

WORK WITH PURPOSE INITIATIVE | PASTORS GATHERING

Now What? Bridging the Sunday to Monday Gap

This discussion explored content presented by pastor and author Tom Nelson at Bethel University on September 14, 2016. He outlined how to engage your congregation in a vision for vocation and the integrative nature of work in God's mission in the world.

What is at stake if we don't have a right understanding of faith, work, and economics in our churches?

1. May not achieve proper and full **worship** of God
2. Narrow understanding of **spiritual formation**
3. Limited opportunities for evangelism when excluding work as a major part of life
4. Application of pastoral practice may suffer

How do we typically understand worship?

- 1 Corinthians 10:31 – Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God
 - This is a key orienting life verse
- Work is an opportunity to:
 - Worship God
 - OR
 - Worship work (idolatry)
- Physicality of worship (actions)
 - Focusing on this is helpful for those who aren't used to thinking about the spiritual dimensions of worship
- Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan
 - Fresh vision acknowledges that both the Samaritan and injured man were workers
 - Economic dimension – Samaritan had the means to make a financial transaction with innkeeper
 - Compassion AND capacity were in play
 - The priest and the Levite were blinded by fear
 - Did they have the resources to help the injured man?
- Human fruitfulness (as described in Genesis 1:28) is a form of worship
 - "Be fruitful and multiply" is a means to honor God

- God is glorified when we produce
- Focusing just on procreation is too narrow an understanding

- Wealth has a bad reputation in churches
 - Profit is considered “evil” but it is a measure of fruitfulness
 - Much depends on how profit is used
 - “No profit” is also judged – Jesus’ parable of the talents
 - It’s easier to ask people to give to the poor but harder to speak about generosity in their working lives
 - God does not operate a zero-sum game – if one person profits, it doesn’t mean that others are unable to

- As workers, our first priority before God is:
 1. To act rightly
 2. To perform remarkably

- How do we define worship?
 - Worship is loving God with everything
 - Worship in the workplace is broader than merely evangelism
 - When asked “how do you worship God” very few will say “by doing my work well”
 - This might be a goal for all of us

How can we help others gain a renewed vision of worship?

- Get employers to recognize the intrinsic, infinite value of employees
 - Love, Dignity and Respect (LDR principle)
 - Value is much more than extrinsic or transactional
 - Wayne Alderson’s “Value of the Person”

- Learn how God defines worship – more than a music event

How do we typically understand spiritual formation?

- New birth
 - Both salvation and sanctification
 - Bringing people into the family of God

- Mentoring
 - Follow-up process after new birth
 - Occurs with the life context of the person

- Sanctification
 - Lifelong process
 - Reveals where we are now
 - Considers where we are headed
 - Where will God take us?
- Multiplication
 - Training disciples to make more disciples
- Life context
 - All of life is impacted by faith, work, and economics
 - How do we demonstrate faith at work?
 - Don't need to change your setting to do ministry
 - Bridge between common grace and common ground

How can we help others gain a renewed vision of spiritual formation?

- Redefine the "right" context for spiritual formation
- Ministry of presence
 - Meet people where they are
 - Pray without a religious posture (i.e. eyes open when at work)
- Theology of the Holy Spirit
 - Our understanding is too narrow
 - Too confined to "church context"
- Dallas Willard said:
 - 80% of life happens outside the "church"
 - 80% of spiritual formation happens outside the church, too
- Spiritual formation happens through life
 - Relationships, home, work crises, etc.
- Help people consider how the Lord is forming them through difficulty
 - How is he using challenging circumstances to change you?
 - i.e. hostile work supervisor
- Adjust our teaching on how spiritual formation occurs
 - Don't necessarily need retreats or withdrawal from the world to grow
 - Might actually be better to engage with other image-bearers within the context of everyday life

- Sanctification vs. spiritual formation
 - Recognize that sanctification is more than just spiritual formation
 - God keeps us in the world to redeem it
 - We are called to redeem all parts of his creation
 - Book series by Vern Poythress on redeeming math, science, etc.
 - Patience is formed through the trial of dealing with difficult people
 - Toil teaches us about the fruit of the Holy Spirit

- Completeness
 - Continually moving toward this
 - Difficult situations can actually be fruit of the Holy Spirit
 - Challenges at work are used by God
 - We should expect this to happen

- Transformation vs. spiritual formation
 - Transformation is a process
 - Passive transformation means we allow it to happen
 - Active transformation means we contribute to the process
 - There is a tension between these two types
 - Involves the work of the Holy Spirit (not just my striving)

How do we help people move into the new work economy?

- Eliminate the stigmatization of certain jobs
 - Some jobs are not socially valued
 - But all work matters
 - Be careful about who we choose to highlight for case studies
 - Not just the CEO
- Use disasters like the current Wells Fargo fiasco to emphasize the importance of character and integrity in the workplace
 - Ethics training doesn't work effectively

What's next?

- Fact: Pastors are still evaluated by traditional outcomes of ministry milestones
 - How can we redefine pastoral success?
 - How can we change the metrics/scorecard to include engagement with the themes of faith, work, and economics?