



COVENANT
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Electronic Thesis & Dissertation Collection

J. Oliver Buswell Jr. Library
12330 Conway Road
Saint Louis, MO 63141

www.covenantseminary.edu/library

This document is distributed by Covenant Theological Seminary under agreement with the author, who retains the copyright. Permission to further reproduce or distribute this document is not provided, except as permitted under fair use or other statutory exception.

The views presented in this document are solely the author's.

**Pastors Leading Congregants to Participate in
God's Mission through their Vocations**

By
Robert W. Robinson

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

Saint Louis, Missouri

December 11, 2018

Covenant Theological Seminary

**Pastors Leading Congregants to Participate in God's Mission
through their Vocations**

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

By

Robert W. Robinson

Graduation Date January 15, 2019

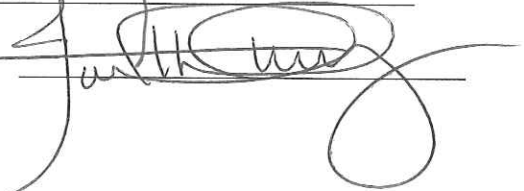
Dr. Donald Guthrie, Faculty Advisor



Dr. Steve Garber, Second Reader



Dr. Joel D. Hathaway, Director of DMin Program



Abstract

The purpose of this study was to discover how pastors lead congregants to participate in God's mission through their vocations. Pastors want to equip their people to be missional, but God's mission is often not very well defined and the means for doing mission is often limited to church-centric programs or neighborhood outreach. Meanwhile, many Christians feel that they are living bifurcated lives, where Christian mission is separate from the rest of life. They are experiencing a "Sunday-Monday gap." A pastor who wants to equip Christians to be missional sees that they are already participating in God's mission through their various vocations.

The researcher conducted qualitative research, interviewing eight pastors from various denominations who are leading their congregants to be missional in their vocations. A literature review explored the mission of God's people and a theology of vocation. The interviews focused on what pastors attempted to help people be missional through their vocations, what challenges they faced, and their results.

The study found that pastors taught the biblical story of Creation / Fall / Redemption / Consummation as a foundation. They were careful with their language to avoid sacred/secular false dualism. They incorporated vocation into their sermons and congregational prayer times, even commissioning people in their callings. The pastors developed relationships, visiting people at their workplaces. The pastors had to overcome theological paradigms that make evangelism the sole purpose of the gospel, expectations about church programming, and presumptions about the essence of work. Results are difficult to quantify so pastors gathered stories to gauge success, which are shared in this study. Several practical recommendations based on the interviews and literature are presented for implementing this discipleship paradigm in churches.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| Chapter 1 Introduction | 1 |
| Problem Statement | 5 |
| Purpose Statement..... | 6 |
| Significance of the Study | 7 |
| Definition of Terms..... | 7 |
| Chapter 2 Literature Review | 9 |
| Recent History of the Concept of Mission..... | 9 |
| William Carey, the Fundamentalists, and the Neo-Evangelicals..... | 10 |
| The Holistic Mission Movement | 15 |
| Contra Holistic Mission | 18 |
| Theology of God’s Mission for His People | 20 |
| The Meaning of the Great Commission..... | 21 |
| Mission as “Being Sent” as Jesus was Sent..... | 24 |
| The Mission and the Kingdom of God | 28 |
| The Mission and the Restoration of Shalom..... | 45 |
| Summary | 47 |
| Theology of Vocation | 51 |
| Vocation / Calling..... | 52 |
| Secular/Sacred Dualism: The Foe of a Theology of Vocation | 59 |
| The Role of the Holy Spirit..... | 68 |
| Creation, Fall, Redemption, Future Hope..... | 75 |
| The Church’s Role in Empowering People in Vocation..... | 112 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Chapter 3 Methodology | 117 |
| Design of the Study..... | 117 |
| Participant Sample Selection | 119 |
| Data Collection | 120 |
| Interview Protocol..... | 121 |
| Data Analysis | 122 |
| Researcher Position..... | 122 |
| Study Limitations..... | 123 |
| Chapter 4 Findings | 125 |
| Introduction to Participants..... | 125 |
| What Pastors Attempted to Do | 127 |
| 1) Laying a Foundation of a Biblical Worldview (Creation/Fall/Redemption/Consummation)..... | 127 |
| 2) Intentionality with the Language Used..... | 130 |
| 3) Incorporating the Concepts of Vocation into Sermons and Prayers... | 133 |
| 4) Developing a Ministry Paradigm that Nurtures Relationships | 139 |
| 5) Purposeful Discipleship of People in their Vocations | 142 |
| Challenges Pastors Experienced | 152 |
| 1) The Difficulty of Overcoming Ingrained Presumptions..... | 152 |
| 2) The struggle to deal with the variegated issues that people face in their vocations | 166 |
| Results from What Pastors Did..... | 168 |
| 1) Success is not Easily Quantifiable..... | 169 |
| 2) The New Metric of Success: Stories..... | 173 |
| 3) Positive Impact on Evangelism and Church Attendance..... | 180 |
| Summary of Findings..... | 184 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Chapter 5 Discussion and Recommendations | 187 |
| Summary of the Study and Findings..... | 188 |
| Discussion of Findings and Recommendations for Practice..... | 194 |
| The Gospel Story of Creation / Fall / Redemption / Consummation is Foundational | 195 |
| The Need to Create a Church Culture that Encourages and Equips People in their Vocations | 203 |
| The Importance of Making Integrated and Holistic Disciples | 207 |
| Recommendations for Further Research..... | 214 |
| Bibliography | 216 |

Chapter 1

Introduction

What does it mean for Christians to be on “mission” for God? Mission work can be thought of as sending dedicated Christians to foreign lands as “missionaries” to spread the gospel. However, when it comes to the local domestic church, the terminology of “mission” can be, and often is, used. The United States has been shifting into what can be called a post-Christian, postmodern and pluralistic culture. Missiologist Darrell Guder writes, “Rather than occupying a central and influential place, North American Christian churches are increasingly marginalized, so much so that in our urban areas they represent a minority movement. It is by now a truism to speak of North America as a mission field.”¹ Another missiologist, Michael Goheen, agrees, “Culturally, rapid changes are taking place in North American culture from a modern to postmodern society. Ecclesiastically, the church finds itself in a new situation dislocated from its former place of importance. What does it mean for a church increasingly on the margins of North American culture to encounter its postmodern culture in a missionary way? That is the question that drives [the missional church] movement.”²

¹ Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998).

² Michael W. Goheen, “The Missional Church: Ecclesiological Discussion in the Gospel and Our Culture Network in North America,” *Missiology* 30, no. 4 (October, 2002), 1.

The recent emergence of interest in how the North American church can become “missional” was inspired by Lesslie Newbigin’s *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches*,³ a monograph that was published by the British Council of Churches and widely disseminated and discussed. Newbigin had returned to England after four decades in the foreign mission field of India and had both an outsider’s and a missionary’s insight into Western Christianity. According to a seminal book on the missional church written in 1998, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, “The missiological consensus that Newbigin focused on our situation may be summarized with the term *missio Dei*, ‘mission of God.’”⁴ The authors of *Missional Church* were from diverse denominational backgrounds—Baptist, Methodist, Mennonite, Christian Reformed, and Presbyterian-USA—including Darrell Guder, Alan Roxburgh and Craig Van Gelder. They formed The Gospel in Our Culture Network (GOCN) to explore how the church can undertake the challenge of reaching North America. They were eager to reassess the church-centric focus of Christian ministry in the West and, inspired by Newbigin’s insights, they determined that they should follow the lead of the missiologists of the past century who had transferred the focus to a God-centered understanding of the church’s mission, based on the *missio Dei*. They write, “We have come to see that mission is not merely an activity of the church. Rather, mission is the result of God’s initiative, rooted in God’s purposes to restore and heal creation. ‘Mission’

³ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Church* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1984), <http://www.newbigin.net/assets/pdf/83os84.pdf>.

⁴ Guder, *Missional Church*, 3.

means ‘sending,’ and it is the central biblical theme describing the purpose of God’s action in human history.”⁵ Beyond those in GOCN circles, there is emerging agreement that the North American evangelical church needs a deeper understanding of the mission of God and, related to that, the mission of God’s people.⁶ How does a biblical understanding of the *missio Dei* impact the way a local church functions? This is an issue that this study will explore.

Alan Hirsch, in an influential book in the missional church movement, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*, asserts that a missional reading of the Great Commission to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20) “requires that we see that Jesus’s strategy is to get a whole lot of versions of him infiltrating every nook and cranny of society by reproducing himself in and through his people in every place throughout the world.”⁷

What this study will explore is how Christians, having already infiltrated the “nooks and crannies of society,” can leverage that infiltration to participate in the mission of God in the world. The way they’ve done so is through their various vocations. Lesslie Newbigin stated that the “enormous preponderance of the Church’s witness is the witness

⁵ Ibid, 4.

⁶ For instance, many organizations and affiliations have been formed since the initial GOCN, including the Verge Network, 3DM, Forge, Missio Alliance, GCM, Missional Church Network, The Ecclesia Network. Also, many denominations have initiated programs to help foster “missional” conversations in their churches, for instance, the Evangelical Presbyterian Church’s “Vision 21,” and The Presbyterian Church (USA)’s Missional Church Project.

⁷ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 113.

of the thousands of its members who work in field, home, office, mill, or law court.”⁸ As Steven Garber states, “Vocation is integral, not incidental, to the *missio Dei*.”⁹ A number of books,¹⁰ conferences,¹¹ and websites¹² have been created in recent years, indicating a renewed emphasis on vocation as mission. This vocation-as-mission movement intentionally equips God’s people, in the words of John Yates, “to get out into the difficult and dark places of the community and the city, and simply do the best they can to love their neighbors and work for the common good... to dignify all Christian calling to serve God in all sorts of ways.”¹³ Christians are being encouraged to recover their creative callings.¹⁴

⁸ Lesslie Newbigin, “Our Task Today” presented at the Fourth Meeting of the Diocesan Council, Tirumangalam, India, December 18, 1951, Unpublished paper, 6.

⁹ Steven Garber, “Vocation As Integral, Not Incidental” Address (The Q Gathering, Portland, OR, April 25, 2011), accessed March 9, 2013, <http://www.washingtoninst.org/893/vocation-as-integral-not-incidental/>.

¹⁰ See bibliography.

¹¹ Theology of Work Project, “Upcoming Events,” accessed December 12, 2015, <https://www.theologyofwork.org/about/events/>. Included in the list: The biannual “National Faith@Work Summit” hosted by The Center for Faith & Work at LaTourneau University, The Mockler Center at Gordon Conwell Seminary, Center for Integrity in Business at Seattle Pacific University, the Kern Family Foundation, The Oikonomia Network hosted at the Center for Transformational Churches at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, “Redeeming Work” gatherings sponsored by Leadership Journal, Redeemer Presbyterian Church’s annual “Faith & Work Conference,” Jubilee Professional Conference hosted by the Coalition for Christian Outreach, Oikonomia Network, and Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation, “RightNow Work as Worship Conference” sponsored by RightNow Media, “Acton University” from the Acton Institute.

¹² Patheos, “Faith and Work Channel,” 2015, accessed November 2, <http://www.patheos.com/Faith-and-Work>.

¹³ John Yates, “Is Our View of Ministry Too Narrow? Is It Too Church-Focused?” (presented at the Commencement, Covenant Theological Seminary, May 16, 2008), accessed 2/19/2013, <http://www.washingtoninst.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Cov-Seminary-May-19-08.pdf>.

¹⁴ As the subtitle states in Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008).

Problem Statement

According to the vocation-as-mission movement, when Christians fully engage in their callings, they are already being missional. Darrell Cosden writes, “Believers desperately need to grasp why and how mission is what they, the whole people of God, are engaged in already as they work. More specifically, they need to grasp why and how the work itself that we do is missionary activity rather than just an occasion for it...It is largely (though not exclusively) through our work that we reflect God’s image and cooperate with him in bringing people and the whole of creation to humanity’s and nature’s ultimate maturity and future.”¹⁵

In order for churches to be missional, Amy Sherman contends that Christians must be equipped in what she calls “vocational stewardship.” “By vocational stewardship, I mean the intentional and strategic deployment of our vocational power—knowledge, platform, networks, position, influence, skills, and reputation—to advance foretastes of God’s kingdom. For missional congregations that desire to rejoice their cities, vocational stewardship is an essential strategy.”¹⁶

However, a majority of those who attend North American evangelical churches do not understand such a high view of vocation. David Miller, Director of the Faith and Work Initiative at Princeton, writes, “Many people report feeling that they live increasingly bifurcated lives, where faith and work seldom connect. Many who are

¹⁵ Darrell Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 129–30.

¹⁶ Amy L. Sherman, *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011), 20.

Christians complain of a ‘Sunday-Monday gap’ where their Sunday worship hour bears little or no relevance to the issues they face in their Monday workplace hours.”¹⁷ The problem, it seems, does not lie just with those in the pews but also with those in the pulpit. Theologian Miroslav Volf, in making the case that the church needs to transition toward developing and applying a robust theology of work, states, “Amazingly little theological reflection has taken place in the past about an activity which takes up so much of our time.”¹⁸ Pastor Tom Nelson concurs. He writes, “For way too long, I did not see work as an essential component of a broader, robust theology of calling. I failed to grasp that a primary stewardship of my pastoral work was to assist and equip others to better connect the professions of their Sunday faith with the practices of their Monday work.”¹⁹

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to discover how pastors lead congregants to participate in the mission God has for his people through their vocations.

Three main areas that are central to discovering pastors’ experiences have been identified: the application of both a theology of the *missio Dei* and a theology of vocation to a local congregation, the process of leading a congregation toward a richer paradigm of vocation as mission, and the challenges and results of the process that pastors

¹⁷ David W. Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement*, (Oxford University Press, 2006), 10.

¹⁸ Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*, Reprint (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2001), 69.

¹⁹ Tom Nelson, *Work Matters: Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2011), 15.

experienced as they led their congregants to be missional in their vocations. To that end, the following research questions guided the qualitative research:

1. What have pastors attempted in order to lead congregants to embrace vocation as the means to participate in God's mission for his people?
2. What challenges did pastors experience as they were leading congregants to participate in God's mission for his people through their vocations?
3. What results have pastors experienced as they were leading congregants to participate in God's mission for his people through their vocations?

Significance of the Study

This study has significance because faith-and-work integration, or vocation as mission, is a growing movement in the American evangelical church. Pastors and church leaders who want to encourage the people in their congregations to participate in God's mission through their vocations may benefit from the findings in this study, informing them of the process of leading a church toward being more missional through vocations.

Definition of Terms

The Mission of God (missio Dei) is the story of how God has purposed to bring the sinful world and the fallen creation into the redemption found in the world of his new creation. "The God revealed in the Scriptures is personal, purposeful and goal-oriented... From the great promise of God to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 we know this God to be totally, covenantally and eternally committed to the mission of blessing the nations through the agency of the people of Abraham. The Bible presents itself to us fundamentally as a narrative, a historical narrative at one level, but a grand metanarrative at another... This has often been presented as a four-point narrative: *creation, fall,*

redemption, and future hope.”²⁰ The *missio Dei* is God’s redemption of the entirety of his creation.

God’s people are those that have been converted into the Christian faith through a “born-again” experience, having committed to a life-long process of following Jesus as their Lord. They believe that Jesus Christ, through his the death and resurrection, brings redemption to humanity and restoration to the world. They are active in their local congregations and embrace the mission God has for his people, including evangelism and social reform. They live out of obedience to the Bible as their ultimate authority.

Vocation/Calling/Work - “Vocation” comes from the Latin word *vocāre*, which means “calling.” The Christian’s highest calling is the one in which Christ bids us to follow him. The Christian’s secondary calling, which is common to all in the church, is to live in abiding fellowship with Christ and to do that which Christians are commanded to do. The Christian’s third level of calling is that which this study will focus. When discussing “vocation,” or “calling,” or “work,” the researcher will be referring to that which is particular to each Christian, the work by which each participates in God’s mission on earth, whether it is the work he or she does at the workplace, in their community, in their neighborhood, or with their families. There is no false dichotomy between “sacred” vocations (like pastor or missionary) and “secular” vocations (like businessperson, teacher, housemaker, soccer coach, painter, or politician). Vocation (or calling or work) is intrinsic to being human and essential for our participation in the mission of God on earth.

²⁰ Christopher J. H Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 64.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to discover how pastors lead congregants to participate in the mission God has for his people through their vocations.

Three particularly relevant areas of literature were reviewed to provide a foundation for the qualitative research. The first topic of literature focused on the recent history of the concept of mission. The second topic focused on the theology of the mission of God's people. While interacting with this literature, the researcher examined the pertinent biblical texts. The third topic of literature focused on the theology of vocation. This area of literature looks more specifically at the how particular callings of individual Christians relates to the overall mission of God's people.

Recent History of the Concept of Mission

The purpose of this study was to discover how pastors lead congregants to participate in the mission God has for his people through their vocations. However, in recent history, there have been various ways that evangelical Christian leaders have conceptualized "mission." A survey of the recent history of evangelical understanding of Christian mission reveals an ebb and flow between seeing the mission of God's people as being about the redemption of all aspects of life on earth to being solely about evangelism and the destiny of souls in the afterlife.

William Carey, the Fundamentalists, and the Neo-Evangelicals

The “father of Protestant missions,”²¹ William Carey (1761-1834), focused on the “Great Commission” at the end of the Gospel of Matthew as the purpose of Christian mission. The text of the Great Commission is “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”²² David J. Bosch states, “Carey—like thousands of other missionary enthusiasts since—has built his case almost exclusively on the commission of the risen Lord. Christ has commanded us to go into all the world, therefore it is incumbent upon us to go.”²³ Bosch criticizes Carey and those who follow him for starting with a presumption “that we already know what ‘mission’ is and now have only to discover it in Scripture. For most Western Christians, Roman Catholics and Protestants alike, from the Middle Ages down to our own times, mission meant the actual geographic movement from a Christian locality to a pagan locality for the purpose of winning converts and expanding the Western Church into that area.”²⁴ In addition to this geographic focus, the presumption about mission was also “defined almost exclusively as the verbal proclamation of an other-worldly message and a preparation for the hereafter.

²¹ Christianity Today, “William Carey,” Christianitytoday.com, August 8, 2008, accessed September 12, 2014, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/missionaries/carey.html>.

²² Matthew 28:19–20 (ESV).

²³ David J. Bosch, “Hermeneutical Principles in the Biblical Foundation for Mission,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 17, no. 4 (1993), 438.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 439.

Consequences of mission, such as social and political changes, were, in essence, regarded as by-products. Other activities of the missionary societies, such as education and medical care, were only ancillaries to the verbal proclamation of the gospel.”²⁵ Some evangelists in the United States, such as D. L. Moody (1837-1899), used “the priority of evangelism, together with premillennialism, as an excuse to avoid saying much on social issues.”²⁶

Historian George Marsden makes the case that contrary to Carey and Moody, for most evangelicals in the middle and end of the nineteenth century, “the principal emphasis was not on social concerns, but they were certainly an integral part of the evangelical program.”²⁷ However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, influential Christians like Walter Rauschenbusch and Henry Emerson Fosdick began writing about what would eventually be called “the social gospel,” which defined sin as injustice in society and promoted the belief that the kingdom of God could be ushered in by the Church transforming society. As Bosch put it, “Optimism was in the air. The generator was the old postmillennialism...wedded to the Darwinian theory of evolution.”²⁸ According to Marsden, “Until this time in American history considerable numbers of revivalist evangelicals had always been in the forefront of social and political reform efforts (antislavery, for instance), even though many other evangelicals had been socially

²⁵ Ibid, 440.

²⁶ George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2006). 90.

²⁷ Ibid, 80.

²⁸ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1991), 321.

conservative. In the twentieth century, however, evangelical participation in progressive reforms, except in some of the older crusades such as for prohibition, dwindled sharply. As theological liberals spoke more and more about the social implications of the gospel, revivalist evangelicals spoke of them correspondingly less.”²⁹

In the early 1900s, “Modernists” (i.e., liberal mainline Protestants) defined the Christian mission in terms of philanthropy and/or social development and even began viewing non-Christian religions as no longer false or intrinsically evil. “Modernists tended to increasingly emphasize mission as democratization and improvement of living standards. Hospitals and schools were no longer seen as *means* or *partners* of evangelism, but as *ends* in themselves.”³⁰ The early twentieth century saw a clash between Christians who emphasized the social gospel and those who were influenced by North American revivalism. In response to the optimistic progressive modernists, conservatives advocated what they called “The Fundamentals,” stimulated by pamphlets of that title funded by Lyman Stewart, a wealthy businessman. Marsden reports, “The practical essays and personal testimonies in *The Fundamentals* display an overwhelming emphasis on soul-saving, personal experience, and individual prayer, with very little attention to specific ethical issues, either personal or social.”³¹ Ott and Strauss agree and add, “Evangelicals rejected the social gospel and thus shied away from any social agenda

²⁹ George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, IL: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 30.

³⁰ Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 129.

³¹ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 120.

whatsoever for church and mission. The fundamentalist-modernist debate polarized the positions further, impacting mission work and theology.”³²

In response to this divide, in 1947 Carl F. H. Henry, a key leader in launching the National Association of Evangelicals, wrote a book entitled *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*.³³ Henry believed that the liberals had mistakenly correlated the gospel to a political agenda while the conservatives had over-reacted to the social gospel. When conservatives preached on the kingdom of God, they saw it only as a future, other-worldly event and believed that the only mission for the church had to do with the “spiritual” matters of evangelism and personal piety. He advocated moving beyond the modernist-fundamentalist divide and called for a course between the two. “A Christianity without a passion to turn the world upside down is not reflective of apostolic Christianity.”³⁴ His plea was for evangelicalism to develop a compelling Christian mind but then to apply these thoughts to the culture at large to curtail evil. “The battle against evil in all its forms must be pressed unsparingly; we must pursue the enemy, in politics, in economics, in science, in ethics—everywhere, in every field, we must pursue relentlessly.”³⁵ However, Henry made it clear that he believed that the “evangelical task primarily is the preaching of the Gospel, in the interest of individual regeneration by the

³² Ott and Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission*, 129.

³³ Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1947).

³⁴ *Ibid*, 16.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 86.

supernatural grace of God, in such a way that divine redemption can be recognized as the best solution of our problems, individual and social.”³⁶

Henry was among a new generation of Christians that came to be known as the neo-evangelicals, a term coined by Harold Ockenga, one of the co-founders of Fuller Seminary. Along with Ockenga and Henry, other leading voices in the neo-evangelical movement were Kenneth Kantzer, the founder of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and evangelist Billy Graham. However, even while voicing this desire to see the Gospel as a both/and (evangelism and social action), these new evangelicals still tended to see social action as either a means for evangelism or its consequence.

Headed by American and British neo-evangelicals, the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (aka, the Lausanne Movement) further nuanced the definition of Christian mission. It began in 1974 when “the gathering was called by a committee headed by Rev. Billy Graham and drew more than 2,300 evangelical leaders, from 150 countries... The gathering produced The Lausanne Covenant, a declaration that is ‘intended to define the necessity, responsibilities, and goals of spreading the Gospel.’”³⁷ John Stott chaired the drafting committee and is known as its chief architect. The Lausanne Covenant came up with the following definition of God’s Purpose: “He has been calling out from the world a people for himself, and sending his people back into the world to be his servants and his witnesses, for the extension of his kingdom, the building

³⁶ Ibid, 88.

³⁷ “Lausanne I: The International Congress on World Evangelization,” Lausanne Movement, accessed November 4, 2014, <http://www.lausanne.org/gatherings/congress/lausanne-i-the-international-congress-on-world-evangelization-2>.

up of Christ's body, and the glory of his name."³⁸ And while The Lausanne Covenant specifically stated that its purpose was world evangelization, it emphasized a more holistic gospel, what it called the "whole gospel." The covenant stated that the results of evangelism "include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world." Therefore, Christians "should share (God's) concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression."³⁹ The phrase that has guided the Lausanne Movement ever since is, "World evangelization requires the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world."⁴⁰

The Holistic Mission Movement

More recently, the Lausanne Movement has been influential by advocating for what is being called "holistic mission," seeing the mission of God's people as including evangelism as well as the work of social action. The Holistic Mission movement is led by scholars like René Padilla and Christopher J. H. Wright. Padilla, in an influential paper presented at the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand in 2004, wrote,

"The reduction of the Christian mission to the oral communication of a message of otherworldly salvation grows out of a misunderstanding of God's purpose and of the nature of human beings. It is assumed that God wants to 'save souls' rather than 'to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven' (Colossians 1:20) and that the human being only needs to be reconciled

³⁸ "The Lausanne Covenant, 1974," Lausanne Movement, accessed November 4, 2014, <http://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>.

³⁹ "The Lausanne Covenant, 1974."

⁴⁰ "The Lausanne Covenant, 1974."

to God rather than to experience fullness of life. In the final analysis, this is a reduction related to ideas taken from Greek philosophy, not from scripture. Mission is faithful to scripture only to the extent to which it is holistic. In other words, it is faithful when it crosses frontiers (not just geographic but also cultural, racial, economic, social, political, etc.) with the intention of transforming human life in all its dimensions, according to God's purpose and of enabling human beings to enjoy the abundant life that God wants to give to them and that Jesus Christ came to share with them. The mission of the church is multifaceted because it depends on the mission of God, which includes the whole of creation and the totality of human life."⁴¹

Christopher Wright, also addressing the same Lausanne Committee, wrote,

“Holistic mission includes the whole of what God calls and sends us to do. Evangelism without social action is not holistic mission. Likewise, social action without evangelism cannot be holistic mission either.”⁴² Wright is an Anglican clergyman, and his view is in keeping with The Anglican Communion, which has identified what they call “The Five Marks of Mission,”

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.⁴³

⁴¹ C. René Padilla, “Holistic Mission, Occasional Paper No. 33,” <http://www.lausanne.org>, 2005, accessed 10/29/2014, http://www.lausanne.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/06/LOP33_IG4.pdf.

⁴² Christopher J. H Wright, “Re-Affirming Holistic Mission: A Cross-Centered Approach in All Areas of Life,” *Lausanne World Pulse*, October 2005, accessed October 29, 2014, <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/themedarticles.php/61/10-2005>.

⁴³ “Mission - The Five Marks of Mission,” Anglican Communion, accessed November 12, 2014, <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm>.

In 2010, the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization convened, and the result was “The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action,” in which there was a commitment to “the integral and dynamic exercise of all dimensions of mission” which is summed up with two bullet points:

“• God commands us to make known to all nations the truth of God’s revelation and the gospel of God’s saving grace through Jesus Christ, calling all people to repentance, faith, baptism and obedient discipleship.

“• God commands us to reflect his own character through compassionate care for the needy, and to demonstrate the values and the power of the kingdom of God in striving for justice and peace and in caring for God’s creation.”⁴⁴

Ronald J. Sider, founder of Evangelicals for Social Action, has also advocated for a more holistic vision of Christian ministry. He (along with Philip N. Olson and Heidi Rolland Unruh) wrote, “The whole gospel brings salvation in its fullest sense— forgiveness of sins, inner conversion of individuals in regeneration and sanctification, physical and emotional healing, the transformation of social and economic relationships, reconciliation and peace overcoming sinful human divisions, and the ultimate triumph of Christ over the forces of evil on a cosmic scale.”⁴⁵ The authors quote John Perkins who makes the case for a holistic understanding of the mission of God’s people, “Evangelism creates the committed people, the concern for the needs of people and the broad community base from which to launch social action. Social action, in turn, fleshes out the Lordship of Christ, reaching people’s spiritual needs through their felt needs and

⁴⁴ “The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action,” The Lausanne Movement, 2011, <http://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment>.

⁴⁵ Ronald J. Sider, Philip N. Olson, and Heidi Rolland Unruh, *Churches That Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 59-60.

developing an indigenous economic base for the work.”⁴⁶ Perkins never minimizes the importance of evangelism, stating, “A ministry of Christian community development without evangelism is like a body without a soul.”⁴⁷

Contra Holistic Mission

However, there remains an insistence among many evangelicals that mission should be defined specifically as the “conscious, deliberate, organized and extensive effort to convert others to one’s religion by way of evangelization or proselytization.”⁴⁸ This is the definition given for Christian mission in *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, written by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O’Brien. In this book, the authors state that in light of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection, “the mission of God’s people within the world is to be understood within an eschatological perspective, that is, it is grounded in the saving events of the gospel and keeps as eye on the final goal – the gathering of men and women from every nation, tribe, people and language before the throne of God and the Lamb.”⁴⁹ The authors begin in chapter one with a look at the Old Testament, in which they state, “Any comprehensive treatment of mission in the Old Testament must begin with God’s creation and his purposes for

⁴⁶ John Perkins, *A Quiet Revolution* (Waco: Word, 1986), 221, quoted in Sider, Olson, and Unruh, *Churches That Make a Difference*, 57.

⁴⁷ John M. Perkins, *Beyond Charity: The Call to Christian Community Development* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 80.

⁴⁸ Andreas J. Kostenberger and Peter T. O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 254.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 269.

humanity.”⁵⁰ They then write a paragraph explaining the six days of creation and that “Man as the image of God is installed as his vicegerent over all creation with a mandate to control and rule it on behalf of its maker.”⁵¹ This is the first and last mention of Genesis 1 in the entire book. Rather than focusing on the cosmic redemption of the created order of Genesis 1, the authors’ conclusion to their chapter on the Old Testament focuses rather on Isaiah 66:18-24, “in which God’s gracious plan for the world is marvelously presented. The Lord himself is the missionary who gathers and rescues, not simply the dispersed of Israel, but also people from ‘all nations’, in order that they may see his glory. The goal of mission is the glory of God, that he may be known and honoured for who he really is.”⁵² Therefore, according to Köstenberger and O’Brien, the *missio Dei* is specifically defined as God saving people from the ends of the earth so that he will be known and honored by them. While there does not seem to be any disagreement among the other scholarship on what this passage in Isaiah means and that God’s mission includes the proclamation of salvation to all nations so that all peoples may know and glorify him, this definition of the mission of God focuses more narrowly than the other sources. In contrast to what the Holistic Mission movement is advocating, it truncates the mission of God’s people to being sent to the nations to proclaim God’s salvation of individuals. It assumes that God’s mission is to save souls and to reconcile people to himself rather than what has been advocated by the others, a holistic mission of

⁵⁰ Kostenberger and O’Brien, 25.

⁵¹ Ibid, 26.

⁵² Ibid, 52.

reconciling all things to himself⁵³ and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God in a way that sees Christ's lordship in the world, providing abundant life and restoring the entire cosmos.⁵⁴

Therefore, in the wake of the history of the concept of mission, there still is a need to define what the mission of God is and what role Christians have in that mission. This is what we will look at next.

Theology of God's Mission for His People

When we think of the word "mission," one of several concepts can come to mind. Merriam-Webster offers several definitions, including "a specific task with which a person or a group is charged," "a body of persons sent to perform a service or carry on an activity," and "a ministry commissioned by a religious organization to propagate its faith or carry on humanitarian work." Interestingly, there is another definition offered: "calling, vocation."⁵⁵ The purpose of this study is to discover how pastors lead congregants to participate in the mission God has for his people through their vocations. According to Merriam-Webster, the word "mission" already includes the idea of "vocation."

⁵³ Colossians 1:20.

⁵⁴ John 10:10.

⁵⁵ "Mission" accessed July 22, 2014, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mission>.

The Meaning of the Great Commission

William Carey’s paradigm from the 19th century, defining Christian mission by interpreting the “Great Commission” (“go and make disciples”)⁵⁶ as primarily the geographic expansion of Christianity by means of making converts through evangelism, is still widely accepted in many evangelical churches. However, as Charles Van Engen, Professor Emeritus of Biblical Theology of Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary, observes, “Protestants who used the Great Commission as their foundation for mission assumed the following: that salvation was individualistic; that salvation had to do primarily with a spiritual and personal relationship with Jesus Christ; that the primary calling of the church's mission was geographic: Christians were called to ‘go’; that the ‘going’ was primarily from the west and north of the globe to the east and south.”⁵⁷

So, the command to “go and make disciples” needs to be reassessed. New Testament scholar D. A. Carson writes, “In the Greek, ‘go’—like ‘baptizing’ and ‘teaching’—is a participle. Only the verb ‘make disciples’ is imperative... The main emphasis, then, is on the command to ‘make disciples.’”⁵⁸ Most evangelical commentators on Matthew make it clear that even though “make disciples” is the only imperative in this text, the participles do, in some way, also carry an imperatival

⁵⁶ Matthew 28:18-20.

⁵⁷ Charles Van Engen, “‘Mission’ Defined and Described,” in *MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, ed. David Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010), 15.

⁵⁸ D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 595.

component.⁵⁹ Therefore, the activity demanded is to “make disciples,” and this is done “going,” “baptizing,” and “teaching.” Also, contrary to the assumption of William Carey and those he has influenced, the command to “make disciples” is not merely a command to do evangelism. “The word ‘disciple’ means above all ‘learner’ or ‘pupil.’ The emphasis in the commission thus falls not on the initial proclamation of the gospel but more on the arduous task of nurturing into the experience of discipleship, an emphasis that is strengthened and explained by the instruction ‘teaching them to keep all that I have commanded’ in v 20a.”⁶⁰ “To disciple a person to Christ is to bring him into the relation of pupil to teacher, ‘taking his yoke’ of authoritative instruction (11:29), accepting what he says as true because he says it, and submitting to his requirements as right because he makes them.”⁶¹ Therefore, the Great Commission is to “make disciples,” not simply “make converts” (though that is implicit first step in the “making”). It means “make students.” “Jesus mandates that all mission activity emulate his pattern of discipling followers as exemplified in this gospel. They must be brought to understanding and to that deep ethical commitment patterned in the Sermon on the Mount and the Community Discourse; then they will become ‘trained as disciples of the kingdom.’ (Matt. 13:52).”⁶²

⁵⁹ Ibid, 595; Also confirmed by Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 1080; David L. Turner, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 689; Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 33b: Matthew 14-28 (Dallas, TX.: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 886.

⁶⁰ Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 33b: Matthew 14-28, 887.

⁶¹ John A. Broadus, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1886), 593.

⁶² Osborne, *Matthew*, 1080.

It is telling that Jesus opens The Great Commission with the words, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”⁶³ Jesus is proclaiming his lordship. Thus, what Jesus is commissioning his followers to do is to not just make converts but to make people who will yield to his lordship in the kingdom of God. The Great Commission mandates both evangelism and deep training in the ways of Jesus the King.

John Stott (1921-2011), in a book published the year after the Lausanne Committee, wrote that the Great Commission should not be interpreted in such a way that truncates it to just evangelism. “I confess that I myself argued this at the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin in 1966...I now see more clearly that not only the consequences of the commission but the actual commission itself must be understood to include social as well as evangelistic responsibility, unless we are to be guilty of distorting the words of Jesus.”⁶⁴ Ralph Winter, the founder and longtime director of the U.S. Center for World Mission, agrees with Stott. “Looking closely at Matt 28:20, it isn't just the *teachings* that Jesus commissions His disciples to pass on; it is the actual enforcing, so to speak, of *obedience to those teachings*...Such breadth must not be seen to be a divergence from the preaching of eternal life but rather an empowerment of the message of a gospel of a kingdom, which is both here and hereafter. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the gospel of the kingdom, the announcement of a rule and reign of God that must be extended over the whole world and all of creation.”⁶⁵

⁶³ Matthew 28:18.

⁶⁴ John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1975), 23.

⁶⁵ Ralph D. Winter, “The Future of Evangelicals in Mission,” in *MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, ed. David Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010), 189.

Mission as “Being Sent” as Jesus was Sent

The Great Commission of Matthew 28 can further be understood by reading it alongside John 20:21, where Jesus says, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”⁶⁶ In his commentary on John, Bruce Milne states, “The mission about which he (Jesus) had taught them (the apostles) in the upper room is now imminent and he sets them apart for it in a solemn moment of commissioning...it is the form in which the ‘Great Commission’ appears in this gospel.”⁶⁷ John Stott, addressing the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974 said, “‘Mission’ is an activity of God arising out of the very nature of God. The living God of the Bible is a sending God, which is what ‘mission’ means. He sent the prophets to Israel. He sent his Son into the world. His son sent out the apostles, and the seventy and the church. He also sent the Spirit to the church and sends him into our hearts today.”⁶⁸ Verbs for “sending”⁶⁹ appear 60 times in John’s Gospel, starting with God sending John the Baptist⁷⁰ to be “the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord.’”⁷¹ The Gospel of John makes it clear that God sent his Son “to save the world through him.”⁷² John then states

⁶⁶ John 20:21.

⁶⁷ Bruce Milne, *The Message of John* (Leicester, England ; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 298.

⁶⁸ John R. W Stott, “The Biblical Basis for Evangelism,” in *Let The Earth Hear His Voice*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 65–68.

⁶⁹ Πέμπω and ἀποστέλλω seem to be interchangeable in John’s gospel; they are both used for the Father sending the Son and for the Son sending the disciples.

