



ENTER God's presence

What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun? For all their days are full of pain, and their work is a vexation; even at night their minds do not rest. This also is vanity. There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God; for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? – Ecclesiastes 2:22-25

Lord God, we come together today, some of us carrying the cares and concerns of our lives and our work. Even as we gather to explore your Word, our minds can be distracted and fail to rest. Refresh and renew us by your Holy Spirit as we let go of the cares and concerns of our work and our world, and rest together in your presence. Amen



SHARE life together

1. Share your highs and lows with each other?
2. Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?
3. What was the first job you ever had? How did you get that job?
4. Think about the best job you have ever had. What made it such a good job?



LISTEN attentively

Read Colossians 3:15-25

5. What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?
6. What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?

Week beginning:
Sunday 6th September 2020

Worship series:

New Terrain



VERSE for the week

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:17



REMEMBER this week

What you do each day becomes an act of faith that brings the presence of Christ into ordinary moments to bless others.

7. Which of the roles described in this passage apply to you? Husband, wife, father, mother, child, slave/employee, master/employer? (it is probably more than one)

There are a number of things that a modern listener might take issue with in this passage of Scripture. The first might be 'wives being subject to their husbands' and another might be 'slaves obeying their masters in everything'. Our modern society has come to recognise the inherent problems with slavery and has officially done away with the practice of keeping slaves. In addition, our modern thinking around gender and traditional gender roles has certainly moved on from the time that these words were written and incorporated into Scripture. Yet even in our modern context these words still have something to say to us. Any of us who are employees, may not be slaves and have masters, but we do have a boss or supervisor who we work for and we can apply these words concerning slaves to a workplace context very easily. The key to understanding the overarching theme or message of this passage is found in verse 23, "**Whatever your task**, put yourself into it as done for the Lord and not for your masters." We each hold a myriad of different titles, positions in the different parts of our lives. Whether we are spouses, parents, children, students, teachers, employees or employers, whatever sphere of our lives we find ourselves in we are to operate in that sphere as if working for God. Martin Luther called these different areas of life 'vocations'. While most people only have one career or occupation at a time, we can hold many 'vocations' or 'callings' at the same time.

8. What are some of the vocations that you hold at the moment?

9. Has Covid-19 caused a shift in the balance between your various vocations? Are you now acting more in certain vocations that you were before?

The word 'vocation' comes from the latin term *vocare* which means "to call". In Martin Luther's day only clergy (bishops and priests etc.), monks, and nuns were considered to have a vocation. To have a vocation meant to be called by God into holy service in the church. Scriptures like this one led Luther to believe that every area of life, every line of work or employment was a calling from God in the life of a believer, a calling to serve as the hands and feet of God in our communities. He said, "every occupation has its own honour before God. Ordinary work is a divine vocation or calling. In our daily work no matter how important or mundane we serve God by serving the neighbour and we also participate in God's on-going providence for the human race".

10. When you meet someone for the first time and they ask you, 'What do you do?', how do you answer that question?

11. In what ways do you see God at work through your life and occupation (or other daytime activity) to bring blessing to those around you?



Now look at Acts 9:1-19

There is arguably no greater example in the Bible of someone who experienced a 'change' in his vocation than Saul. This up-and-coming Pharisee was well known for his aggressive approach to dealing with the problem of Christians. Yet in his zeal to persecute the Christians, as a devout Jew, it seems likely that his zeal came from a desire to serve God. What changed his direction was simply an encounter with Jesus. Saul, who became Paul, was still the same man he was before, the difference was simply who he took his directives from; ie. who he worked for. Instead of setting his own path, Jesus took the reins. When we encounter Jesus, we all receive a new call on our lives. It may be expressed differently in each of us as we go about trying to live out that call on a daily basis, but Jesus calls us out of a life lived in self service and self gratification, into a life of following and serving him.

12. What would be different if each day you knew you were going to work for Jesus rather than your boss, shareholders, or customers? How might it change our attitude to work, family, community to think this way?

Often people who do not know Jesus have the misconception that being a Christian is difficult and boring. That it involves a list of things which you have to be careful not to do and that it involves punishment and discipline if you get it wrong. In fact the opposite is true. When we truly live each day intentionally to serve the Lord, he gets us involved in all kinds of exciting things. Just look at the rest of the book of Acts and see all the incredible things the early church witnessed - mass conversions, miraculous healings and jail breaks are all in there. A life lived working for Jesus will be the biggest adventure you can undertake, because there is absolute freedom in serving Jesus. The mistakes we might make have been taken care of, the cost of our blunders has been paid. The guy calling the shots is not a business man concerned about the bottom line, he is your Heavenly Father who just wants to offer you the chance to get involved in the family business.

13. If there were no time/money/physical/practical constraints, what is one thing you would like to do/achieve in your time working for Jesus?



LIVE purposefully

Covid-19 has changed the work landscape for almost everyone in one way or another. Maybe you no longer have work, maybe the way you work or the nature of your work has changed. However, the person you work for is still the same. As work changes, as we transition into and out of different phases of our working lives, God always has something for us to do.

14. What ways has Covid-19 affected the various vocations you have in your life? What opportunities has this situation created for you to serve God in new ways?

15. Each morning this week, remember who you work for. Spend some time at the beginning of each day to ask God what he wants you to achieve throughout the day. Keep a record of where you see God working through you as you do this and share with your LifeGroup next time you meet.



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for giving you a life of purpose and meaning. Praise him for all that he has done to empower you to be a part of his work in the world.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you discern the times and places where God has something for you to say or do to bless the life of someone else.
- Pray for those whose work and income has been negatively impacted by the Coronavirus. Pray that they would experience God's provision and care for them during these difficult times.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], may everything you do and say reveal the presence of Christ. Amen.