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**Vocation for Mission
Understanding How Work is Integral
To God's Mission to the World**

A Dissertation Submitted to

the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary

in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Ministry

By

Richard M. Vise, Jr.

Saint Louis, Missouri

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore how congregants in leadership roles understand their work as integral to God's mission in the world. A qualitative research study was designed in which the areas of literature on a Christian theology of vocation and employee engagement were reviewed. The researcher discovered that congregants described their lives and their work as integral to God's mission in the world. They also described the effect of their working environments on that belief and the fruitful work that emerged from that belief.

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Chapter One

Introduction

In the first chapter of Genesis, God goes to work, and he creates man and woman to image him in their work. They would create and cultivate within the world God had made. Work would be a blessing to them, and all they touched would flourish from their care. However, sin entered the world and human work was cursed.[1]

Today, few American workers enjoy their work. According to a 2013 Gallup, Inc. report, "70 percent of American workers are 'not engaged' or 'actively disengaged' and are emotionally disconnected from their workplaces and less likely to be productive."[2] The 20 million "actively disengaged" employees are not neutral toward their work but hurt companies' productivity. This inability to engage in work can be exacerbated in the church by certain commonly held religious beliefs. Cosden, in his book *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, writes, "Christians sometimes experience a further, distinctively religious, dimension of frustration—something that unfortunately we bring on ourselves."[3] If Christians have been taught that only "spiritual" work matters, then many will conclude that their ordinary work must not. Kinnaman, president of the research firm Barna Group and bestselling author, confirms this experience among today's teenagers and young adults. Writing about these "exiles" who are trying to faithfully live out what

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[1] Genesis 3:14-19.

[2] Gallup, Inc., "State of the American Workplace: Employee Engagement Insights for U.S. Business Leaders," 2013, http://www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/163007/state-american-workplace.aspx., 12.

[3] Darrell Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 14.

they believe, he writes in his book *You Lost Me*, "One of the recurring themes in our research with young exiles is the idea that Christianity does not have much, if anything, to say about their chosen profession or field."[4]

Christian Theology of Vocation

The tragedy for the church is that it has theological resources to address the frustration that many of its members feel with their work. During the first centuries of the Christian church, it began to grapple with what it meant to be "called" by God. The doctrine of vocation developed after the Protestant Reformation to include all lawful work.[5] Writing about the potential of this doctrine, Sherman in her book *Kingdom Calling* asserts, "Christianity insists that our lives-including our work-are all about God and his work, his mission. This should be inspirational, because it provides profound meaning to our labor."[6] Not only should this doctrine inspire, it should send people out into the world to bless it. Bishop and missiologist Newbigin writes that Spirit-filled congregations will act on behalf of the world through the several vocations of their members, "The primary action of the church in the world is the action of its members in their daily work."[7] Pursued well, Newbigin continues, this action may be of more benefit to the world than a big program of social action. Sherman concurs, "If church leaders

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[4] David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church– and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: BakerBooks, 2011), 78.

[5] Cosden, quotes John Paul II on page 5.

[6] Amy L. Sherman, *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011), chap. 6 (location 1097-1099), Kindle.

[7] Lesslie Newbigin, "Evangelism in the Context of Secularization," in *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church, ed.* Paul W. Chilcote and Laceye C. Warner (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 51.

don't help parishioners discern how to live missionally through that work, they miss a major-in some instances the major-avenue believers have for learning to live as foretastes [of God's kingdom]."[8]

There is great potential to help people embrace their work for God's mission and some progress has been made[9], but the church's performance is still wanting. Pastor Nelson writes in *Work Matters*: "One of the highest stewardships for local church leadership is to encourage and equip apprentices of Jesus for their work. Yet this stewardship rarely gets the attention and commitment it requires."[10] Newbigin challenges the church to train, support, and nourish its members for their work and enable them to confront problems they face in it.[11] Yet, efforts to help people with their work have focused largely on the workplace as an arena for growth in personal piety or for interpersonal ministry. Not enough is being done to equip people to consider how their work might be integral to God's mission in the world.[12] For something to be integral is for it to be "necessary to make the whole complete."[13] There is an inseparability that is not necessarily true of things that have been integrated or "combined with another to

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[8] Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, introduction (location 184-186), Kindle.

[9] See Made to Flourish Network (madetoflourish.org), the Theology of Work Project (theologyofwork.org), the Institute for Faith, Work and Economics (tifwe.org), the Faith@Work Summit (fwsummit.org), and the Center for Faith and Work (faithandwork.com).

[10] Tom Nelson, *Work Matters: Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work* (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2011), 193.

[11] Newbigin, "Evangelism in the Context of Secularization," , 51.

[12] See Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, chapter 5 for a survey current efforts to integrate faith and work.

[13] *Oxford Dictionaries, s. v.* "Integral," accessed August 10, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/integral.

form a whole."[14] The credo for the Washington Institute is 'vocation is integral, not incidental, to the *missio Dei,'* and Garber argues, "Most of the time, all over the world, the church teaches otherwise, that vocation is incidental, not integral, to the *missio Dei.*"[15] There are a few notable exceptions, and even fewer churches that are trying to help their members live out a robust doctrine of vocation. Katherine Leary Alsdorf, Founder and Executive Director of the Center for Faith and Work at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York, writes about her own experience. She found very little help understanding the relationship of faith and work outside of Redeemer.[16] Churches like Redeemer make known their own practices but more is needed for God's people elsewhere to pursue their work as integral to God's mission in the world.

Employee Engagement

In addition to the theological and ministerial literature, there is burgeoning research in the fields of business management and psychology. Germane to this study is the field of employee engagement. The study of employee engagement is generally attributed to have begun with William Kahn in 1990. Kahn argued that people can use varying degrees of their selves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in the roles they perform and that the more engaged people are with their roles the more satisfying and

[14] *Oxford Dictionaries s. v.* "integrate," accessed August 10, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/integrate.

[15] Steve Garber, *Visions of Vocation: Common Grace for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), 137.

[16] Timothy Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (Boston: Dutton Adult, 2012), 13.

productive their work will be.[17] The literature on employee engagement has surged in the

last 20 years. According to Schuk et al., "Because employees who report being engaged

at work demonstrate greater workplace performance, the concept of engagement has

gained widespread international attention."[18] Gallup, Inc. argues that employee

engagement is important because an organization's greatest asset is its people, but only if

they are fully engaged in their work.[19] According to Saks, engaged employees manage a

sustainable workload, feel they have choice and control, and are recognized and

rewarded. Also often present are a supportive work community, perceived fairness and

justice in the workplace, and work that is meaningful and valued in their own eyes.[20]

Discoveries made across the field provide opportunities for comparison and contrast with

participant responses in this study.

The biblical and theological literature would lead one to expect that something

more exists between workers and their work than compensation for tasks completed. The

employee engagement literature confirms this to be true. Gallup, Inc. discovered, "An

intrinsic connection to one's work and one's company is what truly drives performance,

inspires discretionary effort, and improves wellbeing."[21] This is significant because an

intrinsic connection to work affects not only life at work but life outside of work as well.

Engaged employees report 25 percent greater wellbeing than disengaged workers who

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[17] William A. Kahn, "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work," *Academy of Management Journal* 33, no.4 (December 1990): 692.

[18] Brad Shuck, Thomas G. Reio, and Tonette S. Rocco, "Employee Engagement: An Examination of Antecedent and Outcome Variables," *Human Resource Development International* 14, no. 4 (September 2011): 428, doi:10.1080/13678868.2011.601587.

[19] Gallup, Inc., "State of the American Workplace: Employee Engagement Insights for U.S. Business Leaders," 23.

[20] Alan M. Saks, "Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement," *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 21, no. 7 (November 2006): 602, doi:10.1108/02683940610690169.

[21] Ibid., 28.

took six weeks or more of vacation.[22] Companies with high degrees of employee

engagement report lower healthcare costs.[23] Gallup, Inc. concludes, "If these basic needs

[for engagement] are not fulfilled, then even the most extravagant perks will be little

more than window dressing."[24]

The employee engagement literature explores the relationships of engagement

with common associates. Often in the church, vocation is pursued as if the material

environment surrounding the employee does not matter. The tacit assumption is that as

long as the work is believed to be important, it will be. The employee engagement

literature, however, explores a range of factors that influence people's experience at

work.[25] Early in the study of employee engagement, Kahn recognized that

meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability were important

contributors.[26] Subsequently, research within these categories ensued, and Saks reports

that job enrichment and role fit contribute to meaningfulness, supportive work

environments support safety, and sufficient resources improve availability, all of which

furthers employee engagement.[27]

As efforts to systematize the research findings continued, factors contributing to

engagement have become commonly categorized simply as resources or antecedents of

engagement. They must be sufficient to meet job demands for employees to experience

[22] Ibid..

[23] Ibid., 4.

[24] Ibid., 28.

[25] Saks, "Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement"; Shuck, Thomas G. Reio, and Rocco, "Employee Engagement," 602.

[26] Kahn, "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work," 703-717.

[27] Saks, "Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement," 602.

high levels of engagement. Personal and situational resources may be intrinsic to the job itself or be derived apart from it. Personal resources may include personality traits and psychological capital. A broad range of situational resources is reported in the literature, encompassing individual roles and tasks as well as organizational resources. Resources reviewed for this study include meaningfulness, environment, and personal resources.

In addition to the resources of engagement that have been identified, outcomes have been studied as another set of associates. Important outcomes of engagement reviewed for this study include discretionary effort, proficiency, adaptivity and proactivity. This study will explore the degree to which people who believe their work is integral to God's mission in the world experience higher employee engagement.

Purpose Statement

More help is needed for people to engage in their work with confidence that it matters to God. One potential source of help includes people who are working with confidence that their work is integral to God's mission in the world. Exploring their understanding of their work, the communities and environments that support them, and the difference this understanding makes in their lives and work will serve the church and the workplace well. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how congregants in leadership roles understand their work as integral to God's mission in the world.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study:

1. How do congregants describe their work as integral to God's mission in the world?

2. How do congregants relate their work environments to their belief that their work is integral to God's mission in the world?

3. How do congregants describe the impact on themselves and others of their belief that their work is integral to God's mission in the world?

Significance of the Study

This study has significance for all who wish to understand human work as integral to God's mission in the world.

First, men and women working in a variety of fields will be encouraged to reconsider their own callings. The literature available is thought-provoking, and the participants' responses provide a rich backdrop against which they may compare their own work experiences. Working men and women will discover features of supportive environments and communities that promote integral understanding of work and God's mission. They may look for or try to cultivate these features in their own environments and communities.

Second, employers and managers who wish to care for those they oversee may benefit from this study. They may cultivate a similar understanding in those who work with and for them. To the degree that the working environments and working communities can be shaped, these employers and managers will find suggestions for how to do that productively. Consultants wishing to find a theological foundation for common insights in the business community will find it in the doctrine of vocation. Others may simply enjoy the resonance between the literatures of a Christian theology of vocation and employee engagement

Third, pastors and ministry leaders will benefit from a richer understanding of the way work is understood by participants as integral to God's mission in the world. The broad business literature base adds clarity for how people engage in their work. Participants' stories will provide some guidance for those who pastor men and women in their churches and ministries. Campus ministry leaders will be enlightened by how influential formative environments and communities are during the early stages of participants' working lives.

