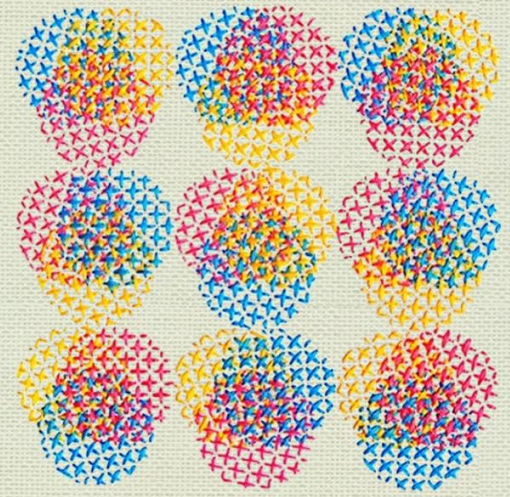


# COLOSSIANS

A B O V E A L L



## Colossians: How Christians Work

*June 13, 2021*

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Colossians 3:22 – 4:1

Good morning, Doxa. If we have not met, my name is Donald and I am one of the staff pastors here at Doxa church. And we are in a very exciting season as a church. Lots of good things happening around. And I just want to say publicly, I am very proud of us as a church and our members. This last month has been a very significant moment for us, both in having folks kind of come out of the woodwork and out of the COVID caves and reenter the gathering. It's been an important moment for us as well as a lot of our giving needs. We've been talking about week over week and you all have all responded wonderfully, and I am deeply grateful for that. So thank you. I love hearing the many ways that our people are really trying to make disciples in the everyday stuff life. That is not just a tagline for us. That's something that we're really committed to.

I got a text message from somebody just this week, a good friend of mine here at Doxa and their kids are getting a little older and they realize they've got 15 boxes of newborn baby clothes. And so he texted me and then within an hour, he was connected to Olive Crest, which is the foster care agency that we work with as a church and partner with, and got those clothes delivered. And so now these newborn babies have clothes and that's just a beautiful picture of us doing this kind of work. So good job, Doxa. Keep that up. I can also let you know our national lead teaching pastor search is going really, really well. The agency that we're working with is really pleased with how that's progressing. So we'll continue to keep you apprised of that whole thing, particularly in our member meetings. So make sure you guys participate in those.

My aim this morning is twofold. I want to clarify and put away the confusion about the Bible's position on slavery, namely by discussing the nature of slavery in the Greco-Roman world, because it comes up in this passage. And then number two, to equip every employed person in this room who hears this message to examine their work life and perhaps pursue their hours of employment a little differently than what they do now, okay. So it's kind of a two for one sale this morning. Even though it's coming out of the same passage, you're going to get two different sermons.

The topic of slavery is significant for us. It's significant because the church has interaction with the institution of slavery. When I say Church, I mean, capital C the universal Church. Their interactions with the institution of slavery have been a mixed bag, both here in America, and in other parts of the world. We have had Bible-believing Christians in both the insidious oppression of entire people groups and Bible-believing Christians leading the costly charge to free the slaves. Christians have toiled toward desegregation. They themselves have manned gunships at great peril to take down the slave trade to the Americas and the middle east, for example. And they have been a part of the worst parts of slavery in the world. So to put it mildly, we have both heroes and villains in our family tree.

It is also an important topic because there are an estimated 40 million people made in the image of God that awoke today in a life of slavery. Not the kind they chose willingly, not a form of employment for their betterment, but one of forced labor-abuses of every kind. In fact, they woke up today certain that they will die in those same horrible circumstances once their utility has been spent. This is bothersome. We should not be comfortable with that truth. The second topic of vocation and the Christian's calling in everyday work is in some ways, the more difficult of the two topics and let me explain why. I don't believe anyone in this room here this morning owns other human beings or has kidnapped a human being from another nation, abducted them against their will and placed them into employment in their household or their business. I am confident that very few, if any of you have actively supported the modern slave trade today. In indirect ways, we have probably all played a role, even if it's been unknowingly through the names embroidered on our clothing that we are wearing right now in the service, through our addictions to certain online content that I'll not detail because we've got kids in the room. These things have supported modern slave trades. These are not my focus this morning. They're certainly worthy of further discussion.

