

PAPER CHURCH

A New Imagination for Work – Colossians 3:23-24

Sunday 19 July 2020

Some Tips

Our hope is that this is a resource that will help us all to engage meaningfully with God's word for us and invite an open and experimental sense of worship today. Use it in a way that feels comfortable and helpful to you. Here are a couple of suggestions that might help the process.

Get prepared for worship

Have your Bible close by, perhaps set up some favourite music to listen to, find some food and drink to have during communion. It doesn't have to be bread and grape juice; it could be whatever is available (tea and a biscuit) to use in this symbolic time.

Get into a 'sacred' space

When we are not physically in a dedicated worship space (like a church building), it is important to mentally and spiritually shift into a sense of worship.

Be intentional. Sit somewhere where you feel receptive and responsive to God (e.g. a cosy chair or outside in the garden). Have some visual representation of God (perhaps a small cross, your Bible, a symbol or image). Start with a few moments of silence and deep breathing.

Consider your environment

Consider your environment and what will work for you. If you have others in your house (house-mates/family), consider sharing this time with them, each reading or participating as appropriate. You might simply reflect individually, in your own time and space. Afterwards, you might connect with others through technology to share your reflections, or an encouragement, with them.

Psalm 121

I look to the hills. Where will I find help?

It will come from the Lord who created the heavens and the earth ...

The Lord will protect you now and always wherever you go.

Call to Worship

Pat Greig

These words from Psalm 121 came into my mind as I awoke the morning after the news that Melbourne was to go into lockdown again for a further six weeks.

Over these past weeks my faith has certainly been integral in how I have coped with COVID-19 and it is out of or because of my faith that there are certain personal qualities and characteristics that I strive to live by.

As we dip into week two of our series “A New Imagination” and this week, “A New Imagination: for work” I’d really invite you to begin thinking about those qualities/values you’d like people to witness in how you live your life. (Kaye mentioned some of them last week.) If you are not sure what I mean by ‘values’, consider the qualities you would like to be remembered by when you are no longer here.

As many of you are aware, for more than 35 years I have worked in private practice as a Counselling Psychologist – 2020 will mark the end of my paid working life so today’s theme is an interesting one for me. I first trained and worked as a teacher in both primary and secondary schools and for 10 years post my registration as a psychologist, I combined those two careers.

As I have reflected on my long working life, I can see that God has gently, and sometimes with a hefty push, been changing my thinking and causing me to rethink my values on a range of issues. I have, on more than one occasion, been confronted with situations and issues in the lives of my clients that have been far removed from my personal experience – abuse, trauma, addiction, relationship breakdown, grief, betrayal, abandonment, suicide, murder – I could go on.

I’ve needed to see that each of these clients, no matter how flawed or broken, was a child of God and my job was not to judge or criticise but to use my professional skills in a Christ-like/Godly way that could hopefully bring about healing and restoration in their life. For me, my faith and my work cannot be separated. I know I don’t always get it right but I would like to think that my faith and every area of my life are intertwined - that Godly values show up wherever I am and in whatever I do.

Our reading for today from Colossians 3: 23-24 certainly spells out this link:

Do your work willingly as though you were serving the Lord Himself and not just your earthly master. In fact, the Lord Christ is the one you are really serving, and you know that he will reward you.

What are the values that are important for you in your life? How do you want people to see you?

Prayer

Loving God, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do and say flow from our deep connection with you. Help us in our work, in our homes, in our interactions with others, to bring our lives as a daily offering of worship to the servant king.

Amen

Song: The Servant King

From heav'n You came helpless babe
Enter'd our world Your glory veil'd
Not to be served but to serve
And give Your life that we might live

This is our God the Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to the Servant King

There in the garden of tears
My heavy load He chose to bear
His heart with sorrow was torn
Yet not my will but Yours He said

Come see His hands and His feet
The scars that speak of sacrifice
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails
Surrendered

So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving

CCLI Song # 78897

Graham Kendrick

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Reflection

Pat Greig

As you reflect on the lyrics of the song, consider those values that are important to you. There is an exercise that you might then like to do.