Definition of Terms

In the context of this study, the terms are defined as follows:

Vocation: In this study, vocation and calling, will be used interchangeably. This usage reflects what is common in many circles. Vocation or calling may be defined as the response to God in all of life. Guinness describes vocation in *The Call* 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 special devotion, dynamism, and direction and lived out as a response to his summons and service."[28]

Work: In this study, work will be understood as defined by Volf in *Work in the Spirit*, who summarizes work as "instrumental activity serving the satisfaction of needs."[29] According to Volf, this differentiates work from more common experiences as burdensome, from compensation that often, but not always, attends it, and from similar activities of leisure done apart from satisfying needs. In this study, at times, work will be

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[28] Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 29.

[29] Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2001), 13.

identified as "ordinary" or "common" to ensure that all forms and fields of lawful work are in view.

Congregant: In this study, congregant will refer to a man and woman who is a church member working outside of vocational ministry.

Employee Engagement: Related to other constructs in the business and management literature, employee engagement or work engagement or, for the purposes of this study, engagement, is distinct. A working definition is best expressed in the words of Saks, who reported that employee engagement, "has been defined as a distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that are associated with individual role performance."[30]

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[30] Saks, "Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement," 602.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore how congregants in leadership roles understand their work as integral to God's mission in the world. The literature review begins with a study of biblical passages that inform the place of human work in God's mission in the world. Following this opening section, two additional areas of literature were reviewed that provide context for the qualitative research which follows. These included literature on a Christian theology of vocation and employee engagement.

A Biblical Framework of Work and God's Mission

The Bible provides the resources for developing a rich theology of vocation. In the first chapter of Genesis, God works to create the earth and everything in it. The first man and woman, created in his image, God calls to subdue the earth and rule over everything in it.[31] As Crouch points out, this work is not only useful but joyful, ending in celebration of work that is very good.[32] As the narrative continues into chapter 2, the man is placed in the garden of Eden "to work it and keep it"[33] and the woman is created as a companion and helper for work God has given them. Then, as Crouch points out again, God makes space for the creative work of man: "But now the Creator graciously steps

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[31] Genesis 1:28.

[32] Alan M. Saks, "Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement," *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 21, no. 7 (November 2006): 600–619, doi:10.1108/02683940610690169.

[33] Genesis 2:15.

back just enough to allow humankind to begin to discover what it means to be a

creator. Adam, like his Maker, will be both gardener and poet, both creator and

cultivator."[34]

From the idyllic scene of chapter 2, Adam and Eve plunge the world into sin and

misery in chapter 3 as they reject God's word to them. Immediately, the text makes clear

that sin will affect human work. In Crouch's words, they continue to make something of

the world, but now their work is not furthering the purposes of their Creator but in part an

effort to hide from him.[35] Even the fruitfulness of well-intended work after much sweaty

toil will bear thorns and thistles[36]. Work becomes a means of securing life apart from

God as the Tower of Babel is built.[37] Rather than a blessing, work becomes part of a

system of oppression as people are enslaved.[38] Among God's people, work must be

regulated so that it does not become an instrument of oppression or self-destruction[39].

Those milking their neighbors by their laziness must be rebuked.[40] The threat of war and

the need to learn war among God's own people vividly demonstrate how far work has

fallen.[41] The preacher in Ecclesiastes laments: "What has a man from all the toil and

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[34] Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013), chap. 6 (location 1250-1251), Kindle.

[35] Ibid., chap. 6 (location 1312), Kindle.

[36] Genesis 3:17-19.

[37] Genesis 11.

[38] Exodus 1.

[39] Exodus 21-23; Leviticus 19.

[40] 2 Thessalonians 3.

[41] Judges 3.

striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity."[42]

Though God's people misuse his gift of work, he continues to call them to it. Following the Flood to cleanse the world of evil, God covenants with Noah in language that reaffirms the role that was given to Adam in creation. With the covenant established, Noah goes back to work, "Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard."[43] The pattern for work and rest that reflects God's own work and rest in creation is upheld.[44] There is expectation that God will bless work as Moses prays, "Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!"[45] Jesus underscores the importance of stewardship of gifts with a parable about ordinary work.[46] The apostle Paul asserts that God has created his people "in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand.".[47] Clearly this applies to ordinary work, as later in the letter Paul encourages slaves that they are doing the will of God, and that they may know that "whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord."[48]. Stott makes the point in his commentary on Romans 13 that because of the servant language used, "Those who serve the state as legislators, civil servants, magistrates, police, social workers or tax-collectors are just as

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[42] Ecclesiastes 2: 22-23.

[43] Genesis 9:18.

[44] Exodus 31:15-17.

[45] Psalm 90:17.

[46] Matthew 25.

[47] Ephesians 2:10.

[48] Ephesians 5:8.

much 'ministers of God' as those who serve the church as pastors, teachers, evangelists or administrators."[49]

The value of work in a fallen world is not only for the present. The Bible describes continuity between this world and the world to come after the return of Christ. This is intimated in Old Testament passages, where the prophets connect the completion of God's redemptive work with his intention for a work-filled creation. Isaiah makes clear that the new heavens and new earth will be free from sin and distress and will focus on work. People's work will no longer be cursed when they inhabit the houses they build and eat of the vineyards they plant. Isaiah writes: "My chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain."[50] The same imagery is picked up in Revelation 21-22 as John writes of the fully restored new heavens and new earth, where God's work to dwell again with his people is complete. The garden of Genesis has become a great city that bears the marks of human cultivation. The precious stones have been fashioned and made to adorn the city. The kings of the earth bring their glory into it, indicating that the best work of the world's people groups will itself last forever. As Paul describes the cosmic scale of Jesus' work, he asserts that God was pleased "through [Christ] to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven."[51] For Paul, the "all things" reconciled refer to the "all things" that were created and are now fallen. A future restoration is coming, and Paul uses it as a buttress against giving up on work. He closes his teaching on the resurrection, stating, "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be

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[49] John Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1994), 343-44 as cited in Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 231.

[50] Isaiah 65:22-23.

[51] Colossians 1:20.

steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."[52]

Christian Theology of Vocation

Much of the literature of a Christian theology of vocation supports the understanding of work as integral to God's mission in the world. The first important theme is vision for work. By beginning with a vision for the world, this theme explores an integral life, cooperation with God, God's intentions, and alienation in work. The second important theme is assessment of work. This theme explores people's responsibility to bring their work in line with God's intentions for work. Workers connect, judge, choose, cultivate, clear, and create with their work as they self-assess their own gifts and passions for it.

Vision for Work

A Christian theology of vocation supports an understanding of work as integral to God's mission in the world by providing a vision for work. This vision for work begins with a vision of the world that is integral to life. Schmemann, in *For the Life of the World,* writes, "All that exists [in the world] is God's gift to man, and it all exists to make God known to man, to make man's life communion with God."[53] For Schmemann, creation and culture are integral to man's life, purpose, and relationship with God. The simple act of eating is one in which "he must take the world into his body and transform

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[52] 1 Corinthians 15:58.

[53] Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, 2nd Revised and enlarged edition (Crestwood, N.Y: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 14.

it into himself, into flesh and blood."[54] Though spoiled because of sin, this integral life is

being restored. Plantinga writes from a different tradition, affirming the holistic nature of

God's redemption. In *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning and

Living*, Plantinga explains, "In the Bible, shalom 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."[55] For Schmemann, the present life

of the Christian is to lean into this vision for the world, "seeing *everything* in it as a

revelation of God, a sign of His presence, the joy of His coming, the call to communion

with Him, the hope for fulfillment in him."[56] It is the hope and joy of an integral life

again in the coming Kingdom that is "the source and the beginning of all Christian

mission" whereby "we recover the world as a meaningful field of our Christian action."[57]

The integral nature of life suggests that a person's experience of the world is not

only a part of her life but also shapes it. Smith writes about the unavoidable influence of a

person's social environment. The individual is always tethered to others and to

institutions. In his book *Desiring the Kingdom,* Smith writes, "There are no private

practices; thus our hearts are constantly being formed by others, and most often through

the cultural institutions that we create."[58] These practices shape precognitive dispositions

that aim our intentions toward a vision of a good life. The shaping of these precognitive

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[54] Ibid., 11.

[55] Cornelius Plantinga, *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 15.

[56] Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*, 112.

[57] Ibid., 113.

[58] James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 71.

dispositions are one way of describing how what is "out there" in the world resides within the people who have been shaped by it.

Another aspect of this vision of the world is the way these embodied practices are formative, whether they are intentionally sought or not. Smith reasons, "while cultural institutions are essentially human creations, there is also an important sense in which humans are the products of the formation we receive through cultural institutions."[59] Hunter, in his book *To Change the World*, argues against individualism and makes the point forcefully, "it is not so much individual hearts and minds that move cultures but cultures that ultimately shape the hearts and minds, and, thus, direct the lives of individuals."[60] Smith, working with recent research on the "new unconscious," concludes, "Whether we intentionally choose to participate in a practice, or unintentionally just find ourselves immersed in it over time, the result is the same: the dispositions become inscribed into our unconscious so that we 'automatically' respond the way we've been conditioned."[61] Crouch, in his book *Culture Making*, takes this line of thinking from the theoretical to the concrete. He argues that culture sets the horizons of possibility and impossibility. As an illustration he argues that the interstate highway makes new ways of life possible that were previously never possible. It also makes some old ways of life impossible in today's world. Cross-country travel by car, for many, is an assumed way of life for work and play, while travel by horse for any distance is no longer

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[59] Ibid., 72.

[60] James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 45.

[61] Ibid., 81.

possible, even if it is considered.[62] The world is integral to life in both the daily

necessities of food and water and the contours of our cultural practices that shape us,

whether we are aware of that shaping or not.

God carries out his work of redemption, in part, through the formative practices

and experiences in a world that is integral to life. Schmemann proposes this is true of the

church, "First of all, she is the possibility given to man to see in and through this world,

the 'world to come.'"[63] Jean Vanier, a Catholic writer and social innovator, founded the

L'Arche organization for residents with intellectual disabilities that is now made up of

147 communities spread over 5 continents. Over 50 years of work with L'Arche, Vanier

discovered how formative it is to live with those who have intellectual disabilities. In his

book, *Community and Growth*, he writes, "A community must be clear about its

spirituality and help form its members in it, for it is through the spirituality of the

community that its members grow to wholeness and union with God."[64] In an interview,

Vanier discusses how formative has been the experience of the world for people in

history. He recounts Francis of Assisi's aversion to lepers until Assisi was brought to

them and changed by life with them. Vanier reports Assisi's reflection about the change

that had taken place in him, "And when I left, there was a new gentleness in my body and

in my spirit."[65] According to Vanier, God has always used communities of those with

disabilities to shape the lives of those who assist them. Smith has hope for people to be

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[62] Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013), 27–28.

[63] Schmemann, *For the Life of the World,* 113.

[64] Jean Vanier and Ann Shearer, *Community and Growth* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), 110.