My focus is on the collision of our identities as disciple and employee. That surely almost all of us have practiced work. In other words, we have established habits, beliefs, approaches to what we think work is for, what we think it's supposed to do, and what our work lives should ultimately look like. So my task this morning is to invite the Spirit through his written word and my spoken words to press on these matters in such a way that it doesn't just give us a couple of interesting thoughts, but that a small fire would ignite inside of us, that it would burn slow and steady, eventually forging a different tactic, a different method, or better yet, God help us a different heart as we head into the workplace, whether that be in the office or in the home.

What I want us to see this morning from this passage is that as gospel-centered Bible-believing Christians, that we work as one watched by God. That we work within our limitations and that we would work for far more than a paycheck.

I want to pray for you and I'm going to ask that you pray for me this morning. Jesus, thank you so much for the people of Doxa. There are so many incredible saints in this church. Many of them have brought you into the workplace, have looked for opportunities to bless others, have worked hard as to not malign your name. They have watched for ways to give away their power, giveaway their ability to encourage others and pull for others and not just care about their own success. I'm so thankful for that. I pray you would continue to stir in us a desire to live out our identities in order that we are yours first, before we are in any position of employment, before we have any company's name, we have your name. So help us this morning for your glory. Amen.

Starting in verse 22, Colossians 3, it says "Bond servants obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye service as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart fearing the Lord." Okay, so sermon number one. Let's start with this jarring and troubling statement. Nowhere in the Bible is slavery explicitly prohibited. Let's think about that for a second. Nowhere in the Bible is slavery explicitly prohibited. Now, before any of the non-Christians here today, say "Aha!, I knew you were all a bunch of bigots". Allow me a few minutes to unpack why that would be the case, because I think you actually find that the God of the Bible agrees with many of your sentiments. If we were to talk about slavery we have to ask what is slavery or perhaps which slavery are we speaking of? And that's an essential question because the slavery that every hearer of this letter in Colossians would be familiar with is Greco-Roman slavery. And what we as Christians in a Western world in 2021 think of are quite different and not in subtle ways. This is why most translations use the term bond-servant here. So let's talk about Greco-Roman slavery, just for a moment. And I promise not to get too, you know, rabbit trail into the history of things. I think some of this is really helpful for us to understand these passages.

Slaves in ancient Greece were generally not identifiable by their physical appearance, including their skin color. In fact, there were slaves or bond-servants in every single strata of social class-blue collar, white collar. In fact, slaves were not only laborers and construction workers, but also small business owners and doctors and lawyers. In colonial slavery in America, the mere appearance of a black person outside of the general store in town was enough information for you to safely assume that you understood their status. And with very few exceptions, you would be correct. But in Greco-Roman slavery, slaves adopted the culture of their master. This included their attire, their fashion, their customs, their diet, even their haircut. Slaves in ancient near east participated in the Sabbath. They took part in festivals. Both testaments show them included in the religious practices. And slaves were not seen in this culture as the bottom rung of the social ladder, the day-laborer was because of the uncertainty that they constantly faced. Jesus tells a few parables with these characters included, right? I mean the closest modern equivalent we have would be the group that hangs in the corner of the Home Depot parking lot on a Saturday, looking for work. That's a far better parallel for the day-laborer in these times.

And on the whole slavery was something that many willfully opted into because being a bond-servant had some benefits. This is why day-laborers would actually aspire to and aggressively pursue these open positions. Why would they do that? Well, there's three reasons. Number one, because being a bond-servant was vocationally beneficial. They would learn a craft. You can think of it as an internship or apprenticeship with a little more bite. They would take on the trade of their master. If their master happened to be successful in his trade, you can see why this would be a great opportunity. This is in part why bond-servants were capable of reaching incredible positions in society. In the Greco-Roman world slaves who showed academic promise would often save their earnings, purchase themselves out of their bond servanthood as well as other bond servants, who they had trained to start their own business and then go do their own thing. Kind of like a small business buyout would work today.

