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BRIDGING THE GAP FROM SUNDAY TO MONDAY:
DEVELOPING COMMON GROUND
BETWEEN FAITH AND WORK

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As Johann Sebastian Bach wrote at the bottom of each of his compositions, may this
work also be “For the glory of God alone.”

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PREFACE

I would like to thank Dr. Michael Wilder, who was involved with the development of this proposal; Coleman Ford, who has spent many hours examining this work; and Dr. Danny Bowen, who was a tremendous advisor and mentor through this process. All three have been instrumental in bringing this work to fruition. I would also like to thank my family, Jen, Caden, and Caylee Grace, who supported me in this academic endeavor by giving up Daddy for many evenings and Saturdays so that I could pursue this goal. Thank you, and I love you with all my heart.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

From its very beginning, Christianity has had difficulties practically addressing the issues centering on the interplay between faith and the secular world. The New Testament cannot be read without realizing that early Christians faced many difficulties and issues as they sought to live as the newly redeemed church of Christ. Paul is an example when he writes to the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians chapter 8 addressing the particularly difficult societal issue of the first century church related to eating food sacrificed to idols. In addition, the history of Christianity is full of stories and examples of those who attempted to answer the issue of faith's relation to culture in a variety of ways. In the fifth century, Simeon the Stylite removed himself from society by sitting on the top of a tall pillar.¹ On a less radical note, the monasteries of the medieval Catholic Church attempted to remove themselves from the stain and sin of a corrupt world by organizing themselves into self-contained entities. In more modern times, various separatist groups removed themselves from society and had significant impact on the early history of the United States. This separatist theme can be followed even into the early twentieth century in response to the debates regarding Darwinism, naturalism, and social progressivism. Clearly, Christians have struggled to find a common answer and unified response to living their faith in a secular world.

Not surprisingly, here at the beginning of a new millennium, Christianity continues to struggle with issues regarding faith and culture, and a Christian's dutiful

¹Williston Walker et al., *A History of the Christian Church*, 4th ed. (New York: Scribner, 1985), 155-56.

response in a fallen and sinful world. The society of the West continues to foster the attitude of a separation between faith and culture. As the old saying goes, religion is akin to politics in that it should be kept to oneself and remain a private matter. While study after study continues to observe the basic “religious” nature of those in the United States, it is still clear that the widespread preferred attitude in the culture is one of clear separation between the two spheres of private religion and public secularism. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the issue of faith as it relates to the workplace. Americans spend a large number of their productive hours during the week in a job or work environment. However, most believers find their workplace to be an arena in which their Christian faith is not considered a relevant factor. Again, faith is viewed as inappropriate or “out of place” in the work environment. While there may be a movement afoot to strengthen the “spirituality” of the workplace, and this should be encouraged by Christians for reasons we will address below, this potential movement is a far cry from a workplace infused with a Christian worldview. Therefore, how should a Christian view their work? How should a believer practice their Christianity in a secular workplace? And what can be done to begin to address this separation between faith and work at institutional levels so that faith can make progress towards becoming a welcome dialogue partner in the workplace? This thesis seeks to address these questions and topics.

Familiarity with the Literature

In order to address the difficult questions posed above, a variety of disparate works will need to be considered as they provide essential contributions to the overall discussion of the topic and the logical flow of the argument. It is essential for the Christian to begin with the Bible to discern the message from God regarding the believer’s place and responsibility in this world. Therefore, biblical commentaries will be consulted for guidance. Studies on the Christian doctrines of calling and vocation will be necessary to have a deeper understanding of how the great minds of faith have

systematized and applied Biblical teachings. Finally, studies on leadership are necessarily a major component of this work as five leadership principles in particular are examined and discussed. The following works are foundational and essential to this thesis, and they represent the highest of academic scholarship in their particular areas of study.

One of the foundational passages of the Bible related to this topic is found in Exodus when God Himself gives the Ten Commandments to the Israelites. Peter Enns's work *Exodus* provides essential information for this thesis regarding God's view of his chosen people and their place in a very fallen, but still very "spiritual" society; much like modern Western culture.² Through the giving of the Decalogue, Enns argues that Yahweh demonstrates to his chosen people that they are to be a witness of his grace to the cultures of the Promised Land, and that there was not a single aspect of their lives that was not connected to their relationship with him. This foundational event in the history of the Israelites also demonstrates to modern day Christians that God's chosen people are expected to be witnesses to their culture, and that the entirety of the Christian life must be lived in relationship to the Triune God.

In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Jesus is asked by his opponents to name the greatest commandment. Jesus' answer is based upon the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6 and the command of Leviticus 19:18 to love one's neighbor as oneself. Peter Craigie's work *The Book of Deuteronomy* argues that the *Shema* demonstrated to the Jewish people that this commandment was intended to include every aspect of an individual's life.³ Craigie's argument is essential for this study because it further underscores the importance of a Christian understanding that the entire life of a believer has value to God. No biblical basis exists for separating the various aspects of a Christian's life between the sacred and the secular. The entire scope of life is to be lived in fellowship with Yahweh.

²Peter Enns, *Exodus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

³Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976).

If the Bible demonstrates that the entirety of a Christian’s life is in fellowship with Yahweh, then an individual’s occupation must be included within this relationship. This logic has led theologians to develop the biblical doctrines of calling and vocation. One theological work that thoroughly addresses these doctrines and their place in the life of a believer is Daniel L. Akin’s *A Theology for the Church*.⁴ The section of this work that addresses calling and vocation is written by John S. Hammett, and he presents many characteristics and aspects of human nature that are very relevant for this thesis. Hammett argues that “work” is a prefall institution that is instituted by God, and is therefore a necessary component of what it means to be human. And while work has been corrupted by the Fall, Christians can look forward to the new creation in which work will be redeemed and emptied of toil.

Once the biblical mandate for a Christian to live in this world has been established, and the theological doctrines of calling and vocation are examined for insights, it is necessary to consider the available significant studies within leadership literature. One of the most influential and respected academic studies on leadership is Bernard Bass’s *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, & Managerial Applications*.⁵ This work addresses a vast array of leadership and management topics and is significant for this thesis because of its tremendous scope and breadth. In particular, the *Bass Handbook* will influence this thesis through strong sections on the definition of leadership, the importance of management and its relationship to leadership, and the various styles in which leadership is exhibited.

Another highly respected work is Peter Northouse’s *Leadership: Theory and Practice*.⁶ This work presents very in-depth studies of the many leadership styles

⁴John S. Hammett, “Human Nature,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2007), 340-408.

⁵Bernard M. Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, & Managerial Applications*, 4th ed. (New York: Free Press, 2008).

⁶Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE

identified by researchers, with an examination of the strengths and weaknesses of each. Each “Approach” or “Theory” has a complete chapter, which provides Northouse the opportunity to present each of the categories of leadership in a thorough manner, fully describing and illustrating each. *Leadership* is influential for this thesis because of Northouse’s academic examination of servant leadership, as well as other forms of ethical leadership. In addition, Northouse makes positive contributions to the discussion of stewardship and altruism in leadership.

In the study of Christian leadership, one of the primary models presented as best practice within current academic studies is servant leadership, and it is impossible to adequately discuss servant leadership without examining Robert Greenleaf’s *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*.⁷ Greenleaf’s work is foundational for any study on the topic and has been highly influential. At the heart of Greenleaf’s theory is the belief that the needs of others should be the leader’s highest priority. Greenleaf argued that servant leaders have a natural desire to serve others before themselves. Therefore, to develop the best organization possible, leaders should think of themselves as servants to those they lead. An additional characteristic that is essential to Greenleaf’s theory is that leaders should invest themselves in developing those they lead. In fact, development of personnel is a critical component of servant leadership. This work is essential for this thesis both because of its foundational character, as well as the theory’s ability to practically address the spiritual gap for many Christians between faith and work.

Closely connected to servant leadership, while also still quite distinct, is the Christian leadership principle of stewardship. Peter Block has written a significant work

Publications, 2010).

⁷Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, 25th ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002).

titled *Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest* that examines the concept of stewardship and how it relates to modern day businesses.⁸ Block argues that it is a necessity for leadership to be replaced by stewardship because many organizations are led by those who are motivated by self-interest, dependency, and control of others. Block argues that negative types of leaders should be replaced by organizational stewards who would rely instead upon service, responsibility, and accountability. In addition, Block stresses the view that stewardship is to hold something in trust for another individual. Therefore, to be a steward in organizational life is to be willing to be accountable for the well-being of the larger organization. The well-being of the organization is protected when those who lead choose stewardship, which is accountability, without using coercive traditional power structures of leadership, such as control or compliance. Stewardship is a common Christian symbol and motif for leadership. Therefore, Block's work is integral to this thesis as an important secular leadership literature source that points to biblical principles.

One of the Christian leadership principles that can be a practical contact point between faith and work for a believer is the leadership model of shepherding. This thesis will argue that the concept of shepherding can be found within current leadership literature, even when the concept is presented with other names or labels, such as "altruism." However, to develop a thorough Christian concept of shepherding as leadership, Timothy Laniak's *Shepherd's After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* provides a strong presentation.⁹ Laniak argues that biblical shepherd imagery provides examples and models by which leaders can evaluate themselves against God's standard. This work begins with a background discussion that

⁸Peter Block, *Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1993).

⁹Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherd's After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

provides information about shepherds as historical realities in the Ancient Near East, as well as various ancient world rulers who made use of this image to strengthen their ruling position. Laniak then examines both the Old and New Testament for shepherd leaders whose lives give modern Christians instructive examples of how to be a leader through the shepherding of God's people.

Another contact point between faith and work within the argument of this thesis is that believers are demonstrating Christian leadership when they engage in teaching. This argument is supported by Gary Bredfeldt in his work *Great Leader Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership*.¹⁰ Bredfeldt writes that the best leaders are the greatest teachers. More specifically, Bredfeldt emphasizes the need for faithful teaching of the Bible to bring about life change through God's Holy Word. He argues that the role of teacher has often been missed or ignored by those who consider and study leadership, but that within this role, the most significant and powerful leading takes place. In fact, in Bredfeldt's opinion, individuals cannot truly be leaders unless they are committed to teaching biblical truths and applying them to life.

The final leadership principle that this thesis will discuss and evaluate is team leadership, which is a widely examined topic within current leadership studies. From a Christian worldview, Kenneth Gangel's *Team Leadership in Christian Ministry: Using Multiple Gifts to Build a Unified Vision* is a work that is extensive as it examines the many facets of leading a team.¹¹ In addition, the work is very thorough in its treatment of the different layers of leadership in a Christian ministry organization and how they rely and benefit from team leadership, while also providing a substantial discussion of the various roles of the team leader. From a secular viewpoint, J. Richard Hackman's

¹⁰Gary Bredfeldt, *Great Leader Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2006).

¹¹Kenneth O. Gangel, *Team Leadership in Christian Ministry: Using Multiple Gifts to Build a Unified Vision*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997).

Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performances examines the five conditions necessary for the best teams to emerge.¹² These five are that the group is a real team, that a compelling direction is clear, an enabling structure, a supportive context, and finally, the presence of expert coaching. Hackman also provides a strong focus on what leaders can do to best prepare their teams for success. Both of these works provide support for the argument of this thesis that team leadership can be a contact point between faith and work.

Void in the Literature

A void in the literature is present in three areas in regards to connections between faith and work. Each of these areas will be addressed through a chapter within this thesis. To begin with, chapter 3 will address the issue of calling and vocation. If many of the top evangelical theological works and dictionaries are evaluated, a rather small amount of space will be found reserved for the topics of calling, vocation, and work.¹³ While there is no doubt a great deal of eternally significant material to cover, and no work can cover all topics, the lack of honest and purposeful discussion regarding a Christian's calling and vocation demonstrates a significant void.

Chapter 4 of this thesis will address the difficult issues related to a Christian's attitude and behavior within a predominately secular workplace. A significant void exists in the literature in practically addressing faith and work questions. Notable attempts have

¹²J. Richard Hackman, *Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performances* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2002).

¹³The works referenced and evaluated are as follows: Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984); Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000); from a Presbyterian Reformed perspective: Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991); from a Lutheran perspective: Ted Peters, *God – the World's Future: Systematic Theology for a Postmodern Era* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992). One of the strongest resources evaluated in terms of these topics would be the following already discussed above: John S. Hammett, "Human Nature," *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2007), 340-408.

been made to bring clarity and understanding to the topic, and many of these will be discussed and cited in chapter 4. However, considering the complexity and inherent difficulties when considering issues of faith and its relationship to work, a rather small sampling of literature exists which seeks to offer practical answers and guidance. The work of Sebastian Traeger and Greg Gilbert, *The Gospel at Work: How Working for King Jesus Gives Purpose and Meaning to Our Jobs*, attempts to fill this void.¹⁴ Unfortunately, much of the guidance provided falls into rather unhelpful categories, such as how does an individual perform as a Christian boss, how should Christians handle difficult co-workers, and how should a believer share the Gospel at work. On the surface these issues would seem to be very helpful and practical. However, Traeger and Gilbert focus on such specific examples that there is no overarching structure or framework to address the multitude of workplace issues that do not make their subject list. The current literature either tends towards vagueness, or on the other hand, is overly specific as to be irrelevant for the vast majority of workplace issues. What is truly needed is a practical overarching framework by which the Christian life can be applied to the wide variety of workplace situations believers face Monday through Saturday.

Finally, chapter 5 will consider the implications of this thesis on both the individual Christian, as well as Christian institutions and secular businesses. The last void in the literature this thesis seeks to address is the lack of a cohesive strategy for developing Christians and institutions to properly train believers in navigating the relationship between faith and work. While there is a significant void within the literature on this topic, one notable exception is the work by John Knapp *How the Church Fails Businesspeople: And What Can Be Done About It*.¹⁵ However, Knapp focuses primarily

¹⁴Sebastien Traeger and Greg Gilbert, *The Gospel at Work: How Working for King Jesus Gives Purpose and Meaning to Our Jobs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

¹⁵John C. Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople: And What Can Be Done about It* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012).

on the growth of the spiritual movement at work, affinity groups, and the current situation in various theological institutions, with little guidance for the individual Christian. It can be argued that this is not primarily the focus of Knapp's study. However, this lack of focus on the individual Christian implicitly affirms that a believer has few practical sources from which to draw regarding his or her desire to blend faith and work.

Thesis

Christians have a biblical mandate to infuse their faith into every aspect of their lives. However, there is a spiritual gap that exists for many Christians between their life of faith and their life at work. This gap can be addressed by evaluating the doctrine of vocation towards a deeper understanding, followed by a thorough examination of five leadership principles which provide Christians within the workplace both a shared language, as well as mutual positively viewed leadership experiences.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 2 will focus on the biblical mandate to live in complete relationship to God. Both the Old and the New Testament consistently argue that to be chosen by God necessitates this complete relationship with Him and a commitment to His ways. This relationship is demonstrated by Yahweh's interactions with His chosen people the Israelites, and continues into the New Testament with the words of Christ and the teachings of the church of the New Covenant. Scripture argues that Christians are to give all of themselves to God and God alone, and this must necessarily include vocation if the Christian's commitment is to be all encompassing. The Biblical texts that will be analyzed are Exodus 20:1-17, Deuteronomy 5:6-21, 6:4-9, Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:34-40, Luke 10:25-37, and Revelation 3:14-20.

Chapter 3 will consider the theological teachings developed as the biblical message of complete commitment to God analyzed in chapter 2 was considered and applied throughout Christian history. Theology centered on calling and vocation provides

a vital basis for a Christian's view of work. Educating Christians in regards to the importance and value of their calling is necessary if faith and work are to be more closely connected.

Chapter 4 will examine five leadership principles for connecting faith and work. These five leadership principles are mutually acknowledged by Biblical theology and secular literature as beneficial and positive. By using these five as connection points, a Christian can have both a shared language to bridge the experiences of faith and work, while also having a practical platform in which to meld Christian convictions and secular workplace environments.

Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of this work for Christians, the church and seminaries, and finally businesses. Individuals struggle mightily to bridge the gap between Sunday faith and Monday work. The five leadership principles of S3T2 provide believers with both the necessary spiritual perspective to meld faith and work, as well as a shared language that can assist in bridging their experiences.¹⁶ In addition, the church has often failed to assist Christians with the living out of their faith in the workplace. The church must deepen its commitment and efforts in this area. Seminaries and theological schools must also take a more proactive role in developing leaders who can successfully bring faith into the workplace. Finally, the current business climate that actively supports the concept of “spirituality” within the workplace is an opportunity for Christians to be salt and light for Christ and to positively impact their workplace for the Kingdom.

¹⁶ The suggested mnemonic of S3T2 is a formula of the first letters of Servant, Steward, and Shepherd times three, combined with the first letters of Teacher and Team times two. These are the headings of the five leadership principles presented in this work.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL MANDATE

Throughout the Bible, God has demonstrated a desire to draw a people to Himself. In the Old Testament this occurred within promises to the Patriarchs of Genesis, the powerful acts of liberation on behalf of the Israelites in Egypt, and the formation of the nation of Israel with both the positives and negatives of that history. As the narrative of Scripture moves into the New Testament, this demonstration continues as Jesus consistently teaches and focuses upon God's love for His people, and the desire to be in fellowship with them. This chapter will focus upon selections from Scripture to evaluate God's love, His expectations for His chosen people, and what impact these expectations should have upon the entirety of a believer's life and sphere of influence. In short, what does it "look" like to live in this world as a chosen child of God? The following selections give insight into, and provide a necessary basis for, adducing appropriately grounded Scriptural conclusions regarding the importance of a Christian worldview within the workplace.

Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21 **The Ten Commandments**

Scholarly consensus has long solidified upon the academic position that the Ten Commandments follow the ancient suzerainty treaty formula in their format and presentation. Several characteristics of the suzerainty treaty were common to the ancient world; including a contract made between a stronger power and a weaker vassal, a promise of protection for the weaker by the stronger, and commitment and stipulations for the weaker power in return for the protection afforded. Suzerainty treaties could occur between nations or individuals, although the stronger individual in the treaty would, by

necessity, have to possess the means necessary to promise and provide protection and safety.

Douglas K. Stuart provides a strong explanation and comparison of the relationship of Yahweh's interaction with His chosen people to the ancient suzerainty treaties.

The legal portion of Exodus is patterned after those of ancient covenants known as "suzerainty treaties," where a conqueror made a treaty with the conquered in which he "benefited" them with his protection and care as long as they would abide by the treaty stipulations. Such covenants normally have six parts, summarized here with the coordinates that relate the structure to Exodus:

1. Preamble: which identifies the giver and recipients of the covenant ("the LORD your God," 20:2)
2. Prologue: a reminder of the relationship of the suzerain to the people ("who brought you out of Egypt," 20:2)
3. Stipulations: various laws/obligations on the part of the people (20:3-23:19; 25:1-31:18)
4. List of witnesses to the covenant ["I am Yahweh," Exod 29:46; 31:13; Lev 11:44]
5. Document clause: providing for writing down of the covenant so that periodic reading and relearning of the covenant can take place as time goes by (see Exod 24:4,7,12)
6. Sanctions: blessings and curses as incentives for obedience (see Exod 20:5-6,12,24; 23:20-31; cf. Lev 26:3-14 [blessings]; 26:14-39 [curses]; 26:40-45 [restoration blessings]).¹

As a result of these similarities between the Old Testament covenant and the suzerainty treaty, the Israelites entered into a covenantal relationship familiar to their cultural setting. However, a significant difference is at the very heart of this covenant: This covenant relationship is initiated by God Himself for a people already redeemed. This characteristic cannot be overstated. The special relationship between Yahweh and His people did not begin with the covenant, but instead is made with a people who have already been chosen. This redemption becomes the basis for the giving of the Law, with the intention that through the commands, the relationship asserted at the Exodus will be

¹ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 2 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 439.

further developed. Peter C. Craigie explains that the “Decalogue is the legal basis of the covenant relationship, but to stress its nature as law would be to fail to appreciate its true role.”² Peter E. Enns argues the law has grace as its very foundation.

Now they are to learn what a redeemed life should look like. The law, in other words, is connected to grace. It is based on God’s gracious act of saving his people; it is not a condition of becoming God’s people, for that has already happened in the Exodus. They now perceive rules for holy living, so they can become more and more God’s holy people. This is what God wants for them.³

As a result, the law given by Yahweh is not salvific in character, but rather instructional. Yahweh has already provided liberation and grace to this covenant people. Instead, it is through the Decalogue, and the commands that further illuminate them, that the chosen people will understand what this God expects and how they, as His chosen people, will “look.”

However, the Israelites would not be Yahweh’s people in isolation. It is not necessary to possess a great knowledge of ancient history to be aware that the cultures of the Exodus time period (fifteenth century B.C.) were extremely polytheistic, in which every stage and phase of life was connected to a god or deity. The Israelites themselves had lived for several centuries surrounded by Egyptian religious culture, which was marked by a sophisticated milieu of deities and religious ceremonies. However, Yahweh’s choosing of the Israelites would be very different. This people had experienced grace and would live in relationship with this God. In return, Yahweh promised to not only protect them, but bless them if they would follow the commandments He gave for the protection of their relationship with Him and the larger purpose for which He had called and redeemed them.

This larger purpose was to witness to the other cultures of the Ancient Near

² Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 149.

³ Peter E. Enns, *Exodus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 412.

East that there was one God who desired relationship. The laws of Yahweh were given to a specific people so that these people could witness to the divine character and nature of their God Yahweh. So while these laws did in reality order the daily lives of the Israelites, their purpose was in fact much larger in that the Israelites would be “different” than the world around them. Their uniqueness would demonstrate to the Ancient Near East that there was another way; a way of grace. Enns makes this argument persuasively when he writes, “The focus of many of these commands is to foster social cohesion, which serves not merely to make the Israelites ‘nice people,’ but agents of world change, image-bearers of God to be a light to the nations.”⁴

Therefore, the greater divine purpose for these laws is two-fold. First, they are guides for living in a relationship with Yahweh after grace has been extended. They do not earn salvation; they are the natural extension of grace already given. Second, they aim to demonstrate to the nations that Yahweh is God alone and His people bear witness to this fact.