⁷⁰ “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John,” John 1:6.

⁷¹ John 1:23.

⁷² John 3:17.

that Jesus sends his followers to continue Jesus's mission when Jesus says, "Whoever receives whomever I send receives me; whoever receives me receives him who sent me."⁷³ "Jesus' followers carry out his mission as he carries out the Father's."⁷⁴

Writing on the text of John 20:21 where Jesus says, "As the Father has sent me," Michael Goheen writes, "The 'as' in this text tells us that the mission of Jesus to Israel is to serve as a paradigm for the mission of his followers to the nations."⁷⁵ Goheen quotes Lesslie Newbigin, "This must determine the way we think about and carry out the mission; it must be founded and modelled upon his. We are not authorized to do it in any other way."⁷⁶ According to Ross Hastings, in John 20:21, "we are called to be a missional community of sent ones, but this is because that is what we are. This commission is more an *is* than an *ought*. The ought is derived from the *is*. The church is missional, Christians are missional, because they are conjoined to the missional God and therefore enabled by him, the sending triune God."⁷⁷

John Stott saw this missional paradigm as "incarnational." He wrote, "Now he sends us into the world, as the Father sent him into the world. In other words, our mission

⁷³ John 13:20.

⁷⁴ Craig S. Keener, "Sent Like Jesus: Johannine Missiology (John 20:21-22)," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 12, no. 1 (January 2009): 21-45.

⁷⁵ Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 117-118.

⁷⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *Mission in Christ's Way: A Gift, a Command, an Assurance* (New York: Friendship Pr, 1988), 1, quoted in *ibid*, 118.

⁷⁷ Ross Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 244.

is to be modelled on his. Indeed, all authentic mission is incarnational mission.”⁷⁸

Theologian Ross Hastings agrees, “If God’s central way of reaching his world was to incarnate himself in Jesus, then our way of reaching the world should likewise be *incarnational*.”⁷⁹ Two influential missional church leaders, Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost, have advocated for this incarnational missional approach, stating, “The Incarnation provides us with the missional means by which the gospel can become a genuine part of a people group without damaging the cultural frameworks that provide a sense of meaning and history”⁸⁰ and it “implies a real and abiding presence among a group of people,” reflecting the concept that “Jesus moved into the neighborhood; he experienced its life, its rhythms, and its people from *the inside* and not as an outsider.”⁸¹

In what way is Jesus’s incarnational mission the same as the Church’s incarnational mission? Stott states that the major purpose of the mission of Jesus is unique to him and therefore cannot be replicated by his followers: He is the savior of the world, dying to atone for our sins to bring eternal life. “We cannot copy him in these things. We are not saviours.”⁸² But Stott insists that there is a deeper, more general understanding of the mission of Christ found in Mark 10:45, and we can indeed copy him

⁷⁸ John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian: Applying God’s Word to Today’s World* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 1995), 356.

⁷⁹ Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 133.

⁸⁰ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21 Century Church* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Pub, 2003), 37.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 39.

⁸² Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 38-39.

in this. The verse reads, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”⁸³ Stott writes, “The ransoming sin-offering was a sacrifice which he alone could offer, but this was to be the climax of a life of service, and we too may serve...He served in deed as well as word, and it would be impossible in the ministry of Jesus to separate his works from his words...Now he sends us, he says, as the Father had sent him. Therefore, our mission, like his, is to be one of service.”⁸⁴ Stott states that followers of Jesus should do all they can to alleviate oppression, injustice, poverty, and the like, “Anything which undermines human dignity should be an offense to us.” But, to Stott, this does not undermine the primacy of evangelism, for “is anything so destructive of human dignity as alienation from God through ignorance or rejection of the gospel?”⁸⁵ He quotes the Lausanne Covenant, which states that “the church’s mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary.”⁸⁶

Missional church leaders Hirsch and Frost make the point that Christians are already sent into the culture and therefore churches need to change their paradigm to equip and encourage the mission that happens outside of what the local church does programmatically. They criticize the church, writing, “We don’t see businessmen, students, youth workers, lecturers, plumbers, electricians, and homemakers as having missional roles in their worlds. If a businessman starts a prayer breakfast in a local

⁸³ Mark 10:45

⁸⁴ Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 56.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 58.

⁸⁶ “The Lausanne Covenant,” paragraph 6.

restaurant, the church will notify its members and support the program. But if a businessman attempts to use his influence to develop ethical schemes through his business to serve the needy or create jobs for the unemployed we traditionally don't see this as mission."⁸⁷

The Mission and the Kingdom of God

At the beginning of Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, the people in Capernaum didn't want him to leave them. He replied, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."⁸⁸ The good news, or gospel,⁸⁹ that Jesus was sent to proclaim was "the kingdom of God." Christians confess that "Jesus is Lord."⁹⁰ "With this confession, rightly understood, all of life is placed under Christ's lordship."⁹¹ The leaders of the missional church movement agree, saying, "Before the church is called to do or say anything, it is called and sent to be the unique community of those who live under the reign of God."⁹² However, various Christian traditions have held to different perceptions of the "kingdom of God." Howard Snyder delineates eight models of the kingdom of God held by these various traditions:

⁸⁷ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 45.

⁸⁸ Luke 4:43, NIV.

⁸⁹ The words "proclaim the good news" translates the Greek word εὐαγγελίσασθαι, "to proclaim the gospel."

⁹⁰ Romans 10:9.

⁹¹ Ott and Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission*, 88.

⁹² Guder, *Missional Church*, 103.

“1. The kingdom as future hope: the *future* kingdom. 2. The kingdom as inner spiritual experience: the *interior* kingdom. 3. The kingdom as mystical communion: the *heavenly* kingdom. 4. The kingdom as institutional church: the *ecclesiastical* kingdom. 5. The kingdom as countersystem: the *subversive* kingdom. 6. The kingdom as political state: the *theocratic* kingdom. 7. The kingdom as Christianized culture: the *transforming* kingdom. 8. The kingdom as earthly utopia: the *utopian* kingdom.”⁹³

Going through each of these models and critiquing each goes beyond the scope of the research for this present study, but for an understanding of the mission of God’s people, we need to decipher how God’s mission for his people relates to God’s kingdom. Snyder makes the point that “biblical teachings present us with six fundamental tension points or polarities that are central to the mystery of God’s reign.”⁹⁴ According to Snyder, each of the eight models are attempts to deal with these six polarities found in Scripture. For the sake of this study on the mission of God’s people as it relates to their vocations, three of the major tensions that need to be resolved are these, which are very interconnected. (1) Is the kingdom present or future? (2) Is the kingdom individual or social? (3) Is the kingdom particular for those under the reign of God (that is, Christians) or is it universal for the entirety of the cosmos (especially for the transformation of culture)?

For much of the 20th Century, Dispensationalists taught that the kingdom is a future event, “the millennial kingdom is that period of 1,000 years during which our Lord

⁹³ Howard A. Snyder, *Models of the Kingdom* (Nashville, TN.: Abingdon Press, 1991), 18.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 16.

Jesus Christ will rule the earth in righteousness and will fulfill to the Jews and the world those promises of the Old Testament covenants.”⁹⁵ Amillennialists refuted the idea of a future kingdom, insisting that God’s rule “is going on now, and will be until Christ returns. Hence the term *realized millennialism* is an apt description of (this) view...if it is remembered that the millennium in question is not an earthly but a heavenly reign.”⁹⁶

“Then along came George Eldon Ladd. Immersed in the German wrangling over the kingdom of God during his doctoral studies at Harvard, Ladd found that the *already/not yet* construct could add a great deal of light to the heat generated by the debate.”⁹⁷ From the time of the first publication of *Jesus and the Kingdom* in 1964,⁹⁸ George Eldon Ladd became one of the most influential scholars in evangelicalism. “In a 1984 survey that Mark Noll sent to members of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) and the Institute for Biblical Research (IBR), Noll asked, ‘Please list the three individuals, living or dead, who have exerted the dominant influence on your scholarly work. You do not have to share the conclusions of these individuals but they should be the ones whose work influences you most.’ For ETS members, the number one individual was John

⁹⁵ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 174-175.

⁹⁶ Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 235.

⁹⁷ Stephen J. Nichols, “The Kingdoms of God: The Kingdom in Historical and Contemporary Perspectives,” in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 42.

⁹⁸ George Eldon Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964).

Calvin. Number two was George Ladd. For IBR members, number one was George Ladd.”⁹⁹

Ladd’s view of the “already/not yet” of the kingdom is described as,

“The Kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God dynamically active to establish his rule among men... This Kingdom, which will appear as an apocalyptic act at the end of the age, has already come into human history in the person and mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver men from its power, and to bring them into the blessings of God's reign. The Kingdom of God involves two great moments: fulfillment within history (already), and consummation at the end of history (not yet)”¹⁰⁰

For Ladd, the kingdom of God manifests itself in two stages: The “already” of God’s reign in the lives of Christians, and the “not yet” of when God will rule over the full realm of the cosmos. What God’s people experience spiritually now is a prolepsis of the fullness that will be experienced when Christ returns. Ladd is an example of Snyder’s second model, the *interior* kingdom, where the present manifestation of the kingdom as God’s rule is not focused on the realm of the physical created cosmos, but rather as a dynamic redemptive-rule in the hearts of individuals. If Ladd’s view of the kingdom of God is correct, then the mission of God’s people is to proclaim a gospel that God is to be the ruler of each person individually in the present as a means for guaranteeing the bliss of entering into the King’s material realm in the future, when the internal spiritual experience will come to consummation in the more external tangible experience. Ladd’s understanding of the kingdom also separates church and kingdom: “While there is an

⁹⁹ Andrew David Naselli, “Three Reflections on Evangelical Academic Publishing,” *Themelios*, 39, no. 3 (Nov 2014), 431.

¹⁰⁰ George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 218.

inseparable relationship between the Kingdom and the church, they are not to be identified. The Kingdom takes its point of departure from God, the church from human beings. The Kingdom is God's reign and the realm in which the blessings of his reign are experienced; the church is the fellowship of those who have experienced God's reign and entered into the enjoyment of its blessings. The Kingdom creates the church, works through the church, and is proclaimed in the world by the church. There can be no Kingdom without a church—those who have acknowledged God's rule—and there can be no church without God's Kingdom, but they remain two distinguishable concepts: the rule of God and the fellowship of men and women.”¹⁰¹

While Ladd has helped us understand how to reconcile one polarity or tension by showing how the kingdom of God is both future and present, his method of resolving (1) the tension of whether the kingdom is individual or social and (2) the tension of whether the kingdom is particular to the church or the entire cosmos was to relegate the former items (individual and church) to the present age and the latter items (social and cosmic) to the age to come. For Ladd, “the word ‘kingdom,’ then, is not a place or a space or a realm or a people with boundaries and kings and a temple. No, ‘kingdom’ refers to the abstract dynamic that God is now at work redeeming individuals in Jesus Christ in this world, and this rule in Jesus Christ will be completed and universal at the eschaton when the kingdom arrives fully.”¹⁰² Ladd’s proposal emphasizes Jesus Christ’s lordship

¹⁰¹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 117.

¹⁰² Scot McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014), 13.

manifested as his redemptive-rule over individual Christians but does not emphasize God's call on these individuals into a redeemed community that is called together for the purpose of participating with God in his mission for the redemption of the entirety of his creation.

Ladd's influence over evangelical theology on the kingdom cannot be underestimated. Ladd's influence has been so powerful that theologian Millard J. Erickson, in his *Christian Theology*, writes that the tensions in eschatological and ecclesiological debates have shifted, "in fact, the phrase 'already, but not yet' has become a sort of slogan."¹⁰³ This influence has led Russell Moore, in his study of evangelical teaching on the kingdom, to state "After a half-century of searching the Scriptures a quiet consensus is emerging about the Kingdom of God."¹⁰⁴ However, Moore's study focuses almost exclusively on the dispensational and covenantal wings of evangelicalism, where the "already/not yet" has taken root and where most have accepted that the church and the kingdom are different things. He does not consider Anabaptist theology, which disagrees with Ladd's separation of the church and the kingdom. They hold to Snyder's category of "The kingdom as countersystem: the *subversive* kingdom." "Countersystem," for Anabaptists, means that the local church is to live subversively *as* the kingdom of God, countering the kingdoms of the world. As John Howard Yoder wrote, "The

¹⁰³ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 80.

¹⁰⁴ Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 11.

alternative community discharges a modeling mission. The church is called to be now what the world is called to be ultimately.”¹⁰⁵

Scot McKnight, in *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church*, lays out the case for the Anabaptist view of the kingdom. He contributes to the conversation by showing the limits of Ladd’s approach of truncating the concept of kingdom to merely God’s redemptive-rule over individual Christians. He contends “‘A people governed by a king’—this is how the Old Testament uses the term ‘kingdom.’...Israel is a kingdom. Moses legislates how a king in Israel is to behave: ‘When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law’ (Deut. 17:18). If he does this, that king ‘will reign a long time over his kingdom in [the land of] Israel.’ (Deut. 17:20).”¹⁰⁶ So, contrary to George Eldon Ladd, McKnight insists, “Over and over, the word ‘kingdom’ in the Old Testament refers to a people governed by a king. Any suggestion, then, that ‘kingdom’ means only ‘ruling’ or ‘reigning’ cannot satisfy what the Bible explicitly affirms...Gerhard Lohfink, a German scholar, pushes against this all-too-common conclusion in these memorable words: ‘A king without a people is no king at all but a figure in a museum.’ He’s right. To say that kingdom is ‘reign’ is to tell half the story.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 92.

¹⁰⁶ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, 68, 69.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 70, 74.

However, McKnight's claim may tell only two-thirds of the story if we add the idea that "a king without a territory is an enigma."¹⁰⁸ This is what Patrick Schreiner adds to the conversation, as he defines the kingdom of God as this: "The kingdom is the King's power over the King's people in the King's place."¹⁰⁹ His contention is that "these three realities (power, people, place) interrelate, and although they can be distinguished, they never can be separated... The mission of the church is to bring people in union with a real King and into a real kingdom, not just assent to some immaterial theocracy. Disciples are people who go out and give shape to every place. Jesus brings people into place, and he gives them a law that structures their interactions."¹¹⁰

The kingdom of God, then, is the inbreaking of God's rule in a people and in a place. The question remains as to how those people ruled by God interact with the place that God has them. For anabaptists, it is done as local churches subversively act in ways that are counter to the systems of world. "The missional church as an alternative community is called to demonstrate an alternative culture in a fallen world, to engage in practicing alternative economics, and to provide the world with an example of living out an alternative approach to the exercise of power. This takes place as the missional church embodies Jesus's mission and patterns as its own actions in the world."¹¹¹ One of the main concerns that Darrell Guder, Alan Hirsch and others in the missional church

¹⁰⁸ Patrick Schreiner, *The Kingdom of God and the Glory of the Cross* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2018), 19.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 18.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 18, 21.

¹¹¹ Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids, IL: Baker Academic, 2011), 50.

movement articulate concerning the North American church is what Scot McKnight calls “The Constantinian Temptation”¹¹² a concept that flows from John Howard Yoder. Chris Huebner, a theologian specializing in Yoder’s teachings, wrote,

“Perhaps the most recurring theme in Yoder’s theology is his depiction and critique of ‘Constantinianism.’ In short, Yoder argues that the history of Christianity must be read in light of a deep and lasting, though often subtle, shift that took place with respect to the relationship between church and world, and which he claims is best associated with the reign of Constantine. Whereas pre-Constantinian Christianity was that of a minority church existing in a world that was largely hostile toward it, Yoder claims that the Constantinian shift resulted in an alignment of the church with the ruling political regime of the day...Short of the actual institutional alignment of church and state, Yoder claims that Constantinianism continues where there is merely a formal identification of the church with the prevailing political establishment, as in American public discourse...Yoder maintains that it is only through its concrete presence as an alternative community that the church can truly serve as a witness to the world.”¹¹³

The Anabaptist desire to be an alternative community leads to a reticence toward participating in the political process which, in turn, leads to their general suspicion of the desire of Christians to actively interact with and influence culture. McKnight sees a troubling situation arising from the fact that Christians are now finding themselves no longer in a Constantinian situation. “When the majority of the citizens are Christian, as they were more or less in Europe and North America until later in the twentieth century, the culture takes on Christian themes naturally, and Christians are able to influence culture. But when Christianity became less and less the majority, Christians began to

¹¹² McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, 209.

¹¹³ Chris Huebner, *A Precarious Peace: Yoderian Explorations on Theology, Knowledge, and Identity* (Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, 2006), 57-8.

raise their voices in protest and—here is the element we must observe—they sought *through political means* to influence culture and state.”¹¹⁴

But the Dutch Calvinists believe that the kingdom of God requires the influence of every aspect of culture. “The collective work of Geerhardus Vos (a Dutch theologian who taught biblical theology at Princeton) and Herman Ridderbos (a Dutch theologian who taught biblical theology in the Netherlands) stresses redemptive history, all from the center point of Christ's proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom understood as inaugurated eschatology. Inaugurated eschatology simply means that the kingdom, and eschatological promise, is in the beginning stages of fulfillment already, and will be fully consummated in the future.”¹¹⁵ This version of the “already/not yet” does not make the distinction between the spiritual and the material that Ladd’s version does. It sees “kingdom” as the comprehensive rule of God over everything—not only the rule of God in the lives of individuals and in the way we live together in the local church but also in the way we live in every other sphere of society. In this view, God is king of the entire cosmos, not just of the people of God. Abraham Kuyper, the influential Dutch Calvinist in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century, famously said in his inaugural convocation at the Free University of Amsterdam, “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’”¹¹⁶ Richard Mouw, a Kuyperian scholar, writes, “For Kuyper, every

¹¹⁴ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, 216.

¹¹⁵ Nichols, “The Kingdoms of God: The Kingdom in Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.”, 43.

¹¹⁶ James D. Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 488.

Christian is called to be an agent of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, wherever they are called by God to serve.”¹¹⁷ The reason is that, for Kuyperians, “the restoration in Christ of creation and the coming of the kingdom of God are one and the same.”¹¹⁸ Influential neocalvinist¹¹⁹ Albert Wolters claims, “The whole world belongs to God, the whole world has fallen, and so the whole world needs to be redeemed—every last person, place, organization, and program; all ‘rocks and trees and skies and seas’; in fact, ‘every square inch,’ as Abraham Kuyper said.”¹²⁰

Another key of the Kuyperian model is the concept of the spiritual “antithesis:” “Namely that the human race is divided distinctly between believers who acknowledge the redemption and kingship of Jesus Christ and unbelievers who do not, with the concomitant implications of both life orientations across the whole spectrum of human existence. Thus, a spiritually sensitive and holistic interpretation of Christianity that includes the transformation and development of all aspects of human thought and culture is at the heart of the Kuyperian vision.”¹²¹ This means that Christians are to pervade every sphere of society, in what is known as “Sphere Sovereignty” where “God’s sovereign rule extends over all of our lives. All of the cultural spheres are in place – to

¹¹⁷ Richard J Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching in: Isaiah and the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 5.

¹¹⁸ Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 73.

¹¹⁹ The researcher will use “Neocalvinism,” “Kuyperian,” and “Dutch Calvinism” synonymously.

¹²⁰ Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 96.

¹²¹ David Naugle, “Introduction To Kuyper’s Thought,” *The Kuyperian*, February 2001, <http://kuyperian.blogspot.com/2004/08/introduction-to-kuypers-thought.html>.

use a Kuyperian phrase – *coram deo*, before the face of God.”¹²² What this means for the Kuyperian, then, is that the kingdom of God is not limited to the church. Richard Mouw, in his book, *Abraham Kuyper: A Short and Personal Introduction*, writes, “Kuyper makes much of the fact that the Kingdom of Christ is much bigger than the institutional church. The Kingdom is that broad range of reality over which Christ rules. Actually, Christ's Kingdom is the whole cosmos — remember Kuyper's manifesto about every square inch of the creation belonging to Jesus.”¹²³

While critics of Kuyper and Neocalvinism often point at a seeming neglect for the importance of the church, Mouw states, “The institutional church is certainly an important part of Christ's Kingdom. It is where we as believers gather to worship—where we are shaped by the preaching of the Word, by participation in sacraments, by instruction in the church's traditions and teachings, and by less formal patterns of fellowship.”¹²⁴ However, contrary to the anabaptists, it is clear that Kuyperians do not equate the church with the kingdom. Mouw continues: “But the church is only one part of the Kingdom. And it is no trivial thing to point that out. I once heard a prominent pastor complain from the pulpit about lay people—he used the example of Christians in the business community—who don't give enough of their time to church activities. This is how he put it: ‘These folks work all day at their marketplace jobs, and then they go home and watch television. Other than coming to Sunday services,’ he said, ‘they don't seem to

¹²² Richard J. Mouw, *Abraham Kuyper: A Short and Personal Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011), 41.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

care about Kingdom activities!’ Kuyper would have been horrified by that statement—as I was. The pastor was equating church and Kingdom, as if the two terms were interchangeable. Kuyper would urge business people to see their places of work as providing important opportunities for Kingdom service.”¹²⁵ Abraham Kuyper embodied this all-of-life service to the king; he not only taught theology, he founded a university, two newspapers, started a political party, and became the Prime Minister of the Netherlands.

Calling the Christian’s work for the sake of cultural influence “kingdom service” is what makes anabaptists like Scot McKnight uncomfortable. McKnight has no problem with the Kuyperian notion of influencing culture in the various spheres, “The Christian’s calling is to serve God and in so doing to influence each sphere toward the kingdom of God, efforts which will both strengthen each sphere and simultaneously prevent the government from extending its reach and control...When individual Christians work within the confines of a given sphere to make the rule of Christ visible, they are in the kingdom and doing kingdom work.”¹²⁶ However, he has issues with the Kuyperian concept of “Sphere Sovereignty,” for it reduces the church to just one of many spheres in society that God rules over, where his Anabaptist view sees the church totally separate from all the spheres in the world. The church is the kingdom of God, while everything else are parts of the kingdoms of the world in rebellion to the king. Anabaptists like Scot McKnight find problems with the Christian mission being defined as “Christ the

¹²⁵ Ibid, 57.

¹²⁶ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, 233.

transformer of culture” (as H. Richard Niebuhr called it),¹²⁷ worrying that this ultimately leads into sliding toward Constantinian Christendom, for they see all attempts to change culture as naturally devolving toward political means. “The Christian influence theory is a kind of Constantinianism. Insider talk calls it ‘salt and light,’ but in the public sector it is called working for the common good, and sometimes it is called ‘kingdom work.’ Ironically, in calling social agitation for Christian values in the public sector ‘kingdom work,’ the Christian joins hands with Constantinianism itself, for it equates ‘kingdom’ with ‘state.’ Winning in the Christian influence theory is getting the state to back up the Christian voice.”¹²⁸ McKnight warns that a Kuypertian view, reflecting Niebuhr’s “Christ transforming culture,” has evolved into something akin to liberation theology, which separates “kingdom work” from Christ’s church. “The transformation approach pointed to a biblical reality: the cosmic reign of God... The social is profoundly important to the Bible's sense of kingdom, but the social dimension of salvation has become a totalizing force in much kingdom thinking today.”¹²⁹ What he sees in Kuypertianism today is a tendency toward a social gospel, where the kingdom of God is about changing the world. “One wonders at times if kingdom theology for many is religious language used to baptize what to most other observers is merely good actions done by decent people for the common good.”¹³⁰

¹²⁷ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 190.

¹²⁸ McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy*, 217.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 254.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 254.

Even Kuyperians have voiced this concern that twists any good deed into something that would be characterized as “kingdom,” as evidenced by what James K. A. Smith wrote concerning himself and other neocalvinists. He stated, “In strange, often unintended ways, the pursuit of ‘justice,’ shalom, and a ‘holistic’ gospel can have its own secularizing effect. What begins as a Gospel-motivated concern for justice can turn into a naturalized fixation on justice in which God never appears. And when that happens, ‘justice’ becomes something else altogether—an idol, a way to effectively naturalize the gospel, flattening it to a social amelioration project in which the particularity of Jesus as the revelation of God becomes strangely absent.”¹³¹

What George Eldon Ladd (representing the Reformed side) and Scot McKnight (representing the Anabaptist side) both do not consider is that perhaps the biblical concept of “kingdom” can have both a particular and a universal definition. Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke writes,

“The Bible bears witness to two forms of God's kingdom: a universal kingdom and a particular kingdom. By God's universal kingdom is meant the activity of God (*‘elohim*: ‘the transcendent, omnipotent Creator and Sustainer of all things’) in exercising his sovereignty over all things... By God's particular kingdom is meant God's activity in exercising his authority over his subjects who, out of their faith and love for him, serve only him...

Considering these two aspects of God's kingdom, we see that there is a twofold emphasis on God's kingship: he is King of all the earth (2 Kings 19:15; Isa. 6:5; Jer. 46:18; Pss. 29:10; 99:1-4) and of his chosen people in particular (Ex. 15:18; Num. 23:21; Deut. 33:5; Isa. 43:15). God allows Satan a limited, but powerful, rule over his universal kingdom to display God's own spiritual glory through his chosen people (Es. 6:4). The cosmos, since its creation, displays God's incommunicable qualities—his eternal power and divine nature (Rom. 1:20)—but

¹³¹ James K.A. Smith, “Naturalizing ‘Shalom’: Confessions of a Kuyperian Secularist,” *Comment*, June 28, 2013, accessed July 24, 2017, <http://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/3993/naturalizing-shalom-confessions-of-a-kuyperian-secularist/>.

not his communicable attributes, such as his justice to all and his grace, mercy, patience, and reliable kindness to his chosen people (cf. Ex. 34:6).”¹³²

The universal rule of God is evident when Scripture proclaims that “God is the King of all the earth.”¹³³ “The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.”¹³⁴ Even Nebuchadnezzar was forced to acknowledge that “the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.”¹³⁵ But at the same time, Israel was called out of the world to be the particular manifestation of God’s kingdom. Upon their rescue from bondage in Egypt, God told them, “If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”¹³⁶ And this designation is carried over to apply to the New Testament church, for the people of God there are called “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”¹³⁷ Jesus is both the “the ruler of kings on earth” who also loves the particular people of the church, for he “has freed us from our

¹³² Bruce K. Waltke, “The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament: Definitions and Story,” in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 50, 51.

¹³³ Psalm 47:7.

¹³⁴ Psalm 103:19.

¹³⁵ Daniel 4:25.

¹³⁶ Exodus 19:5-6.

¹³⁷ 1 Peter 2:9.

sins by his blood” and “made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father,” and God the Father is to receive “glory and dominion forever and ever.”¹³⁸

If there are indeed two interconnected but different conceptions of “kingdom” in the Bible, it explains why Christians in the particular kingdom (both personally and in the community of the church) have certain callings within the particular sphere of the church and how they are also to have other extended callings in the culture as well (i.e., their call to do what they must to participate in God’s mission to redeem everything in the world). If God is the king of both his people and the entirety of the cosmos, then this creates all sorts of callings or vocations for the one submitted to that lordship, both inside and outside the church community. As Greg Allison writes, “The church lives the reality of the inaugurated kingdom by seeking to advance that kingdom wherever the church’s members—the citizens of the kingdom—live, work, and play: in neighborhoods, workplaces, governmental agencies, financial establishments, sports programs, and other institutions and structures. Specifically, the church takes seriously the so-called ‘cultural mandate’ (Gen. 1:28), or the commission enjoined upon all human beings to engage in civilization-building as vice-regents of the King. Accordingly, the church prepares redeemed ‘civilian citizens’ to participate well in human endeavors such as politics, business, the arts, medicine and health care, athletics, science and technology, farming, and economics.”¹³⁹ Patrick Schreiner agrees, writing, “If the mission of the church is

¹³⁸ Revelation 1:6.

¹³⁹ Greg R. Allison, “The Kingdom and the Church,” in *The Kingdom of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 200.

reduced to intellectual assent of a sovereign God but does not mold how we use our hands and feet, then the church and the kingdom become a monastery rather than a world-forming force. The kingdom of God is the mission of God, and we must not limit this mission.”¹⁴⁰

The Mission and the Restoration of Shalom

Also significant in the John 20 passage is that the risen Jesus twice says to his disciples “Peace be with you” before commissioning them. The Greek word, *eirēnē*, corresponds to the Hebrew word, *shalom*. “Seldom do we find in the Old Testament a word which to the same degree as *shalom* can bear a common use, and yet can also be filled with the concentrated religious content far above the level of the average conception.”¹⁴¹ Cornelius Plantinga Jr. offers this definition of *shalom*:

“The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets called *shalom*. We call it ‘peace,’ but it means far more than just peace of mind or cease-fire between enemies... (it) means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, all under the arch of God’s love. *Shalom*, in other words, is the way things are supposed to be.”¹⁴²

When looked through this lens, the mission of God is to reverse the Fall’s destruction of *shalom* by way of inaugurating the kingdom of God through his Son. “(Isaiah) envisions a day when God’s chastened people will return to the land and be

¹⁴⁰ Schreiner, *The Kingdom of God and the Glory of the Cross*, 21.

¹⁴¹ Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 2:402.

¹⁴² Plantinga Jr., *Engaging God’s World*, 14-15.

governed justly by the Prince of Peace. This fighter for shalom will not only restore proper order to society but also remove the debilitating sin of its members by suffering in their place. In the words of Isaiah, the coming Messiah ‘was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace (*shalom*) was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.’ This is fulfilled in the person of Jesus, as the Christmas hymn *Joy to the World* puts it, “No more let sins and sorrow grow; Nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow; Far as the curse is found.”¹⁴³ The kingdom of God is both particular to his people yielded to his will and universal to bring blessing to all nations. It is particular because, as Ross Hastings states, “as communities of the presence of the risen Christ, churches should be communities that experience and express *shalom*.”¹⁴⁴ This *shalom* is also missional, according to Hastings, because it is the divine mission to reconcile all of creation and humanity to their proper relatedness to God, “And that begins with the new humanity already reconciled, and disseminates from there.”¹⁴⁵ As the people of God experiences and expresses the *shalom* that comes from God, the people of the world are blessed. The paradigm for this is found in Jeremiah 29 when God sent a letter to the Israelites who had been carried away to Babylon. God commanded them to “seek the shalom of the city to which I have exiled you, and pray on its behalf to the LORD, for in its shalom there will

¹⁴³ Isaac Watts, *Joy to the World* (1719).

¹⁴⁴ Hastings, *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West*, 127.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 128.

be shalom for you.”¹⁴⁶ “The exiles had a task—a mission no less—even in the midst of the city of their enemies. And that task was to seek the welfare of that city and to pray for the blessing of YHWH upon it. So they were not only to be the *beneficiaries* of God’s promise to Abraham...they were also to be the *agents* of God’s promise to Abraham that through his descendants the nations would be blessed.”¹⁴⁷

Summary

To understand what God’s mission is for his people, we need to reflect more on the first definition of “mission” from Merriam-Webster: “a specific task with which a person or a group is charged.” What is the specific task (or tasks) which God has charged to his people? We have determined that, according to the Gospels, the “mission” of God’s people is to be sent ones as modeled by Jesus as the sent one. Jesus was sent to do nothing other than the mission of God in the world. Thus, the people of God are also sent to do the mission of God in the world. Christopher Wright states, “We have to go one step further back and ask, Whose mission is it anyway? And of course, the answer to that has to be—it is the mission of God. God himself has a mission. God has a purpose and goal for his whole creation...All our mission flows from the prior mission of God.”¹⁴⁸ There needs to me a more comprehensive and multi-faceted definition of the mission of God’s people than merely evangelism, as important as that is. And, on the other hand, the

¹⁴⁶ Jeremiah 29:7.

¹⁴⁷ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God*, 99-100.

¹⁴⁸ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People: A Biblical Theology of the Church’s Mission* (Grand Rapids, IL: Zondervan, 2010), 24.

definition of mission cannot be reduced to humanitarian work in the name of Christ, as important as that is. “We must not prostitute our humanitarian work, only serving the poor so we can tell them about Jesus, yet we must not be satisfied until our friends are rescued from all suffering, especially the eternal kind.”¹⁴⁹

Central to David Bosch’s missiology was the *missio Dei*. “This notion helped him (Bosch) to articulate the conviction that neither the church nor any other human agent can ever be considered as the author or bearer of mission...Bosch states that mission is primarily and ultimately the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world; a ministry in which the church is privileged to participate.”¹⁵⁰ According to Christopher Wright, the *missio Dei* is “the story of how God in his sovereign love has purposed to bring the sinful world of his fallen creation to the redeemed world of his new creation...It is a vast, comprehensive project of cosmic salvation.”¹⁵¹ If this is the case, then those who insist that the mission of God’s people must be more than the salvation of individual souls are correct. The mission of God’s people is to join in God’s mission to save the entire cosmos. “The Bible presents itself to us fundamentally as a narrative at one level, but a grand metanarrative at another. It begins with the God of purpose in creation; moves on to the conflict and problem generated by human rebellion against that purpose; spends most of its narrative journey

¹⁴⁹ Michael E. Wittmer, *Becoming Worldly Saints: Can You Serve Jesus and Still Enjoy Your Life?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 34.

¹⁵⁰ Tiina Ahonen, “Antedating Missional Church: David Bosch’s Views on the Missionary Nature of the Church and on the Missionary Structure of the Congregation,” *Svensk Missionstidskrift* 92, no. 4 (January 1, 2004): 579.

¹⁵¹ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 46.

in the story of God's redemptive purposes being worked out on the stage of human history; finishes beyond the horizon of its own history with the eschatological hope of a new creation. This has often been presented as a four-point narrative: *creation, fall, redemption, and future hope.*"¹⁵²

This is in stark contrast to those in evangelical circles who insist that the mission must solely be focused on fall and redemption, as Köstenberger and O'Brien do when they state, "There was no 'mission' in the Garden of Eden and there will be no 'mission' in the new heavens and the new earth (though the results of 'mission' will be evident)...Mission is necessitated by humanity's fall into sin and need for a Saviour, and is made possible only by the saving initiative of God in Christ."¹⁵³ If, as Christopher Wright insists, the mission begins in the Creation account of Genesis 1 and 2 and comes to fruition in the "future hope," then Köstenberger and O'Brien have truncated the mission.

While the salvation for individuals accomplished on the cross by Christ is the climax of the story, it is not the whole of the story. This is the value of looking at the whole of the grand narrative to identify the mission of God and thus the mission of God's people. A holistic definition of the mission of God's people pushes us to define it beyond evangelism or merely social action. It pushes the mission into every sphere of human endeavor. It takes into account not only the Great Commission to make disciples,¹⁵⁴ the

¹⁵² C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God*, 63-64.

¹⁵³ Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 251.

¹⁵⁴ Matthew 18:16-20

Great Commandment to love God and love others,¹⁵⁵ and the commission to be sent as Jesus has been sent,¹⁵⁶ but also brings into view a wider, more robust understanding of seeking first the kingdom of God¹⁵⁷ and praying, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”¹⁵⁸ It also takes seriously Christians’ identification as being salt and light,¹⁵⁹ the commands to bless the nations,¹⁶⁰ to seek the welfare (shalom) of the city,¹⁶¹ and the many commands to do good,¹⁶² and to fulfil the reason God created a new people that would be zealous for good works.¹⁶³ All of life, then, is meant to be participation in the mission of God. If the mission of God is just evangelism, then “what about the rest of life? What about the rest of the ‘world?’ – the world of work, the public arena, the world of business, education, politics, sports, and the like? In what sense is that world the arena of the mission of God’s people, and what does such mission consist of? Is it only the moments of evangelistic opportunity in that world, or can our work itself

¹⁵⁵ Mark 12:28-34

¹⁵⁶ John 20:21

¹⁵⁷ Matthew 6:33

¹⁵⁸ Matthew 6:10

¹⁵⁹ Matthew 5:13-16

¹⁶⁰ Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:8

¹⁶¹ Jeremiah 29:7

¹⁶² Luke 6:27; Galatians 6:9-10; Ephesians 2:10; Hebrews 13:16; 1 Peter 2:15-20

¹⁶³ Titus 2:14

participate in God’s mission?”¹⁶⁴ Since the mission of God’s people is directly tied to the vocations of God’s people, this is where this study will go next.

Theology of Vocation

Darrell Cosden warns, “Any understanding of mission that fails to grasp that in itself human work is fundamental to God’s purpose (the mission of God or the kingdom of God) for us and creation will be theologically flawed.”¹⁶⁵ As many of the theologians cited in the previous section advocate, the way that Christians participate in the *missio Dei* is in and through their vocations. The purpose of this study is to discover how pastors lead congregants to participate in the mission God has for his people through their vocations. Vocation (or calling) includes, but cannot be reduced to, a person’s occupation, their nine-to-five job, their career. “Scripture teaches that our work is about more than financial remuneration, making a profit, economic self-interest, or career advancement.”¹⁶⁶ However, work from which one receives a paycheck usually takes up a vast majority of a person’s time and energy. Presuming a 40-hour work week, it is estimated that an average employed person will end up spending at least 90,000 hours of his or her lifetime at work.¹⁶⁷ That is a conservative estimate, since Gallup reports that “adults employed full time in the U.S. report working an average of 47 hours per week,

¹⁶⁴ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 28.