So number two, they became slaves because it was educationally beneficial. Owners educated their slaves for their own financial benefit. A more educated staff meant higher returns and more potential for the household. And lastly, they became bond-servants because it was financially beneficial. The moment you entered and became a bond-servant, no one was allowed to charge any interest on any debt that you owed. So you can see why if you got behind in your financial obligations this was also pretty significant. Now this is a far milder form of what we understand of slavery, but God still, even in this system creates guardrails. And we'll see that in the passage today. Ephesians 6 says that masters shouldn't threaten their bond-servants. Deuteronomy 15 says that every seven years everything resets all slaves go free, and in fact, when your slaves went free you had to send them out with a care package or a severance package of grapes and grain and livestock to ensure that they could get on their own two feet and start a new life. We'll be talking more about the Year of Jubilee this fall which we're going to look at in our series in the book of Joel. But it's just an interesting concept of how Jesus builds in this massive reset button into the culture and society. And after the seven years, they may elect to re-up, but ultimately that was their choice. So I want you to see that Greco-Roman version of slavery is quite different. And even in that light, God speaks into it because he cares about the Imago Dei. The fact that you and I, and every human being that has ever walked the face of the planet has been made in his image.

Greco-Roman slavery was not the slavery we saw in this country between 1776 until the 13th amendment was passed in 1865. In fact, the ancient near east rejected the notion that some races were better suited for labor. Aristotle toyed with this idea and was rejected and mocked by his peers. The slavery that we think of the Bible repeatedly and unwavering declares as depraved and wicked. Chattel or colonial slavery goes against everything that Christ stood for. If you want to know what God thinks about people being oppressed, imprisoned, and forced into labor, please go read the book of Exodus. Just in case we think that God is soft on this, he literally destroys nations for violating these laws. Exodus 21:16, "Anyone who kidnaps another and either sells them or still has him when he is caught, must be put to death." Slave traders are listed among those who are ungodly and sinful in the New Testament. And they're in the same category as those who killed their fathers and mothers, murderers, adulterers, perverts, liars, and perjurers (First Timothy 1:8-10.) That's a pretty heavy list. Notice in the garden when there's a lot of work to do, what does God do for Adam? Does he bring him

a group of people to be his slaves? No. He gives him a wife, tells him to have kids and begin subduing the earth. Get to work. If you watch the Old Testament when nations like Gaza and Tyree practiced slavery, it looks a lot more like our historical slavery, specifically kidnapping people from their native land, importing them a distance for the purpose of labor. If a slave escaped Gaza and made it into Israel, Israel protected those slaves and refused to extradite them to be recaptured and placed back into slavery. Think for a moment about the beautiful symbolism here, church. If you make it to Israel, you are no longer a slave, but free. Think about how this foreshadows what we know to be true of Christ and the Church.

Lastly, we see in Philemon, Paul's shortest letter, right, 335 words where Paul encounters a runaway slave Onesimus. Paul meets him in prison, disciples him, Onesimus gets saved. Paul initially thinks he wants to keep him around because he's a great disciple but then realizes that the most gospel-centered thing that could possibly happen is to send him back to the house where he ran away, where he presumably from the context of the story, stole something- send him back to that. He offers Philemon and says, (this is Paul talking) he says, I'll pay for whatever the damages are, but I want you to be reconciled because you are now peers. It's been pointed out to the fact that you all have the book of Colossians this morning as evidence that that worked out. Can you imagine the walk back to Philemon's mansion? Imagine that. Unreal.