However, while these commandments may not earn salvation, they are still the laws of Yahweh and have a significant impact upon the resultant blessings or punishments received by the Israelites. Therefore, they are not to be taken lightly or casually. Enns argues, “The laws concerning conduct toward others are still commands from God. They are still his laws, so that breaking any commandment, even one against a fellow Israelite, is an offense toward God. That is, there is no sphere in ancient Israelite life that is ‘secular.’”⁵ Through the giving of the Decalogue, in both the Exodus and Deuteronomy presentation, Yahweh has demonstrated that every aspect of His chosen people’s lives will be a witness to His power and desire for relationship. Through the Decalogue and their wide implications, both positive and negative, the entire life of the

⁴ Enns, *Exodus*, 427.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 419.

chosen people would be lived in relationship with Yahweh. Enns expounds by writing,

More important than which commands are specifically mentioned, where, and how often, is the fact that these commands are given to Israel in order to distinguish them from the other nations. Because Israel is God's people, they are to reflect God's nature in their conduct. In this way they will bear witness to the nations that Yahweh is God and no other, which will lead to the nations acknowledging that God exists. It is the redemptive-theological dimension of these commands that must be emphasized. They are given to a redeemed people in order that they may more fully bear the image of God as they live among the nations of the world. They are never intended to make Israel a "nice" nation, nor are they to be imposed on the nations apart from their own prior heartfelt acknowledgement that Yahweh alone is to be worshiped. Israel's task as a holy nation is to be a light to the Gentiles. The Ten Commandments are a means toward that end.⁶

Christians are living in the new covenant ushered in by the ministry of Jesus and the salvation He offers through the gift of grace. As the Israelites were chosen and redeemed irrespective of their merits, Christians are chosen by Yahweh and redeemed by the work of His Son. The same God who called the Israelites out of Egypt into the Promised Land is the God who calls Christians today into relationship with Him and is represented by the gathering of the church. In fact, "The church is the new Israel and as such, the gift of the law given to the Israelites is transposed into a new context. Moreover, seeing the law reiterated rather than obviated in the context of God's grace in Christ underscores the proper relationship between law and grace."⁷ Christians are not redeemed by the Law any more than the Israelites of the Old Testament. However, the call of Yahweh's commands carry the same weight and importance in the life of modern day Christians.

As discussed above, Yahweh demonstrates through His commands that He is a God who desires relationship. The Decalogue's two-fold focus of relationship and witnessing that encompassed the lives of ancient Israelites continues to have purpose and provide direction for the modern day believer. To begin with, Christians are called into a

⁶ Enns, *Exodus*, 430.

⁷ Ibid.

relationship with God that is much deeper than a “do’s and don’ts” religion. Christians can never earn salvation by remaining free from the stain of sin, and must rely on the grace of Yahweh through the blood of Jesus for the hope of eternity. As the Israelites were called out of Egypt by Yahweh’s power, Christians are called to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Christians follow the commands of Yahweh because it is through these that believers experience and strengthen their relationship with God.

The second focus of the law as a witness to the nations is fulfilled as Christians are called to follow Yahweh’s laws, so that as they become more and more the image of God, they can witness to the surrounding world the call of Christ and the power of God. “His law is to be followed not so that individuals can show their worth before God, and certainly not so that they can either earn or secure their salvation, but so that God’s people can show the world the kind of God they worship.”⁸ As Christians follow Yahweh’s commands, the world views a demonstration of what it means to live in a relationship with a God that seeks to be known by His creation. A Christian can have a significant impact upon their sphere of influence by following God’s commandments and having others see this relationship lived out on a daily basis.

Finally, as discussed above, the giving of the Decalogue demonstrated to the ancient Israelites that no sphere of their lives was untouched by their relationship with Yahweh as covenant people. As they attempted to live out the commands of their God, these commands impacted every phase and aspect of life. The obvious corollary is that Christians are also called to live out their relationship with Jesus in the new covenant as a people redeemed by grace in every sphere of their lives, including their work or marketplace. There is not a single arena of life in which God’s law and commands do not apply. In conclusion, Craigie states that the “implications remain the same today; the relationship to one God must dominate every sphere of life, whether the life of action, of

⁸ Enns, *Exodus*, 432.

thought, or of emotion. There can be no area of life in which a person or thing comes before the commitment to the one God. The other gods may take on forms more subtle than wooden images or stone idols; indeed, anything that relegates the relationship with God to second place functions in effect as ‘another god.’”⁹

**Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Leviticus 19:18,
Matthew 22:34-40 and
Luke 10:25-37**

As the Israelites began to consider the Ten Commandments and their implications, certain teachings and aspects of the Decalogue became particularly important for the summary of the truths they contained. In particular, Deuteronomy 6:4-9 came to be considered as the essence of the Decalogue and the very core of the Torah by rabbis and Jewish religious leaders.¹⁰ Craigie explains that this passage contains what has been called “the fundamental truth of Israel’s religion” and “the fundamental duty founded upon it. The fundamental truth has to do with the nature of God as one (v. 4), and the fundamental duty is the response of love which God requires of man (v. 5).”¹¹ Therefore, in these verses the First Commandment of the Decalogue is presented positively, as opposed to the negative presentation of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. These five verses came to be known as the *Shema*, from the opening Hebrew word שמע (*shema*) that has the standard English translation “hear.”¹² However, the word can also be translated as “listen to” or “obey.”¹³ Such was the regard and importance of these verses that the *Shema*, following the mandate within the passage, was repeated twice a

⁹ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 153.

¹⁰ Bernard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998), 341.

¹¹ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 168.

¹² Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 341.

¹³ George M. Landes, *Building Your Biblical Hebrew Vocabulary: Learning Words by Frequency and Cognate* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 52.

day every day, as a means of reminding the Israelites of their special relationship with Yahweh.

The *Shema* calls all Israelites to love Yahweh with “all their heart, soul and with all their might” (NAS). These English translations of ancient Hebrew nouns deserve special attention in order for their full meaning to be truly understood. The Hebrew word translated “heart” is לבב (lebab) which can mean “heart, ones’ inner self; inclination, disposition; will, intention; attention, consideration, and reason.”¹⁴ Clearly, the Hebrew word has deep connotations in regards to the seat of one’s volition. Gordon J. McConville writes, “The translation ‘heart’ is suitable, since ‘heart’ in Deuteronomy is typical for penetrating to the seat of the will (as in English ‘heartfelt’).”¹⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright states, “The heart (lebab) in Hebrew was not so much the seat of emotions and feelings- as it is in English metaphors- as the seat of the intellect, will and intention. You think in your heart, and your heart shapes your character, choices, and decisions. It is also the center of the human being as a moral agent.”¹⁶

The English word “soul” is the standard translation of the Hebrew נפש (nepes), but as with heart, this metaphor does not capture the entirety of the Hebrew meaning. A fuller description and translation of נפש would be “living being, oneself; life; and soul.”¹⁷ Therefore, the “soul” of an individual, as the ancient Israelite would have understood it, means one’s unique essence as an individual. McConville argues that the word means a person’s “vitality.”¹⁸ Wright explains that “most often it is used to express the whole inner self, with all the emotions, desires, and personal characteristics that make each

¹⁴ Landes, *Building Your Biblical Hebrew Vocabulary*, 129.

¹⁵ Gordon J. McConville, *Deuteronomy*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 142.

¹⁶ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 98.

¹⁷ Landes, *Building Your Biblical Hebrew Vocabulary*, 129.

¹⁸ McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

human being unique.”¹⁹

If this passage in Deuteronomy 6 concluded with these two words representing the decision-making capability of individual, combined with the very essence of that same individual, then most would consider this to be a strong statement of the loyalty and commitment one should both internalize and demonstrate towards Yahweh. However, the *Shema* goes one step further and includes the word מאד, which is frequently translated as “strength” or “power.” Wright argues that there is a sense within the word of “very-muchness.”²⁰ However, Wright also points to the fact that “the earliest Jewish versions (including the Targum) translated it as ‘your substance’ or ‘your possessions’ – an acceptable possibility that has some support in Proverbs 3:9.”²¹ Therefore, the most accurate understanding for the ancient Israelite would have been one of commitment that “exceeded” and would have extended to the entirety of an individual’s life, even their possessions. This final addition to heart and soul would have made it clear to Yahweh’s chosen people that every aspect of an individual was required, their “full capacities, perhaps including natural abilities and even resources.”²² It is not enough to just love Yahweh with all one’s decision-making abilities and with the whole of one’s inner vitality (as difficult, if not impossible, as this might be), but one must also love Yahweh with everything in that individual’s life and existence.

The entirety of this relationship and commitment is expounded upon in the following verses of Deuteronomy 6:7-9. These verses discuss the importance of filling the home with conversation regarding the *Shema* (v. 7), knowing the verses fully (v. 8), and making them public by posting them on the home and the gates (v. 9). These words

¹⁹ Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 98.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 99.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² McConville, *Deuteronomy*, 142.

were not to be simply for an individual, but were to radiate out to the rest of that individual's world. The *Shema* should be the constant focus of conversation within the home, when getting up in the morning until going to bed in the evening (You shall teach them . . . when you lie down and when you rise up [v. 7]). They would be "bound" to the individual, both literally and figuratively on the forehead. And they would be in the society and places of power, signified by placing the commands on the "gates" where public transactions and societal interactions took place. In short, there was not an aspect of the individual's life that was not to be impacted by the teachings of the *Shema*.

Commentators are in wide agreement in acknowledging the importance Scripture places upon the constant and all-encompassing nature of these teachings. They are to literally fill the life and sphere of influence of the ancient Israelite. As way of example, Wright writes that "the law of God is thus to be applied to the *individual* (your hands and your foreheads), the family (your houses), and public, civil *society* (your gates, the place of public business, courts, markets, etc.). The believer must work out the meaning of loving God in appropriate ways for all three levels. The love-commitment of the whole person in verse 5 is thus expanded to the whole community in verse 7-9."²³ Craigie comments, "Whether taken literally or metaphorically, the signs described in verses 8-9 indicate that the individual (v. 8), his home, and his community (v. 9) were to be distinguished in their character by obedience to the commandments as a response of love for God."²⁴ Craigie comments further that "the commandments were to permeate every sphere of the life of man."²⁵ In conclusion then, the commands of the *Shema* were to involve the entirety of the ancient Israelites' lives. Not a single aspect of either the individual, or the individual's life was outside the focus and concern of these commands.

²³ Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 100.

²⁴ Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 171.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.

Yahweh had established the covenant with this people and this summary of the very basis of the covenant (the Decalogue) was to permeate the entire sphere of life and influence of the redeemed people.

Jesus and the Law

Throughout the centuries, Jewish religious leaders discussed, developed, and argued over various topics related to the laws of Yahweh. It is not surprising then that once Jesus' ministry began, questions from religious leaders concerning various points of the law were often used to "trip" Jesus up, or attempts to expose Him as outside the mainstream of Jewish belief. Matthew records such an occurrence in chapter 22:34-40 when a lawyer of the Pharisees asks Jesus, "Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (v. 36). Jesus responds with the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6 by saying, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (NAS), and states that this is the greatest commandment. This would have been an acceptable answer to the lawyer. However, Jesus expands the greatest commandment and states, "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (NAS). This is a direct quote from Leviticus 19:18 and would have been well known to both the lawyer and many present in the crowd. In quoting this passage from Leviticus, Jesus is using a well-known verse to answer the question on the lawyer's own terms and religious concepts.

Furthermore, Jesus is making the argument that these two commandments are the sum of the entire law. The love of God and the love of others constitute the entirety of the Old Testament law. In fact, Matthew concludes this pericope with Jesus stating that upon these two commandments *ολος ο νομος κρεμαται και οι προφηται*, hang the whole law and the prophets. However, how can these two statements truly encompass the entirety of the Old Testament teachings and laws of Yahweh? R. T. France argues that the answer lies within Jesus' choice to use Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 to

address the lawyer's "test."

In the first place, by focusing on "love" rather than on more tangible regulations to be obeyed it lifts the discussion above merely adjudicating between competing rules, and gives the priority to a principle which has potential application to virtually every aspect of religious and communal life In the second place, by bringing these two texts together Jesus asserts that the one principle of love applies equally to the two main aspects of religious duty, one's attitude to God and one's attitude to other people. It is these two foci which provide the framework of the Decalogue, with its two "tables" covering these two aspects in turn. If the Decalogue is itself a sort of epitome of the law, these two quotations in turn sum up the Decalogue.²⁶

Therefore, France finds within these two verses the summation of the Decalogue that help illumine Jesus' statement that the whole law and prophets can be fully understood by these teachings. In contrast to laws of "do's and don'ts," Jesus lifts up love of God and love of others as the foci from which to understand the "do's and don'ts" presented throughout the Old Testament, and especially the Decalogue. Love becomes the focal point and a truer basis for understanding the law than regulations and rules. France concludes his discussion by writing, "The two texts chosen by Jesus are together sufficiently strong to bear the weight of the whole OT Far from making the law irrelevant, therefore, love thus becomes 'the primary hermeneutical principle for interpreting and applying the law.'"²⁷ Finally, Donald A. Hagner concludes that when one truly loves God and others, than "the law and the prophets have reached their ultimate goal."²⁸

In addition, by elevating the love of neighbor to the second greatest commandment, Jesus is laying the groundwork for this verse in Leviticus to become the basis for Christian ethics within the church of the new covenant. Hagner argues this point when he states that this verse is clearly the fundamental ground upon which the ethical

²⁶ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 843.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 847.

²⁸ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 648.

teaching of the NT church is built.²⁹ In support of his statement is the fact that other New Testament texts lift up this use of the Leviticus passage as the guiding principle for the interactions of Christians with others (Rom 13:9, Gal 5:14; and Jas 2:8). Followers of Christ will be known by their love towards a neighbor, as well as their love of God.

Neighbor

Therefore, if the love of neighbor is the fundamental foundation of the Church's social ethic, the essential question for understanding the ethic is "Who is a neighbor?" This question had been widely discussed throughout the history of Judaism as religious leaders grappled with this issue. John E. Hartley explains, "In Judaism at the time of Jesus there was a great debate over who was one's companion or neighbor, some groups favoring a broader definition than others."³⁰ Thus, Jesus spoke into a historical context in which the people of the covenant had varied opinions on this topic. However, Jesus raised the ante and expanded the definition far beyond what his first century students were prepared to hear. Hartley continues by stating, "The standard for loving or being beneficial to another person is that that person is like one's very own self, thus being worthy of one's love Jesus took this commandment, elevated it as the second of the two great commandments, and expanded the circle of 'an acquaintance' to include all fellow humans, particularly anyone in need."³¹

This expansion can be seen fully demonstrated within Luke's presentation of this pericope, which in his Gospel account leads directly into the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). In Luke's presentation the lawyer asks a different question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (NAS). Jesus asks him the answer he finds in

²⁹ Hagner, *Matthew*, 647.

³⁰ John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 4 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 325.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 318.

Scripture, meaning specifically the Torah. The lawyer gives the Deuteronomy and Leviticus verses as a reply in Luke's account, as opposed to Matthew's presentation which has Jesus supply the answer. Then the lawyer goes a step further and asks Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (NAS). It is at this point that Luke records Jesus' telling of the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). The most applicable aspect of the Parable for this study is Jesus' intentional teaching of a neighbor being anyone in need, regardless of any human or societal distinction. France observes,

While there was a clearly limited sense to "neighbor" both in the original text and in later Jewish understanding of it, Jesus makes it clear . . . in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) that for his disciples no such limitation is acceptable. The neighbor is everyone, and the nature of the "love" which God expects is equally unlimited: "as (you love) yourself."³²

Jesus' followers are to pay no heed to any attempt by fallen humanity to place people into categories of "other" that could somehow exclude them from love. The lawyer is hardly expecting the direction Jesus is taking His teaching. Even as the Parable is concluded, the lawyer cannot find the ability to mention the paragon of the story by his heritage and title of "Samaritan," but instead opts for the reference of "The one who showed mercy" (NAS), demonstrating the deep animosity Jews had for the "mixed-breed" Samaritans. Darrell L. Bock goes a step further and argues, "The lawyer's question about identifying his neighbor is really an attempt to say there is such a person as a 'non-neighbor.' Jesus refuses to turn people into a subspecies or into things that can be ignored."³³ Furthermore, "By choosing the Samaritan as the model, Jesus shows that neighbors may be found anywhere, among any racial group, even in those groups despised by the Jewish leadership."³⁴ For Jesus' hearers, if a Samaritan could be lifted up as a virtuous neighbor, worthy of imitation, than truly anyone and everyone was their

³² France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 846.

³³ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke: 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1028.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1029.

neighbor.

Implications for Twenty-First-Century Christians

As discussed above, the *Shema* and its use in the New Testament pericopes within Matthew and Luke are summarizations of the Decalogue and intent of the Old Testament law and prophets. As such, many implications are present within these verses for modern day Christians who desire to live every aspect of their lives in relationship to God and impact their sphere of influence for His Kingdom. To begin with, if Christians have any doubt that the Decalogue requires one to give everything to the Lord, then the summary contained within the *Shema* leaves no room for confusion. If Christians are to love the Lord God with all their heart and mind and strength, then the only appropriate understanding is that God requires all of a person, every aspect of their life. This includes personal devotion, but also involves the giving over to God all of the many and varied aspects of a Christian's life, including work, recreation, time, possessions, talents, etc. The list compiled could be absolutely endless because it is clear from these verses that every part and parcel of an individual believer is to be put into a proper relationship with God; meaning God comes first and everything else is second.

If this ordering were attempted by a majority of individuals connected to churches throughout the United States, the spiritual state of society would be significantly improved. Unfortunately, churches have many attending who have not committed themselves to giving over every aspect of their lives to God, thus giving up the opportunity to have an eternal impact on the various arenas in which they live. It should not be assumed that this level of commitment is easily achieved, and it must be accepted that it will never be fully accomplished while living in a fallen, corrupted world. However, there are many nominal Christians who do not even understand that complete commitment to God and others is the Biblical standard. Christians need to hear the unified message of Scripture that God wants relationship that is total surrender, not half

hearted efforts that assuage guilt or earn positive “marks” that can somehow be redeemed when necessary. God requires all of a person, not just what that individual is willing to give.

A Christian’s total commitment to Christ is visible through the way he or she interacts with the world and the workplace. This is clearly demonstrated by the inclusion of the second greatest commandment, and its frequent discussion throughout the New Testament. In particular, Jesus’ quoting of Leviticus 19:18 in Matthew, and the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke demonstrate without question God’s expectation that His children will be known by the way that they love others. This is the way Christians are separated, or “holy,” in a sinful fallen world. While we are called to give everything to God, it must be understood that these pericopes demonstrate that the way the world will know who is committed to Christ is the way that an individual Christian loves those around him or her.

Truly loving others has a tremendous potential impact upon the sphere of influence of a believer, especially in the secular workplace. What would it look like if all of a Christian’s work interactions were based in love, instead of a desire to succeed or step over someone to get a promotion or raise? How might a boss interact with employees in love? How should a Christian handle conflict with those within their workplace and sphere of influence? How would a Christian business leader demonstrate a love for others in their decision making process? Many more questions could be supplied as examples, but the point remains that if Christians are to truly love others as themselves, then every interaction within their arena of life should be based in a deep concern and caring for the other, perhaps even more so when that individual is a modern day “Samaritan.”

Because of the radical nature and wide ranging implications inherent in such a thought as truly loving others, it is important to examine the nature of Biblical love to fully understand its practice towards others. Hagner makes the argument that love in

these verses is not about emotion in any way. Rather, “Love for one’s neighbor means acting toward others with their good, their well-being, their fulfillment, as the primary motivation and goal of our deeds. Such love is constant and takes no regard of the perceived merit or worth of the other person.”³⁵ Therefore, biblical love is action and choice, not fluctuating emotion. Christians can choose to love another and act in that individual’s best interests, even if the person is unlovable. The world knows that Christians are children of God because of the way they choose to love all people, and these day-to-day choices are visible in every arena of the Christian’s life. Bock provides a fitting summary of how loving others should look: “The issue is not who we may or may not serve, but serving where need exists. We are not to seek to limit who our neighbors might be. Rather, we are to be a neighbor to those whose needs we can meet.”³⁶

Revelation 3:14-20 – The Letter to the Laodiceans

Unfortunately, it did not take long for the followers of Jesus to act contrary to His teachings regarding complete commitment to God and love of the other. The church at Laodicea is a strong biblical example of a community of believers who have become ineffective in the faith and spiritually sick. The Book of Revelation begins with seven letters to churches in ancient Asia Minor, or modern day Turkey, and the last of the letters was to the church in Laodicea. This city was located at the conjunction of two roads that led from the West into the eastern province of Phrygia, and from there into the rest of Asia Minor and the East. The city was situated on a plateau about a half-mile square and a few hundred feet above the plain in the fertile Lycus valley. Laodicea was the more important member of three cities located geographically quite close to each other, with Hierapolis six miles to the north and Colosse ten miles to the east. Each of

³⁵ Hagner, *Matthew*, 648.

³⁶ Bock, *Luke*, 1035.

these three cities was in the province of Phrygia.³⁷

As mentioned above, the letter to the Laodiceans was the last of the letters John was commanded to write to the churches in “Asia.” This may in fact have been because this church was in the worst shape spiritually. In essence, John’s seven letters built to a crescendo that culminated with this strongly worded indictment to the Laodicean church. G. K. Beale has observed, “This church needs an injection of Christ’s resurrection power, since they are in the worst condition of all the churches in the letters. Even in the nearly dead church of Sardis, there was a faithful remnant, but no such remnant is clearly discernible in the Laodicean church, nor is there any commendations as occurs to varying degrees in all the other letters.”³⁸ So while the other churches had at least some type of positive spiritual health marker on which to find joy, or perhaps hope, there is no such positive note to offer the church at Laodicea. They are simply quite spiritually dead.

After the greeting of the letter, John begins the critique of the church by writing that Christ knows the deeds of the Laodiceans and that they are ουτε ψυχρος ει ουτε ζεστος (*oute psychros ei oute zestos*, you are neither hot nor cold), but instead, the church is lukewarm (χλιαρος, *chliaros*).³⁹ This passage is strongly worded, but has often been misunderstood. Osborne explains: “The statement ουτε ψυχρος ει ουτε ζεστος . . . has been the subject of much speculation down through the centuries. Until the mid-twentieth century, it was moralized as ‘hot or cold’ spirituality.” The problem with this explanation was sufficiently laying out the rationale for why Jesus would rather they be “cold” spiritually than “lukewarm.” As a result of this difficulty, it has been argued

³⁷ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 201. The previous geographical information for Laodicea and the Phrygia region was selected from the above work.

³⁸ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 302.

³⁹ These translations are used from Osborne, *Revelation*, 205.

consistently that the metaphor stems from Laodicea's water supply.⁴⁰

To fully understand the allusion Christ may have intended, it is necessary to briefly explain the everyday challenge and situation the citizens of Laodicea faced in regards to their water. Robert H. Mounce explains the situation by writing,

Laodicea's major weakness was its lack of an adequate and convenient source for water. Its location had been determined by the road system rather than by natural resources. Thus water had to be brought in from springs near Denizli (six miles to the south) through a system of stone pipes approximately three feet in diameter. Such an aqueduct could easily be cut off, leaving the city helpless, especially in the dry season when the Lycus could dry up.⁴¹

As dangerous as a suspect water supply could be for a city during the first century A.D. for reasons such as enemies or the dry season, the larger day-to-day issue was the quality of the water itself. Since the water was piped from the hot springs located near Denizli, it did not have enough time to cool before arriving at Laodicea, resulting in water that was tepid and "lukewarm." In addition to the temperature, Osborne points out the fact that the water was also full of calcium carbonate deposits that literally caused vomiting.⁴²

As if this situation did not create enough frustration for the citizens of Laodicea, they were subjected daily to the fact that their two sister cities, within relatively easy walking distance, were famed for the quality of their water. Hierapolis was famous for its hot springs to such a degree that the city became a major health center as a result of the benefits that were attributed to the water. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Colosse was most likely established at its ancient location because of the cold, clear water that was found there.⁴³ In comparison to both of these situations, Laodiceans consistently struggled against the sickly water that slowly wound its way down the

⁴⁰ Osborne, *Revelation*, 205.