¹⁶⁵ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 130.

¹⁶⁶ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 124.

¹⁶⁷ Jessica Pryce-Jones, *Happiness at Work: Maximizing Your Psychological Capital for Success* (Carmel, IN: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 13.

almost a full workday longer than what a standard five-day, 9-to-5 schedule entails. In fact, half of all full-time workers indicate they typically work more than 40 hours, and nearly four in 10 say they work at least 50 hours.”¹⁶⁸ In order to determine a theology of vocation, we will define the words “Vocation” or “Calling,” we will explore how a theology of vocation differs from the Christian platonic worldview, we will determine the role of the Holy Spirit in callings, we will look closely at how the story of the gospel (creation, fall, redemption, consummation) illuminates the concept of vocation, and we will look at the role the church plays in empowering people for vocation.

Vocation / Calling

The word *vocation* comes from the Latin *vocatio* (summons), from *vocare* (to call).¹⁶⁹ Therefore, a vocation is a calling. In the modern mindset, people often say they are “choosing their vocation,” but this is a misnomer if the word *vocation* means *calling*. If there is a calling, there is a caller other than the individual seeking to understand his or her vocation.

R. Paul Stevens explains the biblical concept of vocation/call. “‘Call’ (*Qara*) language in the Old Testament is used primarily for the people of God who are summoned to participate in God's grand purpose for the world. It is a call to salvation, a call to holiness and a call to service. In the New Testament it is the same. ‘Call’ (*kaleo*

¹⁶⁸ Gallup, Inc., “The ‘40-Hour’ Workweek Is Actually Longer -- by Seven Hours,” Gallup.com, accessed May 22, 2018, <http://news.gallup.com/poll/175286/hour-workweek-actually-longer-seven-hours.aspx>.

¹⁶⁹ “Vocation, Definition,” Free Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed February 27, 2015, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vocation>.

and *klesis*) is used for the invitation to salvation through discipleship to Christ, the summons to holy corporate and personal living, as well as the call to serve.”¹⁷⁰ Os Guinness agrees with Stevens on this vocational meaning of call. As a response to the call to people to follow Jesus, Guinness says Jesus “also calls them to other things and tasks: to peace, to fellowship, to eternal life, to suffering, and to service. But deeper even than these particular things, discipleship.” He points to Colossians 3:23, writing, “As Paul wrote the followers of Christ in the little town of Colossae, ‘Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.’”¹⁷¹

Guinness states that a Christian’s call should be understood in terms of a primary calling and a secondary calling. “Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by him, to him, and for him... Our secondary calling, considering who God is as sovereign, is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything, should think, speak, live, and act entirely for him. We can therefore properly say as a matter of secondary calling that we are called to homemaking or to the practice of law or to art history.”¹⁷² Guinness further insists that we understand “the distinction between the individual (or particular) calling and the corporate (or general) calling.”¹⁷³ He means that we have a tendency to merely focus on ourselves when discussing callings, but our individual callings as followers of Christ (like

¹⁷⁰ R. Paul Stevens, *Playing Heaven: Rediscovering Our Purpose as Participants in the Mission of God* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 2006), 23.

¹⁷¹ Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 31.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 31.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 48.

the call to be holy or to be peacemakers) “should complement, not contradict, the corporate calling.”¹⁷⁴

Skye Jethani thinks along the same lines as Guinness but delineates three levels of calling that are particular to Christians. “First, a Christian’s highest calling is to abide in communion with Christ. Second, all Christians also share a set of common callings. These are the many commands of Scripture that apply to all of God’s children in every time and place. These include instructions to love one another, pray for those who persecute you, forgive those who wrong you, give to those in need, honor your father and mother, do not steal, do not covet, do not commit adultery, be prepared to share about your hope in Christ, and hundreds of other commands. Third, each Christian will also have a specific calling that God directs him or her to accomplish...which requires [a Christian] to live in communion with God and discern her call directly. While her specific calling may be blessed and confirmed by members of her community, as Paul and Barnabas experienced in Acts 13, it cannot be discovered without the illuminating role of God’s Spirit in her life.”¹⁷⁵ Os Guinness also makes these distinctions, in what he called “a later, specific calling and our original, ordinary calling,”¹⁷⁶ The original (or ordinary) Christian calling is that which drives a Christian to a “life-purpose and life-task in response to God’s primary call, ‘follow me.’” In contrast, the Christian’s specific calling “refers to those tasks and missions laid on individuals through a direct, specific,

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 48.

¹⁷⁵ Skye Jethani, “Calling All Christians,” *The High Calling*, March 21, 2013, <http://www.thehighcalling.org/faith/calling-all-christians>.

¹⁷⁶ Guinness, *The Call*, 49.

supernatural communication from God.” God gives each Christian the first calling and provides the means to do something for God’s kingdom, having the responsibility to actively participate in some way in God’s mission by being good stewards of what God has given him or her. “The servants in Jesus’ parable of the talents and pounds were assessed according to how they ‘got on with it’ when the master was away. In this sense no follower of Christ is without a calling, for we all have an original calling even if we do not all have a later, specific calling.”¹⁷⁷

Vocation, or calling, is always something beyond cognitive assent to theory. It is activity that puts hands and feet to a Christian’s yielding to the lordship of Christ. Gene Veith wrote, “God works through human beings—indeed He is hidden in human vocations.”¹⁷⁸ Vocation is what humans do, and if humans are to participate in the mission of God, then human work is the means by which that mission is done. As Plantinga puts it, “Because of her enthusiasm for the kingdom, [a Christian] doesn’t merely endorse justice in the world; she hungers and works for it. She doesn’t merely reject cruelty; she hates and fights it. She wants God to make things right in the world, and she wants to enroll in God’s project as if it were her own. She ‘strives first for the kingdom’ in order to act on her passion. In short, she is a person with a calling. She has been elected to be a follower of Jesus, which means she has been elected to serve the kingdom of God. A Christian’s main vocation is to become a prime citizen of the

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 49.

¹⁷⁸ Gene Edward Veith, *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 33.

kingdom of God — and this is true of every Christian, of artists and engineers as well as ministers and evangelists.”¹⁷⁹ Biblically, God’s mission in the world is primarily carried out in and through what humans do. Certainly, there are times when God directly and/or miraculously does something or one of his angels carries out his will, but God has ordained that his kingdom come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven by the means of human vocation. Christians are therefore called to do many things for the sake of God’s mission and kingdom. Jesus said, “Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”¹⁸⁰ As Christians abide in Christ in communion with the Holy Spirit, they are able to discern their vocations by assessing the world around them and understanding who they are as God’s children.

Every aspect of life as a disciple of Jesus Christ is to be impacted by his lordship. Therefore, all that we do is meant to be participation in God’s mission in the world. Remember that Os Guinness defines calling as “the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to his summons and service.”¹⁸¹ Guinness makes it clear: *everything* is wrapped up in his concept of calling. In the concept of “vocation” or “calling,” the very purpose of humanity in general and of Christians in particular is found. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “So

¹⁷⁹ Plantinga Jr., *Engaging God’s World*, 108.

¹⁸⁰ John 15:5 (ESV)

¹⁸¹ Guinness, *The Call*, 29.

whether you eat or drink or *whatever you do*, do it all for the glory of God.”¹⁸² In his book *Visions of Vocation*, Steven Garber makes the case that Christians who live examined lives will know both the world around them and they will know themselves, and are therefore implicated and forced to answer a very important question: “Knowing what you know about yourself and the world, what are you going to do?”¹⁸³ Christians are called by God to do something, something out of love, for the sake of the world. Garber offers story after story of politicians, homemakers, moviemakers, entrepreneurs, pastors, economists, teachers, doctors, lawyers, mothers and fathers being intentional in the way they participate in the *missio Dei* – “Ordinary people in ordinary places, each one is a story of a life lived as a vocation.”¹⁸⁴ This is the “everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have” of which Guinness wrote. Garber writes, “The word vocation is a rich one, having to address the wholeness of life, the range of relationships and responsibilities. Work, yes, but also families, and neighbors, and citizenship, locally and globally—all of this and more is seen as vocation, that to which I am called as a human being, living my life before the face of God. It is never the same word as occupation, just as calling is never the same word as career. Sometimes, by grace, the words and the realities they represent do overlap, even significantly; sometimes, in the incompleteness of life in a fallen world, there is not much overlap at all.”¹⁸⁵ Gene Edward

¹⁸² 1 Corinthians 10:31, NIV, emphasis mine.

¹⁸³ Steven Garber, *Visions of Vocation: Common Grace for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), 51.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 168.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 11.

Veith agrees, writing, “The doctrine of vocation amounts to a comprehensive doctrine of the Christian life, having to do with faith and sanctification, grace and good works... It transfigures ordinary, everyday life with the presence of God.”¹⁸⁶ Guinness reminds us that “we need to remember that calling has multiple dimensions and includes our relationships. Martin Luther, for example, was among other things husband to his wife, father to his daughter, pastor to his congregation, professor to his students, and subject to his prince.”¹⁸⁷

Therefore, vocation or calling is not just one aspect of human and Christian life; it is not just a minor part of what it means to be a redeemed human in Jesus Christ. It is the whole of life, the very means by which Christians live out what it means to be human and how they participate with God in his redemption of his creation. John Calvin wrote, “The Lord enjoins every one of us, in all the actions of life, to have respect to our own calling.”¹⁸⁸ As Steven Garber says, “Vocation is integral, not incidental, to the *missio Dei*.”¹⁸⁹ Misolav Volf affirms this as well. “All Christians have several gifts of the Spirit. Since most of these gifts can be exercised only through work, work must be considered a central aspect of Christian living.”¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Veith, *God at Work*, 17.

¹⁸⁷ Guinness, *The Call*, 50.

¹⁸⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 1997), 3.10.6.

¹⁸⁹ Garber, *Visions of Vocation*, 18.

¹⁹⁰ Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 124.

Secular/Sacred Dualism: The Foe of a Theology of Vocation

Volf asks “But what does the Spirit of God have to do with the mundane work of human beings? According to most Protestant theology, very little.”¹⁹¹ He blames this on two theological decisions: “First, the activity of the Spirit was limited to the sphere of salvation, and second, the locus of the present realization of salvation was limited to the human spirit.”¹⁹² There is, therefore, an assumption that salvation is limited to the spiritual lives of humans and not all-encompassing for the whole of reality, including the material things that humans do physically in the world. Guinness states that the “everyone, everywhere, and in everything” characteristic of calling is often undermined by what he calls the “Catholic distortion,” “a form of dualism that elevates the spiritual at the expense of the secular.”¹⁹³ Martin Luther was the first to identify this distortion. He wrote, “It is pure invention that pope, bishop, priests and monks are to be called the ‘spiritual estate’ while princes, lords, artisans, and farmers the ‘temporal estate.’ This is indeed a piece of deceit and hypocrisy. Yet no one need be intimidated by it, and for this reason: all Christians are truly of the ‘spiritual estate,’ and there is no difference among them except that of office.”¹⁹⁴

Protestants, however, “cannot afford to be smug. For one thing, countless Protestants have succumbed to the Catholic distortion... Ponder, for example, the fallacy

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 102.

¹⁹² Ibid, 102.

¹⁹³ Guinness, *The Call*, 32.

¹⁹⁴ Martin Luther, *Three Treatises* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1970), 12.

of the contemporary Protestant term *full-time Christian service*—as if those not working for churches or Christian organizations are only part-time in the service of Christ. Protestant confusion about calling...has led to a "Protestant distortion" that is even worse. This is a form of dualism in a secular direction that not only elevates the secular at the expense of the spiritual but also cuts it off from the spiritual altogether."¹⁹⁵ According to Brian Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, the reason for this distortion of the biblical worldview can be summed up in one word: "dualism." "Dualism is a split-vision worldview. It separates reality into two fundamentally distinct categories: holy and profane, sacred and secular...In the place of a biblical understanding of the kingdom of God as God's rule over all creation, the kingdom is identified with what has been called our spiritual life,"¹⁹⁶ things like prayer, Bible study, church attendance, evangelism, etc. Walsh and Middleton say that the notion of "full-time Christian service" that Guinness identified will continue to persist as long as this dualistic Christian worldview is propagated. Not only that, "even when we reject this notion of full-time service and say that all Christians are full-time servants of the Lord, an unconscious dualism may still constrain us. We often mean that we are all called to evangelize, no matter what situation we find ourselves in. In this case submission to Christ may still be limited to a so-called spiritual activity that is unrelated to the actual work of a secular occupation...Most of us are Christians and something else; we do not engage in our daily tasks integrally as

¹⁹⁵ Guinness, *The Call*, 32.

¹⁹⁶ Brian J Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 95.

Christians.”¹⁹⁷ In diagnosing the gap between Christian theology and our everyday lives, Robert Banks provides a list of several problems that stem from dualism. Among them are: “Few of us apply or know how to apply our belief to our work, or lack of work. We only make minimal connections between our faith and our spare time activities. We have little sense of a Christian approach to regular activities like domestic chores. Our everyday concerns receive little attention in the church. Only occasionally do professional theologians address routine activities.”¹⁹⁸

The dualism between that which is sacred and that which is secular can be traced back to the Greek philosopher Plato. “Foundational to all Platonic thought is its dualism, the distinction...between unchanging ideals (‘forms’) and the world of the unstable and changing (‘matter’). Heaven is the true and ultimate reality, and earth is a derived reality—sometimes seen as an illusion, but always viewed as of lesser value. At its worst, Platonism viewed the visible world as ‘the homeland of evil,’ while it saw the world of ideas as the goal of human life and morality. Following Platonic logic, we must deny our creaturely life in the world and strive for the heavenly life of permanence, stability and bliss.”¹⁹⁹ N. T. Wright adds, “The Platonic strain entered Christian thinking early on, not least with the phenomenon known as Gnosticism... The Gnostics believed, like Plato,

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 97.

¹⁹⁸ Robert Banks, *Redeeming the Routines: Bringing Theology to Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 50-65.

¹⁹⁹ Walsh and Middleton, *The Transforming Vision*, 108.

that the material world was an inferior and dark place, evil in its very existence.”²⁰⁰

Gnostics believed that people could be relieved of this inferior plane of existence and freed from their disgusting material bodies through secret knowledge (Greek, gnosis) which “would enable them to enter into a spiritual existence in which the material world would no longer count.”²⁰¹ Not only did the heretical Gnostics embrace Plato’s philosophy, it also subtly crept into the true church. This dualism took root in Christianity in the “Catholic distortion” that Os Guinness critiqued, especially through the influence of Thomas Aquinas. Michael Wittmer states, “Plato’s spirit-body dualism significantly impacted the early church...It encouraged the more zealous types to forsake the physical world entirely, or as much as they could, and become lonely monks intent on nothing but their individual spiritual growth. And it implies that physical pleasures, such as the act of marriage and the enjoyment of material goods, are at worst evil and at best distractions from the most important things in life”²⁰² According to Herman Bavinck, due to its succumbing to neo-Platonic philosophy the Roman Catholic system created a “contrast between the natural and the supernatural, between the human and the divine, between the terrestrial and the celestial, and within each of these categories a host of gradations. If God is at the center, his creatures gather round him in ever widening circles. Most distant from him is the natural man; then comes the preternatural man; finally the supernatural man. And in the last class there again are all kinds of distinctions and degrees. There are

²⁰⁰ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 88.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, 89.

²⁰² Michael E. Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth: Why Everything You Do Matters to God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 126-127.

clergy and laypersons, monks and ordinary people, precepts and counsels, a lower and a higher morality. On the highest level stands the mystic who by meditation, asceticism, and prayer already here on earth achieves contemplation. And above the humans stand the angels, in turn organized in all sorts of rankings. Everything tends to rise upward toward God in ever increasing proximity to him. The soul's fusion with God is the highest bliss...It was against this Neo-Platonic Areopagite philosophy that the Reformation, taking its stand in Scripture, took action.”²⁰³ But as Guinness pointed out, this “Catholic distortion” morphed into the current “Protestant distortion” that emerged especially in the rise of fundamentalism in the early 20th Century. Two popular 1930s folk hymns by Albert Brumley demonstrate this distortion that the material life is meant to be shed for the more favorable spiritual life to come. In “I’ll Fly Away,” this life will end with a greater destination coming: “Some glad morning when this life is o’er, / I’ll fly away. / To a home on God's celestial shore, / I’ll fly away. / I’ll fly away, Oh Glory / I’ll fly away. / When I die, Hallelujah, by and by / I’ll fly away.”²⁰⁴ N. T. Wright cites another Brumley song (“This World is Not My Home”) in his critique of Christian Platonism, “Most Western Christians—and most Western non-Christians for that matter—in fact suppose that Christianity was committed to at least a soft version of Plato’s position. A good many Christian hymns and poems wander off unthinkingly in the direction of Gnosticism. The ‘just passing through’ spirituality (as in the spiritual ‘This is not my

²⁰³ Herman Bavinck, *In the Beginning: Foundations of Creation Theology*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 176.

²⁰⁴ Albert E. Brumley, “I’ll Fly Away” (Hartford Music Co., Albert E. Brumley & sons, 1960, 1932).

home, / I'm just a'passin' through'), though it has some affinities to classical Christianity, encourages precisely a Gnostic attitude.”²⁰⁵ Walsh and Middleton identify some specific vocations that are harmed by this dualism. There are Christians who work as doctors and farmers primarily as the means for evangelism, failing to develop a truly Christian alternative to the world's way of doing medicine or farming. There are business people who do not have an integrated view of their work as participation in God's kingdom, limiting the application of their Christian faith to either running an explicitly Christian business like a bookstore, working ethically while on the job as a “witness,” or making money for the sake of giving it away to their church or to missionaries. In this paradigm, faith at work is limited to evangelism, ethics, and ministry support. “Seldom does the Christian ask foundational economic questions: What is the purpose of business enterprise? What is the role of profits? Will my particular enterprise be both ecologically sensitive and socially responsible? There are Christians who are musicians, but feel constrained to composing only music that is perceived as explicitly ‘spiritual.’ These well-meaning Christians are merely adding faith to their vocation rather than letting their faith transform their vocation.”²⁰⁶ John Stott's assessment of modern evangelicalism sounds very similar to Bavinck's criticism of Catholicism: Stott wrote, “We often give the impression that if a young Christian man is really keen for Christ he will undoubtedly become a foreign missionary, that if he is not quite as keen as that he will stay at home and become a pastor, that if he lacks the dedication to be a pastor, he will no doubt serve

²⁰⁵ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 90.

²⁰⁶ Walsh and Middleton, *The Transforming Vision*, 98.

as a doctor or teacher, while those who end up in social work or the media or (worst of all) in politics are not far removed from serious backsliding.”²⁰⁷

In a book entitled *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, John C. Knapp agrees and spells out what he believes will be the results. “Membership and attendance are eroding in the United States and other Western countries, even as congregations stubbornly invest their hopes and resources in traditional Sunday programs. Church priorities continue to tilt heavily toward private faith and away from ministries that might equip believers for a robust public faith...In failing to bridge faith and work, the church has failed itself and society with far-reaching consequences.”²⁰⁸ Gabe Lyons sees the next generation of Christians rejecting this dualism. “While some may be called to full-time religious work, (the “next Christians”) accept that many Christians should simply work to restore the needs right under their noses. They’ve grown tired of being regarded as second-class Christians and want to be empowered on mission right where they are.”²⁰⁹ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch write, “Because the missional church, by its very nature, exists organically within its host community, it has had to abandon Western Christianity’s dualistic worldview in favor of whole-of-life spirituality.”²¹⁰

Dorothy Sayers, a British writer and poet who associated with Inklings C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, believed that this was no small matter. In her 1942 essay,

²⁰⁷ Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 33-34.

²⁰⁸ John C Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople: And What Can Be Done about It* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2012), xiii.

²⁰⁹ Gabe Lyons, *The Next Christians: Seven Ways You Can Live the Gospel and Restore the World* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Books, 2012), 112.

²¹⁰ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 21.

“Why Work?”, she wrote, “In nothing has the Church so lost Her hold on reality as in Her failure to understand and respect the secular vocation. She has allowed work and religion to become separate departments, and is astonished to find that, as a result, the secular work of the world is turned to purely selfish and destructive ends, and that the greater part of the world’s intelligent workers have become irreligious, or at least, uninterested in religion.”²¹¹ This is contrary to the Reformers’ view of vocation. Gene Veith summed up Martin Luther’s position when he wrote, “The priesthood of all believers did not make everyone into church workers; rather it turned every kind of work into a sacred calling.”²¹² Gerard Manley Hopkins sums up by saying, “To lift up the hands in prayer gives God glory, but a man with a dungfork in his hand, a woman with a slop-pail, give him glory too. He is so great that all things give him glory if you mean they should.”²¹³

The sacred/secular dualism also harms the efficacy of evangelism. Lesslie Newbigin believed that the plausibility structure found in our western pluralist society is one where “facts” are believed to be that which is verifiable according to the scientific method, while “values” are wholly private and unverifiable. “This is the operative plausibility structure of our modern world.”²¹⁴ Faith, for many in our culture, is a private

²¹¹ Dorothy Sayers, “Why Work?,” in *Letters to a Diminished Church: Passionate Arguments for the Relevance of Christian Doctrine* (Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 131.

²¹² Veith, *God at Work*, 19.

²¹³ Gerard Manley Hopkins, “The Principle or Foundation,” in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Major Works*, ed. Catherine Phillips (Oxford University Press, 2002), 292.

²¹⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 10-16.

thing having little to do with the secular world around us. What they need to see is something tangible that creates a plausibility structure for hearing the truth of Jesus Christ. As J. Gresham Machen once wrote, “It should be ours to create, so far as we can, with the help of God, those favourable conditions for the reception of the gospel.”²¹⁵ The apostle Peter told us to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”²¹⁶ This presupposes that people are seeing Christians living in a manner that conveys “hope,” that breaks down the presupposition that there is a divide between private faith and the secular world.

Another example of the sacred/secular dualism that pervades evangelical Christian circles is found in the way we presume what it means to do “good works.” I’ve read article after article on “good works” and have found very little specifics as to what is meant by the phrase. The meaning is merely presumed by the words themselves. One dictionary defines it this way: “In contrast to ‘works of the flesh,’ the Bible teaches of ‘good works.’ Such acts can be described as acts of Christian duty and piety, as evidence of faith in Jesus Christ.”²¹⁷ As anecdotal evidence, I’ve asked over 20 Christians what is meant by the phrase and have received one of two answers: (1) works of benevolence and kindness that witnesses to God’s love and (1) works of evangelism. For some reason, evangelicals have imbued a special spiritual dimension into “good works.” The presumption is that in order for something to be “good works” it must have a blatant

²¹⁵ J. Gresham Machen, “Christianity and Culture,” in *Christianity, Education, and the State*, ed. John W. Robbins (Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1987), 51.

²¹⁶ 1 Peter 3:15.

²¹⁷ Allen C. Myers, “Works,” in *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 1065.

spiritual component. However, a look at the Greek work for “work” in the phrase “good works” reveals that there is nothing significantly “spiritual” about it. A study of the semantic range of the Greek words for “works” in Louw and Nida’s *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* shows that the words merely mean physical work – *ergon* means “that which one normally does—‘work, task,’ and *koros* means “to engage in hard work.”²¹⁸ *Ergon* is the same word found in Ephesians 2:9-10 where we learn that our work is important, but that it is not the means of salvation, “for it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”²¹⁹ If modern English translations were to render the phrase as “good work” (work in English already has a plural connotation to it without adding the “s”), we might start to see that all of our work is meant to be for the good.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

The problem of dualism is that what is perceived as the “spiritual” life becomes disconnected to the actual work humans do as participation in the mission of God. Miroslav Volf contends, “The sphere of the new creation cannot be tied to the ‘inner man.’ Because the whole creation is the Spirit’s sphere of operation, the Spirit is not only

²¹⁸ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 514.

²¹⁹ Ephesians 2:9-10.

the Spirit of religious experience but also the Spirit of worldly engagement.”²²⁰ Volf’s theology of vocation centers on the Holy Spirit’s role in the present new creation begun with Christ. He believes that our understanding of “Spiritual Gifts” needs to be broadened. “One should not define *charisma* so narrowly as to include in the term only ecclesiastical activities.”²²¹ Churches often give “Spiritual Gifts Tests” to their congregants with the intention of helping people find their role in the local church. For instance, LifeWay Christian Resources has a downloadable “Spiritual Gifts Survey” authored by Gene Wilkes. In its introduction, he writes, “Peter Wagner defines a spiritual gift as ‘a special attribute given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ according to God’s grace for use within the context of the Body.’ I like to use this definition: A spiritual gift is an expression of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers which empowers them to serve the body of Christ, the church.”²²² However, Volf points out that biblically, the *charisms* are not limited to that which is done in the local congregation. After all, he argues, the gift of an evangelist presupposes action outside the Christian fellowship and contributing to the needs of the destitute does not cease to be a *charisma* when it is exercised to non-Christians. We have grown accustomed to calling human skills, abilities, and knowledge (like crafts, poetry, medicine, etc.) “natural,” while we call certain more sensational gifts “supernatural.” Volf maintains that no dichotomy like this is found in the Bible, not in the original Created Order, nor in the New Creation in

²²⁰ Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 110.

²²¹ *Ibid*, 111.

²²² Gene Wilkes, “Discover Your Spiritual Gifts!,” LifeWay, accessed February 23, 2015, http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/files/lwcF_PDF_Discover_Your_Spiritual_Gifts.pdf.

Christ. He says that in spite of the fact that in many churches charismatic gifts are still widely believed to be “extraordinary,” “one of the main points of the Pauline theology of charisms is the overcoming of such a restrictive concentration on the miraculous and extraordinary. For this reason it is of great importance to keep the term charisma as a generic term for both the spectacular and the ordinary.”²²³

Throughout biblical history, there is evidence that humans were spiritually gifted to do work. For instance, Bezalel, Oholiab, and other men were “filled with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts.”²²⁴ God’s gifts of poetry and song were given to various people, as well as the gifts to interpret dreams and to prophesy. God’s gifts to humans are freely given to his people at various times and in varying degrees, as Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good...All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.”²²⁵ A new day had begun to dawn in the person and work of Jesus Christ. When Jesus began his ministry, we read that “Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee”²²⁶ This power healed and cast out demons.²²⁷ Jesus proclaimed that “if it is by the Spirit of God

²²³ Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 112.

²²⁴ Exodus 31:1-11, NIV

²²⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11.

²²⁶ Luke 4:14.

²²⁷ Luke 4:31-41.

that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”²²⁸ But this power not only does these amazing feats, it also does what we would not normally call “supernatural.” This power also anointed Jesus to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.²²⁹ Overcoming injustice is not normally seen as “supernatural,” but it is just as much a part of the New Creation as casting out demons.

One of the great promises concerning the New Creation was given by the prophet Joel. “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit.”²³⁰ Joel says that when the New Creation begins, God’s spirit will be poured out like never before. Peter announced that Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church at Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:16-21. It should be noted, however, that the charismatic gifts that appeared after Pentecost ended up being not only what we might call “supernatural” (tongues, healings, etc.) but they also were rather “natural” as well (teaching, serving, encouraging, etc.).²³¹ In Paul’s economy, no gift was greater than any other (he lists many gifts, from “speaking in

²²⁸ Matthew 12:28.

²²⁹ See Luke 4:15-22.

²³⁰ Joel 2:28-29.

²³¹ See the New Testament lists of gifts found in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 7:7, 12:8-10, 12:28, Ephesians 4:11, and 1 Peter 4:11.

tongues” to “helping”).²³² In fact, he devotes three chapters in his first letter to the Corinthians to make the point.²³³ The foundation for using gifts well, according to Paul, is love: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”²³⁴ Christ died and was risen from the dead to redeem us for a purpose: “to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”²³⁵ The purpose of God gifting his people is so that they can be empowered to do these good works. What makes work “good” is if it is done as a tangible effort to love others.

God has always empowered his people with the gifts they’d need to do good work. So we need to ask, Are the gifts God grants to people in the new creation different from those he granted in the original creation? In the original Creation, God empowered humans with gifts so that they could do their work. Albert M. Wolters believes that “the charismatic gifts are not supernatural at all; rather they belong to the nature of God’s good created earth. They are gifts of the Spirit as genuinely as love, joy, and peace are, but they do not add anything to what God had intended for his earthly creation from the beginning.”²³⁶ Wolters contends that even though *charisms* are introduced in the New Testament, they are not peculiar to the New Testament Church but rather they are the

²³² Paul does say to desire especially the spiritual gift of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14:1, but in the context he is contrasting a gift of prophecy with the gift of speaking in tongues.

²³³ See 1 Corinthians 12-14.

²³⁴ 1 Corinthians 13:1.

²³⁵ Titus 2:14.

²³⁶ Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 105.

redemption of the gifts that God has always intended for humanity. Certainly, in the present age of redemption, the Holy Spirit gives gifts that are new to the age of redemption, those that edify the church and those that proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God, but there are gifts that have other functions as well. Wolters writes, “All human talents and abilities can flourish and blossom under the regenerating and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit to the glory and service of God. When opened up by the Spirit they are all charismatic gifts. This applies to social tact, to a way with children, to a knack for communicating, to mechanical skill, or whatever. There may be degrees of importance or splendor in the gifts, but all alike qualify as ‘charismatic’ and ‘spiritual’ if they are directed to Christ’s redemption, sanctification, and reconciliation.”²³⁷ Therefore, Wolters and Volf are in agreement that the charismatic gifts are a part of God’s intention for the original creation, and all the more in the New Creation that came in Jesus Christ.

Local churches should help believers discover and exercise these gifts in their vocations. This means that the Church needs to take seriously the role of the Holy Spirit in congregants’ discerning of their callings. However, as we have seen, the platonic sacred/secular dualism disconnects the “spiritual” life from the actual work humans do as participation in the mission of God. Also, according to Skye Jethani, the church has done a poor job of helping God’s people hear what the Holy Spirit is calling individuals to do. “In many of our Christian communities there is a functional denial of the Holy Spirit. We may affirm the Spirit as a doctrinal truth, but the reality of his presence is often ignored.

²³⁷ Ibid, 106.

As a result, Christians are not equipped to engage their highest calling (communion with God) or to discern their specific calling (vocation). What remains is the one thing the church can access without the Spirit's presence—the Scripture.”²³⁸ This leads to confusion because the only callings that are proclaimed from pulpits and talked about in Bible studies are those that are common to all Christians, centering on the goal of doing evangelism and living pious lives. While these are certainly biblically mandated for all Christians, “when these callings are untethered from our highest calling (communion with God) or the specific vocations Christ has given to each of his followers, it can do great damage. When this happens, the institutional church’s work soon becomes all-consuming, and many Christians develop a suspicion that the church’s leaders really only care about advancing their institution’s agenda.”²³⁹ The Holy Spirit, then, is empowering believers not only in church-centric activities and not only through spectacular healings and miracles. He is gifting believers so that they can work for the common good as a testimony to the good news of God’s kingdom. Charismatic leader Charlie Self, professor of church history at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, writes, “What if our testimonies included creating jobs as well as physical healing? Will we count being on the local school board as Kingdom service as well as Royal Rangers leadership? What if every church sought the ‘prosperity of the city’ by seeking God about what they can do for the local culture, economy, and safety of the community?... All the spiritual gifts are

²³⁸ Skye Jethani, *Futureville: Discover Your Purpose for Today by Reimagining Tomorrow* (Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson, 2014) 104.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 105.

operational outside the church walls. Opportunities for witness come naturally as we carry out our assigned tasks with excellence and joy.”²⁴⁰

Creation, Fall, Redemption, Future Hope

We will now look at the storyline of the mission of God (as described by Christopher Wright as *creation, fall, redemption, and future hope*) as it relates to a theology of vocation. Cosden writes, “It is often not clear to many leaders, let alone to ordinary church members, how our Christian beliefs in creation and redemption, resurrection and heaven could relate directly to such real-world issues as our work.”²⁴¹

Creation

The first two chapters of the Bible give significant insights into God’s design of how the world and the humans in this world ought to be. It ties directly to the discussion above about the kingdom of God and God’s intention of *shalom* for his creation. God, as the King, creates everything that there is. The pinnacle of the creation are the humans, created in God’s image to be placed in charge of the creation as the King’s vice-regents. They are given authority and the mandate to make something of the world God has created.

²⁴⁰ Charlie Self, “Discipleship for the Other Six Days,” *Enrichment Journal / Assemblies of God*, accessed May 22, 2018, http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/201402/201402_082_Discipleship.cfm.

²⁴¹ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 6.

Image of God

In Genesis chapter 1, we read of God creating the world in six days. In the first three days, God created light, sky and seas, and then land. In the next three days he fills these with their respective inhabitants, sun, moon and stars, then flying creatures and swimming creatures and finally land creatures. In the latter half of the sixth day, God created humanity. In Genesis 1:27-28, we read that humanity was created in the image and likeness of God.

“Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”²⁴²

“The basic thought underlying the words image (*tselem* and *demuth* in Hebrew) is that of likeness; these words tell us that man as he was created was *like God*. Genesis 1:26-28, which describes man's creation in the image of God, does not tell us precisely in what this likeness to God consists... But we should note at the outset that the concept of man as the image or likeness of God tells us that man as he was created was to mirror God and to represent God.”²⁴³ The text of the Bible indicates that there was a purpose for creating humanity as the *imago Dei*, “*so that they may rule.*” According to Gerald Bray, some scholars contend that “the biblical picture reflects the ancient Near Eastern idea of

²⁴² Genesis 1:26–28 (NIV).

²⁴³ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 66-67.

images as statues representing the king and therefore partaking of his authority in some way. If that is true, the designation of Adam as the image of God might mean that he was intended to be God's viceroy on earth."²⁴⁴ J. Richard Middleton's conclusion based on the ancient Near Eastern context in which Genesis was written is that "humanity is dignified with a status and role vis-à-vis the nonhuman creation that is analogous to the status and role of kings in the ancient Near East vis-à-vis their subjects. Genesis 1...thus constitutes a genuine democratization of ancient Near Eastern royal ideology. As *imago Dei*, then, humanity in Genesis 1 is called to be the representative and intermediary of God's power and blessing on earth."²⁴⁵ As Psalm 8 proclaims about the wonder of God's human creatures, "Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet."²⁴⁶ Dallas Willard agrees, adding, "In creating human beings God made them to rule, to reign, to have dominion in a limited sphere. Only so can they be persons."²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ G. L. Bray, "Image of God," ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 576.

²⁴⁵ J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005), 121.

²⁴⁶ Psalm 8:5-6, NASB (New American Standard Version). The Hebrew word *elohim* "should be translated in its plain and regular meaning 'God,' a meaning which it has almost without exception." (H. C. Leupold D.D., *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992).), especially in light of the apparent reference to the creation story of Genesis. Many English translations favor the Septuagint's Greek rendering of the word as "heavenly beings" (ESV) or "angels" (KJV, NIV).

²⁴⁷ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life In God* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 21.

Not only are humans to “rule,” they are also told to do other things. Michael Wittmer explains, “God commanded his freshly minted humans to ‘be fruitful,’ ‘increase in number,’ ‘fill the earth,’ ‘subdue it,’ and ‘rule’ over the rest of creation. These five distinctives to govern and develop the original creation are what theologians call the ‘creation mandate’ or ‘cultural mandate.’ It is the first command God ever gave us, and he has never taken it back.”²⁴⁸ Albert Wolters explains what the cultural mandate entails, writing, “Although God has withdrawn from the work of creation, he has put an image of himself on the earth with a mandate to continue... People must now carry on the work of development: by being fruitful they fill it even more; by subduing it they must form it even more. Mankind, as God’s representatives on earth, carry on where God left off. But this is now to be a human development of the earth. The human race will fill the earth with its own kind, and it will form the earth for its own kind. From now on the development of the created earth will be societal and cultural in nature.”²⁴⁹

Volf also makes the point that humanity’s calling in God’s image can only be fulfilled through work. “The text does not mention work explicitly, but since human beings can fulfill their God-given task only by working, it is obvious that this *locus classicus* of Christian anthropology considers work to be fundamental to human

²⁴⁸ Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*, 124.

²⁴⁹ Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 41-42.

existence.”²⁵⁰ Nelson agrees, writing, “Scripture tells us that the most bedrock answer to the question of why we work is that we were created with work in mind.”²⁵¹

“Work” is a Part of the Good Creation

Genesis 1 does not explicitly use the term “work,” but in the creation account recorded in Genesis 2, the word becomes much more central. In verse 5, the text says that there were two reasons why shrubs and plants had not yet appeared: God had not yet sent rain, and more significantly to our study, “there was no one to work (*“vad*) the ground.”²⁵² “Gen 2:5 indicates clearly that one of the purposes for the creation of *‘ādām*, humankind, was to till (*‘bd*) the ground *before* the Fall. So it was always God's design that humans would work the ground the Lord/God had created in Eden, an inherent religious act when done to fulfill the Creator's purposes.”²⁵³ A second, and very significant use of the word “work” is found in Genesis 2:15, “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to *work* it and *take care of* it.”²⁵⁴ The Hebrew words in the original text of Genesis 2:15 for these English words (work and take care of) are *“vad* and *šamar*. *Šamar* (the second word found at the end of verse 15) means “to

²⁵⁰ Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 127.

