

Bethel Seminary's Work with Purpose Initiative
Church-Based Course Series

LEADING WHOLE-LIFE DISCIPLESHIP

EXPLORING THE BIBLICAL
FOUNDATIONS SUPPORTING
FOUR PASTORS' STORIES OF
WHOLE-LIFE DISCIPLESHIP
INTEGRATION

Developed by TediAnne Hasapopoulos



BETHEL
SEMINARY

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Leading Whole-Life Discipleship

Exploring the Biblical Foundations
Supporting Four Pastors' Stories of
Whole-Life Discipleship Integration

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Bethel Seminary's
Work with Purpose Initiative

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St. Paul, MN 55112

<https://www.bethel.edu/seminary/about/initiatives/work-with-purpose/>

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Work with Purpose Initiative

Bethel Seminary

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PREVIEW

Introduction

Across the United States there is a movement afoot. Pastors and church leaders are hearing about and seeing the impact of reconsidering how we equip and encourage people to be disciples of Jesus. This movement is smashing through a false sacred/secular divide that has arisen in our culture. Recognizing that Jesus' sovereignty has no boundaries, there are no secular spaces or circumstances. All things are under His divine control regardless if people or systems accept that reality. This is the basis for going deeper in our understanding of what is often called **whole-life discipleship**. We are calling for all believers to envision and go about their daily endeavors with Kingdom purposes in mind.

As we embrace the reality that all of our lives are "unto Christ" and go about our daily lives seeking his purposes (Col. 2:18), we are doing "faith and work integration", keeping in mind that work here means any, and all good endeavors. When we use our resources of time, talent, skills, and monetary assets to his glory, we are also seeking faith and economic integration. Often when you hear people discuss whole-life discipleship, you will also hear them speak of **faith/work/economic or FWE** (pronounced Faith/Work/Economics).

Bethel Seminary's Work with Purpose Initiative has been engaging Christian leaders to encourage and equip the Church to effectively engage in all kinds of work. We have worked closely with many pastors in the Twin Cities region. We've asked four of those pastors to share their stories about how they have become better informed and equipped to lead their congregations to more effectively engage congregational activities toward stronger faith/work/economic integration.

This four session Bible study is based on the stories of pastors who have been on journeys deepening their biblical and theological understanding of whole-life discipleship. Each pastor shares how he or she developed understanding and engaged others. With their leadership teams, they brought whole-life discipleship and faith/work/economic thinking and actions into the life of their congregations.

The studies have been written by pastors, for pastors and congregational leaders. Each session begins with a pastor's story. This story is followed with a short Bible study, discussion and commentary allowing Scripture to illuminate biblical principles being reflected in that story. Each session ends with probing questions regarding the application of these principles to the life and leadership of our local congregations.

The series is designed to create robust discussion among local church pastors and leadership teams as they seek to deepen the discipleship and impact of those they lead.

Each study can be conducted in a 45 minute time frame. This series can be easily used in leader workshop/retreat settings. A half day setting could use two of the four sessions to begin the learning regarding leadership in whole-life discipleship and FWE. An all-day setting could use all four sessions, with visioning, discussion of implications, and planning being conducted between the sessions.

We at Bethel Seminary's Work with Purpose Initiative are dedicated to equipping and encouraging you in your leadership of the local church that is so dear to Jesus. May this series help you envision and engage discipleship that honors Jesus with all one's heart, soul, mind and strength in the good endeavors of everyday life. Amen.

Course Sessions

Session 1: The Leader's Work of Visioning with Pastor Robert Olszewski	Session 3: Missional Service Reimagined with Pastor Lisa Welter
Session 2: Leading from within the Neighborhood with Pastor Aaron Brockmeier	Session 4: Taking the Long View with Pastor Kirk Knudsen

PREVIEW

Session 1: The Leader's Work of Visioning

Every movement of God has a beginning. Sometimes God begins by giving vision to a leader. That leader is encouraged by the Holy Spirit to "see" a potentiality in new ways of advancing the Kingdom of God. But vision is not enough. Every leader must gather a coalition of people who will bring a vision to fruition. The leader must cast the vision, clarify the vision and then devise the first simple step toward moving forward in that vision.

In Pastor Robert's story, you will hear about an associate pastor, fairly new to his congregation and community, who catches a vision for the potential of deeper discipleship when people understand the Kingdom value of our everyday endeavors.



Pastor Robert Olszewski, Family Life pastor for CrossWinds Community Church, began his partnership with Bethel Seminary's Work with Purpose Initiative in 2014. He attended events co-sponsored with the Made to Flourish Pastors network. There he made connections with new concepts that present faith/work/economics integration through whole-life discipleship. And he connected with people who were also seeking to honor God by fostering whole-life discipleship in their personal life and in their leadership of others. Robert joined the Made to Flourish Pastors Network and began a close relationship with Work with Purpose. He shared his new learning with CWCC's lead pastor, Tim Caspers, who immediately saw the value of the learning, connections and resources Robert was developing. CWCC became a partner church with Work with Purpose, becoming a site for piloting new courses on whole-life discipleship understanding, as well as launching a concerted, and well-designed long term plan for leading CWCC in deeper whole-life discipleship through preaching, teaching and action. CWCC also partnered with Work with Purpose's church ambassador/consultant to revise their articulation of vision, mission, and values and create a long term plan to strategically bring these to fruition within the congregation, the Stillwater community and most importantly, on the frontlines of each congregant's everyday life.