⁴¹ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 107.

⁴² Osborne, *Revelation*, 206.

⁴³ Both of these statements, regarding the healing power of Hierapolis' water and the founding of Colosse as a result of its cold water, are stated by Osborne, *Revelation*, 205.

aqueducts, bringing its negative effects with it.

Most commentators on this passage see a direct allusion in Christ's words ψυχρος ει ουτε ζεστος (you are neither hot nor cold) to the water situation of Laodicea.⁴⁴ In effect, Christ is saying to the church that their spirituality was neither healing (hot), nor spiritually refreshing (cold). It was instead, a sickening "lukewarm." Mounce describes the situation by writing that "the contrast is between the hot medicinal waters of Hierapolis and the cold, pure waters of Colossae," and argues that the result is ineffectiveness on the part of the church.⁴⁵ This ineffectiveness leads Jesus to state, "I wish (οφελον, ophelon) that you were either cold or hot." The point is that the effectiveness of the church should not have matched the tepid and nauseating affect of its water supply. "They were devoid of works and useless to the Lord."⁴⁶ It is enough to make Christ state vividly, "I will spit you out of my mouth" (NAS). After this devastating chastisement, Jesus then begins to reveal the true spiritual state of the Laodicean church. They say they are rich and wealthy, but spiritually Christ views them as poor and blind and naked. This view clashes deeply with the opinion the church has of itself.

The obvious questions must be "Why was this church so spiritually empty and wayward? Why does Christ view this church as so depraved?" Commentators point to significant factors in the life of Laodicea that may shed light on the church's predicament and chief sins. First, Laodicea was an extremely wealthy city. This wealth is universally attested in both ancient and current texts. Much of this wealth was the result of Laodicea's location on the roads connecting East and West through Asia Minor. A significant amount of traffic and goods passed through the city, and the roads brought this

⁴⁴ Mounce, Osborne, and Alan F. Johnson agree with this allusion. However, while Beale acknowledges the possible connection, he does not see this explanation as necessary for the point of the letter to the church.

⁴⁵ Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 109-10.

⁴⁶ Osborne, *Revelation*, 206.

wealth. Christ lifts up this reality, but in a strictly negative tone. The mindset of the Laodiceans is that “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing” (NAS). However, this is the very basis for Christ stating that, in spiritual reality, they are in fact “wretched and miserable and poor” (NAS).

The wealth of the Laodicean city and church had corrupted the effectiveness and spiritual health of the people, but a greater misunderstanding was at work as well. The church believed that its material wealth indicated blessing from God, and an affirmation of their mindset and viewpoint. Osborne argues that “because they [Laodiceans] were materially ‘rich,’ they assumed that they were spiritually ‘rich’ The church was like the city, believing that its material wealth connoted spiritual wealth . . . [and] They had succumbed to their own affluent lifestyle and they did not even know it!”⁴⁷ Thus the church had fallen into a self-confidence that justified and validated its lack of effectiveness and commitment by pointing to the supposed affirmative material blessings. Osborne continues, “The Laodiceans had apparently listened to their worldly affluence rather than Christ and had thought material success meant they were right with God (a mistaken theology that paralleled some aspects of ancient Jewish thinking and continues today). Their enthusiasm needed to change focus from self to God, and the only way to do so was to repent.”⁴⁸ Therefore, Christ calls this church to buy gold from Him that has been refined by fire so that they may become truly rich (v. 18). The Laodiceans must turn away from their spiritually destructive material wealth, and receive from God a gold that will bring them spiritual healing and vitality.

Christ chastises the Laodicean church as wretched, miserable, and spiritually poor, but they are also blind and naked. Similar to the church having wealth, but actually being spiritually poor, Jesus is making a statement of contrasts that would have been

⁴⁷ Osborne, *Revelation*, 206-7.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 212.

especially understandable and relevant to the Laodiceans. The city was known throughout the ancient world for its famous medical school, and as the center for the production of a special eye salve that was believed to have a medicinal affect. This medicine was widely known as “Phrygian powder” and was mixed with oil.⁴⁹ Jesus is using the Laodiceans’ own strength and fame in this area to highlight their actual spiritual depravity and blindness. They are blind to their true spiritual state. The spiritual solution is for the church to receive new sight. Jesus is stating to the church that they need to purchase a different eye salve, one that He provides, so that they may see themselves as they truly are spiritually. “They must ‘see’ their spiritual blindness, repent, and receive spiritual healing from Christ, who alone is the source of healing.”⁵⁰

So, in contrast to their own opinions of themselves, the Laodiceans are poor and blind, but finally, they are also naked. As with their eye salve, the city produced a wool that was exceedingly well known for its fine quality. Mounce describes the widespread knowledge of this famous wool by explaining that “the fertile ground of the Lycus valley provided good grazing for sheep. By careful breeding, a soft, glossy black wool had been produced that was much in demand and brought fame to the region. Among the various garments woven in Laodicea was a tunic called the *trimita*. So widely known was this tunic that at the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451 Laodicea was called Trimitaria.”⁵¹ While the Laodiceans may have been famous for their garments, Christ states that they are actually naked before God. Again, Jesus uses an allusion that would have been well understood by the church to convict them to repentance and a true relationship with Him.

Unfortunately, the twenty-first century church of the West has many parallels

⁴⁹ Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 107.

⁵⁰ Osborne, *Revelation*, 210.

⁵¹ Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 107.

to the Laodicean church, which is very disturbing to say the least when Jesus' harsh indictments against this worshiping body are considered. The modern church could easily fit the "lukewarm" description Christ levies on the Laodiceans. If, as discussed above, the use of the terms hot and cold are allusions to the spiritual vitality and effectiveness of the church, then Christians in the United States would be wise to take note and begin a process of true self-evaluation and repentance. Many surveys and studies indicate that religion is decreasing in its influence in the culture of the West; and in some regions of Europe and Canada, the society is practically void of a Christian presence altogether.⁵² A wide and detailed discussion of these trends is outside the scope of this study. However, the patterns and numbers are impossible to misinterpret in regards to the negative conclusions one can draw concerning the spiritual impact on the workplace and secular society of Christianity in the West, and increasingly, the United States in particular.

Alarming, churches and individual Christians in the West have fallen victim to the same mindset and viewpoints that affected the Laodiceans so negatively. In a word, the church in the United States is too wealthy to truly understand its disease. Much like the Laodicean church, the church in this country has benefited from being located in an

⁵² These statements are supported by comments made by Ed Stetzer as the keynote speaker at the National Conference of The Church Network (formerly the National Association of Church Business Speakers), which I attended on July 14, 2015. In regard to the condition of Christianity in the United States, Stetzer made the statement, "The sky is not falling, however, the ground is shifting." To support his points, Stetzer referred to the "General Social Survey of 2014" which indicated that the growth of individuals in the United States who were willing to claim in surveys that they had no religious connections (the "nones") had grown to 21 percent of those surveyed, with "no evidence of a slowdown" in years to come. However, Stetzer argued that the GSS study also demonstrated that the number of "convictional Christians" (those whose lifestyle reflected their beliefs) has remained statistically consistent. So while more individuals are willing to claim "no religion," Stetzer argued that this is a cultural movement of formerly nominal Christians feeling at ease within the culture to state the truth of their religious preference, which is none. This does indicate that the culture is indeed becoming less Christian, as the culture is willing to look to sources other than the church for its social mores and attitudes. The key findings of the General Social Survey can be found through the following footnote: Shawn Hout and Tom W. Smith, "Fewer Americans Affiliate with Organized Religions, Belief and Practice Unchanged: Key Findings from the 2014 General Social Survey," accessed August 5, 2015, [www.norc.umd.edu/PDFs/GSS Reports/GSS_Religion_2014.pdf](http://www.norc.umd.edu/PDFs/GSS%20Reports/GSS_Religion_2014.pdf). Support for the comments relating to Canada can be found at Pew Research Center, "Canada's Changing Religious Landscape," accessed August 5, 2015, www.pewforum.org/2013/06/27/canadas-changing-religious-landscape/. Support for the comments relating to Europe can be found at Charismanews, "Are We Witnessing the Birth of Modern Christian Persecution in Western Europe?" accessed October 19, 2015, <https://www.charismanews.com/world/40835-are-we-witnessing-the-birth-of-modern-christian-persecution-in-western-europe>.

area of the world that is full of natural resources and riches, advanced learning, and an economy unmatched by any other in the world, even in the midst of the current economic difficulties. The church is struggling with overabundance and material wealth that has made individual Christians complacent and disinterested in impacting their sphere of influence for Christ. Osborne accents this argument:

The Laodicean church is unfortunately a perfect parallel for some of the greatest problems in the church at the start of the twenty-first century, especially in the West and parts of the Far East. Affluence has made us “lukewarm,” for we have become self-satisfied and interpret our trappings of “success” (big churches, beautiful buildings, huge budgets) as God’s blessings. We too easily forget that God wants our hearts and not just our numbers The point of the Laodicean letter is to warn us that God demands our best. If worldly possessions are more important than he is, we too will “make Christ sick.” The answer is to “repent” and gain “victory” over material and earth-centered pursuits. We need to serve him and let him glorify us in his own time, for he will.⁵³

The wealth of the American church has deceived the institution, as well as individual Christians from recognizing their true state. Much like the Laodiceans who interpreted their wealth as Godly affirmation of their works, the church of the West has fallen victim to a similar false view. Christians in the successful West have deluded themselves into believing that God is not only happy with their spiritual vitality, but is actually blessing it, as demonstrated by big sanctuary and buildings, significant resources, and large budgets. “The Laodiceans may have interpreted their material wealth as a blessing from God and thus have been self-deceived as to their true spiritual state. The parallel with the church today is obvious.”⁵⁴ Unfortunately, the end result of this delusion has been diminished impact upon the culture, and a virtually invisible role within the secular workplace. The self-assurance of Christians and churches in the West has resulted in a “lukewarmness” that Revelations teaches would make Christ want to spit these institutions out of His mouth, as well as the Christians within them.

⁵³ Osborne, *Revelation*, 215-16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 207.

However, a solution is offered not only to the Laodiceans, but also modern Christians of the West as well. Christ urges the church to “be zealous, and repent” (NAS). The only solution for this lack of true spiritual vitality is to desire the things of Christ, accept discipline, renew commitment, and repent from past sins (vv. 18, 19). It is important to note that even though the Letter to the Laodiceans is the strongest and most condemning of the seven letters, Christ still offers reconciliation and acceptance. While verse twenty of this passage is often used as an evangelism tract, most commentators argue that the verse applies specifically to the context of the Letter to the Laodiceans. Beale sees in this conclusion to the Letter that “this is an invitation not for the readers to be converted but to renew themselves in a relationship with Christ that has already begun.”⁵⁵ Amazingly, even after reproofing and disciplining these early Christians, Christ still describes Himself as desiring and seeking an opportunity to come into the lives of the believers and dine with them (v. 20). The willingness of Christ to lovingly accept His followers, even those far from Him, should not be overlooked. The modern church of the West and its individual members may only find renewal and a resurgence of impact upon the secular workplace through recognizing its’ similarities with the church of Laodicea and following Christ’s command to repent and open the “door,” so that He can reunite with them.

Conclusion

Both the Old and the New Testaments are consistent in their message that God calls His chosen people to be both “holy,” and also a witness of Him to the secular world. This study has examined biblical texts to examine Scripture’s call upon God’s people to commit themselves completely to Him, and to impact the world around them for His glory. From the giving of the Decalogue, to the Two Greatest Commandments, to the

⁵⁵ Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 308.

Letters of Revelation, Christians are called to be God's chosen people who impact their entire sphere of influence and arena of life. Therefore, this call to action includes every aspect of a believer's life, extending from the individual, to the family, to the society. These passages demonstrate that the world is to be different because Christians are lovingly active in the world. Specifically, the secular workplace where Christians spend the majority of their lives should be a better place because Christians are there. The Scriptural message is clear. Christians are not just called, but expected, to impact every aspect of their life with the message that there is a Creator God who desires relationship with His creation.

CHAPTER 3

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES OF CALLING AND VOCATION

Strong biblical support exists for Christians to engage and interact with a sinful world. Christians are expected to be light in a dark world, demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ in all aspects of their life. For many Christians, one of the most significant and time-consuming aspects of life occurs from Monday to Friday as they participate in the workplace. In fact, in terms of time commitment, believers will spend a considerable portion of their week working a job. Patrick Morley has observed that almost half of an individual's 112 waking hours each week are devoted to work and the necessary commute.¹ Therefore, a Christian cannot sufficiently live out and fulfill the biblical mandate to live all of life for God if the workweek is sectioned off from the rest of a believer's Christian walk.

Unfortunately, Christians often struggle with the relationship of Sunday to Monday as they attempt to reconcile the two seemingly unrelated spheres of personal faith and secular employment. However, this struggle can begin to be addressed through an examination of the Christian doctrines of calling and vocation. Historical Christianity has defined and developed these two concepts to assist in providing theological answers to the difficult questions related to the connection between a believer's faith and work. Therefore, this chapter will present a thorough understanding of the doctrines of calling and vocation so that believers will have a deeper understanding of how their faith and work are connected in the eyes of God.

¹ Patrick Morley, *A Man's Guide to Work: 12 Ways to Honor God on the Job* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 9.

Confusion

The need for a thorough discussion of calling and vocation in the Western world of the twenty-first century has been demonstrated by authors and researchers. Os Guinness has observed, “Out of more than a score of great civilizations in human history, modern Western civilization is the very first to have no agreed-on answer to the questions of the purpose of life.”² Despite technological, societal, and economic advances of which prior civilizations could only dream, Western society is suffering profound confusion. Individuals desire fulfillment and to leave the world better than they found it. But despite the desire, which modern society has provided its members the time and convenience to contemplate, there is an inability to comprehend the solution to the craving and “search for significance.”³ The Barna Group has uncovered that more than three-quarters of Americans (77%) say they desire to have a purpose for their life, but disturbingly, only one in five say they have a clear understanding of God’s purpose for them.⁴ Barna found that less than half (41%) of practicing Christians stated that they understood God’s purpose for their lives. These types of studies lead Guinness to conclude that modern people “have too much to live with and too little to live for . . . in the midst of material plenty, we have spiritual poverty.”⁵

So what can be done to overcome this lack of purpose and confusion? How can individuals be directed and encouraged to see the totality of their lives as important to God? The correct place to begin is a reassertion of the biblical doctrines of calling and

² Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), 3.

³ Ibid., 1-14. The “search for significance” is the phrase Guinness uses to begin his argument for an individual’s confusion regarding purpose and meaning within modern society.

⁴ Barna Group, *Multi-Careering: Do Work That Matters at Every Stage of Your Journey* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 29.

⁵ Guinness, *The Call*, 4. Jim Collins makes a similar point by writing that the social sectors provide a solution to the “desperate craving for meaning in our lives,” which give them one compelling advantage over the for-profit companies in Western society. Jim Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors: A Monograph to Good to Great* (Boulder, CO: Jim Collins, 2005), 16.

vocation. Western society offers individuals, to their detriment, the workplace as the “realm, par excellence, of utilitarian individualism,” which defines the individual and their place in society.⁶ Therefore, when most have been led to believe that their work defines their value, a lack of clarity and purpose in this arena of life is very detrimental to the wellbeing of the vast majority of the members of society. The doctrines of calling and vocation provide this clarity and direction for those who are otherwise adrift. One-third of employed Christians claim to have never thought about their work as something they were called to do to provide purpose in their life.⁷ Clearly, the need for a deeper understanding of calling and vocation are necessary for Christians and Western society at large.

Sadly, the very doctrines that would provide the needed direction have been largely ignored by the church. Barna found that sixty-three percent of Christian adults claimed to have not received any discipleship teaching in the last three years that developed their views on work or career.⁸ John Knapp’s research demonstrated that the majority of Christians in his study “reported that the church had done little or nothing to equip them for faithful living at work.”⁹ As a result, Knapp concluded that the church “has failed itself and society” by not taking an active role in issues related to faith and work.¹⁰ So the very message that society needs to hear has been ignored or given over to the secular sphere by the church, the very institution God has empowered to teach and direct His followers. John Hammett concludes,

⁶ Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 83.

⁷ Barna Group, *Multi-Careering*, 29.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹ John C. Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople: And What Can Be Done About It* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), xi.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

For most people work is a major part of life. Indeed, for many it is the most important aspect of their lives. Yet churches rarely give their members teaching on how to integrate their vocational life as part of their Christian life. As a result, most Christians think about their work as a separate compartment, something outside their Christian life. But since we are all called to be full-time Christians, then our work must be part of our service to God. Fortunately, the Bible has much to say about work, and it gives us a strong basis for developing a theology of work.¹¹

Again, the biblical doctrines of calling and vocation must be reclaimed if both believers and the culture in which they live are to find the answers to the most pressing questions of purpose and meaning.

Calling

Historically, the doctrine of calling has been viewed in two parts.¹² The first is the call of a sovereign God who reaches from eternity to call His children and people to Himself. At the very heart of the faith, Christians are those who are “called” to follow Jesus and to live in accordance with His ways, having a relationship with God that is total in its dedication. This is commonly referred to as the primary calling. This primary calling leads by extension to the secondary calling, which is the expectation of the “called” of God to live out their faith in everything they are, everything they do, and everything they have. All the various aspects of a believer’s life are to be lived out in commitment to this loving God. Thus, the second calling is a result of the primary lived out in a particular context.¹³ Guinness describes the relationship between the two.

Our secondary calling, considering who God is as sovereign, is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything should think, speak, live, and act entirely for him. We can therefore properly say as a matter of secondary calling that we are called to homemaking or to the practice of law or to art history. But these things and other things are always the secondary, never the primary calling. They are “callings”

¹¹ John S. Hammett, “Human Nature,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2007), 362.

¹² Several scholars make a distinction between a primary and secondary calling. John Knapp points to the Puritans as the ones who first formulated this distinction. Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 90. Ted Peters refers to the two theological meanings of “calling.” Ted Peters, *God – the World’s Future: Systematic Theology for a Postmodern Era* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), 300. Os Guinness provides additional points. Guinness, *The Call*, 31.

¹³ Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 90.

rather than the “calling.” They are our personal answer to God’s address, our response to God’s summons. Secondary callings matter, but only because the primary calling matters most.¹⁴

Therefore, the primary calling is the foundation of the individual believer’s relationship to God. However, the secondary calling is the focus of this study, as it concerns itself with the believer’s relationship to God lived out in a sinful world. It is here that much of the confusion between faith and work is found. Once the gracious primary calling is offered by God and received by the believer, then the questions concerning the difficulty of living out this calling begin. This difficulty is the struggle of the secondary calling, and when most believers live a significant portion of their lives in a secular workplace, many face confusion on how this secondary calling should be lived out and truly reflect the totality inherent within the primary calling. This struggle is further increased when the development of two distortions that have arisen within historical Christianity are considered. Both are a form of dualism between the sacred and secular and have created significant difficulties for Christians striving to fulfill their secondary calling throughout their spheres of influence.

Distortions Affecting an Understanding of Calling

The first distortion elevates the spiritual at the expense of the secular. Guinness refers to this as the “Catholic distortion” because it was expounded during the high tide of influence of the Catholic church and remains the majority position within this tradition.¹⁵ The danger of this distortion is that the spiritual is raised up and placed on a pedestal of respect and “sacredness,” while the secular is considered inferior. A clear example of this distortion is visible in the societal arrangement of medieval Europe. A “calling” was a religious experience fulfilled by priests, monks, and nuns. All of the rest

¹⁴ Guinness, *The Call*, 31.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

of society lived out their days in a secular worldly sphere that was viewed as inferior.¹⁶ This view is decidedly unbiblical.¹⁷ Clearly the Bible demonstrates that God does not delineate between sacred and secular in this way. There is no biblical precedent for “acceptable” sacred callings for the spiritually strong, while the vast majority of believers toil in secular inferior spheres. John Knapp makes precisely this point when he argues that this distortion creates “a theology that elevates an ecclesiastical elite while subtly devaluing the rest of the body.”¹⁸ Furthermore,

It is an attitude that betrays a distorted conception of Christian vocation and calling, one that sorts human activities into contrived categories of secular and sacred, suggesting that God is more concerned with church-sponsored work than with Christians being faithful in a thousand other daily contexts.¹⁹

The second distortion is no less concerning, and in fact, may be more spiritually dangerous because it is a strongly held view in the modern Western world and is ultimately more extreme.²⁰ While the “Catholic” distortion is a spiritual form of dualism, the “Protestant” distortion results in the elevation of the secular over the spiritual.²¹ The inherent danger in this “Protestant” distortion is that the secular overpowers the sacred and pushes the sacred into the sphere of the private, where it can ultimately be isolated and removed completely from the secular world, which includes the workplace for most believers. Knapp argues that in our current modern worldview,

Work is performed with little sense of serving God. All too often it is just something to be endured – a means to other ends, such as paying the rent, feeding the family, and supporting the church.²²

¹⁶ Guinness, *The Call*, 33.

¹⁷ See chapter 2.

¹⁸ Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 29.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Guinness, *The Call*, 32, 39-40.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 33.

Knapp also states that this view is seriously flawed from a biblical standpoint where one would be “hard-pressed” to find such a teaching supported by Scripture.²³ Morley also argues forcefully against this distortion calling it “biblically inaccurate,” and “utter fiction” from a scriptural viewpoint.²⁴

Therefore, this distortion leads to a secular dualism that in Western culture has created a sphere of work that is wholly separated and distinct from the realm of life that Robert Bellah has identified as the “lifestyle enclave.” This is the realm of expressive individualism where members are expected to find family, support, love, and religion. It is intentionally distinct from the workplace and is to be kept at arms length from the supposedly superior secular sphere.²⁵ Knapp has noted that many believers go to work in an atmosphere that discourages religion expression, where faith is considered a private matter that should not be a factor in public life.²⁶ This atmosphere is the inevitable result of the inherent dangers of the “Protestant” distortion coming to fruition. Guinness has presented the concept in a humorous fashion by writing “Formerly the philosopher atheist would shout defiantly, ‘There is no God!’ Now the practical atheist who is the modern manager, marketer, expert, or consultant says with quiet professional authority, ‘There is no need for God – and frankly, this is not the time or the place for such questions.’”²⁷

Corrections to the Two Distortions

However, a biblical understanding of calling undercuts this secular dualism

²³ Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 34-35. The entire quote is as follows: “One would be hard-pressed to find in Christ’s teachings a rationale for an other-worldly faith that fails to take seriously one’s life and work in this world. What’s more, an artificial separation of eternal and temporal devalues the first great commission, found in the Genesis narrative, where God instructs humans to tend and care for creation – real work that is at once both temporal and sacred.”

²⁴ Morley, *A Man’s Guide to Work*, 16.

²⁵ Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, 83.

²⁶ Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 5-6.