So while there is no verse that explicitly condemns all forms of slavery, there are many places that forbid what we know around colonial slavery and the Bible clearly opposes what was happening here in this country in the 1800s. The Bible clearly opposes what is happening today in human trafficking. The Bible unmistakably condemns the inhumane and violent slavery that we see around the earth today. So with a clear understanding of what the Bible says about that and bond-servants, I want to work through these verses. And most New Testament scholars are in agreement that these principles and concepts presented in these verses are meant to be applied to us today in our work environments.

So let's look at it together. Verse 23, "whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ for the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done. And there is no partiality." When you see that part there about no partiality, he's talking about master/slave, bond-servant/boss, there's no partiality. "Masters treat your bond-servants justly and fairly knowing that you also have a master in heaven." All right, that concludes sermon one. Here comes sermon number two. A theology of work is arguably one of the most desperately needed messages for discipleship on the East Side. I want you to think about that. I would believe, I suspect that one of the biggest movements of the heart God desires to do on the East Side today is to get all of the Christians in their workplaces to walk in their identity in Christ first. I mean, most of us will spend half of our waking hours doing a job, right? And some of us may primarily work in the matters of the home, namely making sure that our little humans don't die and that others here might be too young to join the workforce yet. These passages are still helpful for you to consider when you think about how you help out around the house.

You see there has been a cultural shift in America. One that Tim Keller describes as a shift from working to live, to something that is better described as living to work. And the purpose of work has always historically been that it would help us or enable us to experience life and enrich our family. But this shift has been happening really for the last 25 years in significant ways, and it's hurting us in a variety of ways. There's a lot to be said about this at a high level though. 48% of Americans consider themselves workaholics. And I would bet good money that that number is far higher on the East Side. The U.S. scores... internationally for developed nations, the U.S. scores in the bottom 10% for number of days we take off in a year. Our average is 10.2, bottom 10%. Pre COVID, 26% of people took work home. Any guesses as to what that is now? A hundred? Yeah, you all know.

So with that in mind I want to get after this question...how do Christians work? To understand the Bible's answer to this question we have to look at how work starts. You see a lot of folks think that work is a result of the fall, that endless vacation or dithering around the house all day is the best possible way to spend your life. And the Bible shows us something different. You see most world religions say that the many sources of power in the universe all got into some kind of conflict, and that's where creation came from, and it was the result of battle and struggle. Christians do not believe that the world is an accident or the result of conflict.

The Bible teaches us that the world was in fact created as a work of art, a masterpiece, in fact, the highest craftsmanship. And when man was created he was created to work. Work precedes the fall, precedes the curse. We're actually built to work and not in small amounts. Now the fall has clearly affected our work, right? The thorns in the garden- Genesis three, the ground will sprout thorns and weeds, and we will get our food the hard way. Many of you in this last year have felt the weight of getting your food the hard way, the difficult relationships with those you report to, work alongside, those we lead, our innate sinful desire to only ever be our own boss. So we can still get work done. We can still be productive. We can still invent and create, but there's this undercurrent of frustration underneath it all. And that has been there for a long, long time. Redemption comes to the working world first through Jesus Christ and then through his people. And when Christ returns to make a new heavens and new earth work will continue, or maybe rather return to its original form and design-gardens without thorns. Design without decay. Cuisine, without calories. Can I get an amen? And so this is the gospel arc of the world.

Now, with that in mind, let's look back at this passage and see what we can learn today. what we can do different. Again verse 22, "Bond-servants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye service as people pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord, not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive your inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ." So how does a gospel-centered or Bible-believing Christian work?