Here is Pastor Robert's story.

Advancing the Integration of Faith, Work and Economics at CrossWinds Community Church

The process for integrating faith, work, and economics for the flourishing of all to the glory of God focused primarily on three key aspects. The first aspect was learning. The second aspect was relationships. The third aspect was implementing. Each step built into the next step and reinforced the previous step where applicable. Let's start by looking at the first step: learning.

Learning was throughout all of the steps. However the key to all learning started with reading and listening to experts & practitioners. Learning happened in two key ways. First was reading books like

Every Good Endeavor, *Vision of Vocation*, and *Kingdom Calling*¹ to name a few. The reading helped to form ideas and provoke changing mental models that I had regarding God's kingdom. In addition to the readings I valued the discussions I had with other pastors, thought leaders (Gary Black, Steven Garber, Tim Keller, Paul Williams, Brian Fikkert), and leaders within the local church. These times of processing together with others built into my thinking, roots that gradually grew deep and strong. Learning also entailed sharing what I thought and trying it out with those I was leading in the church. An example of this was the implementation of *For the Life of the World (FLOW)* with Evan Koons in our adult education hour at church. This began the process of sharing faith/work/economic (FWE) ideas and truths with a broader audience. It was refreshing and encouraging when they also took to this teaching. Their desire for more and need for talking it out was deeply encouraging.

Relationships were the second aspect that helped to mold me and develop my learning and implementation of FWE. The first group of people that I developed a relationship with was at the Faith & Work Boot Camp in the fall of 2014, offered by Work with Purpose, the Made to Flourish (MTF) network and other partners. Learning from Leith Anderson at our evening kick-off was my first personal connection to the FWE movement. Following the evening session I had many conversations with different pastors, academics, and practitioners. The one team that shared was a church in Cambridge, MN that talked about their journey in developing a Kern Family Foundation Church Building Grant project for a youth ministry project that integrated FWE.

Through the MTF pastors network I continued to build relationships and connect ideas and thoughts with real world challenges. Some of these connections started at MTF pastor sponsored gatherings and at Acton University both in 2015 and 2016. Other relationships were developed through the Word with Purpose Initiative at Bethel Seminary. The various thought leaders that they hosted provided me with relationships that I would further connect with down the road. These new relationships deepened my learning and understanding for FWE.

Implementation is the third key aspect for helping me to integrate FWE into my leadership and the life of CWCC. After developing and implementing a learning program for our leadership at CrossWinds, we started on a process for changing CWCC. There were three distinct ways in which we implemented what we learned from our KBG. These ideas came out of the work done by the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC). In particular the booklet titled, *Leading a Whole-life Disciple-making Church* by Neil Hudson and Tracy Cotterell provided the framework from which we would implement FWE at CrossWinds. The first step was implementation of a process focused on recasting our vision, mission, and values. Work with Purpose deployed Pastor TediAnne Hasapopoulos to consult and facilitate discussion as we began to look at our current vision, mission, and values in order to align them with the FWE principles that we had been learning (see first aspect above).

The second way we implemented FWE was through the teaching/preaching of whole-life discipleship. The recasted mission stated that we will, **"love God and represent Jesus with the whole of our lives by serving and loving others."** This focus has been integrated into all that we do at CWCC and

¹ Tim Keller and Kathrine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor*; Steven Garber, *Visions of Vocation*; Amy Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*.

we use this to help guide our focus as a church. The “whole of lives” is the thinking that we have learned from being a whole-life disciple that represents Jesus wherever we go.

The third and on-going way we have implemented FWE has been guided by a roadmap for our church and myself when thinking about how you implement FWE. The key is our focus has been on:

1. Recasting vision, mission, and values – we always need to keep this out front so that people understand why we are doing what we are doing. This has been integrated into our worship service and planning for ministry.
2. Focus on the Frontline - we seek to equip followers of Jesus Christ for wherever they are (home, work, community, leisure).
3. Pastor to People Care retooled - our commitment is to build care that doesn't revolve solely around the pastors. This also has been our *When Helping Hurts*² strategy for all of our mission and care opportunities.
4. Grow leadership - this is where we focus on developing leaders, recruiting/growing new leaders, and keeping the whole-life discipleship concept before us all the time.
5. Making One Degree shifts - this helps us to understand that many changes happen incrementally and not all of a sudden. It is culture change done well.
6. Share Stories - this aspect is where we use video, articles (Frontline Focus), and personal stories to help reinforce what we have been learning and implementing from FWE.