²⁷ Guinness, *The Call*, 207.

and the resulting separation of spheres. Calling accomplishes this by countering the privatization of religion and insisting that Jesus Christ is the Lord of every sphere of life.²⁸ It addresses the totality of the relationship between the Creating God and the children He has called. As Scripture teaches, the secondary calling is the outworking of the entire life of the believer in relation with God. is no room for separation or distinctions. Scripture clearly teaches that all of life is to be lived under the umbrella of the primary calling by God to His children for covenantal relationship. Guinness powerfully summarizes the totality of this call.

Jesus is not a “religious leader” but Lord of all of life. Responding to his call touches the world of fishing as well as preaching, the depths of the lake, not just the shore. All that we are, all that we do, all that we have, and even all that we think and dream is called into question by this demand. Once again, it is a matter of everyone, everywhere, and everything.²⁹

An additional aspect of calling must be addressed. Calling is ultimately about relationship. A loving God calls unique children to Himself and seeks relationship with them as individuals. The Bible teaches that His children are all made in His image, unique, and that He knows each of them intimately, even to the point of how many hairs are on their heads (Matt 10:30). The doctrine of calling teaches that believers are to fulfill their calling within their sphere of influence, as they have been created and gifted by a sovereign God. The Bible clearly teaches that the secondary calling of God is based in His children’s uniqueness, both in personal characteristics and particular context. James Loder has written that the doctrine of calling means that each Christian is “called according to very particular and concrete qualities of one’s own person, which may or may not include one’s immediate circumstances. God has made you his own in your particularity and your specific situation, and he has given you particular gifts and

²⁸ Guinness, *The Call*, 165.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 167.

opportunities.”³⁰ This observation is similar to Paul’s analogy of the church to a human body, in which Christians with different God-given skills and abilities should exercise different functions (1 Cor 12). David’s Psalm proclaiming the Creator’s attention to him in the womb, stitching him together, and knowing the form of this future child intimately could also be considered (Ps 139:13-16). This is a God who takes joy in the uniqueness of His children. Therefore, the secondary callings given to His children are as various and unique as the individuals themselves. As a result, the process of discerning an individual believer’s secondary call is dependent on the unique gifts that believer has been given by God. “The main way to discover calling is along the line of what we are each created and gifted to be. Instead of, ‘You are what you do,’ calling says: ‘Do what you are.’”³¹

Vocation

A Biblical understanding of calling is essential to discerning God’s will for a believer’s vocation. The term vocation is derived from the Latin *vocare*, which means literally “to call.”³² So it is understandable if there is some confusion in regards to the relationship between calling and vocation. While it is clear that calling and vocation are closely connected, and in many minds they are intertwined, a clear distinction should be made. Once a believer has clarity regarding the calling of God within his or her particular context and specific skill set, there might be many vocations that can be a “proper” use of the calling God has given the individual believer. For example, if a believer has the spiritual gift of teaching, there are many different vocations in which he or she might use this gift, and hence, fulfill his or her calling. While it could be argued that this is a distinction without a difference, it is important to keep these clear distinctions because

³⁰ James Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 226.

³¹ Guinness, *The Call*, 46.

³² Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 89.

clarity of terms leads to deeper understanding. A vocation is the arena in which a believer exercises his or her calling, and a prayerful choice of vocation should flow out of discernment focused on how the believer has been “formed in the womb.”

This discussion naturally leads to a theology of work. As has already been discussed, the workplace claims a large portion of the lives of most in Western society. However, it is also clear that many in this society do not feel that their workplace has any connection to their faith or their calling. As mentioned above, the Barna Group has stated that approximately one-third of employed Christians have never thought about their work as something to which they were called. In addition, only one-third of practicing Christians say that they feel called to their current work. These are disturbing numbers, and the trends do not improve with the younger generation; the Christian leaders of tomorrow. Alarming, forty-eight percent of Christian Millennials think that God is calling them to different work, but they have not been willing to make the change.³³ These numbers drive home the point that Christians are struggling deeply to connect their call to their current workplace. So, while much of Western society is struggling to find purpose and meaning for their lives, Christians are unable to provide biblical answers because they too are wandering aimlessly. It is time for clarity on the purpose of work and God’s intentions for His people. If the “Called” are to be a light unto the world, they must have a proper understanding of vocation if they are to guide others to the covenanting God who concerns Himself with the totality of a believer’s life. As Daniel Migliore has argued,

The vocation of a Christian is not to be confused with having a job by which one earns one’s livelihood. Whatever one’s job or profession, as a Christian one is called to be a partner in God’s mission in the world. Christian life involves inward growth and renewal, but it does not turn in on itself. It participates in a movement outward to others and forward to the future of the completion of God’s redemptive activity.³⁴

³³ Barna Group, *Multi-Careering*, 29. All of the statistics in this paragraph were reported by the Barna Group and accessed through this resource.

³⁴ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*

Why Must Christians Work?

Theologians are agreed in observing that God originally intended for humanity to work. According to Scripture, work is first presented in Genesis 2 and was instituted with the command to “keep” the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15). It is through divinely appointed work that humanity would participate with the Creator in exercising dominion over the Garden. Loder has argued that through this dominion, humanity would participate in the very action of creation.³⁵ Therefore, work was “not a necessary evil but, as God intended, is part of our nature and good.”³⁶ What must be clearly understood is that the institution of work preceded the fall. After this tremendous failing, when sin entered into the world in Genesis 3 and corrupted the good intentions of God, work became toil and a curse.³⁷ Sin turned God’s gift to His children, which was sharing in His image and His creation through work, from joy into struggle and difficulty. Understanding this course of biblical events is pivotal for believers because it explains the ongoing difficulties that Christians face in the workplace. Sebastian Traeger and Greg Gilbert have argued this point.

Understanding that part of the Bible’s story and work’s place in it is actually crucial for us as Christians, because it helps explain why our work will always, to some degree or another, be marked by frustration. Work is hard because both we and the world around us have been affected by our turning away from God.³⁸

God never intended for believers to struggle in their work, but to find joy through participation with Him. Unfortunately, sin entered into the creation, and now humanity struggles to find meaning in their work. Morley has accurately portrayed the situation in

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 183.

³⁵ Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit*, 173. Robert Benne makes the same point. “Work becomes participation in God’s ongoing care for the creation.” Robert Benne, *Ordinary Saints: An Introduction to the Christian Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988), 165.

³⁶ Hammett, “Human Nature,” 362.

³⁷ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 535.

³⁸ Sebastian Traeger and Greg Gilbert, *The Gospel at Work: How Working for King Jesus Gives Purpose and Meaning to Our Jobs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 15.

which humanity now finds itself. “Because of the fall, we must do our work while feeling the prick of thorns.”³⁹

So, if work has been completely altered from its original intent, what should the modern day Christian hope for from their work? What redeeming message can be given to overcome the frustrations and stress that routinely beats down on believers in the workplace? First, it must be understood that even for believers who live in a post-fall world, work is still intended for the glory of God. The primary calling discussed above is a call to live for God in totality. God does not desire compartments of a believer’s life. He desires all of the believer’s life. When the totality of the call is connected to the Creator’s original plan for humanity to be fulfilled by work and to participate with Him through these endeavors, then it is clear that His call to the Christian must also include their vocation. Therefore, the totality of the work that Christians perform in response to their calling, should be properly understood to be glorifying to God. When Christians use their gifts and skills and fulfill their callings through a vocation, God is glorified.

Hammett supports this point.

Seeing the purpose or goal of work as the glory of God is an idea with many implications and serves to tie together numerous aspects of the doctrine of work. For example, work is an inherent part of being a creature made in God’s image, for the overall purpose of our creation is to glorify God. As part of God’s original creation, work is a good thing. It is good and just as a means to some other good; it is good to work. It is not an evil necessity from which we seek to escape.⁴⁰

So, if all of a believer’s life is to be an offering to God’s glory, then this by necessity includes the workplace. Therefore, as an offering to God’s glory, fulfilling a vocation is also a form of worship. When Christians live for God in totality, then God is glorified and worshipped through that commitment and dedication. As a result, even in a postlapsarian world, work still should bring joy to the life of a believer because they do

³⁹ Morley, *A Man’s Guide to Work*, 15.

⁴⁰ Hammett, “Human Nature,” 394.

not work to merely provide money or the comforts of life. The work is truly service that is rendered to the Lord Himself. It is for God that the believer ultimately works. This is the most important fact a believer should always remember regarding the work to which he or she has been called. A believer does not work for himself, a family, boss, or lifestyle. The believer works, and sometimes toils, to the glory of God, thereby worshiping Him through that effort.⁴¹

If work is an act of worship, bringing glory to God, then a proper conclusion of this logic is that all work done for His glory is acceptable and worthy. This is in contrast to the discussion above in which the “Catholic” distortion presented a spiritual dualism that placed the work of the worthy sacred over the inferior toil of the secular. However, when work is done for the glory and worship of God, this forced separation falls by the wayside as the unbiblical tenet that it is. Not surprisingly, this was a church teaching that Martin Luther railed against during the Reformation. Having served as a monk himself, Luther had full understanding of the mindset that would place the sacred over the secular, and he rebuked it as false teaching.

It follows from this argument that there is no true, basic difference between laymen and priests, princes, and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status. They are all of the spiritual estate, all are truly priests, bishops, and popes. But they do not all have the same work to do. Just as all priests and monks do not have the same work. This is the teaching of St. Paul in Romans 12 [4-5] and I Corinthians 12 [12] and in I Peter 2[9]], as I have said above, namely, that we are all one body of Christ the Head, and all members one of another. Christ does not have two different bodies, one temporal, the other spiritual. There is but one Head and one body. Therefore, just as those who are now called “spiritual,” that is, priests, bishops, or popes, are neither different from other Christians nor superior to them, except that they are charged with the administration of the word of God and the sacraments, which is their work and office, so it is with the temporal authorities. They bear the sword and rod in their hand to punish the wicked and protect the good. A cobbler, a smith, a peasant – each

⁴¹ Traeger and Gilbert, *The Gospel at Work*, 16-17. The statements are supported by this quote from the footnoted text. “Work is not just a way to pass the time and make money. Your job is actually service that you render to the Lord himself . . . What you do in your job is actually done in service to King Jesus! He is the One who deployed you there for this time of your life, and it is for him that you ultimately work . . . No matter what you do, your job has inherent purpose and meaning because you are doing it ultimately for the King. Who you work for is more important than what you do . . . You work for Jesus. That fact is the most important thing you can know and remember about your work.”

has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops. Further, everyone must benefit and serve every other by means of his own work or office so that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, just as all the members of the body serve one another [I Cor 12:14-26].⁴²

Luther argues clearly that a cobbler, a smith, even a peasant, are as worthy as a priest or bishop when they offer their work to God. Luther even goes so far in another writing as to argue that when a father is washing diapers and performing other menial tasks, God and His angels are smiling because the father is doing so in “Christian faith” to the glory of God.⁴³ Even the act of changing diapers can be an act of worship to God.

Writing during the same historical period, the Swiss Reformer, John Calvin had similar comments. “From this will arise also a singular consolation: that no task will be so sordid and base, provided you obey your calling in it, that it will not shine and be reckoned very precious in God’s sight.”⁴⁴ It is clear that both Luther and Calvin believed and taught that Scripture sees all work done for the glory of God as acceptable and of eternal worth.

Writing three hundred years later, in a very different context but with the same message, Charles Spurgeon bellowed in London, preaching that all work was acceptable to God. He is quoted here at length because of the power of the words of this “Prince of Preachers.”

You housemaids, you cooks, you nurses, you plowmen, you housewives, you traders, you sailors – your labor is holy if you serve the Lord Christ in it – if by living unto Him as you ought to live The galley slave tugs the oar for Jesus! The menial minister to the Lord. This cheers the darkest shades, for now we no longer complain of the hardness of our lot, but rejoice in it because we bear all for Jesus – and the burden which we carry is His Cross which He, Himself, places on

⁴² Martin Luther, “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation,” in *Three Treatises* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1970), 14-15. Robert Benne in his footnoted work above adds to this discussion by commenting on Luther’s views. “Luther insisted that a humble milkmaid does more for the kingdom than the monk in his cell.” Benne, *Ordinary Saints*, 165.

⁴³ Martin Luther. *The Estate of Marriage*, accessed November 4, 2013. <http://pages.uoregon.edu/dluebke/Reformations441/LutherMarriage.htm>. 16.

⁴⁴ John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, in vol. 20 of The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 724.

our shoulders! This ensures us a reward for all we do. If in our service we receive but little thanks from man and, if, after a life of toil, find ourselves but scantily furnished for old age, we will not complain, for our recompense is sure, our rewards is in the hands of One who never forgets His servants! There is no unrewarded toil in the service of the Lord Christ, even a cup of cold water He remembers. He who serves Christ shall have it said of him at last, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” and in the fullness of His Master’s joy, into which He shall enter, He shall forget that for a while he lived unremunerated among the sons of men! Let this stimulate your zeal, my Brethren! If you serve the Lord Christ, serve Him well!⁴⁵

Spurgeon comes to a very important point when he argues that there is “no unrewarded toil in the service of the Lord, even a cup of cold water He remembers.” Many jobs in the Western workplace are, in fact, menial and tedious. They do not appear to be places of great joy. However, this teaching that all work can be done for God’s glory and His worship must raise the eternal value of every workplace. While there may still be toil, all work done unto God has intrinsic eternal value.

These three titans of the church are not in any way isolated from more recent theological discussion on this topic. Their arguments have been further developed for new generations with each new age of Christianity. C. S. Lewis, writing in the twentieth century for students in the midst of World War II, has this to say in his lecture “Learning in War Time.”

We are now in a position to answer the view that human culture is an inexcusable frivolity on the part of creatures loaded with such awful responsibilities as we. I reject at once an idea which lingers in the mind of some modern people that cultural activities are in their own right spiritual and meritorious – as though scholars and poets were intrinsically more pleasing to God than scavengers and bootblacks. I think it was Matthew Arnold who first used the English word spiritual in the sense of the German *geistlich*, and so inaugurated this most dangerous and most anti-Christian error. Let us clear it forever from our minds. The work of Beethoven and the work of a charwoman become spiritual on precisely the same condition, that of being offered to God, of being done humbly “as to the Lord.” This does not, of course, mean that it is for anyone a mere toss-up whether he should sweep rooms or compose symphonies. A mole must dig to the glory of God and a cock must crow. We are members of one body, but differentiated members, each with his own vocation. A man’s upbringing, his talents, his circumstances, are usually a tolerable index of his vocation We can therefore pursue knowledge as such, and beauty as such, in the sure confidence that by so doing we are either advancing to the vision

⁴⁵ Charles Spurgeon. “All For Jesus! Sermon 1205,” accessed November 1, 2013. <http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols19-21/chs1205.pdf>. 3.

of God ourselves or indirectly helping others to do so.⁴⁶

Again, the argument is made that all work becomes spiritual “on precisely the same condition, that of being offered to God.” Regardless of the “value” human wisdom may attach to the nature of the work, the deciding factor is to whom the work is offered. If Christians are following their secondary calling into a vocation that is offered to God’s glory, then believers can be confident that they are, in their own way and within their abilities, “advancing to the vision of God ourselves or indirectly helping others to do so.”

Finally, the teaching that all work offered to God is eternally valuable can be found in the twenty-first century as well. The need for this teaching is hardly debatable considering the earlier statistics discussed that highlight the current lack of understanding on this topic in this new century. The Western world has done no better, and perhaps much worse, than past generations in understanding how the workplace is an arena that can glorify the Lord. The question should not be “How does faith and work connect?” Instead, the question should be “How can work truly be understood outside of faith?” Sebastian Traeger and Greg Gilbert have written the following for workers of the twenty-first century and provide a nice summary of this teaching.

Our work is not something we do in addition to our growth as a follower of Christ. Our work, here and now, is an expression of our Christian faith. Everything we do is an act of worship to God and an act of following Jesus, whether it is at home, at work, or at church. But it’s also true that when you’re writing a memo for your boss, you’re worshiping God and following Jesus. When you’re talking on the phone to a customer, you’re worshiping God and following Jesus. When you’re placing an order or driving a rivet, you’re worshiping God and following Jesus. It’s all worship, and it’s all discipleship. “Whatever you do,” Paul writes, “work at it with all your heart.” Why? Because you work for the King. Because it is the Lord Christ you are serving.⁴⁷

So, in summary, the workplace is a component of the life and calling God has extended to His children. The Scriptures teach that work was God’s original plan for

⁴⁶ C. S. Lewis, “Learning in War Time,” in *The Weight of Glory* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 55.

⁴⁷ Traeger and Gilbert, *The Gospel at Work*, 40.

humanity and has intrinsic eternal worth. Then, work done in accordance with the believer's call is an offering of worship to God and to His glory. Additionally, earthly value systems regarding work have no standing in eternity. Any vocation that is offered to God is accepted and imbued with eternal significance. "Faith is not a private thing to be kept in a compartment. Instead, on the job your faith should season every action and word so that God will receive praise, glory, and honor."⁴⁸

Work as Service

An additional consideration that must be taken into account is the nature of work as a means to help and serve others. Lewis alluded to this concept in the work quoted above when he wrote that Christians can indirectly help others advance towards the vision of God. God has called His believers to be the salt and light of the earth (Matt 5:13-16). The Bible is very clear that Christians are to be visible representations of a God who calls His children into community. Furthermore, as this is the God who calls for totality, then the workplace must be an arena in which God expects believers to be a witness for Him to the lost. Christians are to be an army in the secular workplace for their King, bearing witness to His love and desire for relationship. The secular workplace is the place where God has placed most of His children, and He expects that believers will shed light in these dark areas.

Therefore, the very purpose of work is to improve individual's lives by bringing them into a right relationship with God and others. Christians are to liberate people from the darkness surrounding them in a secular, sinful world, improving their lives in the process.⁴⁹ Hammett has noted that Paul wrote Ephesians 6:6-7 and Colossians

⁴⁸ Morley, *A Man's Guide to Work*, 19.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 30, 33. The statements made are based in the previous footnoted work. "This is the ultimate purpose of work: to bring people into right relationship with God and with each other. Once you see your work like the way God sees your work life, it is a perspective that will permeate every human encounter, every decision you make, and every minute you allocate. The purpose of work is to improve people's lives – to bring them into right relationship with God and others . . . That's why God calls people into the marketplace. God sends us into the marketplace to liberate people from "the groan"! We are not

3:34 to slaves, encouraging them to serve their masters as if they were serving the Lord. “Therefore, any job that blesses others in some way is a way to glorify God.”⁵⁰ If this is a God who will not forget a “cup of water” offered by His children, then He will not overlook the smallest and humblest attempts by believers to work in such a way as to bring glory to Him through honest acts of love and service to others in the workplace.

Without the understanding that work is both for the glory of God as an act of worship and also for the benefit of others, many in the modern Western workplace fall into two predominant errors regarding work. Without a sense of purpose for their lives and the separation created between faith and work by society, it is little surprise that individuals in the workplace would tend to vacillate between two extremes in their views of the work they perform. The first of these errors is idolatry; to elevate work as the end of all ends. This is the concept that work has value in and of itself because of the societal position that it affords the individual. On the opposite end of the spectrum is the second error, which is to view the job with ambivalence, leading to idleness.⁵¹ Both of these errors are incompatible with the Christian view of work as a means to give God glory and to serve others. However, they are natural results of Western society’s confusion related to work.

Idolatry is the error of worshiping something instead of and in place of God, who rightfully deserves an individual’s praise. This ill-placed worship can occur towards virtually anything in an individual’s life. Common examples are family, possessions, money, and most important for this study, work. When individuals have a void within themselves, or are unfulfilled within their life, elevating work to fill this need is a common mistake of Western society. This error is often quite negative for an individual

only an occupation force; we are liberators.

⁵⁰ Hammett, “Human Nature,” 366.

⁵¹ Traeger and Gilbert, *The Gospel at Work*, 18-31. The identification and naming of these two errors as “idolatry” and “idleness” has been presented by Traeger and Gilbert in their work.

because of a sociological phenomenon known as “role identification.” This occurs when individuals identify with a particular role they hold within their sphere of influence as the basis of their own worth or “identity.” Therefore, when individuals attach their role in society, or essentially their worth, to a particular occupation, it is but a short step to making an idol of the work itself. How do we know that this is a problem in Western society? Knapp has noted that counselors acknowledge that the loss of a job can be a devastating loss of an individual’s identity, because the occupational role which defined the individual has been taken away, leaving an emptiness and void within the individual.⁵² All of this has led Guinness to point back to the oft-repeated phrase “that the modern world has scrambled things so badly that today we worship our work, we work at our play, and we play at our worship.”⁵³

The second error common among workers in Western society is one of idleness in the workplace. When individuals do not view their work as meaningful or fulfilling, they often are unmotivated to perform their duties with any attention in regards to quality. Idleness can be the result of misunderstanding the role of work in the believer’s life. If the believer fails to understand that work is ordained by God and that through work we give God glory, then work can be a mere means to an end; a necessary evil to pay the bills and to maintain a lifestyle. This is the common mindset of the “working to live” philosophy. The work itself is considered to have no value beyond what creature comforts it provides. As a result, the individual gives it the least amount of effort necessary to maintain employment. Such individuals do not grasp the concept already discussed that every task, if given to God, is of inherent eternal value. Martin Luther, John Calvin, and the others presented would loudly denounce such a view as unbiblical. The value of the work is not in the task itself, but rather the value of the One

⁵² Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 68.

⁵³ Guinness, *The Call*, 160.

to whom it is offered. However, when individuals fail to view their work as an aspect of the sovereign God's will for their life, they can only judge the value of the work based upon how it makes them feel. Therefore, when the response is to approach the work in idleness, God is not glorified.

Also lost in this mindset is the biblical teaching that one of the primary reasons for work is to serve and bless others. Work is intended to bring others closer to a right relationship with God. How an individual works speaks volumes to others. Christians are called to perform their vocations in a way that gives honor to God among the peoples. Working hard with a joyful heart can be as strong a witness as speaking words of salvation. However, idleness distracts others away from God and does not bless or serve. Ultimately, idleness is a faith issue. Regardless of the opinion a believer holds of the particular job, does the believer trust God to redeem and honor the work to which he or she has been called? Idleness would indicate that the answer is no. However, as Traeger and Gilbert argue, "Our ultimate sense of meaning and purpose as Christians should come from knowing that everything we do is for Jesus' glory, which in turn should motivate us to work with all our heart wherever he has deployed us in this season of our lives."⁵⁴ In the final analysis, the individual believer must trust that work offered with a full heart to a loving God will be elevated to a much greater height than any work done without.

Conclusion

The modern Western world has experienced a deeply negative lack of understanding and purpose related to work. While many desire to find meaning from the large portion of their lives spent at work, they struggle to have a healthy relationship with their workplace. Unfortunately, these struggles are not limited to non-Christians and the

⁵⁴ Traeger and Gilbert, *The Gospel at Work*, 68.

secular modern world. Christians also struggle to see God's hand in their vocation and His purposes in the struggles they face within the workplace. The solution to these difficulties is a strong biblical understanding of calling and vocation. If work is properly viewed as God's original intent for humanity, while purposed for His glory and the blessings of others, Christians can bridge the gap between faith and work that has been so difficult to achieve, while also sharing this light with others. It is through the biblical view of work as calling and vocation that Christians will be able to theologically connect their Sunday faith with their Monday employment.