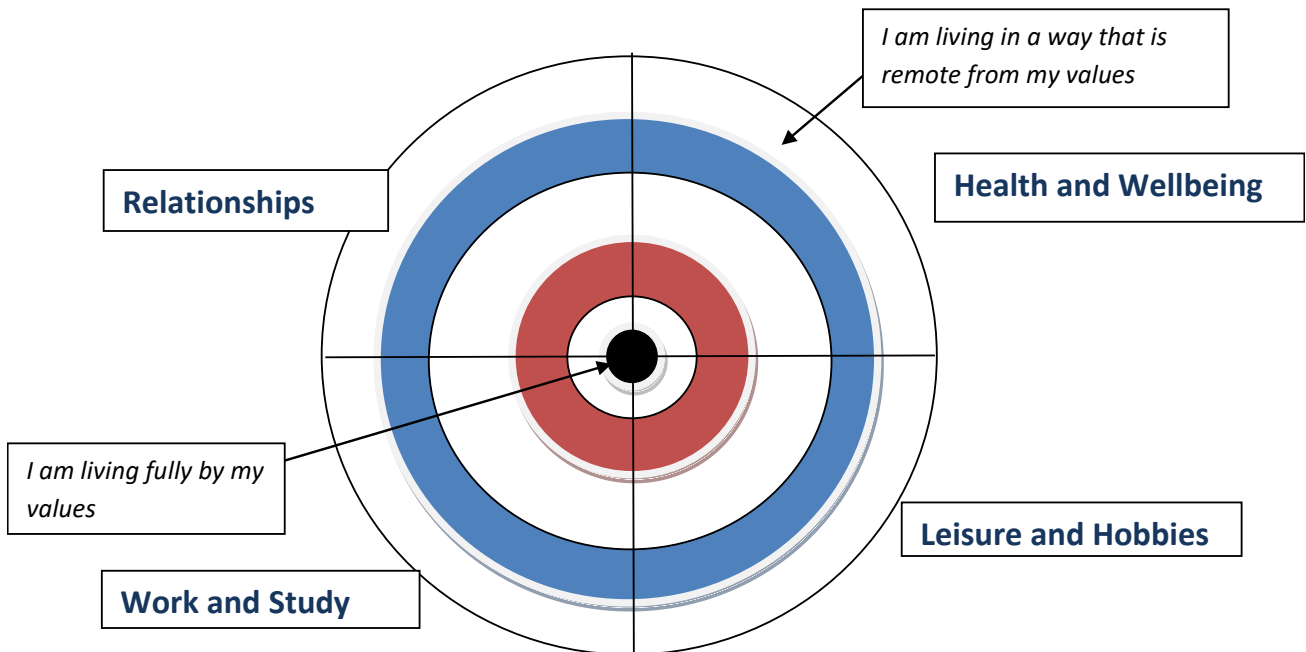
We may be the only 'Bible' a person reads

As a child of God and a follower of Jesus, there are qualities I want people to see in me. On the image below, circle those words that best describe how you want to be as you live your life or alternatively, strike out those that don't resonate with you. You might then like to complete the Bull's Eye exercise on the next page.

balance understanding
professional accountability authenticity
reverence persistence integrity confidence
contributions sincerity tolerance communications
authenticity fairness conviction curiosity peace grace
courtesy love openness
sensuality sexuality intimacy gratitude equality
energy vitality fitness selfless stewardship humility
imagination humility teamwork justice devotion
justice vigour playfulness optimism sensitivity connection
discipline wisdom cooperation
thankful ethical enthusiasm productivity
aware empathy patience
justice maturity calm communications spirituality sensuality
courtesy motivation skillfulness

My Personal Bullseye

On the Bull's Eye, mark where you would place yourself today. The closer you are to the Bull's Eye, the more closely you are living by your values



RELATIONSHIPS: refers to intimacy, closeness, friendship and bonding in your life and includes relationships with your partner, children, parents, relatives, co-workers and other social contacts. How do you want to be in these relationships?

WORK AND STUDY: refers to your workplace and career, educations, knowledge, skills development and may include volunteering and other forms of unpaid work. What personal qualities do you want to bring to your work? What skills do you want to develop?

PERSONAL GROWTH/HEALTH: refers to your ongoing development as a human being and includes personal expression of spirituality, creativity, mindfulness, exercise, nutrition and addressing risk factors such as smoking.

HOBBIES AND LEISURE: refers to how you play, relax or enjoy yourself; your hobbies or other activities for rest, recreation, fun and creativity.

As you complete this exercise, you may become aware of areas for personal growth. Pray into those areas and, if it would help, find someone you feel comfortable to speak with and to whom you can be accountable as you grow.