I believe there are three things we can take away from these passages. Number one, gospel-believing Christians work knowing that God is watching. We work under the watch of both God and the world. You've, perhaps those of you who are a bit older, have seen those really lame t-shirts or bumper stickers or coffee cups that say dance like no one is watching. Jesus here is

saying you're supposed to work like everyone is watching, okay, starting with him. Having integrity at work and doing a job well done is a big part of how we earn the right to talk about our faith with those in the workplace. I can tell you respect on the East Side is given to those who display some competency and character. In fact, if you are horrible at your job, I'm sorry, please don't go around running, telling everybody you go to Doxa. Oh, come on, that was a joke. According to this passage, the key is remembering who your real boss is. That a man or woman that does your annual review, the one who has the power to hire and fire you, it turns out they're actually in middle management because your real boss if you are a sinner saved by grace, is God. Now we have to be careful not to reduce God in our minds to a task master. God is far more than your boss, right? He does far more than assigning tasks and delegating the work of the universe. And I just, I want to quote my favorite person who to me understands the love of God in deep and meaningful ways-Brennan Manning. I have intentionally not put this on the screens because I'm going to invite you all just to close your eyes for a moment and allow me to read this passage about God's love for you from author Brennan Manning. "The compassion of Jesus is the compassion of almighty God. And Jesus says to your heart and mind don't ever be so foolish as to measure my compassion for you in terms of your compassion for one another. Don't ever be so silly as to compare your thin, pallid, wavering, moody, depending on smooth circumstances, human compassion with mine, for I am God, as well as man. Your Christian life and mind don't make any sense unless in the depth of our beings, we believe that Jesus not only knows what hurts us, but knowing-seeks us. Whatever our poverty, whatever our pain, his plea to his people is come now wounded, frightened, angry, lonely, empty, and I'll meet you where you live. I'll love you as you are, not as you should be because you're never going to be quote, 'as you should be'. Do you really believe this? With all the wrong turns you have made in your past, the mistakes, the moments of selfishness, dishonesty, degraded love. Do you really believe that Jesus Christ loves you? Not the person next to you, not the church, not the world, but that he loves you-beyond worthiness and unworthiness, beyond fidelity and infidelity. That he loves you in the morning sun and in the evening rain without caution, regret, boundary, limit. No matter what has gone down, he cannot stop loving you. This is the Jesus of the gospels." Church, Jesus is far more than a boss. And this passage indicates that working for the approval of other bosses, what he calls ice service, basically working in a different way when the boss is around. Then it's possible that maybe we've lacked some integrity in that. And all of us, truly all of us can grow in this. We tend to change the rules in different environments, depending on who's around, right?

I was out in public in the last month and recently witnessed a Doxa person out there in the world. And they were pretty fired up and losing their cool because a situation hadn't gone their way. I won't detail what it is cause you can figure out who it was. But here's the point...I was wearing my mask. And I would bet you good money that if they knew Pastor Donald was standing there 20 feet away, they probably would have responded a little differently. I've run into church folks in restaurants and overheard them just making life absolutely miserable for the wait staff. Just so entitled. So absorbed in themselves. I myself can drive at times like Jesus has not taken the wheel. As my mom used to say, I drive faster than my angels can fly. And like many aspects of life, the still small voice of God says slow down. I was sitting at a stoplight several years ago. I looked over and I saw a guy in my men's Bible study at the stoplight with a

cigarette hanging out of his mouth. Not the end of the world, but he texted me five minutes later after he realized I was in the car next to him and all the text said, please don't tell my wife. Turns out he'd been smoking in his car for about three years. I said, you're going to tell her I'm going to. Maybe we watch things online we wouldn't if our spouse was next to us. Maybe we behave in the office super different based on who's around. The point is all of us do things at times a little bit different based on who we think is watching or perhaps that the people who are watching have any power to say anything, right? This is an indication that you've lost sight of who you are, Church, if you find yourself in any of those examples. You are a child of God. You are a resident of the kingdom under the watch and care of a perfect king, not a harsh king, not a workaholic, not an emotional toddler. A king that always knows what effort you put in even when others miss it. Some of you work really hard and nobody knows it. Nobody appreciates it. Jesus notices it. Jesus appreciates it. He's a king that cares about the smallest of tasks because they too could be done in an attitude of worship. So here's the good news, church. Jesus is a better boss than whomever you report to. Way better. Say it with me, "Jesus is a better boss. Jesus is a better boss."