CHAPTER 4

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES FOR CONNECTION BETWEEN FAITH AND WORK

While the doctrines of calling and vocation can provide the biblical and theological basis for addressing the question of how faith relates to work, this basis alone will not provide the guidance necessary for Christians to achieve practical and visible connections from Sunday faith to Monday employment. Calling and vocation can provide the solid biblical foundation for believers to gain greater purpose, meaning and insight into God’s intentions for their work and job, and how to avoid the theological concepts of idolatry and idleness. However, there ultimately remains a lack of practical guidance on how a believer can actually connect these two spheres if calling and vocation are considered independent of practical solutions. The ultimate goal of connecting Sunday to Monday must be achieved for the believer by melding biblical and theological concepts with practical application. Therefore, this chapter will address these practical concerns by focusing on five leadership principles and actions that are both biblical, as well as highly regarded by secular leadership literature. These five principles provide “contact points” between the believer’s faith and the life of the workplace.

Servant

Servant leadership has received a great deal more attention from researchers in recent years. While the theory was first articulated as a leadership principle by Robert Greenleaf in the nineteen seventies, the interest from researchers and the academic literature was not immediate. Gary Yukl has observed this lack of attention in the early

days of servant leadership and believes that the increased interest over the past few years “may be a reaction to corporate scandals and declining confidence in elected officials.”¹ Bernard Bass agrees with Yukl’s assessment. In fact, Bass believes that there is an observable trend towards spirituality within the workplace. “Society is undergoing a spiritual revolution and a new awakening that cannot be ignored by organizational leaders. This awakening is moving people to a higher level of transcendence and morality.”² Bass even observes that some in the business world see spirituality as a new type of management theory that provides “an opportunity to exploit religious language in service of organizational performance.”³ While believers should correctly avoid the exploitation of Christian language for purely business reasons, it is clear that the business world is seeing value in the presence of “spirituality” within the workplace environment. It should also be clearly stated at the very beginning of this discussion that “spiritual” values do not equate to a Christian worldview. However, this openness and willingness on the part of the business world does provide a believer with a welcome opportunity to impact the current trend in a positive manner, as well as benefit from this spiritual movement to create personal connection points between work and faith.

Servant leadership is the perfect connection point for Christians to begin with to meld work and faith because “Servant leadership is deeply spiritual but has become a secular approach to promoting service to others, empowerment, shared decision making, participative management, and a holistic approach to work and to personal

¹ Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 7th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2012), 419-20. Peter Northouse agrees by writing, “Interest in the nature of ethical leadership has continued to grow, particularly because of the many recent scandals in corporate America. On the academic front, there has also been a strong interest in exploring the nature of ethical leadership.” Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010), 378.

² Bernard M. Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, & Managerial Applications*, 4th ed. (New York: Free Press, 2008), 213.

³ Ibid.

development.”⁴ In other words, the secular world of business has taken Greenleaf’s concepts and used them to improve the workplace environment and increase the bottom line. Therefore, if the business world has recognized the strength of a “spiritual” theory as a baseline, then a Christian has the perfect place to begin to make personal connections between faith and work.

However, before these connections are made, there must be a discussion of what is actually meant by the term servant leadership. As mentioned above, Greenleaf began the conversation after a reading of Hermann Hesse’s “Journey to the East.” From this story Greenleaf deduced that “a great leader is seen as servant first, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness.”⁵ For Greenleaf, an individual is a servant by making sure that other individual’s highest priority needs are being served. Therefore, the test for a successful servant leader is simply “Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?”⁶

Therefore, Greenleaf developed servant leadership as a theory that prioritizes the other. The greatest leaders are the ones who build up, develop, and empower those who work under them on the organizational chart. Therefore, when a workplace is observed where others are growing and developing, Greenleaf argues that there is a servant leader present. Not surprising then, servant leadership is not a checklist of practices and activities, as much as a “philosophy that embraces certain principles but few prescriptions.”⁷ Pat MacMillan has argued, “Servant leadership is much more an

⁴ Bernard M. Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership*, 213.

⁵ Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*. 25th anniv. ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002), 21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁷ Robert Greenleaf, *On Becoming a Servant-Leader* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 4.

attitude than a skill The key to becoming a servant leader is to see leadership as a role from which to serve, not a position to be served.”⁸ Ken Gangel has observed, “Servant leadership is an attitude with which we approach the leadership task; it is not bound by the situations in which we find ourselves.”⁹ Finally, Peter Drucker summarizes servant leadership as an attitude in his work for leaders in non-profit management positions. “Non-profit people must respect their customers and their donors enough to listen to their values and understand their satisfactions. They do not impose the executive’s or the organization’s own views and egos on those they serve.”¹⁰

Servant leadership is an approach to leadership that places others first and strives to create a better organization and business workplace through the acts of supporting and empowering others. Amazingly, as discussed above, this is a form of leadership that is growing in strength and consideration in the places of power on Wall Street and Main Street U.S.A. The very places that are frequently presented as lecherous and driven only by money and profit are embracing a leadership philosophy that emphasizes raising up others as opposed to running them down in a drive to get to the top of the corporate ladder or earnings reports. However, what is not surprising to a believer in Christ is the inherent Christian ideals embodied within servant leadership. Richard Leyda goes so far as to argue that “servanthood, as Jesus makes clear in Mark 10:45, is the dominant biblical image of leadership. Greatness in God’s kingdom is equated with serving others.”¹¹ In addition to the Mark 10 passage, the recounting in the Gospel of

⁸ Pat MacMillan, *The Performance Factor: Unlocking the Secrets of Teamwork* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2001), 99.

⁹ Ken Gangel, *Team Leadership in Christian Ministry*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), 443.

¹⁰ Peter F. Drucker, *Managing the Nonprofit Organization: Principles and Practices* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990), 103. Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr. make a similar point in their work *In Search of Excellence* when they argue that the excellent companies stay close to the customer while learning from those they serve. Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America’s Best-Run Companies* (New York: MJF Books, 2004), 14.

¹¹ Richard Leyda, “Developing Leaders,” *Management Essentials for Christian Ministry*, ed. Shawn J. Anthony and James Estep (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2005), 298.

John (13:3-17) of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples is another strong biblical passage that supports the Christian view that a leader must be a servant to truly lead. If the Son of God could demonstrate leadership by washing feet, which was a vile job in first century Palestine, then His followers should not shy away from leading through serving others. The truly amazing aspect of servant leadership is that twenty-first century leadership theory and literature agrees.

One additional aspect of servant leadership should be discussed. One of the risks of servant leadership is the potential risk to fail as a leader as a result of hyper-focusing on others, to the point of being a detriment to the company or to employees. Can Servant leaders still hold employees accountable? Can a business that focuses on others be profitable in the long haul? Patrick Morley addresses these questions by writing that

to love and serve doesn't mean that we lower our expectations for how people treat us. In other words, to love someone doesn't mean you let them get away with mistreating you or others, not paying their bills as agreed, routinely missing deadlines, making promises they don't keep, and so on. That's not loving them; that's enabling them to continue bad behavior. I will love and serve you best not by lowering my expectations of you, but by increasing my expectations of myself.¹²

Simply stated, servant leadership does not seek to enable bad behavior. It is not “weak” leadership where deadlines do not exist, accountability is lacking, or leaders look the other way on personnel issues. It is not a leadership theory without leadership. Instead, it is a philosophy of leadership that insists on empowering, while holding everyone accountable. Servant leadership does not advocate leadership through a “weak” leader, but instead, one who is willing to look beyond themselves and seek to serve.

So how can a philosophical leadership theory without a list of tasks be a practical method for Christians to connect faith and work? How can such a theory provide a framework for moving Sunday faith into Monday work? Servant leadership can provide a framework specifically because it is not a task oriented leadership theory.

¹² Patrick Morley, *A Man's Guide to Work: 12 Ways to Honor God on the Job* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 71.

Christian writings on faith and work often run the risk of becoming overly situational and very un-practical in the process. The guidance can center on such topics as “How to be a Christian when your boss is mean?” or “How should a Christian witness in the workplace?”¹³ These types of situations do occur in the workplace and Christian advice could potentially be helpful if believers find themselves in that particular situation and specific instance. However, the examples and advice often provided to believers are so specific as to be unhelpful unless the actual situation presents itself. Therefore, what Christians truly need are large philosophical brush strokes of leadership that can apply in a multitude of workplace situations.

In essence, in order to be practical, the connection points between faith and work must be non-situational, transcendent concepts that can apply to the multitude of situations faced during the workweek. Servant leadership provides exactly this type of framework. Because servant leadership is an attitude as opposed to a skillset, it can function throughout the workweek in a multitude of workplace situations. The primary necessary component of servant leadership is a willingness to be a servant, and to act as a servant when opportunities present themselves, and these opportunities exist everyday in the workplace. A believer does not have to wait for the specific situation to occur in which to “be” a Christian. Everyday activities and workplace interactions become opportunities to exercise faith at work.

It is in this way that servant leadership becomes a “connection point” between faith and work. Whenever believers are serving another in the workplace, they are participating in a fundamentally Christian activity. In addition, the act of serving is a practice fundamental to Christian faith that has gained prominence and legitimacy in the

¹³ These types of examples are evident in Sebastien Traeger and Greg Gilbert, *The Gospel at Work: How Working for King Jesus Gives Purpose and Meaning to Our Jobs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), as well as Morley A Man's Guide to Work, footnoted above. Both of these writings are helpful, well presented, and used throughout this work. However, the presented critique is that when these writings move from theology and theory into practical guidance, the “practical” aspect of the guidance is lost. The guidance offered runs the risk of becoming so situational as to be unhelpful.

eyes of secular business. Therefore, Christians can recognize in the midst of their workweek that when decisions are made, actions are taken, or strategies are developed, if believers are serving others in these actions, they are bringing their faith into the workplace and impacting that environment for the Kingdom of God through values that are shared by both the sacred and the secular.

Steward

It has already been noted above that servant leadership was slowly accepted by leadership researchers and has just recently begun to receive attention, especially in comparison to other leadership theories. However, in some ways this recent increase in interest has also handicapped detailed discussions of distinct leadership theories that are often lumped together and referred to as “ethical” or “transformational.” While these categories can certainly be helpful, they are often very broad with several different nuanced theories of leadership placed under the same rubric. No doubt some of the explanation for this combining of theories is a result of the nature, as discussed above, of servant leadership as a “philosophy” as opposed to a set of tasks or skills, creating difficulties in differentiating between similar but distinctly different theories. However, these broad leadership categories do not do justice to the many different characteristics inherent within these types of leadership theories. At times, the researchers appear to miss the many different voices within the “ethical” leadership conversation.¹⁴

Stewardship is an example of a leadership theory where there is a lack of dialogue centered primarily on its unique contributions and distinctions from other forms of related leadership theories. Often stewardship is placed within a larger leadership category as simply an aspect of that larger category. However, this is to miss the power of stewardship as a leadership theory with its own strengths and contributions to the

¹⁴ Peter Northouse is representative of this weakness. While his work is significant, there is a lack of distinction within his work on ethical leadership styles.

conversation. Simply put, stewardship has seldom been given its own place at the table in the discussions of leadership. However, Bernard Bass has presented an appropriate distinction between servant leadership and stewardship, allowing stewardship to stand as a leadership theory all its own.

Leaders who are stewards are similar to but not the same as servant leaders. Stewards try to balance the interests of all the different constituents of their organizations: shareholders, owners, managers, peers, subordinates, customers, clients, and community. Servant leaders are especially concerned about constituencies with less power or more need for help.¹⁵

So while the two theories are similar, they focus on different aspects of the organization. Servant leadership wants to serve the people within the organization, but recognizes that many times this will focus on those who most need service or guidance. Stewardship as a leadership theory is focused on the potentially significant variety of different groups within the organization. Now it must be made clear that stewardship contains a strong component and commitment to the service of others, but the focus is not on the act of service as an end unto itself.¹⁶ Rather, serving within stewardship leadership is a component necessary to fulfill the needs of the larger business. The two theories should not be viewed as unrelated, but it must be recognized that they are distinct, with different primary concerns.

This distinction is further clarified by Peter Block, in his work *Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self-Interest*, the standard-bearer text for stewardship as a leadership theory. Block defined stewardship as “the willingness to be accountable for the well-being of the larger organization by operating in service, rather than in control, of those around us. Stated simply, it is accountability without control or compliance.”¹⁷ Again, “Stewardship asks us to be deeply accountable for the outcome of an institution,

¹⁵ Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership*, 51.

¹⁶ Peter Block, *Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1993), 41.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, xx.

without acting to define purpose for others, control of others, or take care of others.”¹⁸

Therefore, stewardship emphasizes the need for leaders to view the needs of the organization as their most important focus. While this will often be accomplished through individuals, it is the health of the organization that drives decision-making. The steward asks, “What is best for the business?” as the guiding principle to all organizational questions.

Drucker was a strong proponent of leaders possessing a leadership worldview impacted by stewardship principles. In writing the work *The Effective Executive*, Drucker argued that effective executives ask one main question when making difficult decisions.

“Is this the right thing for the enterprise?” They do not ask if it’s right for the owners, the stock price, the employees, or the executives. Of course they know that the shareholders, employees, and executives are important constituencies who have to support a decision, or at least acquiesce in it, if the choice is to be effective. They know that the share price is important not only for the shareholders but also for the enterprise, since the price/earnings ratio sets the cost of capital. But they also know that a decision that isn’t right for the enterprise will ultimately not be right for any of the stakeholders.¹⁹

Getting the right answer is often the result of asking the right question, and this is exactly Drucker’s point. The “effective” executive must depend on the strength of stewardship as a guiding principle to answer the questions in such a way as to strengthen the organization first, and the many within that organization second. What is good for the enterprise is ultimately good for the many who make up the enterprise.

However, it is impossible to lead an organization without interacting and working with others. Organizations are dependent upon individuals to accomplish goals, and thus, leaders of organizations must invariably deal with personnel issues. Therefore, one significant aspect that must be discussed is the relationship of leading through stewardship while also balancing the leadership duty of managing the performance of

¹⁸ Block, *Stewardship*, 18.

¹⁹ Peter F. Drucker, *The Effective Executive: The Definitive Guide to Getting the Right Things Done* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006), xiii.

others. How can a leader balance the proper handling of all the myriad of individual needs within one organization? More specifically, how does a leader address personnel decisions in a stewardship work environment? One of the most powerful and descriptive answers to this tension is provided by Jim Collins in his very influential work *Good to Great*.²⁰ Collins argues that making successful personnel decisions in the business world is similar to considering individuals on a bus. The organization must take stock of the personnel situation and discern whether or not the right people are on the company's bus. Collins writes that the organizations that moved from simply good to truly great started with the "main point" that the right people must be on board, in the correct seats, and conversely, that the wrong people must get off. The analogy works because it is so clear. If a company is to become a "great" company, then personnel decisions must be made with the basis centered on what is best for the company. Drucker also supports this position of beginning with the health of the company when making "people" decisions in his work *Managing the Nonprofit Organization*. "An effective non-profit executive owes it to the organization to have a competent staff wherever performance is needed. To allow non-performers to stay on means letting down both the organization and the cause."²¹

Therefore, it should be clear that the secular literature supports the concept of leading through stewardship. However, it should also be clear to most Christians that stewardship is a foundational biblical principle present from the earliest point possible. God tells Adam in the Garden of Eden to be a steward by tending the creation (Gen 1:26-30). So, in the very beginning of humanity's relationship with God, the relationship of master to steward was already established. In essence, it is the role of humanity to represent God in the care and supervision of the creation given to humanity. As human

²⁰ Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 44.

²¹ Drucker, *Managing the Nonprofit Organization*, 154.

history continued along, the representative and supervisory components of stewardship were further developed. In the middle ages, a steward was the representative of a noble or other highly positioned individual or family within society.²² The steward was the one responsible to the “owner” regarding the management and operation of the estate.

Coming back to the biblical text, Jesus tells the Parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14-28) where three servants are given different amounts to “tend” while the master is away. Two excel, while one does not. Two are elevated, and one is demoted and rejected.

Albert Mohler presents one of the strongest Christian presentations of stewardship as a leadership principle in his work *The Conviction to Lead*. Mohler argues that a leader must function as a steward because to fail this test is to fail to be a true leader.

A leader unwilling to exercise the responsibility of office has no business accepting that stewardship Leaders must keep one truth constantly in focus – the office you hold exists because the organization depends on it Someone has the responsibility to answer for the organization. Someone has the authority to hire and to fire. Someone proposes a budget and has spending authority. In any organization of size, someone has executive authority. The wise leader knows that the stewardship of office is a matter of highest priority. The health and welfare of the entire institution depends on it. At times, this is the only authority the leader really has.²³

Mohler continues by insisting that true leadership rests in the understanding that individuals are given the opportunity and the responsibility by God Himself, and this is a responsibility that the believer must take extremely seriously. As much for the modern leader as Adam in Genesis, Christians are to understand that believers are given the role of steward by God and they are accountable to Him for the results, which was the same message presented by Jesus in the Parable of the Talents discussed above. Mohler states it best when he writes, “The bottom line is this: We are merely stewards, not lords,

²² Frances Gies and Joseph Gies, *Daily Life in Medieval Times* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 1990), 52-55.

²³ R. Albert Mohler Jr., *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership that Matters* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishing, 2012), 109.

of all that is put into our trust. The sovereignty of God puts us in our place, and that place is in God's service.²⁴

So stewardship is a principle valued by both secular and Christian leadership literature. Working for the good of the company is clearly valued by those within the organization. In addition, most believers in the workplace must make decisions at some point in time as they go about their job duties. They may not all be managers or executives, but every believer in the workplace must perform duties, make decisions, and produce a product that affects the overall health of the organization or business. If a believer receives a paycheck, then the organization has deemed that believer's service to have value to the company. Therefore, when a believer is acting on behalf of the good of the company or business, then he or she is practicing stewardship. Clearly this is a significantly large category, potentially encompassing virtually every act a believer may offer up before God during his or her workday, but this is precisely the reason why the act of being a "steward" is such an indispensable "connection point" between faith and work. Stewardship can be practiced on the job by virtually every Christian, and it has the added bonus of being valued by secular organizations. When a believer is acting for the good of the company, when decisions are made that correctly protect assets, when personnel decisions are made for the health of the organization, then that believer is acting in stewardship, which is glorifying to God and a powerful witness to others whom the believer comes in contact during the workweek. The principle of stewardship provides the believer the opportunity to see his or her multitude of workplace acts done for the good of the organization as a connection between faith and work.

Shepherd

Unlike servant leadership and stewardship, shepherding as a term to define a

²⁴ Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 135.

leadership principle is a purely sacred concept. It creates the pastoral image of the shepherd guiding his sheep, hearkening back to images of King David, and to the New Testament shepherds in the fields outside of Bethlehem who were the first to hear that Christ was born. These are not images that translate well into secular leadership literature or the workplace. However, the characteristics that define shepherding as a leadership principle are very evident in the secular literature, and in the discussion below there will be connections made between Christian leadership literature and its counterpart in the secular realm.

Timothy Laniak has written a strong work on shepherding as a leadership motif in his work *Shepherds After My Own Heart*. Laniak argues that the Bible has a great deal to say about the shepherd as leader. “One of the primary metaphors by which biblical authors conceptualized leadership is shepherding. This is quite consistent throughout Old and New Testaments.”²⁵ But what is it about the role of shepherds that indicates leadership? What principles do shepherds possess that would lead the inspired biblical writers to see such a job as one of leadership that should be imitated?

The key for Laniak is in the title of his work. It is not just the title or job duties of a shepherd that indicates leadership, but rather the shepherds who have the heart of the Lord. Laniak writes, “It is not just ‘heart’, however, but ‘after my own heart’ that matters. A good shepherd is one who sees what the Owner sees and does what the Owner does.”²⁶ God Himself is presented throughout Scriptures as the ultimate Shepherd of His people, and a shepherd after His own heart must demonstrate the same qualities; they must be “after” the heart of God. The specific godly characteristic that shepherds must possess and demonstrate in imitation of the Heavenly Shepherd is self-sacrifice. Consider the

²⁵ Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherd's After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 21.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

shepherd in the field. He was out in the elements of rain, cold, and heat. He was dirty, and smelled like sheep. He was on constant watch for predators who would hurt the flock, and vigilant to lead his sheep to food and water. These images are evident in the well known Psalm 23 in which the Lord the Shepherd “will lead me beside still waters (Ps. 23:2).” A shepherd lived the life of self-sacrifice, placing the needs of the flock before himself and his own wants and needs. Additionally, one can think of Jesus Himself, who gave Himself as a ransom for many. Jesus is the ultimate example of a self-sacrificing leader.

Therefore, in imitation of Jesus, self-sacrificing leadership occurs whenever individuals protect, guide, and nourish those in their care. It occurs when a leader is willing to act like a shepherd and give up his or her comforts and benefits for the strengthening of the “flock.” Alexander Strauch has written that “a healthy, growing flock of sheep doesn’t just appear; it is the result of the shepherd’s skillful management of sheep and resources A good shepherd elder knows people He knows that they must be slowly and patiently led He loves to learn better skills and methods for managing the flock.”²⁷ Thus, the health and strength of the flock is a direct reflection of the abilities of the shepherd leader. Stephen Macchia has also argued this point by stating that shepherd-leaders imitate Jesus when their “number one priority is the flourishing nature of each sheep.”²⁸ Macchia provides a very strong description of the shepherd leader when he writes,

For a shepherding leader, the instinct is to find greener pasture for the flock under his or her care. The inclination of the shepherd is to nudge the sheep in that direction, for their own good. When the shepherding leader seeks out the interests of the followers and protects them from the enemy’s attacks, the spotlight is appropriately on the needs of the sheep. The measure of an effective shepherd,

²⁷ Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, rev. ed. (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1995), 26.

²⁸ Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Team: Five Traits of Vital Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 150.

therefore, is whether the “sheep” are flourishing as they hear the voice of the shepherd leading them to Jesus, the Good Shepherd.²⁹

Self-Sacrificial Leadership

As discussed above, when the secular literature is reviewed, the term “shepherd leader” does not appear. Nor should this be expected since the term is so laden with Christian imagery. However, the concept of self-sacrifice is a well-known leadership characteristic throughout secular leadership literature. The value of self-sacrificial leadership has been presented in particular through the work of Yeon Choi and Renate Mai-Dalton. Choi defines self-sacrifice as “total/partial abandonment, or permanent/temporary postponement of personal interests, privileges or welfare in the division of labor, distribution of rewards, and/or exercise of power.”³⁰ Therefore, the leader is practicing self-sacrifice whenever he or she is giving up or voluntarily surrendering a benefit or privilege of the job for the good of others.

In addition, self-sacrifice is virtually interchangeable in the leadership literature with the concept of altruism.³¹ Peter Northouse defines altruism as “an approach that suggests that actions are moral if their primary purpose is to promote the best interests of others. From this perspective, a leader may be called on to act in the interests of others, even when it runs contrary to his or her own self-interests.”³²

²⁹ Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Team*, 152.