Message

Dave Moody

1. THE INTERVIEW

Hi. Dave Moody here. Hope you are doing well. It's great to be able to chat with you today. Well, here I am right at the start of a job interview. I'm pretty nervous. I haven't done this for a while. These two interviewers are asking me about what I have done for work in the past. Hmmm! I wonder what they want to hear about me. I better start talking.

(To the Interviewers) "So I used to work at Ford Motor Company where we made 500 cars a day. My role was to help launch the new falcon down the assembly line. After that I worked at Kenworth trucks and now at a supplier to Kenworth trucks. We make the trim panels that go inside the cabin."

Hmmm! Not sure how that went down. They don't look that interested. One of them look like he was trying to hide a yawn by not opening his mouth. You know that look. I might try something else.

(To the Interviewers) "At the various places I've worked, I try to have respect for all people, no matter who they are. My goal is to communicate clearly and in a timely manner. I enjoy being part of a team and we need to all be committed to achieve our goals."

Wow, that time, at least one of the interviewers looked like he wanted to write something down. I thought if I shared a bit more on the way I go about my work, rather than just what I do, I thought that might engage them a little more. But I think I need to crank it up to another gear, or else this could be a short interview.

(To the Interviewers) "This is what I am passionate about: I seek to design better ways to serve people. I brainstorm, research and implement ideas for the service of people. Whatever role I am doing, I love to approach every task by figuring out who I can help. Taking care of people is what matters most, but my methods involve my intellect. I analyse processes or data, see opportunities for improvement and then design better systems to do things. Not because the system itself matters; but because the users of the system do."

That's me.

When sharing about these deeper motivations that make me tick, I found myself more connected and actually quite emotional sharing about it. I'm passionate about this stuff. It moves me. It's funny, I sensed that they were really listening. By the time I finished that bit, they both seemed to be smiling. Maybe I've got a chance at getting this job after all. I better get back to it.

2. WHY, HOW and WHAT

Although my little interview setting wasn't real, the words about my passion for designing and creating processes to serve others - that's real. That's what I love doing.

This interview scenario here reminds me that knowing and sharing about the “WHAT” we do in life is good. “WHAT” we do is really important. But knowing and sharing about the “HOW” we do life is even more important. But what is super-important is recognising and sharing about the “WHY” we do what we do.

As we track through the bible, it becomes so clear that God wants us connected and engaged with our WHY. He deeply cares about us knowing our ultimate WHY, our overarching purpose. And because we humans are made in His image, we too are intrigued and motivated by WHY. So, what is God’s ultimate purpose for us, His ultimate “WHY” for us?

3. GOD STARTS WITH WHY

One of the pages of the bible where God shares about His purpose for us is Paul’s letter to the Colossians - especially Chapter 3 which is our focus today.

Through these inspired words, let’s look at the way God calls us to do life in general and then more specifically our focus for today, exploring what it means to have “a new imagination for the way we do our work”.

But let’s not get too stuck on our definition of “work”. I believe that the principles that we can learn from scripture about how we do work, in a traditional sense, like working for a boss, are extremely applicable to all the activities in which we are engaged.

So, in reading the first part of Colossians 3 (let say verse 1 to 13), I got out my blue highlighter and highlighted in one colour words where we are instructed about the WHAT we are to do and WHAT we are not to do.

We are called to:

⁵ Put to death: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, ... anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

⁹ Do not lie to each other,

¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone.

These are all about the WHAT we do.

Then I grabbed my green highlighter to focus on the values and principles that guide our action. Viewing our actions from a slightly different perspective, scaling up some stairs to see more of the overall picture.

These are the verses where we are taught about HOW we are to do these things.

HOW we are to do our WHAT.

Strategy 1. (v1,2) set your hearts on things above, ... Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

Strategy 2a. (v9) (a reminder that) you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and

Strategy 2b. (v10,12) have put on the new self ... clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

These are powerful strategies to help us do what God calls us to do.

It's like when we put on our clothes in the morning, it is a very intentional decision that you carry with you throughout the day. We are called to be intentional about our daily strategy to be compassionate, patient, humble ...

So, then I got out my yellow highlighter to discover the next level up.

Verses where we are encouraged about our ultimate purpose, the ultimate driver behind why we would live in this way.

The inspiration for our WHAT we are to do and the HOW we are to do it.

