

JULY 2014

# TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God.

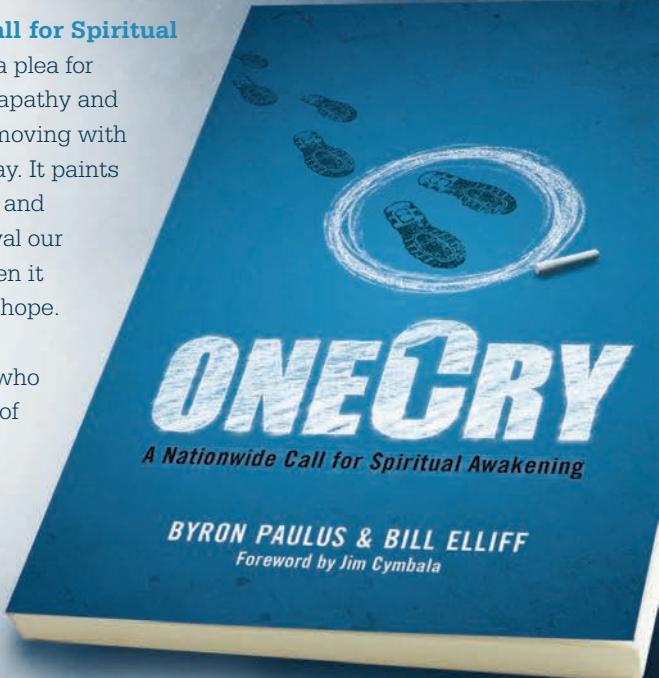
Ecclesiastes 3:13



## Work and the Word: A Biblical Survey of Labor

## **OneCry: A Nationwide Call for Spiritual**

**Awakening** is a challenge, a plea for readers to shake off spiritual apathy and wake up to the hope of God moving with extraordinary power in our day. It paints a picture of both desperation and hope—without spiritual revival our country has no hope, but when it comes we will need no other hope. Drawing on an abundance of stories from ordinary people who have experienced the power of life-changing revival in their own lives, this book provides a contemporary roadmap for spiritual awakening and real revival.



Passionate and story-rich, *OneCry* engages readers to seek God urgently at this moment in history. It inspires them with hope for what God can do, and it invites them to join a growing movement of believers who are uniting in one cry for revival and spiritual awakening. It is a summons to join together in a single focus and passionate prayer for revival in our nation like it hasn't been seen in nearly two hundred years.



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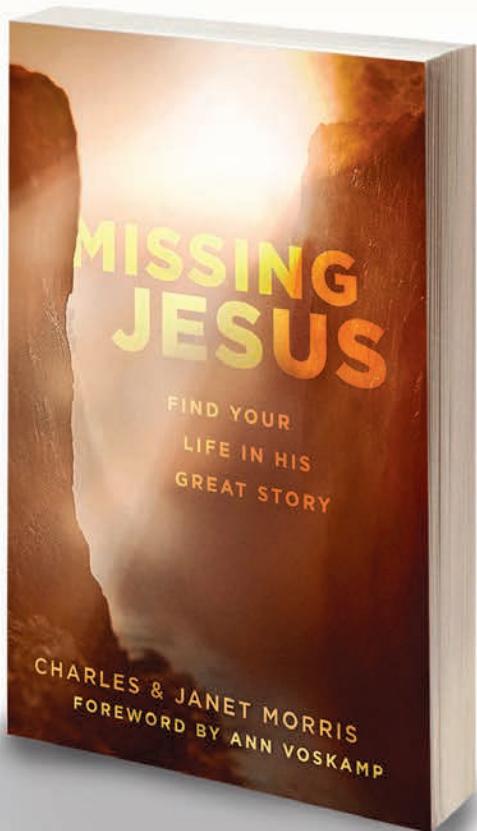
We put our trust in Christ alone for the forgiveness of our sins, desire to please God with our life, and yet, we often find that something crucial is missing. Our day-to-day experience of faith lacks the vitality we know it should have.

## WE FEEL LIKE WE'RE MISSING SOMETHING, AND WE PROBABLY ARE. WE'RE PROBABLY **MISSING JESUS.**

That's what this book is about—it's about not missing Jesus. It's about having our lives re-centered on the glorious Son of God all over again. Charles and Janet Morris wanted to know what happens when we stop missing Jesus, and now they're sharing what they've learned.

"The Morrises see that many professed Christians actually keep Christ at a distance, to their own loss. But the stories told here, vivid, poignant and searching as they are, should bring Him and us close."

*J.I. PACKER, PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY AT REGENT COLLEGE AND AUTHOR OF KNOWING GOD*



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# TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

The Purpose of Work



My first job was as a corn detasseler on my best friend's farm. I grew up in a small town outside of Omaha, Nebraska, and I was 14 years old when I signed up for a summer detasseling job on Mr. Siert's hybrid popcorn farm. I made \$1.05 an hour. For two summers, I worked long hours in hot dusty fields. Then when I was a bit older I found other ways to make money.

For most of us, what we do for "work" occupies the majority of our lives. Most people spend at least eight hours each day at our job, 40 hours every week. For some, "work" is their passion or calling, something they have desire to do and in which they want to invest their lives. But for most, work is simply a necessity. We must work in order to provide for our needs and the needs of our families.

A Barna study found that 75 percent of U.S. adults say they are looking for ways to live a more meaningful life. What was interesting to me is that nearly two thirds of those same adults say it has been at least three years or more since they heard a sermon in their church about work or career.

Why isn't the church talking about the way adults spend the majority of their time? In this month's issue of *Today in the Word*, we will look at what the Bible has

to say about work. We will study Scripture passages related to God's view of our "labor."

From Scripture, we learn that God created us to work. In Genesis, Adam and Eve are given specific responsibilities (Gen. 1:27, 28). In Exodus, the Israelites are commanded to work and be productive in an even more specific manner: "Six days you shall labor, and do all your work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath" (20:9). Clearly God designed us to work and to rest.

Whether we labor for money or not, we are admonished to dedicate our work to God. This covers all types of service, in our homes, communities, workplaces, and churches. Colossians 3:17 says it well, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of Christ Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

It does not matter if I detassel corn in a field or answer phone calls in my office, each task I am given can be done for the glory of God. That gives my work, and every part of my life, a higher calling.

No matter what our formal job title, our focus is to be on following Jesus. Perhaps that is why Jesus told His disciples to put down their nets and to follow Him. Our position, as followers of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, gives every job we do a higher, clearer, and ultimately more satisfying sense of purpose.

# THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler

## God, Work, and Rest



God was the first worker. He was also the first to rest. According to Genesis 2:2, “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.” In this way God established a rhythm and a fundamental relationship between the two. Work and rest go together.

We usually rest in order to work, or else we rest because we have grown weary from working. But neither is true where God is concerned. God who created all things rested—but not out of need. God does not need to conserve His energy so that He has enough strength for a task. Nor does He need to recover His strength after expending His energy. God does not need to rest because He never grows tired or weary (Isa. 40:28).

What does the Bible mean when it says that God rested? It is significant that Scripture says God rested from His work, not that He rested because of His work. The emphasis is on completion, not exhaustion. God rested because His work was complete. There was nothing more that needed to be done. Scripture also does not say that God rested *in* His works. God sustains all that He has created. He is deeply involved with His

creation, but He is not dependent upon it for anything.

Jesus was also a worker. He was a carpenter who learned His trade at Joseph's side (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3). During His earthly ministry, Jesus' primary concern was to complete the work assigned to Him by His heavenly Father (John 17:4). This effort brought Him into contention with the religious leaders who criticized Him for “working” on the Sabbath when He healed a man who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. Jesus replied: “My Father is always at his work to this very day and I too am working” (John 5:17). This reply seems to point back to the statement of Genesis 2:2 by suggesting that the Father who “is always at his work to this very day” also continues to “rest from all his work.”

Jesus worked on the Sabbath because the Father does as well. God is at rest while still being engaged with His creation. Jesus is “the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). As far as God’s purpose was concerned, Christ’s work was finished before it had ever begun.

## For Further Study

To learn more about the relationship between work and rest, read *An Unhurried Life: Following Jesus’ Rhythms of Work and Rest* by Alan Fadling (InterVarsity).

# FROM THE EDITORS

by Elena Mafter

## The Controller's Office: Work and Prayer with *Today in the Word*

This month's theme reminded me that we at *Today in the Word* have the best job! We have the privilege to focus our work on the Word, and make each working day "today in the Word." I wondered how other departments at Moody use *Today in the Word*, and how the Word of God and prayer help them in their day-to-day work.

Meet our Controller's Office team, a department on Moody's Chicago campus of mostly quiet people who don't like to be in the limelight. They prefer working behind the scenes, and at first glance their ministry may not seem glamorous. But without them, Moody would not be able to function. They manage Moody's budget and payroll, oversee our expenses, and make sure our bills are paid—they contribute a great deal to Moody's commitment to godly stewardship of our financial resources. *Today in the Word* is an important part in this department's life. Every morning before work starts, they gather for their departmental devotions. They read and discuss the Scripture portion of the day, share their personal insights into the theme, and may dwell on one of the questions in the "Q&A" column. Their favorite time is when they pray for the department listed in the "Pray with Us" section that day. They also mention in prayer *Today in the Word* readers as well as Moody donors and partners.

Roger Sipes, who supervises accounts payable and budget reviews, became a reader of *Today in the Word* 25 years ago, when as a young pastor he was striving to deepen his preaching and his

personal daily devotions. "This devotional helped me revitalize my time with the Lord back then," recalls Roger, "And it helps me now. So many publications feel outdated years after. But what's great about *Today in the Word* is that you can take a 20-year-old copy and it's still relevant today. The treasures of Scripture that *Today in the Word* mines never fade." It's a privilege for me to introduce some of the quiet prayer warriors at the Controller's Office:

### ANNITA SMITH

**Place of birth:** Crenshaw, MS

**Years at Moody:** 15

**Years as a *Today in the Word* reader:** 15

**Why do you read *Today in the Word*?**

To grow spiritually

**What do you like most about this devotional?** "Apply the Word"

**Most memorable/favorite issue:**

The issues with my name in the "Pray with Us" section. I feel even more connected to the writers and readers.

