

In daily life - towards imitation

Can you imagine a redeemed building site? Imagine a building site where the bricklayers love their bricks as well as their neighbours! Imagine a building site where deaf people drive the fork lift trucks. Imagine a building site where the managers really care for the employees. They employ refugees, disabled people etc. Imagine a building site which is full of good humour and kindness. Imagine a building site where the sand and cement are ethically sourced. This is how the prophet Micah put it - "He has showed you - oh human what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8) Let's not spiritualise Micah's message. Micah is talking about ordinary things like work - digging, farming, picking strawberries, preparing maths lessons and cleaning toilets. Through Jesus Christ the curse can be lifted even on a building site.

STUDY QUESTIONS – EXPLORING THE INFORMATION

Gen 3: 17-19. How does this Scripture describe the reality of life? In work?
2 Corinthians 4: 1-6, Ephesians 6: 10-18. How does satan/spiritual powers produce tunnel vision in the world of work? What is idolatry and how does it relate to work?
John 10: 10. Meditate on this verse. Imagine it hung over your workplace.
Matthew 13: 24-30. How does this parable illuminate our existing tensions living in the world?

Living it out

Paul is a real plasterer and he has a baptised imagination about his work. Here are some of his thoughts about bringing God's kingdom into his work. There is an ethical dimension to plastering that few people see. How can the plasterer show love and mercy to other tradespeople? First, the plasterer relies on other tradespeople to do their job well. The plumber has to have the water working. The joiner and bricklayer have to make straight, uniform walls. The electrician has to bury the wires sufficiently to ensure that they aren't hit by a nail (when skimming over plasterboard it often happens that I'll get a shock because a nail has gone into a wire). Whoever puts the plasterboard up has to drive the nails in well so that they don't show through the skim. **The plasterer has responsibilities: to the painter, not to over-polish the walls; and to the joiner, not to have bumps where the skirting boards will go.** 1 Corinthians 14:40 should be the motto of every construction worker! "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." How can the plasterer show love to the paying customer? **It is possible in this context to bless those on the margins** – the widow, the orphan, the refugee, the autistic person by charging lower prices. Frequently you'll be asked to do "homers" i.e. small pieces of work for friends and neighbours. You'll be working in their homes and they appreciate advice and help. **Here you can be generous** with prices. People appreciate it; you'll be a hero! Sometimes people who are restricted in their movements sit in one room most of the day and as a result obsess about tiny flaws in the walls. These are difficult cases to deal with. But I like having the opportunity to help such people, socially.

Paul the plasterer can really do God's will on earth by thinking hard about how he can help an elderly lady who is obsessed by tiny flaws in the wall. **This is developing a baptised imagination about plastering.** The Christian plasterer can develop the kind of imagination that Randy Lewis has in spades. How can you develop a baptised imagination in your daily work?

INSPIRE

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FROM SEPTEMBER 20TH 2015

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Weekly discipleship and spiritual growth resources for all ages, groups and individuals.
Follow up material on Sunday's teaching for groups and individuals.

Week beginning: 25th October 2015.

GROWING AT HOME

Three suggested discipleship activities suitable for all ages to help you grow, based on up - to God; in - to each other; out - to mission

Up

Find a quiet place in your house or garden where you can enjoy God's creation. Listen. Watch. Thank and praise God for what you can see and hear.

In

Take time after a meal together as a family or with friends to mention something you are thankful for. Thank God for the food, and then for the other things you have mentioned.

Out

Make an trail of arrows on the ground out of sticks when you are out and about. Follow the trail and remember that wherever you go and whatever you do God is King of your life, friendships and work.

DAILY READINGS AND PRAYERS.

These daily readings are the same as the ones used in church every morning from 9 - 9.30. Feel free to join us, or use them at home. Read one or both of the readings asking yourself, "What is God saying to me, personally?" and, "How can I respond today?" If you are pressed for time there is a focus verse from the passages. Try reading the verse slowly, three or four times, allowing God to shape your heart and mind through His word. You can use these together with our daily prayer diary from the monthly newsheet.

Monday 26th October

Readings: Psalm 1, John 17: 1-5. Focus verse: 3 Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Tuesday 27th October.

Readings: Psalm 5, John 17: 6-19. Focus verse: 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

Wednesday 28th October Simon and Jude

Readings: Lord God, the source of truth and love, keep us faithful to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, united in prayer and the breaking of bread, and one in joy and simplicity of heart, in Jesus Christ our Lord. John 17: 20-end. Focus verse: I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Thursday 29th October

Readings: Psalm 14, John 18:1-11. Focus verse: 11 Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?'

Friday 30th October.

Readings: Psalm 17, John 18: 12-27. Focus verse: 26 One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, 'Didn't I see you with him in the garden?' 27 Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a cock began to crow.

Saturday 31st October.

Readings: Psalm 20, John 18: 28 -end Focus verse: 36 Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.'

SUNDAY'S TEACHING: RESOURCES FOR GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS.

First thoughts:

In what way is your work affected by the fall?

This week's teaching in a nutshell:

Lifting the Curse Genesis 3:17-19 & 2 Corinthians 4:1-6.

The Old Testament teaches that early in human history, human beings rebelled against the Lord and became ensnared by evil, deceiving powers. The covenant or treaty between God

and humankind was broken and a curse began to consume the earth (Genesis 3). The exact nature of this curse becomes clear when we investigate it systematically. God's relationship to humans was broken because God had to withdraw from a sinful world. The result of this? Humans can experience God as distant and uncaring. Many humans turn to false gods. The relationship between humans is often consumed with jealousy, hatred and suspicion. The relationship between men and women can be fraught with pain, fear and violence. The fall has also affected our relationship with ourselves. The relationship between humans and the earth has been filled with poor stewardship, exploitation and sheer greed. The fall has also introduced a vast range of diseases.

And as far as work goes, when humans rebelled against God it had catastrophic consequences for our daily labour - work became painful toil - trouble, strife, thorns, blisters, aching bodies, smelly armpits and tunnel vision. Something very good - unfolding, managing and stewarding God's wonderful creation project became difficult, bitter and frankly exhausting. We still do the cultural mandate (unfolding, managing and protecting creation) but it is twisted and perverted by sin and idolatry.

Hetty was the richest woman in the USA. But is listed in the Guinness book of records as the meanest person ever to have lived! Her children, Ned and Sylvia, were never allowed to use hot water when bathing. On her 21st birthday Hetty refused to light the candles on her birthday cake so as not to spoil them. The next day she wiped the cake off the candles and returned them to the store for a refund. Notice how twisted and corrupted work becomes when we follow false gods. Hetty could have used her vast fortune to bless all kinds of people. She could have employed disabled people like Randy Lewis but Hetty was driven by tunnel vision! Scripture is clear about this - tunnel vision is sponsored and nurtured by invisible powers of darkness. "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (2 Corinthians 4:4)

So while the Holy Spirit longs to baptise our imaginations about our daily work but the accuser nurtures a destructive and poisonous imagination - satan loves tunnel vision and the misery and suffering it brings. Satan loves to sponsor work that destroys people and the planet. Labour can be exhausting and horrible but it doesn't have to be. Work can have the curse taken out of it! The curse can be partially lifted. Through the Lord Jesus and His kingdom rule work can be restored to its original state of joy, meaning and purpose. Work can be redeemed! Work can be rescued from sin and corruption.

Prayer suggestion:

On a piece of paper ask each person to write their profession – paid or voluntary. Make two columns – baptized imagination and tunnel vision. Under each column write some ideas about how your work can be redeemed for Christ, or suffer from tunnel vision. Having done that pray for baptized imaginations at work.