²⁵¹ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 22.

²⁵² Genesis 2:5.

²⁵³ Eugene Carpenter, “6268 abd,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 3:304.

²⁵⁴ Genesis 2:15, emphasis mine.

exercise great care over.”²⁵⁵ “It means to treat something (or someone) seriously as worthy of devoted attention... This makes it clear that the main point of our ruling the earth is for *its* benefit, not our own.”²⁵⁶

The first word in Genesis 2:15, “*ʿavad* (also found in verse 5), is translated in a number of ways in English translations: “work” (English Standard Version, New International Version), “tend” (New King James Version, New Living Translation), “till” (New Revised Standard Version), “dress” (King James Version), and “cultivate” (New American Standard Bible). The Hebrew word “*ʿavad* (and its variants) appears 317 times in the Hebrew Old Testament.²⁵⁷ A study of the English translations discovers that the word is translated in various ways, depending on the context. For example, the NIV translates the Hebrew qal verb “*ʿavad*, and the nominative forms ‘*ʿebed* and “*ʿvōdâ*, in these ways:

- During their enslavement in Egypt, “the Israelites groaned in their slavery (“*ʿvōdâ*) and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery (“*ʿvōdâ*) went up to God.”²⁵⁸
- In response to their cry, God gave this command to Moses: “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship (“*ʿavad*) me.”²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 939.

²⁵⁶ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 187.

²⁵⁷ Carpenter, “6268 abd,” 304.

²⁵⁸ Exodus 2:23.

²⁵⁹ Exodus 8:1.

- After the Israelites escaped the Egyptian forces through the Red Sea, “the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant (*‘ebed*).”²⁶⁰
- On Mount Sinai, among God’s Ten Commandments was, “Six days you shall labor (*‘avad*) and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God.”²⁶¹ God reinforces the Sabbath command in Deuteronomy by saying, “Remember that you were slaves (*‘ebed*) in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.”²⁶²
- While in the wilderness, the Levites were appointed to do the ministry of the tabernacle, “fulfilling the obligations of the Israelites by doing the work (*‘avad*) of the tabernacle.”²⁶³ The English Standard Version translates this verse, “as they minister (*‘avad*) at the tabernacle.”²⁶⁴
- Later, Joshua pronounced these words: “Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped (*‘avad*) beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt and serve (*‘avad*) the LORD...But as for me and my household, we will serve (*‘avad*) the LORD.”²⁶⁵

If one word encompasses the concepts all along this spectrum: slavery – work – service – ministry - worship, all these seemingly disparate things share some sort of semantic domain. When we compartmentalize these things into separate categories we are disintegrating that which God sees as a whole. God must want his people to live lives that are totally integrated. All of life is meant to be *‘avad*. This concept is carried over to the New Testament when the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “So, whether you eat

²⁶⁰ Exodus 14:31.

²⁶¹ Exodus 20:9-10.

²⁶² Deuteronomy 5:15.

²⁶³ Numbers 3:8.

²⁶⁴ Numbers 3:8, ESV.

²⁶⁵ Joshua 24:14-15, NIV.

or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”²⁶⁶ According to Paul’s words in Romans, a believer’s entire life, what we do as work or service, both ethically and physically, is to be offered to God “as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”²⁶⁷ He even makes the case, echoing back to the Exodus story, that Christians “were slaves to sin,”²⁶⁸ but now “have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God” which results in “eternal life.”²⁶⁹

As history continues after Adam and Eve in Genesis, the initiations of different vocations are mentioned. “Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron.”²⁷⁰ Cornelius Plantinga Jr., states, “All of these unfold the built-in potential of God’s creation. All reflect the ingenuity of God’s human creatures—itsself a superb example of likeness to God...To image God, then, human beings are charged not only to care for earth and animals (‘subduing’ what’s already there) but also with developing certain cultural possibilities (‘filling’ out what is only potentially there). To unfold such possibilities – for example, to speak languages, build tools and dies, enter contracts, organize dance troupes – is to act in character for human beings designed by

²⁶⁶ 1 Corinthians 10:31.

²⁶⁷ Romans 12:1.

²⁶⁸ Romans 6:20.

²⁶⁹ Romans 6:22.

²⁷⁰ Genesis 4:20-22.

God. That is, to act in this way is to exhibit some of God's own creativity and dominion in a characteristically human way."²⁷¹ Terence Fretheim adds, "Genesis does not present the creation as a finished product, wrapped up with a big red bow and handed over to the creatures to keep it exactly as originally created. It is not a one-time production. Indeed, for the creation to stay just as God originally created it would constitute a failure of the divine design. From God's perspective, the world needs work; development and change are what God intends for it and God enlists human beings (and other creatures) to that end. From another angle, God did not exhaust the divine creativity in the first week of the world; God continues to create and uses creatures in a vocation that involves the becoming of creation."²⁷² Albert Wolters agrees by making an analogy of a developing baby. "Earthly creation preceding the events recorded in Genesis 3 is like a healthy newborn child. In every respect it can be pronounced 'very good,' but this does not mean that change is not required. There is something seriously wrong if the baby remains in its infancy: it is meant to grow, develop, mature into adulthood."²⁷³

On the seventh day, "God finished his work that he had done, and he rested."²⁷⁴ But elsewhere in the Bible, we learn that God did not then stop working. The Psalmist wrote, "Thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of

²⁷¹ Plantinga Jr., *Engaging God's World*, 32.

²⁷² Terence E. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed: The Bible, God, and Natural Disasters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 15.

²⁷³ Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 45.

²⁷⁴ Genesis 2:2, ESV.

man,”²⁷⁵ “Indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”²⁷⁶ Jesus said, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.”²⁷⁷ Therefore, God didn’t simply set the creation in motion and then let it go. God is still involved with the creation, holding all things together,²⁷⁸ and is actively responsible for our sustenance, for “He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful,”²⁷⁹ and we should therefore pray “give us this day our daily bread.”²⁸⁰ God is sovereign even over our work, for “the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God’s hands.”²⁸¹ Human beings, created in the image of God, are likened to clay pots that God continues to work with his hands (“We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.”²⁸²), shaped in particular ways for the work he has for each of us. God knows better than we do why we are shaped the way we are for certain types of work, and we have no right to complain, “Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, ‘He

²⁷⁵ Psalm 107:15, NIV.

²⁷⁶ Psalm 121:4.

²⁷⁷ John 5:17.

²⁷⁸ Colossians 1:17.

²⁷⁹ Isaiah 30:23.

²⁸⁰ Matthew 6:11, KJV.

²⁸¹ Ecclesiastes 9:1, NIV.

²⁸² Isaiah 64:8.

did not make me’; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, ‘He has no understanding’?”²⁸³

The imagery of humans as vessels made by God for his purposes is picked up by the Apostle Paul in his second letter to Timothy. He writes, “Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.”²⁸⁴ Ben Witherington III points out three things this passage reveals: “(1) different vessels are made for different purposes, but all have a purpose; (2) any vessel, if it cleanses itself, can be made useful for an honorable purpose; (3) the function of any and all such cleansed vessels is good works! Human beings were intended to work, and not just to do any kind of work, but to do good works, doing them in accord with the way we have been fashioned, the abilities we have been given, and therefore the vocations for which we are best suited.”²⁸⁵

Fall

After the creative events recorded in Genesis 1 and 2, Genesis 3 records what theologians call “the Fall.” “The essence of man's first sin was his disobedience to the only divine command he had received: not to eat of the tree of knowledge. The

²⁸³ Isaiah 29:16, ESV.

²⁸⁴ 2 Timothy 2:20–21.

²⁸⁵ Ben Witherington III, *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011), 7.

consequences of his actions are both physical—toil, pain, and death—and spiritual—alienation from God.”²⁸⁶ The consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin go beyond them to all of humanity, we inherit a sinful nature. The first transgression of man resulted in the total depravity of human nature. Berkhof states, “The contagion of his sin at once spread through the entire man, leaving no part of his nature untouched, but vitiating every power and faculty of body and soul. This utter corruption of man is clearly taught in Scripture, Gen. 6:5; Ps. 14:3, Rom. 7:18. Total depravity here does not mean that human nature was at once as thoroughly depraved as it could possibly become. In the will this depravity manifested itself as spiritual inability.”²⁸⁷ Every human inherits this corruption; we are all tainted with iniquity from the time we are created. David says, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”²⁸⁸ The apostle Paul states, “For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature”²⁸⁹ and “to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.”²⁹⁰ Contrary to what we want to do in blaming others for the Fall, we are ourselves culpable. As Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote, “If only there were evil people somewhere, insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to

²⁸⁶ Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 1, Genesis 1-15*, ed. David Allen Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and John D. W. Watts (Dallas, TX.: Word Publishing, 1987), 90.

²⁸⁷ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939), 101.

²⁸⁸ Psalm 51:5, NIV.

²⁸⁹ Romans 7:18.

²⁹⁰ Titus 1:15.

separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being.”²⁹¹

The Image of God is Distorted

Theologians insist that the image of God in humanity has not been annihilated because of sin. Wayne Grudem wrote, “After the fall, we are still in God’s image – we are still like God and we still represent God – but the image of God in us is distorted; we are less fully like God than we were before the entrance of sin.”²⁹² Both Grudem and Wittmer agree that the image of God’s “lingering presence is the reason Scripture gives admonitions against murdering or cursing people.”²⁹³ For the purposes of this study, we are focusing on that aspect of the image of God that has to do with vocation. If the image of God gives humanity the “cultural mandate,” then how does the Fall affect humanity’s ability to accomplish this mandate? Sin corrupts or pollutes the *imago Dei*, but humans are still capable of doing those things they are mandated to do – to “be fruitful,” “increase in number,” “fill the earth,” “subdue it,” and “rule” over the rest of creation. Humans still procreate and create communities and relate to fellow humans, but they cannot relate to God at all or to other people very well without the grace of Christ. Humans still rule over the non-human creation, but they do so with selfish intent, often exploiting the goodness of God’s creation. Humans still work, but their work is now very difficult. “According to

²⁹¹ Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago Abridged: An Experiment in Literary Investigation* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2007), 168.

²⁹² Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 444.

²⁹³ Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*, 76.

Genesis 3:16, work would now become sweaty and hard with the workplace infested with thorns and thistles, a poetic way of describing the troubles every worker in the world encounters.”²⁹⁴ The initiation of various vocations is seen in Genesis 4 (which we discussed above); these were accomplished post-Fall. We can also empirically see the growth of society – of cultural goods, art, education, political structures, economies, etc. But the Fall is also empirically evident, in the wide-scale corruption of the good work people do at every level, from CEOs who make poor decisions down to the gossip that undermines flourishing in the office.

The imago Dei is meant to result in humans working for the common good. However, with the Fall, this ability in humanity is deeply distorted. “Rather than responsibly care for this creation, we make only halfhearted stabs in our vocations. Rather than search for imaginative opportunities to encourage and serve our neighbors, we only befriend those whose personal assets promise to benefit us. And rather than joyfully offering ourselves as living sacrifices to God, we fixate on how our alleged obedience might boomerang and bring us bushels of divine blessing.”²⁹⁵ In wake of the Fall, we worship ourselves and we lift up the good things in the creation as idols that are there to benefit us, rather than worshipping God and seeking to serve him alone. “Idolatry thus usurps not only God’s proper place but ours too. It contradicts both God’s rightful

²⁹⁴ R. Paul Stevens, *Work Matters: Lessons from Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012), 22.

²⁹⁵ Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*, 180.

kingship as Lord of the universe and our fundamental human calling to represent him in daily, cultural obedience—to image him in our lives.”²⁹⁶

Shalom is Broken

Because of the Fall, humans struggle to work together for the attainment of *shalom*. In the previous section on the mission of God’s people, we defined *shalom* by way of Cornelius Plantinga Jr. as “universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight.” Per Plantinga, *shalom* is the way things are supposed to be.²⁹⁷ Wittmer writes, “Unfortunately, the shalom of creation was soon shattered by the sin of Adam and Eve. They broke the peace when they disobeyed God and followed their own desires. And since rebellion against God is always accompanied by animosity toward others, it wasn’t long until their sin had spoiled the other relationships within their world.”²⁹⁸ Plantinga goes on to say, “Evil is what’s wrong with the world, and it includes trouble in nature as well as in human nature. It includes disease as well as theft, birth defects as well as character defects. We might define evil as any spoiling of shalom, any deviation from the way God wants things to be.”²⁹⁹ Wittmer agrees, “The trajectory of human sin ricochets into the farthest corners of creation, destroying first ourselves, then human society, and finally the animals and even the earth itself. No aspect of shalom is spared from the

²⁹⁶ Walsh and Middleton, *The Transforming Vision*. 65.

²⁹⁷ This is the premise of his book, Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).

²⁹⁸ Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*, 108.

²⁹⁹ Plantinga Jr., *Engaging God’s World*, 51.

careening path of sin.”³⁰⁰ Wolters further informs us of the vastness of the effects of the Fall, writing, “The effects of sin touch all of creation; no created thing is in principle untouched by the corrosive effects of the fall. Whether we look at societal structures such as the state or family, or cultural pursuits such as art or technology, or bodily functions such as sexuality or eating, or anything at all within the wide scope of creation, we discover that the good handiwork of God has been drawn into the sphere of human mutiny against God.”³⁰¹ In Genesis 3, because of the rebellion of the first humans, God cursed the ground.³⁰² Romans 8 explains the results of this curse, “for the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it.”³⁰³ Therefore, “the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”³⁰⁴ The consequence of sin not only runs through the hearts of every individual human being, but also through the entire cosmos.

The Good Creation Remains

A careful reading of the Bible will see that the original creation is corrupted but not unredeemable. Sin does not abolish God’s love for his creation. Christopher Wright states, “Creation is intrinsically good...In the creation narratives, the affirmation ‘It is good’ was not made by Adam and Eve but by God himself...Our own value as human

³⁰⁰ Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*, 108.

³⁰¹ Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 53-54.

³⁰² Genesis 3:17.

³⁰³ Romans 8:20.

³⁰⁴ Romans 8:22.

beings begins from the fact that we are ourselves part of the whole creation that God already values and declares to be good.”³⁰⁵ The pollution and corruption of God’s creation are distinct from the creation itself. We must not make the mistake of conflating the sin done within the creation with the creation itself because the creation was created “very good.”³⁰⁶ Wittmer states, “God refuses to allow our fall to ultimately destroy his good creation, and he graciously comes to earth to put away sin and restore the world to its original goodness. To understand this work of restoration correctly, we must first properly distinguish between the original creation and its fall.”³⁰⁷ Contrary to those who believe that the physical world is now evil because of the Fall and therefore God’s destiny for those he saves is to deliver them to a nonmaterial heaven, these theologians are insisting that God still loves everything he has created and that his intention is to not destroy it all but to redeem it all. Many of the fundamentalists of the early 20th Century and their progeny in the current day do not believe that God’s intention is to redeem the material world. Rather, they believe that this world is passing away. Likening the world to a sinking ship, the most pressing mission for God’s people is to rescue people. As D. L. Moody is credited as saying, there certainly is no reason to polish the rails on a sinking ship. Paul Marshall calls this “lifeboat theology.” “The ship is sinking rapidly, God has given up on it and is concerned only with the survival of his people. Any effort we make to salvage God’s creation amounts to rearranging the deck chairs. Instead, some say, our

³⁰⁵ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God*, 398.

³⁰⁶ Genesis 1:31.

³⁰⁷ Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*, 57.

sole task is to get into the lifeboats, to keep them afloat, to pluck drowning victims out of the water, and to sail on until we get to heaven where all will be well.”³⁰⁸ Marshall suggests a different metaphor to correct this misrepresentation, what he calls “ark theology.” “Noah's ark saved not only people, but it preserved God's other creatures as well. The ark looked not to flee but to return to the land and begin again. Once the flood subsided, everyone and everything on board was intended to return again to restore the earth.”³⁰⁹ N. T. Wright confirms, writing, “The one thing we can be sure of is that this redeeming of creation will not mean that God will say, of space, time and matter, ‘Oh, well, nice try, good while it lasted but obviously gone bad, so let’s drop it and go for a nonspatiotemporal, nonmaterial world instead.’”³¹⁰ The Fall did not make the creation so evil that it is unredeemable. The problem is not intrinsic to creation, it too is suffering the groans of the Fall.³¹¹ The problem is rooted in the corruption of the way God intended things to be. Therefore, “Prostitution does not eliminate the goodness of human sexuality; political tyranny cannot wipe out the divinely ordained character of the state; the anarchy and subjectivism of much of modern art cannot obliterate the creational legitimacy of art itself. In short, evil does not have the power of bringing to naught God’s steadfast faithfulness to the works of his hands.”³¹²

³⁰⁸ Paul A Marshall with Lela Gilbert, *Heaven Is Not My Home: Living in the Now of God’s Creation* (Nashville, TN.: Word Publishing, 1998), 30-31.

³⁰⁹ Marshall and Gilbert, 31.

³¹⁰ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 211-212.

³¹¹ “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” Romans 8:22, ESV.

³¹² Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 57.

Good Work Can Still Be Done

Neither does evil bring to naught the work of the hands of those created in God's image. Because of God's bestowment of common grace, fallen humans are still capable of bringing the good, the true, and the beautiful into the world through our cultural endeavors. "Put simply, common grace responds to the question many have about our world: 'How does the world go on after sin's entrance and how is it possible that 'good' things emerge from the hands of humans within and without a covenant relationship with God?' Common grace is God's restraint of the full effects of sin after the Fall, preservation and maintenance of the created order, and distribution of talents to human beings."³¹³ But Dooyeweerd warns, "In all this it is imperative to understand that 'common grace' does not weaken or eliminate the antithesis (opposition) between the ground motive of the Christian religion and the apostate ground motives. Common grace, in fact, can be understood only on the basis of the antithesis."³¹⁴ In the book *He Shines in All That's Fair*, Richard Mouw looks in depth at the arguments for and against the doctrine of common grace. He states, "The underlying view I am endorsing here posits multiple divine purposes in the world. To state it plainly: I am insisting that as God unfolds his plan for his creation, he is interested in more than one thing. Alongside of

³¹³ Vincent E. Bacote, "Introduction," in *Wisdom & Wonder: Common Grace in Science & Art*, by Abraham Kuyper, ed. Jordan J. Ballor and Stephen J. Grabill, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2011), 26.

³¹⁴ Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options*, 38.

God's clear concern about the eternal destiny of individuals are his designs for the larger creation.”³¹⁵

Redemption

As we've discussed at length above, the mission of God is to redeem the entirety of his created cosmos. However, God's redemption of all things begins with his redemption of humanity. The reason is that since humanity is God's most precious creation, the *imago Dei* placed in charge of the rest of the creation, they are the pinnacle and lynchpin of the creation. As the image-bearers go, so goes the rest of the creation. “The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.”³¹⁶ The redemption of the human race, therefore, is the key to the redemption of everything else. The image of God must be redeemed if the creation is to be renewed.

Jesus, the Perfect Image of God

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is depicted as the perfect image-bearer, “the image of the invisible God.”³¹⁷ We are image-bearers like Adam, the first man, but now with redemption in Christ, the second Adam, we are brought into the fullness of what it means to be the *imago Dei*. “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall

³¹⁵ Richard J. Mouw, *He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002).

³¹⁶ Romans 8:19, NIV.

³¹⁷ Colossians 1:15.

also bear the image of the man of heaven.”³¹⁸ However, “the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”³¹⁹ God’s plan is to overcome this evil, recreating people by his grace, and transforming them through the process of sanctification, for “we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”³²⁰ Our destiny as full-blown image-bearers is assured by the decree of God; everything we experience in this life is used by God for that purpose, because “we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”³²¹ I. Howard Marshall notes, “According to Rom 8:29 God’s purpose in redemption is that we should be conformed to the image of God’s Son with the result that Christ becomes the first of a whole company of brothers and sisters. Consequently, those who are called are justified and glorified.”³²² Stanley Grenz adds, “Consequently, the humankind created in the *imago Dei* is none other than the new

³¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:49.

³¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 4:4.

³²⁰ 2 Corinthians 3:18.

³²¹ Romans 8:28-30, ESV.

³²² I. Howard Marshall, “Being Human: Made in the Image of God,” *Stone-Campbell Journal* 4, no. 1 (2001), 58.

humanity conformed to the *imago Christi*, and the telos toward which the OT creation narrative points is the eschatological community of glorified saints. In this manner, the narrative of the emergence of the new humanity provides the climax to the entire salvation-historical story and becomes the ultimate defining moment for the Genesis account of the creation of humankind in the *imago Dei*.³²³ And so, “when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”³²⁴

The Redemption of All Things

The manner by which God brought redemption is through the cross of his Son, Jesus Christ. “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”³²⁵ In the words of Albert Wolters, “Grace restores nature, making it whole once more...It is *all* of creation that is included in the scope of Christ’s redemption: the scope is truly cosmic. Through Christ, God determined ‘to reconcile to himself *all things*,’ writes Paul, and the words he uses (*ta panta*) preclude any narrow or personalistic understanding of the reconciliation he has in mind...The scope of the redemption is as great as that of the fall; it embraces creation as a whole.”³²⁶ N. T. Wright sees in this the motif of a new creation, in which all things are remade by

³²³ Stanley J Grenz, “Jesus as the Imago Dei: Image-of-God Christology and the Non-Linear Linearity of Theology,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no. 4 (December 2004): 623.

³²⁴ 1 John 3:2.

³²⁵ Colossians 1:19–20.

³²⁶ Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 72.

the grace and power of God. “John 20 stresses twice (in verses 1 and 19) that Easter is the first day of the new week. John has so ordered his gospel that the sequence of seven signs, climaxing in the cross of Jesus on the sixth day of the week and his resting in the tomb on the seventh, functions as the week of the old creation; and now Easter functions as the beginning of the new creation.”³²⁷

For years, the New International Version of the Bible translated 2 Corinthians 5:17 in a very individualistic fashion. The 1984 version of the NIV read, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.”³²⁸ In the latest rendering, the translation committee changed this to indicate that when an individual becomes a Christian, it is an indication that something cosmic is happening. The 2011 translation reads, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”³²⁹ Redemption restores all things, starting with human beings, to make right what humans have made wrong through our sin.

Participation in God’s Mission of Redemption

Very early in his earthly ministry when Jesus first gained notoriety in Capernaum, the people tried to keep him from leaving them. But he said, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.”³³⁰

³²⁷ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 238.

³²⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:17. *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984.

³²⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:17. *The New International Version*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

³³⁰ Luke 4:43.

To “proclaim good news” (Greek, *euangelisasthai*) is to proclaim the evangel, the gospel. The gospel, according to Jesus in this verse, is “the kingdom of God.” God in Christ is establishing his kingdom which means, according to Amy Sherman, God is reestablishing shalom. Sherman wrote, “God’s plan is to bring shalom to his broken world, but he wants to do that in partnership with us.”³³¹ Sherman’s contention is that we partner with God through our vocations. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “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.”³³² As we “work heartily,” God graciously gives Christians the opportunity to participate in his mission in the world. This relates back to the imago Dei being restored in humanity through the person of Jesus Christ. Cosden wrote, “Human work in itself is Christian missionary work. Why? Because it is largely (though not exclusively) through our work that we reflect God’s image and co-operate with him in bringing people and the whole of creation to humanity’s and nature’s ultimate maturity and future... We are saved to become together the image of Christ... and we express and develop this most directly in our work.”³³³

N. T. Wright illuminates further the connection between the kingdom, image, and work: “God builds God’s kingdom. But God has ordered his world in such a way that his own work within that world would take place not least through one of his creatures in particular, namely the human beings who reflect his image. That, I believe, is central to

³³¹ Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, 86.

³³² Colossians 3:23-24, ESV.

³³³ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 129-130.

what the notion of ‘being made in God’s image’ is all about. God intends his wise, creative, loving presence and power to be reflected, ‘imaged’ if you like, into his world through his human creatures. He has enlisted us to act as his stewards in the project of creation. And, following the disaster of rebellion and corruption, he has built into the gospel message the fact that, through the work of Jesus and the power of the Spirit, he equips humans to help in the work of getting the project back on track.”³³⁴ Therefore, the Fall reveals that the *imago Dei* in humanity also includes the reflection of God as the Redeemer. Image bearers are not only called to steward God’s creation on his behalf, they are also called to participate in God’s work of redeeming it. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch wrote, “We partner with God in the redemption of the world. This is not just an issue of theology or spirituality; it is an issue of a thoroughly reorienting missiology. It will provide God’s people with a new sense of purpose, a divine connection to daily actions. We need to grasp the fact that in God’s economy our actions do have an eternal impact. We do extend the kingdom of God in daily affairs and activities and actions done in the name of Jesus.”³³⁵

Future Hope

According to some Christian scholars, the future effects the present as much as the other way around. In *Theology of Hope*, Jürgen Moltmann wrote, “From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present. The

³³⁴ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 207.

³³⁵ Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 115.

eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day. For Christian faith lives from the raising of the crucified Christ, and strains after the promises of the universal future of Christ.”³³⁶ Christopher Wright concurs, “The return of Christ will not only bring to its grand finale that section of the Bible story line that we have called redemption in history, it will also inaugurate the ultimate fulfillment of the whole point of the story—namely, the redemption and renewal of God's whole creation.”³³⁷

Confusion on “Heaven” as Our Final Destiny

However, according to Darrell Cosden, the belief that “salvation is the future not simply for souls but also for our bodies and the wider non-human creation as well—including within it our work—cannot simply be assumed in today's Christian landscape. For a very long time, popular Christianity has focused on salvation consisting of the immaterial soul going to heaven when we die. The belief that our ultimate salvation hope is the bodily resurrection to a transformed and genuinely physical new heaven and new earth has been relegated to the spiritual background, in danger of being lost altogether.”³³⁸ In order to have a fully-orbed theology of vocation, therefore, one must recapture Scripture’s descriptions of heaven and earth—what they currently are, and what

³³⁶ Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 16.

³³⁷ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 43.

³³⁸ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 52.

their destinies are. First, many Christians in North America have been taught that their ultimate, final hope and destiny is “heaven.” Billy Graham set the tone for this as the leading evangelist of the 20th Century. His message was, “What about you? Do you know where you will be when you step into eternity? ... The ultimate destination is Heaven—found in Jesus Christ. Nothing can transcend this wonderful place.”³³⁹ Another very influential evangelical leader has been Rick Warren, who wrote the bestselling book (selling over 32 million copies³⁴⁰) *The Purpose Driven Life*. In it, Warren wrote, “The Good News is that when we trust God’s grace to save us through what Jesus did, our sins are forgiven, we get a purpose for living, and we are promised a future home in heaven.”³⁴¹ Not only does Warren teach that heaven is our final home, he writes something contrary to a fully orbed theology of vocation while reflecting a sacred/secular dualism by saying, “In heaven God won’t say, ‘Tell me about your career, your bank account, and your hobbies.’ Instead, he will review how you treated other people, particularly those in need.”³⁴²

The confusion about heaven may lie in the fact that there is not much written in the New Testament about what happens to Christians upon their death. Most of what is

³³⁹ Billy Graham, *Where I Am: Heaven, Eternity, and Our Life Beyond* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 2015), 159.

³⁴⁰ A. Larry Ross, “Rick Warren’s ‘The Purpose Driven Life’ Celebrates 10 Years,” *Charisma News*, accessed December 2, 2015, <http://www.charismanews.com/us/34357-rick-warrens-the-purpose-driven-life-celebrates-10-years>.

³⁴¹ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013).

³⁴² *Ibid*, 158.

written is actually about what happens to Christians upon their resurrection. The time between our death and our eventual resurrection (what theologians call the “intermediate state”) is clouded in some mystery. The intermediate state postulates “either an immediate consciousness of ‘being with Christ’ at death or the granting of the resurrection body at death. Thus the intermediate state can be interpreted in terms of either a postmortem embodied existence, or a postmortem disembodied existence; the Pauline materials have been invoked by competent scholars to support both positions.”³⁴³ C. S. Lewis wrote concerning the intermediate state, “The earliest Christian documents give a casual and unemphatic assent to the belief that the supernatural part of a man survives the death of the natural organism. But they are very little interested in the matter. What they are intensely interested in is the restoration or resurrection of the whole composite creature by a miraculous divine act.”³⁴⁴ Wittmer agrees, stating that what happens to us when we die is “not the primary focus of Scripture. There are only a few verses that even allude to it. Scripture is relatively silent on our intermediate state in heaven because it is not the Christian hope. The Christian hope is not merely that our departed souls will rejoice in heaven, but that, as 1 Corinthians 15 explains, they will reunite with our resurrected bodies.”³⁴⁵ However, in his book *A New Heaven and A New Earth*, J. Richard Middleton looks at all the relevant scriptural texts that relate to the

³⁴³ Larry J. Kreitzer, “Intermediate State,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 438.

³⁴⁴ C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*, Revised 1960 (London and Glasgow: Collins/Fontana, 1947), 33.

³⁴⁵ Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*, 17.

intermediate state and states, “I am surprised by how little evidence there actually is for an interim state in the New Testament, certainly less than I expected.”³⁴⁶ He then states, “whatever we think about the intermediate state (and I acknowledge that belief in such a state is dear to many Christians), it is clear from Scripture that heaven is not the final destination for the redeemed.”³⁴⁷ Adding to this confusion, according to Randy Alcorn, is that “books on Heaven often fail to distinguish between the intermediate and eternal states, using the one word—*Heaven*—as all-inclusive. But this has dulled our thinking and keeps us from understanding important biblical distinctions.”³⁴⁸ Wittmer explains that the common understanding among Christians that their final destiny is to live away from earth in heaven is different from the picture painted in Scripture. “The Christian hope is not merely that someday we and our loved ones will die and go to be with Jesus. Instead, the Christian hope is that our departure from this world is just the first leg of a journey that is round-trip. We will not remain forever with God in heaven, for God will bring heaven down to us.”³⁴⁹ As N. T. Wright puts it, there is a “life after ‘life after death’,”³⁵⁰ in other words, there is a life after death (the intermediate state) but what really matters is the life after that “life after death.”

³⁴⁶ J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 236.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 237.

³⁴⁸ Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2004), 44.

³⁴⁹ Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*, 17.

³⁵⁰ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 151.

Not only that, heaven as it exists now will be different from the heaven of the future: “Once we abandon our assumption that Heaven cannot change, it all makes sense. *God* does not change; he’s immutable. But God clearly says that Heaven *will* change. It will eventually be relocated to the New Earth (Revelation 21:1)...The questions, What is Heaven like? and, What *will* Heaven be like? have two different answers.”³⁵¹ The second leg of what Wittmer called the “round-trip” will happen when heaven unites with earth and what John saw in the Revelation will come to fruition: “The dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”³⁵² N. T. Wright explains that heaven and earth has always meant to be together. “Let us, then, remind ourselves of the starting point. The created order, which God has begun to redeem in the resurrection of Jesus, is a world in which heaven and earth are designed, not to be separated, but to come together. In that coming together, the ‘very good’ which God spoke over creation at the beginning will be enhanced, not abolished. The New Testament never imagines that, when the new heavens and new earth arrive, God will say, in effect, ‘well, that first creation wasn’t so good after all, was it? Aren’t you glad we’ve got rid of all that space, time and matter?’ Rather, we must envisage a world in which the present creation, which we think of in those three dimensions, is enhanced, taken up into God’s larger purposes no doubt, but certainly not abandoned.”³⁵³ In other words, as we’ve seen earlier when discussing the mission of

³⁵¹ Alcorn, *Heaven*, 45.

³⁵² Revelation 21:3, ESV.

³⁵³ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 259.

God's people, the *missio Dei* is "the story of how God in his sovereign love has purposed to bring the sinful world of his fallen creation to the redeemed world of his new creation...It is a vast, comprehensive project of cosmic salvation."³⁵⁴ This is important for a theology of vocation because if our destiny is to go off to another place called heaven, then our work on earth really does not matter much. If our "home" is not earth but heaven, if the destiny of our souls is to go away to heaven, then what we do in our earthly vocations is really just done in vain. But if our destiny is to live forever on a restored Earth, then our work may also have a destiny along with us.

Confusion on the Future of the Physical Earth and thus the Destiny of Human Work

A related issue as it relates to our present work is the common belief that this physical world will be destroyed in order to usher in the New Heavens and New Earth. If this is the case then our current work is in vain, for it will all burn with that destruction. In Peter's second letter, he writes, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat."³⁵⁵ This certainly sounds like the earth will indeed be burned up/destroyed, especially in light of how the King

³⁵⁴ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 46.

³⁵⁵ 2 Peter 2:10-12, NIV.

James Version ended verse 10, “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”³⁵⁶ If the KJV is correct, then not only is the earth doomed, but so is our work. However, most modern English translations render verse 10 as the above citation reads, “and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.” According to New Testament scholar Ruth Anne Reese, “An examination of the apparatus of the Greek New Testament at 3:10 reveals an extraordinary number of suggestions as to the proper ending of the verse. The best reading is εὑρεθήσεται (*heurethēsetai*, ‘to be found’) both because it is attested by the most diverse witnesses and because it is easiest to explain the other variants as corrections or additions to this particular reading... ‘To be found’ can have the sense of ‘being found out’ or ‘discovered’ even though the Old Testament usages that support this reading are not direct parallels. More important, the verb is a divine passive, so it should be understood that God is the one who discovers the works that have been done by humanity.”³⁵⁷ Lucas and Green agree, adding, “everything in the earth will be laid bare. That is, everything God has made and done, and everything mankind has made and done, will be laid open and be on full view to him. God will literally judge the works! Artists and scientists, insignificant and grand, leader and led, Christian and non-Christian, will all be laid bare to God. This is what Jesus had in mind when he described himself as a master who leaves his servants with work to do and then returns to inspect them.”³⁵⁸ But the text in 2 Peter 3:11 states that “everything will be destroyed.” What is actually

³⁵⁶ 2 Peter 3:10, KJV.

³⁵⁷ Ruth Anne Reese, *2 Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 171.

³⁵⁸ Dick Lucas and Christopher Green, *The Message of 2 Peter and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 143.

destroyed? What is this destruction? The context in 2 Peter gives the most important clue. Paul had already made the argument that since “the earth was formed out of water and by water,”³⁵⁹ “by these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed.”³⁶⁰ Wittmer writes, “Just as the Great Flood did not annihilate the world but primarily cleansed it of its numerous sinners, so the impending fire seems to perform an *ethical* cleansing rather than an *ontological* annihilation.”³⁶¹ Richard Bauckham agrees, saying that “we cannot take the physical description literally,” but makes the important point that we should not make the mistake of thinking of this in a neo-Platonic way, as if this will be just some kind of spiritual judgment without material consequences. “This is not to say that the end of the history of this age will not involve the material world of nature. Human history, including human evil, is too inextricably involved with the natural world for that to be conceivable. It seems that the author of 2 Peter, like some other biblical writers (cf., Rom 8:21; Rev 21:1), did expect the natural world to be radically recreated.”³⁶²

Human work has a future if the hope of Christianity rests in human resurrection and the restoration of the broken world. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul offers a lengthy description and defense of the resurrection. At the end of this, he states, “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work

³⁵⁹ 2 Peter 3:5.

³⁶⁰ 2 Peter 3:6.

³⁶¹ Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*, 202.

³⁶² Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, Word Biblical Themes (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), 91.

of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”³⁶³ Many Christians, including Darrell Cosden, read this “work of the Lord” and “labor” in its context of Paul’s teaching on the Resurrection as being “the hard work needed to understand, hold onto, and witness to Christ’s and our own resurrection.”³⁶⁴ However, N. T. Wright insists on our seeing the “work of the Lord” much more generally than that. He writes, “The point of the resurrection, as Paul has been arguing throughout the letter, is that *the present bodily life is not valueless just because it will die*. God will raise it to new life. What you do with your body in the present matters, because God has a great future in store for it.”³⁶⁵ Somehow, as mysterious as it is, the voice from heaven in Revelation declares that for those “who die in the Lord,” “their deeds will follow them.”³⁶⁶ This has major ramifications on our theology of vocation. Wright says, “And if this applies to ethics, as in 1 Corinthians 6, it certainly also applies to the various vocations to which God’s people are called. What you *do* in the present—by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself—all these things *will last into God’s future*. They are not simply ways of making the present life a little less beastly, a little more bearable, until the day when we leave it behind altogether (as the hymn so mistakenly puts it, ‘until that day when all the blest to endless rest are called

³⁶³ 1 Corinthians 15:58, ESV.

³⁶⁴ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 61.

³⁶⁵ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 193.