**What would you like to say to other readers?** The Lord loves you and is thinking

about you. You'll see this love in the issues of *Today in the Word*. The people here are seeking the Lord and writing what God has on His heart for you.

### ROGER SIPES

**Place of birth:** Berkeley Springs, WV

**Years at Moody:** 23

**Years as a *Today in the Word* reader:**

25

**Why do you read *Today in the Word*?**

To be inspired, encouraged, and challenged, to pray for co-workers at Moody and to get to know them better.

**What do you like most about this devotional?** Compact format, attention to biblical accuracy, and presentation of the Word in an attractive and interesting way.

*Continued on page 39*

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**TODAY IN THE Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

**Work and the Word: A Biblical Survey of Labor**

A recently released online snapshot survey by a staffing firm underlines job dissatisfaction among American workers. Nearly two thirds of respondents said they were not happy at work. Of course, today's high unemployment, financial markets' upheaval, and slow job growth contribute to workplace unhappiness, but this feeling of "doom and gloom" over our everyday toil is found as far back as Ecclesiastes. The first chapter declares that "everything is meaningless" and "what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun." And then the book asks a rhetorical question: "What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun?" (Eccl. 1:3).

In this month's *Today in the Word*, we'll conduct our own survey, but ours will be the survey of God's Word. We'll look at what the Bible says about God's work and our work, about wealth and the kingdom of God, and a godly ethic of work and rest. We'll walk the path of Ecclesiastes, from everything-is-meaningless worldview in chapter 1 to acknowledging the sovereignty of God in chapter 3 (this issue's cover verse): "That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God" (Eccl. 3:13).

Thank you for supporting *Today in the Word* and for sharing the fruits of your labor with this ministry and other ministries of Moody! We hope this study of God's Word will help you delight in the Lord in all seasons of your spiritual journey and find contentment in Him in every area of your life.

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## Labor Is a Gift

In the beginning God worked. And one of His first gifts to His beloved humans was labor. This fact often gets obscured by the long shadow cast by the Fall and God's subsequent curse: "Through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return" (Genesis 3:17–19).

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Genesis 1:31

be drawn from verses 26 through 31. First, God commissioned Adam and Eve to "subdue" and "rule" over the earth and their fellow creatures. Those words suggest a created hierarchy with humans occupying a special place at the top, but it's not until after the Flood that God gives people permission to eat animals. Here God instructs humanity to be wise stewards of the resources He has provided; man's selfish exploitation of earth or animals is not a part of God's original plan.

We tend to think of work as a regrettable reality, a direct result of sin. And certainly sin has marred our experience of labor. But a closer consideration of Genesis suggests that the work inherent in God's creative acts and also the work of sustaining creation was all present before sin entered the story.

Two of the most striking observations about what work was meant to be can

Second, this passage shows that work is meant to be a delight. God stands back and looks at His creation and calls it "good" (v. 31) He finds satisfaction in the labor. Work—its pleasures and pains—is discussed throughout the Bible and this month we'll survey many of these passages and learn more about this endeavor that is central to human life.

### Apply the Word

Whether you work inside or outside the home, as a salaried worker, an hourly employee, or a volunteer, whether your labor is public or private or both, your efforts can be a source of satisfaction and an opportunity to serve God. Make a list of the kinds of work that you do and don't enjoy and then ask God to give you wisdom about your work in this world.

### Pray with Us

Please support in prayer the Moody trustees whose names are listed on page 5 of this issue. We thank the Lord today for bringing these dedicated servants to Moody, and we are grateful for their service.

## God's Covenant with Noah

Wikipedia describes a rainbow as "an optical and meteorological phenomenon that is caused by both reflection and refraction of light in water droplets in earth's atmosphere, resulting in a spectrum of light appearing in the sky." Today's Scripture passage tells us that a rainbow is also a reminder of God's promise to never flood the world again. Both accounts of rainbows are true and speak to God's creative powers and His ongoing commitment to both the earth and its inhabitants. They are a source of wonder and delight for people of all ages.

Today's Scripture passage is truly bittersweet; not only does the rainbow signify God's covenant with humanity, but we also see that people are increasingly estranged from each other, God, and the rest of creation. Sin entered the world in Genesis 3 and disrupted that harmonious work of

stewardship God had given to Adam and Eve, leaving them at odds with nature. And in Genesis 9 the ramifications of sin continue to reverberate when God reveals: "Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything" (v. 3).

As for you,  
be fruitful and  
increase in  
number; multiply  
on the earth and  
increase upon it.

Genesis 9:7

Man's stewardship of creation was complicated by the emergence of sin, and these difficulties affect one of the most frequent types of work humans do: finding, preparing, and eating food. But in this passage and elsewhere God puts limits on the practice of eating meat.

And here God makes a covenant between not just Himself and Noah but encompassing all of the earth's creatures: He will not destroy the earth again. He encourages people to be fruitful and multiply. The rainbow reminds us that despite the specter of death, God is pro-life.

### Apply the Word

Many of us are blessed to live in a time and place where food is abundant and costs relatively little to acquire. We can be tempted to forget that God cares a great deal about how we approach food, including principles of respect for His creation, thankfulness to Him for the provision, and care for those who lack the resources to get food.

### Pray with Us

July is an important month for the employees of the Operations branch on our Chicago campus. Steven Mogck, executive VP and chief operating officer, appreciates your prayers for this team as they prepare the campus for the upcoming school year.

## Jesus' Creative Work Underlies All Creativity and Production

The deep mystery of the Trinity, particularly the relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son, is plumbed in the opening verses of John's Gospel. Jesus is the "Word," and we are told that not only was He present in the beginning, He was an active participant in creation. "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (v. 3).

As one commentator explains, "The work God did in *Genesis 1 and 2* was performed by the Word. This may seem too fine a point to press, but many Christians continue to labor under the delusion that the Messiah only began working once things had gone irredeemably wrong, and that his work is restricted to saving (invisible) souls to bring them to (immaterial) heaven. Once we recognize that the Messiah was working materially with God from the beginning, we can reject every creation-denying (and thus work-denigrating) theology."

The Gospel of John often uses dichotomies—dark/light, doubt/faith, spirit/flesh—to underscore the radical juxtaposition of God's ways against the world's ways. Some people have argued that this rhetorical device means that God is calling people away from creation and into an immaterial spiritual realm. But the opposite is true. John 3:17 says, "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." Jesus did not come to relieve us from the world and its toil but to transform the world through the redemption of work, to return labor to its original nature as a source of human flourishing.

Unless the LORD builds the house,  
the builders labor in vain. Unless the  
LORD watches over the city, the guards  
stand watch in vain.

Psalm 127:1

Because Jesus' work began in the beginning, all subsequent human labor is derived from His initial labor. Everything people work with—from minds and hands and backs to paint and soil and paper—was created by Him and is a gift from Him.

### Apply the Word

What tools have you been gifted that make your work possible? If you had to hire someone to do your job—raising children, managing a team of professionals, reading electric meters—how would you describe the skills and characteristics necessary for a successful applicant? Do an inventory of the tools you've been given with which you work.

### Pray with Us

Summer is a busy time for the Admissions staff, as they help our students prepare for their arrival on Moody's Chicago campus in the fall. Please keep in your prayers Janessa Davis, Charles Dresser, Jacqueline Haywood, and Amy Slennett.

## In Praise of God's Work

God's creative activity is twice described in Genesis as "his work." In his commentary on the first half of this epic opening book of the Bible, scholar Victor Hamilton notes that the Old Testament has two words for labor: "The second word emphasizes labor that is raw and unskilled. The first—and the one used here—designates skilled labor, work that is performed by a craftsman or an artisan. One describes work that is raw and unskilled, the other refers to skilled labor. Such is the measure of the finesse and professional skill of God's work."

Pastor Tim Keller underscores the artistic aspect of God's work when he points out that the Genesis story is unique among ancient stories about the beginning of the world. Many cultural traditions maintained that the world and human history were born out of a struggle between cosmic forces. In the

Babylonian creation story the *Enuma Elish*, the god Marduk overcomes the goddess Tiamat and forges the world out of her remains. In this and similar accounts, the visible universe was an uneasy balance of powers in tension with one another. But in reality God has no rivals. All powers and beings of heaven and earth were created by and are dependent on God. Keller writes, "Creation, then, is not the aftermath of a battle but the plan of a craftsman. God made the world not as a warrior digs a trench but as an artist makes a masterpiece."

The heavens  
declare the glory  
of God; the skies  
proclaim the work  
of his hands.

Psalm 19:1

So it's no surprise that God's masterful work is a subject of admiration in Psalm 19 and throughout Scripture. Having spent his youth as a shepherd tending his father's flocks, David was familiar with the wonder of creation and was able to see God's majesty in it as clearly as in written revelation.

### Apply the Word

In Psalm 19 David sings God's praises for both forming the world and for constructing the laws that govern all of creation. Spend some time today reflecting on the beauty of the natural world and write your own hymn of praise. It can be as simple as a haiku or, if you're musically gifted, a simple melody that pays homage to God's skill as an artist.

### Pray with Us

Would you pray with us again today for the Admissions team: Christopher Toland, Audrianna Cageao, Ricardo Brown, and David Humphrey? Their hard work helps set the stage for students' learning and for the success of Moody education.

## Jesus Baptized as a Sign of His Vocation

Many people graduate from school—elementary, high school, college, technical training—at some point in their life. And when they do, there's often a ceremony of some kind to confer the degree, an official gesture that communicates that this person is ready to do what they've been trained to do. Degrees also convey that the granting institution backs up its graduate; it vouches for the student's readiness. While not a graduation in the typical sense of the word, Jesus' baptism in today's passage does share some of the qualities of the rite of passage.

About thirty years passed between the final verses of Matthew 2 and the opening scene of Matthew 3, where we find John the Baptist wandering the wilderness and quoting Isaiah, urging all who will listen to repent, "for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (v. 2). John's preaching drew crowds

from the surrounding towns, and he baptized many people before Jesus showed up on the riverbank of the Jordan. Whether John recognized the fullness of Jesus' identity in the moment of their meeting or not, he did know that Jesus was unlike all the others he had baptized. "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" (v. 14).

