



COLLEGE SENIOR

Discipleship Essentials Pathway

Discipleship Essentials Pathways

NEW VISION

DISCIPLESHIP ESSENTIALS PATHWAY

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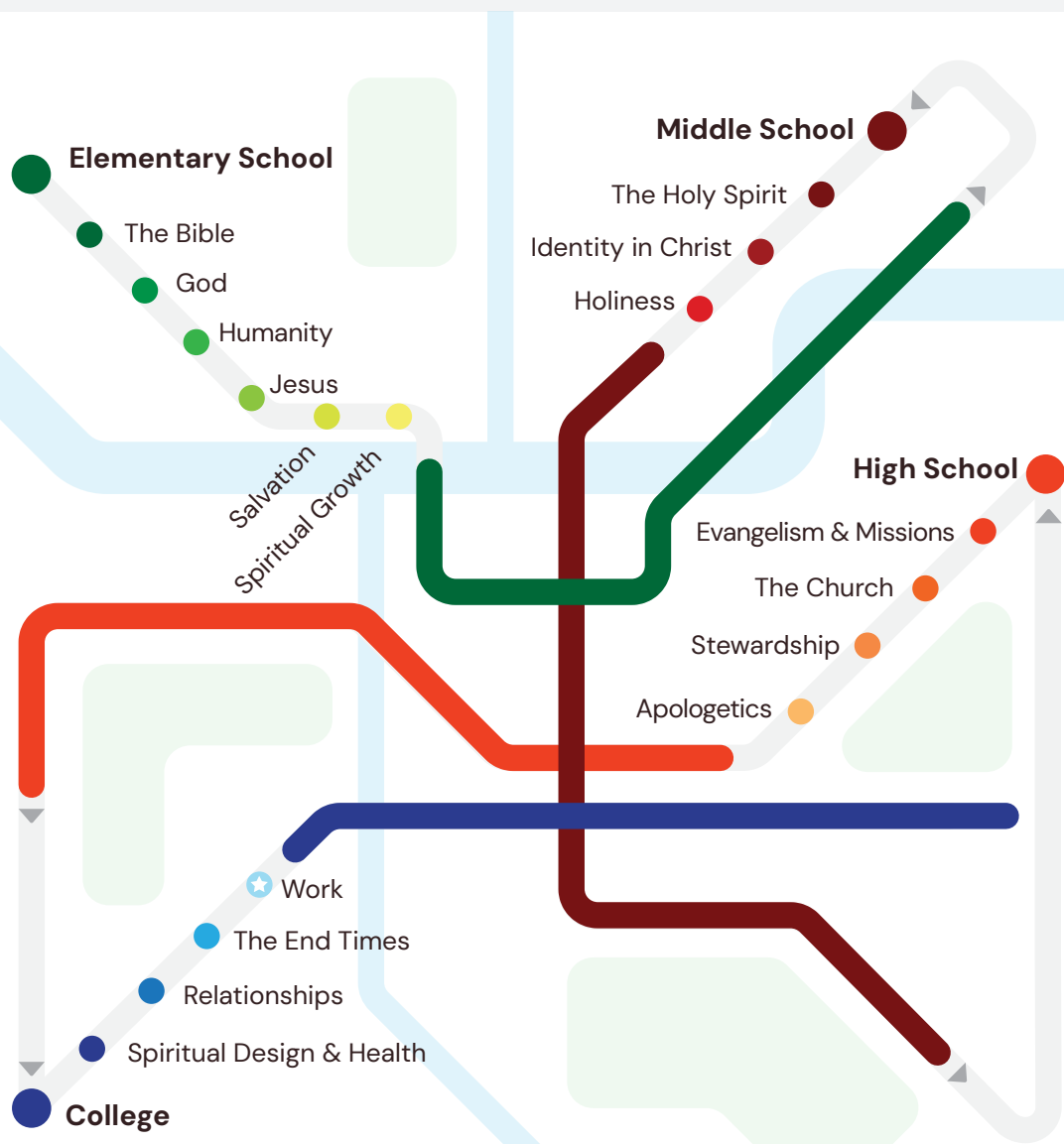
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The Danger of Success

System Map

LEGEND

- Elementary School
- Middle School
- High School
- College



Discipleship Essentials Pathway

Detailed Overview

Elementary Schoolers

- Kindergarten: The Bible
- First Grade: God
- Second Grade: Humanity
- Third Grade: Jesus
- Fourth Grade: Salvation
- Fifth Grade: Spiritual Growth

Middle Schoolers

- Sixth Grade: The Holy Spirit
- Seventh Grade: Identity in Christ
- Eighth Grade: Holiness

High Schoolers

- Ninth Grade: Evangelism and Missions
- Tenth Grade: The Church
- Eleventh Grade: Stewardship
- Twelfth Grade: Apologetics

College Students

- Freshman: Spiritual Design & Health
- Sophomore: Relationships
- Junior: The End Times
- Senior: Work

Introduction

Note: You may be a student going through this Pathway on your own. That is awesome! If you would like, continue through the Pathway on your own; but you may also consider doing so with a small group leader, friend, or mentor. This is also an opportunity to invite someone in your family to study with you. Feel free to reach out to the Student Ministry Team for help or guidance as you walk through your own discipleship journey.

To be a follower of Jesus means that we are to lead others to follow Jesus, too. Contrary to the spirit of the famous “The Buck Stops Here” placard on President Harry S. Truman’s desk, Jesus’ desk placard might have said something like “You’re One Link in a Long Chain.” You don’t have to disciple anyone alone; you’re an essential part of the process. To be a *disciple* of Jesus is to be a *discipler* of others, just as Jesus told us in what is known as the Great Commission:

Then Jesus came to them. He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So you must go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And you can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end.”
– Matthew 28:18–20

Often, when we think of people discipling to fulfill the Great Commission, we think of men and women discipling other men and women at coffee shops, a collegiate minister discipling students at the student union, or perhaps a church staff discipling its members on the church campus. All of that is true, of course, but one of the most important places for discipleship is our homes. Whether you are a young adult planning on discipling others in the future, or you are a parent, grandparent, family member, or mentor, your calling is discipleship. As a Christian, God has called you to disciple others. This is the central point of what God told His people Israel through Moses:

“The commandments I give you today must be in your hearts. Make sure your children learn them. Talk about them when you are at home. Talk about them when you walk along the road. Speak about them when you go to bed. And speak about them when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:6–7). This is what we want to help you with through the *Discipleship Essentials Pathway*.

How to Use the Discipleship Pathway

The *Discipleship Essentials Pathway* is built on a framework of seventeen modules to be used one per year. This book includes Module 17: Work and is designed for senior-age college students or young adults. Modules 1–6 are to be used for kindergartners through fifth graders. Modules 7–9 are to be used with sixth through eighth graders. Modules 10–13 are to be used with ninth through twelfth graders. And finally, Modules 14–17 are to be used with college-aged young adults. Throughout the seventeen modules, you will have the opportunity to engage with the core doctrines of the Christian faith and many practical aspects of following Jesus.

Each module contains twelve lessons, one for each month beginning in August and ending in July of the following year. Here’s how to use the *Pathway*:

The First Week of August

STEP ONE

Choose a day and time when it is easiest to block out about fifteen minutes for a weekly devotion. You can do this alone, with family, friends, or a small group. Of course, if you already have a regular devotion time, that would be the best time to choose.

STEP TWO

During your family devotion time in the first week of August, open the *Discipleship Essentials Pathway* book to August’s content.

STEP THREE

Begin by reading the catechism to your family. A catechism is a method of instruction based on a question-and-answer format that has been used throughout church history. The catechism provides the main idea that your family will focus on for the month. You may notice definitions or further definitions provided. These are provided to help you learn these important terms.

