Transforming Our Work Perspective – Part 3
The Great Commission and our Work
Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:8

There is a negative stereotype about how Bible-believers are at work that satan & the demonic encourage so current Christians won’t combine their witness & their work. Don’t worry, negative stereotypes have always arisen against Christians, but as we shared a couple weeks ago about Christian workers in Russia, God will actually turn these false stereotypes into a witness for Him. Here are a couple that are popular in our day.

- Some paint Christian workers as judgmental of anything that isn’t explicitly Christian and lets everyone around them know about that. They claim Christians are against everything in society.
- Some portray Christian workers as completely (& usually purposefully) out of touch with what is happening in culture or world around us.
- Some portray Christian workers as constantly referring to God no matter what the conversation and getting so pumped up about talking about their faith that their behavior borders on the bizarre – the satire in last week’s bulletin about the Christian who constantly cuts cars off so they have to read their Christian bumper stickers is an example.
- Some paint Christian workers as constantly telling people they are going to hell. Then when a supervisor asks these stereotype Christians to just tone down some of these things a little, the Christian takes that as persecution, spurring them on to even more zealous proselytizing. Actually that Christian is just being obnoxious and they equally get upset at their Pastor who says the same thing.

Since we’ve all had to work, go to school, be around or live with someone who is actually obnoxious & justifies it, it is easy for sensitive Christians to go too far the other direction. We say we want to witness for Jesus in a more "subtle" and "nuanced" way – but our actual Christian witness is totally imperceptible. Or we wait for the right opportunity, relationship or conversation – problem is, it has been many years and that right opportunity, relationship or conversation has never come up. So how can we actually witness for Jesus in our work in this day of increasing antagonism, false stereotypes and fear?

PROPOSITION: We can transform our work as we seek to carry out Jesus’ Great Commission where we are right now!

I. Quick review
Let’s do a quick review of where we have been and where we are going in this area of transforming our work perspective. Remember work does not just refer to our paid or volunteer jobs. Work refers to any effort that we put out to accomplish a goal but it excludes play, rest, and leisure … Your chores are work, learning & studying at school is work, running a home is work, serving Jesus is work, if you are disabled or retired, the extra time & effort you have to do just to keep going is work.
A. Reflecting God in our work
The first week we looked at how we can transform our work perspective by reflecting God in our work. God works, in fact He is currently working all around us. So when we work, we are imitating God — we are reflecting God. This is true of ANY and ALL legitimate work — there is no low or demeaning work in God’s sight. There is a dignity in all work. In fact, work is so fundamental to our design as humans that it is one of the few things we can do in significant amounts without it harming us. How special it is that you and I can reflect our awesome Lord in the little, continuous and mundane tasks of life.

B. Honoring God as we work
The second week we looked at how we can transform our work perspective by honoring God as we work. Constant complaining, not finishing a job or being sloppy in our work does not honor God no matter how much effort we put out. Our identity is in Jesus, not what we do or how much we accomplish. We are children of God simply through faith in Jesus who died on the cross for us. As we do our work for Jesus, instead of our identity or pay, there is a new motivation, attitude and values we bring to our work which honors God. This includes working hard with honesty and integrity. It is God who is our real boss & He’s the one who will abundantly reward us.

C. The Great Commission and our work (Applying the Great Commission to our work)
This week we want to tackle how we can transform our work perspective by applying the Great Commission to our work in a non-obnoxious way — especially through our words and our intentional desire to be God’s ambassador at work.

D. Fulfilling God’s calling through work
Then next week we will tackle how we can transform our work perspective by fulfilling God’s original calling to us as humans in work. This is by far the least thought about in our culture, but the one that will fire up our creativity the most.

II. The Great Commission(s) and work
So how does the Great Commission relate to our work? First, we need to understand what the Great Commission is? The Great Commission refers to the last instructions that Jesus gave to the disciples before He bodily ascended into heaven. These instructions are the overall “marching orders” given to all believers for what we should do to advance Jesus’ work until He bodily returns to remake the earth. If you have been in a Bible-believing church for very long, you may think of the Great Commission as just the words here in Matthew 28. READ v 18-20. There are actually 5 different Bible passages that describe these final instructions of Jesus — one in each Gospel and then one in the beginning of the Book of Acts. The composite of these 5 is our actual commission. So let’s quickly go through them and see the main points emphasized in each. We aren’t going to worry about any side questions that may arise or how groups may have misused these sections in the past.