This is my Son,  
whom I love; with  
him I am well  
pleased.

Matthew 3:17

Jesus insisted, and as soon as He was finished being baptized the Spirit of God came to rest upon Him in the form of a dove. "And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased,'" (v. 17). This was the signal that Jesus was ready to begin the public phase of His earthly ministry. He had been a carpenter and now He was being called into new work, into the fulfillment of His role as Savior. Soon He would be calling others to join Him in this work.

### Apply the Word

As we'll explore in coming days, professional and ministry endeavors can both serve God—but have you spent any time considering how you can specifically prepare yourself to work for God? For more information about resources offered by Moody Bible Institute, visit [www.moody.edu/distance-learning/](http://www.moody.edu/distance-learning/).

### Pray with Us

Jim Elliott, vice president of Stewardship, welcomes the prayers of the Moody community for the staff under his leadership who foster connections with the Moody donors in Chicago and across the country.

## Jesus Describes His Own Vocation

In yesterday's Scripture passage, Jesus was baptized and ushered into a new phase of His work on earth. In the verses that follow, we learn that Jesus' readiness for ministry was immediately tested with a forty-day stint in the wilderness, a time during which God allowed Satan to tempt the Messiah with all of the pleasures of the world. But Jesus remained true to His calling. In today's reading we see that Jesus emerged from that time of trial focused and ready to begin the work of His public ministry.

Jesus used the words of the prophet Isaiah in publicly announcing His job description: to proclaim good news to the poor; to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind; to set the oppressed free; and to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor. His Jewish audience certainly heard the political tone of Jesus' message. After 2,000 years of waiting for their promised Savior—after countless generations lived under

foreign rule—Jews were hungry for a Messiah.

But Jesus' claims provoked anger. Instead of freeing politically oppressed people, He emphasized freedom from captivity to sin. He healed literal blindness as evidence the He also healed spiritual blindness. He had compassion on the poor, but He didn't abolish all poverty.

He has sent me  
to bind up the  
brokenhearted  
. . . and release  
from darkness for  
the prisoners.

Isaiah 61:1

This was not the King people had imagined. They wanted a warrior who would defeat Rome, and instead Jesus was the Suffering Servant of

Isaiah 53. And yet it was true. Jesus was the promised Messiah. While His message certainly does have political implications, Jesus' aims were even more ambitious than earthly power. His work was to proclaim the kingdom of God, a kingdom more vast than even the mighty Roman Empire with a King more glorious than all the wealth of Caesar.

### Apply the Word

We all have options when it comes to spending our time and talents. Developing a personal mission statement can provide focus when weighing those options. Prayerfully draft your own statement using questions including, *What brings me joy? What would I do with my money if it were unlimited? In what ways have I clearly seen God's hand on my life?*

### Pray with Us

Pray for our regional Stewardship representatives who meet with Moody donors in many parts of the United States. Pray for God's encouragement, strength, and traveling safety, as they establish personal connections within the Moody community.

## Calling the First Disciples

In his commentary for the Theology of Work project, Grant Macaskill observes that the Gospel of Mark emphasizes the work of Jesus—to teach, to heal, to perform signs of God's power, and to reconcile humanity to its Creator. Christ's work is unique, but it's also connected to the work of all God's people: to cooperate with God in His ongoing work of redemption and restoration. This means that our work is not Christ's work, but our work has the same goal as His. The Gospel of Mark is not about our work, but it should inform and define the ultimate goal of our work.

Today's passage suggests how seriously Jesus took this shared aspect of His work. His first proclamation of the gospel—"The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" (v. 15)—is followed quickly by a specific exhortation to two sets

of brothers to leave their jobs and follow Jesus. The scene-setting detail—"as Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee"—suggests that Jesus was an itinerant rabbi. In contrast, the brothers were all actively employed when Jesus issued His call. Fishing and fish-salting were two major industries in Galilee that together provided a good deal of economic stability even during turbulent times. To leave that kind of security was no small sacrifice.

"Come, follow me,"  
Jesus said, "and I  
will send you out to  
fish for people."

Mark 1:17

When thinking about the ways in which the disciples' commitment to Jesus

should inspire our own, it's important to keep in mind the special circumstances of their own work. They were called to join Jesus in His earthly ministry—to travel at His side, to eat meals and sleep on the ground together. The details of Jesus' call on our individual lives will look different—but His request for us to follow Him with all that we are and have remains the same today.

### Apply the Word

Jesus might not call you to leave your work place and become a full-time preacher, much less a wandering one (though He does call some to be evangelists and missionaries!). But Jesus does ask us all to become "fishers of men," and this job has implications for any other job titles you have as well. How does being a fisher of men affect your job?

### Pray with Us

Today, would you pray for Dr. Thomas Shaw, vice president of Student Services and Enrollment? We pray that the Lord would bless his service at Moody, for the benefit of all students, graduates, and alumni.

## Jesus Commissions His Disciples

Matthew 10 presents a bracing vision of what it meant for the Apostles to join Jesus in His work, and it has implications for our lives as well. Jesus' commission to the newly gathered Twelve includes the gift of performing miracles, followed by very specific rules about where they are to go, how they are to treat others and be treated in return, what they should say and do, and the suffering they will both cause and endure.

It's worthwhile to pause and reflect on the differences between this commission and the one given to Jonah when he was told to deliver a message from God. Jonah was instructed to go forth and preach the coming catastrophe: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown" (3:4). In contrast, the disciples preached the imminent arrival of the Messiah and healed people, heralding the at-hand reality of the kingdom of God. As preacher

J. Vernon McGee put it, "The preaching of this was like the morning light, to give notice of the approach of the rising sun."

And yet this very good news would be met with resentment and even violence. Jesus references Micah 7:6 when He

Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Matthew 10:39

says, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (v. 34).

Scripture indicates that even for the disciples, understanding and embracing the fullness of the kingdom of God was a process. It's a credit to

these men that they followed Christ, trusting Him even beyond the limits of their understanding. And it's not until Jesus left them that their persecution intensified, when it became undeniable that the kingdom of God that Jesus ushered in would be nothing like the reigns of earthly kings.

### Apply the Word

Scripture reminds us that the gospel was delivered to Israel first. This was no accident of history; it was intentional on God's part (see Acts 3:26). God still desires to be reconciled to all people, including the Jewish people. Spend some time in prayer specifically asking for peace, safety, and spiritual revival among Jewish people around the world.

### Pray with Us

For the next two days, please pray for the Academic Records department on our Chicago campus. Katherine Bragg, Auctavia Cegers, Margaret Creech, and George Mosher diligently document students' academic progress at Moody.

## God's Redemptive Work in the World

Debt is a burdensome feature of life for many people. Even those who are careful to not spend more than they earn find it nearly impossible to avoid ever borrowing money—student loans, a mortgage, a car loan—and those ensuing payments are often a source of ongoing worry. The specter of debt is conjured in today's passage in the phrase, "counting people's sins against them." And so too the relief when we see that the debt is paid, with the preface "not."

The better word for "sin" in this phrase might be *trespasses*, a term that in Greek suggests a false

step, slip, or blunder. In his consideration of the word, scholar Wolfgang Bauder said that for Greeks, *paraptomata* are mistakes that result from ignorance. For Jews, they are deliberate actions knowingly committed against God. As someone once said, "sin is a clenched fist and its object is the face of God."

This is good, and  
pleases God our  
Savior, who wants  
all people to be  
saved and to come  
to a knowledge of  
the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3–4

Like debt, sin is something that could and should count against us. But God pays our account in full and forever through His work of reconciliation. And while in Hellenistic visions of the relationship between gods and men the human seeks restoration of the god's favor, in Paul's writings reconciliation is always God's job. Instead of human beings approaching hostile gods with their own varied and often self-serving hopes, God approaches often-hostile human beings in the hope that all of His beloved creatures be reconciled to Him through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:10).

As one who had a great debt, Paul experienced a tremendous sense of relief, gratitude, and love when Christ discharged him of his sins. Inspired by his own experience, Paul wanted to serve the Lord: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us" (v. 20).

### Apply the Word

Some adult converts to the Christian faith have a stunning moment of realization. Some who accept Christ at a young age experience a slow dawning of the ramifications of Jesus' sacrifice. Remember how you felt when you realized that your debt has been paid in full and forever, and say a prayer of gratitude for your own reconciliation to the Creator.

### Pray with Us

We keep our prayer focus on Academic Records today, adding Melanie Monteclaro, Bethanne Tremper, and Tyrone Turner to your prayer list. May they feel the joy and love of the Lord as they assist students throughout their studies at Moody.

## Living and Working in Christ

After being reconciled to God, Paul dedicated his life to the work of reconciling others to God through his preaching and letters. Among his missionary travels was a three-year stint in Ephesus, during which a man named Epaphras was converted to Christianity. Epaphras, in turn, journeyed to Colossae and helped to plant a church. Like many young congregations, internal and external forces threatened to distort the gospel and dissolve their fellowship. Epaphras returned to Paul and asked for guidance. In this context Paul wrote a letter to the struggling church that we know as the book of Colossians.

Paul doesn't directly or systematically address the problems in the church, but contextual clues suggest that the Colossian heresy was a mixture of an extreme form of Jewish legalism and early stages of Gnosticism (a heresy that elevated the spiritual realm over

and against the material world and often involved a denial of the bodily death and resurrection of Jesus). To refute these positions, Paul's letter underscores the complete adequacy of Christ's work for salvation. In chapter 3 Paul describes an ethical vision in light of this truth: trade vice for virtue.

Whatever you do,  
work at it with  
all your heart,  
as working for  
the Lord, not for  
human masters.

Colossians 3:23

Just as when restoring a car you must sand off the rust rather than paint over it, the logic of conversion moves from darkness to light. Paul urges his readers to rid themselves of immorality (vv. 5–11) so that Christ's will have full sway on their hearts and minds (vv. 12–17).