³⁶⁶ Revelation 14:13, NIV.

away’). They are part of what we may call *building for God’s kingdom*.³⁶⁷ Cosden acknowledges that this could indeed be the case, stating, “The church has never been inclined to think that the ‘work of the Lord’ only includes sound teaching specifically about the resurrection...Nothing in the text necessarily limits our participation and witness to the resurrection to narrowly ‘religious’ working activity. Indeed, getting away from a narrow view of what is ‘spiritual’ that downplays physical life seems to be the whole point of Paul’s teaching on the resurrection.”³⁶⁸

Confusion on the Future being a Return to the Garden or Continued Cultural Development

The future New Heavens and New Earth is also depicted in the Bible as an advancement in development and culture as opposed to a return to the pristine world of the Garden of Eden. In the words of Albert Wolters, “From a cultural point of view, that situation (the Garden of Eden) was primitive and undeveloped. It preceded Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal Cain (sons of Lamech), for example, who introduced a number of historical advances (animal husbandry, music making, metalworking) that contributed significantly to the furtherance of civilization (see Gen. 4:20-22). It is doubtful whether Adam and Eve were acquainted with the wheel; it is certain that they had not yet discovered how to make textiles (Gen. 3:21) or bake bricks (Gen. 11:3). In the language of modern archaeology, they lived in the early Stone Age.”³⁶⁹ What was revealed to John was not a

³⁶⁷ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 193.

³⁶⁸ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 62.

³⁶⁹ Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 77.

pristine garden but “the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.”³⁷⁰ In this city he saw major parts of God’s original creation; “the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”³⁷¹ There is therefore “healing” in this city; God will “wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain,”³⁷² for in this redeemed world, “no longer will there be any curse.”³⁷³ John also saw that “the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it (the city). On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.”³⁷⁴ In light of this passage, Richard Mouw makes the point that theologians “Herman Bavinck and Abraham Kuyper were both clear on this point: they were convinced that the Bible explicitly encourages us to expect an eschatological ingathering of the fruits of humankind's cultural labors.”³⁷⁵ J. Richard Middleton agrees, and challenges common notions of eternity by writing, “Just as we have to get rid of the unbiblical idea of ‘going to heaven’ as our final destiny, so we need to drop pious ideas of a perpetual worship

³⁷⁰ Revelation 21:10, NIV.

³⁷¹ Revelation 22:1-3a.

³⁷² Revelation 21:4.

³⁷³ Revelation 22:3.

³⁷⁴ Revelation 21:24b-26.

³⁷⁵ Mouw, *He Shines in All That's Fair*, 50.

service as our ultimate purpose in the eschaton. Whereas in Genesis 1 God made humans in his image to represent his rule by developing the earth, in Genesis 2 the human purpose was to work the garden, thereby extending God's presence throughout this world. It thus comes as no surprise that Revelation 21-22 portrays the renewal of the fundamental human purpose in God's world."³⁷⁶ Therefore, it is very probable that the Cultural Mandate will continue to be humankind's mandate for all eternity.

This reflects how the prophets, in looking toward that future New Heaven and New Earth, often described life in the future. It is described in very earthly (and working) terms, as in when Isaiah promises that "They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands. They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them."³⁷⁷ Wittmer observes, "Houses, vineyards, kings, and wealthy nations—these words signal a world of cultural activity on the new earth. Remember that God's first command to Adam and Eve was to develop his creation, to take the raw materials of his good creation and make something better. Because this cultural mandate has never been rescinded, we may rightly expect to continue cultural activity on the new earth, much as we are doing now."³⁷⁸ Indeed, the promise that God

³⁷⁶ Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth*, 174.

³⁷⁷ Isaiah 65:21-23.

³⁷⁸ Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*, 207.

makes through Isaiah about the future is that the tools of war would be transformed into the tools of work. “They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.”³⁷⁹ Witherington observes, “When Isaiah envisions the eschatological age, or the last days, he does not envision a massive work stoppage. What he envisions is a massive war stoppage...his vision of shalom, well-being, peace, is not of a workless paradise, but of a world at peace worshiping the one true God and working together rather than warring with each other.”³⁸⁰ Christopher Wright goes on to say, “This inspiring vision portrays God's new creation as a place that will be joyful, free from grief and tears, life-fulfilling, with guaranteed work satisfaction, free from the curses of frustrated labor, and environmentally safe!”³⁸¹

The Church's Role in Empowering People in Vocation

Earlier we looked at the problem cited by Skye Jethani, that while the institutional church has rightly proclaimed the believer's call to obey Scriptures, it has neglected the believer's call to have abiding communion with God and has, by way of diminishing the role of the Holy Spirit in people's lives, neglected to encourage and empower believers in their specific call into vocations. He writes, “This generation's lack of response to the institutional church's call has left many pastors flummoxed. They mistakenly believe it is a matter of style... Others blame it on immaturity... I don't believe the problem is style or

³⁷⁹ Isaiah 2:4.

³⁸⁰ Witherington III, *Work*, xiii-xiv.

³⁸¹ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God*, 408.

immaturity; it is a church that has lost a theology of vocation.”³⁸² Gabe Lyons also believes that vocation is the key to reaching the next generation. He writes that the next generation of Christians see their place in the world differently from their predecessors. “The next Christians don’t work at jobs; they serve in vocations. They see their occupational placement as part of God’s greater mission... While some may be called to full-time religious work, they accept that many Christians should simply work to restore the needs right under their noses. They’ve grown tired of being regarded as second-class Christians and want to be empowered on mission right where they are. They see the need all around them for Christians to show up and restore in their neighborhoods and workplaces.”³⁸³ Lyons sees hope for the issue that Jethani states. “The churches that recognize that this move is under way find themselves in the middle of what could be the greatest transformation in how Christians have consistently engaged culture in a century. It has all the signs of being a manifestation as crucial as the Reformation was.”³⁸⁴

Theology of vocation was a major part of the Reformation; it is nothing novel. Gene Veith relates how Martin Luther saw the importance of vocation as central to all of life: “When we pray the Lord’s Prayer, observed Luther, we ask God to give us this day our daily bread. And He does give us our daily bread. He does it by means of the farmer who planted and harvested the grain, the baker who made the flour into bread, the person who prepared our meal. We might today add the truck drivers who hauled the produce,

³⁸² Jethani, *Futureville*, 107.

³⁸³ Lyons, *The Next Christians*, 112.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 120.

the factory workers in the food processing plant, the warehouse men, the wholesale distributors, the stock boys, the lady at the checkout counter...God has chosen to work through human beings, who, in their different capacities and according to their different talents, serve each other. This is the doctrine of vocation.”³⁸⁵ Luther believed that everyone seeking to be in the clergy should understand that everyone’s vocation is as important as that of the pastor’s. “Therefore I advise no one to enter any religious order or the priesthood, indeed, I advise everyone against it—unless he is forearmed with this knowledge and understands that the works of monks and priests, however holy and arduous they may be, do not differ one whit in the sight of God from the works of the rustic laborer in the field or the woman going about her household tasks, but that all works are measured before God by faith alone.”³⁸⁶ In his *Institutes*, John Calvin stated, “The Lord enjoins every one of us, in all the actions of life, to have respect to our own calling...In following your proper calling, no work will be so mean and sordid as not to have a splendour and value in the eye of God.”³⁸⁷

The centrality of vocation as our way of participating in the mission of God is often lost, and new voices rise up to call the church back to it. In the mid-twentieth century, Dorothy Sayers saw this as a crucial doctrine that needed to be recovered in her time. She wrote, “It is the business of the Church to recognize that the secular vocation, as such, is sacred. Christian people, and particularly perhaps the Christian clergy, must

³⁸⁵ Veith, *God at Work*, 13.

³⁸⁶ Luther, "Babylonian Captivity of the Church" in *Three Treatises*, 202-203.

³⁸⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge. (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 3:10.

get it firmly into their heads that when a man or woman is called to a particular job of secular work, that is as true vocation as though he or she were called to specifically religious work. The Church must concern Herself not only with such questions as the just price and proper working conditions: She must concern Herself with seeing that the work itself is such as a human being can perform without degradation—that no one is required by economic or any other considerations to devote himself to work that is contemptible, soul destroying, or harmful. It is not right for Her to acquiesce in the notion that a man's life is divided into the time he spends on his work and the time he spends in serving God. He must be able to serve God in his work, and the work itself must be accepted and respected as the medium of divine creation.”³⁸⁸ Sayers words from over seventy years ago remain prophetic today and are just as relevant to the contemporary church. She wrote, “The Church’s approach to an intelligent carpenter is usually confined to exhorting him not to be drunk and disorderly in his leisure hours, and to come to church on Sundays. What the Church should be telling him is this: that the very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables.”³⁸⁹

As Moses prayed in Psalm 90, “May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us—yes, establish the work of our hands.”³⁹⁰ The Hebrew word translated “establish” is *kûn*, which, when used in the Old Testament with God as the subject, has the connotation that God prepares things with “overtones of

³⁸⁸ Sayers, “Why Work?,” 138.

³⁸⁹ Sayers, “Why Work?,” 139.

³⁹⁰ Psalm 90:17.

certitude.” Since God does not change, what God prepares and/or establishes are “fixed forever.”³⁹¹ The Apostle Paul confirms this when he later wrote, “We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”³⁹² Our work is “good” when it is prepared and established by God.

³⁹¹ John N. Oswalt, “964 בִּנְיָ,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 433.

³⁹² Ephesians 2:10.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to discover how pastors lead congregants to participate in the mission God has for his people through their vocations.

Three main areas that are central to discovering pastors' experiences have been identified: the application of a theology of vocation to a local congregation, the process of leading a congregation toward a richer paradigm of vocation as mission, and the positives and negatives of the process that pastors experienced as they led their congregants to be missional in their vocations. To that end, the following research questions guided the qualitative research:

1. What have pastors attempted in order to lead congregants to embrace vocation as the means to participate in God's mission for his people?
2. What challenges did pastors experience as they were leading congregants to participate in God's mission for his people through their vocations?
3. What results have pastors experienced as they were leading congregants to participate in God's mission for his people through their vocations?

Design of the Study

The researcher conducted qualitative research to discover how pastors lead congregants to be missional in their vocations as their participation in the *missio Dei*. This general qualitative methodology seeks to understand "(1) how people make sense of their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences," as described by Sharan B. Merriam, in *Qualitative*

Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation.³⁹³ In a qualitative study, “data are collected through interviews, observations, and documents and are analyzed inductively to address the research posed.”³⁹⁴

The researcher sought to uncover how the pastors construct meaning out of their experience and how they interpret those meanings. “The key concern is understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants’ perspectives, not the researcher’s. This is sometimes referred to as the *emic* or insider’s perspective, versus the *etic* or outsider’s perspective.”³⁹⁵ In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for the data collection and analysis. “Since understanding is the goal of this research, the human instrument, which is able to be immediately responsive and adaptive, would seem to be the ideal means of collecting data.”³⁹⁶ The researcher inductively gathered data from the interviews and then built “themes, categories, typologies, concepts, tentative hypotheses, and even theory about a particular aspect of practice” in order to create a final product that is “richly descriptive,” where “words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the researcher has learned about the phenomenon.”³⁹⁷

³⁹³ Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 23.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 37.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 14.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 15.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 16.

Participant Sample Selection

In 2010, the Kern Family Foundation began a project in which they gathered pastors who were interested in influencing their congregations in a transition toward being missional by focusing on vocation. Dr. Steven Garber, Principle for The Washington Institute for Faith, Vocation, and Culture, spearheaded the project. Pastors would meet in various venues around the United States, starting in the Washington D.C. area, for two-year cohort learning experiences. Dr. Amy L Sherman, Senior Fellow at the Sagamore Institute for Policy Research also led some of the pastoral cohorts. The original group of pastors were sourced through networks that Garber had developed over years in the D.C. area. Other pastors were sourced from networks across the country that indicated an interest in discipleship methodologies based on a theology of vocation. Each pastor has a vested interest in making disciples that will reflect Christ in the world. Amy Sherman led pastors in Pennsylvania through the same style of cohort. From these pools of pastors, the researcher used the non-probability strategy of purposefully sampling participants across denominational and geographic areas who were already highly involved in creating discipleship paradigms that reflect a rich theology of vocation. “Non-probability sampling is the method of choice for most qualitative research...the most common form of which is called purposive or purposeful. Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned.”³⁹⁸

³⁹⁸ Ibid, 77.

The pastors interviewed for this study varied in age (mid-30s to 50s) and ministry experience. All had seminary graduate educations. Their positions varied, including senior pastors, associate pastors of discipleship and/or outreach, professors at schools, leaders of fellowship programs, and church planters. They represented various denominations, including Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA), Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), Anglican, Evangelical Free Church (EFCA), and non-denominational. Church sizes varied from 75 members to 2,000.

Data Collection

The researcher interviewed eight pastors in the Garber and Sherman cohort groups using a digital recorder. The researcher travelled to Washington DC, Virginia, and Pennsylvania to interview the pastors in their churches or at other places of convenience for the interviewees. These interviews generally lasted one to one and a half hours. The interviews were transcribed so that the stories could be analyzed. The methodology of interviewing was semi-structured, encouraging reflective engagement with the participants as they thought through the prepared questions while having the flexibility to explore ideas that emerged that the researcher had not anticipated. In the end, this method fostered the identification of common themes and patterns from all participants.

Again, the following research questions guided the qualitative research:

1. What have pastors attempted in order to lead congregants to embrace vocation as the means to participate in God's mission for his people?
2. What challenges did pastors experience as they were leading congregants to participate in God's mission for his people through their vocations?

3. What results have pastors experienced as they were leading congregants to participate in God's mission for his people through their vocations?

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol contained the following set of questions, which includes specific questions seeking more exact data but with most questions being open-ended.

“This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and the new ideas on the topic.”

1. What specifically have you done to explain the role of vocation in God's mission to your congregants?
2. Tell me about a specific strategy that you implemented to help congregants to see their vocations as their participation in the mission of God.
3. What leadership techniques did you try for helping people live missionally through their vocations?
4. In what other ways did you attempt to lead people or groups into embracing this vocational paradigm for missional living?
5. As you began in earnest to lead your congregants into being missional through their vocations, what specific challenges did you face?
6. How did you deal with these challenges?
7. Tell me some stories of congregants that seem to be on their way to fully embracing a lifestyle in which their vocations are becoming their mission.
8. Tell me some stories of congregants that have *not* been able to embrace this concept.
9. In what ways has your church benefited from your efforts?
10. How have *you personally* benefited from this emphasis?
11. In what ways has the *larger community* that your church serves as a witness to the gospel benefited?

Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed all the recorded interviews within a week of each interview. Then the researcher used open coding to begin to recognize patterns and themes in the data. The data was analyzed using the “constant comparative method,” which “involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences.”³⁹⁹ The data were then grouped together based on themes that arose from the answers given by the participants. Once patterns were identified, the categories were organized into common themes.

Researcher Position

According to Merriam, “Qualitative case studies are limited, too, by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator. The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis.”⁴⁰⁰ The researcher is the executive director of a nonprofit organization that aids church leaders, college students, and marketplace leaders to reintegrate the Christian faith with vocations. Therefore, the researcher has a predisposition to believing that vocation is important to God’s mission in the world. For the past eight years, he has also been in leadership and active ministry with a college student outreach ministry that has at its primary focus the development of young men and women to be followers of Christ in every aspect of their lives, especially in the vocations for which they are in school. He is also an ordained pastor who has experience as a church planter and also as an associate pastor in charge of outreach and discipleship. As a

³⁹⁹ Ibid, 30.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, 52.

church planter, the researcher was closely connected to many of the national leaders of the missional church movement. As a leader of two ministries that focus on vocation-as-mission, he has a deep understanding of the theological and practical implications of such a perspective on ministry. This experience gives the researcher the ability to listen to the responses of the pastors interviewed and have an insider's knowledge of what the pastors are talking about, without as much equivocation as other researchers might have. In addition, the researcher has personal experience leading congregations through change, both as a church planter and in initiating new discipleship paradigms in churches, which is what the pastors interviewed were asked to describe from their personal situations.

Study Limitations

The research is confined to eight pastors in a two specific cohort groups that met together for two years with Steven Garber and Amy Sherman. All the participants are male pastors from the three particular places: Washington DC, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. All were in populous city or suburban contexts. Denominations represented were Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA), Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), Anglican, Evangelical Free Church (EFCA), and non-denominational. The pastors were all generally Reformed or had been somewhat influenced by Reformed theology. As with all qualitative studies, the reader must take into consideration that not all conclusions from this particular context may be generalized. However, the reader is encouraged to develop working hypotheses that reflect situation-specific conditions in a particular context. Thus, "when we give proper weight to local conditions, any generalization is a working hypothesis, not a

conclusion.”⁴⁰¹ Qualitative research is valuable in helping the reader create extrapolations based on the findings. “Extrapolations are modest speculations on the likely applicability of findings to other situations under similar, but not identical conditions.”⁴⁰²

⁴⁰¹ L. J. Cronbach, “Beyond the Two Disciplines of Scientific Psychology,” *American Psychologist* 1975, no. 30 (1975): 116–127, as cited in Merriam, 225.

⁴⁰² Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2002), 584, as cited in Merriam, 225.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to discover how pastors lead congregants to participate in the mission God has for his people through their vocations. To that end, this chapter utilizes the findings of the eight pastoral interviews and reports on common themes and relevant insights pertaining to the research questions for this study. The following research questions guided the qualitative research:

1. What have pastors attempted in order to lead congregants to embrace vocation as the means to participate in God's mission for his people?
2. What challenges did pastors experience as they were leading congregants to participate in God's mission for his people through their vocations?
3. What results have pastors experienced as they were leading congregants to participate in God's mission for his people through their vocations?

Introduction to Participants

Eight pastors were selected to participate in this study. All names and identifiable information of participants have been changed to protect their identity.

Ben is in his 40s and serves as an associate rector at an Anglican church of over 1,000. Along with his work in pastoral ministry, he is a spiritual advisor and retreat leader. He has also worked with Fellows programs for young adults.

Steve is in his 50s. He planted the church he serves ten years ago. The church is in the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA). They have an average Sunday attendance of 200. Before planting the church, he served as an associate pastor of small groups, mercy

and outreach at a large church in the southern United States, and before that was a missionary overseas. Before going into missions, he worked in the business world for seven years. The church meets in an auditorium of a college in their city.

Dave is in his 30s who has been leading a church plant in a major metropolitan city that a large PCA church in that same city started five years ago. Before taking on this leadership role, he led the larger church's efforts to integrate faith and vocation as well as singles and young adult ministries.

Brett is in his 50s and has served as an associate pastor in a Presbyterian Church (PCA). He has launched and led a Fellows program based on faith and vocation while also teaching and training congregants on how to integrate faith and work. He was also in charge of his church's efforts to plant churches.

Sam is in his 50s and has served as pastor of his PCA church in a college town for twenty years. He went to a very fundamentalist college where he felt that he did not fit their definition of spiritual maturity. His major was in the arts and he felt that the paradigm that was conveyed to him at this institution was impoverished, that it did not cohere to reality. He went to a reformed seminary where he discovered humanity's proper relationship to God's creation and how we "give expression to the character and the purposes of God." His vision of ministry is driven by the intersection of faith and the arts.

John is in his 30s and planted an Anglican church in a midwestern city. He was raised in a farming community, a blue-collar kid. He went to a Baptist high school and then went to a Christian college. After seminary, he was in charge of a "church within a church" geared toward young adults that grew quickly. However, he feels that its growth was mainly because of the "flashiness" of the ministry—that they were not really making

deep disciples. He purposefully planted the church in the heart of the city to do “small-batch ministry,” where relationships of one-on-one discussions about life and callings would be the focus.

Tom is in his 40s and is the senior pastor of a non-denominational church of 500 that meets in a high school in the suburbs of a mid-west city. He leads worship as well as preaches most weeks.

Jack is in his 50s and has served twenty years as senior pastor of an Evangelical Free Church of 2,000 in a major city.

What Pastors Attempted to Do

The first research question sought to determine what pastors had attempted in order to lead congregants to embrace vocation as the means to participate in God’s mission for his people. Four themes surfaced in the research as the participants described their efforts: 1) They laid the foundation of a biblical worldview that focused on the story of Creation / Fall / Redemption / Consummation, 2) They were intentional with the language they use in their Sunday worship services and in articulating vision and mission, 3) They incorporated the concepts of vocation into their sermons and prayers, 4) They developed a ministry paradigm that nurtured relationships, and (5) They were purposeful in how they disciplined people in their vocations.

1) Laying a Foundation of a Biblical Worldview (Creation/Fall/Redemption/Consummation)

Many of the participants stated that they were intentional in laying a worldview foundation in their churches that framed the biblical story as Creation / Fall / Redemption / Consummation. They were convinced that if Christians understood the four-chapter

gospel story, it would open up opportunities for more fruitful ministry in and through their congregants' vocations.

Jack said that early in his pastoral ministry, he did not have “CFRC as a navigational guide,” but he eventually had come to appreciate it as “the common thread of canonical coherence, and the importance hermeneutically of seeing the whole story and keeping the whole story in front of me starting from creation to consummation.” He admits that “there’s always this danger of reductionism” by just focusing in on the CFRC storyline because of “the infinite complexity of the biblical story,” but he stated that for his own understanding and for the good of his congregation’s understanding, “it’s true that it can work as a sign post, giving you more clarity from the infinite complexity of the text. These sign posts, like CFRC—which I think is one of the best—I needed that. I use it all the time, so I like it of all the sign posts, the best.”

Dave’s church goes even further with it: “Our liturgy is framed by the four-part story of redemption. Our bulletin is creation, fall, redemption, consummation.” While he says that the elements of the service “might seem like a familiar Presbyterian worship service,” they are intentional in how they frame things. “Right there we are saying, even from our call to worship, that this is important.” The first chapter of the story gets significant emphasis in Dave’s church. “For instance, we are weekly celebrating physical things, communicating that in the care we try to put into even the kind of bread we use for communion bought from a local bakery which also reflects our commitment to the neighborhood, a bakery down the street. We believe that aesthetics matter; we’re not disembodied souls connecting with God.” Dave sees this as foundational to his ministry of connecting vocation with the faith: “These are two or three steps moved from the topic

of work per se, but I do believe it goes a long way in shaping people's worldview which is the key to the practice of their faith out there in the world."

Steve, in planting his church, states that "I mostly focus my energy on laying down the groundwork theologically, worldview wise, to what I think will best shape us long term." "A part of our initial vision" was "breaking down the Creation Mandate into three key things: Knowing God, growing in community, and following Christ in all aspect of our lives." Knowing God is focused on "the church's worship, outreach, and evangelism." Growing in community refers to "growing a family" and being attentive to "entire social structures of connecting to one another," as well as the church's efforts "in mercy and justice issues." It is especially in the third part of that Creation Mandate vision where a theology of vocation plays a part: "And the third one – the trickiest one – is this idea that there is great dignity in our everyday work and that following Christ includes your vocations, in tending the garden, cultivating the creation, and being good stewards of it. We've kind of played a little with the nomenclature but we say, 'Following Christ in all aspects of our lives.'"

Dave has found the four-part gospel story to be helpful in his outreach to non-believers. "My 'Gospel presentation' to non-Christians almost always involves the four-chapter story of redemption because I think non-Christians resonate most with chapters one and four, which is exactly the chapters that the last generation of evangelists and churches left out. This generation of non-Christians believes that if God does exist, and if he did make all things that he made it good."

Ben agrees that both Creation and Consummation are the key chapters of the four-chapter gospel story for him to teach so that people can grasp the goodness of their

vocations. “It has a lot to do with your eschatology. If you believe that the world goes up with a whisp of smoke, then vocations don't matter. As a result of premillennial dispensationalism, many Christians do not have a biblical worldview. They believe that everything gets destroyed. And thus, ends the continuity between this earth and the next earth. Right? But if your eschatology includes some sort of physical continuity with what this world is, and that some of our products in this life will find their way into the next life, that makes a lot more sense about how your work might matter. So, as a guide to what I teach, I might begin with the writings of N.T. Wright.”

2) Intentionality with the Language Used

Indicative of many of the participants, Dave said, “We care about our language. We try to avoid binary language in terms of referring to people in full time ministry or exalting my pastoral vocation over against other people’s.”

Jack echoed this intentionality, stating, “We began to change language on Sunday morning, we were much more sensitive to any kind of bifurcation, dualism, so we realized we were kind of talking out of both sides of our mouth. So, our curriculum also began to change. Our preaching, illustrations began to deal with all of life. I think those were some of the early things that began to change.”

Steve wanted to have the core leaders of his church plant to think in terms beyond the “typical language of church purposes.” “When we came up here for church planting, I remember thinking about what we’d focus on as a new church. I don't know if you've heard the sort of list of five things that typically churches will focus on - like worship, teaching, service, evangelism, and fellowship...Churches might focus on one or two of those.” One of his leaders asked him what they would focus on, and he said, “Well, I

reject the idea that you would ever want to answer that question. If you ever get really good at just one or two and became known for those things, then shame on you, because you're really not giving attention to the others. You just can't say we're going to let fellowship slide because we're really good at teaching or something.” But then Steve shook up the paradigm on just those five emphases. He said, “And on top of it I think there's a sixth one that is never on anyone’s list—cultural engagement. We're called as a church to be helping to change and transform our culture, but that's never on the focus list...churches don't even talk about that. And that should be the sixth thing that churches are equally engaged in.” This cultural engagement, according to Steve, is rooted in the story of CFRC: “I think it goes back to the mandate back in Genesis. The inherent dignity of work. That's who we were made as individuals, and who we're made as a people and that's what the church is to be involved in—that restorative work. It's largely through people's vocations that culture changes. So, I want people to think in terms of ‘How can my business be a change agent?’”

Dave, whose church’s worship liturgy is based on the four-part gospel story, shared how at the end of each worship service, there is a recommissioning of the people to their vocational ministries in the world, “intentionally mentioning that the call is to all these secular spheres that they are being sent back out into.” He said that his Benediction often sounds something like this: “Now having experienced the grace of God and the love of Jesus in community, go from this place and make this world a clear image of the One who has loved you so. Extend the grace of God and love your neighbor as yourself. In your homes with your families and your roommates, on your street blocks, both with friend and enemy, in your workplaces and wherever God might take you in this city, in

your neighborhood and around the world. And know, with full assurance, that God is with you. And as a final reminder of that, receive this final promise, your benediction from Second Corinthians: The grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ be with you.”

Brett said that people in the congregation “appreciate that we’re trying to talk to them in what they do most of their lives. So often pastors, when they give stories and examples, it’s about the missionary overseas. So, we’re trying to meet people where they’re at and they find that encouraging.”

Sam has shifted the language of “commissioning” toward an emphasis on “people according to every vocational sector.” “We have them stand up. We say, anybody who’s in an arts related field, you’re a graphic designer, an art teacher, a musician, stand up and we’re going to commission you. We commission our pastors and our missionaries, but we now want to commission you. It is encouraging to hear people really resonating with that.”

Dave wants to be sure that the language of vocation isn’t too lofty that people will not understand it and apply it to their normal, ordinary lives. “We need to rearticulate this theology of vocation for the construction worker in a language that they can connect with and understand, translated so that they don’t have to read Kuyper or whatever.” When asked what he’s concerned with, he said, “It’s just that in some of these gatherings that I’ve been a part of with different pastors and the experts in this topic, you hear this lofty language. I want to explain this idea of the *missio Dei* expressed and actualized through their daily work in terms that can be grasped and applied. I think I know how to do it if I’m sitting in a room with overeducated professionals. That’s my personal background, it’s my natural mindset, it’s easy to pass on the things that I’ve read and learned without a

great need to do translation work. But now I'm convicted in how to articulate this, how to translate this, to the blue-collar worker, the housewife, the normal person."

3) Incorporating the Concepts of Vocation into Sermons and Prayers

As we've already mentioned, the participants have incorporated the four-part gospel story and the concepts associated with a theology of vocation into their Sunday worship, such as Dave's benediction and Sam's commissionings. They also were intentional with incorporating the concepts of vocation into sermon series, congregational prayer times, Sunday school classes, small groups, conferences, and fellows programs.

Steve, when asked how the members of his congregation have come to realize that they are on mission through their various vocations as a participation in the Mission of God, said, "I'd say that's a really important question. We ask that a lot as a leadership team. I would say a couple things. One is that we work hard to make Sunday mornings a formative time in people's vocational mission. Through messages, through a lot of liturgies on Sunday mornings. Sunday morning is a really important time for us to get the broadest DNA grip, through whoever's teaching, our mindset, our worship leader's prayer. We have to increasingly make this the water we swim in."

Jack said that a sermon series on vocation was actually formative in his own understanding of its importance. "Early in our journey toward emphasizing vocation in our church, we did a message series on work that was really transformative in getting the message out. It was very well received by our congregation and helped me more as I crafted it, realizing the change that needed to be made. I think that also stimulated my ability to rethink my ministry practices, realizing that our church's mission was impoverished because of an impoverished theological vision of Scripture. I found an

intersection where I had quite a few a-ha moments. Oh, this is why I'm feeling this way about our concept of spiritual formation, this is why I'm feeling this way about the lack of integralness in our missions."

Brett said, "The Senior Pastor would have me, the guy who specializes in faith-and-work, preach on it on labor day. Which always left me a little flat. Like sure, I'll do it, I'm happy to, so I did that a bunch of times. But I feel like it was almost counterproductive because people were like, 'Oh yeah, it's the work sermon.' I feel like it's so much more valuable when it's the natural examples you use as you preach."

Many of the pastors emphasized that it was important to talk about vocations and calling on a normal basis, as a standard part of many of their sermons. As Brett said, "I feel like that's a far more robust thing than, 'Okay, you gave me my faith and work sermon; I got sermoned up on this.' We did that, but I was much happier when there were sermons with an honest application of the passage to issues of vocation."

Tom echoed this when he said, "Another key thing we've done is that those of us who preach try to get at some of these things within sermons—whether or not it's the main point of the sermon. So, illustrations within the sermons or during teachings within the sermon about the value of work and the value of people's jobs and the value of vocations."

Dave said, "I sprinkle the value of vocation often in sermons. Last year during Easter, while doing a series on the Resurrection, I took the opportunity to talk about the physicality of God's work in the world. And even these past two weeks I talked about Daniel moving through this world as an Exile." For Dave, "preaching is not just a fully

dedicated sermon series on vocation and work but more so taking opportunities to drop these themes in here and there.”

Sam shared the insights of a recent sermon series through Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians. “Paul does something very interesting in this letter. He uses his work as an apostle as a template for common work. In chapter two, he describes how he goes about his work as an apostle. We did not seek to take advantage of you or to fraud or exploit you to use our power illegitimately against you. Then he says not only did we give the word of the gospel to you, we gave our very lives to you. Then in chapter four he talks about work as a quiet life. He says I want you to lead quiet lives where you work with your own hands. And give attention to the things that are right in front of you. So, in this sermon series, we have spent several weeks unpacking how Paul uses his apostolic work as a template for common work. It pushes back against created culture because he’s asking them to view themselves as servants. The goal of their lives is not to reach the pinnacle of their professions but is to serve well and to be faithful.”

Brett shared a story of how even a bad sermon can be used by God. “I remember—you know we’ve all got dogs—we’ve all preached bad sermons. I remember one, it was just a terrible sermon. That sucker barked! But with that one, I had more emails and calls from people who were business people in the congregation. I had about five or ten say ‘That was such a powerful sermon and spoke to me,’ and I was like, ‘What? It sucked!’ So, I went back and looked at it and all of my examples and illustrations were related to my time at work. I think, even though I still would say it’s a bad sermon, what made it impactful to people is that I was giving them stories that

related to where they were, and they felt this deep connection with that sermon. God's power is perfect in our weakness."

Ben also made the point that vocation should naturally be a part of many sermons. "We preach sermon series on this and incorporate this in sermons. But that being said, there are a lot of important things to touch on in sermons. Although vocation is integral to what it means to do God's will in the world, it's always going to be one of the many things that you have to preach on. Because there are many things that are important and that's okay. I would say that for me, vocation is not the tail that wags the dog. Vocation is a very important tail on the dog—but there are about 10 tails."

Steve made a point that should seem obvious to preachers. "Because I'm so involved in the vocational lives of the people in my congregation, I am never in want of a sermon illustration!"

Some of the pastors spotlight people and their vocations on Sunday mornings. Sam said, "One of the things we are doing as part of congregational worship is what I'm calling 'All of Life Interviews.'" Sam told the story of one of those interviews. "I interviewed a taxi driver and I gave him the questions in advance that I ask everyone, 'Where do you see the brokenness of the world? Not by watching the news, but your own experience of life.' 'In what ways, in the doing of your work, do you embody some aspect of the character of God?' And, 'In what way, by doing your work, do you make tangible, visible, the shalom of the world made new?' And so, the taxi guy, he was great. He's got this mop of black curly hair and he's appears kind of oafish. But, he starts waxing eloquently. He says, 'People trust their lives to me. They get into my car and my car is the universe, it's the whole world and my job is to keep them safe. I want them to

really know that there is a safe place in the world for them and if they know it in my cab then they can know it's true in Jesus too. Everyone I take is going somewhere. I pick up people and they're on their way to interviews, and they're full of hope. I pick up people at the airport and they didn't get the job they wanted and they're devastated. I get to care for them and be present in their lives in these moments of real discouragement and provide some hope. I'll pick up somebody at 4 o'clock in the morning and they're so drunk they can't even stand up and I get to take them safely home.' And it was really powerful to hear him. I'm just standing there holding the microphone and he's just going on. This Sunday I have a homeschool mom of five kids who's going to do the interview and her answers will be very different. And that's the idea, there's not a stock answer we're looking for, we just want to hear what it looks like in the circumstances of your life.”

Many of the participants said that giving weight to people's vocations in their congregational prayer times has been transformative to their ministries and their congregants. Ben was emphatic, saying, “Of all we've done as a church to teach the importance of vocation, the most significant thing we've done is praying for people in their jobs, paid or unpaid, in the same vein that we pray for people who are missionaries and para-church workers.” His church is very intentional in how they go about this prayer time. “Every Sunday, we'll pray for four or five 'full time Christian ministers' and four or five parishioners who work—by name and occupation.” When asked how his church practically gets the information they need for such prayers, Ben said, “It may seem like a lot of work, finding out what people are doing and how to pray for them, but why wouldn't you do it? This is just another administrative function in the church. What

church now doesn't have a database? And how hard is it to do a congregational survey? Every now and then you do those things anyway, right? Asking questions and so on. Who doesn't have some kind of intake form? How hard is it to add – ‘What do you do?’ on the intake form and it all goes in the database. It's not hard.”

Dave said, “Prayer times weekly will involve prayer for different aspects of the neighborhood. We’ll pray for our missionaries. We’ve prayed for small businesses in the neighborhood, for law enforcement, crosswalk workers. We pray for young people, the elderly. We try to reflect this all of life, Kuyperian thing in the way we pray. Not in explicit terms, giving some kind of Calvinistic explanation of why we do it this way and how it applies to your work, but it’s there week in and week out as a tacit affirmation. When we pray for the schools, we let our people know that if you’re a teacher you are doing the work of God, if you’re a crosswalk volunteer, etc., we have just prayed for your work because your work matters.”

Brett’s church included the prayers in their weekly bulletin. “Every week we have an insert in the bulletin, ‘The Flock Note,’ which is prayer requests and stuff, and every week we feature marketplace servants of the week listed by category. So, this week, please pray for all the accountants; next week, pray for all the food service workers; next, students. Rotating through a list. We also included that in our worship service’s pastoral prayer every time.”

Sam stated, “We have men and women who lead in congregational prayer each week. We’re a small enough church that we can stand up and folks can express their praises and petitions each week and the typical routine is to have somebody then wrap it

up with a pastoral-type prayer. But I really ask the folks leading that prayer to include prayers for our vocations. It's a normal part of our weekly rhetoric."

Steve says that these prayers make an impression on people. "When we talk about the dignity of work and pray in general for people's vocations, I've heard stories about people getting teary-eyed at like 'Wow, somebody actually cares! Not just for the missionary or Aunt Sally, but we are actually praying for God to bless my job!' That's unusual for people."

4) Developing a Ministry Paradigm that Nurtures Relationships

The participants all told stories that emphasized the importance of relationships within the congregation as the primary instigator and sustainer of applying a theology of vocation to the mission of God's people. Many echoed what Tom said, "We decided we are going to be intentionally relational—relationships matter."

Tom's intentionality came from a realization of his ineptitude in relationship-building. "What we realized early on is that we are relational dummies. Particularly in our congregation. And I'm the chief of relational dummies. We talk about being relational, but we really don't know how to do relationships well. We believe that relationships are at the heart of the faith—church is not brick and mortar, it's about people and relationship." Tom realized that he has a responsibility to provide his people with the tools for developing good relationships. "We felt like a lot of churches talk about relationships but we don't teach people how to do that. Make a friend—okay, how do I do that? We think the New Testament gives us great prompts of how to do that inside the body, and, as well, to apply those principals to coworkers or fellow classmates." Therefore, he decided to create a paradigm and curriculum on how to have Christian

relationship. He said, “We’ve developed what we call the five ways of being. Based on the New Testament – the ‘one-anothers.’ Be accepting, be hospitable, be encouraging, be forgiving, and be loving. That’s the soil of our community ethos.” This is an application of a deep commitment to helping people in their vocations. “We teach what it means to accept someone in the workplace—to receive them as Christ has received you—how can you accept someone without having to agree with them. Does acceptance mean approval? We talk about that a lot, and we revisit these almost every year in January with a five-week series teaching on these relational components. Trying to help people develop relational skills to be better parents, spouses, friends, coaches, employees—just living in that relational realm because we think if people relate better to one another in all those spaces it will make the world a little bit more like God intended it to be.”