STEP FOUR

Next, read the Bible story, either from the *Discipleship Essentials Pathway* book or from a Bible. The CSB is used in Modules 14 through 17.

STEP FIVE

Now, it is time to read the devotional.

STEP SIX

Next, find the memory verse and prayer prompt for week 1. These will provide your focus for the rest of the week. Begin by reading the memory verse a few times, saying as much as you can by memory as you do. Then, close your devotional time in prayer, using the prompt as a guideline for what to pray about. Of course, you can pray about more than that, but at least pray about the topic provided.

That's it! You're done.

You will notice that each lesson concludes with a next step, a challenging thought, or reflection questions. These are for you to use during the week and on the rest of the devotion days of the month.

During the week, look for opportunities to talk about the main ideas of the catechism, Bible story, and devotional that you covered. The goal is to keep God at the top of your mind and deep down in your heart. Also, continue working on memorizing the memory verse and praying for the topic of the prayer prompt.

The Second, Third, and Fourth Weeks of August

STEP ONE

During your devotion time in the second, third, and fourth weeks of the month, go over the catechism again, perhaps memorizing it along with the memory verses.

STEP TWO

You do not need to read the Bible story or devotion again, but of course, you can if you want.

STEP THREE

Spend more time working on the memory verses.

STEP FOUR

Close your time in prayer, once again using the prayer prompt as your baseline.

The First Week of September

Once the calendar flips to September, it's time to move on to the next lesson, repeating the process. Then, once July arrives, finish this book, and use the rhythm you've created to explore other modules, or consider another discipleship tool or bible study.

A FEW FINAL TIPS

If you have multiple people going through different modules, that's awesome! Go through the lesson with the youngest student in the first week, and move to the second youngest the next week, and so on. Review together as needed, and turn your prayer prompts into a prayer list!

If you miss a devotion one week, that's okay! Give yourself grace and pick back up next week. Consistency over the long term is the key.

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If you use the *Pathway* in a group setting, try to encourage questions as a part of your time as you grow more comfortable. Dialogue is always better than monologue when it comes to discipleship.

If you are starting your journey using the *Discipleship Essentials Pathway* with this Module, you might consider using what you have missed during Christmas break, Spring break, or the summer as a short-term intensive, covering one lesson per day instead of per month, and forgoing memorizing the memory verses. Of course, there's also nothing wrong with starting right where you are and moving forward without ever looking back!

If you already have a devotional plan, or if you find one along the way, feel free to couple it with the *Discipleship Essentials Pathway*. Do both on the same day or choose a second day to stretch your discipleship efforts further throughout the week.

The *Discipleship Essentials Pathway* doesn't provide you with all the answers about our faith, but it should give you a solid framework from which you can explore additional questions as they come up.

The Gospel Message

In the beginning, God created the universe (Genesis 1:1). He formed light and darkness, land and sea, fish and birds, plants and animals. But on the final day of creation, He saved His best work for last: He made people. God created us in His image (Genesis 1:27) and designed us to love, trust, worship, and follow Him.

However, God didn't force us to love Him; He gave us a choice. We can choose to trust and obey Him or we can go our own way. When we choose to go our own way instead of God's way, that's called *sin*, and sin breaks our relationship with God. The Bible tells us: "Everyone has sinned. No one measures up to God's glory" (Romans 3:23). The bad news is that our sin separates us from God, and we cannot fix this problem on our own. We need help.

The good news is that God, in His great love, made a way for us to be forgiven through Jesus. God sent Jesus, His one and only Son, to live a perfect life and take the punishment for our sins by dying on the cross (John 3:6, 2 Corinthians 5:21). Even though he physically stopped breathing and died, He didn't stay dead. On the third day, He rose again, defeating sin and death so we could have new and eternal life in Him. Why is this important? Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves – pay the price for our own sin.

Through Jesus' death and resurrection, a restored relationship with God has been offered to us. To accept this offer, we turn away from sin and choose to put our faith in Jesus as both Savior and Lord. The Bible tells us: "If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9). To break that down, We trust Jesus as Savior, because His death in our place is the only way we can be forgiven for our sins. We trust and follow Jesus as Lord, meaning we submit to His ultimate authority and allow Him to lead our lives. When we trust Jesus for our salvation and submit to His authority as Lord, we receive forgiveness and are saved from the power and punishment of our sins.

If you're ready to follow Jesus, here's what you need to do:

01

Admit that you are a sinner in need of forgiveness.

02

Believe that Jesus is God's Son, who died for your sins and rose again.

03

Confess Jesus as your Savior and Lord, choosing to follow Him daily.

The following is an example of what to pray if you are ready to put your faith and trust in Jesus as your Savior and Lord today. The words themselves aren't special. It's your heart behind them if you believe it.

Dear God,

I know that You created me in Your image to love, trust, and follow You. But I confess that I have sinned against You. I have chosen my own way instead of Yours, and my sins have separated me from You. And I know that I cannot fix this problem on my own.

Thank You for loving me so much that You sent Your Son Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. I believe that He paid my punishment, and I believe that He rose from the dead, defeating sin and death so that I could have new life in Him.

Today, I turn away from my sin and I surrender my life to You. I ask for Your forgiveness and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. Please change my heart, help me to follow You daily, and give me the strength to live for You.

Thank You for Your love and the gift of salvation.

In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

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If you just prayed that prayer for the first time, don't keep it to yourself, share it with someone! Tell a parent, guardian, pastor, or trusted Christian friend. They would love to celebrate with you, encourage you, and help you to take your next steps in following Jesus.

The Goodness of Work

Why do we work?

God designed people in His image to be like Him in certain ways. One of those ways is to imitate Him in how He is active and working in His creation. We are thus called to use our God-given gifts, talents, and abilities to work for His glory.



Definition

Work: Work includes what we do for our vocation and how we create, steward, grow, learn, and affect our community, family, and friends.

Work has always been a part of God's design for humanity as a part of His creation.

Bible Story

⁵ No shrub of the field had yet grown on the land, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground. ⁶ But mist would come up from the earth and water all the ground. ⁷ Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

⁸ The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had formed. ⁹ The Lord God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ A river went out from Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became the source of four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon, which flows through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² Gold from that land is pure; bdellium and onyx are also there. ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon, which flows through the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris, which runs east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it.

— Genesis 2:5–15

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

Genesis shows us how God, the Creator, used His power and authority to create the world and everything in it. In this, we see how God modeled for us the goodness and value of work and affirms our calling to imitate Him in our work.

We must understand that work existed *before* sin entered the world; it is not a consequence of the fall. Rather, God has given all people work to do to fulfill our created purpose. In Genesis, God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden “to work it and watch over it” (Gen. 2:15). Adam’s work was to tend to the world God made, allowing it to flourish, also known as the “cultural mandate.” Adam and all people following him were to take the raw resources God made and work with them to create new things for God’s glory. As Adam sowed and took care of creation, he could perfectly reap the benefits.

We are to do the same with the world around us. God made us, in part, to work. God calls us to work for His glory, whether that occurs by working a 9-to-5 office job, running our own business, or working 12- to 13-hour shifts at a hospital. God uses

our jobs to put food on the table and provide for our needs, but more than that, they are an avenue by which we can give God glory.

Work, however, doesn’t always take the form of a career. Work can also include how we use our God-given gifts, talents, and abilities to affect others. This includes what we do at school, what we do in our homes, what we do at church, and what we do through volunteering at non-profits and other organizations. Whatever work we put our effort into doing for the good of others and the glory of God can be leveraged for God’s glory.