As one commentary notes, "For [Paul], morality is a matter of what sort of person one becomes in Christ, where one 'puts on' the capacity for doing the good that God has willed. Therefore, believers are transformed by the working of divine grace into people who have the character to do God's will."

### Apply the Word

Trading vice for virtue is more easily said than done, and there's no shortcut or formula. Instead, Paul describes what virtue looks like: transformed relationships within the church and the home. Reflect on your relationships and whether they testify to a life that is characterized more by virtue or by vice.

### Pray with Us

Please uphold in prayer the work of Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media, and his staff. Ask the Lord to bless the media ministries of Moody: Moody Radio and Moody Publishers. May the Lord use these ministries for His glory!

## Spiritual Gifts and the Equality of Work

The *Los Angeles Times* recently reported that in 2012 the average CEO-to-worker pay ratio in the United States was 350 to 1. That's actually down a bit from 2008, but there is growing concern that executive pay has gotten out of hand. The most alarming aspect of this income disparity seems to stem from structural features that prioritize short-term goals over long-term investment. As one economist explained, today's executives spend capital less on long-term investments, which will set their companies up for future profit, and more on shoveling dividends to investors, which props up their shares quarter by quarter and inflates their stock-related bonuses. In the 1970s American companies devoted 15 times as much capital to investments as they disbursed to shareholders. Today the ratio is less than 2 to 1.

Whatever else can be said about this disparity, it doesn't elevate the common good over individual goals. It's an

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

Romans 12:6

example of ways that earthly powers have different priorities than the vision of God's kingdom in Scripture. As Jonathan Pennington and Alice Mathews point out in the commentary on Matthew for the Theology of Work project, power under God's control means two things: first, refusal to inflate our own self-estimation; and second, reticence to assert ourselves solely for our own benefit. Paul captures the first aspect perfectly in Romans 12:3: "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment." Verse 5 continues, "In Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

Christ does not want us to deny our abilities. On the contrary, Scripture teaches us to evaluate ourselves clearly and employ our gifts with humility and joy—for the common good and to the glory of God.

### Apply the Word

While we can hope to find fulfillment in our work as we serve God, our gifts are really bestowed not for our own satisfaction but for God's glory and service to others. Prayerfully reflect on your gifts, talents, work, and service. Have you surrendered these facets of yourself to God? Ask Him today to use you to bless people around you.

### Pray with Us

Moody Radio provides quality Christian programs and inspiring music. Ask God to enlarge the scope of this ministry through the service of Moody Radio Programming team: Daniel Anderson, Maureen Ber, Mark Bretz and Daniel Craig.

## The Body of Christ at Work

We are studying what the Bible has to say about work this month, and for the next few days we'll examine different kinds of work that are pleasing to God. Like yesterday's reading in Romans 12, in our passage today Paul employs the physical body as a metaphor for the way the spiritual gifts of individuals support and sustain the whole body of Christ.

The New Testament includes additional catalogs of God's gifts (Eph. 4:11; 1 Peter 4:10–11) and the differences among the lists suggest that they are illustrative rather than exhaustive.

The term *spiritual gifts* is often misunderstood. Scholar John R. White notes that these gifts are *spiritual* in the broad sense of originating from God's Spirit, not in the narrow sense of being disembodied or paranormal. And *gift* is only one of a number of terms that Paul uses. In 1 Corinthians 12 alone, he calls the various gifts "services" (v. 5), "ac-

tivities" (v. 6), "manifestations" (v. 7), "deeds," "forms," and "kinds" (v. 28).

An overemphasis on the term *spiritual gift* to refer to what Paul also calls "manifestation of God's spirit for the common good" or "kind of service" tends to skew our thinking. It suggests that God's Spirit supersedes or ignores the "natural" skills and abilities God has given us.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12:27

The Holy Spirit does not dispense with our bodily abilities, however, but rather honors and employs them (vv. 14–26).

The community or organization, not merely the individual, benefits (v. 7); the purpose is to build up the community (14:3–5) and serve outsiders (14:23–25).

White suggests *giftings* might be a better term to use, since it carries these important connotations better. God has created each of us and through His Spirit imbued us with particular ways that we can serve and strengthen others.

### Apply the Word

We should develop the *giftings* we have been given and use them for the common good in every sphere of life. Many named here—leadership, service, and discernment—will be of obvious benefit in the workplace. Others will be given to us as needed to serve God's purposes in whatever work we do.

### Pray with Us

Once again, we invite you to pray for the staff of Moody Radio Programming: Jon Gauger, Nathan McMillan, Dennis Nugent, Mike Kellogg, and Yahir Vergara. Their programs bring much joy, encouragement, consolation, and strength to listeners.

## The Particularity of Sacred Vocations

*From Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . And Others Don't; Who Moved My Cheese?: An Amazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and in Your Life; and Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* are just a few of the many books about business and leadership that reached the best seller lists in the last decade. But passing along ideas for effective management is nothing new. The apostle Paul wrote his own three-volume leadership manual of sorts called *The Pastoral Epistles*, circa A.D. 67.

Paul wrote these books—*1 and 2 Timothy* and *Titus*—

toward the end of his own ministry with a keen concern that young pastors benefit from his hard-won wisdom about church leadership. While there is much in these letters that could be considered good advice in any number of workplaces, it's important to note the particularity of work in the context of the church.

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

1 Timothy 5:17

Christians have interpreted the list of qualifications for a person to be a deacon or elder in various ways over the last 2,000 years, but the central point is clear: in keeping with the importance of the kingdom-building responsibilities of the church, its leaders are held to the highest standards of conduct. And those involved in such ministry are due special consideration in light of their unique responsibilities.

The varied lists of the Holy Spirit's "giftings" found throughout the New Testament attest that we can serve God in ways as diverse as

the body of Christ itself. You do not have to be a pastor or a missionary to please God with your labor, and many godly people never work in a full-time capacity within a church. But the body of Christ should also understand the distinctive pressures on pastors and other full-time Christian workers and support and encourage them.

### Apply the Word

Hopefully most of us are praying for our pastors and missionaries on a regular basis. They need the spiritual support to sustain their ministry. Are there other ways you can support people in vocational ministry? Perhaps you could help support your pastor to attend a conference or retreat, or send birthday cards and gifts to missionaries.

### Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for the Moody Radio Programming staff, pray for Anita Lustrea, Lori Neff, and Melinda Schmidt during your prayer time. *Midday Connection*, the Moody Radio program they produce and host, is one of listeners' favorites.

## Providing for All Kinds of Neighbors

If you were to ask people why they work, a good number of them would reply with some variation of “to provide for my family.” This impulse is so strong that its theological implications are easy to overlook. But in today’s two Scripture passages we are reminded that providing for your family—including your brothers and sisters in Christ—is a central feature of Christian life. In fact, in 1 Timothy 5:8 Paul goes so far as to say, “Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

**Learn to do right;  
seek justice. Defend  
the oppressed. Take  
up the cause of the  
fatherless; plead  
the case of the  
widow.**

Isaiah 1:17

Him at all? Alice Matthews took up this question in conversation with Haddon Robinson on their *Discover the Word* radio broadcast. She said: “There is something about being created in the image of God and then by extension being called ‘to image’ God in this world. . . . If we are created in God’s image . . . we are imagining God to the people around us. If you claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ and you do not do what you can do in order to provide for your family, this is such a contradiction of what you profess with your mouth that it just devastates your Christian testimony.”

While many people would see such a lapse in responsibility as terribly negligent and even unnatural, how is it the case that this is equated with denying the faith and setting you farther from God than those who do not believe in

Loving your neighbors—those under your roof, those in your faith community, those wounded and lying on the side of the road (Luke 10:25–37)—reflects the nature of God. And it is work that pleases Him.

### Apply the Word

Think of families in your church or community who are struggling, whether through illness or job loss, and think of ways you can bless them. Perhaps you can leave a bag of groceries on a porch, include a gift card in a note of encouragement, or help make a connection to local job development resources.

### Pray with Us

Janet Stiven, general counsel at Moody, requests your prayers for the ministry of her department in all legal matters. We are thankful for the godly manner in which our Legal department represents Moody in official proceedings and agreements.

# Question and Answer

By Dr. Rosalie de Rosset, Professor of English, Literature, and Homiletics



**At my job and in my living situation, many of my colleagues and neighbors are living secular, even alternative, lifestyles. They joke about the specifics of their lives casually, even graphically, and at times they put down things that are sacred to me. Sometimes I am confused about how to handle conversations and jokes in a Christian way without sounding self-righteous. How do I respond so they know I am not condoning their lifestyles and ideas but am still approachable? My tendency has probably been to stay quiet or to make too many concessions.**



This is a good question, one that I think many of us wonder about in a world that has lost its moral compass and is becoming increasingly hostile and at times even litigious about expressed Christian values and teaching. In conversation about this issue, a friend once said to me that the best response is a sober one. I love the word *sober*; its definitions include "habitually temperate" and "quiet or sedate." Romans 12:3 tells the Christian to "think soberly," or, as one translation puts it, "think of yourself with sober judgment." In the context of that passage, Christians are exhorted not to think of themselves as better than other Christians. The principle is true consistently with anyone, believer or unbeliever: we are to think of ourselves in a way that points our conduct

toward sobriety, humility, wisdom, and discretion. The opposite of that would be thinking that leads to pride, out of which comes foolish behavior.

In the case you are asking about, examples of foolish behavior would include throwing truth at those who don't believe or joining too casually in inappropriate jesting and behavior. Second Corinthians 6:14 asks us to consider the rhetorical questions: "What do righteousness or wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" The implied answer is "none." Soberness, then, becomes a way to think about our posture in situations where we cannot join in—not an attitude of dour disapproval but the distance of polite seriousness. Finally, the respect with which we treat those around us may in time earn us the ability to give our perspective on what matters in life.



**As a middle-aged woman in the church, I often have young women and men ask me about the disappointments of life, particularly the problem of not having found a mate. A young woman has said to me, "I won't be able to bear it if I don't find someone, especially since I have prayed so hard." Or, I hear, "My friends all have someone, and they aren't even Christians." How do I answer the hard questions?**

*Continued on next page*

We are to think of ourselves in a way that points our conduct toward sobriety, humility, wisdom, and discretion.