[65] "Transcript: Jean Vanier,, "The Wisdom of Tenderness," *On Being*, accessed June 5, 2015, http://www.onbeing.org/program/jean-vanier-the-wisdom-of-tenderness/transcript/7614.

shaped in communities by their institutional practices. In his book *Imagining the Kingdom*, he reasserts what is discussed in *Desiring the Kingdom*. He advocates that the hope of Christian universities is that alumni "will have been habituated to love God and his kingdom— to love God and desire what he wants for creation— and thus engage the world."[66] This vision of the world that is integral to life within it becomes the starting point for a vision for work that is integral to God's mission in the world.

Cooperation with God

Volf propounds a vision for work in which people cooperate with God in his mission. For Volf, human work matters because it is true cooperation with God for the sake of his eternal kingdom. This work will be taken up, purified, and transformed as God acts to establish the new heavens and new earth. While human work transformed by God will influence the future, it also impacts the present. Crouch describes how work on different scales shapes the world, sometimes dramatically, and he believes culture-making changes the horizons of what is possible.[67] The interstate highway, the laser, and the Internet have opened new vistas of possibility and set new trajectories for human work and life. At the same time, they have made other work and living almost impossible, from small town farming to local news printing. According to Volf, the inevitability of shaping the world demands the thoughtful "transformation of work toward ever-greater correspondence with the coming new creation."[68]

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[66] James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), introduction (location 379), Kindle.

[67] Crouch, *Culture Making*, chap. 1 (location 259), Kindle.

[68] Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2001), 83.

God's Intentions

A vision for work that is integral to God's mission in the world requires that

God's intentions lead his people in their work. Volf identifies three of God's intentions

for work, and argues that greater correspondence with the new creation will entail work

that promotes individual freedom and dignity, the flourishing of all people, and the

protection and stewardship of nature.[69] Similarly, Cosden describes God's intentions for

the new creation, by stating that human relationships with God and one another will be

"fully restored and are fully co-operative and harmonious," individuals are healed, and

potentials realized. He states people will flourish in the world freed from the curse of

sin.[70] For both Volf and Cosden, good work is work that is good for the individual, for

the community, and for the creation.

A vision for work must include the needs of communities, because God's

intention is to bless them. Fey, Ankenbrandt, and Johnson, in their book *210 Project:*

Discover Your Place in God's Story, demonstrate that one's calling is at the intersection

of one's story, the community's story, and God's story.[71] The needs of the community

revealed in story keeps the process of vocational discovery from becoming exclusively

self-referential. Sherman agrees, when she places a question on the lips of pastors to their

parishioners, "Why, as a follower of Christ, would you choose to give your creative

talents to these sorts of exercises, when you could employ them instead in businesses or

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[69] Ibid., 15–16.

[70] Darrell Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 76-77.

[71] Marc Fey, Don Ankenbrandt, and Frank Johnson, *210 Project: Discover Your Place in God's Story* (Birmingham, AL: Alliance Publishing Group, Inc., 2011), 31.

organizations that are meeting genuine needs?"[72] Sherman develops this further, arguing

boldly, "It's time to admit that some things are just trivial, and if we can avoid them, we

should."[73] God's intentions for work must direct his people in their pursuit of it.

When God's intentions fail to shape their vision, his people become susceptible to

competing visions for work as progress. Crouch illustrates this susceptibility with an

argument about child labor laws.[74] The progress of enacting child labor laws in the 19th

century blocked the exploitation of children in an industrial world. However, as a vision,

progress forfeits valuable lessons from the pre-industrial era. The benefit of children

working alongside their parents on farms disappeared.[75] Cosden argues more

emphatically that when people jettison the new creation and its contours for work,

progress becomes a new kind of savior.[76]

Alienation

A vision for work that is integral to God's mission in the world begins with a

vision that the world and God's work in it are integral to human life. A vision for work

inspires people with the significance of cooperating with God in his work of renewing the

world. God's intentions direct them toward this work. Now, the vision must help prepare

for the difficulty of work. According to Keller in his book *Every Good Endeavor*,

"Everyone imagines accomplishing things, and everyone finds him- or herself largely

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[72] Amy L. Sherman, *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011), chap. 6 (location 1120-1121), Kindle.

[73] Ibid., chap. 6, (location 1124), Kindle.

[74] Crouch, *Culture Making*, chap. 3 (location 541ff.), Kindle.

[75] Ibid., chap. 3 (location 586), Kindle.

[76] Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work,* 109.

incapable of producing them."[77] Although most of the current literature argues for the value of ordinary work, Volf also articulates the reason for one's frustration with work by returning to the theme of alienation within work.

He writes, "Work is alienating when it does not correspond to God's intent for human nature."[78] The lenses of autonomy, self-development, and the common good are helpful for exposing alienation in work. Volf argues that when freedom for self-direction and for growing with one's gifts is lost, people experience alienation. He explores this further within the relationships of work, management, and technological development. When work loses its connection to the common good, it becomes alienating. In language that echoes Schmemman, Volf argues, "Without being framed by the concern for the common good,…I am alienating myself from my true nature as a being-in-communion."[79]

Living by God's intentions for work is difficult because of the complexity of the world and its degree of brokenness. Sin leads to exploitation, dehumanization, discrimination, and unemployment.[80] The dominant economic systems of the modern world have struggled with alienation, as work has become a means to an end. Within capitalism, as conceived historically by Adam Smith, alienation is necessary because work is necessary. Some workers will be rendered powerless, exploited, and estranged from themselves.[81] For them, there is no room for autonomy, self-development, or the

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[77] Keller, *Every Good Endeavor,* introduction (location 312), Kindle.

[78] Volf, *Work in the Spirit,* 160.

[79] Ibid., 186.

[80] Ibid., 37–40.

[81] Ibid., 54.

common good. In the words of Karl Marx, when the division of labor limits the worker to the routine performance of a few activities, work "loses all the characteristics of art."[82] Crouch employs the language of poverty, "To be poor is to be unable to 'make something of the world.'"[83] Cosden and Sherman argue that alienation in work cuts people off from their purpose in it.[84] Even with the desire to work for the common good, it is often difficult to name the meaningful contribution one makes to a complex society.[85] This leads to alienation, resulting from a poor fit of one's gifts and talents with the work roles he has presently.[86]

A vision for work must prepare people for the deep frustration of work in a fallen world[87] without giving in to hopelessness. According to Keller, "And when we say that the Christian Scriptures 'give us hope' for work, we at once acknowledge both how deeply frustrating and difficult work can be and how profound the spiritual hope must be if we are going to face the challenge of pursuing vocation in this world."[88]

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[82] Ibid., 60.

[83] Crouch, *Culture Making*, chap. 2 (location 439), Kindle.

[84] Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work,* 15; Sherman, *Kingdom Calling,* chap. 6 (location 1120), Kindle.

[85] Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 187–188.

[86] Ibid.,161.

[87] This point is made frequently in the following works: Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*; Crouch, *Culture Making*; Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*; Hunter, *To Change the World*.

[88] Timothy Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (Boston: Dutton Adult, 2012), Kindle Location 246–247.

Assessment of Work

A Christian theology of vocation not only provides vision for work but shapes the assessment of it.

Connecting, Judging, and Choosing

Assessment begins with connecting work to a vision for it. This is especially evident in Cosden's first chapter, "Why Can't I Do God's Work Too?" He traces the disappointment that many Christians feel because they do not think their work is integral to God's work in the world.[89] Sherman agrees and argues that the church must help its members connect their vocational work with God's work. She discovered that in printed periodicals and from the pulpit, a Christian receives general instructions on being salt and light to the world. Yet she concludes, "Overall, though, her church offers little specific guidance about why her work matters, how God can and does use it, or how her vocational power can be stewarded to advance his kingdom."[90]

To connect work with God's work, Cosden combines the significance of cooperating with God with the privilege of imitating Him. He states that work matters, "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 creation to humanity's and nature's ultimate maturity and future."[91] Sherman offers advice for how to make a connection with imaging God. Building on Banks' illustrations of imaging God, she states, "Pastors can explain the various ways in which God is a worker, and then

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[89] Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work,* 13–30.

[90] Sherman, *Kingdom Calling,* Location 1037–1038.

[91] Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work,* 130.

encourage their congregants to identify where their own labors fit."[92] With many examples for each, she names six categories of work that image God: redemptive work, creative work, providential work, justice work, compassionate work, and revelatory work.

The companion of connecting our work to God's work is the need to judge work. Cosden writes that our need to judge our work "applies to how we embody, shape, and carry out our work … to what we choose to do as our work…. [to] spiritual judgments about whether the career or job that we seek or have is… characterized by the four-fold nature of salvation found in the new heaven and new earth."[93] This four-fold nature of salvation includes 1) fully restored relationships between God and humans, 2) fully restored relationships between people, 3) fully restored individuals within themselves, and 4) fully restored and harmonious, mutual relationships between God, humanity and the rest of creation.[94] His questions for evaluation tie into God's intentions directing work:

> Does, or can, this or that occupation allow me to work as God's apprentice according to his purpose for this creation?
>
> Given the ambiguities and ambivalence in this specific work, does it (or how can it) in some measure promote and build harmonious relationships between God and humanity, between people and between people and nature?
>
> Does this work promote or contribute to the psychological wholeness and flourishing of people in themselves?

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[92] Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, chap. 6 (location 1065-66), Kindle.

[93] Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work,* 117.

[94] Ibid., 76–77.

Is this work suited to who I am and am becoming with my gifts and talents?[95]

Cosden acknowledges that these questions do not always yield straightforward answers. He calls for people to imagine together better ways for working for the kingdom of God. Without a clear moral obligation, someone may choose to remain in an industry and work for change.[96]

When deciding to pursue work, one may be able to connect many fields of work with God's work in the world. Here Crouch's thoughts on spheres of culture are applicable to spheres of work. No one can make meaningful contributions in every field. So, Crouch argues, "Real culture making, not to mention cultural transformation, begins with a decision about which cultural world-or, better, worlds-we will attempt to make something of."[97] Cosden concurs, "As God's working apprentices, surely we can and should exercise our freedom and responsibility in our choice of work and in the way we work."[98] Choosing a particular field of work is a necessary part of the process of assessing work.

Cultivating, Clearing, and Creating

Having chosen a sphere of work, it is important to cultivate the best of the work completed by previous generations. Cosden writes that good work "preserves and

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[95] Ibid., 117.

[96] Ibid., 138.

[97] Crouch, *Culture Making,* chap. 2 (location 511), Kindle.

[98] Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work,* 116.

maintains what is good in creation, both God-given and made by humanity."[99] Crouch

develops this further, arguing that all experience of culture, and therefore work, is

received from those who have gone before. Therefore, making something of the world is

largely, for most people,[100] a cultivation of the best they have received. Crouch writes,

"we start not with a blank slate but with all the richly encultured world that previous

generations have handed to us."[101] Crouch believes cultivation requires devotion to the

disciplines of a particular field, stating, "small things done over and over that create new

capacities in us over time."[102] He notes that every field has these disciplines, from the

chef who works with knives, to the banker who studies balance sheets, to the physician

who reads medical journals.