Jack issued a caution about a theology of vocation that is void of the importance of relationships. “The danger of vocation language is that we tend to make it so privatized in our cultural context. People think it’s about ‘me and my work, me and what I do,’ but the biblical design is collaboration, it’s community.” Steve says that relationships in small groups in which people talk a lot about their vocation is part of the “church’s culture.” He also has purposefully placed his church’s administrative offices in the heart of the business district that many of his congregants work, believing that “where this office is sets a culture for our church.”

Jack and others spoke of the biblical concept of *shalom* that requires pastors to emphasize that what God wants from humans is to build relationships and work collaboratively for the common good. “So, very early on in the story we introduce people to God’s design for human flourishing, it’s not just individual, it’s collective. That’s the

on-ramp in the creation narrative to economics. We unpack the Great Commandment a little more fully because I think we have an impoverished view of that.”

Sam also made the point that a theology of vocation is relational and sacrificial for the sake of others. “What has become much of my teaching about calling is that ‘It’s not about me.’ I think that the common question about calling these days is ‘What is God’s will for my life? What am I supposed to do?’ And I think at a very significant level that’s the wrong question to ask because it’s not about us.” Sam makes a significant connection between vocation and the teachings of Jesus. “There is a real reversal in the kingdom of God that brings us fulfillment and significance that are counter to our intuition. As Jesus says, ‘How do you find yourself? You give yourself away.’ I think that’s true in this area of calling and vocation as well in that if the focus of our search remains ourselves, then I’m measuring everything by how I’m doing—by my own successes and failures. It’s quite liberating and transformative to say my life is not about what I accomplish; my life is about what God is accomplishing in Christ and I’m a part of that. That’s a work that will never fail, will never be derailed, and now I’m a contributor to that work through this kaleidoscope of opportunities.”

This means allowing people in the congregation to minister to each other with their gifts. Sam said, “I’ve gotten to know the people in our church, and I think that what myself and the elders try to do is ask, when a need arises, ‘Who’s gifted to meet that need? Who’s positioned best to speak to that need?’ Because it’s far too easy to say, ‘Oh, I’m the pastor, I’m the savior. I’ve been sent here by God to be everything that you need.’ It’s very easy to develop that kind of messiah complex, but we are trying to be sure to encourage the people in our church to use their gifts to minister to one another.”

This utilizing people's gifts is related to their vocations. "A major way they do that is through a vocational frame—they each have callings that are undergirded by those gifts that God has given them. So, our leadership looks at the fellowship as this great well of grace entrusted to us that we should learn to draw from, and part of our leadership is to say to people, 'You're gifted to do this. You're in a position to do this. Would you prayerfully consider?' Instead of assuming we're the guys, so we should do it."

Brett also makes the point that our giftings and our vocations are meant to bring shalom or flourishing to others. "As a theological principal, I really do believe that our gifting is not for our good but for someone else's good. There's an economy in the kingdom of God where what is entrusted to one is ultimately for the benefit of another. And so, we teach people to intentionally make that exchange."

5) Purposeful Discipleship of People in their Vocations

Each of the pastors relayed stories of how they had personally discipled people in their vocations and how they encouraged a pastoral culture of doing so.

Brett said, "What we did as a technique so that people would begin to live missionally through their vocations is a one-on-one discipleship model. So, we really had a two-pronged approach, we had more formal classes in our Fellows Program and in our church's Sunday Schools, and I also found myself meeting with people one-on-one." Ben did not actually intentionally seek to do one-on-one discipleship. "Ironically, I am not usually a huge fan of one-on-one models, because the problem is that they don't scale well, they only scale to the level that your time is available. So, I'm much more of a fan of one-on-several, of a small group discipleship mode. But in our case, it seemed to

simply develop into more of a one-on-one because I found that if I could have conversations with somebody, they would start to really get it. I'd get calls out of the blue from people wanting to have lunch and talk about their lives, and especially their vocations. It surprised me.”

It seems that as a matter of on-the-ground ministry, pastors naturally found themselves in one-on-one discussions with people about their vocations. For some, it was purposefully going out and meeting people at their workplaces. For others, the meetings came as people sought the pastor out for advice. Sam said, “As we got more into this discussion on the importance of vocations, these meetings one-on-one would spring up organically.”

Part of the reason these conversations happen is that the pastors have made it clear to their congregations that this is a normal part of discipleship. Meeting people at their work has a significant impact on this. Tom said, “One of the things that's been cool is to go visit my people in their places of employment and spend an hour in their workplace. I do this two or three times a month. Once a week or so, I'm with someone in their space, on their turf. One of the things I've learned is that it affirms people in their work. Going to them, on their terms. Years ago, I used to say, 'Let's meet for lunch somewhere,' and I would pull them out of that workspace and we'd meet. I don't know why, I guess it's just because that's what you did. Pastors don't show up at workplaces; there's a divide there. That's why I did it. Would this person even be embarrassed to have their pastor show up at their workplace? Now I intentionally meet them right there at work.”

Jack says that discipleship of people in their work has become a part of his church's culture. “Our foundational culture was focused on the development of

leadership and then we discovered that discipleship was integral to that. Then as I discovered how vocation is integral to discipleship, all three of these things have become the links in our church's DNA." He told the story of a recent workplace visit. "I spent four hours the other day with a medical team, with one of our parishioners who is a cardiologist. And I couldn't have imagined this when I first went into pastoral ministry that this would be a part of my pastoral practice to spend time with people in their workspace. He's a newer parishioner and I asked if I could visit him. He was excited to let me. So, I observed and scrubbed up and met his team and observed his work and it was just fabulous. But it's just like, you know, that was part of my practice just like a hospital visit. Transformational to him and to me, and to us as a church because now I can relate that experience to others to nurture this idea that what you do in your various vocations matters."

Why are workplace visits so transformative? Jack said, "On a practical level, I think that workplace visitations are the most important thing we can do, it dynamically changes our prayer life, it changes the discipleship relationship, it says something to our congregation that discipleship does matter in their life, in all of life, every day."

Ben agrees, and makes it clear that workplace visitations are a foundational part of shepherding people. "You must have a good theology behind it—the danger is that we may treat it as a fad. Or the latest church growth gimmick. I have been gripped by the importance of my stewardship to disciple my people and to enter their world of work as a part of shepherding. It has transformed my preaching, prayer, discipleship and the relationship that I have with my congregation. I could go on and on in that. But it's profoundly transforming to be the pastor of a congregant when the pastor initiates a

workplace visit and truly cares and learns and listens and gains understanding of that person's calling. It's absolutely transformational."

Dave echoed this idea that vocational discussions is a major part of his role as a pastor. "I try to make vocation a point when I meet with people. It's part of shepherding people more generally. I always do make it a point to ask how life at work is going. I'm committed to that just as much as I ask them how their communion with Jesus is.

Actually, those are the two areas of emphasis that I hear when we believe the promises of the Gospel. Jesus's ministry inwardly for them: confessing your sins, do you know your Father loves you today? That bundle. But also, the second: What's going on at work? How can I pray for you? What are your challenges? Are you working with some sense of contributing to God's work in this world? Usually, for most people, this is a new thing. But I just invite a conversation around that."

Many of the pastors spoke of creating a church culture in which people's vocations are celebrated as important to God's mission. Dave said, "When people apologize, 'I was busy at work, sorry I was late to this meeting,' I try to drop a response like, 'Your work is important—glad that you were doing it well—glad that you're here.' So, if you're doing too much church, we'll get on your case. I do my best to cultivate that kind of culture." John talks about how discipling people is a part of a "DNA change" that needs to be done at the most basic level in order to influence the church's culture of how a Christian lives his or her life.

John establishes this church culture on the very front-end of his assimilation process. "When a new member comes to sign up to be a member our church, they sit down with my wife and I for a new member interview. We hand them the church

directory and open it to the back and see all the businesses represented by our congregation, or their schools or the creative titles that stay-at-home moms make for themselves, that are listed in the back of the directory, people we pray for weekly. I know where every single person in my church works or goes to school. This knocks these people off their feet. They are expecting us to answer questions about the softball team or is there a youth ministry, but here I have a chance to gauge how integrated this person is. Here's what these new people do, some of them, they ask, 'Why do you want to know about my job? What does it have to do with the church?' Assimilation into the church is an opportunity to create artifacts and rituals that support our vision of vocation."

John also makes it a major part of his ongoing pastoral counseling ministry. "People come talk with me for pastoral counseling. Because that's mostly how I do my pastoral care; I'm gifted as a counselor. We have our office and I have an area where we do counseling and people work through things within their vocational setting. Because as we seek to be integrated people, they feel like they can work on their stuff with me. We discuss things like, 'What am I called to?' 'How do I do my job well and serve God and steward my resources?'"

Brett said something along the same lines as John. "I got to be known as the faith and work guy on the church staff, so I had countless conversations where someone would say, 'I want to come in and talk to you about my job, or the fact that I'm struggling about where to go in my career.' And you could take an approach that says well that's not exactly the role of the church—we're not a career counseling center. But we took the opposite approach, believing that bodies and souls are intertwined, that if you're going to care for one you're going to care for the other. But what makes pastoral counseling

unique is that we can be even deeper in our career counseling. We can ask the question of how does the meta-narrative of scripture or how does the Christian story impact what you're dealing with? Then we can sort of go down the path of asking, 'Should I take this or that job?' I try more to say, 'How does this grand narrative of what God has done inform the decision you're making?' rather than just diving into the weeds about, 'Is that job a better job than that job,' or whatever. My main role is to keep them from doing that too quick. It's far more important that, as a pastor, I ask the right questions and get their brains going. I view a lot of what I do as being to keep people from getting in the weeds of 'x vs y.' 'This one pays more, but it's a worse commute. Blah blah blah.' You care about this and I care about it because I'm your pastor, but I care far more about the fact that you're thinking about these issues with a deep biblical approach. Let's look at the deeper questions about what vocations God has made you for."

An example of this one-on-one discipleship comes from Tom. He told the story of Angie. "She is a neurologist, She is in charge of some residents, and this is a very recent case: There's a resident that was not performing up to standards and she had to make a decision. Am I going to fire this person, or am I going to coach them? This is an opportunity. This is not just a business ethical decision—this goes to the core of who she is as a follower of Jesus and she feels deeply committed to nurturing the next generation of doctors. Her supervisor told her, 'This is your call; you're responsible. You can fire the resident and eliminate the problem but if you don't fire him then you must coach him up.' This is an opportunity to pray. She processed this with myself and some others who are part of our church that are in the medical profession, further along in their careers. What does discernment look like? She made the decision not to fire him. She believes in his

potential, but she must take the responsibility to coach him. This is a real time case study of what I think is a spiritual formative process. Not just go study the book of Colossians and figure out intellectually what this means. What does it mean to believe in and to nurture people? What does it mean to have a shepherding heart for people in the marketplace?”

Jack has made it a major part of his leadership training curriculum. “Because I had a faulty paradigm, my primary focus was for leaders within the church. I had the idea that, like any institution or enterprise, everything rises or falls on leadership. So, twenty-some years ago, when I was developing this church, I was primarily focused on that. I had the presumption that the local church and the nuclear family were the two key components to flourishing or developing Christians. But I didn’t know at that time the importance of what people were doing in their individual callings—no, that had to come later and that’s a big part of what I was missing...So, we’ve been adjusting our curriculum for our leadership pathway, particularly in the areas of spiritual formation, mission, and vocation.”

Some of the pastors have instigated relational cohort groups so that people can encourage one another in their vocations. Tom is one of them. He said, “We started these groups we call Vocarē Groups within the congregation. We do some general work on vocation. We’ve written some brief essays that get at vocation generally. We’ve tried to get as many of our people through that understanding and we have some specific groups that meet. A business owner group, an education group, a healthcare group. We try to bring affinity groups together.”

Sam also has created vocational groups. “We have people meet in different vocational categories and we trained some people to facilitate that time, whether it was business, or arts or education. Just trying to get people to think about things they had never thought about before.”

This training is based on what the participants had learned from their own cohort groups that met with Steve Garber and/or Amy Sherman and the materials they receive from them. However, for Tom, it also was more based on what the participants brought to the table. “Other than the basic, brief essays on vocation, we don’t really have a curriculum. It’s real-life case studies. What’s going on in your life? How does it look like to live Christianly in our work relationships, showing acceptance, hospitality, encouragement, forgiveness and love? We talk about spiritual practices, scripture, prayer, service, sabbath and examine. How do those get mapped into my vocation? At the end of the day, how do we invite God into the fullness of our day? Search me, O God, try my heart.”

As part of leadership training, a number of the pastors were intentional in delegating to their leaders this task of developing disciples in their vocations. Steve stated, “I do my best to not allow leadership to arise simply by popularity. I really want people who will be empowered to lead to understand and own the vision of vocation. They don’t have to understand one hundred percent and all the implications of it. But they need to have a heart for this.”

Sam said, “Usually the significant dividing line in leadership is the difference between shepherding and administration. In our denomination, there’s a significant group of our churches that look at leadership as administration and the gatekeepers or guardians

of the confession. While I think that's true, I think our day to day activity must be in pastoral equipping and encouraging the saints to live faithfully. It is to have them value and understand this view of work and vocation that really is not trying to jerk them out of the academy or out of medicine or out of any other realm of cultural life and say they have to go be a missionary and do something that really matters to God. No, I want to know that our church's leaders are saying to each person, 'I'm committed to helping you flourish as a vet, or a server at a restaurant, an administrator, a teacher.' I want to know that my colleagues in leadership are communicating that message of calling to the congregation."

When it comes to church staffing, Brett said, "I don't staff for faith-and-work ministry per se, but rather staff for an assistant pastor or whatever position I'm hiring, and as part of the interview process try to assess whether this is something the person's got as a passion. Problem is it's not going to be the easiest thing to find—their seminary probably didn't prepare them well for this and since this is important to us as part of the DNA of our church, it needs to be something that we have to help you get up to speed on. There will be a need to be some sort of your ongoing training of people you hire. I'd rather hire talent and coach and teach them, than hire someone who is passionate about faith and work who wouldn't be a good pastor."

Ben believes that if a church truly believes that vocation is important, then they'd staff for it. "So, you look at our Senior Pastor's four things that he really wants to be excited about—bringing others to new life in Christ, developing the next generation of leaders, strong marriages and families, and helping people to serve God in their workplace. But just look at how many folks are on staff. How many folks are paid to help

others experience new life in Christ—maybe seven or ten. How many folks are paid to develop young leaders? A lot—I'm talking 12 or 15. How many people are paid to help with pastoral care and family life and so forth? A few. And how many are paid to do vocation? None. So, even though it's one of the four emphases of the church's pastor, I wouldn't even call it a dominant message of this church based on that. We need to staff for that which we believe is important.”

Steve plans on staffing for a specialist in vocation. “Well, on staff you’ve got me in that office and Ken in that office who is in charge of community groups and pastoral care. I have one more office in which I’d like to see someone who will disciple people in their workplaces.”

However, Brett, because of his experience of being the “faith and work pastor” in his church, believes that this kind of position may actually be detrimental. “At one point, we got rid of the missions pastor position because what had happened was people in the church who cared about missions gravitated to it, and everybody else sort of said ‘Okay, well, that’s the missions people thing, I’m not part of that ministry so I’m not going to worry about it.’ So, you ended up with a core that was deeply passionate about it and everyone else just ignored it because they thought, ‘Well, those people are doing that.’ And instead what we want to be saying is, ‘No, everyone cares about missions and it needs to be worked into all our other ministries so it’s not like people can ignore that part of God’s call.’ I worry about having a guy who gets known as the faith and work guy that it might turn into the exact same thing. The ones who care deeply about it land on your doorstep and the ones who don’t want to think about how their vocation and faith relate,

just don't. I think that it's better when it's just an organic emphasis that all of us pastors have—it's a far stronger thing than sort of the specialized thing.”

Challenges Pastors Experienced

The second research question sought to determine what challenges pastors experienced as they were leading their congregations to participate in God's mission through their vocations. The first theme that surfaced had to do with the difficulty of overcoming ingrained presumptions among the Christians in their churches, including a) Ingrained presumptions about the gospel, b) Ingrained presumptions about church programming, and c) Ingrained presumptions about work. The second main theme was the struggle that they experienced as they dealt with the variegated issues that people face in their vocations.

1) The Difficulty of Overcoming Ingrained Presumptions

Three ingrained presumptions were identified: a) Ingrained presumptions about the gospel, b) Ingrained presumptions about church programming, and c) Ingrained presumptions about work.

a) Ingrained presumptions about the gospel

One of the challenges that the participants experienced was with Christians in their congregations having been taught theological paradigms that undermine a theology of vocation. Even though Brett served in a PCA church with reformed theology, he had to handle the challenge of the pervasiveness of dispensational theology. He realized that in order to get to vocation, he had to first teach the underpinnings of a gospel that is described in terms of the story of Creation / Fall / Redemption / Consummation. “The

hard part is when it really comes down to it, you are dealing with this sort of basic dispensational covenant worldview, people may not be willing to go with you with creation, fall, redemption, consummation. If they don't get that, they're certainly not going anywhere else. So, the first task is to get people to say, 'Yes. Unquestionable. I'm entirely there with you.' And then you have to then say, 'Okay, let's really unpack the implications of that—You see pre-fall in Genesis 1 and 2 you see post-fall in Revelation 21 and 22. What can we say about all this? You're really helping people make such a massive shift in their understanding of biblical history and the structure of theology.'"

Therefore, Brett had to not jump right into the intricacies of a theology of vocation with his congregants; he had to first offer a more foundational curriculum. "So, what I put together isn't actually a 'faith and work' curriculum. What I'm doing is putting together a basic Christian leadership biblical literacy curriculum but then, in its final third, we really delve into the implications for vocation because otherwise if you just pitch it as a 'faith and work' thing they may have trouble adapting to it. You may have the best curriculum in the world that nobody uses because they presume they know what it means—that is, a very truncated view of why we work, rather than the holistic view that I want them to embrace."

Ben, echoing what Brett was experiencing, identified another aspect of the problem. "Many people have such a hard time getting this because they've been immersed in the pedagogy that created the hard time getting this.... I think for decades and probably longer than that, the primary way that you served God with your work was to evangelize your co-workers. They've been taught that the context of the workplace is where you display Christian character as a witness to how Jesus changes your ethics. And

that's how you create a platform for personal evangelism, right? So, now that this pedagogy has been lodged in, it's very difficult to communicate, no, the work that you're doing actually has Kingdom value.”

Many of the pastors identified that one of the sources of the challenge to teach vocation as the means to participate in God’s mission is the false sacred/secular dualism inherent in much of North American Christianity. Dave remarked, “I think for many people they still do have a latent lingering sacred/secular divide, especially people who grew up in more traditional church settings. Anyone who comes to our church and have highly church backgrounds have this dualistic understanding of church and then the rest of life. It’s so prevalent, across the board. I would also say that many who either grew up in the Hispanic Pentecostal community or the African-American church, there can tend to be more of this binary thinking.”

Jack also encounters people with preconceived notions of what the Bible teaches, but he embraces their challenge. “Thoughtful people really want to ask, ‘Is this really what the biblical text teaches?’ Because so many of us see what we know rather than know what we see. So, we have a lot of thoughtful conversation on this. They ask, ‘Are you overcorrecting this?’ Someone said to me not too long ago when I was teaching out of Genesis 2, ‘Oh, Crap!, You’re right! I hadn’t seen that before!’”

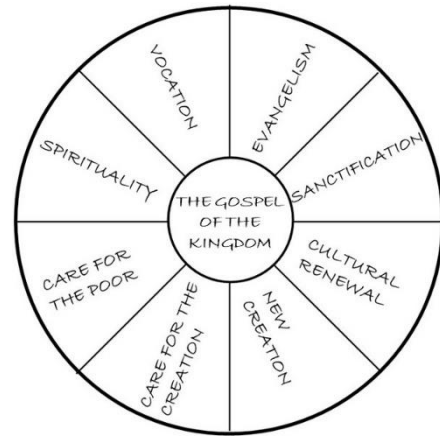
Steve showed his feelings about this, saying, “I get frustrated at the way Christians have been taught an anemic gospel that narrowly defines our mission in terms of merely saving souls, as important as that is. Frustration at the shallow vision of evangelical mission. But, thankfully, there are various sea changes that have gone on in

the evangelical church in the last twenty years. We see changes toward a more holistic gospel; it's great. Evangelicalism is growing up, it's maturing.”

The participants know that people will push back on focusing on vocation because they have a legitimate commitment to the centrality of evangelism to the Christian mission. Sam explained how it can be difficult to explain, in a nuanced way, a holistic gospel that includes both. “When we start talking about the value of vocation, we say, ‘Look it’s not about evangelism at work, it’s not about just being ethical at work,’ but we have to be careful that we don’t mean don’t evangelize or be ethical at work. We need to be aware that the old guard will be suspicious, all too aware of the social gospel disaster that happened at the mainline protestant church in the early part of the last century. So, I have purposefully kept my eye on never letting this get divorced from sin, forgiveness of sin, Christ’s propitiation for us. Because there is a set of people who are getting very unhappy about the faith and work movement in the church because they think we’re stepping away from the gospel. Just like there will be people who get so into social justice that they forget sin and redemption. So, I wonder if there’s a two-chapter backlash coming at some point. We need to be careful that faith and work doesn’t go too far this way and that we value all aspects of the gospel.”

Jack agreed with this concern, saying, “I think there is always a concern that we may overemphasize vocation to the point that we will lose our passion for church ministry or missionary work or evangelism.”

Ben teaches a very holistic vision of the gospel to his people. “This is the way I would talk about how holistic the gospel is. The gospel is all of these things.” (At this point, Ben started drawing a diagram on a piece of paper of a pie chart, see my version of what he originally drew). “You’ve got vocation, personal spirituality, caring for the poor, caring for the creation, growing in sanctification, working for cultural renewal, living in the hope of new



creation, evangelism. I'm not willing to diminish any of them. These pie-partitions should be of equal size. So, if evangelism has taken over 40% of this pie, which one do you have to diminish? I would say that if there's anything that is foundational, it is this. The Gospel at the center is the Good News of the Kingdom of God. And that's Jesus. That's Jesus in Luke 4.”

However, Jack was not willing to place evangelism as just one piece of the pie. He said, “We want to preach with conversion in mind, and have clarity about God’s grace, that people need to come to Jesus so they don’t spend eternity apart from God. I think that has to be in front of us, on a heart level.” Jack does add that he wants his people to see the broader vision of the gospel, saying, “But that’s not all. I gently help people to open up their view of the gospel, that is, those who have a more pietistic frame of mind. That is not necessarily wrong—it’s just that we have to realize that our eyes are a bit myopic, we need to open them up a little bit. Some people are going to be resistant, so I just keep going back to what the scripture teaches, because if we don’t have a rich theological vision from the text, then the consequences are profound. Without that, then

pastoral priorities and practices, as well as the congregation's formation, are going to be impoverished. So, there is a lot on the line here.”

b) Ingrained presumptions about church programming

Another difficulty that pastors faced in implementing a paradigm of ministry that focuses on vocation as a major part of Christian discipleship was how people had ingrained presumptions about what the church should be doing with its programming.

Tom shared this typical frustration as he tried to establish the culture of his church plant. “My experience here in our part of the country is that it’s hard to find a pure unchurched person. Most people have church baggage and it’s hard to shed that stuff. Probably my biggest job my first couple of years as a church planter was saying no. People got pissed off at me. They’d say, ‘We should do this program.’ Why should we do that? ‘Because the church down the street does it.’ ‘When are we going to get a youth pastor?’ Why? ‘Because you have to have a youth pastor to be a real church.’ A lot of people got angry because I said no, we’re not going to do any church programming. Trying to break people of that addiction. Trying to focus, rather, on what people are doing Monday through Saturday.”

Sam’s experience was along the same lines. “I’d say the biggest challenge is with families. There are a lot of families who have very strong expectations about how the church should serve children. We’re not indifferent to kids, but we’re not a programmatic church. We have to be intentional with what we can or can’t do with the resources that we have. There have been a number of families who have chosen not to worship with us because our focus is not enough on children’s programming. But for the families who do stick around they understand how we engage the children within the fullness of the life of

the church to contribute to their spiritual life maturity—its just not in the normal way churches often do it. It's part of the whole ethos of living for the sake of the world through all that we do. I think that the families who stay eventually get that.”

Both Tom and Sam are often under pressure from people in the congregation to buy a church building, which forces them and their leadership to continually talk about what kind of church culture they are trying to nurture and maintain. “There’s a church that closed and the building’s available in our neighborhood,” Tom said. “And we have to have that conversation again: Who are we? What’s our DNA? And it’s good to revisit that. Do we want to spend a million dollars to purchase a building? Or are we more interested in where we are now placing our resources, into the people as they live out their faith in the marketplace?” Interestingly, Sam also used the terminology of “DNA,” saying, “We’re committed to being in the downtown area. So, we found an art theater that’s a nonprofit theater downtown. It was a good opportunity to do some DNA stuff with the congregation and say, ‘What is it that’s driving our decision to stay downtown? What is driving our decision to not buy a building? What is it that’s influencing all these decisions?’” Part of what drives their decisions is a desire to not go the traditional route of being a church that meets in a building, where the building becomes the “identifier of who we are as a church.” Sam wants a church culture that says that their “church” is the “people out there making a difference in the world.”

On the other hand from these more traditional presumptions, some young adults have come to the participants’ churches with expectations not rooted in traditionalism, but rather rooted in the more recent missional movement. They want the church to be so “missional” in their neighborhoods that they don’t get the idea of living out the faith in

their already established vocations. John, having recently planted a church, attracts people with preconceptions of what a modern church plant should do. “We have people who come and talk a lot about being missional, wanting us to create missional groups. They’re into these massively high-profile things to do as missional outreaches, but I believe that this creates more fragmentation in people’s lives. People are already maxed out and now your church is asking you to go do something else. Why don’t you spend more time with your son? He doesn’t even know how to ride a bike. Why is that? Because you’re off in the missional world. C’mon dude, let’s get that work done. When I was serving in a big outreach church, we had a lot of already maxed out people who were very involved in the church life, but they didn’t live well as human beings.”

Ben echoed this suspicion of the missional movement. “I believe they compartmentalize what it means to share the Gospel. It’s all about a church-wide movement to go clean up the neighborhood or plant a community garden or serve at food banks. They don’t see the way in which they’re being effective vocationally.”

John further illustrated what he feels is wrong with the missional movement. “You’re not an effective lawyer if you get up and say your prayers in the morning and then act like a jerk in front of the judge. But you feel that you’re a good Christian because on Sunday, your midsize group, as a missional movement, goes out and serves at the homeless bank. You can be a complete disintegrated human being as a lawyer. An integrated lawyer is one who says his prayers in the morning and then goes out and solves problems for human beings in a way that honors God and serves the common good and blesses the community and brings flourishing to God’s Kingdom. That’s how God’s Kingdom will come.”

Dave wants to be careful in emphasizing that people should redeploy their vocational training in the church. “The missional movement is so church-centric. They talk about vocation, but they want people to use their vocational gifts in the context of the church, since the church is the main thing in that paradigm. In Amy Sherman’s book on vocation, she does talk about this redeployment or redirection of people’s gifts and the stewardship of their resources. So, the banker that’s serving soup in a soup kitchen, that’s great but how much better if he can be teaching financial management to folks who need a little bit of help. So, the things that you do for a living now just apply in a different setting. Now, I get that and see the benefit of that. But what we have discussed as leaders in our church is the danger of communicating to people that your main calling isn’t your job; your main calling is your redirection and redeployment of your resources for the sake of the church’s ministry.”

Steve also has experienced the expectations of young adult Christians wanting to be more “missional.” He said, “I struggle with that because I do believe ideally we should live, work, and play in an integrated way. So, I do think the whole ecosystem of kingdom life would work better if our investment in our daily nine-to-five work and our investment in neighborhood and local community were one in the same. I don’t mean that too heavily as if to say that’s the only ideal way of going about it. But I do think we’re too dis-integrated even in the way we devote ourselves to different spheres of life, where church ministries become a completely different commitment than family time, which is also completely different from the commitment of outreach, which is a completely different sphere and geography from work.”

c) Ingrained presumptions about work

The participants shared that another challenge to their equipping people for their participation in God’s mission through their vocations was the people’s ingrained presumptions about the very nature of work. People often operate in a dualistic view of work where there is a spectrum of more sacred vs. more secular vocations, viewing some occupations as second-class in God’s kingdom. Another challenge is how pastors can affirm the goodness of work while also having to repudiate how so many make work into an idol.

It is challenging to pastors to overcome an ingrained sacred-secular dualism when it comes to vocations. Steve is never surprised that people have this presumption. “It happens all the time. They think that what I do, as a pastor, really matters, while what they do—as a doctor, an engineer, a mom—somehow is not very important to God’s work in the world.”

Brett told the story that shows how people, even after lots of teaching on how “all vocations are intrinsic to God’s mission,” show that they “still don’t get it.” “We had this in-depth discussion about vocation. After a two-hour teaching and discussion time, when I’m feeling pretty confident that we nailed it, a guy from this church, who is a very, very solid believer, his basic comment at the end was, ‘Well that’s all very interesting, but I still think that the only thing that matters in my workplace is to share my faith and lead somebody to Christ.’ That’s not atypical.”

Sam told a similar story. “This man runs a very successful car dealership and I can’t overstate all the superlatives of his character. People in our community know that his dealership is up-and-up, honest. A great place to buy a car. But he still has this angst for whether or not he was doing anything of value for the Kingdom. That’s the

frustration: How hard it is for people to embrace this, because of what they've been taught all their lives.”

Ben is dumbfounded how Christians can embrace both this false dualism and the basic teachings of the Reformation. “How in the world do we, the inheritors and articulators of the Priesthood of All Believers, the belief that there is no vocation that is better than any other, how is it in fact that for so long we have believed that ministry vocations are better than all the other ones? It's disingenuous. You're saying one thing out of your mouth, but then we are always implicitly communicating that people who are not involved in full time Christian ministry feel like they are second class. In other words, there's this good conscientious pedagogy, but underlying it is a very powerful unconscientious pedagogy and it's the powerful unconscientious one that has been much more effective, specifically as it relates to issues of vocation and work.”

Dave identified what he called “a new secular/sacred divide” of vocations, especially among “twenty-something” believers. “It is one that esteems helping careers as being better than, and more noble than, other careers. We may easily fall into the idea that the careers that more obviously help people, serving human needs—teachers, doctors, social workers and international development folks, non-profit workers—are more godly than other forms of work, especially work that is part of the for-profit corporate world. It's a generational thing because millennials are wired to be bleeding hearts. For them, they have a great need to extract meaning from their work and to be fulfilled by some sense of contributing to the common good. Which we agree is right and proper as Christians. But it is hard for them to swallow taking a job that doesn't have any

explicit and obvious connection to help others or compassion for the needy or that sort of thing.”

Brett echoed this challenge with young adult Christians, only in the sense that they have a naïveté that every form of work should offer satisfaction. “The big problem we’ve had is ‘Idealists-R-Us.’ The big problem I see is that young people who are like, ‘I ought to feel perfectly fulfilled by my job and it ought to complete me,’ in very idolatrous ways—not the idolatry of workaholics but the idolatry of thinking that work shouldn’t be hard, it should be like a great play date. And so, I actually more often than not find myself saying, ‘Okay, remember, there’s this grand glorious creation purpose to work—Genesis 2. And it is fundamentally screwed up and difficult from Genesis 3! Remember that the curse impacted our working the ground. Get your head out of the idealist clouds.’”

The participants also have to deal with the challenge of how so many Christians have succumbed to idolatry in their work. Tom shared the typical confrontation he needs to make. “Especially with people my age, who have been trained to find their identity in their work—I know this well, because I struggle with it too—I have to have hard conversations about how they need to reassess their understanding of who they are, as an image-bearer and as a child of God. That their success at work does not determine whether or not they are a worth-while human or Christian.”

Steve has a theory as to why so many Christians fall into this trap. “I think that we have unwittingly been subverted by the prosperity gospel, where a good Christian is a success in their work, they have a wonderful home and family, they drive a nice car. It’s idolatry.”

Tom sees so many people stressed out by their overwork. “I think one of the biggest obstacles is stewardship of time. Many in our church are in an affluent, busy culture. People are busy with their jobs, working many hours a week, stress, a lot of people working for global companies. Their business is 24/7. I have a fantastic guy in my leadership team, he works for a large multi-national company. He reports to people in Germany and people in China. He’s like, ‘One of my bosses is always awake, any time day or night he’s emailing me!’ He’s a parent with two little kids and he’s just worn out. So, my ministry is trying to help him recognize that this is a difficult season of life for him—it is reality. I’m helping him to just be the person God’s created him to be in these spaces. That’s all God’s asking you to do. I feel for him, he’s so fatigued.”

Dave had to step in and tell one of his leaders to stop doing so much in ministry because he was too stretched. “There’s a man in our church who works as a researcher. He’s committed to his work, doing very well, thoughtful guy. He’s also one of our leaders in our neighborhood outreach ministry in which he spearheads a middle school boys basketball team to connect with inner city to get the Gospel to these kids along with life skills and character. It’s hard work and there’s no end to their needs. But I needed to tell him to stop doing all this stuff for these kids. I don’t want to, I really don’t. I want this ministry to thrive, it’s a massive part of our vision. But as he and I and the other leaders have conversations about that ministry and what we want to do, I realize that he’s way too stretched—he’s got a family and he’s really busy in his career. I turn to him and say, ‘You need to not think about this ministry so much and go back to that research project on your desk and not feel guilty about that.’”

Steve says, “I’m trying to call our leaders to that kind of understanding, that we all have multiple callings that God has placed on our lives, not just one and not just two. But the answer is not to think that you’ll be 100% fulfilled if you only devote yourself to one. But we don’t know how to do that. We’re not trained to do that in society. And the modern church doesn’t cultivate that understanding. What may feel like a 50% effort to you might exactly be what the Lord wants of you. Because he wants you to be not just a faithful elder in the church, but he wants you to be a faithful Dad, a small group leader, someone who rests—sabbathing well—he wants you to have leisure time in your life so that you can go and watch that movie guilt-free.”

Steve identifies this as yet another form of idolatry. “Yes, that’s part of the idolatries of our contemporary church culture, where the one thing that’s worse than being bad is being mediocre or being forgettable. And that’s hard because it means embracing our limits which we don’t like to do. It means to trust that God can feed five thousand with two fish and five loaves. We don’t need to be perfect. In fact, we should embrace that we are not, cannot, be perfect. But we don’t believe that the Kingdom can come through weakness.”

Dave said that, for the unbelievers he is reaching out to, their idolatry of work creates another challenge. “For non-Christians, especially for the millennial generation, it’s not a point of contention that their work matters—they absolutely believe that everything about their career and their work is going to change the world. Their career is the primary mindset, their reason for being, what they’re after. So sometimes unchurched or un-Christian folks, in its own weird way, don’t have a secular/sacred divide. It’s actually a secular version of the Kingdom of God that they would subscribe to. So, they

have this attitude that since God can do all these things through their work, then the church is unnecessary. They think that the church is actually messing stuff up and that's why we need more non-profits. They think that this is why they are so political, they want to get the government straight, that sort of thing."

Tom sees this as an opportunity. "In our outreach to college students, we see those who are not Christian resonating with our message that it is through our vocations that we can transform the world. It makes more sense to them than the old message of 'accept Jesus and you'll live forever in heaven after you die.'"

Dave, however, cautions the young people he ministers to with these words: "It's actually quite a luxury, certainly a blessing, but a luxury to sit back and say, 'What has God called me to do?' Most people in the world don't have that choice. And even if they did and found that they are called to some other vocation, they wouldn't have opportunity to choose otherwise."

2) The struggle to deal with the variegated issues that people face in their vocations

The participants shared that in their counseling people in how to be faithful in their vocations, they must work through some difficult issues. As Dave said, "I take seriously Ephesians—I see us as equippers of those who do the work of ministry. I believe, contrary to what some are teaching, that our equipping ministry doesn't just apply to the church's ministries but also to the world and the way the kingdom is ushered in through people's daily work. So, I have to be there, in the nitty-gritty of working through the frustrations that they are experiencing in their work."

Some of the participants indicated that, as they got more into discussing vocation with their congregations, they became more aware that many people are simply not in work that they find profoundly and clearly purposeful in God's kingdom. Sam became more aware of the need to honor people who worked in these occupations. "So, for some, there is the simple yet profound component of simple faithfulness, even in a mundane or grueling job. I love hearing from a working-class elderly man saying, 'God has called me to provide for my family.' That good, dutiful faithfulness—something that I feel the prior generation gets better than the current. Providing for my family and being a steward for the opportunity that he's given to me."

