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Class Notes

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Action, Part 2

Seven Categories of Christian Works

1. Worship: both public and private, formal and informal
2. Spiritual Disciplines: Bible intake, prayer, fasting, etc.
3. Family: marriage, parenting
4. Ministry to Believers: spiritual gifts, and “one anothering”
5. Mission to Non-believers: evangelism, missions, mercy ministries
6. Stewardship: time, energy, and money
7. Work: employment, maintaining possessions (not being a sluggard)

I. Worship

Worship is the response of a sentient being (an angel or a human) to the revelation of an aspect of the glory of God. It begins with the understanding and includes passion and results in actions – falling down, praising with words, singing, reaching to others to say “Did you see that? Isn’t that amazing?!”

Jonathan Edwards: “I should think myself in the way of my duty to raise the affections of my hearers as high as possibly I can, provided that they are affected with nothing but truth, and with affections that are not disagreeable to the nature of what they are affected with.” ... “If we be not in good earnest in religion [WORSHIP], and our wills and inclinations be not strongly exercised, we are nothing. The things of religion are so great, that there can be no suitableness in the exercises of our hearts, to their nature and importance, unless they be lively and powerful. In nothing is vigor in the actings of our inclinations so requisite, as in religion; and in

nothing is lukewarmness so odious. True religion is evermore a powerful thing; and the power of it appears, in the first place in the inward exercises of it in the heart."

O, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)

Revelation 4:9-11 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: ¹¹ "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Revelation 5:11-14 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" ¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" ¹⁴ The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

John Piper: "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over and countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever."

- A. Spirit – Empowered Worship: the indwelling Spirit takes the truth of Scripture and lays it out in our hearts, then ignites it that our souls may ascend to God in true worship, resulting in actions

For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3)

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24)

B. When Should We Worship?

1. Private Worship - The foundation of private worship is regular intake and meditation on the word of God. The key to this is the daily quiet time, a time regularly set aside for spiritual disciplines.

Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. (Psalm 146:1-2)

2. Corporate Worship - There is a simple standard for corporate worship that a mature Christian refuses to violate: if we are physically able, we must assemble with other Christians. This is commanded very plainly by God:’

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together! (Psalm 34:3)

- C. What Kinds of Active Worship? - One of the most common acts of worship is singing. Scripture also reveals many other physical responses of worship. Here are just some: standing (Nehemiah 8:4); kneeling (Psalm 95:6); bowing down (Psalm 5:7); falling prostrate (1 Chronicles 29:20); shouting for joy (Psalm 118:15); speaking words of praise (Psalm 78:4); speaking words of thankfulness (Psalm 100:4-5); lifting hands (Psalm 63:4); covering the face (1 Kings 19:12-13); leaping for joy (Luke 6:23); dancing (2 Samuel 6:14); playing musical instruments (Psalm 150:3-5).

- D. Summary - The life of a mature Christian is one rich with praise and worship of Almighty God. A mature Christian man or woman is delighted to spend eternity in the presence of God, giving Him honor and glory for His salvation. Worship begins in a heart that knows, believes and delights in spiritual truth as revealed in the Bible.

II. Spiritual Disciplines

- A. Spiritual Disciplines - Discipline is absolutely essential to success in the Christian life.

Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. (1 Corinthians 9:25)

...train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. (1 Timothy 4:7-8)

- B. Following Christ’s Example: in this commitment, we are to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ. We get a glimpse of some of Jesus’ habits of personal piety in the Gospels

Matthew 4:2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. (Mark 1:35)

Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. (Luke 5:16)

Luke 6:12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

C. A Daily Quiet Time - A daily quiet time is the foundation to progress in the Christian journeys.

D. Bible Intake - It was Christ who likened Scripture to food when he said:

Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4)

The primary source of biblical intake must be our daily reading and personal study of the Bible.

E. Meditation and Memorization of Scripture - meditation on God's word is essential to attaining the deeper knowledge, insight, understanding we crave. Memorization is one of the simplest ways to ensure long term meditation.

Psalm 119:99 I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.

Psalm 119:27 Let me understand the teaching of your precepts; then I will meditate on your wonders.

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. John 15:7

F. Personal Prayer - Bible reading is God speaking to us. Prayer is us speaking to God. I am urging a pattern of focused, concentrated, uninterrupted prayer.

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. (Matthew 6:6)

1. Example of Daniel - consider the example of Daniel, who was the second most powerful man in the Persian Empire. He never neglected his duties, but was diligent in everything he had to do. Yet he still prayed three times a day, down on his knees, thanking God and asking God for help (Daniel 6:10-11).
2. A.C.T.S. Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.
3. A point of maturity is to grow constantly in your prayer life.

The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. (1 Peter 4:7).