Using a gardening metaphor, Crouch takes the assessment of work forward from

cultivating to clearing: "One who cultivates tries to create the most fertile conditions for

good things to survive and thrive. Cultivating also requires weeding—sorting out what

does and does not belong, what will bear fruit and what will choke it out."[103] Cosden

uses the language of clearing when he writes that good work, "will be work that clears

away, as much as possible, those things that seek to confound the purposes of God and

threaten to destroy his kingdom."[104] Sherman acknowledges that life circumstances may

necessitate working with a thin connection to God's work. She turns to clear worldly

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[99] Ibid., 145.

[100] Crouch, *Culture Making,* chap. 4 (location 842), Kindle.

[101] Ibid.*,* chap. 4 (location 805), Kindle.

[102] Ibid., chap. 4 (location 849), Kindle.

[103] Ibid., chap. 4 (location 840), Kindle.

[104] Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work,* 146.

motives from the heart and asks: "What are the reasons—and are they good reasons, kingdom reasons, God-honoring reasons? How much of a role do comfort, convenience, pride, fear or materialism play in explaining why we're staying in our current jobs?"[105]

The final phase of assessment of work is the opportunity to create. Cosden again writes that good work "will be work that produces new things that promote personal, communal, cultural, and environmental harmony and well-being—all in a restored relationship with God in Jesus Christ."[106] Crouch argues that after we have done the hard work of cultivating and clearing within a particular field, we are prepared to create. He writes, "The more each of us knows about our cultural domain, the more likely we are to create something new and worthwhile."[107] With creativity firmly planted in people's conceptions of work, they can overturn a common opinion of Christians in their work. Crouch notes, "Why aren't we known as creators–people who dare to think and do something that has never been thought or done before, something that makes the world more welcoming and thrilling and beautiful?"[108]

Self-Assessment

The work, done by a worker, includes an overall assessment and attention to one's fit for the work. Fey, Ankenbrandt, and Johnson begin with self-assessment, and write, "When we discover our God-given passion and mission, and then develop clarity about how God has uniquely wired us and equipped us with spiritual gifts, passions, and the

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[105] Sherman, *Kingdom Calling,* chap. 6 (location 1196), Kindle.

[106] Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work,* 146.

[107] Crouch, *Culture Making,* chap. 4 (location 810), Kindle.

[108] Ibid., chap. 5 (location 1117), Kindle.

unique experiences in life, we become infectious to the people around us, affecting others in surprising ways."[109] Helpfully, they situate this discovery at the intersection of one's personal story, the community's story, and God's story. They broaden one's personal story to include four assets: personality, spiritual gifts, passions, and the actual story or experiences of one's life. Wedded to the content of the book is their learning approach–.[110] the *210 Project* includes online tools to digest, apply, and process the information covered in the book.

Employee Engagement

Research on employee engagement in business management and psychology broadens the backdrop for understanding work as integral to God's mission in the world. The rapid emergence of the field over the last 25 years has generated multiple explanations of observed phenomena and attempts to synthesize available research. Efforts have been made to differentiate employee engagement from more established concepts in business management and to research the construct as it is used in business consulting. According to Albrecht, "Definitions of engagement, however cast, might therefore usefully reflect these two essential qualities: (i) a positive and energized work-related motivational state, and (ii) a genuine willingness to contribute to work role and organizational success."[111] Fleck and Inceoglu capture Albrecht's qualities in their definition, "Work engagement is a positive cognitive-affective state that is activated (that

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[109] Marc Fey, Don Ankenbrandt, and Frank Johnson, *210 Project: Discover Your Place in God's Story* (Birmingham, AL: Alliance Publishing Group, Inc., 2011), 30.

[110] Ibid., 22.

[111] Simon L Albrecht, "Employee Engagement:10 Key Questions for Research and Practice," in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice*, ed. Simon L Albrecht (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 3–19, 5.

is, involving higher arousal levels) and is likely to result in activated ("motivated") work behavior.[112]

Before exploring employee engagement further, it is helpful to contrast it with three other established concepts. It differs from job satisfaction in that work engagement is about mood and activation at work. Job satisfaction is focused on the worker's affect toward work and indicates satiation rather than activation.[113] Different from general positive affectivity, work engagement is domain-specific rather than a context-free dispositional trait. Someone with a high degree of positive affectivity may be prone to higher levels of work engagement, but the two are not the same.[114] While employee engagement and workaholism may share some behavioral similarities, they are driven by different passions. Someone with a high degree of employee engagement possesses a harmonious passion for her work. She remains in control of the activity that occupies significant space but it does not overpower her life. The workaholic is possessed by an obsessive passion that controls the person, assumes excessive space in a person's identity, and causes conflict with other areas of life. The essential difference is that "workaholism lacks the positive affective (fun) component of work engagement."[115]

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[112] Ilke Inceoglu and Steven Fleck, "Engagement as a Motivational Construct," in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice*, ed. Simon L Albrecht (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 74–86, 77.

[113] Wilmar B. Schaufeli and Arnold B. Bakker, "Defining and Measuring Work Engagement: Bringing Clarity to the Concept," in *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research*, ed. Arnold B. Bakker and Michael P. Leiter (Hove, England ; New York: Psychology Press, 2010), 10–24, 13.

[114] Ibid., 14.

[115] Marjan J. Gorgievski and Arnold B. Bakker, "Passion for Work: Work Engagement Versus Workaholism," in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice*, ed. Simon L Albrecht (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 264–73, 265.

Research of employee engagement explores the motivational state of the worker, the resources or antecedents that contribute to the worker's state, the demands that hinder it, and the outcomes that follow it. Schaufeli and Bakker describe work engagement as "a psychological state that mediates the impact of job resources and personal resources on organizational outcomes."[116] See Figure 1 below:
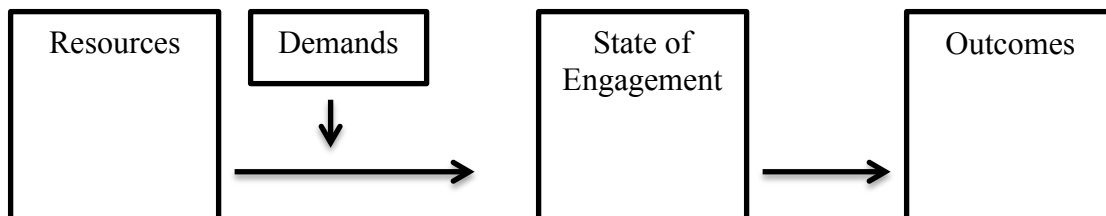
An Activated Cognitive-Affective State

Employee Engagement is an activated cognitive-affective state that results in activated work behavior. This state is further defined in terms of vigor, dedication, and absorption. This is broadly true of the most common approaches to work engagement. According to Schaufeli and Bakker, after considering the two most widely acknowledged approaches, "both academic conceptualizations that define engagement in its own right agree that it entails a behavioral-energetic (vigor), and emotional (dedication), and a cognitive (absorption) component."[117] This concurs with Kahn's identification of physical, cognitive, and emotional involvement in work. Schaufeli and Bakker describe vigor as "characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work and persistence even in the face of

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[116] Schaufeli and Bakker, "Defining and Measuring Work Engagement: Bringing Clarity to the Concept," 20.

[117] Ibid., 13.

difficulties."[118] They locate vigor at the opposite end of a spectrum from exhaustion,

towards energy. Mauno, Kinnunen, Makikangas and Feldt describe vigor similarly, and

add that vigor best captures the motivational aspects of an aroused state that directs

action.[119] According to Schaufeli and Bakker, dedication, the next characteristic of work

engagement, "refers to being strongly involved in one's work, and experiencing a sense

of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge."[120] Dedication is understood

by Schaufeli and Bakker in contrast to cynicism on the 'identification' spectrum. Mauno

et al. report a conceptual similarity between dedication and strong identification with

one's work.[121] Schaufeli and Bakker describe the third characteristic, absorption, as being

"fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly

and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work."[122] These characteristics of

vigor, dedication, and absorption hold true across fields of work. Hakanen and Roodt

report, "We have noticed in our studies that the level of engagement is not determined as

such on the basis of employee status or position at work, and that regardless of job or

profession, it is possible to feel vigorous, be dedicated, and become absorbed at work."[123]

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[118] Ibid..

[119] Saija Mauno et al., "Job Demands and Resources as Antecedents of Work Engagement: A Qualitative Review and Directions for Future Research," in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice*, ed. Simon L. Albrecht (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 100–128, 111.

[120] Schaufeli and Bakker, "Defining and Measuring Work Engagement: Bringing Clarity to the Concept," 13.

[121] Mauno et al., "Job Demands and Resources as Antecedents of Work Engagement: A Qualitative Review and Directions for Future Research," 111.

[122] Schaufeli and Bakker, "Defining and Measuring Work Engagement: Bringing Clarity to the Concept,"13.

[123] Jari J. Hakanen and Gert Roodt, "Using the Job Demands-Resources Model to Predict Engagement: Analysing a Conceptual Model.," in *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research*, ed.

These concepts of vigor, dedication, and absorption are pertinent in the discussion of resources and outcomes of engagement.

Resources and Demands

Resources, also called antecedents or drivers, contribute to employee engagement and have been broadly defined.[124] Hakanen and Roodt describe job resources as "physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that may a) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, b) are functional in achieving work goals and c) stimulate personal growth, learning and development."[125] Demerouti and Cropanzano add, "Though the availability of resources does not guarantee engagement, resources are the hypothetical antecedents of motivation or engagement."[126] Many resources prove to be true across employment sectors and geographical regions. Wiley et al., in their study of global macro drivers, propose, "Drivers of employee engagement tend to be more universal than country specific."[127] Though there is widespread agreement, resources are not as easily identified as one might expect. For instance, education level has not been shown to promote engagement. One study reported

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Michael P. Leiter and Arnold B. Bakker, 1st edition (Hove, England ; New York: Psychology Press, 2010), 85–101, 98.

[124] Jonathon R. B. Halbesleben, "A Meta-Analysis of Work Engagement: Relationships with Burnout, Demands, Resources, and Consequences.," in *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Practice* (Hove, England ; New York: Psychology Press, 2010), 103.

[125] Hakanen and Roodt, "Using the Job Demands-Resources Model to Predict Engagement: Analyzing a Conceptual Model," 87.

[126] Evangelia Demerouti and Russel Cropanzano, "From Thought to Action: Employee Work Engagement and Job Performance," in *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research* (Hove, England ; New York: Psychology Press, 2010), 153.

[127] Jack W. Wiley, Brenda J. Kowske, and Anne E. Herman, "Developing and Validating a Global Model of Employee Engagement," in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 362.

that those with up to a high school diploma were slightly more likely to be engaged than college graduates.[128] With research still exploring possible antecedents, one well-established resource is meaningfulness.