³⁰ Yeon Choi, “Self-sacrificial Leadership: Empirical Findings and Theoretical Implications,” *Korean Social Science Journal* 30, no. 1 (2003): 131-59, accessed March 7, 2014, [http://kossrec.org/board/imgfile/KSSJ%20Vol.30.no.1\(Yeon_Choi\).pdf.pdf](http://kossrec.org/board/imgfile/KSSJ%20Vol.30.no.1(Yeon_Choi).pdf.pdf), 134.

³¹ Strictly speaking, self-sacrifice and altruism are not exactly the same concept. The *Encyclopedia of Leadership* has observed, “Self-sacrifice is similar to altruism, but focuses more narrowly on the costs of such behavior to the helper.” Patrick Gavan O’Shea, “Altruism,” in *Encyclopedia of Leadership*, ed. James MacGregor Burns (Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire Publishing Group, 2004), 1:30. However, while this distinction should be noted, it falls outside the realm of this work. For the purposes of this work, the two concepts will be considered as interchangeable. The focus and goal of this discussion on self-sacrifice and altruism is to acknowledge their shared focus on the leader’s actions and choices to forego self-interest for the benefit of others. Regardless of minor distinctions between the two concepts, the overall view of the secular leadership literature is that there is value added to an organization when the leader practices self-sacrifice/altruism.

³² Northouse, *Leadership*, 380.

Therefore, the impetus for both self-sacrificial or altruistic actions by leaders focuses on the giving up of benefits and privileges for the benefit of others, and the importance of this behavior on the part of leaders has become highly respected among secular leadership literature.

Dennis Organ has developed the Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) criteria and has concluded through his research that altruism is a foundational component of the construct.³³ An Organizational Citizenship Behavior is defined as an “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization.”³⁴ Therefore, OCBs are actions taken by workers that are beneficial to the organization, and lead to the increase of similar behavior from others, especially when the OCBs are demonstrated by leaders within the organization.³⁵ Organ’s work presents strong evidence that altruism or self-sacrifice is viewed positively within leadership research and literature as a positive contributing factor in the health and strength of organizations.

In addition to contributing positively at the macro-organizational level, altruism and self-sacrifice are also guiding principles at the micro-level of inter-personal relationships and Human Resource management issues. It was noted in the discussion above that stewardship assists and guides personnel situations by considering the issues from the perspective of the organization. Through the lens of stewardship, personnel decisions must be made for the overall health and strength of the company, as the focus is the organization’s entire constituency. However, inter-personal decisions and

³³ O’Shea, “Altruism,” 31.

³⁴ Dennis W. Organ, Philip M. Podsakoff, and Scott Bradley MacKenzie, *Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Its Nature, Antecedents, and Consequences* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2006), 3.

³⁵ O’Shea, “Altruism,” 31.

considerations within the leadership principles of altruism and self-sacrifice begin with and focus on the individual.

This concept of beginning and focusing on the needs of individuals is demonstrated clearly throughout the leadership literature. Collins in *Good to Great* with his analogy of the organizational “bus” evidences this in his research. As discussed above, Collins uses this analogy as a characteristic of “great” companies. The great companies perceive when an individual should stay or get off the bus, or perhaps instead, they simply need to change seats. The initial focus of the analogy is the organizational strength for which all companies should strive. However, Collins has also demonstrated that his analogy has significant implications for those who would seek to lead by considering the wellbeing of others.

Waiting too long before acting is equally unfair to the people who need to get off the bus. For every minute you allow a person to continue holding a seat when you know that person will not make it in the end, you’re stealing a portion of his life, time that he could spend finding a better place where he could flourish. Indeed, if we’re honest with ourselves, the reason we wait too long often has less to do with concern for that person and more to do with our own convenience. He’s doing an okay job and it would be a huge hassle to replace him, so we avoid the issue. Or we find the whole process of dealing with the issue to be stressful and distasteful. So, to save ourselves stress and discomfort, we wait. And wait. And wait. Meanwhile, all the best people are still wondering, “When are they going to do something about this? How long is this going to go on?” The good-to-great leaders, however, would not rush to judgment. Often, they invested substantial effort in determining whether they had someone in the wrong seat before concluding that they had the wrong person on the bus entirely.³⁶

As argued above, the strength of the “bus” analogy is that it is appropriate for a wide variety of situations, much like this current study that seeks to provide connection points between faith and work for believers that provide insight and guidance for a variety of workplace situations and circumstances. Collins argues that it is not “fair” practice to keep a coworker in a position in which he or she is ill-suited, and unfortunately, the continuation of the employee’s situation is oftentimes the result of

³⁶ Collins, *Good to Great*, 56.

employer selfishness. In contrast, a shepherd leader would consider the needs and health of the individual as the starting point, and not stall in making the “right” decision driven oftentimes by their own self-centered needs. Greenleaf in writing on servant leadership makes a similar point.

Gentleness, in itself, is not always kindness. The act may seem hard and unreasonable to the recipient at the time, but it may be the most constructive kindness. Many a person has been fired from a job with immediate devastating effects only to say later that it turned out to be an enormous favor. This is not cited to justify indiscriminate firing. The point is that seemingly harsh actions like this do produce a level of constructive tension in some cases without which it is unlikely that the individuals involved will surmount their own life problems The trouble with passive gentleness is that it may be the cloak behind which hides the unwillingness to develop the concern, the real affection, and the skill required to be kind.³⁷

Therefore, it is not strong leadership to allow, for any set of reasons, an individual to remain in a situation in which they cannot succeed. It is often the responsibility of the self-sacrificial shepherding leader to guide and direct a coworker to “greener pastures” where they can find fulfillment and experience a healthy, productive life. Drucker sums up the self-sacrificial leadership mindset by writing of those who work in non-profit organizations. “People work in non-profits because they believe in the cause. They owe performance, and the executive owes them compassion.” Employers cannot be sacrificial leaders without compassion for those they lead.

Servant Leadership Compared and Contrasted with Self-Sacrificial Leadership

With the Greenleaf quote above arguing for aspects of self-sacrificial leadership in the midst of his discussion of servant leadership, it is justifiable if the relationship between these two leadership principles is unclear. How do these principles relate and how are they differentiated? At the end of the day, are they simply different names for the same theories of leadership? The answer is both yes and no. It is clear from

³⁷ Greenleaf, *On Becoming a Servant Leader*, 48.

the leadership research that servant and sacrificial leadership do, in fact, share commonalities. Just as Greenleaf demonstrated above, there are leadership characteristics that are valued by both concepts. Jeffery A. Matteson and Justin A. Irving have noted that these two leadership principles have in common the characteristics of “empathy, developing people, building community, providing leadership, empowering followers, and serving followers.”³⁸ So in many criteria, servant and sacrificial leadership have much in common.

However, it is also clear that the two leadership principles are still quite distinct. To begin with, it should be noted again that sacrificial leadership centers on a true giving up of specific privileges or tangible benefits by those in power. Whereas servant leadership can be “oriented” towards altruism; within self-sacrificial leadership altruism is the primary behavioral component.³⁹ This difference in the role and purpose of altruism has led Matteson and Irving to reaffirm that the two concepts, while similar at multiple points, are ultimately quite distinct theories.

Self-sacrificial leadership has also been demonstrated to be unique in that it is very effective in regards to the overall health of the organization during unique and specific times. In a very real sense, sacrifice by the leader on behalf of coworkers or subordinates improves the health and culture of the larger organization, and this has been demonstrated to be particularly true during significantly trying times within the organization. Choi has noted that self-sacrificial leadership is most effective when an organization is in crisis, where it may be that only the sacrifices of leaders can overcome the pervasive dire circumstances facing the organization.⁴⁰ In such circumstances, servant

³⁸ Jeffery A. Matteson and Justin A. Irving, “Servant versus Self-Sacrificial Leadership: A Behavioral Comparison of Two Follower-Oriented Leadership Theories,” *International Journal of Leadership Studies* 2, no. 1 (2006): 36-51, accessed January 28, 2014, <http://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/ijls/new/vol2iss1/matteson/mair.htm>, 4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 5. This statement is based on an examination of Table 3: The Three Dimensional Comparisons of Servant and Self-Sacrificial Leadership provided within this referenced work.

⁴⁰ Choi, “Self-sacrificial Leadership,” 134.

leadership may not have the inherent characteristics necessary to overcome a sickened and weak organization. It may be unsuited to address the myriad of difficulties during such a crisis. Ultimately, it may be only the sacrifices of those in leadership that can inspire others within the organization to continue, and perhaps lead to recovery.

An additional area in which self-sacrificial leadership is unique is within the realm of motivation and cooperation of fellow coworkers. David DeCremer and Daan van Knippenberg have demonstrated that leader self-sacrifice has the ability to motivate coworkers beyond their own self-interest and promote cooperation on behalf of the work group.⁴¹ They write that there is “converging evidence that self-sacrificing leaders, compared with self-benefiting or non-sacrificing leaders, are better able to motivate group members to cooperate with the collective.”⁴² The actual act of self-sacrifice leads to imitated positive behavior by those who observe the sacrifice made by leaders and supervisors.

So while servant leadership actively seeks to develop other servant leaders, self-sacrificial leadership is most effective when it is affecting the motivations and cooperation of the larger work group in a unique and powerful way. In fact, DeCremer and Knippenberg have concluded that the evidence is so strong, that on a practical note, they recommend that managers and supervisors should be made aware of the benefits of self-sacrificial leadership for the strength and welfare of the organization. They state emphatically, “Organizations need to be able to implement leadership based on self-sacrifice.” As a result of these types of studies, self-sacrificial leadership has clearly become highly valued by the secular leadership literature.

While it must be admitted that the current state of leadership studies creates

⁴¹ David DeCremer and Daan van Knippenberg, “Cooperation as a Function of Leader Self-Sacrifice, Trust, and Identification,” *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* 26, no. 5 (2005): 355-69, accessed January 28, 2014, <http://arno.uvt.nl/show.cgi?fid=44114>, 355-56.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 356.

some confusion in the realm of “ethical” leadership by depending on overlapping categories and behaviors shared by the different theories, the expectation among researchers is that the present body of knowledge will increase over time, providing more clarity to the current confusion through additional studies. Matteson and Irving are examples of this expectation when they state their belief that additional information in the future will further differentiate the theories of “ethical” leadership, such as servant and self-sacrificial leadership.

A concern the authors have with this present effort is that this comparison was made between two theories at different stages of development Follower-oriented leadership theories are likely to continue to be refined as leadership research progresses in the 21st century. Although transformational leadership has dominated the research agenda, servant and self-sacrificial leadership theories have staked a claim on a portion of contemporary scholarly efforts The findings of this study, while preliminary, suggest that while these two leadership theories share several characteristics, they are likely distinct phenomena.⁴³

So, while servant and self-sacrificial leadership in particular share many leadership characteristics and concepts, research demonstrates that they are, in fact, distinct theories. In addition, the expectation exists within the field of leadership studies that future research will develop each more fully, highlighting the unique contributions of each. Servant leadership, as noted above, has been evaluated for a longer period of time, essentially since Greenleaf began the discussion in the nineteen seventies. However, on the opposite end of the spectrum, self-sacrificial leadership is much younger and has not been subjected to the same degree of thorough examination. Therefore, there is every reason to believe that many considerations and hypotheses regarding the “ethical” classifications of leadership will come into greater focus over the next few decades as researchers more fully analyze these individual theories and develop the resultant data.

⁴³ Matteson and Irving, “Servant versus Self-Sacrificial Leadership,” 6. DeCremer and Knippenberg agree with the expectation that future research will yield additional insights and conclusions within this realm of leadership studies. They write that it is evident that “there is still much to learn about the workings (e.g. trust and identification) of leadership behavior such as leader self-sacrifice.” DeCremer and Knippenberg, “Cooperation as a Function of Leader Self-Sacrifice, Trust, and Identification,” 365.

Shepherding and Self-Sacrificial Leadership as a Workplace Connection for Christians

The principles of shepherding and self-sacrificial leadership share many significant characteristics that are valued by both Christian and secular leadership studies. Therefore, shepherding/self-sacrificial leadership is a very strong “contact point” for believers who seek to meld faith with work. Shepherding/self-sacrificial leadership centers on leading through sacrifice for the benefit and betterment of others. It is highly applicable to inter-personal relationships and is a strong motivator, encouraging others to imitate sacrificial behavior, even to the point of substantially improving overall organizational health and strength. When believers sacrifice within the workplace for the good of others, they are living out both their faith and exhibiting solid leadership behavior. Within the act of sacrificing, believers are successfully melding their faith, which lifts up sacrifice as an act worthy of Jesus Himself, with a leadership behavioral practice that is increasingly valued by the secular workplace. In addition, when believers choose to act out of sacrifice for the benefit of other coworkers, they are making a strong connection between faith and work that is applicable to a multitude of workplace situations and circumstances.

Shepherding/self-sacrificial leadership transcends the minutia of the specific workplace circumstance to broadly apply to a wide variety of workplace situations. It is here that shepherding/self-sacrificial leadership has its true value for believers. In essence, every workplace sacrifice for the betterment of others becomes a situation in which faith is combined with work, and all the while, the secular workplace places value in the act itself. Therefore, every sacrificial act can be legitimately viewed as a successful melding of Sunday faith with Monday work, and functions as a broad brushstroke that has practical application for the believer.

Teacher

Similar to shepherding leadership, the concept of the teacher as leader has been

a Christian motif of leadership from the very foundations of the faith. Gary Bredfeldt and Albert Mohler have both observed that the final words of Jesus’s earthly ministry, commonly known as the Great Commission, contain the instruction for Jesus’ followers to both evangelize followers and also teach them. The concept of “Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matt 28:20) takes the Great Commission beyond evangelism into teaching and discipling those who have been reached with the Gospel. This observation made by Bredfeldt in his work *Great Leader Great Teacher* leads him to write, “Teaching is at the very heart and center of Christ’s commission to the church. Biblical leadership is a teaching task. Teaching is, in fact, the foundational task of every Christian leader.”⁴⁴ Mohler agrees by writing, “Every great leader is a great teacher, and the greatest leaders seize every opportunity to teach well.”⁴⁵

But why is teaching considered leadership? It can be granted that since Jesus included the command to teach within the final words of his earthly ministry, that clearly it is an action in which all Christians should take part. However, that in itself does not require that the act of teaching in particular be viewed as a leadership behavior or action. Bredfeldt provides three reasons to explain why teaching is fundamentally leadership in action. “Teachers are great leaders for three basic reasons – they have great influence, they bring about great change, and they can invoke the highest levels of follower development.”⁴⁶ The goal for Christian teachers is no less than the “transformation of the student’s life.”⁴⁷ This is leadership at its most significant; “Leadership in its simplest,

⁴⁴ Gary Bredfeldt, *Great Leader Great Teacher: Recovering the Biblical Vision for Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2006), 27. Albert Mohler agrees with Bredfeldt’s argument and writes in his work *The Conviction to Lead*, “After all, the Bible elevates teaching to the first mark of the church and the church’s primary responsibility. The Great Commission is a command to go and make disciples of the nations, ‘teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you’ (Matthew 28:20).” Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 68.

⁴⁵ Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 68.

⁴⁶ Bredfeldt, *Great Leader Great Teacher*, 19.

⁴⁷ Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1998), 114.

most distilled form.”⁴⁸

However, to be a strong teacher, and therefore a strong leader, a Christian must commit himself or herself to becoming a life-long learner. From a Christian perspective, Ed Stetzer has noted in his work *Comeback Churches* that “effective leaders make the commitment to be lifelong learners.”⁴⁹ This is especially true in the teaching of adults, which is the primary teaching reality in most work environments. When teaching adults, the life-long experiences of the adults within the classroom or work environment are a part of the “real-world” education that they bring to the learning environment, and this lifetime of learning cannot be shared in its totality by the teacher. It is virtually impossible for a teacher of adults to have more experiences or life-lessons than the accumulated variety of those in the classroom.⁵⁰ Therefore, to successfully teach adults, the teacher must be willing to learn from students who bring their own experiences to the learning environment. This is an aspect of teaching that has become clear in the secular work environment as well. Drucker has argued that the best way for individuals to develop is to be used as teachers, on the premise that teaching requires intensive learning and self-development.⁵¹ He develops this point by writing,

The means for self-development are not obscure. Many achievers have discovered that teaching is one of the most successful tools. The teacher usually learns far more than the student. Not everybody is in a situation where the opportunity to teach opens up, nor is everyone good at teaching or enjoying it. But everyone has an associated opportunity – the opportunity to help develop others. Everyone who has sat down with subordinates or associates in an honest effort to improve their

⁴⁸ Bredfeldt, *Great Leader Great Teacher*, 15.

⁴⁹ Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2007), 170. Mohler agrees and writes, “Without apology, the Christian leader is a devoted student and lifelong learner.” Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 32.

⁵⁰ This is a fundamental point made by Malcolm S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton, and Richard A. Swanson in the foundational work *The Adult Learner*. Malcolm S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton, and Richard A. Swanson, *The Adult Learner*, 7th ed. (Burlington, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2011). Howard Hendricks makes a similar point in his work *Teaching to Change Lives*. For example, Hendricks provides three suggestions for educators for continued intellectual growth. Howard G. Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1987), 26-29.

⁵¹ Drucker, *Managing the Nonprofit Organization*, 151.

performance and results understands what a potent toll the process is for self-development.⁵²

Self-development is a primary driver for secular researchers in their interest of teaching as leadership. Bass has recognized in his research that teaching has been demonstrated to be effective in improving job performance and employee knowledge and abilities. “Meta-analyses of available evaluative studies have provided evidence that leadership and management training, education, and development are usually effective. Effective training and education add to valid assessment in fostering effective leadership and management.”⁵³ Effectiveness is an important marker for any business activity, but particularly essential when development activities and trainings may not clearly impact the bottom-line or the market share. Businesses must clearly experience positive results to justify the investment of time and money into development of staff. Bass argues that the meta-analysis demonstrates effectiveness. In addition, in agreement with Drucker above, Bass argues that the secular workplace environment is beginning to understand the necessity of staff development, and furthermore, that the resultant growth and development is essential for leadership to be strengthened within the organization.

Increasingly recognized is the need for managers and leaders to engage in continuous learning, both for their own sake as well as their organization. Learning and teaching are part of their job The education and development of adult leaders require the combined efforts of the individual and the organization Our leadership is an expression of who we are. Thus, to grow as leaders, we need to grow as persons.⁵⁴

Interestingly, leadership authors also recognize the importance of development for not only the current work force, but future leadership of the organization as well. If organizations are going to continue to impact the market and survive as businesses, they must recognize that they are primarily responsible for training not just current staff, but

⁵² Drucker, *Managing the Nonprofit Organization*, 224.

⁵³ Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership*, 1122.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1061, 1063.

future ones as well. The health and long-term viability of the organization depends upon this long-term view. Max DePree has sounded the alarm when he writes, “Leaders are also responsible for future leadership. They need to identify, develop, and nurture future leaders.”⁵⁵ Robert Hargrove also acknowledges that long-term staff development is essential from an executive coaching viewpoint. “A leader is a coach and teacher versus commander and controller.”⁵⁶ An individual who holds a position of power within an organization must view their role as coach and teacher to increase the viability of the organization. The former ways of the leader operating as commander and controller will no longer achieve the desired results, which is stronger and healthier companies. Finally, Yukl argues for the continued future focus on self-development for the benefit of organizations. “A systems approach to leadership development will become more common as more organizations realize that this activity is as strategically important for long-term organizational effectiveness as product development, marketing, and customer service.”⁵⁷ Ultimately, an organization is only as healthy as its people, and one that chooses to ignore or downplay staff development is limiting its future.

Teaching as a Workplace Connection for Christians

So, while the concept of teaching as leading has a strong basis in Christianity, secular leadership studies have also developed an understanding of the value of teaching within the areas of individual self-development and organization improvement. This development within secular leadership thought has been noted by Christian authors. In particular, Mohler has observed from a Christian perspective the increased attention paid to teaching by secular leadership literature.

⁵⁵ Max DePree, *Leadership Is an Art* (New York: Doubleday Publishers, 1989), 14.

⁵⁶ Robert Hargrove, *Masterful Coaching*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2002), 11.

⁵⁷ Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 488.

The larger world of corporate leadership and management has discovered the necessity of developing what is now often called a learning organization. The knowledge economy is not a passing fad – it is the shape of the future. Organizations that do not learn will be left behind, and this is true across the spectrum of business and institutional life. The organization of the future will learn fast, learn well, learn together, and learn to keep on learning. The leader who makes the greatest impact will be a master teacher who trains leaders at every level in the organization to teach with faithfulness, enthusiasm, and confidence The emphasis on the leader as teacher might be a recent arrival in business schools, but it should be second nature to Christian leaders.⁵⁸

This is exactly the contact point that teaching as leadership provides for Christians who seek to find effective and practical ways to impact their workweek through their faith. Virtually every position in the workplace of Western society has the responsibility to teach or develop someone else. From kitchens, to mechanic shops, to schools, to corner offices, the opportunity to teach and develop a coworker is ubiquitous within the organizational structures of the workplace. Both the Christian and the secular leadership literature are proponents of the value and necessity of teaching for the betterment of individuals and organizations as well. Therefore, when believers have the opportunity to teach others within their role at work, they are taking a foundational Christian concept of leadership and melding it with a secular environment that values the contribution. They are participating in an act that springs up from faith and takes hold in the workplace. The strength of teaching as a “contact point” is that the opportunity and activity of teaching is present in virtually every employment situation in which a believer fulfills their vocation. In addition, teaching as a connection between faith and work is truly practical because this contact point can supersede all the limiting situational Christian advice offered by much of the current scholarship, and conversely, apply in an untold number of workplace environments.

⁵⁸ Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 68-69. Richard Leyda makes a similar point. “Christian and secular researchers often note the lack of qualified leadership in government, business, schools, religious organizations, and society in general, both here and around the world. This crisis in leadership might also be viewed as a leadership development crisis, due in large measure to the failure of leaders to fulfill their critical role of raising up others to replace them Developing other leaders is the essence of the leadership role.” Leyda, “Developing Leaders,” 297-98.