*Continued from previous page*

**A**I understand this dilemma since, as a professor, I work with young people, ones who not only have this understandable question but who also wonder why God has allowed them to suffer heartbreak in their childhood. The thing one must *not* do in these situations is to tell him or her (or anyone for that matter) that you're sure he or she will find someone someday, to just keep obeying God because He will reward that obedience, or cite that too easily quoted, often-used-out-of-context verse, "All things work together for good to those who love God" as a quick answer to deep, undeserved distress. The truth of the matter is that suffering exists; bad things happen to children and "good people"; and a person may or may not get married, may or may not have a good marriage, may or may not experience circumstantial happiness and success in life.

The foundational issue each one of us has to come to terms with and remind ourselves of regularly is our theology of God—what we believe about Him. If we believe firmly that He is good, we can accept disappointment much better (though not without pain) than those who have never dealt biblically and personally with Who He is. The entire book of Job is about Job coming to terms in a whole new way with a God he has believed in and served faithfully. He has to do this because of the intense suffering and loss he goes through. God gives him no lists of reasons for his extreme reversals of fortune and rebukes the friends that do. After listening to Job

speak his suffering and his anguished questions and self-defense, God points back to Himself by asking Job a series of rhetorical questions that fill four chapters (38–41). All of God's questions draw such an overpowering picture of the omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient God that Job, brought back (or, more accurately, pushed forward) to a new level of spiritual comprehension, answers, "I know that you can do all things, and no purpose of yours can be thwarted" (42:2); "My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you" (42:5).

German theologian Helmut Thielicke tells the story of a man who lost his four children, one after another, in two weeks. The man wrote poignantly about the way he committed each one of them to the "fatherly hands of God." In what Thielicke calls this "ghastly trial of faith," this man [like Job] never broke his conversation with God and so never yielded to "that dumb, leaden silence" by which so many of us are tempted in the darkest hours of our lives. He turned his worst tragedy into prayer, a prayer to a God he believed was good. This belief was born out of knowing His Word and character and developing a trusting relationship. Then he could take all joys and sorrows to God. Such ability to turn tragedy to prayer came from a decision made more and more decisively through the years.

I am reminded of the words to the old hymn by Daniel W. Whittle: "But I know whom I have believed / And am persuaded that He is able / To keep that which I've committed / Unto Him against that day."

## Meeting the World's Needs in Gratitude for God's Grace

On May 20, 2013, an EF5 tornado hit the town of Moore, Oklahoma. The state's Department of Emergency Management reported that 25 people were killed, 377 people were injured, and approximately 1,150 homes were destroyed. Reporting for NBC from the disaster site two days later, anchors Brian Williams and Harry Smith had the following exchange. Williams: "In the briefings today it was apparent there's FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) and then there's the faith-based FEMA. I counted no fewer than thirty churches banding together and that's going to be a huge part of the recovery." Smith: "And as we've seen in so many different places in this country, if you're waiting for the government, you're going to be in for an awful long wait. But the Baptist men, they're gonna get it done tomorrow."

What a testimony to the world to hear Christian churches recognized for their good deeds! The Bible is clear that we are

saved by God's grace, not our own good deeds (Eph. 2:8–9). But in many passages, including today's reading, Scripture is just as clear that good deeds characterize those who are followers of Christ.

Works are not the opposite of faith; they grow naturally from faith. "Having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life" (v. 7)—and as a result, devote ourselves to "doing what is good," not primarily for ourselves, but in ways that are "excellent and profitable for everyone" (v. 8).

Faith by itself, if it is  
not accompanied  
by action, is dead.

James 2:17

### Apply the Word

What does it mean to meet other people's needs in your workplace? Is there a new colleague who could use help getting up to speed? Could it mean cleaning out cabinets in the communal kitchen? Would your boss appreciate an offer to take on a project? This week pray that God would alert you to needs that you can joyfully meet.

### Pray with Us

Please pray for the work of our Engineering Operations staff: Al Campa, Thomas Drost, John Fraats, Jamie Ixcaragua, and Gerald Malozien. Their talents and dedication ensure that all the systems at Moody's Chicago campus are running smoothly.

## Wealth and the Kingdom of God

Examples of work and workers run throughout the Gospel of Mark, but today's passage is one of the few times the book directly addresses economic activity. It might be tempting to dismiss this story as simply an exhortation against greed, but when we examine the context more closely we find that love is at the heart of this story of a wealthy man, his money, and Jesus and his kingdom.

The drama of this scene begins with the man throwing himself at Jesus' feet and pleading to know how to secure eternal life. Jesus lists several of the Ten Commandments, and this man can truthfully say he has kept them all since his boyhood. This is a person whose vision extended beyond the present material world and who has prioritized virtuous living. Unlike the despised tax collectors, this man had not earned his wealth through exploiting others.

Jesus loved this man, and He invited him to come on the road with Him. This man had the opportunity to travel with Jesus, fellowshipping with Him and learning from Him. All he had to do was give away all of his wealth. To help with his decision, Jesus even reminded him that giving it away was really a kind of transfer from earth to heaven. But "at this the man's face fell," and he went away sad (v. 22).

**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

Luke 12:34

The man's love for his money outweighed his love for Jesus and desire to be a part of the kingdom of God. We should not be too quick to dismiss him as selfish and shallow. The story is more harrowing than that interpretation would allow. This man knew about Jesus. He wanted to learn about eternal life. He cared about spiritual things. But his attachment to his wealth and status overruled his willingness to choose Jesus over money.

### Apply the Word

Most of us can relate to this man's struggle. What are we choosing over Jesus? When He calls us to do something, what are we clinging to instead? Do we follow Him with our choices about our resources, including our money and our time? Or are we holding on to our status, our wealth, and our comfort and trying to squeeze Jesus in on the side?

### Pray with Us

In summer Moody students are busy with short-term mission trips, summer jobs, and local church work. Remember these students in your prayers and ask that God would give them a time of refreshment before they immerse themselves in study.

## Zacchaeus and Hope for the Wealthy

The following lyrics will quickly bring a familiar tune to mind for some of us: *Zacchaeus was a wee little man / And a wee little man was he / He climbed up in a sycamore tree / For the Lord he wanted to see / And as the Savior came that way / He looked up in the tree / And he said, Zacchaeus, you come down from there / For I'm going to your house today.* The simplicity of this song—popular in many church nurseries and Sunday school classrooms— belies the profound implications of Zacchaeus' story for our understanding of wealth, economic justice, and Jesus' posture toward those most despised by society.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Matthew 5:8

wealth. As a senior tax official in the important business hub of Jericho, Zacchaeus would have been well known for his long involvement in the corrupt system.

The crowd was shocked when Jesus approached Zacchaeus and invited Himself over: "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today" (19:5). That a king, much less a rabbi, would avail himself of the hospitality of a known sinner was a scandal in Jewish culture. And yet Jesus entered into relationships

with the most marginalized members of society.

While the Gospel of Luke mentions the conversion of tax collectors (3:12; 7:29; 15:1; 18:10), we know that people with this job during Jesus' time were widely shunned. Tax collectors extorted their fellow Jews on behalf of the Roman government and used questionable methods to accrue vast personal

Zacchaeus demonstrates how the gospel transforms our views about personal finance and business practices. Instead of theft, he practiced generosity. Instead of cheating others, he now made restitution. A life transformed by Jesus includes a change in the way we serve others through our wealth.

### Apply the Word

We know from the story of the rich man in Luke 18 that money is among the greatest impediments to the kingdom of God. But Zacchaeus' story provides hope for the wealthy that they can take steps to orient their lives around God's will. Consider your own financial situation: is it a stumbling block to closer fellowship with God and others?

### Pray with Us

Dr. John Jelinek, VP and dean of Moody Theological Seminary, appreciates your prayers for the faculty and staff on the Seminary's two campuses—Chicago, Ill., and Plymouth, Mich.—as student population increases and new programs are developed.

## Unexpected Visitors at Work

Today we'll explore two very unusual days at work as representatives of the many instances in the Bible when God met people in their workplace and changed the course of their life. You might not immediately think of the Jewish temple as a workplace, but scholar Aaron Kuecker points out the temple was the center of Jewish economic and social life in addition to being a religious facility. Priests and Levites there were engaged in butchery, cooking, janitorial work, accounting, and a wide variety of other activities.

Luke 1:8–9 provides a window into the temple's management: "Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense." In his commentary on Luke, Darrell Bock explains that as

one of about 18,000 priests, Zechariah served in the temple twice a year, but only once in his life would he get to assist in the daily offering by going into the holy place. His job was to offer incense as a sign of intercession rising to God, and one can't imagine a more dramatic moment for the angel Gabriel to appear.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

Luke 2:8

In contrast, the shepherds in Luke 2 were keeping watch over their flocks on a night just like countless other nights when a heavenly host of angels suddenly appeared heralding Christ's birth.

In the social hierarchy of the first century, shepherds were near the bottom, since they had to wrangle dirty animals for a living. From temple priests to smelly shepherds, God breaks into the workplace in order to bring people into an encounter with His good news. No profession is too grand or too lowly to escape God's care.

### Apply the Word

This month's survey of work in Scripture has benefited from the Theology of Work Project, which writes and distributes materials with a biblical perspective on work. To deepen your study of what the Bible and the Christian faith can contribute to ordinary work, visit the library of theologically sound resources at [www.theologyofwork.org/](http://www.theologyofwork.org/).

### Pray with Us

Moody Publishers' ministry enriches the lives of many Christians and spreads the gospel in print and online all over the world. Please remember in your prayers its Content Development team: Erik Peterson, Josh Reigel, and Judy Tollberg.

## Moses' Example of Excellence in Leadership

In the final hours of his life Moses climbed Mount Nebo and surveyed the Promised Land. God was making good on His oath to give this land to the descendants of Abraham, but sadly Moses would never dwell in the new country as a result of defying God's instructions (see Numbers 20). Despite this fact, however, he is still remembered as one of the greatest leaders who ever lived.