Meaningfulness

Richardson and West propose that many experience an innate sense to seek meaning in their work, stating "The opportunity to carry out meaningful work can facilitate both intrinsic motivation and personal growth."[129] May et al. define meaningfulness as "the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards."[130] Shirom uses the language of job significance to describe meaningfulness toward others inside and outside the organization. He found that as a category, it accounts for 46 percent of employee engagement resources.[131] Meaningfulness develops in line with values that go beyond the workplace. In her study of staff nurses in Canadian hospital settings, Laschinger found that when the personal values of employees matched those of the organization, the nurses were more likely to be engaged. She continues: "When workplace norms violate personal standards, individuals will be less dedicated, have less energy at work and not experience a sense of flow or

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[128] Gallup, Inc., "State of the American Workplace: Employee Engagement Insights for U.S. Business Leaders."

[129] Joanne Richardson and Michael A. West, "Engaged Work Teams" in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 330.

[130] Douglas R. May, Richard L. Gilson, and Lynn M. Harter, "The Psychological Conditions of Meaningfulness, Safety and Availability and the Engagement of the Human Spirit at Work," *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 77 (March 2004): 12.

[131] Arie Shirom, "Feeling Energetic at Work: On Vigor's Antecedents" in *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research* (Hove, England ; New York: Psychology Press, 2010), 77.

absorption due to the tension experienced by the values discrepancy….Value congruence had the strongest influence on work engagement in this study."[132] These values do not have to be related to other people but, according to Kahn, may be values for the quality of work itself. His list of characteristics that promote meaningfulness include "challenging work, variety, … use of different skills, personal discretion, and the opportunity to make important contributions."[133] Saks and Gruman generate a similar list of characteristics of meaningful work that is "challenging, clearly delineated, varied, creative and autonomous."[134] For work teams, Richardson and West argue that meaningfulness is carried by a clearly articulated and compelling vision for the work and the contribution the team will make to it.[135] These characteristics resonate with the vocational literature above, especially in the human need for self-direction and creativity in work.

Though meaningfulness may be derived from characteristics of the task itself, most often it is associated with some desire to have a positive impact on one's surroundings. Shuck et al. express "human beings desire the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to their surroundings, and when employees feel as if they are contributing, they work harder at contributing more."[136] Bakke concurs, in his book *Joy at Work*, that he needed purpose for the work to feel meaningful. From his broad experience founding

[132] Heather K.S. Laschinger, "Staff Nurse Work Engagement in Canadian Hospital Settings: The Influence of Workplace Empowerment and Six Areas of Worklife" in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 319.

[133] Saks, "Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement," 604.

[134] Alan M. Saks and Jamie A. Gruman, "Organizational Socialization and Newcomer Engagement" in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 302.

[135] Richardson and West, "Engaged Work Teams," 330.

[136] Shuk et al., "Employee Engagement: an examination of antecedent and outcome variables," 440.

and leading the Fortune 200 global power company, AES, Bakke writes, "People I have met— regardless of class, income, nationality, and education level—want a chance to make the most of their abilities to meet the needs of their families while doing something useful for society."[137] A study of physicians in underserved communities of Los Angeles revealed similar results as Bakke. Walker et al. explain that physicians, who choose to work in underserved areas, were significantly more likely to choose their place of work based on their mission-based values. Some physicians named these values as moral obligations. The study revealed that for some, their sense of mission was more important than the lifestyle their profession could provide.[138] The doctors strongly expressed meaningfulness as mission.

Meaningfulness can be cultivated. Gallup, Inc. recorded responses to this statement, "The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important,"[139] and only 41percent of workers knew what their company stood for and what made its brand different from competitors.[140] This corresponds to lower engagement, and the study suggests that engagement can be improved, especially as an employee "understands the importance of his or her role to the company's mission and purpose" and is "empowered to do what is right for the customer." [141] Sweetman and

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[137] Dennis Bakke, *Joy at Work: A Revolutionary Approach to Fun on the Job* (Seattle: PVG, 2005), chap. 1 (location 240-241, 304-305), Kindle.

[138] Kara Odom Walker et al., "Recruiting and Retaining Primary Care Physicians in Urban Underserved Communities: The Importance of Having a Mission to Serve," *American Journal of Public Health* 100, no. 11 (November 2010): 2172-73, doi:10.2105/AJPH.2009.181669.

[139] Gallup, Inc., "State of the American Workplace: Employee Engagement Insights for U.S. Business Leaders," 19.

[140] Ibid.., 10.

[141] Ibid., 57.

Luthans agree and found that, with workplace workshops, personal resource strengths and psychological capacities could be developed to strengthen desired outcomes.[142] In his study of job crafting, Bakker found that employees with sufficient resources became active job crafters and learned to assign meaning to their tasks or jobs.[143]

The research is inconclusive when relating meaningfulness to the components of employee engagement. Bakker found that as a resource, meaningfulness contributes more to feelings of dedication, rather than vigor or absorption within work engagement.[144] Shirom, however, argues that vigor is also influenced by experience unrelated to one's work role or task, "Vigor may be experienced as an affective response to events and situations that individuals encounter outside of work."[145] Richardson and West recognize that all three components of work engagement may be driven by meaningfulness, "By collectively recognizing the meaning in their work, teams are more likely to experience feelings of dedication, vigor, and absorption."[146] There is no consensus in the literature about how meaningfulness is related to each component of employee engagement.

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[142] David Sweetman and Fred Luthans, "The Power of Positive Psychology: Psychological Capital and Work Engagement" in *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Practice* (Hove, England ; New York: Psychology Press, 2010), 63.

[143] Arnold B. Bakker, "Engagement and 'Job Crafting': Engaged Employees Create Their Own Great Place to Work" in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 238.

[144] Ibid., 230.

[145] Shirom, "Feeling Energetic at Work: On Vigor's Antecedents," 78.

[146] Richardson and West, "Engaged Work Teams," 330.

Environment

In addition to meaningfulness, the work environment notably affects employee engagement, as shown by Walker et al. in their study of physicians.[147] When they explored factors that led physicians to locate their medical practices in underserved areas, the environment of their training was significant. The authors found that positive exposure to and experience in the underserved communities increased the likelihood of physicians' serving there.[148] It is striking that 26 out of 32, or 81percent, of physicians who trained in or were from underserved areas went on to work in those areas. Of the physicians who trained in non-underserved environments, none went to work in underserved environments.[149]

Walker et al. showed that difficult work environments undermined work engagement. As noted, physicians in underserved areas are likely to report a sense of mission or moral obligation as a leading factor for choosing to work in these environments. When asked to account for the reasons they left underserved areas, physicians named work hours and lifestyle as decisive factors. The study suggests that strategies to address difficult conditions of the work environments are important for retaining physicians in underserved areas.[150]

Structure of the workplace environment

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[147] Kara Odom Walker et al., "Recruiting and Retaining Primary Care Physicians in Urban Underserved Communities: The Importance of Having a Mission to Serve," 2172-2173.

[148] Walker et al., "Recruiting and Retaining Primary Care Physicians in Urban Underserved Communities," 2168.

[149] Ibid. , 2172.

[150] Ibid. , 2173

The structure of the workplace environment has a significant impact on employee engagement. Bakker argues that organizations can create a structural basis for work engagement.[151] The Gallup study illustrates the need for careful attention to structure. In their study of the effects of remote work environments, they discovered several factors that affect engagement. They recorded that those working remotely scored higher on two items associated with engagement: "opinion seems to count" and "mission and purpose."[152] Yet, their study revealed that the highest levels of engagement were found in those who spent less than 20 percent of their time working remotely. This suggests that the most engaged workers benefit from the autonomy of working remotely and the camaraderie and collaboration of working in community. [153] Bindl and Parker also note the importance of the structure of the working environment. They argue, "Organizations, instead of only selecting engaged individuals, can promote feelings of engagement among their workforce by creating conducive work situations."[154] According to Saks and Gruman, this begins with good orientation and training that promotes self-efficacy beliefs that lead to increased engagement.[155]

Structures are important for individual roles and tasks. Bindl and Parker found that task variety promoted engagement, "Being responsible for different tasks prevents

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[151] Bakker, "Engagement and 'Job Crafting': Engaged Employees Create Their Own Great Place to Work," 241.

[152] Gallup, Inc., "State of the American Workplace: Employee Engagement Insights for U.S. Business Leaders," 30.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Uta K. Bindl and Sharon K. Parker, "Feeling Good and Performing Well? Psychological Engagement and Positive Behaviors at Work" in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 394.

[155] Saks and Gruman, "Organizational Socialization and Newcomer Engagement," 304.

feelings of monotony and enables employees to feel stimulated in their jobs."[156]

Similarly, Saks and Gruman note that job rotation and mentoring programs are additional

structures that promote engagement.[157] Beugre conducted a study on 'voice,' or "verbal

behavior that is improvement oriented and directed towards a specific target that holds

power inside the organization."[158] She found that the lack of 'voice' created individual

and organizational problems, such as humiliation, anger, loss of creativity, and

productivity. When mechanisms for 'voice' were in place, however, employee

engagement increased.[159] Laschinger, in her study of nurses, found that access to

empowerment structures bolstered feelings of control and promoted engagement. Also

important were employees' having contributions recognized and having opportunities to

share in decision making, which increased the nurses' sense of empowerment.[160]

The structures at the work group and organizational levels also affect engagement.

Bindl and Parker found that generally, the larger the work group, the lower the group's

engagement.[161] Richardson and West report several structural features that are important

for work team engagement. They found higher levels of engagement when teams could

control their proximal working environments and have responsibility for the functioning

[156] Bindl and Parker, "Feeling Good and Performing Well? Psychological Engagement and Positive Behaviors at Work," 394.

[157] Saks and Gruman, "Organizational Socialization and Newcomer Engagement," 303.

[158] Constant Beugre, "Organizational Conditions Fostering Employee Engagement: The Role of 'Voice'" in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 174.

[159] Ibid., 180.

[160] Laschinger, "Staff Nurse Work Engagement in Canadian Hospital Settings: The Influence of Workplace Empowerment and Six Areas of Worklife," 318.

[161] Bindl and Parker, "Feeling Good and Performing Well? Psychological Engagement and Positive Behaviors at Work," 394.

of the team. Also important was the actual practice of assigning and delegating responsibilities within the team.[162] Bindl and Parker conclude that interventions aimed at teams' levels of engagement will be more effective than targeting individuals only.[163] At the organizational level, Bindl and Parker found that internalizing and identifying with organizational values and goals promoted engagement. They conclude, "Thus organizational practices that effectively convey the values of the organization to all employees and involve them with the goals of the organization result in more engaged employees and ultimately in more positive behaviors at work."[164]

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are repeatedly shown to be important parts of working environments that promote employee engagement. Shirom reports, "Transformational leaders exhibit energizing emotions in order to arouse similar emotional states among their followers."[165] Richardson and West also observe the transfer of energizing emotions, and add that transformational leaders boost engagement when they "empower followers, delegate autonomy, develop followers' self-confidence and encourage learning behavior."[166] There are many functions that leaders and managers may provide for their employees. Bindl and Parker found that feedback on job performance boosted engagement when managers informed employees of the

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[162] Richardson and West, "Engaged Work Teams," 332.

[163] Bindl and Parker, "Feeling Good and Performing Well? Psychological Engagement and Positive Behaviors at Work," 394.

[164] Ibid., 395.

[165] Shirom, "Feeling Energetic at Work: On Vigor's Antecedents," 78.