Work sometimes gets a bad reputation because it can be difficult or tedious. The adage is true: work is called work because it’s work. However, even in these times, we need to remember that work existed before the fall and is not a way God punishes us, but rather a way we can worship and glorify Him, and a way we can experience purpose and meaning in life.

WEEK ONE

Memory Verse

There is profit in all hard work, but endless talk leads only to poverty.
— Proverbs 14:23

Prayer

Ask God to give you a strong work ethic.

WEEK TWO

Memory Verse

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth and the creatures that crawl on the earth."
— Genesis 1:26

Prayer

Thank God for making you in His image, which in part means working.

WEEK THREE

Memory Verse

To seek to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, so that you may behave properly in the presence of outsiders and not be dependent on anyone. — 1 Thessalonians 4:11–12

Prayer

Ask God to give you a deep desire to contribute to His kingdom through your work.

WEEK FOUR

Memory Verse

The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it.
— Genesis 2:15

Prayer

Ask God to help you see work not as a chore, but as a blessing and way to honor Him.



Reflection Questions

- 01** What forms of work do you engage in, or do you plan on engaging in?

- 02** How do you tend to view work: as a calling and a blessing from God or as a curse and a chore?

- 03** How can you use work to help others and glorify God?

Notes:

AUGUST

Working in a Fallen World

Why does work seem so difficult?

Adam and Eve's sin affected everything, including work. Work has gone from being something we delight in and thrive in doing to something that takes incredible effort and is often a struggle. Work is still a gift from God, but because of sin, it usually feels anything but that.

Bible Story

¹⁷ And he said to the man, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'Do not eat from it':

The ground is cursed because of you. You will eat from it by means of painful labor all the days of your life.

¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground, since you were taken from it. For you are dust, and you will return to dust."

²⁰ The man named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all the living.

²¹ The Lord God made clothing from skins for the man and his wife, and he clothed them.

²² The Lord God said, "Since the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever."

²³ So the Lord God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.

— Genesis 3:17–24

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

Sin destroys all it touches, including our work. God's design for work was for it to be a delight. While work still required effort in the pre-fall paradise, it was perfectly fulfilling and yielded ample produce. Work did what God designed for it to do; it was a joy to serve God through work.

However, once Adam and Eve rebelled against God, everything that God had created fell apart to various degrees. That included work. While work still could achieve its God-given purpose of bringing Him glory and bringing people meaning and purpose, that purpose was made much more difficult. Ever since Eden, the effort that work requires has multiplied exponentially. And at the same time, the fruit of work has become much more difficult to attain.

However, one of the greatest ways sin has affected work is found within us. Our brokenness as people carries over to our work. Regardless of occupation or activities, because

of sin, we now work with broken motives. We see this played out in a hardworking person becoming a workaholic and leaving no time for family. We see it in the person finding their worth as a person in their work. We see it in a person working more and more to earn more and more to spend more and more. We see it in broken companies that do not value working unto God. We see it in employers acting selfishly and taking advantage of their employees. Simply put, none of this is God's design for humans.

As followers of Christ, we know that work is supposed to be a form of worship and service to the Lord. We know that it is God's gift to us, the way He graciously provides for us. However, we also know that sin has affected work in general, those we work with, and ourselves. Because of this, the effort required is compounded by our need to fight sin within ourselves and to extend grace to those we work with.

WEEK ONE

Memory Verse

In fact, when we were with you,
this is what we commanded you:
“If anyone isn’t willing to work, he
should not eat.”
— 2 Thessalonians 3:10

Prayer

Thank God for providing for your
needs through your work.

WEEK TWO

Memory Verse

And he said to the man, “Because
you listened to your wife and
ate from the tree about which I
commanded you, ‘Do not eat from
it’: The ground is cursed because of
you. You will eat from it by means

of painful labor all the days of your
life.” — Genesis 3:17

Prayer

Ask God to help you navigate the
challenges of work with dignity,
grace, and Christlikeness.

WEEK THREE

Memory Verse

Do everything without grumbling
and arguing, so that you may be
blameless and pure, children of
God who are faultless in a crooked
and perverted generation, among
whom you shine like stars in the
world. — Philippians 2:14–15

Prayer

Ask God to curb any spirit of
complaining you might experience
while you at work.

WEEK FOUR

Memory Verse

The one who is lazy in his work is
brother to a vandal. — Proverbs 18:9

Prayer

Ask God to help you identify any
ways you might avoid work or not
work fully for His glory.



Reflection Questions

- 01** How does the result of sin on work affect you the most? Is it in the challenges of work itself, the conduct of others, or your own conduct?

- 02** What steps can you take to fight against sin's influences on your work?

- 03** What do you think work in the world might look like today if it weren't for sin?

Notes:

Work as Worship

How should Christians approach work?

God has called us to worship in every aspect of our lives, including our work. As believers, we are to dedicate our work to the Lord, using whatever it is to bring Him honor and glory. We can do this by enjoying our work, putting in full effort in what we do, maintaining humility and integrity in the workplace, and being an example of Christ to our colleagues.

Bible Story

⁵ Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, existing in the form of God,
did not consider equality with God
as something to be exploited.

⁷ Instead he emptied himself
by assuming the form of a servant,
taking on the likeness of humanity.

And when he had come as a man,

⁸ he humbled himself by becoming obedient
to the point of death—
even to death on a cross.

⁹ For this reason God highly exalted him
and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee will bow—
in heaven and on earth

and under the earth—
¹¹ and every tongue will confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

— Philippians 2:5–11

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

In Philippians 2:6, we see that even though Jesus is God, He did not exploit His position, authority, and power. That means He refused to do anything for selfish reasons, and instead did everything for the Father's glory. Even if and when that cost Him greatly.

So, what does this mean for our work? In everything we do, including our work, we are to live with profound humility, remembering that our work is not about making much of ourselves, but rather about making much of God. God wants us to find satisfaction, meaning, and joy in our work. And yes, our work is one of the primary ways God provides for us. But ultimately, even these truths are to be turned back to God as we express gratitude and worship to Him for these blessings.

But we can imitate Jesus in our work in other ways, too. We can do this by giving our full effort into what God has called us to do, as Christ did during His earthly ministry. We want to pour ourselves fully into our work while maintaining a healthy balance in our lives. When "on the clock," we want to work efficiently,

with integrity, and to the best of our abilities. This may also look like properly giving credit to others when things go well, and adequately accepting blame or responsibility when things go wrong. When you receive praise, you can glorify God by sharing that He is the one who allows you to do well in your work. Still another way to worship God in our work is by being a joy and a blessing to those we work for and with. We should strive to be a worker who others delight to be around, as we also look for opportunities to love and serve them.

WEEK ONE

Memory Verse

Furthermore, everyone to whom God has given riches and wealth, he has also allowed him to enjoy them, take his reward, and rejoice in his labor. This is a gift of God.
— Ecclesiastes 5:19

Prayer

Ask God to help you worship Him through your work, whatever that is.

WEEK TWO

Memory Verse

And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
— Colossians 3:17

Prayer

Ask God to work with a heart of sincere gratitude for God's generous provisions.

WEEK THREE

Memory Verse

For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life? — Mark 8:36

Prayer

Thank God that His provisions through your work are small compared to His provision of eternal life in Jesus.

WEEK FOUR

Memory Verse

Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. — Philippians 2:5–6

Prayer

Ask God to give you the attitude of Christ as you work, one of humility and worship. you from any jealousy you might feel about others.



Next Steps

Consider the various ways you are a worker: at school, at a job, at home, in the community, and anywhere else. Evaluate how well you are bringing God glory in your work. Consider ways to improve. What steps can you take to work more abundantly for the Lord?

Notes:

OCTOBER

Choosing Where to Work

Where should I work?