Why was Moses such a great leader? A study of his life reveals several characteristics worth noting. First, throughout his life Moses demonstrated compassion. He shared God's care for His people and their plight as slaves in Egypt (see Ex. 3:7–8). Second, Moses learned humility from his decades of herding sheep in the desert. Moses did not aspire to power and begged God to allow someone else to be the liberator of the Hebrews. He never sought to put himself in the limelight.

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

Hebrews 13:7

Third, Moses obeyed and listened to God. He acted in faith when God called him from the Burning Bush. He sought out God's will and counsel. He desired to know God deeply and personally, so that "no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face" (34:10).

God called Moses to do remarkable things that might have seemed impossible for an 80-year-old man who had been in Midian for decades. He confronted Pharaoh, he instructed the Hebrews how to keep the Passover, he led the march out of Egypt, he designed the tabernacle, and he

appointed elders. He continued to love the people of Israel even throughout their many episodes of grumbling. Finally, as we see in our reading today, he demonstrated leadership and humility through preparing the people for his successor. Moses stayed true to the mandate God had given him.

### Apply the Word

Good leadership is vital to a healthy and productive workplace. While God is no mere business consultant, He does welcome our prayers, and He can bring forth leadership abilities that you didn't know you had. If you're heading up a group—whether it's a PTA committee or a large company—ask God to give you wisdom as you seek to lead well.

### Pray with Us

Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, welcomes the prayers of the Moody community for the upcoming academic year. Ask the Lord to grant Moody the wisdom to challenge, inspire, and equip our student body to fulfill the Great Commission.

## Work and the Sermon on the Mount

Today's Bible reading moves us into a new section in our survey of scriptural insights for our working lives. For the next several days we'll examine biblical ethics and explore how they might translate in modern workplaces. In what's become known as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus sets forth a concise description of the radical values for people who follow Him.

In eight statements that start with the word *blessed*, Jesus subverts worldly logic and calls believers to shift their understanding of what has value. Among the most surprising of these statements is this: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (v. 5).

This can be especially puzzling for those employed in a competitive workplace that demands and rewards an assertive, even aggressive, posture. But it's important to recast meekness not as weakness but as controlled power. Jesus upended the moneylenders' tables

in the temple (Matt. 21:12–13) not long after describing Himself as "meek and lowly," (Matt. 11:28–29, KJV). And even Moses was described as the meekest man on earth (Num. 12:3, KJV).

As we noted in our study of Romans 12:3–8, God calls us to soberly assess our strengths and weaknesses, to accept ourselves for what we are instead of employing smoke and mirrors to appear more capable or important than we really are. Being meek doesn't require us to deny our abilities; it's the simple practice of submitting our abilities to God's service.

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather . . . the faith God has distributed to each of you.

Romans 12:3

Being meek is to wield power that is under God's control and for the good of others. Serving others in the workplace can be especially challenging when the self-serving seem to be the ones to get ahead. But practicing meekness is an opportunity to remind ourselves that—even at work—we're citizens of God's kingdom.

### Apply the Word

"Getting ahead" is a phrase often used to mean "achieving success." But it also implies that to succeed others must fail, or at the very least, fall behind you. But ethics in the kingdom of God are profoundly shaped by the well-being of one's community. With this in mind, how would you describe success as a Christian in your primary workplace?

### Pray with Us

Today and tomorrow let's pray for Moody's undergraduate Theology faculty. Ask God to give professors John Clark, David Finkbeiner, Marcus Johnson, Michael McDuffee, and Bryan Litfin insight as they train the next generation of Christian workers.

## Guidelines for Just Transactions

Several years ago, car dealership owner Don Flow did a study of his business and found that those with the lowest incomes paid the most for their cars. Flow told *Ethix* magazine, “For me, it was wrong to take advantage of the least able (to pay), a clear violation of the biblical mandate in the book of Proverbs.” Flow and his management team restructured the business, eliminating the traditional back-and-forth negotiating process in favor of a set pricing structure. “You don’t have to be a tough negotiator, or more educated, to get a fair price,” Flow said. “If you’ve got a Ph.D. or if you’re a janitor, you’ll pay the same price for the vehicle.”

Exodus 22 reflects God’s heart for just transactions. As was the case in ancient Israel, we live within a complex web of economic interactions that have pervasive social implications. Scholar Gordon Wenham notes, “In Old Testament times there were no police

or public prosecution services, so all prosecution and punishment had to be carried out by the injured party and his family. Thus it would be quite possible for injured parties not to insist on their full rights under the [law], but negotiate a lower settlement or even forgive the offender altogether.”

Do not take  
advantage of the  
widow and the  
fatherless.

Exodus 22:22

While the principles of retribution in this passage and elsewhere in the Old Testament might appear harsh to modern sensibilities, they establish boundaries for restitution and also a framework wherein grace is possi-

ble. God also declares His compassion for those at the margins of society—the widows, fatherless, the poor, and the foreigner—and He expects His people to treat them with fairness and care. Economic transactions are a part of life in this world, but God cares about whether we approach this part of life with justice, compassion, and concern for others.

### Apply the Word

The book of James warns against preferential treatment for the wealthy and ignoring the poor (see James 2:1–13). Are you following God’s will for treating others in your workplace? Or do you take advantage of “the little people” if it helps you impress the bigwigs? Pray that the Lord will help you be a testimony to all the people you encounter at work.

### Pray with Us

Please include these Theology professors in your prayers today: Sanjay Merchant, Bryan O’Neal, Gregg Quiggle, David Rim, Richard Weber, and Kevin Zuber. Join us in thanking the Lord for the godly character and dedication of these men in their service at Moody.

## Gleaning as Provision

In his speech “All Labor Has Dignity,” Martin Luther King Jr. argued that hard work was worthy of respect. “So often we overlook the worth and significance of those who are not in professional jobs, or those who are not in the so-called big jobs. But let me say to you tonight, that whenever you are engaged in work that serves humanity, and is for the building of humanity, it has dignity, and it has worth. ... For the person who picks up our garbage, in the final analysis, is as significant as the physician. All labor has worth.”

Our reading today in Leviticus 19 contains rules for a broad range of scenarios, some directly applicable to labor. As we’ve seen before, God’s people should be characterized by honesty, not practices that rip off unsuspecting customers (vv. 35–36). Partiality and favoritism should be replaced by justice (v. 15).

Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity.

Leviticus 19:35

The practice of gleaning is mentioned in verses 9 and 10 and then reinforced in Deuteronomy 24:19–22. Farmers were commanded to gather their harvest in such a way that there was work left to be done by the poor who needed to secure food for themselves. This practice not only allowed people access to grains and grapes, it also allowed them the dignity of engaging in meaningful labor. Gleaning required farmers and landowners to practice generosity (not gathering all the crops for themselves) and compassion (providing work for the poor and foreigners).

As we noted at the beginning of our study, work is a fundamental part of God’s design for human flourishing. Note the concluding phrase at the end of verse 10: “I am the LORD your God.” Providing worthwhile labor for people is connected to God’s own identity, and is one way to bring Him glory.

### Apply the Word

The practice of gleaning doesn’t seem very efficient, and it’s certainly not geared around maximizing profits for the business owner. And yet it’s a way of acknowledging who truly owns everything—God. Consider the principle of gleaning and how it might apply in your own life. Are there ways to build margin into your work that would benefit others?

### Pray with Us

Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer, requests your prayers as we start the new fiscal year. Pray for wisdom and good stewardship in managing the gifts of Moody’s generous supporters, for God’s kingdom.

## Judgment on the Unjust

John M. Perkins was born in rural New Hebron, Mississippi, during the Great Depression. His mother died when he was an infant, and when he was a schoolboy his older brother—a Purple Heart recipient from World War II—was shot and killed by police. Perkins left Mississippi, never planning to return. But years later, John Perkins encountered Jesus and became a Christian. He and his wife moved their family back to Mississippi and decided to love their neighbors. Their neighbors didn't always appreciate it. Perkins was arrested and beaten as a result of his work. But this time

Perkins stayed in Mississippi, founding Christian ministries like Voice of Calvary Institute, which operated health clinics and thrift stores and offered Bible and theology classes.

Hosea, Amos, and Micah were three prophets in the eighth century when the economy of Judah was declining. The wealthy people increasingly refused to

care for the poor. God had specifically warned against this, and in Amos 8 He promises judgment for structuring society in such an unfair way.

These prophets preached that in God there is no split between the work of worship and the work of daily life. The Lord does not approve a show of worship on Sunday that mouths words of praise but then is followed by the oppression of our neighbor on Monday. Nor is there a tidy split between individual wellbeing and the health and vitality of the community.

What does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

The people's degree of faithfulness was visible in their ethics in life and work, which in turn determined the fruitfulness of their labor and their consequent prosperity or poverty. In the short term the wicked may prosper, but both God's discipline and the natural consequences of unjust economic structures will eventually reduce the unjust to poverty and despair.

### Apply the Word

How can Christians work for justice in their communities? Moody Bible Institute explores this through urban ministries degree programs. Graduates serve in cities around the world, bringing the hope of the gospel to at-risk children, prostitutes, the homeless, and others who need the love of Jesus. How can you serve your community in the name of Jesus?

### Pray with Us

It's our privilege to pray for the employees in the Moody Publishers Fulfillment department. Today, ask God to bless Michael Alcazar, Junico Arroz, Arthur Eastern, and Ernesto Laya who process thousands of readers' orders daily.

## A Prophetic Vision of Prosperity

Earlier this year Cadillac released an ad that featured a man walking around his posh home posing and then answering the question, *Why do we work so hard?* Before driving off in his luxury Cadillac, he says to the camera: “You work hard. You create your own luck. And you gotta believe anything is possible. As for all the stuff? Well, that’s the upside of only taking two weeks off in August.”

This vision of prosperity has little in common with words we find in today’s Bible passage. The book of Joel is one of the twelve books called the Minor Prophets (“minor” due to their shorter length, not their importance). Though these prophets were called to speak to God’s people at different places and times, all of them have the background context of the covenant that God has made with His people. Israel violated the covenant, God responded with punishment and exile for Israel, and then God eventually restored His people back to

the land and a rebuilt temple and community of worship.