[166] Richardson and West, "Engaged Work Teams," 335–6.

consequences of their contributions for consumers.[167] For newcomers in their first 3 to 4

months on the job, Saks and Gruman found task significance and feedback were

especially significant.[168] In Shirom's study, feedback from supervisors was second to job

significance and accounted for 27 percent of resources that promoted engagement.[169]

Feedback was also important in the study of Mauno et al., alongside goal setting,

emotional support, and information about important issues.[170] Segers et al. found that

leaders who increase the person-job fit raise engagement for their employees.[171] In two

studies, Sonnentag et al. and Saks and Gruman found that supervisors foster engagement

through supervisory coaching and support and by emphasizing their subordinates'

strengths.[172] Saks and Gruman describe why this work of managers is important,

"Engagement is important for managers to cultivate given that disengagement or

alienation is central to the problem of workers' lack of commitment and motivation."[173]

Bakker agrees, and states positively that leaders play a special role and must prioritize

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[167] Bindl and Parker, "Feeling Good and Performing Well? Psychological Engagement and Positive Behaviors at Work," 395.

[168] Saks and Gruman, "Organizational Socialization and Newcomer Engagement," 302.

[169] Shirom, "Feeling Energetic at Work: On Vigor's Antecedents, " 77.

[170] Mauno et al., "Job Demands and Resources as Antecedents of Work Engagement: A Qualitative Review and Directions for Future Research," 126.

[171] Segers, De Prins, and Brouwers, "Leadership and Engagement: A Brief Review of the Literature, a Proposed Model, and Practical Implications," 153.

[172] Sabine Sonnentag, Christian Dormann, and Evangelia Demerouti, "Not All Days Are Created Equal: The Concept of State Work Engagement" in *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Practice* (Hove, England ; New York: Psychology Press, 2010), 35. And Saks and Gruman, "Organizational Socialization and Newcomer Engagement," 304.

[173] Saks and Gruman, "Organizational Socialization and Newcomer Engagement," 297.

engagement of their employees because engagement can be contagious and spread through teams of workers.[174]

<u>Peer relationships</u>

Kahn reports on the importance of strong social connections at work, "Good working relations enable us to play off one another, such that working together is better—more creative, interesting, productive—than working alone." Saks and Gruman found this dynamic in firm-sponsored social events that promoted peer relationships and relationships with supervisors and senior co-workers. When these environments are supportive and trusting, they provide the emotional resources to foster engagement.[175] Leiter and Bakker assert that this dynamic elevates engagement, "Collegial relationships hold potential for social contagion in which employees not only respond similarly to their shared work environment but also influence one another's experience of engagement."[176] One way this is especially true is with engaged work teams. Richardson and West found that when there is high vigor, there is a high interaction frequency among team members. Frequent formal meetings, as well as informal lunches and phone calls, help build close relationships and emotional bonds to create team identification and enhance vigor and absorption. Higher levels of engagement are sustained by the willingness of team members to share knowledge, skills, and abilities without being competitive. Engaged teams take time to share ideas about their objectives and make sure they are understood

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[174] Bakker, "Engagement and 'Job Crafting': Engaged Employees Create Their Own Great Place to Work," 241.

[175] Saks and Gruman, "Organizational Socialization and Newcomer Engagement," 303.

[176] Michael P. Leiter and Arnold B. Bakker, "Work Engagement: Introduction" in *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Practice*, ed. Arnold B. Bakker and Michael P. Leiter (Hove, England ; New York: Psychology Press, 2010), 5.

among the team members. Members know they influence decision-making and do not avoid controversy or diversity of opinion. Rather, they leverage controversy to make better decisions.[177] In high-functioning teams, members seek help and assist one another in effectively performing their roles. This assistance among team members becomes especially important when workload demands exceed an individual team member's capacity.[178] These demands when met lead to a sense of team potency, or a shared belief within the group that the group can be effective. Shirom also studied work teams and found that of the three components of engagement, cohesion of the work group most predicted the vigor of engagement.[179]

Personal Resources

Employees derive personal resources from outside work that contribute to higher levels of employee engagement. According to Inceoglu and Fleck, examples of personal resources include moving home, feeling tired, and being in a good mood.[180] Wildermuth found that employees who are extraverted, calm, and focused were slightly more likely to be engaged.[181] Sweetman and Luthans argue that psychological capital can be developed as a state that contributes to engagement.[182] Bakker describes psychological capital with

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[177] Richardson and West, "Engaged Work Teams," 326.

[178] Ibid., 328.

[179] Shirom, "Feeling Energetic at Work: On Vigor's Antecedents," 78.

[180] Inceoglu and Fleck, "Engagement as a Motivational Construct," 159.

[181] Cristina Wildermuth, "The Personal Side of Engagement: The Influence of Personality Factors" in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 206.

[182] Sweetman and Luthans, "The Power of Positive Psychology: Psychological Capital and Work Engagement," 63.

traits such as "self-efficacy, optimism, hope (persevering toward goals), and resilience (responding to adversity and bouncing back)."[183] Hakanen and Roodt add gratitude and empathy to this list of traits.[184] Segers et al. also note that hope, optimism, and self-efficacy beliefs contribute to engagement and that these may be enhanced by leadership.[185] In addition to psychological capital, Bakker reports that physical and emotional health, including the experience of positive emotions such as happiness, joy, and enthusiasm, contribute to engagement.[186] Sonnentag et al. describe the effects of personal resources and their absence:

> These resources increase work engagement as they increase the employee's belief about being able to adequately address his or her tasks and to achieve the desired outcomes. This belief is helpful in immersing oneself fully in one's work, to become absorbed and to dedicate oneself to the task at hand…. When, state self-efficacy self-esteem and optimism are low, it is much more difficult for employees to dedicate themselves to the task and to become absorbed because the self-related doubts associated with low self-efficacy and low self-esteem will interfere with the engagement process and will make employees more susceptible to distraction from the environment.[187]

The authors also note how general positive affect, or the feeling of being in a good mood, can foster excitement and interest which then increases the vigor of engagement.[188]

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[183] Bakker, "Engagement and 'Job Crafting': Engaged Employees Create Their Own Great Place to Work," 232.

[184] Hakanen and Roodt, "Using the Job Demands-Resources Model to Predict Engagement: Analyzing a Conceptual Model," 98.

[185] Segers, De Prins, and Brouwers, "Leadership and Engagement: A Brief Review of the Literature, a Proposed Model, and Practical Implications," 151.

[186] Bakker, "Engagement and 'Job Crafting': Engaged Employees Create Their Own Great Place to Work," 232.

[187] Sonnentag, Dormann, and Demerouti, "Not All Days Are Created Equal: The Concept of State Work Engagement," 33.

[188] Ibid.

Albrect notes the importance of rest as a personal resource. He argues that for

engagement to remain high, there must be opportunities for respite recovery and

unconscious job processing.[189] Sonnentag concurs, finding in a study of day-level

recovery that daily leisure time predicted higher daily levels of engagement overall.[190] In

another study, Sonnentag, Dormann and Demerouti report that on particular days when

the need for work engagement is high, individual employees must refill their "resource

reservoir" with rest and other outside resources.[191]

Job Demands

According to Demerouti and Cropanzano, job demands are required to fulfill

one's role or task and, generally, they hinder engagement. Job resources minimize the

effects of job demands.[192] Saks and Gruman identify role ambiguity, role conflict, role

overload, work/home conflict, excessive workload, and unmet expectations as job

demands that must be minimized when possible.[193] Hakanen and Roodt suggest that

these job demands are often high during organizational changes.[194] According to Albrect,

high levels of employee engagement can heighten demands away from work, especially

for work interference with family. He concludes, "Managers and individual employees

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[189] Albrecht, "Employee Engagement:10 Key Questions for Research and Practice," 13.

[190] Sabine Sonnentag, "Recovery, Work Engagement, and Proactive Behavior: A New Look at the Interface between Nonwork and Work," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 88, no. 3 (2003): 518.

[191] Sonnentag, Dormann, and Demerouti, "Not All Days Are Created Equal: The Concept of State Work Engagement," 35.

[192] Demerouti and Cropanzano, "From Thought to Action: Employee Work Engagement and Job Performance," 153.

[193] Saks and Gruman, "Organizational Socialization and Newcomer Engagement," 301.

[194] Hakanen and Roodt, "Using the Job Demands-Resources Model to Predict Engagement: Analyzing a Conceptual Model," 98.

will therefore need systems and supports in place to help them actively manage engagement and to mitigate the possibility of negative health, well being and performance consequences associated with over-exertion, over-engagement, and workaholism."[195] Mauno et al. agree, citing findings that work-to-family and family-to-work conflict are both negatively related to the vigor of work engagement. The authors propose that when employees are dedicated and absorbed in work, they have less interest in extra-work activities.[196] They conclude, "Being engaged at work and disengaged off the job is probably beneficial for employee well-being, health and motivation in the long run."[197]

Hakanen and Roodt argue that "job resources are expected to gain their salience particularly when employees meet high levels of job demands" because that is when the relationship between job resources and engagement is strongest.[198] Bakker agrees, "Job resources reach their potential when employees are confronted with high job demands."[199] Mauno et al. discovered that when there are sufficient resources, cognitive job demands can stimulate employee engagement. The study findings indicated a strong correlation between high cognitive job demands, vigor, and dedication when there were sufficient resources in place, "Cognitive job demands in challenging and interesting jobs

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[195] Albrecht, "Employee Engagement:10 Key Questions for Research and Practice," 8.

[196] Mauno et al., "Job Demands and Resources as Antecedents of Work Engagement: A Qualitative Review and Directions for Future Research," 114.

[197] Ibid., 127.

[198] Hakanen and Roodt, "Using the Job Demands-Resources Model to Predict Engagement: Analyzing a Conceptual Model," 89.

[199] Bakker, "Engagement and 'Job Crafting': Engaged Employees Create Their Own Great Place to Work," 239.

can be positive but turn into negative stressors when excessive effort is required to meet them."[200] Bakker discovered the same dynamic in highly engaged workers who increased their own job demands to make their work more challenging.[201]

Outcomes

The literature describes the state of employee engagement, the resources and demands that influence engagement, and the outcomes that often follow employee engagement. Kahn illustrates engaged employees in this way, "They do not simply follow routines….They place their ideas, hunches and feelings at the disposal of the problems they are trying to solve."[202] Hakanen and Roodt describe the process of engagement as, *"The motivational process triggered by job resources and engagement may lead to positive outcomes concerning both individual performance (PI) and organizational performance."*[203] In other words, these outcomes may be found on individual, work-unit, and organizational levels.[204] Leiter and Bakker note the breadth of engagement, "Work engagement translates into performance in many industries through employees' interactions with customers, clients, students, or patients. It is in these interactions that the energy dedication, absorption, or efficacy that lie at the heart of work engagement

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[200] Mauno et al., "Job Demands and Resources as Antecedents of Work Engagement: A Qualitative Review and Directions for Future Research,"114.

[201] Bakker, "Engagement and 'Job Crafting': Engaged Employees Create Their Own Great Place to Work," 238.