A. Matthew 28:18-20
**READ Matt 28:18-20.** Here, disciples are charged and commissioned to...

1. disciple people of all nations – that is every ethnic group – so we are called to go to people beyond the natural groups we are most comfortable in.
2. administer water baptism as a sign of initiation to new followers of Jesus in the recognition of the Trinity – One God existing in 3 persons, Father, Son & HS.
3. we are teach the things that Jesus taught in such a way that believers are called to obey – to carry out those teachings in all areas of their life. The Great Commission is not just about evangelism.
4. and we are to be assured of Jesus’ powerful presence with us always as we carry out this commission He has called us to.

**B. Mark 16:15-18**

**Turn to Mark 16:15-18 (all of these will be at the end of each gospel because that is where Jesus gave his final words before ascending into heaven). READ.** In Mark, disciples are...

1. to proclaim the good news of Jesus to all creation – Jesus’ message touches every area of life
2. water baptism of new believers is seen as an act of obedience, while belief is what is necessary for salvation & not being condemned
3. Jesus promised that powerful signs would accompany our stand for Jesus – it is God’s responsibility to provide the proof for His truth and His message.

**C. Luke 24:45-49**

**Turn to Luke 24:45-49 (pull ribbon) READ.** In Luke, disciples are called to...

1. to believe Jesus’ death and resurrection is the foundation of the good news & is core in God’s special revelation.
2. we are to emphasize the need for true repentance for the forgiveness of sins
3. We are to verbally share this message of Jesus in His Name going from where we are now to the whole world.
4. We are called to share what we have witnessed – this is not just mind knowledge but what we have personally experienced
5. and we are to do all this in the power of the Holy Spirit – wait until you’ve received power from on high.

**D. John 20:21-23**

**Turn to John 20:21-23. READ.** In John, disciples...

1. are sent by Jesus Himself as His earthly representatives, in the same way that He was sent by the Father,
2. The Holy Spirit is a gift from Jesus and empowers them.
3. A key focus of disciples is forgiveness from sins.

**E. Acts 1:8**

**Turn a page to Acts 1:8 READ.** Finally, in Acts, disciples are ...

1. to receive power from the Holy Spirit, and
2. be his witnesses – ultimately to the far-reaches of the planet. Theirs would be a
global impact. The whole world will be impacted.

Jesus commissions us to bring His good news to **all people groups** through our words,
life and actions. He also commissions us, not just the pastor, to help other Christians
grow in their knowledge and obedience to the Lord. These things we are **to take the
initiative in** starting with those most like us and then ever expanding to those very
different from us. Clearly this expansive commission is not limited to Sundays, church
facilities or inviting people to Christian things. This Great Commission is to be our
focus in ALL areas of life – including our work! Fortunately, God made it so that our
work times actually **help us be witnesses in places and with people we would not**
onordinarily encounter.

III. Ways we can do that

Isn’t it an amazing thought, that while we will never lead thousands to Christ speaking to
packed arenas, we have been given the privilege to be Jesus’ witness right where we work –
whether that be at a job, in school, with our care-takers, family, relatives and neighbors?
Jesus simply wants us to be His witness where-ever we are and that is just as important to
His plan as the most famous Christian you admire. If God really does love the whole world
as much as He says He does, then He will task some of us to work in obscurity at the same
place for 30 years, just to reach 3 people – people who would not respond positively any
other way. **So how can we be a positive spiritual influence in our work** – how can we carry
out the Great Commission right where God has put us now?

A. Items we have already mentioned in our two previous teachings on transforming our work
Over the past few weeks we have already mentioned a number that deal with our
actions and attitudes at work. Be a good employee. The way we do our jobs either
enhances or hurts our witness for Jesus. Work diligently for Jesus – don’t see any
legitimate task as beneath you, be a team player, encourage others. Work hard with
integrity and honesty. Have a different attitude based on the gospel that we aren’t
better than others, but saved by grace alone. We want to show a different attitude as
ones working of Jesus rather than greedy companies or obnoxious bosses.

B. Use spiritual disciplines
To join Jesus in His work we need to be intentional and not just wait until someone
comes to us. We use spiritual disciplines like prayer, fasting, reading the Bible, and
memorizing scripture to grow in our own spiritual relationship with Jesus. Why not
use those spiritual disciplines to help us more effectively bring Jesus to those we work
with or encounter through our work.