Here's what jumped out:

1. (v1) you have been raised with Christ,
2. (v12) (you are) God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved,

This is the genuine core of who we are and who God called us to be and it forms a huge part of our purpose, our WHY.

This WHY is most critical. It is as if God is saying:

Since this is who I have made you to be (YOUR WHY - My chosen people, holy and dearly loved, raised with Christ) ...

then using this guiding principle (YOUR HOW - set your hearts on things above, take off the old self and put on the new self) ...

This is what we are to do

(YOUR WHAT - Don't lie to each other, Bear with each other, forgive each other).

4. CALLED TO BE WHO WE ARE, WHEREVER WE ARE

Colossians 3 continues on highlighting our WHY, our HOW and our WHAT, all the way through to our scripture of focus for today - "a new imagination for work" - Colossians 3: 23-24.

We notice that the exhortations about working at our various activities are embedded in the chapter about exhortations about how we are called to live life as a whole. I think that this is a strong indicator for us that we are ... called to be who we are, wherever we are.

If I scale the stairs and look at the various areas of my life, what do we see? Even though it looks a little different in these challenging COVID-19 times, I see me at work, at home with family, out at the shops, at church – whether it be in a church building or in our living room, walking with friends, by myself.

Scripture makes it clear that I have been given the incredible privilege of being a child of God, made in His image. I am a child of God all the time, no matter where I go, what I do. I don't clock off being His child when I walk through the front door at work.

Therefore, the same principles of our why, how and what apply to our life in general, apply to our life at work or the place where we do our activities.

So what does Colossians 3: 23-24 say: **Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.**

Before I chat further about work, I just want to say that I really enjoy work, I find it fulfilling and rewarding. I'm very thankful that my place of work is healthy and positive. But I respect that for some, work can be just horrible. Whether it is the person you work for or the people you work with, the workload or just the workplace itself, some have a very tough time at work. I'm sorry if that describes your work. I just hope that there is some encouragement in these words.

4a. WHY do we do it

Colossians 3: 24 is clear about our WHY - It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Here is the foundation for our activity. We are working for the Lord Jesus. We are supervised by the Lord Jesus. He is our managing director, our Chief Executive Officer, our leader. How cool is that! So, what is Jesus' management style, what is His leadership style? Well ... we could chat all day about this, but I feel three attributes could be highlighted.

He is present

He doesn't stand at a distance with arms folded. He's not that kind of supervisor. He came down to stand alongside us, to join us in all that we do.

He is the perfect example

Studies reveal that we are more inspired to work for a leader who is competent and authentic. Well in a spiritual sense, Jesus is our most perfect example to focus on being like. He is committed to us, therefore, we are inspired to be committed to Him and to others. He persevered for us, this inspires us to persevere. He is compassionate towards us, this inspires us to be compassionate.

He is patient

He knows us. He loves us. He is for us. "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. Psalm 103: 8. Although he is the creator of the cosmos, he is so gracious that he makes himself small to relate to us and slows down to our speed and walks with us with such gentleness and patience.

So, we are encouraged so see all that we do as if we are offering our activity as a service directly to our present, perfect, patient Lord.

So, this is our WHY - It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

4b. HOW we do it

Having established our WHY, what about the HOW? Well, Colossians 3: 23,24 helps us understand our HOW – the values we may use to guide our actions.

Values are crucial signposts for organisations and for individuals. In our workplace I have the privilege of being a part of the leadership team and part of our role is to develop and communicate the values that guide our actions and shape our culture as an organisation.

One of the values in our workplace is Respect and one way that we can show the respect we have for others is recognising people for the unique strengths they bring to our company. In the first few months of starting work, all staff are asked to fill out a simple little survey about their strengths based on the book “Now Discover Your Strengths” by Marcus Buckingham. This helps us to get to know them and we then summarise these strengths and post them on the wall. We want to affirm the value of each individual.

Again, we are by no means perfect at this but these principles such as RESPECT guide us when we are making decisions about what we are to do. This is our HOW.

So, what are the values that God inspires us to employ in our work according to Colossians 3: 23.

Value 1: Pauls exhorts us to work **"With all your heart"**.

This speaks to me of commitment. With all our heart describes everything that we have got, out of our very “core” of our being, not just something superficial on the “surface.”

Value 2: Pauls exhorts us to **"Work at it"**.