Brett's church was the one that included prayers for people's vocations in their weekly bulletins' "The Flock Note" and congregational prayer time (spotlighting various lines of work, from accountants to food service workers to students). "But when the economy turned for the worse, we became aware that not everyone actually has a job! We began praying for the people who are looking for work, so they don't feel stigmatized, doing it in a way that honors the people looking for work."

Steve agrees with this, saying, "You've got to be incredibly sensitive if you start really talking about this (vocation) a lot when you know people in your congregation can't find any job."

Dave is sensitive to how easy it is to talk about the implications of a theology of vocation with white-collar professionals and to shirk his responsibility to the rest of his congregation. "I did this panel discussion on work, with people representing different vocations and are doing this well—an architect, a policy maker on the hill, a doctor. And afterward, I'm like, 'Oh, man! I've unintentionally communicated something there!'"

People are struggling with hard modes of work, occupations that are, for a lack of a better word, not glamorous. We need to be able to minister just as well to that person working at Walmart or as a janitor.”

Of course, the pastors talked about helping congregants handle ethical dilemmas at work. Sam shared that “Oh, I can’t tell you how many times I’ve helped people talk through how to deal with office politics, gossip, back-biting. Or a boss that is passive-aggressive or an employee that needs to be fired. My counseling times are filled with helping people with these kinds of issues.”

Steve said that he sometimes needs to help people deal with the ethical ambiguities of their work. “It is frustrating that I know there are some in our church that are high-end computer programmers. Their designing code for x project, but they don’t even know what it is because of governmental security clearances. How does a person not have a hard time seeing the dignity of what they do if they suspect that they’re involved in targeted killing? I’m glad that we can talk about the ethics of that and the legality of those things. But that’s a new layer for me as a pastor: I’m frustrated because these people want answers to how their work has dignity, but I don’t quite get it! I want to be able to help them get it, but I don’t know what the answer is either.”

Results from What Pastors Did

The third research question addressed the results that pastors experienced as they led congregants to participate in God’s mission through their vocations. Four main themes were common among the participants. The themes were: 1) success in this kind of ministry is not easily quantifiable, so 2) the metric of success that they used was based on

gathering stories. Also, another result was 3) a positive impact on evangelism and church attendance.

1) Success is not Easily Quantifiable

John summed up what many of the pastors said about gauging the success of their ministry focusing on people's vocations. "If you actually get people to understand how to be an affective mother, father, husband, employee, employer, nurse, engineer, what have you, you're probably not going to be able to quantify your results. It's not highly quantifiable, yet it's exactly the kind of thing that will change a city."

There are things John can quantify: "We are certainly growing at seven percent. We have people that are not in debt and are faithful. We have forty kids under the age of eighteen. Fourteen moms gave birth and are taking care of their kids without outsourcing them to daycare. We have people getting promotions all the time." But, he said, "When it comes to knowing how well people are bringing flourishing through their vocations, I can't put a number on that. All I can say is that I want my church to live following Jesus. Meet your spouse, buy your home, get your job and make money, but let's do this all for the sake of the city—let's bring flourishing."

Only one pastor had an objectively quantifiable result of their ministry. Tom did a survey in which they asked, "How do you feel when you get up on Monday morning?" He said, that "close to 70 percent said they're excited to go to work, which I thought was pretty amazing."

Dave is excited about what's happening in his ministry, though he cannot quantify it. "I would say that helping people to live intentionally in their vocations has deeply encouraged me. This theology of vocation means that God really is at work everywhere

and in every way. And that to me is exciting. Because if the other worldview is correct then he's really only busy one day out of the week and in one place and in one way. Whereas what this does is it just opens up a whole world of possibilities. I think it lights the imagination aflame, because it means you may not see it quite distinctly, you can't look at an Excel spreadsheet and numerically know exactly what's going on, but you know that God is doing something fantastic in that office across the street. You don't know how God is working out his mission in these secret and creative ways which we will never be able to make sense of until the day brings it to life. One day. So, there's mystery, there's imagination, possibility, and that makes it exciting, fun."

The reason that it's hard to quantify is that a pastor's job is often what Ben called "upstream." "I feel it's an incredible privilege to be that person upstream, which means that the results downstream are not always known by me." Steve also said that creating his church's culture of "vocational faithfulness" is an "upstream" task. "You can't really talk about work faithfulness until you get vocational faithfulness right. Some of that is theological and worldview and some of that is applicational and practical. So how I'm prioritizing that is to get the upstream stuff in the water more in the culture of the church."

Dave said that he is encouraged that "I know that I might not work on that hill or I might not be in that non-profit, or in that inner-city school, or a mom, a single mom down the street, or the person shelving cereal boxes at Target or at Walmart but in a sense I get to be in all those places because it's my calling as a pastor of the tentacles of this vision moving into every walk of life in every corner. I'm only one person, and truth be told, I love a lot of lines of work. I would love to explore market research or be better trained in

graphic design, I would love to shape policy, or do research in a think tank, to teach. There are so many things I would do. But I get to do all those in a way with only doing one thing. I get to help shape all of those different spheres, where if I did any of those, I could only shape one. I don't mean that as a patting myself on the back to try to artificially be noble about my calling, but I'm energized by that. It helps me be motivated to slug the day to day out."

Tom echoed that thrill of serving people in their work. "I know I can't tell you very specifically some numbers that proves that this ministry is a success. I think that would be nice. Sure. But as I have this pleasure of joining in the work God is already blessing. Why would I want to extract people from the place where God already has them positioned and get them into my church world when God already is doing his work out there? Why do we ask God to bless our plans? I talk to my people and say 'God is already blessing you and others there in the marketplace,' and, as a pastor, I want to join in their ministry there. Because there's more Kingdom fruit, more joy, energy. And ultimately, if we really think the Gospel is big, that God cares about all those spaces and that God is doing his redemptive work in those spaces, then this is the primary way we as a church can extend our ministry. But since it is an *extension* of the church ministry, it intrinsically is not easily quantifiable. It's not like when we count butts in the pews or dollars in the coffers. But we have to ask ourselves, do we want to limit ourselves within our four walls or do we see the scope of our influence the entire city? I want to see my city transformed for Christ. I can't do that if all I care about is my little church world. I'd be delusional."

Five of the participants mentioned Jeremiah 29 as important to their ministry. But they all were unable to concretely give any hard evidence that their congregations have succeeded in bringing flourishing to their cities. John said, “We have purposefully created a different measure of success for people. We take Jeremiah 29 really seriously, asking, ‘How do we seek the welfare of the city?’ I’m not sure we have a permanent comprehensive answer for that, but we start by asking where we are in that. That is known by asking people questions.”

Sam said, “The people that are living in our town are really living in Babylon, so the counter-Christian currents are knee-deep with them every day. People are constantly asking the question, ‘What does it mean for me to faithfully represent Christ in this place?’ It really saturates everything we do. I think for that reason it’s part of the ongoing rhetoric, it’s something we think and talk about all the time: How do we, through our day-to-day work, seek the shalom of this city? Even when we are mocked and scoffed at? Even when the culture is so counter to our way of thinking and living?” When asked how he knows if this is getting traction, Sam said, “Simply by how engaged people are in these discussions. I can’t tell you that so many departments at the school are experiencing shalom because our people are in there doing this work. I just know that they are saying they’re engaged.”

Jack, when asked if he’s able to know how well his congregation has impacted his city, said, “You know, that’s always hard to tell, but I think we’ve seen very tangible expressions. There’s also a greater institutional impact that we have strength and influence in our city through our extension ministry partners, different kinds of other ministries in our city. I don’t think they’d be as vibrant without our partnership because

they are often under-resourced. There's certainly a strong volunteer component, a lot of our people at different homeless shelters or serving battered women, or medical aid clinics, Habitat for Humanity. People are serving in those ways. I think that this has helped our people be more connected to the shalom of the city. I would say that we have now more financial resources as a church institution to speak in and bring more emphasis to flourishing our city than we did 25 years ago."

Tom made the point that we measure what we think is truly important. "What we've said is, 'Kingdom work is happening Monday through Saturday. We want to bring shalom to our community.' So, do we really believe that? If we really believe that, then we measure that in some way. How, in a sense, is a little bit more of heaven coming to earth through your work at the bank? How do we know that people are praying through decisions? How do we know that they are dealing with their struggles, obstacles, and joys with Jesus guiding the way? We need to measure how God is doing awesome things big and small."

2) The New Metric of Success: Stories

Tom has decided to overcome the inherent inability to quantify success with a more qualitative approach. "We now gather stories and share them through print, video, and testimony interviews. We need to get evidence that people are actually serious about God's invitation to make the world the way it ought to be where they work, learn, serve and play. We need to drill into that and hear some stories. That's a truer metric!"

The researcher asked for these stories, which the participants were glad to share.

Dave talked about a physical therapist. "She sees her work as a genuinely relational ministry in the way that she cares about mostly elderly people and has even

found herself in to the home of quite affluent old folks in our community. What I mean by that is: Access to these folks is rare, but she is able to love on them and share the Gospel with them. Some that she's able to invite into an investigative bible study as well, but all the while doing good physical therapy."

He also was impressed by someone who moved from being an overseas missionary to going to law school. "So, here's one who out of these convictions actually decided he's so committed to missions that he needed to become a lawyer. A very thoughtful brother. He's in law school right now. It may take him back overseas in some capacity, but it will be not as a full-time missionary worker, ministry worker, but as an attorney of some kind."

Tom shared the story of Tim, a nuclear engineer, who has incredible access to Chinese unbelievers because of his work. "He's a really smart guy. For about two-years, his job was to go to China once a month and observe a 30-minute nuclear experiment. I don't understand this stuff. But he's the expert and he literally had to observe it and sign off on it that it was legit. He showed me that he flew business class—\$10,000—his company paid \$10,000 for him to fly and watch this experiment. For two days all his job was to observe the experiment and build relationships with the Chinese. And when I met with Tim, I said to him, 'Tim, how many missionaries get to fly business class? God has put you in business class, he's using you in a very unique way. You have unique expertise here and once a month you get to go hang out with Chinese people. Smart people, engineers, you get to be with them, accept them, offer hospitality, encourage them, forgive them, love them. What an interesting paradigm, right? The old paradigm was, 'Tim, if you want to do the work of the Lord, you must be a missionary, you have to

go to China and win those people to Christ. It's going to take you years to build up enough funds to do this missionary work. But now, the reality is this: You get to do it once a month, and on the company dime! Are you kidding me? How good does it get? There aren't too many churches that can fund that kind of stuff and you don't have to fund that. He needs to hear me tell him that. You're doing holy work Tim, and it's connected to who you are. You're this genius nuclear engineer, and you don't have to be something that you're not to be useful to God. Live as deeply as you can in that calling. Follow the trails where God takes you and just be open to it. So now he has started looking at this like it's a whole new adventure. You get to see people get it. And do it. To me it's the hardest thing I've ever done, but the most fun, exciting, dynamic work I've ever done in a church."

Steve told the story of a woman who was trained in ministry that is now going to business school. "She wants to be a part of the financial world in the reallocation of resources. Being able to shape the use of money, especially in the hands of the affluent. She's just exactly the kind of person you expect to say, 'I care so much about ministry on the ground that I need to become a church staffer' or, 'I need to become a full-time youth worker' or, 'I need to join a non-profit that's working with young people.' She instead wants to go to business school and get equipped in a vocation and in order to minister in a field that can be the root of all evils!"

Sam shared about people in his church that are making a difference in the academy. "We are a church near a college campus, so many of our people work at the school as faculty and staff. There's a tremendous amount of integration going on between Christian thought and their disciplines. For instance, in the area of economics, we have a

man who is contributing significantly to the shaping of economic policy that is just and that contributes to human flourishing. We have people in the realms of law and science and research, and it's very explicit that they are engaging with their vocational guild communities within the academy and they're voicing their ethic which is arising from their Christian commitments in a way that is having real influence and change."

John shared the story of Lydia, a nurse. "She calls me and says 'You gotta pray for me. I'm on my way to work. I'm going into a meeting.' She's a specialist in helping mothers to breast feed and to latch. And they're going to cut the program, they don't think it's financially beneficial. She tells me that they have no idea what they're doing. No idea how many lives are going to be hurt by cutting this program. So, she calls me on her way to work to pray about her work. We have this intense discussion about how to navigate the meeting: Coaching her on how to talk in the meeting, to advocate for this and to talk about the company's bottom line and help them understand they need to serve the common good and bring flourishing. Lydia's advocating not for her job, but for her cause. And she feels one hundred percent comfortable calling me as her pastor to pray for her and to walk her through how to get through this."

Tom told the story of a man who had moved to his city from Africa, who discovered the importance of his work to the mission of God. "We recently had this new couple begin attending, who had just moved from Cameroon. On the first Sunday in January, they started worshipping with us and they've been here ever since. It was so providential; his wife Googled churches in our area, then boom, they started worshipping with us and then the next month, somebody from our church invited them to Jubilee Professional and his world got rocked. He told me that he wept! We had a follow up

lunch a couple weeks after and he told me this. This guy's a sharp guy. He's got a master's degree, super involved in church in Cameroon. He has been a great dualist—he knows the Bible on one hand, and he knows business and marketing on the other. Both. But they were never integrated. And he says to me, 'I never really believed that I could be a Christian and also be a business person, but Jubilee changed my mind and my heart.' And I was like, are you kidding me? It doesn't get any better than this! Jubilee Professional brought the worlds together for him. It's a beautiful thing. God only knows how He's going to use him. And it's like, woah, we get to be a part of all of this. As a staff as leaders, we now just throw some gasoline on that fire that God's already lit for him."

Jack shared the story of a woman who discovered that her identity was not simply found in having a good Christian marriage, but that she has many vocations in which to serve others. "There was one of the MOPS leaders in our congregation who was going through a really difficult marriage and she visited with me. She realized that she was caught up in her identity with her marriage I encouraged her to hang in there. After some time in counseling, she finally got to a place where she said, 'I realized that regardless of whether my marriage works out or not, I have an important place to serve God.' She has been going through pastoral counseling to try to save her marriage, but she also discovered that she was also called to honor God through raising her children and if she needed to, in the marketplace. That's an example of someone who was really hurting in terms of her marriage but found that that was not the end-all, be-all of her existence. She had other important vocations that she could invest in."

John told the story of Leslie, a young 20-something living in the city who graduated with a degree in film. “She says, ‘I have \$50,000 worth of debt and all they taught me how to do is roll up cable. I have all this creativity—that’s why I was a film major. But now I’m working at Target—my life sucks. None of us can get jobs and the jobs we get are retail. Tell me how I matter. Tell me I’m not just a blip in the universe.’”

John started having deep conversations with her, working on two things. “First, what does it mean to be a faithful steward?—to take whatever talents you have and multiply them, to be faithful in the little things. And, second, what does it mean to have a calling?” As a millennial, she had been told that she could achieve anything that she put her mind to. She’s been told that she needs to find that perfect match of her personality and passions. “So, I help her to define work as the rearranging of the particulars of a certain domain for the flourishing of everything. Sure, you want to work out of your sweet spot—your Myers-Briggs score, your DiSC survey and get your assessment done and find the perfect career where you fit perfectly because the whole world is supposed to revolve around you. But we need to blow that all up. We’re going to go back to Genesis and say, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, fill the whole earth and subdue it.’ Be faithful in the little things and God will bless you. I want you to be Naaman and go wash in the water, not some rock star who goes out and kills everything. Just go to work at the cafe in Target and make really good cappuccinos. She thinks her calling is finding this perfect thing. And I’m telling her—and many other young people—don’t expect to always find your sweet spot, we want you to make your spot sweet. Lisa needs to know her calling is to be a child of God who gives honor to her father, a citizen who blesses the common good, a friend who loves those she’s living with, an employee who honors the thing that

she's been given to do and does it well and a person within the whole economic system. So, we are working on this and I say to her, 'Do you realize this? You're not making a paycheck, you're making Target flourish. Which if you make customers happy, you make Target flourish, you make your neighborhood flourish, you make the city flourish, you please the Lord. As the city goes, so go you—Jeremiah 29, right? These are the kind of things we work on with people. This is what happened with her: Six months later, she got a promotion. She's running the pharmacy.'

Tom tells the story of Mike, 27, who just finished his Ph.D. in exercise and nutrition. "We understand that God has already given him a sphere of influence at the university and we know that God is using this guy and he's got a passion for Christ. We're just throwing gasoline on him, we're not trying to extract him from the university so that he can 'serve in the church.' No, Mike, we want to help you be a godly, Christ-centered leader as you influence people in the school. One of the professional sports teams wants him to work with them in the area of nutrition. He spent a year doing his Ph.D. studies training navy seals out in San Diego. He's a big dog leader. My old self, my old dualist self, would have thought, 'I need to get him out of there and get him into our church.' I mean the old me would say, 'If I could just get Mike to hear the call of God and be a pastor, I could get him to seminary and get him into church leadership. But now I see him doing integral ministry right there in his work. I am now able to affirm the work he's doing there. As a church, we now ask, 'How can we help you be the best person to help your vocation to thrive and flourish and the influence that you have'—that's exciting stuff."

Jack is excited to see members of his church enmeshed in the life of the city. “We have in our city a large non-faith foundation and one of the themes they have is entrepreneurship and not too long ago some of our younger congregants took part in their entrepreneurial think tank. So, here we have individual members of our congregation involved in a cohort connecting with others in our city, talking about big ideas, talking about how their work can make an impact on our city. The guys from our church have this vocation-as-mission as their grid for interacting with the foundation’s material. It’s really a fun thing. I’ve met in there often and I’ve listened to the presentation of entrepreneurs and venture capitalists there and I’m so excited! I never would have imagined that we’d have a presence there! Our church is not labeled there, but we’re there!”

Sam says that a benefit of helping people see their vocations as integral to God’s mission in the world is “that people are less mopey and less angsty because they had believed that their jobs didn’t matter. Because they once felt like they missed some great calling. They looked at the pastoral staff and are like, ‘Hey, you’re an ordained director of my church - that matters.’ But once they get this, they start to think, ‘I have more to contribute to the mission of God in the world than supporting my church with my dollars. That my business, that my work, actually matters, not just my bank account.’”

3) Positive Impact on Evangelism and Church Attendance

Though the participants made it clear that it is difficult to quantify the results of helping congregants integrate their faith with their vocations, they do report that they believe that it has had a positive impact on evangelism and church attendance.

We discussed above how Dave has found that his presentation of the four-part gospel story resonates with unbelievers, especially young adults. “They do believe that things ought to be right and they love the hope that one day it might be—they just don’t know the way to get there. So most of my evangelism is working with the passion that’s already in place in people’s hearts and just finishing the story for them.”

Brett agrees that the millennial generation are already primed to hear the good news that their vocations are integral to God’s gospel mission. “For them, it’s not a point of contention that their work matters—they absolutely believe that everything about their career and their work is going to change the world. Their career is the primary mindset, their reason for being, what they’re after. Having a holistic worldview that includes vocation is an opportunity for evangelism.”

Steve believes that the doctrine of Common Grace is a bridge for evangelism. “The Gospel of the Kingdom is a doorway to be able to affirm, for goodness sakes for a change, that the church can and should affirm things that non-Christians are doing. They’re so used to the church having nothing to say but ‘No’ or ‘Bad.’ But to be able to then surprise them by being a church that shows that God cares.”

Dave told the story of a conversion. “There’s a non-Christian that, praise God, became a Christian in our community just last year. He was passionate about the issues of injustice in Palestine. The matter of justice and the wholeness of people was absolutely a commitment of his. It was a pleasure to be able to start this conversation and say I believe that God absolutely cares about the things that you care about. We were able to fill in the story of what it is that God cares about and why he cares about it—that he made this world, he made it for shalom, he made it as an integrated fabric that was marred by the

fall and evil, and cares about us so much and he's coming back to make it all right. Having the opportunity to say, 'You care so much about justice and you do in fact believe that God cannot stand the evil in people's lives—the victims of injustice and poverty and violence. But don't you think a God that hates evil out there might also hate the evil in here? In my life? In your life? Thinking about this consistently. What do you think? If God does care about it out there which I know you believe and work for, do you think he's overlooking the junk in our lives? If I do violence emotionally against my wife, or if I neglect the poor in my personal life and not just my vocational life. Do you think he cares about those things? Wouldn't you agree that the only just God that cares about justice would also have to be the consistent God? Let's talk about the cross.' And then we can keep going from there."

Ben made the gospel of the kingdom pie chart that made the slice for evangelism the same size as vocation, personal spirituality, caring for the poor, caring for the creation, sanctification, cultural renewal, and living in the hope of new creation. When pressed about his view on evangelism, he said, "Here's the thing: These other slices create the plausibility structures so that people *can* be evangelized. When Christians are living this holistic gospel, then that's when 1 Peter 3 happens, that's when people ask for the reason for the hope that is within us."

John said, "I'm an evangelist, I like leading people to Christ. I can be pretty convincing. I can really sell a person that they need Jesus. But I think that our church is now more evangelistic in authentic ways. I think that's where God's using us most—we're making these whole-life disciples and helping them to really see that faithful motherhood, faithful fatherhood, faithful employment, loving the city, being committed

to a long-term benefit of the city, those things, these integrated ideas, this is the life that is attractive to the lost around us because it has purpose. That's kind of our sweet spot.”

The integration of faith and vocation in church services has also benefited church attendance. Ben reports, “Every Sunday, we'll pray for four or five full time Christian Ministers and four or five parishioners who work—by name and occupation. That's been a big deal. I mean it's a very simple thing, but it's been something that has been very, very powerful. It has had the biggest impact because people have never heard it before. It hits them across their face. They're surprised. We've had people here visiting on a Sunday and that one thing kept them at the church because they never heard a church that honored people's jobs. It's the simplest thing and it's the most effective thing.”

John says he wears a priest's collar as an indicator of his vocation, but also because he has other vocations and he loves talking with those in his church about their vocations. “It's so cool when you're wearing a collar and you're talking about church and it sounds old fashioned. It sounds hardcore. This guy's probably going to say something really religious that has nothing to do with my real life. And I do that—I talk about church and being sacramental. I talk about the mystery and the power of the word and I'm being old fashioned in a sense. But then I turn the tables on them. Then I also say, “Tell me about what you're doing in the marketplace as a business guy. What do you think God is doing through you?” We talk about how he can steward his resources better. And the guy's like, what the hell is going on? You've read Jim Collins' *Good to Great*? You know how to talk to business people? You're not thumbing your nose at me? You're validating me? I have to say that this in-depth discipleship is what keeps people in our

church. They want this. They hunger for this. They're staying with us because our church is about the whole of life.”

Jack reports that he believes his change toward focusing on people's vocations has helped his church attendance. “The first thing we've seen is that our church has grown in numbers and I think that is part of God's plan of fruitfulness—not only quality but quantity. We have a number of church campuses now. I think there are more people throughout our city, through our various church campuses, that are living this out. I think that's the leavening, it's salt and light in our community.”

Summary of Findings

This chapter discovered how pastors lead congregants to be missional in their vocations as their participation in the *missio Dei*. It began by exploring what the pastors attempted to do in order to help their congregants integrate faith and vocations. They laid the theological foundation for this integration by teaching the four-chapter gospel story of Creation / Fall / Redemption / Consummation. They also discovered that they had to be careful with the language they used, during Sunday services and in their various communications, to describe ministry and vocations, avoiding anything that might smack of a sacred/secular false dualism. Many of the participants spoke of creating a “church culture” or establishing the church's “DNA” that equips and encourages people in their vocations. The participants incorporated the concepts of vocation into their sermons. While they would preach sermon series on God's view of work, what made the most impact was simply making people's vocations a natural part of the preaching of sermons, making connections to people's real-life callings and offering illustrations that relates to people's working lives. They were intentional in their congregational prayer times to

include prayers for people in their various vocations. They would offer commissioning times for people in their callings. The participants developed relationships, spending time with people at their workplaces and encouraging them to in turn nurture relationships for the flourishing of other people. It is through these relationships that discipleship was intentionally done to help people in their callings.

The pastors faced challenges as they attempted to lead congregants to participate in the mission God has for his people through their vocations. The most prevalent of the challenges had to do with people's ingrained presumptions. Some people had presumptions about the gospel with theological paradigms that undermined the theology of vocation that the pastors were trying to teach. They found that they had to gently and patiently point people to the text of Scripture so that they could see the whole story of redemption and see that evangelism, as important and central as it is to the mission of the church, is not the entirety of the gospel. Some people had presumptions about what church programming should be offered. While there were traditionalists who expected youth groups, children's programming and the like, there were also progressives who wanted the churches to follow a more "missional church" paradigm. Another ingrained presumption was about the nature of work itself. Many of the participants reported having to deal with latent beliefs that there is sacred work and secular work. Also, many of the pastors talked about how people find too much of their identity in their work, or how they made an idol of their work, or how they allowed themselves to become overwhelmed by the pressures of work. The pastors shared stories of how they faced the challenges of helping people through a wide variety of difficulties in their work.

Finally, we discovered the results that pastors experienced as they led congregants to participate in God's mission through their vocations. The pastors made it clear that it is difficult to quantify success. One reason it is hard to quantify is because much of the work that people do in their vocations is hidden from the view of the pastor, in offices, factories, neighborhoods, community institutions, and family settings. Another reason is that what the pastor does is "upstream" in his preaching, teaching, and discipleship, while the work of vocations is done more "downstream." Therefore, the metric for success is in the form of stories. It is through narrative evidence that we know that God is active in the lives of people as they participate in his mission through their vocations. We shared a number of those stories. The pastors also reported that they believed that another result had been a positive impact on their efforts at evangelism as well as retention in church attendance.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

The participants of this study were all pastors who have been attempting to lead their congregants to participate in the mission God has for his people through their vocations. There is much to learn about how pastors can best help Christians integrate what they do in their various callings with God's mission in the world. A literature review laid the groundwork for the study by clearly defining what God's mission for his people is and how vocation relates to that mission. It was determined that the mission of God's people is to join in God's mission to redeem the entire cosmos and that this mission is primarily carried out through what humans do in and through their vocations. Three research questions then guided interviews of eight participants who were pastors in various churches and locations:

1. What have pastors attempted in order to lead congregants to embrace vocation as the means to participate in God's mission for his people?
2. What challenges did pastors experience as they were leading congregants to participate in God's mission for his people through their vocations?
3. What results have pastors experienced as they were leading congregants to participate in God's mission for his people through their vocations?

This final chapter presents the conclusions of this study. Following a summary of the study and its findings, those findings and recommendations will be discussed at greater length. Then recommendations for further research will be presented.

Summary of the Study and Findings

This study discovered how pastors lead congregants to participate in the mission God has for his people through their vocations. The literature review focused on three areas of study: 1) A survey of the recent history of the concept of mission, 2) A study of a theology of God's mission for His people, and 3) A study of a theology of vocation.

The survey of the recent history of evangelical understanding of Christian mission revealed an ebb and flow between seeing the mission of God's people as being about the redemption of all aspects of life on earth to being solely about evangelism and the destiny of souls in the afterlife. It seems that the evangelical church is still feeling the after-effects of the Modernist/Fundamentalist divide of the early twentieth century. In spite of the historically significant efforts of Carl Henry and the neo-evangelicals, the Lausanne Movement, and those who are currently advocating the "Holistic Gospel," there are still those in the evangelical camp that want to define mission strictly to the work of saving souls rather than what has been advocated by the others, a holistic mission of reconciling all things to God and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God in a way that sees Christ's lordship in every aspect of existence, providing abundant life and restoring the entire cosmos.

The second area of literature review looked at a theology of God's mission for His people. As we discovered in the historical survey, the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, where Jesus mandates Christians to "make disciples" is often narrowly misinterpreted as to "make converts." However, the word "disciple" means "learner" or "pupil," which makes the commission not just the initial proclamation of the gospel but also the arduous task of relationally engaging people in an experience of discipleship,

helping them to yield their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ so that they can obey all the commands that Jesus has taught. We “make disciples” by our obeying the participles found in Matthew 28:19, that is, by “going,” “baptizing,” and “teaching.” The “going” part of the commission is elucidated by what Jesus says in John 20:21, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” Christians are a sent people. We are missional because we have been sent by the missional triune God and we are to do the mission as Jesus did his mission, incarnationally engaging with people to proclaim the kingdom of God through sacrificially serving. The means by which we serve is in and through our various vocations or callings. The gospel proclamation that accompanies our service is of the kingdom of God. Within the evangelical camp, there is a plethora of definitions of what the “kingdom” is, and thus a lot of confusion about the central message that Jesus was sent to proclaim. The Bible speaks of two aspects of God’s rule in the kingdom: a universal kingdom (i.e., that God is sovereign over all things) and a particular kingdom (i.e., that God is the Lord over his subjects who, out of their faith and love for him, serve him). Christians, as the subjects of that particular kingdom, have callings or vocations within the church as well as out in the culture, where they do work that participates in God’s mission to redeem everything in the world. God’s people are called to advance God’s kingdom wherever they live, work, and play: in their churches, and also in their neighborhoods, families, work places, governmental agencies, financial establishments, arts and entertainment industries, educational institutions, the social sector, and other institutions and structures, obeying the “cultural mandate” of Genesis 1:26-28. The goal is to bring the world back to the way it ought to be, namely, into a closer proximity of shalom, that is, the universal flourishing promised when God rules in righteousness. The

mission of God's people is to join in God's mission, which is told in the four-chapter gospel story that starts with *Creation* which God called "very good," then suffers brokenness and frustration because of the rebellion of human beings in the *Fall*, but turns direction toward God's purposes through the *Redemption* found in Christ's death and resurrection, and comes to its *Consummation* when Jesus returns and the kingdom is experienced in its fullness. This four-part gospel story was often abbreviated by the participants of this study as "CFRC."

The third area of literature reviewed was about a theology of vocation. The word *vocation* comes from the Latin *vocatio* (summons), from *vocare* (to call). Therefore, a vocation is a calling. Various Christian thinkers have discerned from Scripture a primary calling and then secondary callings. Our primary calling is to follow and abide in Christ, to live in him and for him. Our secondary callings include obeying all that God commands in Scripture and to serve God and others through the things we do. So, Jesus calls us to follow him, to abide in him, to obey him, and to work for him. Every aspect of life as a disciple of Jesus Christ is to be impacted by his lordship, as we live in and for the kingdom of God. Therefore, vocation or calling is not just one aspect of human and Christian life; it is the whole of life, the very means by which Christians live out what it means to be human and how they participate with God in his redemption of his creation. However, there is a predominant presumption within Christian circles that salvation is limited to the spiritual lives of humans and not all-encompassing for the whole of reality. This heretical split-view of the Christian life can be traced back to the Greek philosopher Plato. Platonism first entered Christian thinking with the Gnostics who believed that the material world was intrinsically inferior and evil to the heavenly world. This false

sacred/secular dualism is still found in contemporary evangelical Christianity, and limits the lordship of Christ and his kingdom to what is deemed our “spiritual life,” things like prayer, Bible study, church attendance, evangelism, etc. The only truly sacred vocations, in this dualistic view, are pastoral ministry or missionary work. Every other vocation is relegated to second-class status, merely a means to support real ministries or as venues to do the real spiritual work of evangelism. This dualism separates what is perceived as the “spiritual” life from the actual work humans do as participation in the mission of God. God has, however, prepared good work for Christians to do, and the Holy Spirit has gifted people to do that work. The four-chapter story of Creation / Fall / Redemption / Consummation best explains both the mission of God and how human vocation fits into that mission. In the first chapter of the story, *Creation*, God speaks the entire cosmos into existence. At the pinnacle of the creation week, humanity was created in the image of God, and was given the cultural mandate to “be fruitful,” “increase in number,” “fill the earth,” “subdue it,” and “rule” over the rest of creation. Mankind, as God’s representatives on earth, are placed in charge of the creation as God’s vice-regents. Work is a part of the good creation, the means by which humans sustain universal flourishing (shalom). The second chapter of the story is the *Fall*. Because of Adam and Eve’s rebellion against God’s good design, they and the entire creation has been cursed by God. Work is cursed as well. Sin has distorted the image of God. Humans are still capable of doing those things they are mandated to do—the work of developing the creation by subduing it and filling it—but their ability to fulfill these human endeavors is deeply corrupted. Rather than responsibly care for this creation, we often exploit it. Instead of creatively working for the shalom of all things, we often work for our own self-interest.

Thus, the Fall has broken shalom. The consequence of sin not only runs through the hearts of every individual human being, but also through the entire cosmos. However, the good creation still remains which God wants to restore, and God provides common grace to restrain the full effects of sin, to preserve and maintain the created order, and to give talents to all human beings. The third chapter is *Redemption*. God's redemption of all things begins with his redemption of humanity since we, as the image of God, have been placed in charge of the rest of the creation. Jesus Christ is the perfect image of God, and redemption in Christ is found when humans are conformed to the image of God's Son through the saving grace that comes by faith. The kingdom of God has been inaugurated, and as we yield to Christ's lordship, we are increasingly conformed to Christ. This redemption of humanity enables us to more fully obey the original cultural mandate as well as participate in God's mission to restore his creation. Therefore, the scope of redemption is the entire creation. Through Christ's death and resurrection, God has determined to reconcile all things to himself. Through our vocations, we participate in that mission of reconciliation. The final, fourth chapter of the gospel story is the *Consummation* of the redemption. The king will return and the kingdom that was inaugurated with his death and resurrection will come to its telos. Salvation will not only include human souls but their bodies as well (we will resurrect as Jesus did), and not only humanity but also the wider non-human creation as well (including, within it, our work). The future promise of resurrection is for eternal life in a new heaven and new earth, the restoration of the creation where God will then dwell eternally with his people. Our destiny is to live forever on a restored earth and our work also has a destiny along with us. When the children of God are revealed, that is, when humanity is fully restored as the

image of God, all of creation will be restored. Revelation 21-22 portrays the renewal of humanity's fundamental purposes in God's world. The Cultural Mandate will continue to be humankind's mandate for all eternity.

The participant interviews yielded rich descriptions to help answer the three research questions. The pastors were chosen and interviewed because each of them has a deep commitment to helping their congregants participate in God's mission through their vocations. I learned what these pastors did, what challenges they faced, and what results they experienced.

The first, and most foundational, thing that the pastors did for their congregants was to teach the basic biblical worldview of Creation / Fall / Redemption / Consummation. In trying to promote a culture in which people were encouraged in their vocations, they were careful with the language they used to describe ministry and vocations, becoming aware of how they far-too-easily say things that implicitly promotes a sacred/secular false dualism. The participants incorporated the concepts of vocation into their sermons, making people's vocations a natural part of their preaching and illustrations. They were intentional in their congregational prayer times to include prayers for people in their various vocations and offered commissioning times for people in their callings. The pastors developed relationships, spending time with people at their workplaces and in counseling settings, and they encouraged a discipleship environment where people were connecting to encourage each other in their work.

The pastors faced challenges as they attempted to lead congregants to participate in God's mission through their vocations. The participants had to overcome an ingrained theological paradigm that makes evangelism the sole idea and purpose of the gospel and

their Christian life. They also had to overcome the expectations that some had about church programming, from traditionalists who expected youth groups and children's programming to progressives who expected "missional church" neighborhood outreach groups. Another challenge was in overcoming people's ingrained presumptions about the essence of work itself. Some people in these pastors' congregations have a difficult time shedding latent beliefs that perpetuates a sacred/secular division in the goodness of work. Some other people idolized work, finding too much of their identity in it and would allow work to overwhelm them.

Finally, we discovered the results that pastors experienced as they led congregants to participate in God's mission through their vocations. The pastors made it clear that it is difficult to quantify success. Therefore, the new metric for success that the pastors use is the gathering of stories. It is mainly through narrative evidence that they can gauge how God is active in the lives of people as they participate in his mission through their vocations. The stories that they shared indeed proved that their congregants were participating in the mission God has for them in and through their vocations. The pastors also reported that they believed that another result had been a positive impact on their efforts at evangelism as well as retention in church attendance.

Discussion of Findings and Recommendations for Practice

This study discovered how pastors have led congregants to participate in the mission God has for his people through their vocations. In this section, I will discuss conclusions and recommendations considering the interview data analysis as it relates to the literature reviewed. As I synthesized the literature, the interviews, and my personal reflection on this subject, I have found three main themes that lead to recommendations

that pastors should heed if they are to lead their congregants to participate in God's mission for his people through their vocations. The first theme is that the gospel story of Creation / Fall / Redemption / Consummation (CFRC) is foundational for developing a ministry in which vocation is intrinsic to people's participation in God's mission. The second theme is the need to create a church culture that encourages and equips people in their vocations. The third theme is the importance of making integrated and holistic disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel Story of Creation / Fall / Redemption / Consummation is Foundational

As we've said, Christians are "sent ones," and every Christian must see themselves as on mission each and every day in each and every vocation that they have. But what is the mission of God's people? As Christopher Wright states, "We have to go one step further back and ask, Whose mission is it anyway? And of course, the answer to that has to be—it is the mission of God. God himself has a mission. God has a purpose and goal for his whole creation...All our mission flows from the prior mission of God."⁴⁰³ The mission of God is best understood within the framework of the meta-narrative story of Creation / Fall / Redemption / Consummation.⁴⁰⁴ A proper understanding of a theology of vocation has at its foundation this four-chapter gospel story. Many of the pastors interviewed stated that they were intentional in laying a worldview foundation in their churches that was framed by this biblical storyline. Dave

⁴⁰³ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 24.