In this passage, God is moved to pity the plight of His people. Despite the fact the Israelites’ own sin brought their judgment, God remained invested in their wellbeing. Scripture describes Him as “jealous,” which in Hebrew connotes a sense of ownership. God can no longer stand to let outsiders oppress and encroach upon His “property,” and so He turns his anger on the usurpers (v. 20), driving them out of Israel. The passage goes on to describe the promised restoration

**Do not be afraid,  
land of Judah;  
be glad and  
rejoice. Surely  
the LORD has done  
great things!**

Joel 2:21

with images of agricultural and ecological flourishing.

God’s labor—not our own—is at this center of biblical visions of prosperity. Our work is a gift from God, providing opportunities to worship Him with our efforts. That is the true blessing of our work.

### Apply the Word

How would you answer the question of the man in the Cadillac commercial: Why do we work so hard? You might want to reflect on this question in your spiritual journal or discuss it with your small group or Sunday school class. Do we work hard for material benefits or because of cultural pressure? Or is it to bring glory to God?

### Pray with Us

Again, please uphold Moody Publishers Fulfillment in your prayers, adding Chieu Nguyen, James Seffinga, Matthew Tran, and Nguyen Tran to your list. Due to their dedicated efforts, shipments of Moody publications reach their destinations on time.

## Working in the Face of Hostility

The book of Daniel begins with the tragic end of the kingdom of Judah when the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar overthrew Jerusalem. As was the custom in the ancient Near East, the victor took as slaves the very best of the vanquished country's young men. Thus Daniel and his three friends were plunged into one of the most hostile work environments one can imagine. And while Daniel's situation was quite different from what most Christians face today, we can learn some lessons from his experience.

Daniel's life was sometimes on the line during his service to Nebuchadnezzar,

but the constant temptation he faced was assimilation to the dominant culture. It's interesting to note that Daniel didn't refuse to be educated in the Babylonian "university" (v. 5), even though the subjects Daniel probably would have studied included astrology, the study

of animal entrails, rites of purification, and other forms of divination and magic. Scholars point out that these would have been abhorrent to a devout Jew.

Daniel did not altogether reject the culture into which he was delivered (vv. 2, 9), but he did find lines that he would not cross. We don't know what specifically about the royal diet he found objectionable, but we do know that the dietary laws were among the cultural features that most sharply distinguished Jews from their neighbors (Lev. 11; Deut. 14). It's possible that maintaining a separate diet

Seek the peace  
and prosperity of  
the city to which I  
have carried you  
. . . because if it  
prospers, you too  
will prosper.

Jeremiah 29:7

functioned for Daniel as a daily reminder of his allegiance to the one true God amidst his labor for the pagan usurper Nebuchadnezzar. In any case, Scripture is clear that God had His hand on Daniel and used him mightily precisely because Daniel was in a place that challenged his faith.

### Apply the Word

In our time as in Daniel's, it is difficult to know which accommodations are good and which are harmful. We need wisdom from studying God's Word and being part of a worshiping community of believers. If you struggle with an aspect of your job that seems incompatible with your faith, ask godly friends or your pastor to pray with you for God's will.

### Pray with Us

Dr. James Spencer, VP and dean of Moody Distance Learning, welcomes your prayers for the teams he leads at Distance Learning. We are grateful that Moody education now goes around the world, beyond the classroom!

## Working without Fanfare

Alex is an electrical engineer at a mid-size company in the Midwest. Like a lot of people, sometimes he enjoys the projects that come his way and sometimes he doesn't, but he's always competent and willing to go the extra mile to deliver excellent value to his employer. What Alex doesn't do is talk about the extra mile. He's not a big talker in the first place, and self-promotion just isn't a natural part of his personality. Yet he has colleagues who often make mention of their successes and are more likely to get promotions.

You cannot serve  
both God and  
money.

Matthew 6:24

wastebaskets and vacuumed floors. New parents toil on behalf of tiny masters who don't even speak yet, much less offer words of thanks or praise.

But take heart. Matthew 6 reminds us that God sees everything and His esteem is to be mostly highly valued. The context of this passage is works of "righteousness," and Jesus talks specifically about charity, prayer, and fasting. But there are clear implications for many spheres of life. "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites,

crites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full" (v. 5). Jesus does not deny that there are rewards to be had for such behavior, but these perks are temporal and ultimately unsatisfying.

### Apply the Word

Even when bosses or colleagues overlook our labor, God notices us. He is the ultimate arbiter of success, and His version of success might be different from what we imagine. And while we don't need to be show-offs in either church or the workplace, we can always go to God in prayer no matter where we are to pour out our hearts to Him.

### Pray with Us

Today, we invite you to pray for Moody Distant Learning's Independent Studies staff: Lanna-Marie Enns, Christian Martinsen, and Christine Tinker. We thank God for their ministry that helps bring Moody's programs to students anywhere.

## Love and Labor

Nelson Mandela oversaw the reintegration of South Africa after a brutal period of apartheid. His most powerful negotiating tools? Love and forgiveness, two things he practiced in his own life as much as he prescribed them for the nation. For example, on the twentieth anniversary of his release from prison, Mandela invited one of his former jailers to a celebratory dinner. Speaking about the relationship that developed between the two men, Mandela said it "reinforced my belief in the essential humanity of even those who had kept me behind bars."

In Philemon Paul demonstrates his own knack for negotiation, with love and forgiveness forming the active core of his argument. Philemon, the shortest book in the Bible, is a letter from Paul to Philemon about the matter of the escaped slave Onesimus. As author Bill Heatley explains, Onesimus escaped, became a Christian himself, and then became an assistant to Paul. Under

Roman law, Philemon had the right to punish Onesimus severely. But as an apostle of the LORD, Paul had the right to command Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother. Instead of resorting to a hierarchy of rights, Paul calls for love, forgiveness, and mutuality. He requested that Philemon forgive Onesimus and forego any punishment, while at the same time asking Onesimus to return voluntarily to Philemon.

He is coming with  
Onesimus, our  
faithful and dear  
brother, who is  
one of you.

Colossians 4:9

Mandela remembered the "essential humanity" of his captors, but Paul adds to this kinship in Christ. He asked Philemon and Onesimus

to treat each other as brothers rather than as slave and master. Here we see a three-way application of the principle of mutuality among Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus. Each of them owed something to the others. Each of them had a claim over the others. Paul wanted to have all the debts and claims relinquished in favor of a mutual respect and service.

### Apply the Word

Philemon could not have failed to notice Paul's statement that he would be following up with him (v. 21). But Paul managed the communication in an artful way that provides a model for resolving issues in the workplace. For more insight into cultivating a loving posture in the workplace, read *The Gift of Work: Spiritual Disciplines for the Workplace* by Bill Heatley.

### Pray with Us

Next on our prayer list is Distant Learning's Marketing and Operations teams: Maria-Elena Franco, Jantzen Loza, John Engelkemier, Danielle Kelly, and Micah Shumate. They develop and coordinate new programs and courses at MDL.

## Work and the Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments is not simply a list of the “top ten” of God’s many directives. It’s a distillation of the entirety of God’s law. And of all the rules that set Israel apart from its neighbors, none was more radical than the fourth commandment: “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (v. 8).

No other group of people took a day to rest; in the ancient world toil was unending for everyone except those in the highest positions of power. In the early chapters of Exodus, Moses’ request for time off for the Jewish slaves to worship was met with Pharaoh’s sneering contempt: “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go” (5:2). The idea was preposterous.

But by the time we get to chapter 20, the tables have turned. God has deliv-

ered His people out of slavery and has cast a vision for a new way of living. Now resting for a day was a dramatic act of trust. While Israel paused in obedience and observance of God’s own work at creation, the surrounding nations continued to forge swords, fletch arrows, and train soldiers. Israel had to trust God not to let a day of rest lead to economic and military catastrophe.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Exodus 20:8

The Sabbath as a concept continues to be just as radical today. In a modern economy where people are encouraged

to “lean in,” to invest themselves primarily in their work, taking a day off bears witness to another kingdom not ruled by the pursuit of power and wealth. And for some who would dearly love to take a day of rest, it’s a luxury beyond their means, a fact that bears witness to the brokenness of our world.

### Apply the Word

In his commentary on Exodus, J. I. Durham writes that the Sabbath proclaimed “not only their dependence upon Yahweh but also their independence of all other people and powers.” Reflect on your own practices related to rest. Do you take time to rest as an act of trust in God? How can you structure your labor so that you have time to rest?

### Pray with Us

As we continue to pray for Moody Distance Learning, please mention Alin Vrancila, Kerwin Rodriguez, Myrna Favors, Berk Arslan, and Daniel Spurrier. Pray that their interactions with students, staff, and guests would reflect Christ.

## When Work Seems Meaningless

It's been reported that after the Dallas Cowboys won their first Super Bowl, legendary football coach Tom Landry observed, "The overwhelming emotion—in a few days, among the players—was how empty that goal was. There must be something more."

The Cowboys were not the first ones to learn that great professional success isn't necessarily coupled with deep satisfaction. The author of Ecclesiastes reminds us this is an ancient experience. He was the king of Israel and yet writes: "I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind" (1:14).

He is a conflicted soul as demonstrated via his arguments, often with himself, throughout the book of Ecclesiastes. It is particularly acute where work is concerned. In Ecclesiastes 2:11 he writes,

"Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun." In chapter 3 we read, "I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God," (vv. 12–13). But that optimism is short-lived: "And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind" (4:4).

What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun?

Ecclesiastes 1:3

Many people resonate with this cycle of enthusiasm and despair regarding their own labor. But the inclusion of this book in the Bible teaches us that God hears our troubles, that He acknowledges them, that He is not indifferent to the small frictions that loom large in our lives.

### Apply the Word

The phrase "under the sun" appears in this book 29 times. Does this reinforce the pointlessness of work with an image of the sun circling endlessly across the sky while nothing ever changes? Or does it refer to a world beyond the Fall, not "under the sun," where work would not be in vain? Keep this question in mind as you read Ecclesiastes.