Number two, gospel-believing Christians know God has given us limits. We work rather knowing that God has given us limits. We work within our limitations. Now this is alluded to in this passage but it's made very clear in other passages in the New Testament. And frankly, if we're going to talk about work and do it at Doxa, we are not going to miss the opportunity to bring this up. This is a crucial idea for us. The passage says, whatever you do, this is a helpful reminder that we all have lots of different kinds of work, but it's also whatever you do. We are responsible for what we do as an act of worship. I'm looking in this crowd and there's people I know personally right now in the medical field, in tech of course, I got people who work for...they're actual rocket scientists, people who work in financial investments, right? Whatever you do, we do these things unto the Lord. Your capabilities, your training, your education, your spiritual gifts, your emotional health, your life stage, all of these things determine boundaries with which Jesus calls you to operate inside of. And we know this intuitively. It's why we can't shake the deep anxiety in our gut when we blow past our limitations, when adrenaline or ambition send us over a cliff. You are finite beings with limitations. If you have a job that requires you to compromise your morals or your values or your identities as a spouse or parent or friend, you need new work. Some of you work so hard to provide for your families-that is godly and commendable. Please hear me say that. That is godly and commendable and seasons can be hectic at work, but please just be darn sure that you're doing it for the right reasons, please! None of us look back on our workaholic parents and think, man I'm so glad our car was nicer than my friend's car. Even though dad was literally never home. Nobody says that. Some of you are in a role that requires for you to trade in your physical health or your emotional health or your spiritual health or the health of your family or your marriage or your character in exchange for a bag of coins. We must as Christians pay attention to and not just notice them, but make decisions in light of our limitations.

Lastly, number three, gospel-believing Christians work knowing that God is rewarding. We work for more than a paycheck. This passage and others detail what Christ...that he will reward us according to our faithfulness in this life. Matthew 5, Luke 6, 1st Corinthians 3 all have the same



theme. Now very importantly, do not confuse this with salvation. We do not earn our relationship with God. We do not earn our salvation from him. We do not earn our right standing before him, but we are absolutely held accountable for how we spend this life. And Jesus dispenses rewards for his brothers and sisters in the faith based on their effort and work on this earth with whatever resources they have been given. One of my first spiritual mentors said the phrase that I've never forgotten it. We are not saved by good works, we are saved for good works, right? This is the talents parable he tells in Matthew 25. This is what 1st Corinthians 3 means when it says if the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives he will receive a reward. We work for more than a paycheck.

Did you know that Christians can be the best workers in any organization? Did you know that? I love Tim Keller's work on this topic from Every Good Endeavor, highly commend that to you. If you've ever thought about theology and work, or just want to know how to approach the workplace differently, Tim Keller's Every Good Endeavor is fantastic. And he reminds us the benefits of being a Christian in the workplace. This is some good news for you all this morning. He describes five primary ways to benefit from being a Christian as an employee. Number one, faith gives you an inner ballast without which work can destroy you, right? Many of us care about our work so if it goes well, it goes to our head. And if it goes down in flames, it goes to our hearts. Christ offers us a balancing and calming peace in our core that keeps us from being destroyed by the rise and fall of our projects and our productivity.

Number two, faith brings significance and dignity to even small and simple work without which work can bore you. Secular culture does not allow or make room for normal work to mean anything. Everything has to be life-changing and taking on the world otherwise it's boring and dreadful. But in the kingdom, small tasks matter. White collar folks are wise to not look down on blue collar folks. There's no room for that in the kingdom. I mean, Christ didn't come as a tech guru or inventor or CEO or surgeon or investor, or even a software programmer, sorry. He came as a homeless carpenter. Failing to appreciate small or simple tasks leads us to overthink what it means to do good work as believers. And I steal this line from Tim Keller. I'll say that out loud. What is the calling of a Christian pilot? Go for it. What is the calling of a Christian pilot? Take a guess. Land the plane. Somebody's read the book. The calling of a Christian pilot is to land the plane. I want you to think right now about your job and think about what it means for you to be a Christian \_\_\_\_\_ (insert the blank) a ministry of competence, doing your job well, glorifying God along the way.