Choosing where to work is one of our most important decisions. Often, though, it's difficult to find a clear direction. God does not want to hide His will for our lives from us. Rather, He wants us to spend time in prayer with Him, as we consider our gifts, abilities, passions, and opportunities. As long as we seek God and desire to glorify Him, we will end up where He wants us.

Bible Story

³ Jonah got up to flee to Tarshish from the Lord's presence. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the Lord's presence.

⁴ But the Lord threw a great wind onto the sea, and such a great storm arose on the sea that the ship threatened to break apart. ⁵ The sailors were afraid, and each cried out to his god. They threw the ship's cargo into the sea to lighten the load. Meanwhile, Jonah had gone down to the lowest part of the vessel and had stretched out and fallen into a deep sleep.

⁶ The captain approached him and said, "What are you doing sound asleep? Get up! Call to your god. Maybe this god will consider us, and we won't perish."

⁷ "Come on!" the sailors said to each other. "Let's cast lots. Then we'll know who is to blame for this trouble we're in." So they cast lots, and the lot singled out Jonah. ⁸ Then they said to him, "Tell us who is to blame for this trouble we're in. What is your business, and where are you from? What is your country, and what people are you from?"

⁹ He answered them, "I'm a Hebrew. I worship the Lord, the God of the heavens, who made the sea and the dry land."

¹⁰ Then the men were seized by a great fear and said to him, "What have you done?" The men knew he was fleeing from the Lord's presence because he had told them. ¹¹ So they said to him, "What should we do to you so that the sea will calm down for us?" For the sea was getting worse and worse.

¹² He answered them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea so that it will calm down for you, for I know that I'm to blame for this great storm that is against you." ¹³ Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they couldn't because the sea was raging against them more and more.

¹⁴ So they called out to the Lord, "Please, Lord, don't let us perish because of this man's life, and don't charge us with innocent blood! For you, Lord, have done just as you pleased." ¹⁵ Then they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. ¹⁶ The men were seized by great fear of the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

¹⁷ The Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

— Jonah 1:3–17

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

NOVEMBER

Devotion

Jonah's story is beautiful because it's a picture of one man's foolishness and pride, but at the same time, it's a brilliant display of God's unending faithfulness and love. No matter how hard-hearted Jonah was and how far he ran, God's grace overpowered Him and God's sovereignty drew

the wayward prophet to fulfill his mission. In this, we see that God's will cannot be thwarted. When you are in your early twenties, the question of where you are going to work can be daunting. It's not really a question of what part-time job is next; rather, it's usually a question of where you will

plant a flag and invest yourself fully for decades to come. It's a question of vocation and calling. And that can be quite intimidating.

The issue can become even more complex when there are several options ahead of you. You might have multiple job opportunities, perhaps even in different fields. Or, you might have the opportunity to further your education even more. And the problem is that often all the options seem good. It's rarely a matter of good versus bad or right versus wrong. And it's not like God speaks audibly to us and tells us what to do like He did with Jonah.

So, how do we make such an important decision? Here are six things you should do:

1. Pray

God might not speak to us in an audible voice, but that doesn't mean He won't speak to us in other ways.

2. Seek Godly Input

Sometimes it's difficult to make a decision because we can't look at it objectively or we might be overanalyzing it.

3. Exercise Wisdom

Sometimes faith calls us to do the unbelievable, but at other times, faith calls us to be obedient to do the normal. Don't discount an option because it seems too obvious or easy.

4. Seek God's Glory

This should go without saying, but consider how you can bring God glory in each option.

5. Seek Your Joy

Godliness is not joylessness. The Bible teaches us the exact opposite. While joy or happiness should not be the primary way we make decisions, we should not discount it as a factor.

6. Maintain Perspective

While choosing where to work might feel like a once-in-a-lifetime decision, it rarely is. People change jobs and occupations all the time. So, choose what is best for you to do today, not necessarily twenty years from now.

WEEK ONE

Memory Verse

Commit your activities to the Lord,
and your plans will be established.
— Proverbs 16:3

Prayer

Thank God that He rewards the
faithful, including directing you to
the right place to work.

WEEK TWO

Memory Verse

A person's steps are established
by the Lord, and he takes pleasure
in his way. Though he falls, he will
not be overwhelmed, because the
Lord supports him with his hand.
— Psalm 37:23–24

Prayer

Ask God to establish your career
steps and to give you the humility
and wisdom to follow His guidance.

WEEK THREE

Memory Verse

Without guidance, a people will fall,
but with many counselors there is
deliverance. — Proverbs 11:14

Prayer

Ask God to provide career
wisdom from godly family, friends,
and coworkers.

WEEK FOUR

Memory Verse

Your word is a lamp for my feet and
a light on my path. — Psalm 119:105

Prayer

Ask God to use the Scriptures
to guide your career
desires and pathway.



Next Steps

Whether you're presently seeking where to work, or that's a little off in the future, walk through the six ways to find direction. Do each one, being sure to record anything you discover along the way. If you see clear direction, thank God for that guidance and move forward.

Notes:

Applying Wisdom to Work

How can I apply God's wisdom at my job?

To apply God's wisdom is to follow His design for life, which includes work. To be wise in our work is to remember its purpose of bringing Him glory, to act in an upright manner at all times, and to obey and exercise authority with love, joy, and grace.

Bible Story

² Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains, ⁴ so that I may make it known as I should. ⁵ Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.

— Colossians 4:2–6

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

A common definition of *wisdom* is that it's applied knowledge. Being aware of a treasure buried in a field is knowledge; digging it up is wisdom. God's wisdom, then, is putting into practice God's plans and designs for life. It's not just knowing how we are to live in order to bring God glory and to experience fullness of life; it's actually doing that. Thankfully, God is generous with this wisdom. He has given it to us in His Word (especially in Proverbs), and He has promised that whenever we ask for it, He will give it abundantly (James 1:5).

How, then, are we to live in wisdom at work? One of the biggest ways is to remember God's design for our work is to bring Him glory. To live in wisdom means that we will do just that. In big ways and in small ways, we will celebrate God and make much of Him, in our own hearts and with our colleagues.

Another way to exercise wisdom at work is to work with total integrity. Anything less than this is a sin. Cutting corners, not giving our best, stealing office supplies, and a host of other "innocent" actions people often take at work go against the

mind and heart of God. There's truly nothing innocent about them. They are forms of rebellion against our Maker and they dishonor our employer. Instead, we are to put God's wisdom into practice and be people of unwavering integrity. The right thing to do shouldn't be the best thing for us to do; it should be the *only* thing for us to do.

Still another way to apply God's wisdom at work is to obey fully and joyfully or, if we are in a leadership position, exercise authority with love and grace. God designed authority, and His intent wasn't for it to be oppressive. Rather, our earthly authority structures are intended to point to His authority over humanity. That means we should engage with authority at work, either top down or bottom up, from a posture of joy, love, and grace. Our leaders should see us joyfully obey. Our team members should see us lead with gentleness and godliness.

WEEK ONE

Memory Verse

Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him. — James 1:5

Prayer

Thank God for the promise to pour out His perfect wisdom on you when you ask.

WEEK TWO

Memory Verse

For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. — Proverbs 2:6

Prayer

Ask God to help you see His wisdom in the Scriptures and then to apply it at work.

WEEK THREE

Memory Verse

Happy is a man who finds wisdom and who acquires understanding, for she is more profitable than silver, and her revenue is better than gold. — Proverbs 3:13–14

Prayer

Ask God to help you value His wisdom far and away over the world's wisdom.

WEEK FOUR

Memory Verse

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his instructions have good insight. His praise endures forever. — Psalm 111:10

Prayer

Ask God to prepare your heart so that it can hear, receive, and live out His perfect wisdom at work and everywhere else.