### Pray with Us

In conclusion of our prayer time for Moody Distance Learning, include these employees in your prayer requests: Richard Lin, Anthony Turner, Feven Gebrehiwot, Kevin Mahaffy, Andrew Beaty, and Kelly Wright. May their service at Moody bring them joy!

## The Rhythms of Work and Life

The first half of Ecclesiastes 3 is one of the most widely known passages in the Bible thanks to folk rock band The Byrds, who made "Turn! Turn! Turn! (to Everything There Is a Season)"—a song written by Peter Seeger that quotes verses 1 through 8 almost verbatim—into an international hit in the mid-60s. Prominent placement in the movies like *Forrest Gump* and TV shows like *The Wonder Years* has managed to keep the song in the spotlight.

As observed yesterday, the author vacillates between a kind of resigned despair and a mild contentment.

Scholars have puzzled over how to make sense of Ecclesiastes given its circular frustrations. But many readers recognize their lives in these cycles of vexation, and this realism sets the stage for the book's practical wisdom. For example: "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for

their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (4:9–12).

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

One sage observation found in today's reading is that timing matters. Life is dynamic, wherein what is appropriate at one time is entirely inappropriate at another time. Put another way, working well includes knowing when not to work. As

one author wrote: "We are creatures of this world going through the changes and seasons of time. ... We deceive ourselves about the fundamental nature of life if we think our labors can bring about permanent peace, prosperity or happiness."

### Apply the Word

Think through the work that occupies your time and what you think should occupy your time. Then write your own lyrics to the song. There is a time to fold laundry, there is a time to ignore the laundry. There is a time to stay late at work, there is a time to knock off early and coach your child's little league game.

### Pray with Us

Today, please remember Moody's president, Dr. Paul Nyquist, in your prayers. As he is gearing up to welcome new and returning students to the Chicago campus, we pray that his leadership would be fulfilling and rewarding.

## Work and the New Jerusalem

How are we to understand the value of our earthly work given the witness of the book of Revelation? It seems to proclaim that the world as we know it will end and so much of what we've built and accomplished will vanish. Does Revelation mean that everything we do here is an elaborate exercise in staying busy until God's final judgment?

The short answer to this last question is "no." But Revelation does force us to examine the big picture as it relates to labor and to remember what has lasting value in God's kingdom. As we've noted throughout

our study, working on our own behalf might provide some temporal rewards, but it never leads to true godly success or fulfillment. Work done for God's glory—with His purposes in mind—endures.

Because the world is itself a creation of God and He loved it enough to send His Son to offer reconciliation, we shouldn't

be surprised that God's purposes often involve loving the world and the people in it in tangible ways. While "works" don't merit salvation, the Bible makes it clear they are a welcome expression of love for God. Many Christians are able to provide for their family through the professionalization of good works—social workers, nurses, chefs, teachers, accountants, engineers, pastors, police, sanitation workers, administrative assistants ... the list of professions in which Christians can glorify God is practically endless.

Revelation 22:12

Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.

Which is not to say that all that we've built will survive until the end of time. Many buildings don't last through lifespan of the architect's children. But even physical labor, done for the common good and in gratitude for God's loving provision, can be a spiritual act that God will reward and honor. He can bless and use our work, whether in the home or the church or the office, for His eternal glory.

### Apply the Word

As we conclude our study this month, pray for the different workplaces where God has placed you. When you feel that one more load of laundry will push you to despair, remember that God blesses your labor. When your boss makes an unreasonable demand, remember that God's grace can shine through you. Ask the Lord to bless the fruit of your work for His glory.

### Pray with Us

As we conclude our prayer journey and study of the topic of work this month, we hope you've been encouraged by the biblical view of work and rest and will apply this study's insights to your life. Thank you for studying and praying with us.

## FROM THE EDITORS

Continued from page 4

**Most memorable/favorite issue:** The issue a year or so ago that highlighted the spiritual journey of one of my co-worker's family, Michael Duong, in the "From the Editors" column.

**What would you like to say to other readers?** We appreciate their faithful, consistent prayer and financial support for Moody as we seek to glorify and serve the Lord here.

### BLAKE SMALL

**Place of birth:** Seoul, South Korea (grew up in Arizona)

**Years at Moody:** 3

**Years as a Today in the Word reader:**  
1.5

**What do you like most about this devotional?** Different theme each month and a team of authors, which gives readers various angles on Scripture.

**Most memorable/favorite issue:** January 2014 issue on God's faithfulness met me at a time when remembering His faithfulness was a must for me.

**What would you like to say to other readers?** Read whole chapters before and after the Scripture portions for each day to gain a deeper understanding in context. Enjoy God's Word!

### LINDA WAHR

**Place of birth:** Michigan

**Years at Moody:** 28

**Years as a Today in the Word reader:** 5

**What do you like most about this devotional?** I like illustrations at the beginning of each day's devotional. I learn from these stories and remember them. Of course, it is one way Jesus taught.

**Most memorable/favorite issue:** The one on Ecclesiastes (September 2013)

**What would you like to say to other readers?** It's a good devotional!

### ELEANOR EHRESMAN

**Place of birth:** East Chicago

**Years at Moody:** 14

**Years as a Today in the Word reader:** 10

**Why do you read Today in the Word?**

It's a great devotional, and I like to pray for my co-workers.

**What do you like most about this devotional?** I like the themes.

**Most memorable/favorite issue:** God's Faithfulness (January 2014)

**What would you like to say to other readers?** Use this tool to increase your knowledge of God and His work.

### MIKE DUONG

**Place of birth:** Saigon, Vietnam

**Years at Moody:** 16

**Why do you read Today in the Word?**

It helps me build a stronger relationship with God each day.

**What do you like most about this devotional?** This is a chance for our department to communicate with God before the work day. We come together to share happiness and sadness, then we present them to the Lord.

**Most memorable/favorite issue:**

The Christmas issue! It brought back special memories of what a wonderful Savior Jesus is.

**What would you like to say to other readers?** Reading *Today in the Word* is having spiritual food every day.

### EUNICE CHILDRESS

**Place of birth:** Dominican Republic

**Years at Moody:** 2

**Years as a Today in the Word reader:** 1

**Why do you read Today in the Word?** It connects us with different ministries of Moody as we pray for them in the "Pray with Us" section.

**What do you like most about this devotional?** It's relevant, inspirational, and practical, a great way to encourage others. Perfect for busy people!

### MARIE BAILEY

**Place of birth:** South Haven, MI

**Years at Moody:** 22

**Years as a Today in the Word reader:** 15

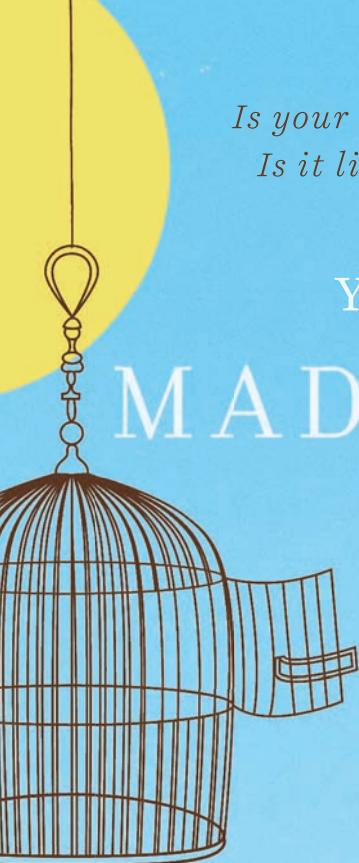
**Why do you read Today in the Word?** Good start to my day!

**What do you like most about this devotional?** It encourages and equips me in my walk with the Lord; it gives me an opportunity to pray for my co-workers and other readers.

**Most memorable/favorite issue:** The January 2014 issue on God's faithfulness really touched me. It's been a difficult year for me, and it reminded me of the song "He's Been Faithful": "Though in my heart I have questioned, even failed to believe—yet He's been faithful to me."

*Is your identity based on a role?  
Is it linked to a relationship?*

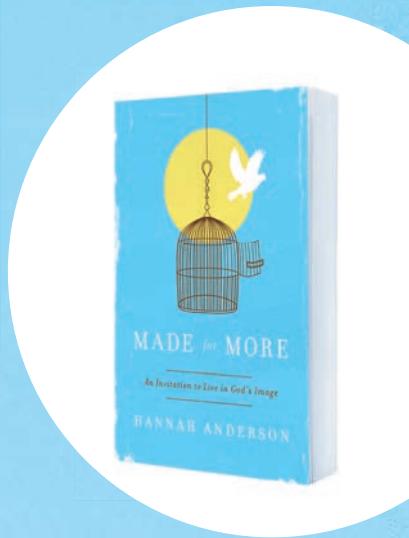
Y O U   W E R E  
M A D E   *for*   M O R E



**What does your family say about  
you? Who are you as a woman?**

These are not the right questions.  
The real question is who are you as  
a person created in God's image?

Until we see our identity in His,  
we're settling for seconds. And we  
were made for so much more . . .



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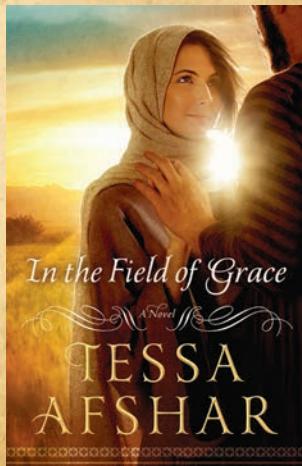
# Two women. Alone. With no provision.

*Can a woman who has  
lost everything, except her  
beloved mother, find hope  
in a foreign land?*

Ruth leaves her home after losing her husband to follow the woman she has grown to love as a true parent, her husband's mother, Naomi.

Reduced to gathering dropped grain from the field, Ruth and Naomi are close to starvation. Ruth is shocked to find the owner of the field is showing her favor.

**Obstacles. Heartache. Withered dreams.**  
**How can God forge love, and new hope**  
**between two such different people?**



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