Number three, faith brings a new compass without which work can corrupt you. Your work life will eventually ask for your allegiance in such a way that it removes Christ from the throne of your heart. Do not be surprised. And we Christians are called to be different. Number four, faith gives you a new worldview without which work can master you. When you know what work is for you have a far easier time saying "no" when you need to. And you also have the courage to say "yes" when you need to. And each of us probably struggle with one of those more than the other. Lastly, number five, faith gives us a new hope without which work can harden and crush you. So for these reasons Christians can be, and I am not confused-I know

they are often not-but Christians can be the best employees in any organization for these reasons.

Okay, so maybe you're hearing this and you're saying, okay, work like God is watching, work within my limits, work for more than a paycheck. I got it. Is there anybody I should emulate from the Bible that shows me how to do this stuff? Well, in what I hope is a fun activity we're going to talk about all the people you should not be like, okay? So who are we to imitate? Well, don't be like Nimrod. That feels like a self-evident statement. Right? He organized the work to build the tower of Babel. The tower's very purpose was to disobey the commands of God for the people to scatter, right? So if you're doing a work that requires you to disobey what God has made clear, again, you need new work. And I'll say this as plainly as I can. If you say, I need the money, then you can show me your paycheck and I will show you the price you put on your own soul. Strangely God thinks your soul is worth the price of his son. So unless you're getting paid that, it's not worth it. You don't need the money more than you need Jesus Christ. There's a lot of people who get stuck in jobs that cause them to compromise because they don't trust that God will provide something else. And that's hard. I get it. And don't say, oh, you're a pastor what do you know? I worked a lot of different places before I was in full-time ministry. I worked...I was in the Silicon Valley and the.com boom, and all the craziness of that, worked for the government on the Human Genome project in a bio lab, worked for Chevron during their merger with Texaco. A lot of my resume is very confusing, very confusing. My point is, I've seen this stuff up close, and frankly, there are just as many concerns when you work in vocational ministry. There are many ways in which life in the local church will make demands on your life as a pastor that will force you to blow through your limitations. So don't be like Nimrod.

I can tell you right now I have seen the way that God works in these things. Sometimes he will bring along a new opportunity for you to seamlessly jump ship from the thing you're in right now that's not a good situation into a new thing. I also know that in God's economy faith is currency. And sometimes he will not bring along the new thing until we muster the courage to walk away from the old thing. So all that to say, don't be like Nimrod.

Don't be like Nebuchadnezzar who in Daniel 4 says walking through his castle and temple, he says "Is not this great Babylon which I have built from my mighty power as a royal residence for the glory of my majesty." If any of you sound like that, that's not a good sign. It says while the words were still in the king's mouth, talk about swift judgment, while the words were still in the king's mouth there fell a voice from heaven, "O king Nebuchadnezzar to you it is spoken. The kingdom has departed from you. You shall be driven from among men. You're dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You will eat grass like an ox until you know that the most high rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he wills." So we have some crazy smart people in this church. I know there's some of you that are in the top of your fields. I love that. That is fantastic. Please do not forget that no matter what level of greatness or high position you have achieved in this life, you have been given all of the necessary materials and the mind and the means to accomplish these things from God. I'm not saying you haven't worked hard.

I'm not trying to take anything away from that. I'm not saying you haven't applied yourself, that you haven't grown in your abilities. I'm saying you've done all of those things because God made you in such a way that it was even an option.

Don't be like Martha in Luke 10 who assumed that being busy was better than being present, that God wants your productivity more than he wants you as a person. It's funny that the Bible says that both the overworked and the lazy are both wrong. We have a far easier time talking about overworking as though it's honorable, right? Don't be like Jonah who avoided the work that God called him to and took a very, very long detour. Don't be like the elder brother in the prodigal son story and fall into the trap of believing that working hard and following the rules means that God owes you something, a comfortable life or anything that you ask for, that essentially he is your employee and that you are the boss. We'll talk a lot more about that in our summer series.