Team Leader

While the four leadership principles discussed above are valued by secular research and businesses across the Western world, team leadership stands out for its wholesale acceptance by the secular workplace. Companies and organizations have come to the realization that teams, not individuals, complete projects and accomplish goals at a more productive rate with a higher quality of outcome.⁵⁹ Yukl has noted this growth of team leadership in the operations and organization of the workplace. “A growing trend in organizations is to give more responsibility for important activities to teams. In many cases, the teams are empowered to make decisions that were formerly made by individual managers. As the use of teams increases, so does the amount of research on leadership in teams.”⁶⁰ The growth of teams has replaced the individual worker as the most effective and productive unit within the organization. This recent movement is hardly surprising or unanticipated. Greenleaf, who was so fundamental to the development of servant leadership, noted in the nineteen-seventies that “Work groups are the foundation stones of the whole structure of institutions.”⁶¹ Since Greenleaf’s observation, the importance of teamwork has only grown in frequency and increased in importance for businesses and

⁵⁹ These statements are supported by Frank LaFasto and Carl Larson. They establish the acceptance and value attached to teams by companies in the prologue of their work *When Teams Work Best*. “For the last 15 years, social scientists and observers of contemporary life have been commenting on a dramatic change in the way we do business in both the public and private sectors. The change that has attracted so much attention and commentary is a significant increase in teamwork and collaborative efforts. . . . By the mid-1980s, more than 6,000 identifiable partnerships among business, public sector, and nonprofit organizations had emerged. A steady increase in collaborative teams was reported in the adoption of collaborative strategies in the auto, steel, and textile industries. A similar pattern was noted in science and technology. Today, collaborative decision-making groups permeated education, especially in the management of schools. Collaborative problem-solving processes are embraced by the healthcare industry, as well as by institutions and agencies that fund social programs and initiatives. Community involvement groups dot the civic landscape and, in the private sector, teamwork programs are everywhere and in all forms.” Frank LaFasto and Carl Larson, *When Teams Work Best: 6,000 Team Members and Leaders Tell What It Takes To Succeed* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2001), xvii. J. Richard Hackman sums up the result of leadership research and the current opinion of workplace environments towards team work by writing, “Teams markedly outperform individuals, and self-managing (or self-regulating, self-directed or empowered) teams do best of all.” J. Richard Hackman, *Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performances* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 233.

⁶⁰ Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 332.

⁶¹ Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 170.

organizations. This growth has developed to the point that Thomas Peters' study on excellent companies led him to write, "Small groups are, quite simply, the basic organizational building blocks of excellent companies."⁶²

One of the main reasons for the growth of team leadership is what Frank LaFasto and Carl Larson call the "Increasing Complexity of Problems." Their argument is that in a frenetic, fast-paced, digital world where information is everywhere, problems are complex and becoming more so. It is difficult, if not impossible, for one individual to have the necessary abilities, knowledge, and experience to be able to single-handedly lead organizations on the basis of their own abilities. "As problems become more complex, and as their solutions require the active participation of diverse perspectives, then teamwork and collaboration become increasingly necessary and valued."⁶³

The increase in interest on the topic of team leadership has not only been in the practical realm of the halls and offices of businesses. As Yukl noted above, the topic of team leadership and collaborative decision-making has also been increasingly the focus of researchers who explore and test theories of leadership. Not surprisingly, as the presence and impact of team leadership has expanded significantly throughout the workplace, researchers are drawn to the topic to analyze the success and failures of team leadership. Peter Northouse has acknowledged this point as well. "Leadership in organizational groups or work teams has become one of the most popular and rapidly growing areas of leadership theory and research."⁶⁴ Peters discovered this trend in his study of excellent companies and pointed to a strong and remarkable connection between

⁶² Peters and Waterman, *In Search of Excellence*, 126. Patrick Lencioni has also noted the power of effective teams on the strength and health of businesses. "Not finance. Not strategy. Not technology. It is teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare." Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2002), vii.

⁶³ LaFasto and Larson, *When Teams Work Best*, xviii, xix.

⁶⁴ Northouse, *Leadership*, 241.

the effective use of teams in these companies and the findings of “best practice” developed by academic researchers.⁶⁵ Finally, through this increased research on the topic over the past few decades, a consensus definition has emerged. According to this consensus, some of the necessary characteristics of a team are interdependent roles for team members with complementary skills, coordination of the work task, and a common purpose or goal.⁶⁶

While the reliance on team leadership is well established and popular in the secular business world, it is foundational for Christians. Team leadership is presented in the Bible as early as Exodus (18:13-27) when Moses receives advice from his father-in-law, Jethro. Moses was exhausting himself by attempting to adjudicate all of the many issues and disputes that arose from leading a large group with no other leadership structure other than a single leader model. Jethro provides guidance to Moses, and recommends that Moses adopt a team strategy that would lessen the load and increase productivity. This is a significant development for the leadership of the Israelites as they wandered through the desert and it is a clear biblical example of team leadership. While this event is clearly an early biblical example of leadership, perhaps the greatest example is Jesus himself, who gathered a team together to teach, lead, and equip to literally change the world. Stephen Macchia points to Jesus as the perfect biblical example of team leadership for modern leaders. “For today’s leaders Jesus provides the most

⁶⁵ Peters’ actual statement is as follows: “It’s also quite remarkable how effective team use in the excellent companies meets, to a tee, the best academic findings about the makeup of effective small groups.” Peters and Waterman, *In Search of Excellence*, 127.

⁶⁶ Gary Yukl has offered the following definition. “The word team usually refers to a small task group in which the members have a common purpose, interdependent roles, and complementary skills.” Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 333. Peter Northouse has defined teams as “Organizational groups composed of members who are interdependent, who share common goals, and who must coordinate their activities to accomplish these goals.” Northouse, *Leadership*, 241. From a Christian perspective, which will be discussed below, Ken Gangel has presented teams as “the exercise of one’s spiritual gifts under the call of God to serve a certain group of people in achieving the goals God has given them toward the end of glorifying Christ.” Gangel, *Team Leadership in Christian Ministry*, 12. And finally, Pat McMillan has presented this offering. “A team is a group of people committed to a common purpose who choose to cooperate in order to achieve exceptional results.” McMillan, *The Performance Factor*, 29.

significant example of team ministry leadership. His work with his team of motley followers is by far our best instruction for our service among teams of modern-day disciples. He had a heart for leading that was reflected early in his few short years of earthly ministry.”⁶⁷

There are many other examples that could be offered up as biblical evidence, but the presence of team leadership throughout Scripture provides the basis for modern Christian authors and researchers to argue persuasively that team leadership is valued and vital to the success of Christian ministries.⁶⁸ Simply stated, team leadership is a powerful vehicle for accomplishing Kingdom goals. In fact, Gangel argues, “Christian ministry is teamwork with a difference, teamwork that makes a difference.” In addition, not only is team-based ministry the most effective model for leading and organizing Christian organizations, it is also the type of leadership that is called for by both Christian theology and the culture of today’s organizations and businesses.⁶⁹ As discussed above, the climate and culture of the secular business world is one in which many individuals with complementary skills must come together to share knowledge and abilities in order to accomplish goals. Gone is the day of the one CEO who can successfully lead as a superstar.⁷⁰ Therefore, team leadership is here to stay as a significant answer to the pressing, ever-changing needs of businesses.

⁶⁷ Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Team*, 144.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 28-30. Macchia provides a thorough list of biblical examples, of which several are listed here: Noah and his family building the Ark (Gen 6-9), Aaron, Hur, and Moses holding up Moses’ hands to win the battle before sunset (Exod 17:12,13), Nehemiah and his fellow workers rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (Neh 2-7), the many team members of the early church (Acts), and Paul with his various teams on mission trips (Acts 9, 13, and other accounts of Paul’s missionary journeys).

⁶⁹ George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), xi, xii.

⁷⁰ These statements are supported by Robert Hargrove. “Given change, complexity, and competition, the era of the legendary CEO who figures it all out from the top is over.” Hargrove, *Masterful Coaching*, 274. Peter Drucker supports these comments as well. “The more successful an organization become, the more it needs to build teams. In fact, non-profit organizations most often fumble and lose their way despite great ability at the top and a dedicated staff because they fail to build teams. A brilliant man or woman at the top working with “helpers” functions only to a very limited extent; the organization outgrows what one person can do.” Drucker, *Managing the Nonprofit Organization*, 152.

Team leadership is vital for this study because of its strong connections between biblical teaching and positive secular research. This connection between faith and work provides extensive opportunities for believers to practice their faith within a secular environment because the presence of teams is so ubiquitous within businesses and organizations. A believer in the workplace will spend a significant amount of the workweek in meetings, planning sessions, strategy development, and the list goes on and on.⁷¹ As noted above, the growth of team leadership does not appear to present any indication that this trend will decrease. As a result, team leadership is a reoccurring platform for believers to practice their faith through this common organizational practice. Simply stated, team meetings allow believers an opportunity to be Christians at work. Within the team interaction, Christians can demonstrate their faith, knowing that the very environment is steeped in a biblical principle of leadership. The connection between faith and work occurs because the very act that is valued by secular organizations are on, colloquially, biblical “turf.” This is an environment where believers should thrive.

Perhaps the most effective way to demonstrate faith within a team leadership environment is to lead the team well. Clearly Christians will not be the primary leader in all team leadership events, but the nature of interdependence within healthy teams provides the opportunity to at least be a leader among equals. Christians can demonstrate their faith by the way in which they work within the team. A believer can help develop a faith-like atmosphere within the team, impact positively the morale and attitude of the group, and demonstrate true Christian practices such as patience and acceptance by his or her behavior towards coworkers. J. Richard Hackman has stated, “A leader cannot make a team be great, but a leader can create conditions that increase the chances that moments

⁷¹ Drucker also supports these comments by acknowledging that meetings will always occur within organizations. However, he views their existence as a negative indicator of organizational health. “There will always be more than enough meetings. Organization will always require so much working together that the attempts of well-meaning behavioral scientists to create opportunities for ‘cooperation’ may be somewhat redundant. But if executives in an organization spend more than a fairly small part of their time in meetings, it is a sure sign of malorganization.” Drucker, *The Effective Executive*, 44-45.

of greatness will occur – and, moreover, can provide a little boost or nudge now and then to help members take the fullest possible advantage of those favorable conditions.”⁷²

Therefore, the nature of team leadership provides an environment in which a Christian can truly infuse the group with Christian ideals, and Hackman argues, increase the chances that the team will achieve truly great results. Obviously, the individual team opportunities will vary, and different groups will have different goals and abilities, but this is the strength of this leadership principle for believers. If believers view teamwork as a Christian leadership principle, than they can practically interject their faith into the vast variety of teams they will participate in within the secular environment. This connection point is practical because it is so applicable to the many different team situations in which a believer will experience within the work environment.

Conclusion

Opportunities for leadership are everywhere. Regardless of the position an individual holds on the organizational chart, the opportunity to influence, guide, or lead another coworker is abundant in today’s fast-paced, digital workplace. In fact, leaders are present in churches, schools, hospitals, warehouses, production plants, and virtually every other organization in society.⁷³ It is in these leadership opportunities that Christians can exercise their faith in the workplace environment. It is in positions of leadership that Christians can have a strong impact on the secular workplace in which they spend the

⁷² Hackman, *Leading Teams*, 253.

⁷³ This point is made by James Kouzes and Barry Posner in their work *The Leadership Challenge*. James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2003), 8. A similar point is made in their related Christian study. James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Christian Reflections on the Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2004), 1-2. Also of interest is Jim Collin’s argument that Level 5 Leaders are prevalent in society and that they are present where extraordinary results are occurring without anyone taking credit. “I believe – although I cannot prove – that potential Level 5 leaders are highly prevalent in our society. The problem is not, in my estimation, a dearth of potential Level 5 leaders. They exist all around us, if we just know what to look for. And what is that? Look for situations where extraordinary results exist but where no individual steps forth to claim excess credit. You will likely find a potential Level 5 leader at work.” Collins, *Good to Great*, 37.

majority of their week. Specifically, the five leadership principles discussed above are significant because of the connections between the sacred and the secular. All five are solidly grounded in a biblical foundation, while at the same time, being highly valued by the secular workplace for their positive impact on the workplace environment. Therefore, when Christians are serving another who is in need, they are melding their faith with the positive leadership principle of servant leadership. When Christians consider the best interest of the organization, they are practicing both the Christian and secular principle of stewardship. When Christians are making decisions for the good of those in their care, they are shepherding or self-sacrificing. As Christians learn and teach within the workplace, they are leading through the lens of faith. When Christians are a positive model of faith within a team environment, they are influencing others and leading while standing on a biblical foundation. Clearly, these five broad categories can apply to a vast array of workplace situations, and that is exactly their strength. While they provide “best practice” guidance for Christians within the multitude of workplace situations in which believers can exercise their faith, they avoid the minutia of particular and specific occurrences often presented as Christian “advice.”

For this current work to have the most lasting impact possible, it is important to present a practical yet memorable way for Christians to easily recall the five leadership principles presented here. Then when particular workplace situations occur, the individual will have both an accessible as well as a helpful tool to remember and act upon this presented solution to living out faith in the workplace. The mnemonic suggested for this tool is the formula “S3T2,” which is a combination of the five leadership principles by their first letter.⁷⁴ This formula provides the believer with a means for easily remembering and applying the five leadership principles in the moment as situations

⁷⁴ As footnoted above, the suggested mnemonic of S3T2 is a formula of the first letters of Servant, Steward, and Shepherd times three, combined with the first letters of Teacher and Team times two. These are obviously the headings of the five leadership principles presented in this work.

occur throughout the workday. It is an effort to combine a practical solution to faith and work issues with an equally practical manner for quick application.

Finally, the most effective manner in which believers can influence their workplace environment for Christ is by infusing their Christian beliefs into the culture of the organization. As discussed above, S3T2 provide specific workplace situations in which leadership can be both biblically based and also valued by secular attitudes. Therefore, if believers can successfully utilize these five principles shared by both Christianity and secular literature as a “hook” on which to hang their hat, the result is the knowledge and understanding necessary to influence the culture of their workplace for Jesus Christ, successfully melding faith and work in the process. Leaders of all ilk are culture creators. Every leader at every level of the organization has the ability to impact and affect the culture of the workplace. As Hans Finzel has observed, “Since the leader is the keeper of the culture, it falls on his or her shoulders to cultivate a culture that is distinctly Christian. The values and beliefs that a leader holds usually become the assumptions of the followers. That puts a great deal of responsibility on the shoulders of leadership.”⁷⁵ The five leadership principles of S3T2 are effective tools for the leader to utilize in an effort to successfully cultivate a culture of faith within the workplace, glorifying God and building His Kingdom in the process.

⁷⁵ Hans Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications, 2000), 167.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS, THE CHURCH, AND BUSINESS

It has been argued that the Bible presents a unified message that Christians are to live life in its entirety in commitment to God and as a witness to the culture in which they live. This entirety must include the workplace for the vast majority of Christians in the western world if the biblical mandate is to be taken seriously and with conviction. The theological doctrines that address these issues are calling and vocation, in which historical Christianity has attempted to faithfully develop the biblical mandate. It has also been argued that S3T2 are valued by both Christianity and the modern workplace and therefore assist the believer in bridging the gap between Sunday faith and Monday work by providing contact points for the believer between the two spheres of his or her influence. The result of these discussions is an assurance that a Christian should take faith into the workplace, that there is strong biblical and theological support for this position, and knowledge of specific leadership principles provide an opportunity to practically act on these beliefs. The topic that remains to be discussed is the implications of these conclusions. Therefore, this chapter will consider the implications of these conclusions on the individual believer, the church and seminary, and the world of business with the hope that Sunday can be more successfully connected to Monday.

The Individual Believer

For the individual believer, the first and most important implication for this study is an understanding of the simple but conclusive fact that the Bible supports, and even demands, the whole life of the believer. While this argument does not need to be restated here, it cannot be overlooked or overemphasized that an individual believer must

grasp this fundamental point in order to bridge the gap between Sunday faith and Monday work.¹ Unfortunately, this point has been clearly missed by many congregants in the pews of churches throughout the western world. Individual believers need to understand that the Bible is not simply a guide for their weekend, vacation time, or personal time at home with friends and families. The Bible teaches commitment to God in the entirety of life and does not advocate or support in any way a separation between the private and public sphere of the believer. This teaching is essential for Christians who struggle with the separation between faith and work. Great clarity and strength of purpose could be gained from a deeper understanding of this biblical teaching of commitment to Christ in entirety.

The historical doctrines of calling and vocation would also have significant ramifications on individual believers if these teachings were truly understood. These doctrines seek to bring the biblical teachings to “life” and a thorough understanding would have an impact on both the individual and the culture of the workplace with wide ranging results. John Hammett provides some thoughts on the potential benefits to the individual believer.

First, Christians would become known as the best employees an employer could ask for. They would not be found complaining about their work, cutting corners, and trying to get by with the least. Rather, because they understand that their work is a means of glorifying God, they would be grateful for it and seek to do in a way that would honor God. Moreover, they would not separate Sunday from the workweek; the same God they serve on Sunday at church they serve Monday through Friday on the job, for they see their job as a calling. Moreover, nonpaying forms of work would also be honored as ways to glorify God. Child raising, housework, and everyday chores are not just mundane necessities; as we serve other, we glorify God.²

Hammett brings out several important implications. Perhaps the most essential of these is that Christians who truly understand calling and vocation would be strong

¹ See chap. 2.

² John S. Hammett, “Human Nature,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2007), 404.

employees because they understand that they do not work primarily for the boss, but to the glory of God. The behavior and attitudes of believers who understand the biblical mandate in conjunction with calling and vocation would bring their very best effort to work everyday. They would understand that it is God for whom they work, and it is Him they represent. Christians who understand the theology of work would avoid the two temptations of “idolatry” and “idleness.”³ Christians would become the employees that every boss is seeking. After all, “Doing high-quality work is a mandate from God even if the boss does not require it.”⁴

An additional implication for believers from this presented argument is a correct and proper understanding of how they are to truly impact and affect the workplace culture. This study has advocated for the broad brush-stroke leadership principles of S3T2 over the oft-presented situational specific occurrences as an effective practical solution to the myriad of faith at work issues. This focus creates the opportunity for individual believers to consider in what manner they should actually present their Christian beliefs within the workplace. With large leadership categories that are applicable to a wide range of workplace interactions and activities, Christians can have a stronger foundation to discern how they are called to affect the culture around them. Patrick Morley argues that a Christian is not called to create a Christian business culture. Instead, the assignment is “to represent God within the work culture – to bring salt and light into the workplace. To do that, we have to go ‘into’ culture. On matters not specifically commanded or prohibited by Scripture, we adapt to the culture. We don’t require the culture to adapt to us. That’s how Paul did it.”⁵ This is exactly the manner in

³ Sebastien Traeger and Greg Gilbert, *The Gospel at Work: How Working for King Jesus Gives Purpose and Meaning to Our Jobs* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013). Discussed in chap. 3.

⁴ Ted Peters, *God – the World’s Future: Systematic Theology for a Postmodern Era* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), 300.

⁵ Patrick Morley, *A Man’s Guide to Work: 12 Ways to Honor God on the Job* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 36.

which S3T2 would be most effective as tools to represent Christ in as wide a variety of potential workplace opportunities as possible. To aim to re-create the workplace into a Christian culture is widely misplaced within the current state of western society and culture. The most effective manner in which to impact the world for Christ is to imitate Paul by using what was acceptable within the culture while urging believers to not conform to this world in matters that are prohibited by Scripture. The five leadership principles discussed in this work assist in this effort by providing guidance on how to use the best secular scholarship has to offer, highlighting its basis within Christian belief, and producing a way to impact the culture with points of agreement, as opposed to areas of dispute and opposition.

Finally, the arguments discussed above should provide great comfort and strength for those believers who struggle with issues of vocation and their ability to be a believer in the midst of a secular culture. Christians are promised that God will use even the smallest of efforts on His behalf. Believers can be confident that God will validate and reward all work done in His name, done with a desire to follow Him and His will. It is not simply the work done “for” God that has eternal significance. It is all work that is done within our vocation for Him. This is why believers have been blessed by God with a vocation in the first place. Even in failures, Christians can rejoice that it is not just “sacred” work that is valued by Heaven, but all work that is offered to God’s glory.

Robert Benne has argued this point most effectively.

In the great sweep of God’s history they (my work) will be discarded or used as God sees fit. They are imperfect offerings about which I can do little. I can consign them to history with the hope that they are no longer mine but God’s. All of this – my work, your work, the whole system of work – will be taken up by God as he brings forth his future. Nothing good will be lost. Nothing evil will finally persist. Our work will be transfigured by God’s work, and the whole Creation will be brought to fruition. That is our hope.⁶

⁶ Robert Benne, *Ordinary Saints: An Introduction to the Christian Life* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988), 172.

Churches and Seminaries

It has already been discussed that believers do not feel that their church has provided guidance on these types of work and faith related issues.⁷ So the obvious question is why has the church missed this tremendous opportunity to shape its congregants, and at the same time abdicated the responsibility to teach and disciple Christians on these topics that have such a significant impact on a biblical understanding of work? John Knapp has argued that the church has simply failed Christians on these topics. Within his research, he encountered many believers who found the church to be largely “indifferent” to the issues and challenges that believers face in the workplace.⁸ Knapp argued that his interview with a financial planner summed up the experiences of many. “The church teaches me to live as a Christian, but I have to apply those principles to my life and work on my own.”⁹ The church has failed to teach and guide congregants and struggling believers on this topic. However, several implications of this study could increase the impact made by churches and seminaries on the lives and understanding of believers.

Capitalism

A very significant implication of this study is a potential solution for overcoming a significant area of contention between clergy and businessperson. The modern workplace is a product of a commitment to capitalism by the Western world. When believers enter the workplace on Monday, they are walking into both the fruits and the spoils of capitalism. However, this commitment is not shared by many of the leaders

⁷ See chap. 3.

⁸ These comments are supported by the following quote: “I believe the church has largely failed Christians who struggle daily to live out their faith commitments in their places of employment Along the way, I have discovered that countless believers . . . find the church oddly indifferent to the challenges they face in their public lives.” John C. Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople: And What Can Be Done about It* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), xi.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

who teach God’s truth to these same believers. This tension between worldviews creates tensions and distrust. Laura Nash and Scotty McClellan conducted a thorough examination of twenty top seminaries in the United States and began to see a pattern centered on views of capitalism.

The attitudes of the clergy and the businessperson, however ambivalent they may be about their own institutions in private, essentially fall into two camps: the naysayers and the yea-sayers of capitalism. Where the latter sees value creation and possibility, the former sees destruction and exploitation. Although we found representatives of both groups in both camps, the bulk of the yea-sayers are in business, and the clergy are overwhelmingly naysayers.¹⁰

Nash and McClellan have argued that the clergy’s distrust of capitalism was primarily triggered by views of poverty and capitalism’s responsibility or culpability in creating social hardship around the globe.¹¹ One interview with a seminary student was particularly telling: “‘I just really, deeply hate capitalism.’ Her reaction was not unusual They took it for granted: a stand with capitalism was a stand against the poor.”¹²

As a result of this negative perception of capitalism, clergy are often at odds with members of the congregation. They are missing the perspective of the businesspeople in their pews that view capitalism as a solution to the problem of poverty and the plight of the poor. In the opinion of the businessperson, capitalism can be a force for good that can bring opportunities to struggling nations and people groups. Within this pro-capitalism mindset, capitalism can carry positive ethical possibilities, and if the church is to be able to connect with those of this mindset, it must develop the ability to speak into this world without condemnation and high-minded judgment.¹³ Unfortunately,

¹⁰ Laura Nash and Scotty McClellan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday: The Challenge of Fusing Christian Values with Business Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001), 122.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹² *Ibid.*, 156.