Reflection Questions

01 How would you define *wisdom*?

02 Do you tend to follow God's wisdom, your own wisdom, or the world's wisdom? Why?

03 In what ways do you need wisdom at work? Ask God for it.

Notes:

DECEMBER

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Witnessing at Work

How can my work serve as an opportunity to share my faith?

As followers of Jesus, we are called to share our faith with all others at all times, including at work. However, we must be careful to balance being a trustworthy worker with seeking opportunities to share the gospel. We never want to neglect our work in an effort to be a witness for Jesus.

Bible Story

⁵ One man was there who had been disabled for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there and realized he had already been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to get well?"

⁷ "Sir," the disabled man answered, "I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I'm coming, someone goes down ahead of me."

⁸ "Get up," Jesus told him, "pick up your mat and walk." ⁹ Instantly the man got well, picked up his mat, and started to walk.

Now that day was the Sabbath, ¹⁰ and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "This is the Sabbath. The law prohibits you from picking up your mat."

¹¹ He replied, "The man who made me well told me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"

¹² "Who is this man who told you, 'Pick up your mat and walk'?" they asked.

¹³ But the man who was healed did not know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

¹⁴ After this, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn't happen to you." ¹⁵ The man went and reported to the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

— John 5:5–15

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

Sometimes we might forget how public Jesus' encounters were. We read an account like Jesus healing this man in John 5, and we might envision it taking place just between the two. But that was rarely the case. There were usually people all around seeing exactly what was happening. That's how the Jewish leaders knew to ask the man what had happened (John 5:10).

Jesus' ministry being public was important. Of course, His mission was to point people to how they could find saving faith in Him, and that was a public mission. But even more than that, Jesus wanted us to understand from the very beginning that our faith is a public faith. Yes, our faith is private in that it is based on our personal faith in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. But beyond that, it is a public faith, a performative faith, that is to be lived out in the public sphere.

As a follower of Jesus, you are called to be His witness wherever you go, and that includes work. Now, part of this is imitating Jesus in how you do your work. When you work with integrity, joy, and passion, and

when you prove to be a reliable worker, you show Jesus to your colleagues and clients. However, we also want to look for opportunities to verbalize the gospel with others. People aren't saved by seeing how good of a worker you are; they are saved by hearing the gospel and responding in faith.

There's a tension in this at times, though. Depending on your work, you may or may not have the freedom to verbalize your faith with others while you are on the clock. And even if you are allowed, you still need to be mindful of not forsaking your primary task of conducting work. Proclaiming the gospel of grace while you rob your employer of their time is inconsistent. Rather, pray that God opens doors for you to share quicker snippets of your faith while you are on the clock and that He gives you opportunities to go into greater detail when you are off the clock, such as during breaks or lunch, or before or after your workday.

It can be especially challenging to share your faith with your colleagues. Many people find it more difficult to share the gospel with people they

know and that they see often. It can feel awkward and forced. However, colleagues at work are among the best mission fields God gives us. These are people you care about, and who care about you. These

people can see you live out your faith, prayerfully giving validity to the gospel message you proclaim. So, ask God to give you courage and wisdom, and seek not only to live your faith at work, but to share it too.



Reflection Questions

- 01** What are some ways that you can imitate Jesus at your work?

- 02** What are some ways that you can talk about your faith appropriately at your work?

- 03** What opportunities do you have at work to share your faith without compromising your effectiveness as a worker?

WEEK ONE



Memory Verse

Come and listen, all who fear God,
and I will tell what he has done for
me. — Psalm 66:16

Prayer

Ask God to give you opportunities
to tell your coworkers about what
Jesus has done for you.

WEEK TWO



Memory Verse

Conduct yourselves honorably
among the Gentiles, so that when
they slander you as evildoers,
they will observe your good works
and will glorify God on the day he
visits. — 1 Peter 2:12

Prayer

Ask God to help you live like Jesus
so that when you tell about Jesus,
your witness is strengthened.

WEEK THREE



Memory Verse

Therefore, we are ambassadors
for Christ, since God is making his
appeal through us. We plead on
Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to
God." — 2 Corinthians 5:20

Prayer

Pray that God would soften the
hearts of your coworkers so that
they respond to the gospel as you
are able to share it with them.

WEEK FOUR



Memory Verse

Peace I leave with you. My peace I
give to you. I do not give to you as
the world gives. Don't let your heart
be troubled or fearful. — John 14:27

Prayer

Thank God for giving you His peace
and for making you an agent of
that peace at work and in all other
areas of life.

Notes:

JANUARY

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Leading as Servants

How can I be a leader in the workplace?

Leadership at work can take on different forms, but as followers of Jesus, we're each called to lead in the way of Christ. Just as Jesus came to earth as a servant, so too should we seek to lead as servants, valuing the lives of those under our charge and care. As servant leaders, we don't do what's best for us; we do what is best for our team.

Bible Story

³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. ⁴ Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others.

⁵ Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited.

⁷ Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man,

⁸ he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross.

— Philippians 2:3–8

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

When Adam and Eve sinned, everything in the world was broken, and that includes leadership. The world's image of leadership is one of power. Being a leader is having the power to do what you want and to get what you want. It's to have others beneath you who are there to serve you and to make you look good. Because of this mindset, it's no wonder that we see so many tyrannical leaders exploiting others in various ways. God designed leadership, but it looks nothing like this. This is a fallen, broken image of God's gift of leadership.

To recover God's design for leadership, we must look to Jesus, the perfect leader. When Jesus came to earth, He didn't come to exploit people. He didn't use His power and authority to get what He wanted. Instead, He came in profound humility and focused on doing what pleased the Father and what benefited people. This is what Paul talks about in Philippians 2. Jesus had every right to come to earth with an iron fist, but He instead came with an open hand. He could have come demanding service, but He instead came seeking opportunities

to serve. That in no way diminished His authority or power. Instead, it revealed the love, mercy, and grace behind it.

Right now, you're likely early on in your career. You may be in an entry-level position, or just one or two levels above that. But that doesn't mean that you shouldn't consider how to lead in the way of Christ. Prepare to be a servant leader now, and as you are given added authority, you will honor God and have the best opportunity to flourish in each role every step of the way. Here are three ways you can develop a servant leadership posture like Jesus:

1. Grow in Humility

As we see in Philippians 2, this is at the heart of servant leadership. You can be a leader without humility, but you can never be a servant leader without it. It's important to remember that humility is not thinking lowly of yourself; it's thinking less often of yourself and more often of others. To think lowly of yourself is to fail to appreciate your identity as an image bearer of God, made new in Christ Jesus. You're of infinite worth

then. However, humility is seeing others similarly, and thus thinking more often about others than you do yourself.

2. Value Others

As we just saw, it's impossible to grow in humility without thinking of others, but we need to be careful to think of them in the right way. We want to value others, as fellow image bearers, and if they are followers of Jesus, brothers and sisters. When we see others this way, it's difficult not to grow in love for them. It's difficult not to extend grace and mercy. Those we lead will let us down, as we will let them down. But the heart of a servant leader values them and works with them to get past any mistakes they might make.

3. Be on Mission

It might be a cliché, but it's true: there's no I in team. A servant leader knows their team is not there for them; they and the team are there for one another. And together, they are better able to achieve their mission, whatever that might be. Servant leaders then resist selfish motivations and instead seek to motivate themselves and their team through the mission.

WEEK ONE

Memory Verse

And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment.

— Philippians 1:9

Prayer

Ask God to give you a heart that loves people and that wants to serve them.

WEEK TWO

Memory Verse

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. — John 3:17

Prayer

Thank God for the ultimate example of servant-leadership that we've been given in Christ Jesus.

WEEK THREE

Memory Verse

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. — Philippians 2:3

Prayer

Ask God to shape your heart to focus on others as more important than yourself.