- G. Other Spiritual Disciplines - the two primary disciplines of Bible intake and prayer are central, there are many habitual practices which can help spiritual growth

III. Family Relationships

- A. Marriage - Marriage is the first human relationship that God established, taking priority over all other relationships. It is the most important social relationship in the world. Mature Christian husbands and wives will give concentrated daily attention to their marriages, seeking to fulfill their Christ-ordained responsibilities.

Matthew 19:4-6 "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?⁶ So they are no longer two, but one.

Ephesians 5:22-28 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

- B. Parent – child - The second most important human relationship on earth is the parent-child relationship. God established procreation as a central part of His plan for the human race, to fill the earth with the knowledge of His glory as the waters cover the sea.

Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. (Genesis 1:28)

Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

One other aspect of the parent-child relationship worth mentioning here is the ongoing need for adults to honor their aging parents. The commandment

Honor your father and mother (Exodus 20:12) does not expire when children grow up, marry, and start their own families.

- C. The Limits to Family Loyalty: though our responsibilities to our family are the highest of any human relationships, yet the sovereignty of God in giving the new birth is such that we cannot guarantee that our spouses, our children, or our parents will be believers. Our highest loyalty, then, will be to Christ, and to those who obey God by grace. These two statements by Jesus put the family into eternal perspective:

Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:37)

Someone told [Jesus], "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:47-50)

- D. Summary: The most important relationships on earth are family relationships—especially the husband-wife and the parent-child relationships. Godly Christians recognize this and are faithful to carry out their God-ordained roles in submission to His commands. The ultimate, multigenerational vision of family-based evangelism and discipleship will remain the most powerful vehicle on earth for consummating the two infinite journeys

This doesn't in any way minimize the role of godly singles in a healthy local church... 1 Cor. 7 lays out the great advantages of the single life in service to the Lord:

1 Corinthians 7:32 An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs-- how he can please the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:34 An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit.

However, godly singles still care deeply about the marriages and the parenting going on in their church, and pray for it, like the single man Paul did.

IV. Ministry to Christians

- A. Building the Church of Christ - For over two thousand years, the magnificent Church of Jesus Christ has been in construction. This structure is rising generation after generation to be an eternal testimony to the love of Christ for the church, a love which infinitely outstrips the love of any earthly potentate for his bride.

1 Peter 2:4-5 As you come to him, the living Stone-- rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him--you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:19-22 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

B. God Builds the Church By Our Good Works: The building of the Church is the central work of history. Therefore, it is the Triune God who builds the Church, and to Him alone be the glory!

For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. Hebrews 11:10

On this rock I will build my church. Matthew 16.18

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

The goal of the spiritual maturity of the church is accomplished by God's people doing their appointed works of service—both in spiritual gift ministries and in general good works.

C. General Ministries of Love to the Body: “One anothering”

- Be at peace with each other (Mark 9:50)
- Love one another (John 13:34)
- Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10)
- Honor one another (Romans 12:10)
- Rejoice with one another (Romans 12:15)
- Weep with one another (Romans 12:15)
- Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)
- Accept one another (Romans 15:7)
- Counsel one another (Romans 15:14)
- Greet one another (Romans 16:16)
- Agree with each other (1 Corinthians 1:10)
- Wait for one another (1 Corinthians 11:33)
- Care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25)
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)

- Carry one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- Be kind to one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Bear with one another (Colossians 3:13)
- Teach, admonish each other (Colossians 3:16)
- Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Build up one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Spur one another on (Hebrews 10:24)
- Offer hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9)
- Minister gifts to one another (1 Peter 4:10)
- Be humble toward one another (1 Peter 5:5)
- Confess your sins to one another (James 5:16)
- Pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Fellowship with one another (1 John 1:7)

D. Spiritual Gift Ministries: Spiritual gifts are special abilities given to each Christian for building the Church to maturity. The picture is that Christ ponders each one of His children and graciously gives them a role to play, equipping them for that role by a measure of His grace. Every single Christian, then, has a spiritual gift ministry laid out for them to do.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. (Romans 12:3-6)

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. ⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

E. Intercession - A careful study of all aspects of Paul's prayers and his request for prayer is an excellent starting place for Christians who want to shoulder each other's burdens in fervent, consistent, intercessory prayer.

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Colossians 1:9-10)

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. (Ephesians 6:18)

F. Discipleship - One of the most important ministries mature men and women can be involved in is that of mentoring discipleship. One doesn't need to be a pastor or teacher to do this vital task.

2 Timothy 2:2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

Titus 2:4-5 [older women] can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

G. Accountability - Finally, mature Christians understand their accountability for the spiritual welfare of other Christians, especially those in their local church. Our church covenant says, "We will watch over one another in brotherly love."

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. (Hebrews 3:12-13)

V. Missions to Non-Christians

A. Evangelism - The Bible reveals that people are naturally *dead in transgressions and sins* (Ephesians 2:1), under the wrath of God. (John 3:36) Therefore, Christ has commanded us to love our lost neighbors by seeking to labor with Him in the salvation of their souls. Christ made it very plain why He entered the world: **The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:10)**

Personal evangelism is a daily commitment, a choice we must make with every encounter God gives us.