[202] William A. Kahn, "The Essence of Engagement: Lessons from the Field," in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 22.

[203] Hakanen and Roodt, "Using the Job Demands-Resources Model to Predict Engagement: Analyzing a Conceptual Model," 92.

[204] Ibid., 98.

turn into action."[205] Inceoglu and Fleck describe this action, or work behaviors, as "active, positive and directed towards a desirable work outcome, be it the accomplishment of a work task or helping a colleague in need. They are relevant for work performance, leading to organizational effectiveness in an aggregated form."[206] Hakanen and Roodt report that this action is not uniform, and it may vary for employees and work groups when they have the same resources within the same organization.[207]

Halbesleben ties outcomes to different components of engagement, even noting the outcomes are influenced by more than one component. The identification outcomes, such as commitment and turnover intention, correlate strongly with dedication. Vigor has a slightly stronger correlation with energy outcomes such as performance and health than does dedication.[208] Inceoglu and Fleck, similarly, found that absorption and vigor lead to increased effort for in-role tasks, as well as the behavior going beyond what is required for one's role.[209]

Albrect notes a variety of outcomes: "commitment, in-role and extra-role behavior, service climate, employee performance and customer loyalty."[210] He describes a diary study of fast-food restaurant employees who linked daily levels of engagement with daily level financial returns for the restaurant. As concrete illustrations of outcomes

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[205] Leiter and Bakker, "Work Engagement: Introduction," 5.

[206] Inceoglu and Fleck, "Engagement as a Motivational Construct," 78.

[207] Hakanen and Roodt, "Using the Job Demands-Resources Model to Predict Engagement: Analysing a Conceptual Model," 90.

[208] Halbesleben, "A Meta-Analysis of Work Engagement: Relationships with Burnout, Demands, Resources, and Consequences," 108.

[209] Inceoglu and Fleck, "Engagement as a Motivational Construct," 74.

[210] Albrecht, "Employee Engagement:10 Key Questions for Research and Practice," 11.

produced by work engagement, Wildermuth mentions teachers who provide extra

tutoring, and customer sales representatives who offer extra help to solve a problem.[211]

Bakker refers to dentists who are more likely to do more than asked, and employees who

volunteer to be a part of a project.[212] Laschinger, in a study of nurse employees, found

that higher levels of engagement decreased absenteeism.[213] Wiley et al., in formulating a

global model for engagement, found that higher levels of engagement were associated

with stronger financial performances.[214] Although many outcomes have been identified,

four types will be discussed in greater detail: discretionary effort, proficiency, adaptivity,

and proactivity.

Discretionary Effort

Discretionary effort is defined as effort that is not required for the task or role, but

is voluntarily supplied by the employee.[215] As an outcome, it is important, because while

high levels of proficiency, adaptivity, and proactivity are often expected, many times they

are not expected. Inceoglu and Fleck describe it in this way, "When individuals feel

engaged at work, they are more likely to allocate personal resources to specific work

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[211] Cristina Wildermuth, "The Personal Side of Engagement: The Influence of Personality Factors" in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 200.

[212] Bakker, "Engagement and 'Job Crafting': Engaged Employees Create Their Own Great Place to Work," 235, 239.

[213] Laschinger, "Staff Nurse Work Engagement in Canadian Hospital Settings: The Influence of Workplace Empowerment and Six Areas of Worklife," 318.

[214] Wiley, Kowske, and Herman, "Developing and Validating a Global Model of Employee Engagement," 362.

[215] Peter H. Langford, "The Nature and Consequences of Employee Engagement: Searching for a Measure That Maximizes the Prediction of Organizational Outcomes" in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 379.

activities."[216] Schaufeli and Bakker describe personal initiative similarly as behavior that goes beyond obvious or ordinary requirements.[217] According to Demerouti and Cropanzo, this initiative may manifest itself in extra-role performance. Employees believe it will help the organization function without necessarily influencing their own productivity.[218] Bakker provides an illustration when he notes that engaged employees are more willing to attend functions that are not required but helpful for the organization's success.[219]

Proficiency

In their taxonomy of work performance, Griffin et al. report that proficiency "describes the extent to which an individual meets role requirements that can be formalized."[220] Put more succinctly, Langford defines proficiency as the ability to carry out the core parts of one's work role well.[221] Inceoglu and Fleck use the language of competency.[222] A nurse caring for patients by administering medications illustrates proficient behavior on an individual level. The nurses' help of one another to reach goals

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[216] Inceoglu and Fleck, "Engagement as a Motivational Construct," 77.

[217] Schaufeli and Bakker, "Defining and Measuring Work Engagement: Bringing Clarity to the Concept," 13.

[218] Demerouti and Cropanzano, "From Thought to Action: Employee Work Engagement and Job Performance," 153.

[219] Bakker, "Engagement and 'Job Crafting': Engaged Employees Create Their Own Great Place to Work," 235.

[220] Mark A. Griffin, Andrew Neal, and Sharon K. Parker, "A New Model of Work Role Performance: Positive Behavior in Uncertain and Interdependent Contexts," *Academy of Management Journal* 50, no. 2 (April 1, 2007): 329.

[221] Peter H. Langford, "The Nature and Consequences of Employee Engagement: Searching for a Measure That Maximizes the Prediction of Organizational Outcomes," 379.

[222] Inceoglu and Fleck, "Engagement as a Motivational Construct," 78.

or complete tasks, and their defense of the organization's reputation illustrate team and organizational-level proficiency.[223]

Factors that influence proficiency have been identified. Griffin et al., in their study of one government agency and two public sector organizations, found that proficiency for individuals, teams, and organizations is important when work environment uncertainty is relatively low and role or task responsibilities are easily defined.[224] Their findings suggest that role clarity aligned with increased proficiency, rather than adaptivity and proactivity.[225]

Bindl and Parker studied the specific relationship of employee engagement to Griffin's taxonomy. They found that the positive affect of engagement was important for promoting positive behaviors that contributed to the proficiency of employees' teams and organizations.[226] Specifically, they found that "positive affect leads people to focus on positive outcomes, which enhances their judgment that they will be able to perform the corresponding task, and thereby promotes greater effort towards achieving the task."[227] This effort leads to proficient behavior in the short run, because engaged employees remain persistent at their defined tasks. Inceoglu and Fleck also found that a higher state of engagement affected persistence, along with direction and intensity of work

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[223] Mark A. Griffin, Andrew Neal, and Sharon K. Parker, "A New Model of Work Role Performance: Positive Behavior in Uncertain and Interdependent Contexts," 331.

[224] Ibid.

[225] Ibid., 340.

[226] Ibid., 391.

[227] Bindl and Parker, "Feeling Good and Performing Well? Psychological Engagement and Positive Behaviors at Work," 387.

outcomes.[228] Bindl and Parker conclude that proficient and adaptive behaviors produced by high engagement are especially important when the work task requires persistence.[229] Griffin et. al, agree: "In stable environments, proficiency should be highly important. As the tasks in a work environment become more unpredictable, we expect that adaptivity and proactivity will make a larger contribution."[230]

Adaptivity

In their taxonomy, Griffin et al. report that adaptivity "describes the extent to which an individual adapts to changes in a work system or work roles."[231] The authors note how quickly markets and technology change and how employees must be able to adapt, cope, and support these changes. When nurses adjust to new ways of administering medication, a new supervision structure, or a new merger of hospitals, they demonstrate adaptive behavior on the individual, team, and organizational levels.[232]

In their study, Griffin et al. found that openness to change correlated with increased adaptivity more than with proficiency or proactivity.[233] Bindl and Parker found that the positive affect of engaged employees was especially important for adaptivity in

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[228] Inceoglu and Fleck, "Engagement as a Motivational Construct," 78.

[229] Bindl and Parker, "Feeling Good and Performing Well? Psychological Engagement and Positive Behaviors at Work," 391.

[230] Griffin, Neal, and Parker, "A New Model of Work Role Performance," 343.

[231] Ibid., 329.

[232] Ibid., 331–332.

[233] Ibid., 341.

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dynamic and ambiguous situations. This was partly due to the perceived control that

engaged employees have over their tasks, even when there is a level of uncertainty.[234]

Proactivity

In their taxonomy, Griffin et al. report that proactivity "describes the extent to

which the individual takes self-directed action to anticipate or initiate change in the work

system or work roles.[235] Langford puts it succinctly by describing proactivity as the

ability to initiate new and better ways of doing the tasks that one's role requires.[236]

Inceoglu and Fleck use the language of creativity to describe proactivity.[237] Bakker

reports that proactivity is increased by high engagement. In a study where employees

scored high on vigor, dedication, and absorption, they also scored high on supervisor

ratings of active learning. Specifically, engaged employees were more likely to learn new

things, look for new challenges, and solicit feedback from coworkers. When work was

slow, they saw it as an opportunity to start new projects.[238] Griffin et al. continue, stating

that proactivity is most important when uncertainty is the highest. Increasingly,

individuals are called upon to innovate improvements for their work roles or tasks

without supervisor direction. When nurses identify safer or more efficient ways of

delivering medication, propose a better way of communicating among team members, or

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[234] Bindl and Parker, "Feeling Good and Performing Well? Psychological Engagement and Positive Behaviors at Work," 392.

[235] Mark A. Griffin, Andrew Neal, and Sharon K. Parker, "A New Model of Work Role Performance: Positive Behavior in Uncertain and Interdependent Contexts," 329.

[236] Langford, "The Nature and Consequences of Employee Engagement: Searching for a Measure That Maximizes the Prediction of Organizational Outcomes," 379.

[237] Inceoglu and Fleck, "Engagement as a Motivational Construct," 78.

[238] Bakker, "Engagement and 'Job Crafting': Engaged Employees Create Their Own Great Place to Work," 235, 239.

contribute to a new hospital policy, they demonstrate proactive behaviors on individual, team, and organizational levels.[239]

Since proactive behavior is future-oriented, it can introduce tensions into a working environment and create more risk for employees. Consequently, employees are likely to weigh the risk against the potential rewards of initiating at work. Griffin et al. found that those employees with high levels of confidence to effect change demonstrated higher levels of proactivity.[240] Bindl and Parker related positive affect to this confidence and found it promotes proactivity at work by enhancing employees' expectations of success.[241] They go on to discuss how engagement encourages an orientation toward the future and greater proactivity. This confident future orientation leads engaged employees to accept higher, more challenging goals. In the authors' words, engagement raises risk tolerance and prompts "a more future-oriented focus which then helps increase levels of effort into tasks that go beyond those immediately required."[242]

Bindl and Parker discovered other relationships within their study of the outcomes of engagement. Similar to Griffin et al.'s findings about confidence, they found the relationship between engagement and proactivity is stronger if the task is believed to be important. Also, the more control workers had over their tasks, the more they demonstrated proactive behavior.[243]

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[239] Mark A. Griffin, Andrew Neal, and Sharon K. Parker, "A New Model of Work Role Performance: Positive Behavior in Uncertain and Interdependent Contexts," 332.

[240] Ibid., 341.

[241] Bindl and Parker, "Feeling Good and Performing Well? Psychological Engagement and Positive Behaviors at Work," 388.

[242] Ibid.