Speaks to me of persistence, perseverance, diligence. It reminds me of Hebrews 12: 1, 2 we were inspired to press on, with perseverance, step by step by step – the journey before us, with our eyes fixed on Jesus. As horribly difficult as this is sometimes, we are encouraged to “Work at it” step by step by step.

4c. WHAT we do

Colossians 3: 23 is clear about the WHAT.

So, Paul has reminded us to scale the stairs and view what we do through the lens of WHY we do it and HOW we do it. So, what does he have to say about the operating level – the WHAT? Well, I believe there is something profound in the whole three words that Paul invests on this. I love his efficiency.

What is the scope of activities that we are to have the perspective of serving the Lord, working at it with all our heart? **"Whatever you do". "Whatever you do"**.

What I love about this is there are times when I struggle with the things I do. I’m probably not alone. We ask whether what we are doing is really worth it? Is this thing I’m doing, is all this energy I’m expending really making a difference? This scripture encourages us not to just look at what we do as an activity on its own. We are encouraged to see where our activity fits into a bigger picture.

When people arrive at our workplace, we get the fact that it is challenging to understand where their job fits into the overall scheme of things. So, not that we are perfect at this, but we take our staff on a tour of our major customer’s premises. They get to walk the assembly line and see how a massive truck is assembled and driven off the end of the line. It helps them understand where they fit. It helps them understand a little about their purpose, the WHY they play their part which in turn influences the way they will do it.

I think this is inherent in our human nature. I need to know that what I do, contributes to a worthwhile purpose.

At work or wherever we do our activities, we are called to remember it is the Lord we are serving, to serve him with all we have, whatever we do. No matter how “major” or “minor” we see our role, no matter how “major” or “minor” we see the activity.

5. WORKING FOR THE ONE THAT REALLY MATTERS

So, as we finish, I encourage us all to scale up the stairs and see the activities we do in the light of our privileged mission - It is the Lord Jesus we are serving.

Having this sense of purpose – our WHY – helps us to understand where the WHAT we do fits in and inspires us to do our activities with a greater sense of calling. Whatever we do!

If we are folding the washing - It is the Lord Jesus we are serving ...

Preparing that report for a meeting - It is the Lord Jesus ...

Hiring a new person at work - It is the Lord Jesus ...

Sweeping the floor of the factory - It is the Lord Jesus we are serving ...

Our roles fits into a larger and privileged calling. A calling to serve the amazingly present, perfect and patient Lord – “The One that really matters”.

Communion

Pat Greig

If you're able, join us at 11am Sunday through Zoom to share in communion together at rngwd.com/communion or after you have shared in communion below, consider who you can call to have a chat as you would on a Sunday morning after a church service.

Our family has certain rituals around Christmas and we've “done Christmas” in a particular way for around 50 years. While there is something special about following traditions and rituals nothing is ever exactly the same. Each year we are all a year older, partners were added to the family, grandchildren arrived and the first three are now young adults, our parents died. Some things have stayed the same but how they are experienced is new every year. I'm not willing yet, to think what Christmas 2020 might be like.

When we take communion, we are participating in an ancient ritual – a ritual that took on a new meaning when Jesus ate that Passover meal with his disciples the night before he died. As you take communion today and read the meditation by Joyce Cowley from her book *Come and See*, may you experience something new that can sustain you for the weeks to come.

Matthew 26: 26-30

While they were eating. Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it, he broke it, gave it to his disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is my body’ ...

Your body is broken as bread for us that in our brokenness we may understand you are in all our crucifixions, big and small, and you lead us always to resurrection.

***“ ... this is my blood of the covenant,
which will be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins ... ”***

Your disciples understood sacrifice. It was part of their traditional faith. But this was bigger than simple atonement. In your surrender to death you freed yourself from the restrictions of one human life to be available to all people. Wherever blood is shed, wherever there is pain, wherever there is grief, you are closer than a breath with the truth of life and death and a greater life to come .

“ ... I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you anew in the kingdom of my father. ”

You drink the new wine of the kingdom. We drink the new wine of you and through you, the kingdom rests in us, a world without horizons, a knowledge beyond words, all of it contained in love.

And so, singing, we go out into this world knowing that you are with us.

Connect cards online

Click this link or enter it into your web browser rngwd.com/connect.

We love to know that you have been able to connect through worship today. Please click on the link (or enter it into your web browser) to our online connect cards letting us know which ways you have been able to worship, and if you want to let us know how we can praying with you.

Thank you!