⁴⁰⁴ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God*, 63-64.

frames the church's weekly liturgy around these four chapters. While he says that the elements of the service "might seem like a familiar Presbyterian worship service," this intentional naming of CFRC is important. "Right there we are saying, even from our call to worship, that this is important." The participants believed that it was imperative that Christians understood the four-chapter gospel story as a foundation for being fruitful in and through their vocations. There are several recommendations that pastors can do to lay this important foundation for their congregations.

Preach sermons that tell the story of Creation / Fall / Redemption / Consummation.

Individual sermons and sermon series should be regularly preached that tell the overarching story. New people may not have heard this story, and those who have heard it before will need to constantly be reminded of what God's mission is and how we participate in that mission. Each chapter of the story directly addresses different aspects of the lives of God's people and the work they do in the world. Our sermons are meant to call every Christian "to be an agent of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, wherever they are called by God to serve,"⁴⁰⁵ because "the restoration in Christ of creation and the coming of the kingdom of God are one and the same."⁴⁰⁶ Many of the pastors said that it was very important to, as Steve said, "focus my energy on laying down the groundwork theologically, worldview wise, to what I think will best shape us long term."

⁴⁰⁵ Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching in*, 5.

⁴⁰⁶ Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 73.

Explain and call people to the Cultural Mandate as much as you do the Great Commission and Great Commandment.

Many evangelical churches have looked to two passages in the New Testament for guidance as to what their purpose should be. The Great Commission (“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”⁴⁰⁷) and the Great Commandment (“Love the Lord your God...and love your neighbor as yourself”⁴⁰⁸) are important passages from the teachings of Jesus Christ. However, the first commission or commandment that God has ever given to humanity is often not spotlighted, what is often referred to as the “cultural mandate” or “creation mandate” that is found in Genesis 1:26-28:

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”⁴⁰⁹

After God created everything in the cosmos, he placed his image into humans with the mandate to continue the creative process of developing the creation. As Albert

⁴⁰⁷ Matthew 28:19-20.

⁴⁰⁸ Matthew 22:36-40.

⁴⁰⁹ Genesis 1:26-28.

Wolters wrote, “Mankind, as God’s representatives on earth, carry on where God left off...From now on the development of the created earth will be societal and cultural in nature.”⁴¹⁰ Michael Wittmer explains, “It is the first command God ever gave us, and he has never taken it back.”⁴¹¹ The cultural mandate is foundational to a vision of vocation—we are called to develop societal/cultural ideas and artifacts for God’s glory and for the shalom of the world around us. It is, in a very real sense, how we fulfil the Great Commandment to love God and to love others. It is also what it means to make disciples. Os Guinness defines calling as “the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to his summons and service.”⁴¹² Patrick Schreiner says that “disciples are people who go out and give shape to every place.”⁴¹³ As Paul wrote in Colossians, ‘Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.’”⁴¹⁴ Churches focus on many very good and important things, but as Steve said, “We’re called as a church to be helping to change and transform our culture, but that’s never on the focus list...churches don’t even talk about that. And that should be (something) that churches are equally engaged in.” This cultural engagement is rooted in the story of CFRC: “I think it goes back to the mandate back in Genesis. The inherent dignity of work. That’s who we were made as

⁴¹⁰ Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 41-42.

⁴¹¹ Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth*, 124.

⁴¹² Guinness, *The Call*, 29.

⁴¹³ Schreiner, *The Kingdom of God and the Glory of the Cross*, 21.

⁴¹⁴ Colossians 3:23.

individuals, and who we're made as a people and that's what the church is to be involved in—that restorative work. It's largely through people's vocations that culture changes. So, I want people to think in terms of ‘How can my business be a change agent?’”

Help people find their identity in their being the imago Dei.

The four-chapter gospel story explains that humans, in our essence, are the image of God. As the interview data showed, many Christians still struggle with finding their identity in the wrong things, especially in their work. Tom’s testimony is typical. He said, “I have to have hard conversations about how they need to reassess their understanding of who they are, as an image-bearer and as a child of God. That their success at work does not determine whether or not they are a worth-while human or Christian.” As Genesis 1:26-28 makes plain, what we do flows out of the fact that we are image bearers, not the other way around.

Preach and teach about how things ought to be (shalom) and how we can work toward a more proximate experience of shalom.

The Fall is what many people experience every day in their lives and vocations. Because of the Fall, humans struggle to work together for the attainment of shalom. Things are not the way they’re supposed to be. However, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God has been inaugurated, and God is reconciling all things back to himself. Jesus proclaimed, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁵ John 10:10.

Pastors must remind their people of the way things ought to be, and encourage them to work toward bringing into the lives of others a more proximate experience of flourishing. Jack was one of the participants that stressed this aspect of pastoral ministry. “We introduce people to God’s design for human flourishing, it’s not just individual, it’s collective... We unpack the Great Commandment a little more fully because I think we have an impoverished view of that.”

Encourage people in both the creative and redemptive aspects of work.

Because work is a part of the original created order that was “good,” and because we now live in the age of redemption in which God is reconciling all things to himself through the blood of Christ, there are now two aspects to the work that believers do. Some vocations are more on the creative end of the spectrum—where people produce new things, through art, technology, ideas and concepts. Some vocations are more on the redemptive end of the spectrum—where people actively reverse the damage caused by the Fall, through medicine, social work, and the like. Pastors need to provide this matrix to their people so that they can find meaning in their day-to-day work.

Preach sermons that not only exposit the text before you but also places that text within the framework of the entire story.

Expository preachers are often so intent on getting into the details of the pericope that they are preaching, that they fail to place the text within its larger context. Not only are we to preach the text within its biblical and canonical context and the context of its Sitz im Leben, but also within the context of the overarching story of redemption. How does this passage elucidate the goodness of God’s creation? How does it echo the brokenness and depravity associated with the Fall? How does this passage not only speak

of our personal redemption in Christ but also the reconciliation of all things back to God? How does this passage point to the hope of the future consummation, when all things will be made new? As the interview data showed, not all sermons are directly connected with the subject of vocations. However, every sermon does connect to one or more of the chapters of the four-chapter gospel story of CFRC “as a navigational guide” (as one of the pastors called it). Dave said, “These are two or three steps moved from the topic of work per se, but I do believe it goes a long way in shaping people’s worldview which is the key to the practice of their faith out there in the world.”

Write or use curriculum that helps people connect their story and work to the big story.

Small group studies and Sunday school classes should have as a regular part of their curriculum something that explains the four-chapter story in various ways. We’ve seen that the only way to measure how the congregation is doing with the vision of vocation is to gather stories. It is through these smaller relational gatherings that people can share their stories and they can be collected. However, in order for the stories to have context, they have to connect to the larger story of what God is doing in the world. With CFRC as a framework, the stories that people share should easily fit into the categories of the grand-metanarrative. Some will tell how an aspect of their work experience reflects how it “ought” to be (Creation), or how something “is” difficult or broken or sinful (Fall), or how something “can” be changed or transformed into the purposes of God (Redemption), or they can provide a vision of how some aspect of their work “will” be made new again if they do that redemptive/transformational work (Consummation).

Provide hope in the return of Jesus and the restoration of all things.

Christopher Wright explains, “The return of Christ will not only bring to its grand finale that section of the Bible story line that we have called redemption in history, it will also inaugurate the ultimate fulfillment of the whole point of the story—namely, the redemption and renewal of God's whole creation.”⁴¹⁶ Jürgen Moltmann wrote, “From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present.”⁴¹⁷ Many Christians are not familiar with the significance of the renewal of all things found in the fourth chapter of the four-chapter story, having been influenced by a Christian culture immersed in dispensational theology. Darrel Cosden identifies this problem by saying, “For a very long time, popular Christianity has focused on salvation consisting of the immaterial soul going to heaven when we die. The belief that our ultimate salvation hope is the bodily resurrection to a transformed and genuinely physical new heaven and new earth has been relegated to the spiritual background, in danger of being lost altogether.”⁴¹⁸ As Ben said, “It has a lot to do with your eschatology. If you believe that the world goes up with a whisp of smoke, then vocations don't matter...But if your eschatology includes some sort of physical continuity with what this world is, and that some of our products in this life will find their way into the next life, that makes a lot more sense about how your work might matter.” N. T. Wright ties it all together, from the

⁴¹⁶ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 43.

⁴¹⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16.

⁴¹⁸ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 52.

first chapter to the last, when he wrote, “Let us, then, remind ourselves of the starting point. The created order, which God has begun to redeem in the resurrection of Jesus, is a world in which heaven and earth are designed, not to be separated, but to come together. In that coming together, the ‘very good’ which God spoke over creation at the beginning will be enhanced, not abolished. The New Testament never imagines that, when the new heavens and new earth arrive, God will say, in effect, ‘well, that first creation wasn’t so good after all, was it? Aren’t you glad we’ve got rid of all that space, time and matter?’ Rather, we must envisage a world in which the present creation, which we think of in those three dimensions, is enhanced, taken up into God’s larger purposes no doubt, but certainly not abandoned.”⁴¹⁹

The Need to Create a Church Culture that Encourages and Equips People in their Vocations

In my thirty years in church ministry, I have experienced that each church I’ve served has its own “culture” or “DNA.” This culture can just passively happen by letting the church develop on its own, or it can be actively created by the church’s leadership purposefully directing it. The former is a sign that leaders are not actually leading, while the latter is where leaders see a vision and tenaciously create an ethos within the body of the church that makes that vision happen. All the pastors that participated in this study had a vision for their churches that encourages people to live out their faith in their vocations and equips them to participate in God’s mission in and through those callings. Many of the participants spoke of creating a “church culture” or establishing the church’s

⁴¹⁹ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 259.

“DNA” in this regard. The data from the interviews and the literature provided some helpful recommendations by which to create this culture.

Continually have conversations with leaders about the church’s culture or DNA.

The pastors were purposeful in their discussions with leaders about their church’s culture. They never want their church to be defined by their buildings but by their people, doing ministry out in the world for the sake of the world. They want to communicate clearly that while the church’s ministries are important, that they place an equal, if not more, emphasis on the ministries that people already have in and through their vocations. In my experience, vision for any ministry needs to constantly be revisited and emphasized, or else it easily dissipates. The pastors indicated the willingness to have conversations with their leaders, continually asking, “Who are we? What’s our DNA? What kind of culture are we nurturing here?”

Provide a clear declaration of what the church is all about during initiation and assimilation.

To make sure that everyone is enmeshed in that culture, the pastors also need to help new people understand it so that they can willingly participate in it. Many of the pastors talked about the challenge of overcoming people’s ingrained presumptions about what the church’s ministries should look like. To nip this in the bud, both John and Jack talked about the time they take to talk with new potential members of the church about the various types of work people do in the church and to talk about vocation with them. John said, “Here’s what these new people do, some of them, they ask, ‘Why do you want to know about my job? What does it have to do with the church?’ Assimilation into the

church is an opportunity to create artifacts and rituals that support our vision of vocation.”

Be careful with your language about work, so that you never make any inferences that hint at a sacred / secular dualism in types of work.

One of the subtle things that undermines a ministry that wants to equip people to participate in the mission of God through vocations is the way we talk about ministry work. When someone unwittingly says something like a pastor is in “full-time Christian ministry,” the inference is that other vocations are not to be seen as such. If you’re not a pastor then you must be participating in something that is “part-time” Christian service or not Christian service at all. This false sacred/secular dualism separates reality into two fundamentally distinct categories which does damage to the lives of Christians. Instead of the kingdom of God being Christ ruling over all of creation, the kingdom is truncated to only the things that can easily be identified as the spiritual life—like church, prayer, Bible study, evangelism, etc. Instead of allowing Christ to be the Lord over every aspect of their lives, people begin to silo those things that they deem as “secular” away from Christ, and their vocations are no longer the means by which Christ can produce fruit. Dave said something that represented many of the other participants’ perspective. He said, “We care about our language. We try to avoid binary language in terms of referring to people in full time ministry or exalting my pastoral vocation over against other people’s.”

Pray regularly during Sunday worship for people in their vocations.

Ben offered the most emphatic endorsement: “Of all we’ve done as a church to teach the importance of vocation, the most significant thing we’ve done is praying for

people in their jobs, paid or unpaid, in the same vein that we pray for people who are missionaries and para-church workers.” Dave said, “Prayer times weekly will involve prayer for different aspects of the neighborhood. We’ll pray for our missionaries. We’ve prayed for small businesses in the neighborhood, for law enforcement, crosswalk workers. We pray for young people, the elderly. We try to reflect this all of life, Kuyperian thing in the way we pray.” Brett and Sam have the church elders lead congregational prayers that include people in their vocations, and Brett includes those prayers in the Sunday bulletin. Steve says that these prayers make an impression on people. “When we talk about the dignity of work and pray in general for people’s vocations, I’ve heard stories about people getting teary-eyed at like ‘Wow, somebody actually cares! Not just for the missionary or Aunt Sally, but we are actually praying for God to bless my job!’ That’s unusual for people.”

Gather stories of people who are working for the kingdom in and through their vocations.

The pastors made it clear in their interviews it is difficult to quantify success. Therefore, it is mainly through narrative evidence that we are able to measure how God is active in the lives of people as they participate in his mission through their vocations. As Tom said, “We now gather stories and share them through print, video, and testimony interviews. We need to get evidence that people are actually serious about God’s invitation to make the world the way it ought to be where they work, learn, serve and play. We need to drill into that and hear some stories. That’s a truer metric!” It is not surprising that the way we understand how we are living in the way of Jesus is through stories, since the Bible is filled with stories that explain what it means to follow God and

the overarching meta-narrative of Creation / Fall / Redemption / Consummation is a grand story.

The Importance of Making Integrated and Holistic Disciples

The Great Commission is to “make disciples.” As we’ve discussed, this commission is often narrowly misinterpreted as simply to “make converts.” However, since the word “disciple” means “learner” or “pupil,” the commission is not just the initial proclamation of the gospel so that people become disciples but also the demanding task of relationally engaging people in an experience of discipleship, helping them to yield their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ so that they can obey all the commands that Jesus has taught. Jesus opens the Great Commission by proclaiming his lordship, saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”⁴²⁰ Therefore, Jesus is commissioning us to make disciples who will yield to his lordship in the kingdom of God. To be an apprentice of Jesus Christ is not to be a half-hearted endeavor. The only kind of disciple is a whole-life disciple, a fully integrated and holistic disciple. In other words, every aspect of a disciple’s life is yielded to the lordship of Christ, not only one’s inner spiritual life but also all that the disciple does—there is no spiritual/secular false dualism in an integrated and holistic disciple.

Os Guinness, in his book *The Call*, states that a Christian’s call should be understood in terms of a primary calling and a secondary calling. “Our primary calling as followers of Christ is by him, to him, and for him... Our secondary calling, considering

⁴²⁰ Matthew 28:18.

who God is as sovereign, is that everyone, everywhere, and in everything, should think, speak, live, and act entirely for him. We can therefore properly say as a matter of secondary calling that we are called to homemaking or to the practice of law or to art history.”⁴²¹ So, Jesus calls us to follow and abide in him, and then to obey him as we work for him. An integrated and holistic disciple does all these things. Every aspect of life as a disciple of Jesus Christ is to be impacted by his lordship, as we live in and for the kingdom of God. We should heed the criticism of Skye Jethani when he says that the church has done a poor job of helping God’s people hear what the Holy Spirit is calling individuals to do. “As a result, Christians are not equipped to engage their highest calling (communion with God) or to discern their specific calling (vocation). What remains is the one thing the church can access without the Spirit’s presence—the Scripture.”⁴²² This leads to confusion because the only aspects of the Christian life that are proclaimed from pulpits and talked about in Bible studies center on the goal of doing evangelism and living pious lives. While these are certainly biblically mandated for all Christians, “when these callings are untethered from our highest calling (communion with God) or the specific vocations Christ has given to each of his followers, it can do great damage. When this happens, the institutional church’s work soon becomes all-consuming, and many Christians develop a suspicion that the church’s leaders really only care about advancing their institution’s agenda.”⁴²³ Based on the review of literature and the data

⁴²¹ Guinness, *The Call*, 31.

⁴²² Jethani, *Futureville*, 104.

⁴²³ *Ibid*, 104.

collected from the interviews, here are some recommendations that pastors can consider to make integrated and holistic disciples who live in and for the kingdom of God.

Develop disciples who both personally yield to Jesus as King and also work for the advancement of the kingdom through their vocations.

Since the gospel that Jesus proclaimed was the “good news of the kingdom,”⁴²⁴ then we had better be proclaiming the same good news. As Bruce Waltke wrote, there are two aspects of the kingdom of God: the particular kingdom (i.e., that God is the Lord over his subjects who, out of their faith and love for him, serve him) and the universal kingdom (i.e., that God is sovereign over all things).⁴²⁵ In order to keep from falling into the problems found in the polarizing modernist/fundamentalist divide of the previous century, churches must embrace both facets of the gospel: both personal submission to Jesus as Lord (salvation that comes from the work of evangelism) and cultural submission to Jesus as Lord (cultural or social change that comes from seeking justice and shalom). People must personally yield to Jesus Christ as Lord, placing their faith in him for salvation, and then continue abiding in Christ as their king in order to grow in sanctification and to bear fruit. The fruit that they are called to produce in and through their vocations only comes by abiding in Christ. Our work, then, cannot be done on our own, in our own strength. The King is not only to be Lord over the hearts of his people; he is also King over the entirety of the cosmos. As Abraham Kuyper said, “There is not a

⁴²⁴ Luke 4:43.

⁴²⁵ Waltke, “The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament: Definitions and Story,” in *The Kingdom of God*, 50, 51.

square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’”⁴²⁶ Therefore, pastors must admonish Christians to advance God’s kingdom wherever they live, work, and play: in their churches, and also in their neighborhoods, families, work places, governmental agencies, financial establishments, arts and entertainment industries, educational institutions, the social sector, and other institutions and structures, taking seriously the “cultural mandate” of Genesis 1:26-28. All the pastors in this study said that they spend time one-on-one with people to guide them through being disciples of Jesus Christ. Sam’s experience was indicative of all of the pastors: “As we got more into this discussion on the importance of vocations, these meetings one-on-one would spring up organically.” One-on-one discipleship, as one pastor said, has the problem that is “doesn’t scale well,” since it is limited by what time you have available to connect with individuals. Perhaps the pastor needs to strategically seek leaders to develop into disciples who will then, in turn, encourage others in their discipleship.

Visit people at their workplaces.

One of the most transformative actions a pastor can do is to visit people at their workplaces. Jack said, “I think that workplace visitations are the most important thing we can do. It dynamically changes our prayer life, it changes the discipleship relationship, it says something to our congregation that discipleship does matter in their life, in all of life, every day.” Ben agrees, saying, “It has transformed my preaching, prayer, discipleship, and the relationship that I have with my congregation.” Brett said that

⁴²⁶ James D. Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, 488.

people in the congregation “appreciate that we’re trying to talk to them in what they do most of their lives. So often pastors, when they give stories and examples, it’s about the missionary overseas. So, we’re trying to meet people where they’re at and they find that encouraging.” Once a pastor begins to earnestly visit with people on their turf and to attempt to understand the issues that they face on a day-to-day basis, people begin to grasp that discipleship is a whole-life, integrated yielding to Christ’s lordship. Pastors find themselves relating better to their congregants because they are taking the concepts from Sunday and applying them on Monday. Sermon illustrations write themselves; there is no need to try to be “relevant” in your messages because you already are. The pastors interviewed were insistent that disciple-making is best done as people practice the Christian life in and through their every-day work lives, not merely when they are huddled up in Bible studies. Discipleship needs to be integrated within all of life.

Make a church filled with missionaries.

When false sacred/secular dualism is successfully eliminated from a congregation’s thinking, then it clears the way for everyone to see themselves as missionaries in and through their vocations. Christians are “sent ones,” for Jesus said to his disciples, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you”⁴²⁷ The life of Jesus is to be our model. John Stott wrote, “All authentic mission is incarnational mission.”⁴²⁸ Christians should wake up on Monday morning with the attitude that they are going into the mission field. As good foreign missionaries do, Christians who are domestic

⁴²⁷ John 20:21.

⁴²⁸ John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, 356.

missionaries in and through their work are to develop relationships with people, serving them in love. They must alleviate pain and suffering, overcome injustice and oppression, and bring flourishing to the place and people that they are serving. They must look for opportunities to share with people how they can be forgiven of their sin and enter the kingdom of God by placing their trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Today's missionaries know that they must offer people the holistic gospel. As Christopher Wright said in addressing the Lausanne Committee, "Holistic mission includes the whole of what God calls and sends us to do. Evangelism without social action is not holistic mission. Likewise, social action without evangelism cannot be holistic mission either."⁴²⁹ In order for someone to evangelize a co-worker, they must create a plausibility structure through their "good work" that communicates that faith is not just something that is "sacred" and therefore private, but is all-encompassing and transforms everything—individual lives as well as social structures.

Encourage congregants to practically seek the welfare (shalom) of the community in which they reside.

An excellent paradigm that many of the pastors cited for their church's mission is found in Jeremiah 29, where the LORD writes a letter to his people who are in exile in Babylon telling them to live normal lives among the pagans and to "seek the welfare (Hebrew: *shalom*) of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on

⁴²⁹ Christopher J. H. Wright, "Re-Affirming Holistic Mission: A Cross-Centered Approach in All Areas of Life," *Lausanne World Pulse*, October 2005, accessed October 29, 2014, <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/themedarticles.php/61/10-2005>.

its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”⁴³⁰ As the people in our churches experience shalom in their own lives and purposefully work as the instruments of shalom in the lives of those around them, the people of the world are blessed. As Christopher Wright wrote, by seeking the flourishing of the community in which we are placed, we become “agents of God’s promise to Abraham that through his descendants the nations would be blessed.”⁴³¹ By blessing people with our good work, we are bearing witness to the goodness of God’s kingdom. As I talked to the pastors, what troubled me was that I found many of them loved to talk about vocation and seeking the shalom of the city in theoretical terms—it was clear that they were totally committed to this as a theological paradigm. But I had to press them for real, on-the-ground examples of how this theological paradigm is resulting in a praxis that can be seen and celebrated. It strikes me that pastoral leadership can preach and teach these things and that people can even sincerely believe them, but like anything else that we preach and teach, people can merely listen but never actually do anything about it. As James warns, “Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.”⁴³² That last phrase (“they will be blessed in what they do”) should resonate with

⁴³⁰ Jeremiah 29:7, ESV.

⁴³¹ C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God*, 99-100.

⁴³² James 1:22-25, NIV.

pastors because it speaks directly to the importance of the work of our congregants' vocations. It is not enough to talk about these things in theoretical terms; the pastor must help people to practically seek the welfare of the community in which they reside through the work that they do. The more specific these things can be identified and done, the better.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this study was to discover how pastors lead congregants to participate in the mission God has for his people through their vocations. As with any study, there were limitations as to how extensive my focus could be. Therefore, pursuit of the following areas of study could be highly valuable. The pastors in this study were, to some degree, "reformed" theologically or familiar and sympathetic to the theology of vocation when they began the process of practically implementing it in their churches. It would be interesting and helpful to have a study on pastors who were not familiar with the concepts of vocation or the CFRC meta-narrative and find out how they moved toward a paradigm of discipleship that focuses on vocational stewardship and what challenges they face. I would presume that many of them would face the same challenges that the pastors in this study face, only more so. The findings of this study could be mapped against the findings of a new study.

Another area of study for future research would be to include leaders of African-American churches. In my work in this field of faith-and-work, I'm discovering that many of these church leaders already resonate with an integrated understanding of faith and work. Many African-American pastors are bivocational, and many of them have, as a

major part of their ministries, a deep desire to bring flourishing to their communities through the work that their people do.

A few of the pastors had indicated that the discussions about the importance of vocation can be focused on those who are upper- to middle-class and white-collared in their work. Studies of how pastors help people who are primarily serving churches that are populated by blue-collar workers and tradesmen or rural churches with people who are in agricultural work would be beneficial.

The participants in this study pastored churches with people in different levels of socioeconomic status. They spoke of people who were executives and professionals, blue collar workers, stay-at-home moms, and the unemployed. However, the people in their churches are relatively doing well economically. It would be a helpful study to see how pastors lead congregations that are predominantly filled with people struggling with poverty as they participate in the mission God through their vocations. What “vocation” means takes on a much richer meaning when it is not tied directly to a paycheck. What are Christians “called” to do while working to make ends meet?

Bibliography

- Alcorn, Randy. *Heaven*. Wheaton, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2004.
- Allison, Greg R. "The Kingdom and the Church." In *The Kingdom of God*, edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Bacote, Vincent E. "Introduction." In *Wisdom & Wonder: Common Grace in Science & Art*, by Abraham Kuyper, edited by Jordan J. Ballor and Stephen J. Grabill, translated by Nelson D. Kloosterman. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian's Library Press, 2011.
- Banks, Robert. *Redeeming the Routines: Bringing Theology to Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996.
- Bauckham, Richard J. *Jude, 2 Peter*. Word Biblical Themes. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990.
- Bavinck, Herman. *In the Beginning: Foundations of Creation Theology*. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.
- Berkhof, Louis. *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939.
- Bosch, David J. "Hermeneutical Principles in the Biblical Foundation for Mission." *Evangelical Review of Theology* 17, no. 4 (1993): 437–51.
- . *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991.
- Bratt, James D., ed. *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998.
- Broadus, John A. *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*. Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1886.
- Brumley, Albert E. "I'll Fly Away." Hartford Music Co., Albert E. Brumley & sons, 1960 1932.
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translated by Henry Beveridge. Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1845.
- Carpenter, Eugene. "6268 Abd." In *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Vol. 3, edited by Willem A. VanGemeren, 304–9. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.

- Carson, D. A. "Matthew." In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984.
- Christianity Today. "William Carey." ChristianityToday.com, August 8, 2008. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/missionaries/carey.html>.
- Cosden, Darrell. *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006.
- Cronbach, L. J. "Beyond the Two Disciplines of Scientific Psychology." *American Psychologist* 1975, no. 30 (1975): 116–27.
- D.D, H. C. Leupold. *Exposition of the Psalms*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992.
- Dooyeweerd, Herman. *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options*. Toronto, Canada: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1979.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Christian Theology*. 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998.
- Fretheim, Terence E. *Creation Untamed: The Bible, God, and Natural Disasters*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010.
- Frost, Michael, and Alan Hirsch. *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21 Century Church*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub, 2003.
- Gallup, Inc. "The '40-Hour' Workweek Is Actually Longer -- by Seven Hours." Gallup.com. Accessed May 22, 2018. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/175286/hour-workweek-actually-longer-seven-hours.aspx>.
- Garber, Steven. *Visions of Vocation: Common Grace for the Common Good*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014.
- . "Vocation As Integral, Not Incidental." Address. The Q Gathering, Portland, OR, April 25, 2011. <http://www.washingtoninst.org/893/vocation-as-integral-not-incident/>.
- Gelder, Craig Van, and Dwight J. Zscheile. *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011.
- Goheen, Michael W. *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011.
- . "The Missional Church: Ecclesiological Discussion in the Gospel and Our Culture Network in North America." *Missiology* 30, no. 4 (October 1, 2002): 479–90.

- Graham, Billy. *Where I Am: Heaven, Eternity, and Our Life Beyond*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 2015.
- Grenz, Stanley J. "Jesus as the Imago Dei: Image-of-God Christology and the Non-Linear Linearity of Theology." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no. 4 (December 2004): 617–28.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.
- Guder, Darrell L., ed. *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998.
- Guinness, Os. *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003.
- Hagner, Donald A. *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 33b: Matthew 14-28*. Dallas, TX: Thomas Nelson, 1995.
- Hastings, Ross. *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012.
- Henry, Carl F. H. *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1947.
- Hirsch, Alan. *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009.
- Hoekema, Anthony A. *Created in God's Image*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994.
- . *The Bible and the Future*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979.
- Hopkins, Gerard Manley. "The Principle or Foundation." In *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Major Works*, edited by Catherine Phillips. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Huebner, Chris. *A Precarious Peace: Yoderian Explorations on Theology, Knowledge, and Identity*. Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, 2006.
- Jethani, Skye. *Futureville: Discover Your Purpose for Today by Reimagining Tomorrow*. Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson, 2014.
- Keener, Craig S. "Sent Like Jesus: Johannine Missiology (John 20:21-22)." *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 12, no. 1 (January 2009): 21–45.
- Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964.

- Knapp, John C. *How the Church Fails Businesspeople: And What Can Be Done about It*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012.
- Kostenberger, Andreas J., and Peter T. O'Brien. *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001.
- Kreitzer, Larry J. "Intermediate State." In *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Ladd, George Eldon. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993.
- . *Jesus and the Kingdom: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.
- . *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996.
- "Lausanne I: The International Congress on World Evangelization." Lausanne Movement. Accessed November 4, 2014.
<http://www.lausanne.org/gatherings/congress/lausanne-i-the-international-congress-on-world-evangelization-2>.
- Lewis, C. S. *Miracles*. Revised 1960. London and Glasgow: Collins/Fontana, 1947.
- Lucas, Dick, and Christopher Green. *The Message of 2 Peter and Jude*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995.
- Luther, Martin. *Three Treatises*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1970.
- Lyons, Gabe. *The Next Christians: Seven Ways You Can Live the Gospel and Restore the World*. Portland, OR: Multnomah Books, 2012.
- Machen, J. Gresham. "Christianity and Culture." In *Christianity, Education, and the State*, edited by John W. Robbins. Jefferson, MD: Trinity Foundation, 1987.
- Marsden, George M. *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. Oxford University Press, 2006.
- . *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991.
- Marshall, I Howard. "Being Human: Made in the Image of God." *Stone-Campbell Journal* 4, no. 1 (2001): 47–67.
- Marshall, Paul A, and Lela Gilbert. *Heaven Is Not My Home: Living in the Now of God's Creation*. Nashville, TN.: Word Publishing, 1998.

- McKnight, Scot. *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014.
- Merriam, Sharan B. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009.
- Middleton, J. Richard. *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.
- . *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005.
- Miller, David W. *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement*. Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Milne, Bruce. *The Message of John*. Leicester, England: Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993.
- “Mission - Definition and More from the Free Merriam-Webster Dictionary.” Accessed July 22, 2014. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mission>.
- “Mission - The Five Marks of Mission.” Anglican Communion. Accessed November 12, 2014. <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm>.
- Moltmann, Jurgen. *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993.
- Moore, Russell D. *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004.
- Mouw, Richard J. *Abraham Kuyper: A Short and Personal Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011.
- . *He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002.
- Mouw, Richard J. *When the Kings Come Marching In: Isaiah and the New Jerusalem*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002.
- Myers, Allen C. “Works.” In *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987.
- Naselli, Andrew David. “Three Reflections on Evangelical Academic Publishing.” *Themelios*, 39, no. 3 (Nov 2014), 428-454.
- Naugle, David. “Introduction To Kuyper’s Thought.” *The Kuyperian*, February 2001. <http://kuyperian.blogspot.com/2004/08/introduction-to-kuypers-thought.html>.

- Nelson, Tom. *Work Matters: Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2011.
- Newbigin, Lesslie. *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988.
- . *Mission in Christ's Way: A Gift, a Command, an Assurance*. New York: Friendship Press, 1988.
- . "Our Task Today." presented at the Fourth Meeting of the Diocesan Council, Tirumangalam, India, December 18, 1951, Unpublished paper.
- . *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Church*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1984. <http://www.newbigin.net/assets/pdf/83os84.pdf>.
- Nichols, Stephen J. "The Kingdoms of God: The Kingdom in Historical and Contemporary Perspectives." In *The Kingdom of God*, edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper & Row, 1975.
- Osborne, Grant R. *Matthew*. Edited by Clinton E. Arnold. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
- Ott, Craig, and Stephen J. Strauss. *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010.
- Padilla, C. René. "Holistic Mission, Occasional Paper No. 33." <http://www.lausanne.org>, 2005. http://www.lausanne.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/06/LOP33_IG4.pdf.
- Patton, Michael Quinn. *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2002.
- Perkins, John M. *Beyond Charity: The Call to Christian Community Development*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993.
- Plantinga Jr., Cornelius. *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002.
- . *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995.
- Pryce-Jones, Jessica. *Happiness at Work: Maximizing Your Psychological Capital for Success*. Carmel, IN: John Wiley & Sons, 2011.

- Ralph D. Winter. "The Future of Evangelicals in Mission." In *MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, edited by David Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer, 164–91. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010.
- Reese, Ruth Anne. *2 Peter and Jude*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007.
- Ross, A. Larry. "Rick Warren's 'The Purpose Driven Life' Celebrates 10 Years." Charisma News. Accessed December 2, 2015.
<http://www.charismanews.com/us/34357-rick-warrens-the-purpose-driven-life-celebrates-10-years>.
- Ryrie, Charles Caldwell. *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1972.
- Sayers, Dorothy. "Why Work?" In *Letters to a Diminished Church: Passionate Arguments for the Relevance of Christian Doctrine*. Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson, 2004.
- Schreiner, Patrick. *The Kingdom of God and the Glory of the Cross*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018.
- Self, Charlie. "Discipleship for the Other Six Days." *Enrichment Journal / Assemblies of God*. Accessed May 22, 2018.
http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/201402/201402_082_Discipleship.cfm.
- Sherman, Amy L. *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011.
- Sider, Ronald J., Philip N. Olson, and Heidi Rolland Unruh. *Churches That Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002.
- Skye Jethani. "Calling All Christians." *The High Calling*, March 21, 2013.
<http://www.thehighcalling.org/faith/calling-all-christians>.
- Smith, James K.A. "Naturalizing 'Shalom': Confessions of a Kuyperian Secularist." *Comment*, June 28, 2013. Accessed July 24, 2017.
<http://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/3993/naturalizing-shalom-confessions-of-a-kuyperian-secularist/>.
- Snyder, Howard A. *Models of the Kingdom*. Nashville, TN.: Abingdon Press, 1991.
- Solzhenitsyn, Aleksandr. *The Gulag Archipelago Abridged: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2007.
- Stevens, R. Paul. *Playing Heaven: Rediscovering Our Purpose as Participants in the Mission of God*. Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 2006.

- . *Work Matters: Lessons from Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012.
- Stott, John. *Christian Mission in the Modern World*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1975.
- . *The Contemporary Christian: Applying God's Word to Today's World*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1995.
- Stott, John R. W. "The Biblical Basis for Evangelism." In *Let The Earth Hear His Voice*, edited by J. D. Douglas, 65–68. Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1975.
- "The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action." The Lausanne Movement, 2011. <http://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment>.
- "The Lausanne Covenant, 1974." Lausanne Movement. Accessed November 4, 2014. <http://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant>.
- Turner, David L. *Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Van Engen, Charles. "'Mission' Defined and Described." In *MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium*, edited by David Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer, 7–27. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010.
- Veith, Gene Edward. *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002.
- "Vocation, Definition." Free Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Accessed February 27, 2015. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vocation>.
- Volf, Miroslav. *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*. Reprint. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2001.
- Walsh, Brian J, and J. Richard Middleton. *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian World View*. Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1984.
- Waltke, Bruce K. "The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament: Definitions and Story." In *The Kingdom of God*, edited by Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.
- Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013.
- Wenham, Gordon J. *Word Biblical Commentary Volume 1, Genesis 1-15*. Edited by David Allen Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and John D. W. Watts. Dallas, TX.: Word Publishing, 1987.

- Wilkes, Gene. "Discover Your Spiritual Gifts!" LifeWay. Accessed February 23, 2015.
http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/files/lwcF_PDF_Discover_Your_Spiritual_Gifts.pdf
- Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life In God*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998.
- Witherington III, Ben. *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011.
- Wittmer, Michael E. *Becoming Worldly Saints: Can You Serve Jesus and Still Enjoy Your Life?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.
- . *Heaven Is a Place on Earth: Why Everything You Do Matters to God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.
- Wolters, Albert M. *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005.
- Wright, Christopher J. H. "Re-Affirming Holistic Mission: A Cross-Centered Approach in All Areas of Life." *Lausanne World Pulse*, October 2005.
<http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/themedarticles.php/61/10-2005>.
- . *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006.
- Wright, Christopher J. H. *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*. Grand Rapids, IL: Zondervan, 2010.
- Wright, N. T. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. New York: HarperOne, 2008.
- Yates, John. "Is Our View of Ministry Too Narrow? Is It Too Church-Focused?" presented at the Commencement, Covenant Theological Seminary, May 16, 2008.
<http://www.washingtoninst.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Cov-Seminary-May-19-08.pdf>.
- Yoder, John Howard. *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.