WEEK FOUR

Memory Verse

It is not to be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever is greatest among you should become like the youngest, and whoever leads, like the one serving. For who is greater, the one at the table or the one serving? Isn't

it the one at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves. — Luke 22:26–27

Prayer

Ask God to keep you humble, no matter how far you might advance up a leadership ladder.

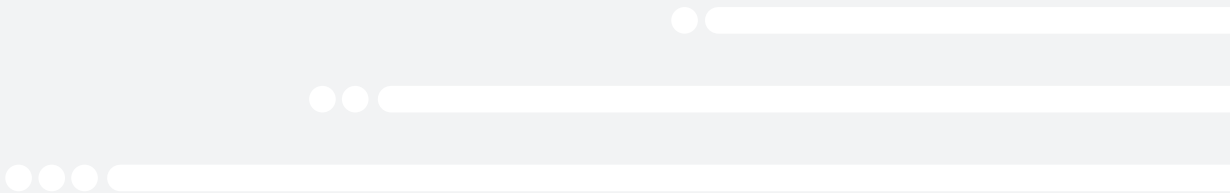


Reflection Questions

- 01** What marks of a servant leader can you identify about Jesus in the Gospels?

- 02** What areas of a servant leader are you strongest in? Weakest?

- 03** What can you do to grow in humility and in your valuing of others?



Serving Others in the Workplace

How do I serve others at work?

Serving others at work requires us to slow down and to look for opportunities to serve as we ask God to provide these opportunities and to help us take advantage of them. Serving others at work might look like helping them complete their tasks, encouraging them when needed, and doing the mundane office tasks that others might not want to do.

Bible Story

²¹ When Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the sea. ²² One of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet ²³ and begged him earnestly, "My little daughter is dying. Come and lay your hands on her so that she can get well and live." ²⁴ So Jesus went with him, and a large crowd was following and pressing against him.

²⁵ Now a woman suffering from bleeding for twelve years ²⁶ had endured much under many doctors. She had spent everything she had and was not helped at all. On the contrary, she became worse. ²⁷ Having heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his clothing.

²⁸ For she said, "If I just touch his clothes, I'll be made well." ²⁹ Instantly her flow of blood ceased, and she sensed in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

³⁰ Immediately Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?"

³¹ His disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing against you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'"

³² But he was looking around to see who had done this. ³³ The woman, with fear and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.

— Mark 5:21–33

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

American culture is all about “Go! Go! Go!” We are constantly on the move from one activity to the next. And that’s true at work too. While we want to work wholeheartedly as unto the Lord, it’s important that we don’t become so busy that we lose sight of the image bearers all around us. If we go too hard, never slow down, and never lift our heads up from our work, it’s almost impossible to be present. We constantly have our minds one step ahead of where others are.

focused and presently-minded, and because of this, He was able to see the woman in her need and was able to help her.

When we slow down, we see people as they are rather than as interruptions and distractions from the task ahead of us. When we do that, we are more likely to see and serve those we interact with at work, which is one of the reasons why we are there.

MARCH

In Mark 5, Jesus was on His way to heal a little girl. Of course, this was an important task that was quite urgent. But while He was on the way, a woman interrupted Him. What would Jesus do? Obviously, He would tell this woman that He had no time for her and keep on His mission, right? Wrong. Jesus, in His abundant love and kindness, did not view the woman who touched Him as an interruption, but instead He saw her as a divine appointment. So, Jesus healed the woman because of her faith and then healed Jairus’s daughter, too. He wasn’t so fixated on one task that He couldn’t slow down to perform a miracle on His way. Rather, he was both future-

Whether we are a leader or a member of our work team, God has given us the opportunity to serve others. As we slow down and lift our heads from our work from time to time, we might be surprised to discover the numerous opportunities God gives us to serve others. That might take the form of assisting a colleague in their work, helping them complete tasks they are late on or are struggling with. That might look like noticing a colleague who seems worried, troubled, or frustrated and encouraging them. That might look like noticing that no one has made coffee or emptied the trash in a while, and then doing just that.

Basically, serving others at work means remembering that we aren't alone in our work. Even if most of our tasks are done independently and

even if we work remotely, we are still part of a team, big or small. And that team is there not to serve us, but for us to serve it.



Reflection Questions

- 01** How have others served you at work? How can you do likewise?

- 02** How often do you get lost in your work and forget about those around you? What can you do to avoid that in the future?

- 03** What shared tasks could you try to take on to serve your colleagues?

WEEK ONE



Memory Verse

He lets me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters. — Psalm 23:2

Prayer

Ask God to slow you down enough so you can see and love people as He does.

WEEK TWO



Memory Verse

Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another. — Romans 12:10

Prayer

Ask God to give you a sincere desire to out-honor every other person you know.

WEEK THREE



Memory Verse

For you were called to be free, brothers and sisters; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. — Galatians 5:13

Prayer

Thank God for the privilege He has given you to serve others.

WEEK FOUR



Memory Verse

The diligent hand will rule, but laziness will lead to forced labor. — Proverbs 12:24

Prayer

Ask God to help you turn from any laziness and instead to work hard at serving others.

Notes:

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Handling Conflict in the Workplace

How should I handle conflict at work?

To engage in conflict is simply to disagree; that means that not all conflict is bad. But how we handle conflict can certainly be. When conflict occurs, it's critical that we imitate Jesus in our response. We should respond in humility and grace, with wisdom and love, with conviction and integrity, and if the conflict gets out of hand, with forgiveness.

Bible Story

¹⁵ "If your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ But if he won't listen, take one or two others with you, so that by the testimony of two or three witnesses every fact may be established. ¹⁷ If he doesn't pay attention to them, tell the church. If he doesn't pay attention even to the church, let him be like a Gentile and a tax collector to you."

— Matthew 18:15–17

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

APRIL

Devotion

When we think of conflict, we often think of an argument. And that's true; an argument certainly is a conflict. But not every conflict is an argument. To be in conflict is simply to disagree. This can take many different forms, and it can be quite casual or quite intense. At work, that might look something like disagreeing on the

best approach to a project or having a communication misunderstanding. Or, that can indeed be a more volatile confrontation.

Because people are different, it's nearly impossible to avoid conflict. And in fact, it's not ideal if we do. A complete absence of conflict often

means that a team isn't engaged as much as they need to be. They're likely holding back and keeping things to themselves. And when that happens, it's neither good for the team nor good for the team's mission. Conflict is often a path toward improvement. But only if we handle conflict in the right way.

To experience healthy, productive conflict, humility and grace must saturate the conversation. While it's often difficult to avoid thinking you're right and that your way needs to be followed because it's best, humility throws up its hands and calls for a pause in that thinking. Humility reminds us that our colleagues are wise and experienced too. Humility forces us to consider that we might not have all the facts or that another perspective could give needed clues as to the direction to take.

Humility, then, gives way to listening. Not hearing; that's not enough. To listen is to take in what is said and to try to understand it. It's even to *want* to be persuaded. As our colleagues share, we must resist the urge to think about what we're going to say next, or how we will ensure we get

our way in the conflict. Instead, we should listen fully, with an open mind to what is being shared.

Listening, then, gives way to action. That might end up being our way. Or it might be a colleague's way. Or it might be a compromise. Whatever it is, the goal is not to win the conflict, but rather to come up with an action that is the best win for the team.

At times, tough conflicts won't go this way. Instead, we'll experience the tense kind. When that happens, there are two things you must do. First, ask God to help you see the ways you might not have handled the conflict the best. This could be acknowledging that you didn't listen, or that you spoke over the person. Whatever it is, confess it to your colleague and ask for forgiveness. Second, forgive any colleague who didn't treat you in the best way, even if they don't ask for it. An unforgiving heart is a heart that holds grudges. That's not the way of Christ. Instead, ask God to help you forgive and release any wrong done to you, big or small.

