maybe the previous one that you actually take with you into the work environment that shapes it and impacts how you respond to people. It impacts how you respond to different situations.

There is actually this practice called Lectio Divina. There are probably people here who have heard of it. And that just means divine reading. It's a devotional practice that I've started to do. I was fascinated by the origins of it. It has some incredible and practical benefits.

But I was reading where it came from. It came before the invention of the printing press. And what would happen is everybody would come to the church every single day and because they didn't have access to the Bible, the priests were the only ones who were able to read from the Bible.

So they would read audibly to the entire congregation. They would read through a passage of Scripture. And then people in the audience are listening to the passage and are trying to identify key words or phrases that they could be able to meditate on and take with them as they leave out of the church.

So go with me for a second. Imagine you're listening to a passage of Scripture being read and then you listen for a key phrase. And if you're the butcher, you're going back into the butcher shop with God's Word—a key word or a phrase that you are ruminating on throughout the day. And you're saying, "God, help me to implement this into my daily life."

If you are a teacher you say, "I'm taking this into the classroom with me. What's that word or phrase that I actually want God to show me. And not just orthodoxy or information, but it's orthopraxy, I'm actually practicing in out on a day-to-day basis.

If you're the baker you're going into the bakery. And so on and so forth. You are taking Jesus with you where you work, live, and play.

So how are you listening to Jesus and leading from that place with others? Here's number three:

- I give my best time and energy to a healthy marriage/singleness before leading others.

This is a reminder that home is your first ministry. My marriage, my family, they are my first ministry.

I never want them competing for my attention and my time with the church. I never want my wife to say, "You give more time and attention to discipling other people or speaking on a stage and yet you are not doing so at home."

I never want my kids to think that the church took their dad away from them. If anything, I want them to love the church more because of what I get to do, not less.

So all of us have this opportunity to say, "Hey, what are my relationships at home looking like before I invest in my work?"

If you're single, what are the relationships around you, your friendships, that you can invest in? And many of us have the opportunity to do a better job.

This isn't to criticize or to demean, but there are so many of you, you're in business, you're an incredible leader in the board room, but you're an absent leader in your living room. So how can you now step into this and say, "First. My home is my first ministry.



I'm going to devote time to my marriage and to my kids before I devote time to anything else." Make it a priority on the calendar. Here's the fourth:

- I invest in a few intentional, discipling relationships.

This is just answering the question: who are you pouring into? Who are just a few individuals who are already in your life and you can be very intentional in just reproducing yourself in a work sense and also spiritually?

Maybe you're in a season where you're saying, "I actually need to get under somebody. I need to be poured into."

So who is already in your life and how are you pouring into them at work and beyond? Here's number five, last one:

- I lead and serve from who I am, not pretending to be someone I'm not.

I lead and serve from who I am, not pretending to be somebody I'm not. This goes back to our sense of identity. It goes back to our sense of identity as a church of who God says that we are. So we should show up to our work environment as our authentic, genuine self.

It's not imposter syndrome, it's not putting on a front, it's not us leading out of this vibrato that I'm just going to command leadership and I'm going to demand submission. No. I'm being real because people actually gravitate toward that more than they will my pretending to be somebody that I'm not.

I love the way that Craig Groeschel says it. He says that people would rather follow somebody who is real than somebody who is always right. So don't show up trying to feel like you have all of the answers. Be humble. Be authentic. Be genuine in how you lead and serve other people.

So as we close, I just want to kind of bring our attention back to what I led us through earlier on. And that's the fact that all of us, all of us are kingdom workers. No matter what your occupational status is, whether you're a student, an employee or that you are in between jobs or you are retired. If you are a follower of Jesus, your work is for the kingdom. And that's important. That matters.

So many of us get caught up in building our own empire. And we become focused on the wrong things. We need Jesus to remind us of what is most important. He needs to recalibrate us in some sense.

Maybe that's what has happened to you today, just a recalibration of what is most important and how you view work because if you're honest, you've been building your own empire, building your own kingdom. Work has been a means for you to kind of build yourself up and provide. And that's solely what it has been.