¹³ Nash and McClellan support these comments. *Ibid.*, 132-35.

this ability has not yet been fully developed. Nash and McClellan observe, “Many clergy see their proper role as disciplinary and corrective, global in focus, representing major portions of heaven and earth.”¹⁴ However, Nash and McClellan also argue that the assuming of this role by clergy does not appear to be productive or helpful because most businesspeople are not willing to accept the heavy guilt trip of church leaders, even if they share the same concern regarding unjust or exploitative business practices.¹⁵

If businesspeople are to find guidance and applicable teaching for their life from church leaders, then clergy must overcome these inherent biases and look for areas of agreement over and above condemnation for the economic failures of the business sector. Clergy need to display the wisdom to view the economic world for the complicated global system that it is, not a caricature of good versus bad. Very simplistic views of the economic world have left many clergy with an “us” versus “them” mentality that is unhelpful at best, and damaging at worst for the businessperson sitting in the pew.¹⁶ To be able to speak into the capitalistic world of the businessperson, clergy must widen their views and understand that seldom in this sinful world is any multicultural global phenomenon, such as capitalism, so easily reduced to such black and white thinking.¹⁷

Much of this anti-capitalistic mindset could be improved upon if clergy would more thoroughly consider the nature of calling and vocation. A reconsideration of these

¹⁴ Nash and McClellan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, 142.

¹⁵ The actual quote on which these comments are based is as follows: “Businesspeople may be alarmed at business practices, but they do not accept the heavy guilt trip they perceive from many of their churches.” Ibid.

¹⁶ Nash and McClellan support these comments on the clergy’s view of economics. Ibid., 121-54.

¹⁷ Nash and McClellan support these comments by observing that the thinking of clergy on this issue was very “thin” and easily muddled by consideration of the human dimensions of business. “A stand with capitalism was a stand against the poor. Thin conceptions of business (solely in terms of systemic pursuit of excessive growth and wealth under unjust exploitative conditions) supported this position. Consideration of the human dimension of business, however, quickly muddled their view They could not reconcile these conceptual models, and they often had trouble coping with the ambivalence.” Ibid., 156.

doctrines could lead to a reexamination of the nature of God's call to the believer who exercises his or her gifts thorough a vocation within the capitalistic system. While calling and vocation can not be the basis for dismissing true wrongs or economic oppression by capitalism, the implication of these doctrines is that they can be the foundation for re-considering the motivation and goal of an individual believer who is genuinely attempting to follow God's call on his or her life within the workplace. If God has called a believer to fulfill a certain vocation, and gifted him or her to fulfill the job duties, clergy should support the work while guiding and teaching the believer how to be a Christian with biblical ethics within the workplace environment.

In addition, the church, and clergy in particular, need to avoid falling into the Catholic distortion that elevates the spiritual and debases the secular.¹⁸ It is a distortion of calling and vocation to view the work of the "spiritual" clergy as inherently more acceptable to God than the "worldly" secular job position. While these doctrines provide understanding and guidance for the individual believer, they also provide direction and correction for church leaders who would elevate themselves over the individuals in the pews. The church should pause before condemning the workplace *carte blanche*, and the individuals within it by association. There are certainly times when clergy must provide biblical correction to exploitative actions by those who would use economics to hurt others, but many within the workplace are truly following God's leading and seeking to honor Him through their vocation. The church would be better served to come alongside these believers and give guidance and teaching rather than demonstrate spiritual minimization of a major component of their lives and condemnation for work completed.

Money

While the issue of capitalism as a driver of poverty can create a wedge

¹⁸ See chap. 3.

between clergy and many in the pews who are in the workplace, difficulties centered on the related topic of money are also a contributor to this separation. Knapp has argued that money is a significant factor in the church's failure to bridge the gap between the Sunday and Monday primarily because work and money are so intertwined within the culture that they are essentially connected.¹⁹ The church cannot adequately speak into the world of work without confronting the topic of money. Unfortunately, the church is not well placed to speak on the topic in a disinterested fashion considering that the church is "thoroughly steeped in the money culture, for even there institutional success and individual status are measured with a financial yardstick."²⁰ This creates a disconnect for the church where, on one hand, money is a necessity and has an impact on the organization, while on the other hand, many clergy have the desire to speak out against poverty and to present a "sacred" position on money.

However, the "sacred" position sought is not as clear as it might be. In fact, there is a lack of a clear "sacred" position within Scripture for clergy to espouse, and this is a large part of the confusion. Within the Old Testament, wealth is frequently a sign of God's favor (Gen 26:12,13; Prov 10:22; 22:4).²¹ On the opposite end of the spectrum, in the New Testament, the love of money is considered a root of much evil (1 Tim 6:10). Clearly, the Bible teacher who wants a clearly stated biblical position on money and wealth will struggle to find that statement. The existence of seemingly conflicting biblical examples makes it difficult for church leaders to speak into the "profit-driven" workplace with clarity and power, and when this is combined with many clergy who have a predisposition to chastise money and wealth, the church has little to contribute to believers who desire guidance on how to live out their faith in the workplace.²² In fact,

¹⁹ Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 45.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 46. Knapp provides these verses as examples.

²² These comments are not intended to imply that there is, in fact, a lack of consistent teaching

Nash and McClellan go further and argue that clergy who take the adverse position of money being interconnected to profit at the expense of the poor around the world were so affected by their views that the distance this created from businesspeople was to the point that the separation was not even evident to them.²³

Faced with perceived ambivalent biblical teaching on money and wealth within the Bible, church denominations and leadership groups have found it more palatable to critique large impersonal processes and organizations, as opposed to truly engaging in the difficult and seldom neat and tidy world of micro-economics in which much of the intricacies and “grey” areas of economics reside.²⁴ Knapp has argued this point.

More often, major church bodies have taken the easier route of critiquing the macro-economic system and its injustices. They issue studies and pronouncements on economic policy, the moral shortcomings of capitalism, the effects of globalization, and other important matters that are not easily connected by Christians to their daily lives. Almost never do these pronouncements offer much help for living and working within an imperfect and frequently unjust system. Too often, these macro-economic statements suggest to individuals that the church is hostile not only to the system but also the people who participate in it by going to work. Where the pre-Reformation church concerned itself with the economic life of the individual but had little to say about economic systems, the opposite is largely the case today.²⁵

In this sense, the church has protected itself from the difficult work of coming to terms and interacting with the complexity of money, profit, wealth, and therefore, by extension, poverty. Macro-economic statements successfully allow church leaders and

within Scripture on money, only that there is a perceived lack within church leadership and that this perception is having a significant impact on how the church teaches and guides believers on the issue of money and wealth. In response to this perception, John Knapp argues, “If Scripture bears a consistent message about wealth, it is that the desire for it is never sanctioned.” Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 47.

²³ Nash and McClellan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, 129. The actual quote is as follows: “The association of business with profit, and profit with adverse religious meaning regarding money, was so automatic that the clergy tended to underestimate its force in coloring their views and distancing them from businesspeople.”

²⁴ Micro-economics is defined as “the branch of economics concerned with particular commodities, firms, or individuals and the economic relationships between them.” This is in contrast to macro-economics which is defined as “the branch of economics dealing with the broad and general aspects of an economy, as the relationship between the income and investments of a country as a whole. Both of these definitions were ascertained on August 5, 2015 through the website www.dictionary.reference.com.

²⁵ Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 66.

organizations to side with the poor, without having to navigate the difficulties faced everyday by believers in the workplace. In the end result, the church achieves a semblance of concern and caring, without the distasteful task of actually interacting with the preponderance of issues related to these economic topics. This makes the resultant teaching and guidance much less than the believer in the pew needs or desires. The church remains “clean” and retains the illusion of a “moral compass,” while believers in the pew are left with little help in attempting to navigate the complexities which define their daily workplace environment.

It would seem that the church, with its negative view of capitalism and money, and businesspeople, who see capitalism on the opposite side of the spectrum as a solution to economic inequalities, would have little hope to build a bridge for communication moving forward. However, this is not the case. It has been argued that what is needed to bridge this gap is common ground. “Rather than retreating from each other, the two groups need to develop a neutral ground on which to meet.”²⁶ For communication to improve, two opposing sides must find ways to converse in the same language. They need a way to develop this neutral ground before progress and improvement can be made.

Language

The five leadership principles of S3T2 detailed in this work make a fundamental contribution towards developing this neutral ground by providing a common language in which the two sides of clergy and layperson can firmly stand on both biblical principles, as well as practices valued by the workplace. What is deeply needed for the two sides of faith and work issues in western culture is the ability to communicate in a way that both can understand, and this need is exactly what S3T2 addresses. The church and clergy can lean on these leadership principles to both securely stand within the

²⁶ Nash and McClellan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, 153.

biblical tradition, while also speaking the business language to which the individuals in the workplace who are hearing the message and teaching can easily relate. These principles are effectively “cross-cultural” concepts in that both sides of the work-faith debate can communicate and understand the other. In this way, S3T2 truly builds a bridge from one side of the discussion to the other.

These principles also address another significant language barrier between the clergy and the believer in the pew. One of the significant difficulties faced by the clergy when communicating with the businesspeople in the congregation is the expectation and belief that academic language indicates high learning and sophisticated thought. Many clergy have been trained in an educational setting that places a high value on verbose and “lofty” language to communicate thoughts, concepts, and ideas. These church leaders have often accepted the premise that the “dense academese of theology” is a sign of analytical superiority. However, this type of language has been demonstrated to not be effective in reaching the businessperson in the pews. All too often, the businessperson hears what Nash and McClellan have dubbed “theo-babble.”²⁷ Nash and McClellan have even gone so far as to indicate that this “lofty” use of language, which is unfamiliar to many in the congregation, may be one of the key barriers to communication between clergy and congregation.

Tightly argued theories populate the normal linguistic domain of the ecclesiastical elite, but they are so embedded in the abstract that they have no point of context with concrete events or personalized expressive forms of religious experience – the stuff of the current spirituality interest There is, after all, implied status to this language within the hierarchy of the church and its accrediting academic institutions. It is judged “superior” to plain preacher talk (in all but the evangelical denominations) The culture of academic elitism may be one of the key barriers to the challenge of developing the church’s ability to be a relevant force in the workplace. Theologians and future pastors who do not adapt to it are weeded out of

²⁷ Nash and McClellan support these comments. The specific quote is as follows: “Miscommunication seems on the surface to be mostly about vocabulary. Clergy interprets the dense academese of theology as a sign of intellectual (analytic) superiority, while business calls it useless theo-babble. Their contrasting analytical styles, echoed in their language, assigns fundamentally different religious perspectives on the same events.” Nash and McClellan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, 187.

the mainstream of the church's intellectual life.²⁸

So while the church and seminaries encourage the educational elite to employ the complicated language of theology, the businessperson in the pew prefers a "simple and pragmatic form of moral and religious expression," which is not considered appropriate for religious dialogue by many church leaders.²⁹ As a result, the two groups speak past each other, using a language of style and form that is foreign to the other.

S3T2 presented in this work provides a practical solution to this communication barrier by supplying the theologian with biblically rigorous concepts, while also using terms that are familiar to the businessperson within his or her work setting. When a clergy member preaches and teaches the power inherent in topics such as stewardship and self-sacrificial leadership, many messages are involved and included that are at the very heart of the Gospel. At the same time, the businessperson can now hear and internalize these central messages in a language that he or she can understand and process. The language is shared, and therefore, the power of the message can be released to impact the life of the businessperson in its entirety as God always intended.

Leadership Development

In addition to the leadership principles discussed in this work, much progress could be made to overcome the current language barriers between clergy and businessperson if seminaries and theological schools would commit to a reassessment of their purpose within western culture and a willingness to train leaders in an effort to impact this culture for Christ. Greenleaf was a strong proponent of seminaries moving from focusing almost exclusively on the individual student and evolving into an institution that also took seriously a "theology of institutions." Greenleaf argued that seminaries have not yet embraced the changes in society that have resulted in the

²⁸ Nash and McClellan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, 188-89.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 190.

emergence of institutions. According to Greenleaf, this shift from a “theology of individuals,” that has dominated the content and focus of the seminaries up to this point is poorly equipped to address the current society that is dominated by institutions and requires a very different educational model.³⁰ To remain effective in this changing environment, Greenleaf recommends that seminaries and theological schools become institutions that focus on developing key people, and specifically chairpersons, who will become more capable of leading institutions in a manner consistent with Greenleaf’s theories. With a refocused path of scholarship within these schools, these individuals would have the necessary education and preparation to transform entire institutions into places of “serving.”³¹ But the first step would be commitment on the part of these theological schools to shift course and develop institutional leaders, not just individual religious leaders without the requisite skills to understand the needs of the organizations in an ever-changing society. The end result of all of this discussion would hopefully be the achievement of a “raising of the level of caring of our institutions,” which was Greenleaf’s ultimate goal.³²

However, the current seminary or theological school is a far cry from the fulfillment of Greenleaf’s vision. This lack is nowhere more apparent than within the curriculum of these institutions of higher divinity learning. Knapp researched the course offerings of eighteen leading theological institutions in the United States and found that the listings were significantly sparse in regards to class work that focused on workplace issues. He describes his findings:

³⁰ Robert Greenleaf, *On Becoming a Servant-Leader* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 356. The actual quote that supports these comments is as follows: “Our seminaries, largely based on events in biblical times, have a similar limitation in that these traditions are only concerned with individuals, relations of one individual to another. Seminaries have not yet accepted that the emergence of institutions in the past hundred years or so has created a different kind of society with concerns not addressed by a theology of individuals.”

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 357.

Only a few electives at a handful of the schools are described as addressing vocational or work-related issues. Several more focus on broader economic topics, such as social justice for the poor. Yet these institutions collectively offer dozens of courses on marriage, family, children, death, hospital visitation, psychological counseling, and other topics most relevant to the private sphere. The message of these curricula is clear about where pastors and priests – and, by extension, the church itself – should spend the most time and energy. A traditional theological education provides a foundation for ministry in diverse contexts, but the typical seminary experience is unlikely to inspire ministries that equip business and professional people for faithful service in public life.³³

It is not that theological institutions do not provide variety within their course offerings. It is simply that the courses offered do not address vocational issues. In fact, it is clear from the research that a student could very easily matriculate from a theological institution without any substantial consideration of how to minister to those in the workplace or address issues faced within workplace vocations. The development of religious leaders who are equipped to speak the truth of Christ into the workplace is lacking and difficult to find in the current theological institution.

So how can this lack of leadership development be addressed? How can seminaries and theological schools contribute an answer to the deeply felt need for guidance from those in the workplace? While critical overall on the current effort by theological schools, Knapp comes to the defense of these institutions by arguing that changing the current course load is the wrong starting point. These institutions are unlikely to undertake a significant redesign of course work at the Masters of Divinity level, and in many ways, this is understandable. So much information must be covered to provide a student even the basic religious knowledge necessary to lead within the church that “it would be unrealistic to expect many theological institutions to add new courses in applied ministry to their Master of Divinity curricula.”³⁴ But Knapp also argues that this type of reworking is probably not necessary because other avenues are available for leadership development within the theological schools that can better pave the way for

³³ Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 37.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

increased knowledge on vocational and workplace issues.

The proper place for this increased knowledge, according to Knapp, is in “continuing education classes for pastors, and in Doctor of Ministry programs that serve clergy who are already employed in parish ministry and other settings.”³⁵ Unfortunately, as was found with the Master of Divinity programs, Knapp reports that reviewing the available programs currently offered at the continuing education or Doctor of Ministry levels produced “very few opportunities for working pastors to hone their knowledge and skills for ministry with businesspeople.”³⁶ So, even though the current offerings at these institutions are lacking, this is still the most appropriate location for leadership development to occur. Theological schools need to commit themselves to addressing these pressing workplace issues in order to help those in the pews who struggle to receive the guidance they seek. Continuing education provides clergy and students the opportunity to further hone their skills in order to serve as a source of wisdom in the face of secular workplace confusion. The appropriate place for this faith and work gap to be bridged is through the continuing education and leadership development of theological schools where experienced religious leaders can be trained to make these connections for congregants.

The principles of S3T2, that bridge the religious and the secular, is the type of study that needs to occur throughout continuing education for religious leaders. Practical studies that provide strong connections between faith and work are essential for successfully preparing religious leaders to guide those in the pews. Experienced clergy who are seeking to increase their skills will not be best prepared to guide believers in the workplace with additional “theo-babble.” What is needed is practical biblical teaching that can be easily and truthfully applied to the many situations those in the workplace

³⁵ Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 39.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

face on a daily basis. This is the type of training provided by this analysis of leadership principles.

In addition, since S3T2 is shared by both religion and secular academic research, the issue of language is overcome. The issue related to language is primarily the inability for religious leaders to speak the same language as the businessperson. With S3T2, religious leaders are presented with a shared common ground that is biblical, while being presented in the language familiar to those in the workplace. If, as Nash and McClellan argued, the language barrier must be overcome for progress on faith and work issues to occur, then studies such as this are necessary for leadership development in order to provide clergy the necessary framework to develop language connections that can ultimately bridge the gap between faith and work.

Business

While it has been argued frequently in this work that businesspeople do not feel that the church is effectively leading in the realm of vocational and workplace issues, this does not imply that the business world is without ethics or lacking a desire for spirituality. Contrary to the opinion of many in church leadership, the business world is not ethically void or “anti-spiritual.” In fact, the opposite has proven to be true over the past few decades. Knapp has argued that many non-religious organizations and businesses have focused “unprecedented attention” on the creation of value statements, codes of behavior, and ethics standards.³⁷ Interestingly, this has been a relatively recent development that has been motivated in large part by corporate financial scandals within the past two decades.³⁸ As a result of this development, businesses have recognized that

³⁷ Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 14.

³⁸ Ibid. This comment is supported by the following quote: “Most major corporations had no ethics codes as recently as 1990; nearly all have them today. The impetus for these initiatives comes mostly from legislative and legal reforms like those prompted by corporate financial scandals involving major U.S. companies (e.g., Enron, WorldCom, HealthSouth, Tyco, and so on).”

ethics programs are useful tools for encouraging behavior that is beneficial to the company, and more importantly, preventing lawsuits and other negative events within the workplace.³⁹

Though in many cases management may view values and ethics within the company as largely pragmatic, it is not necessary to view these developments as purely self-serving. The desire for the modern employee to engage the workplace in a holistic manner has created the atmosphere for an increase in spirituality within the business world. The employee of the twenty-first century does not want to experience a “radical disconnect” between work and the rest of life.⁴⁰ This desire to meld the disparate parts of life has led to the rise of the secular “spirituality-in-business movement.”⁴¹ And while this movement is not based in the church, has no requirement for moral absolutism, or expectation of committed membership, it does succeed at taking “the soul of the businessperson seriously.”⁴² The essential element of the movement’s success is its fulfillment of an individual’s desire to be a “part of the next era of business success without losing one’s soul.”⁴³

This recent movement of ethics and spirituality within the offices and meeting rooms of business gives a Christian a relatively new and strong opportunity to be salt and light within the workplace environment. While the current interest of business in the spiritual and ethical is not particularly Christian or biblically based, the desire for a holistic human experience by many in the workplace provides the opportunity for

³⁹ Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 14. Knapp supports these comments with the following quote: “Today’s corporate ethics programs generally articulate some positive values – honesty and fairness, for instance – but in the end, employees understand that the primary aim is to prevent wrongdoing and help the firm get through the day without a lawsuit or an indictment. Internet giant Google sums up its ethical policies in three words: ‘Don’t be evil.’”

⁴⁰ Nash and McClellan, *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*, 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 91.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Christians to show the love of Christ through their words and actions to co-workers who are seeking to find answers to spiritual questions. The workplace environment is primed for Christians who can effectively demonstrate their faith to have significant eternal impact on the spiritual growth of co-workers. S3T2 is the type of knowledge needed to provide a basis for Christians to impact their co-workers with workplace leadership activities that are both grounded in the Bible, as well as secular research. Through these principles, Christians have a leadership platform to build upon the desire for spirituality within the workplace, and turn that desire into a worldview that is not just “spiritual,” but Christian. Essentially, many believers are within secularly spiritual work environments that are ripe for biblical truth, and S3T2 provides the foundation for impacting fellow co-workers and moving them from the secular spirituality movement to a saving knowledge of the love of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Here at the beginning of the twenty-first century, a wide gulf separates faith and work within the workplace culture of western society. Individuals desire connections between faith and work but lack the understanding of biblical teachings and the theological concepts of calling and vocation to successfully navigate the difficulties and struggles they face. They have become disenchanted with the answers provided by the church and clergy and sense that the church does not have the requisite unbiased mindset or the resources of language to effectively lead through these struggles. As a result, many have turned to secular spirituality provided within the workplace environment in an effort to live in a holistic manner that does not separate faith from the workplace. However, the true solution for these struggles lies in a deeper understanding of the Bible’s teachings on a life lived in entirety to God, the theological teachings of calling and vocation, and the practical application of S3T2 to workplace activities. It is through the logic of these arguments that believers, as well as the lost, can truly understand God’s call on their life.

The most effective way to meld faith and work is to understand the biblical connections between the two, while having practical leadership activities to demonstrate these connections. This study has implications for individual believers, as well as the church and clergy, as they encounter co-workers and an entire business culture that is desperate for the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is through deeper biblical understanding and leadership principles that undergird this knowledge that believers and church leaders can impact the workplace for Christ, and give strength to those who are called to live out their vocation in a secular workplace that is searching, but lost.

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ABSTRACT

BRIDGING THE GAP FROM SUNDAY TO MONDAY: DEVELOPING COMMON GROUND BETWEEN FAITH AND WORK

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Christians have a biblical mandate to infuse their faith into every aspect of their lives. However, a spiritual gap exists for many Christians between their life of faith and their life at work. This gap can be addressed by evaluating the doctrine of vocation towards a deeper understanding, followed by a thorough examination of five leadership principles which provide Christians within the workplace both a shared language, as well as mutual positively viewed leadership experiences.

This study begins with an exegesis of Exodus 20:1-17, Deuteronomy 5:6-21, 6:4-9, Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:34-40, Luke 10:25-37, and Revelation 3:14-20. These passages contain a biblical mandate for Christians to live their life in complete commitment to a relationship with God and His ways. In addition, these selections give insight into, and provide a necessary basis for, adducing appropriately grounded Scriptural conclusions regarding the importance of a Christian worldview within the workplace.

Chapter 3 focuses on the theological doctrines of calling and vocation. Theology centered on calling and vocation provides a vital basis for a Christian's view of work. Educating Christians in regard to the importance and value of their calling is necessary if faith and work are to be more closely connected.

The next section of this study seeks to combine theological doctrine with

practical application. Chapter 4 examines five leadership principles which biblical theology and secular literature mutually acknowledge as beneficial and positive. By using these five as connection points, a Christian can have both a shared language to bridge the experiences of faith and work, while also having a practical platform in which to meld Christian convictions and secular workplace environments.

Individuals struggle mightily to bridge the gap between Sunday faith and Monday work. The five leadership principles of S3T2 provide believers with both the necessary spiritual perspective to meld faith and work, as well as a shared language that can assist in bridging their experiences. Finally, the implications of this study are examined for believers, churches and seminaries, and businesses.

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