WEEK ONE

Memory Verse

What is the source of wars and fights among you? Don't they come from your passions that wage war within you? You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and wage

war. You do not have because you do not ask. — James 4:1–2

Prayer

Ask God to help you see the source of the conflicts you experience and to guard your heart from sinful passions that could cause them.

WEEK TWO

Memory Verse

Then Peter approached him and asked, "Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? As many as seven times?" "I tell you, not as many as

seven," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven." — Matthew 18:21–22

Prayer

Ask God to help you be willing and ready to forgive those who offend you.

WEEK THREE

Memory Verse

Be angry and do not sin. Don't let the sun go down on your anger.
— Ephesians 4:26

Prayer

Ask God to guard your heart from anger and to navigate any conflicts you experience with peace, patience, and gentleness.

WEEK FOUR

Memory Verse

A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath.
— Proverbs 15:1

Prayer

Ask God to help you guard your words so that even in conflict, they might be seasoned with grace.



Reflection Questions

01 Do you tend to avoid conflict or seek it out? Why?

02 Do you tend to keep your wits about you in conflict, or do you let the conflict get the best of you? Why?

03 Think about how you tend to handle conflict. What do you need to work on to reflect Christ more in times of conflict?

Notes:

APRIL

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Prioritizing My Work

What priority should I place on my work?

Although work is a gift from God, given for our good and for God's glory, and we are to work diligently and passionately, when we make it our highest priority, we fall into idolatry. We make work into an idol when we turn to it for our ultimate worth and satisfaction in life.



Definition

Idolatry: Worshiping and/or finding meaning and worth in something or someone besides God. While idolatry took the form of carved statues in the Bible, idolatry today often comes in the form of money, relationships, popularity, sex, power, and work.

Bible Story

³⁸ While they were traveling, he entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹ She had a sister named Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet and was listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, and she came up and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? So tell her to give me a hand."

⁴¹ The Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her."

— Luke 10:38–42

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

It's easy to find our identity in all sorts of things beyond Christ. Some of us find our worth in popularity, in how much money we make, in what other people think of us, or in how well we do in school. Ultimately, though, when we find our worth in the things of this world, we are let down.

We see this in the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10. Martha knew Jesus, and she had an admirable amount of reverence for Him. Out of that reverence, she worked hard so that her home might be pleasing to Jesus. That sounds good, doesn't it? Yet, she really missed the point of why Jesus had come. She worked so hard to prepare for Jesus, but she missed Jesus Himself. While Martha may have found her worth in her work, Mary found her worth in Jesus. That's why she didn't allow anything to distract her from Jesus. She wanted nothing—not even something ordinarily good—to come between her and Christ. Jesus came to bring life to the full, and that life cannot be found in anything the world offers. Martha's priorities were out of line. Her serving wasn't unimportant; however, sitting at Jesus' feet was most important.

Whether we like to admit it or not, it's easy for us to be like Martha here. It's easy for us to take God's good gift of work and make it our highest priority—even above God. And when we do that, we do just what Martha did that day. We neglect Christ and place our work above Him.

Usually, this isn't a conscious choice that we make. It's not like one day we decide, "Hey! I know what I'll do. I'll make my work an idol above Jesus!" Rather, it often happens slowly and gradually over a long time. Work begins to consume us, little by little, until we find ourselves completely consumed by it. We begin to make sacrifices in other areas of our lives—our time with Christ, our family, our friends, and rest—on the altar of our career. The danger is that these sacrifices and increased focus on our jobs often result in short-term benefits at work. We get a raise. We get promoted. We get more responsibility. And that then tends to only further the cycle. Instead of being grateful for what we've achieved and seeking balance in our lives, we feel we need to work that much harder to earn the advance we just experienced, or we begin eying the next one. So, we sacrifice

even more. And then more. And more still. And in the end, we do what Jesus warned us about: “For what will it benefit someone if he gains the whole world yet loses his life? Or what will anyone give in exchange for his life?” (Matthew 16:26).

Instead, when it comes to work, we should strive to do three things:

1. Protect Jesus as Our Greatest Treasure

When it comes to work, or anything else, we must fight to keep Jesus first in our lives. We are to slay the idols—big or small—within our hearts. One of the best ways to do this is to remind our minds and hearts of the beauty and majesty of Christ. Nothing can compare to Him!

2. Work Diligently, Passionately, and Joyfully

We cannot overcompensate against turning work into an idol by being lazy or half-hearted in our work. We should be wholly committed to our work—as worship to Christ.

3. Maintain Balance in Our Lives

Life comes in seasons. Sometimes, we need to focus more heavily on work than on other areas. Just as there will be times when we need to focus on other areas more heavily than work. However, even in these times, we should seek balance. Strive to be a well-rounded person—spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. Ask God to help you know when to say yes and no in each area.

WEEK ONE

Memory Verse

She had a sister named Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet and was listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, and she came up and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone?"

So tell her to give me a hand."
— Luke 10:39–40

Prayer

Ask God to help you not focus so much on work that you lose track of the best thing: Him.

WEEK TWO

Memory Verse

A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance. — John 10:10

Prayer

Ask God to protect you from the theft and destruction of consumerism and believing the lie that possessions and large bank accounts provide peace and joy.

WEEK THREE

Memory Verse

"Follow me," he told them, "and I will make you fish for people." — Matthew 4:19

Prayer

Ask God to use your work relationships to point others to Jesus.

WEEK FOUR

Memory Verse

"Don't work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set his seal of approval on him." — John 6:27

Prayer

Ask God to reveal if work ever becomes a higher priority than Him.



Reflection Questions

- 01** Which are you more prone to do: make your work an idol or be lazy in your work? Why?

- 02** What have you learned from others that you've seen make work an idol?

- 03** Based on your current job or your anticipated career, how can you use your work to glorify God? How might it tempt you toward idolatry?

The Trap of Consumerism

What is the danger of consumerism?

Consumerism is the belief that purchasing goods and services gives you worth and will make you happy. It is a lie that always falls short, consistently failing to deliver on its promises. Consumerism is a trap that leads us to long for more and more, believing it will finally satisfy us, only to find it never does.

Bible Story

¹ He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² There was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. ³ He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was not able because of the crowd, since he was a short man. ⁴ So running ahead, he climbed up a sycamore tree to see Jesus, since he was about to pass that way. ⁵ When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because today it is necessary for me to stay at your house."

⁶ So he quickly came down and welcomed him joyfully. ⁷ All who saw it began to complain, "He's gone to stay with a sinful man."

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, I'll give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord. And if I have extorted anything from anyone, I'll pay back four times as much."

⁹ "Today salvation has come to this house," Jesus told him, "because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost."

— Luke 19:1–10

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

Devotion

It seems as if every year—sometimes even more often than that—a new piece of technology is released, like a new iPhone, tablet, or gaming platform, that becomes essential. We're told that we simply cannot live without it, and we tend to agree. No matter that we've lived for quite a while before without it. Now that it exists, we need it so that we can continue to exist. We imagine the photos we can take with the better-than-ever camera. We think of the new features to improve texting. We think of the games that can be played or the better image quality. And in no time, our wanting becomes needing. We *need* that piece of tech to experience life to the fullest. We *need* it to be someone. And so, we get it.

Then... the next year comes around, and we begin seeing advertisements for a new iPhone, tablet, or gaming system. And the cycle repeats itself. And the device we purchased just a few months ago—it was supposed to be *it*—gets traded in or thrown into a junk drawer.