**We can use prayer.** Make a habit of praying for people you work alongside – pick an
intentional time – maybe praying for your co-workers in the car on the way to work,
or if you are one who gets their early or stays late, walk around where others work
asking God to give you opportunities, boldness and favor to share Jesus with these
people you encounter. On the way to the grocery store, intentionally take extra time to first circle around where you live and pray for spiritual openness in your neighbors. If you wait until after too many things may unthaw! 😊

**We can use Bible discussion.** Offer to start or be part of a lunch-time or after work Bible study or prayer group with the people you associate with. Nothing fancy and it doesn’t have to be often. *You can use video clips.*

**We can use behind-the-scenes fellowship.** Maybe you feel hindered from sharing at work or that no one is interested. Form a partnership with another Christian to jointly pray, discuss and encourage each other in your efforts to shine Christ's light at work.

**We can use quietness and meditation.** Step away from the busyness of work for a few minutes and let yourself just be quiet before Jesus. Listen for any encouragements the Holy Spirit brings to your mind of how you can be an effective representative of Jesus.

C. Use personal interactions
   If we are going to join Jesus in His work, it will primarily be through personal interactions and relationships. It doesn’t matter whether you are an extrovert and have many acquaintances or an introvert who likes to go deeper with less. *All ministry and witness is ultimately interpersonal.*

   So in your work, see the value of nurturing relationships as part of applying the Great Commission to your work. We don’t want to make those we work with “our projects” though. Instead, we simply want to have deeper relationships with others because that is something God works through. Take the initiative but not in the sense of focusing on yourself or what you like. Ask sincere and thoughtful questions at lunches or breaks AND do lots of listening. Keep reaching out beyond people you agree with or those who like what you like.

   You can also lead or be part of compassion projects at your work or in your community to demonstrate the importance of God's love for all people – like lead a food drive or organize the annual blood drive.

   As you deepen your relationship with a non-Christian, invite that person for lunch off-site or to a weekend night out for a movie and coffee. *We are NOT talking about missionary dating here – that doesn’t go well.* Being off-site simply allows them to open up more and you to have more freedom to talk directly about your faith. Be careful not to get defensive – don’t react negatively to objections. Instead see these doubts as evidence they are genuinely thinking about something deeper. Expect emotions such as anger and hostility to surface when you touch on important issues of life. Express your disagreements with respect, affirming the value of the people with whom you speak and leaving the door open for further discussions.
D. Share Jesus verbally

If we are going to join Jesus in His work, then we need to verbally say something about Jesus. Without identifying with Jesus, our compassion just points to ourselves — what nice people we are.

Start by refusing to hide or play-down the importance of your own faith. When it naturally fits a conversation, freely talk about the role your church, prayer, Scripture, and God have in your life. Personally, I love sharing ‘faith stories’ where I see God do what only God can do. Let others see the joy and purpose you find in your faith. Which means we need to genuinely believe and experience God's grace ourselves!

Be careful of being more concerned with what other people think about us than what God thinks about us. God has already confirmed His love for us at the cross; our identity & eternity are secure in Him. Don't be afraid to mention your own flaws. Remember that non-Christians will be attracted, not by your victories, but by God's grace.

You can invite co-workers to social events with your Christian friends, special events at your church, a holiday service like Christmas or Easter or other place where Jesus will be talked about. Think like Outreach Basketball leaders — 15 minutes for Jesus and all the rest is basketball.

Don’t forget to actually share the Gospel. Feel free to use a little tract like “Steps to Peace with God” and then just ask where they see themselves. Don’t do this on paid work time when you are supposed to working unless you more than make up for the time. Share at a break or lunch or gathering outside work when you see spiritual interest. Never force discussions about faith. Doing so does more harm than good. It’s God’s job to spur spiritual interest in people. We are simply called to testify how God has made a difference in our life.

E. Trust God with the results.

Finally trust God with the results. Successful witnessing is simply sharing Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God. It is not our job to convert anyone. That’s God’s job. That frees us up to boldly share but not carry a burden God hasn’t made us to carry. Not all of our co-workers, neighbors, family or fellow students will turn from their sins and trust in Christ, but some of them might. We have the privilege to be a part of that eternal transformation.

God's put you right where He wants you—He's got a plan for you to shine His light in your workplace! So invite God to challenge you about bringing your faith to work. You may be surprised by how different this looks than the stereotypes being promoted around us! Keep overcoming in the power of Jesus.