In summary learning, relationships, and implementation is how I have experienced and enjoyed FWE within my own life and life of a local church. The process is an ongoing one and we are learning everyday how to make more on-ramps for others to join in this movement. I thank God for all of the learning and relationships that God has given me to glorify Him.

Robert Olszewski
Family Life Pastor
CrossWinds Community Church

Hearing from Scripture

Nehemiah: Vision Caster, Relationship Builder and Implementer

The situation: The great Israelite Kingdom of David and Solomon had withered away to a mere remnant of survivors living in the demolished city of Jerusalem. The last hold-out of what was once the Twelve Tribes of Israel united under David and Solomon had been ransacked by conquering nations. While most of God's

² See Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*.

people had been scattered, a contingent of people still lived in the tattered city of Jerusalem. The city needed rebuilding and God gave a vision for that rebuilding to a man who was somewhat of an outsider to the people of Jerusalem. Nehemiah was an Israelite living in far from the tatter city. He had become a trusted court servant to the Persian king who had sovereignty over Jerusalem and its people. Nehemiah led a privileged life. But word from Jerusalem unsettled him. The book of Nehemiah is his account of how God gave him a vision and purpose and empowered him to act on that vision.

Read Nehemiah 1.

Discuss: What do we learn about the situation in Jerusalem? What do we learn about Nehemiah as a person?

Nehemiah is clearly a trusted fellow brother of the people living in Judah. The men from Judah know that they can come to him and report the serious conditions in Jerusalem. From this short passage we learn a number of key aspects of leadership of God's people.

Being attuned to God's will. Notice that Nehemiah's first action is to sit down, weep and mourn for several days, all the while fasting and praying before the God in heaven (verse 4).

Read verse 4-11 again.

Discuss: What does Nehemiah's prayer tell us regarding his understanding of God and his relationship with God?

You likely noticed four aspects of this. Nehemiah acknowledges who God is and praises God's character. He calls God by name, Yahweh³, and declares that God makes and keeps covenant promises with his people. Next, Nehemiah confesses his personal sin and the corporate sins of his people. He comes clean before God who is keeping his covenant promises even as God's people fail. Nehemiah appeals to God's steadfast character demonstrated by the Lord's willingness to keep covenant with those who break covenant. Then he petitions the God of heaven. "Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man (Neh. 1:11)."

Notice that Nehemiah is aware of his personal potential to change the situation in Jerusalem. He also is aware of the risk involved. As he petitions "up the line", he might stir up disfavor with the Persian court and jeopardize his position, and possibly his personal safety. Nehemiah trust God to direct his steps, open proper channels and create in the Persian king, ears to hear Nehemiah's request.

³ In most English translations of the Old Testament, the Hebrew word, *Yahweh* is substituted with the English word, LORD in all capital letters. This leads readers to miss the multiple times the Old Testament writers referred to God by his proper name, *Yahweh*. This was important in the pluralistic cultures of their times. Those inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the OT books wanted no confusion regarding who God is. He has only one name, Yahweh! When God came to earth being born as a human, the name he took was Yeshua (the Greek translation is Jesus), meaning, Yahweh saves!

Being informed of situation. Notice that Nehemiah allows the dark situation of Jerusalem to invade the comfort of his privileged situation in the king's court. He is willing to receive word from those are to be served. He is willing to act on what he has learned.

Being empathetic to the needs of others. Nehemiah has developed deep empathy for others such that the report from Jerusalem brings much grief. As Nehemiah creates his vision so that he might respond, he empathizes with multiple stakeholders who are involved. He immediately empathizes with the residents of Jerusalem. Chapters 2 – 3 continue the story of Nehemiah's response, demonstrating his empathy with the king, with the regional governors who will assist him in helping Jerusalem, with the leaders in Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, he will deal with those leaders who will catch the vision and assist Nehemiah. He will also deal with those leaders who seek to block his success.

Pastor Robert's story demonstrates a "Nehemiah approach" to visioning. Pastor Robert allowed others to provide information regarding the situations prevalent within the church as we disciple others and in the world as we work to represent Jesus among others. He formed his vision for CrossWinds by becoming informed. Pastor Robert understood that developing relationships would be essential to creating and casting vision for CrossWinds and so he allowed himself to be empathetic to the needs of various stakeholders. And while his account doesn't elaborate on this, Pastor Robert depended on God to guide him as he glorified God for who God is and how he works among us.

Leadership Discussion: In hearing the stories of these two leaders, Pastor Robert and Nehemiah, what insights have you discovered regarding your work of creating a vision and sharing that vision with others? How will learning and gaining insights impact your leadership? How will developing deeper empathy and relationships with others enhance your work of leading? How will your personal relationship with God bring clarity and power to your actions of leadership?

Leaders form and cast vision for changing the current state of things into something much better. May God grant you wisdom, relationships and resolve to bring about the vision he has for your leadership. Amen.