This is a picture of consumerism, the belief that purchasing goods and

services will make us important and make us happy. This is the myth—the vile story actually—that advertisers so often tell us. If we wear their brand of clothing, if we drive their brand of car, if we use their brand of fragrance, if we use their brand of technology, we will be popular, successful, and happy. But we know that the things of the world cannot satisfy us. That's what Zacchaeus found to be true.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector working for the Romans. In that day, tax collectors were charged with collecting the required tax of the citizens of their region, but they were allowed to charge above that for their own income. This meant that being a tax collector was quite profitable. Zacchaeus wasn't just a tax collector; he was a *chief* tax collector. That meant he was even more prosperous. That's why Luke tells us he was rich. Hardly anything was inaccessible to him. However, he couldn't buy *everything*; his heart longed to be known and loved by God.

When Zacchaeus met Jesus, he found that the lie of consumerism was just that—a lie that led to

nothing but brokenness. Often, we can fall into believing the same lie that Zacchaeus believed, that the things of this world, or just the sheer money of the world, will lead to freedom and happiness, and will bring us value and love. Now, there's no harm in owning things, as long as we don't look to them to carry a burden they cannot carry—to give us value and fulfill us. Phones aren't inherently evil. New shoes and new clothes aren't of the devil. The things of the world are okay to own and enjoy. The danger is when they become our source of satisfaction. If the next best thing, whatever that may be, is the band-aid that we put on the brokenness of our hearts, that is a dangerous place to be.

To break the deceptive cycle of consumerism, we have to take action. Remind yourself of the gospel—that our meaning and joy are found in Christ alone. Have someone keep you accountable about your spending habits. Get rid of things that you truly don't need, or that you hardly ever use. Plan on keeping what you have longer, instead of giving in to the temptation of trading up the first chance you get. Serve those who have less than you have to give yourself a fresh perspective on contentment and gratitude. Remember: the pull of consumerism is strong, but it is not stronger than the Holy Spirit within you.

WEEK ONE

Memory Verse

Finally brothers and sisters,
whatever is true, whatever is
honorable, whatever is just,
whatever is pure, whatever is lovely,
whatever is commendable—if there
is any moral excellence and if there

is anything praiseworthy—dwell on
these things. — Philippians 4:8

Prayer

Ask God to help you dwell on what
is truly good and praiseworthy—
Him—and not what consumerism
tells us is good.

WEEK TWO

Memory Verse

Keep your life free from the love
of money. Be satisfied with what
you have, for he himself has said,
I will never leave you or abandon
you. — Hebrews 13:5

Prayer

Ask God to help you to be satisfied
with whatever possessions and
income He has provided for you.

WEEK THREE

Memory Verse

Don't store up for yourselves
treasures on earth, where moth
and rust destroy and where thieves
break in and steal. But store up for
yourselves treasures in heaven,
where neither moth nor rust

destroys, and where thieves don't
break in and steal.

— Matthew 6:19–20

Prayer

Ask God to give you a proper view
of worldly possessions, as good
gifts from Him but certainly not
lasting treasures.

WEEK FOUR

Memory Verse

The kingdom of heaven is like
treasure, buried in a field, that a
man found and reburied. Then in
his joy he goes and sells everything

he has and buys that field.

— Matthew 13:44

Prayer

Thank God for the greatest treasure
He has given you: Christ Jesus.



Next Steps

Pay attention to the message of the advertisements all around you, many of which you may not even realize you are ingesting. What is the “gospel” they are presenting? What promise are they making? Often, these ads won’t mention anything about the value of the product itself, but will rather present an appealing lifestyle that’s hard to resist. Learn to recognize the lies of consumerism all around you.

Notes:

The Danger of Success

How should we treat our accomplishments at work?

God gave us work as a means for Him to provide for us; however, it can be easy to believe that we provide for ourselves through our work. When we fail to see whatever we accomplish in our work as a blessing and gift from God and instead believe it is our own doing, we place ourselves as sovereign lords, providers, and masters of our lives.

Bible Story

¹ Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden'?"

² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. ³ But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.'"

⁴ "No! You will certainly not die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

— Genesis 3:1–7

Discussion Questions

01 What do these verses tell us about God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit?

02 What does this tell us about ourselves or other people?

03 Based on these verses and truths, what should I stop doing, start doing, or keep doing?

JULY

Devotion

Have you ever wondered where food comes from? Think about a box of cereal. Where does it come from? *Well, you might think, that's easy—I buy it at the grocery store.* And that's true. But what about before that? *Okay, you respond, it came off a truck in the loading dock. And before that, it was at a factory.* True. But

that's not nearly where it came from. Before that, the cereal ingredients came from corn, wheat, or rice farms, and likely sugar fields. And these ingredients probably made a stop at other factories too. And we can't forget about the packaging materials. It's easy to oversimplify things at times, isn't it? We can live so much in

the here and now that we can forget so much that has happened and that is happening behind the scenes. That box of cereal doesn't make it into our kitchen because of what we do alone; it's there because dozens, even hundreds of people played a role. Not seeing this really isn't that harmful, but when it comes to work, our myopia can indeed be a problem. Rather than seeing work as a blessing from God—one way that He provides for us—it can be easy to come to see work as the way we provide for ourselves. I work hard. I earn my pay. And that work provides for my needs.

This isn't new. When Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden, God had an original design to be in a relationship with them. However, the serpent wanted to disrupt this relationship between humans and God, so he tried convincing Adam and Eve to be "like God." His strategy was to guide Adam and Eve to think more of themselves and less of God; he wanted them to believe that they deserved more than God was giving them. And that strategy worked. Adam and Eve believed the serpent's lies and, in their pride, they rebelled against God.

Satan keeps telling the same lies to people today. He wants us to lift ourselves up so much while we pull God down so far that we end up switching roles. We become gods, and God becomes our servant. This occurs in many areas of our lives, but work is one of the more common ones. In our pride, we come to see ourselves as the ones doing the hefty lifting, at times with a little help from God.

How do we resist this evil pull? Well, in much the same way as we considered where a box of cereal comes from. How do you earn money? At work. But how did you get that work? How did you get the skills and talents to perform that work? Who is giving you breath in your lungs, and who is causing your heart to beat so that you can go to work? It's God. It's all God. Don't just accept that you are in desperate need of God for your daily provisions; delight in it. Humility is the antidote for pride every time.

WEEK ONE

Memory Verse

And stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears. She wiped his feet with her hair, kissing them and anointing them with perfume. — Luke 7:38

Prayer

Ask God to help you come to a deep and full understanding of the value of Jesus and your desperate need for Him.

WEEK TWO

Memory Verse

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit." Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring—what your life will be! For you are like vapor

that appears for a little while, then vanishes. — James 4:13–14

Prayer

Ask God for the wisdom to make plans and the humility to hold onto them loosely, recognizing that He is in control of all.

WEEK THREE

Memory Verse

For they all gave out of surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had—all she had to live on. — Mark 12:44

Prayer

Thank God for reminders—perhaps even financial struggles—that He uses to remind you of how much you rely on Him.

WEEK FOUR

Memory Verse

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and

pleasing to God; this is your true worship. — Romans 12:1

Prayer

Ask God to help you sacrifice everything for Him, even your own plans.



Next Steps

Make a list of the talents, gifts, and skills you need to complete your work, either what you currently do or what you hope to do.

Be as thorough as possible, even getting down to the level of waking up in the morning. Write how God is the provider of every item you listed. If you are stumped to connect a way to God, pause and pray for the Spirit to open your mind and heart. Pray over this list, thanking God for His goodness and asking Him to keep you humble and dependent on Him.

Notes:

JULY

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Memory Verse Tracking Log



COLLEGE SENIOR





NEW VISION