Even Jesus had to recalibrate the disciples when it came to viewing our own kingdom. After His death and burial and resurrection He spends some time with disciples and they begin to ask Him a few questions. And in Acts, chapter 1, this is what happens. It says:

"So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, 'Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel,' look at this, 'and restore our kingdom?' He replied, 'The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'" Acts 1:6-8 (NLT)

Jesus is saying, "Hey, you're still focused on this kingdom. You're still focused on this thing that you are at the center of. I have so much more for you. You're going to help Me actually expand My kingdom. My Spirit is going to come upon you. My Spirit is going to give you power. My Spirit is going to enable you to be My witnesses, My representatives to the end of the earth. You are My children. Now go."

It almost sounds very similar to what God said in Genesis 1, "Go, reign, cultivate—not only in the physical sense, but also in a Spiritual one as well." Why? "Because you have encountered Me. You are My child and now you have been sent to have dominion and to tell everybody about who I am with your words, but also with your actions."

So here's the question that I want to leave with you. Are you concerned about building your own kingdom or advancing God's kingdom? Are you more concerned about building your own empire, your own kingdom, or is it a mission for you to actually step into what God is already doing and to advance His kingdom?

Work is a gift. Do you see work as a gift? Do you see it as a ministry? Do you see work as worship? Because all of us are called to ministry. All of us are called to be His witnesses, His representatives in what we do. Not just what we do with our words, but with our whole lives as an act of worship.

Here's my challenge to us. Let's be kingdom workers. Let's be representatives of God's kingdom. Let's take Him with us everywhere we go. Because that's been our call. That's been our assignment. It's not just about waiting to go to heaven when we die. It's



actually making earth look more like heaven while we are here. So why don't we do that?
Work is worship.

I want to invite everybody with us at all of our campuses to go ahead and stand. And what I want to do is I want to just kind of speak a word of blessing over you, to encourage you no matter what your occupational status is. I want to remind you that you are a kingdom worker, that you've been called to build God's kingdom.

So, if you work in administration, agriculture, architecture, or athletics you are a kingdom worker, build God's kingdom.

If you are a business owner, you are a kingdom worker, build God's kingdom.

If you are a contractor, construction worker, or work in custodial service or customer service you are a kingdom worker, build God's kingdom.

If you work in education, in entertainment, or as an engineer build God's kingdom.

If you are a first responder, you work in finance or foodservice you are a kingdom worker, build God's kingdom.

If you work in health care, health and fitness, or hospitality you are a kingdom worker, build God's kingdom.

If you work in information systems, or information technology build God's kingdom.

If you work in law or legal services build God's kingdom.

If you work in management, manufacturing, or marketing you are a kingdom worker, build God's kingdom.

If you work in politics, man, you need to be reaching across the aisle in unity, not tearing down the other party to make your party look better, to strive for unity and worth and seek the kingdom of God.

If you work in sales, science and technology, social work, social media, or if you are a student you are a kingdom worker, build God's kingdom.

If you work in real estate, retail, or your retired build God's kingdom.

If you work in transportation build God's kingdom.



If you work in vocational ministry, full-time ministry you are a kingdom worker, build God's kingdom.

Father, we thank You. We thank You that You have called us. We thank You that You have said that work is a gift. We are not here just to exist and then die one day; we're here to live on purpose for a purpose.

Help us to maximize the opportunity that we have. Help us to redeem the ordinary, mundane routines that we have in light of the opportunity to show other people who You are and hopefully open the door to a conversation about Your love and Your grace and Your mercy.

God, I pray that You would help us to use work as ministry, that it's not about building our own agenda, but that we seek ways to serve other people, and ultimately that it is an act of worship for Your glory alone. Not for our glory but that we could put You high above us to lift up Your name.

And as we do that, help us to have healthy businesses. Help us not to burn out. Help us to rest with intentionality and seek rest as equally an act of worship. God, we ask all of these things in a way that allows us to speak Jesus over every person that we come in contact with.

Jesus, you told us to shout from the rooftops what we've heard behind closed doors. And that's what we're going to do. We're going to claim the gospel not only with our words but with our actions. May it be done for Your glory alone.

Jesus, we thank You and we love You. It's in Your name that we pray. Amen.