Don't be like Moses believing you have to do all of the work yourself. Who has God brought you? Don't be like the rich man in Luke 12 who renovated his property and spent all of his time trying to store up all of his work and items and the fruit, essentially building for himself a cushy retirement. God's words...he says, you fool, you die tonight. Who gets your stuff now? That's sobering. Don't be like Simon the magician in Acts 8, who thought he could bribe God into receiving his power and be more effective and powerful in his work. Don't be like the sluggard in Proverbs 10. Some of you are coasting at work right now. No one either sees or cares that you are basically in neutral. Proverbs 10 says that the lazy worker is like smoke in the eyes to those that you work with. A few here might be a little smoky.

So who are we to imitate? Who are we to emulate, Church? Jesus Christ. He's the only true hero in the Bible. He works knowing that God is watching over his life. He certainly recognized his limitations. One thing I think frequently about when you look at Jesus in the New Testament is you've got these massive crowds and they come to him wanting to be healed, wanting to be touched by him, wanting to hear his voice. He never finishes the crowd. Do you ever notice that? There's a line formed of people who he wants to heal and at some point he says, I'm done. Can you imagine being the next person in line? Why does Jesus do this? Because he's walking in his limitations. When he does significant work, what does he usually do next? Gets away by himself in the solitude with the father. The crowd did not determine when his work was done. Somebody in this room needs to hear that. The crowd did not determine when his work was done, he did. So Christian, think of Christ as you enter the workplace. As Christians we work towards, or rather we work knowing that God is watching. We work, knowing that God is limiting us and has given us limitations. We work knowing that God is rewarding us. I'll say this in closing. Some of you need to have a, or at least start a significant conversation with your boss this week about transitioning out of your role or perhaps to a different team, because your role causes you to violate your values and your identity. We're going to pray for you.

Some of you need to head in tomorrow to the office and you need to work heartily for the first time in months, maybe years. Some of you may need to take a coworker out for coffee or lunch

this week, and just simply apologize for not living out your relationship with Jesus. Some of you need to take time this week in your MC or your DNA and just talk about how you have seen God show up so faithfully and bless you with far more than a paycheck when you have walked in obedience to him.

If you're an older Saint in this room, I'm telling you right now, the younger saints need to hear these stories from you. Because it is one of the most encouraging things we can get from you. It's essential that you're sharing these kinds of stories, the ways in which the moment was scary and you still had courage and you stepped up to the plate and God came through, God provided because he always does. So encourage others with these stories. My prayer for us, church, is that we would keep our identities in the right order, that we'd remember these truths and that as we scatter across the East Side to our places of employment, even if that's zoom calls from our home work office, that he would give us opportunities to show the world exactly who he is.

Let's pray. Jesus, I'm thankful for your work in our church, thankful that you care about us, that we are more than your employees. We are not just your hired hands. We are your kids. I think some of us, myself included sometimes prefer a working relationship with you. It's just less messy. In some ways it's less demanding, and yet you offer us so, so much more. So help us. Help us return to you to love you first more than our ambitions, more than our retirement plan, more than our position. Help us approach each and every day knowing that the opportunities and resources you give us are not just for our own blessing. Continue to grow this church in our awareness of the needs of others and our generosity. And thank you. Thank you for the older saints we have in this church that model this well for us. Thank you for the older saints that have continued to make you first even when in many cases the world was offered to them and they instead chose relationship with you. They instead chose their families. They instead chose to keep their integrity. We thank you for the grace you freely give us for those of us who have gotten sideways or have gotten our identities out of whack. And in the end we want to imitate you, Jesus, to recognize our limitations, to know that the father watches us, and he is for us and with us, empowering us to do everything you call us to. And that includes celebration as well as the hard stuff. Help us, God. We pray these things for our good and your glory. Amen.