B. Cross-Cultural Missions: The external journey of world-wide disciple-making has as its goal the proclamation of the gospel to every tribe, language, people and nation. A mature Christian feels this same passion for the lost, and wrestles faithfully with the question, "Am I called by God to go to an unreached people group with the gospel?"

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14)

It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand." (Romans 15:20-21)

Before William Carey went to India as a missionary, he said to his friend, Andrew Fuller: "I will go down into the pit, if you will hold the ropes."

“Holding the ropes” = supporting cross-cultural missionaries financially, with prayer, and many other forms of support

- C. Prayer: Though there are many things we can pray on behalf of the lost, the most significant have to do with their salvation.

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. Romans 10:1

The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. (Matthew 9:37-38)

- D. Mercy Ministries: The Lord Jesus Christ does not want us to feel at ease with the issue of human suffering. Instead, He intends to test us, to probe our hearts by confronting us with poverty. In John 6, we read,

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. (John 6:5-6)

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter--when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? (Isaiah 58:6-7)

It is clear that God desires us to be consistently generous to the poor and needy.

- E. Salt and Light: Another pattern of actions Christ commands us to embrace toward the outside world is that of being “salt and light”: You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world. (Matthew 5:13-16) By this, Jesus means for us to have an effect on the surrounding world of exposing and retarding the spread of evil.

- F. Good Citizenship - Concerning our relationship to the government and to our secular nation, Christians really are “between two worlds:” citizens both of heaven and of earth. God desires Christians to be good citizens of the secular government, submitting gladly to God-ordained authority whenever it doesn’t conflict with the commands of God.

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. (Romans 13:1)

- G. Loving Our Enemies: Jesus has commanded us plainly to love our enemies: *But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. (Luke 6:27-28; see also*

Matthew 5:43-48) He himself set an example that we should follow in His steps by His loving demeanor toward men who were killing Him: *When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.* (1 Peter 2:23)

VI. Stewardship

- A. What is a Steward? - A steward is a servant who manages someone else's property. Everything we presently possess is given us in stewardship by God, and God will expect an accounting for it all on Judgment Day. The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)
- B. Of What Resources Are We Stewards? - Stewardship relates to anything that God entrusts to us to use for His glory. We are stewards of our bodies (and health), our time, our opportunities, our gifts and talents, the earth, our national advantages, and any other temporal resource God gives us.
- C. The Proper Perspective – From Randy Alcorn we get the quote “You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead.” Jesus taught this principle in many places, but perhaps most clearly in Luke 12:

Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Luke 12:33-34)

- D. Lessons from John Wesley - He felt that, with increasing income, a Christian's standard of *giving* should increase, not his standard of living. When he died, his earthly possessions totaled no more than a few coins, but his heavenly tally was infinitely richer. He said very poignantly, “I value all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity.”
- E. Faithful in Little Means Faithful in Much - When the time comes, the mature Christian yearns to hear this commendation:

Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. (Matthew 25:21, 23)

- F. Our Financial Responsibilities - Handling money properly also means caring for the basic ongoing needs one's own family:

If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Timothy 5:8)

- G. Other Realms of Stewardship – Our bodies, our time, our abilities, our opportunities, our positions of responsibility, our ministries, and also the earth God has placed us in to rule over.

VII. Work

A. Redeeming the Time - In Ephesians 5:16, Paul says we must be

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:16, KJV)

By the Spirit, we can actually transform the straw of earthly minutes into the gold of deeds done for Christ. They will last for all eternity, rewarded on Judgment Day.

B. Do It All for the Glory of God: A mature Christian seeks to glorify God in whatever work his hand finds to do, no matter how insignificant the task may seem to be.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Colossians 3:23-24)

C. A Theology of Work: From Genesis to Revelation - We were created for work, and work itself is a gift of God. Work predates the Fall of Adam. God labored for six days, and crafted an immense universe filled with the works of His hands. Human beings, created in His image, were created to do work after His pattern. Because of sin we now labor under work that is cursed. BUT NOT IN HEAVEN!

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. (Revelation 22:3)

D. All Honorable Work is "Sacred": A mature Christian view of work, then, begins with the premise that Christ is Lord of all, and thus can be glorified in all things. Martin Luther emphasized the "priesthood of all believers," and worked out consistently a doctrine of labor:

"When a maid cooks and cleans and does other housework, because God's command is there, even such a small work must be praised as a service of God far surpassing the holiness and asceticism of all monks and nuns."

"Your work is a very sacred matter. God delights in it, and through it He wants to bestow His blessing on you."

E. Don't Be a Sluggard! Take Care of Your Possessions!

Proverbs 24:30-34 I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; ³¹ thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. ³² I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: ³³ A little sleep, a little

slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest-- ³⁴ and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.