[243] Ibid., 390.

Discretionary effort, proficiency, adaptivity, and proactivity, with other outcomes, work together to reinforce engagement over time. Bakker relates the ongoing effects of engagement in this way, "Engaged employees performing well are able to create their own resources, which fosters engagement again over time."[244] Kataria et al. notes this dynamic when engagement "drives proactivity, innovation at workplace, and increases employees' ability to adapt to workplace changes in emergencies. Even more, [engaged employees] tend to be resilient in the face of difficulties." [245] May et al. relate ongoing engagement with identification, "Individuals who experience deep engagement in their roles should come to identify with their jobs."[246] Kahn states: "The self is crucial here. When we are engaged, we express that self, rather than defend or withdraw it from view."[247] He continues by stating when there is identification, workers "fully inhabit their roles, not just do their jobs."[248] Bakker continues, stating ongoing engagement may create gain spirals for employees and their teams and organizations.[249] Hakanen and Roodt describe gain spirals that occur when people identify with their work, "Work identity is a personal resource that may develop over time, and result in even deeper engagement and

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[244] Bakker, "Engagement and 'Job Crafting': Engaged Employees Create Their Own Great Place to Work," 239.

[245] Aakanksha Kataria, Pooja Garg, and Renu Rastogi, "Employee Engagement and Organizational Effectiveness: The Role of Organizational Citizenship Behavior," *International Journal of Business Insights & Transformation* 6, no. 1 (October 2012):105.

[246] Douglas R. May, Richard L. Gilson, and Lynn M. Harter, "The Psychological Conditions of Meaningfulness, Safety and Availability and the Engagement of the Human Spirit at Work," *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 77 (March 2004): 12.

[247] Kahn, "The Essence of Engagement: Lessons from the Field," 21.

[248] Ibid., 22.

[249] Bakker, "Engagement and 'Job Crafting': Engaged Employees Create Their Own Great Place to Work," 237.

commitment over the work career."[250] Leiter and Bakker describe this dynamic, "Through their actions, they go beyond living within the confines of their job description to craft their job into something that dynamically adapts to the ever-changing work-life that has become the norm."[251]

Summary of Literature Review

To explore congregants in leadership roles understand their work as integral to God's mission in the world, this literature review began with a study of biblical passages that situate human work within God's mission in the world, followed by a review of literature of a Christian theology of vocation and business management on employee engagement. Many important themes emerged.

Important for a Christian theology of vocation is first a vision for work. This vision for work begins with a vision of the world that is integral to life. A consequence of this integrality is that one's experience in the world shapes one's life. More narrowly, a vision for work must inspire human work, shape it with God's intentions, and prepare people for their alienation from the way God created it to be. The second theme for a Christian theology of vocation was assessment of work. Workers must connect work with God's mission in the world. This requires judging which parts of their work align with his intentions and which do not. Given the many fields of work, people must choose a sphere of work in which they will labor. Once chosen, workers must cultivate for themselves whatever knowledge and skills have been developed before them by others, which

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[250] Hakanen and Roodt, "Using the Job Demands-Resources Model to Predict Engagement: Analyzing a Conceptual Model," 98.

[251] Leiter and Bakker, "Work Engagement: Introduction," 4.

prepares them to clear away what should not belong. The final phase of assessment of work is creating something new that contributes to God's mission in the world, including self-assessment, in which workers reflect on how God has equipped, gifted, and called them to the work they do.

Employee engagement is a motivational state that results in motivated work behavior, and is comprised of high degrees of vigor, dedication, and absorption. The first important theme of employee engagement is the activated cognitive-affective state itself. The second important theme includes the resources and demands that affect the motivational state. Resources promote engagement and include meaningfulness, environment, and personal resources. Meaningfulness is the value that an employee attributes to her work. It can arise from personal values that go beyond work and from the perceived quality of the work itself. Most often, it emerges from a desire to make a positive impact with one's work. Environment as a resource refers to the immediate surroundings of the worker. Included in this study were the structure of the workplace environment, leadership and management, and peer relationships. The last resource explored was personal resources. Job demands generally hinder engagement but can become resources when there are other sufficient resources to meet them.

The third important theme of employee engagement was outcomes, which are the motivated work behaviors that result from employee engagement. They may occur on individual, team, and organizational levels. Those studied included discretionary effort, proficiency, adaptivity, and proactivity. The literature review noted that high levels of engagement can create gain spirals, where the outcomes become new resources for future work engagement.

Chapter Three

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore how congregants in leadership roles understand their work as integral to God's mission in the world. The assumption of this study was that many congregants have discovered how their work contributes to God's mission in the world. Therefore, a qualitative research study was designed to provide a rich description of this phenomenon. Two areas of literature were reviewed including a Christian theology of vocation and employee engagement. To explore the relationship of these areas to the purpose, the following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. How do congregants describe their work as integral to God's mission in the world?

2. How do congregants relate their work environments to their belief that their work is integral to God's mission in the world?

3. How do congregants describe the impact on themselves and others of their belief that their work is integral to God's mission in the world?

Design of the Study

The study was designed using the principles of qualitative research. This approach takes advantage of rich descriptions that emerge from close attention to the details of people's lives. Merriam, in her book *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, writes "that research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making a

difference in people's lives."[252] Study participants spent a great portion of their lives preparing for and working in their chosen fields. This qualitative research study employed semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data collection and offered a more systematic approach to explore how participants construct meaning for their work.[253] The interviews involving eight congregants of differing ages from varying fields provided development of rich descriptions of their understanding of the work they do.

Participant Sample Selection

This research required participants who had thought intentionally about their work's relationship to God's mission in the world. In order to identify potential interview participants, a purposeful study sample was composed. Pastors and seminary professors were asked for recommendations from their churches. Network sampling with initial candidates following these pastoral recommendations surfaced additional candidates to participate in the study.[254]

Participants were chosen to illustrate the best practices of those relating their work to God's mission for the world. To provide a breadth of descriptions, participants were purposefully chosen who had worked in a variety of fields for a minimum of 10 years, who were spread across the Southeast and Midwest to provide variable width based on location for the study. The final study of personal interviews was conducted with 7 men and 1 woman, all who are congregants of various churches. All interviewees were invited

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[252] Douglas R. May, Richard L. Gilson, and Lynn M. Harter, "The Psychological Conditions of Meaningfulness, Safety and Availability and the Engagement of the Human Spirit at Work," *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 77 (March 2004): 11–37.

[253] Ibid., 13.

[254] Ibid., 79.

to participate through introductory contact followed by a personal phone call. Each expressed interest and gave written informed consent to participate in the study. No demographic questionnaire was given.

Data Collection

This study was designed with semi-structured interviews for primary data gathering. The loosely structured format allowed for reflective engagement with the participants on their work. The interviews took the form of a "conversation with a purpose" to understand more clearly what the participants think about their work.[255] In the end, this method fostered the identification of common themes and patterns from all participants.

The interview protocol was discussed with colleagues to evaluate the clarity and usefulness of the questions in surfacing pertinent data. Initial interview protocol categories emerged from the literature and continued to be shaped by the data produced by constant comparison of the interviews throughout the process. Coding and categorizing the data between interviews provided the conceptual space for new data to emerge.[256]

Eight participants were interviewed, with each interview lasting one and a half hours. Prior to the interview, each interviewee was contacted to discuss the research focus and the areas of their experience that would inform it. The researcher recorded the interviews with a digital recorder. The researcher conducted all eight interviews and gathered all data in the span of three months. Five interviews were conducted in person

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[255] Ibid., 88.

[256] Ibid., 171.

and three interviews were conducted over the phone. Following each interview, field notes were reviewed and sorted, and concluding reflections were noted.

Data Analysis

After each interview, the recordings were transcribed by an associate by playing the recording back and typing the manuscript. Using the constant comparison method,[257] data was regularly analyzed for similarities and differences as it was being collected. Coding and comparing allowed for patterns to emerge that could be arranged in relationship to each other to form categories for the findings. These categories were continuously refined and provided for rich description in answer to the research questions.[258]

The interview protocol contained the following questions:

1. Describe a recent experience when you had a strong sense that you were doing work that God had called you to do?

2. What have been some of the things you've done to bring your work more intentionally in line with God's work in the world?

3. What losses would be incurred if you were kept from your work?

4. Tell me about a time that your workplace environment made your work more enjoyable.

5. Who are some of the people at work who have helped or hindered your work? What have they done?

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[257] Ibid., 31.

[258] Ibid., 31, 170, 176, 188.

6. If you could change a few things about your work environment what would they be?

7. What are some ways you have given more to your work than what was required?

8. Describe a time when you needed to be fully engaged with your work but were not sure you could be?

9. If you could do anything with your work to contribute to God's mission in the world, what would it be?

Researcher Position

This section identifies two areas of researcher perspective that affected the stance of the researcher. First, he believes that work is integral to God's mission in the world and this may shape his interpretation of the data. This tenet is not universally held within the researcher's own theological circles. This may have led the researcher toward certain lines of thought in the interviews and away from others. Second, neither the researcher's own experience of work and workers, nor the experience of the participants chosen for this study, have included those suffering high degrees of alienation in their work. The researcher's own positive experience of work may have shaped the choice of interview questions and analysis of data. The researcher pursued the study with a desire to help congregants pursue their work as integral to God's mission in the world.

Study Transferability

The present study was focused in its scope. The literature reviewed provided a strong and focused context for pursuit of the research questions. In depth interviews were

done with 8 men and women working in various fields across the Southeast and Midwest. The focus was not on fields of work and therefore did not take into account the influence of the different fields of work pursued by the participants. Participant selection was focused on the best candidates regardless of denominational affiliation and as referred by the pastors and professors known to the researcher. Many variables in the participants' histories had shaped their experience of work, especially their educations, and these variables could not be evaluated thoroughly. While the findings may be cautiously transfered to other similar settings in the United States, readers who wish to generalize these conclusions must test the conclusions in their context. As with all qualitative studies, readers take responsibility to appropriately apply these findings in other ways. The results of this study may also have implications for pastors and ministry leaders who wish to explore more fully how people understand how their work contributes to God's mission in the world.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how congregants in leadership roles understand their work as integral to God's mission in the world. Interviews were conducted with eight research participants who met the criteria outlined in chapter three. These interviews were analyzed and compared, and are discussed in this chapter to answer the following research questions:

1. How do congregants describe their work as integral to God's mission in the world?

2. How do congregants relate their work environments to their belief that their work is integral to God's mission in the world?

3. How do congregants describe the impact on themselves and others of their belief that their work is integral to God's mission in the world?

Introductions to Participants

Eight congregants were selected to participate in this study. These seven males and one female were from different denominational backgrounds and worked in different fields. In the following section, each participant is briefly introduced. All names and identifiable information of participants have been changed to protect their identity.

Alan

Alan has worked as a special agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation in a large mid-western city for 14 years. For 10 years, he worked in counterterrorism, then he spent a few years investigating civil rights and financial fraud cases, and the last 15 months he has been assigned to work on community outreach. Working first in the suburbs, he moved into under-resourced neighborhoods of the city where he and his family attend church.

Bill

Bill is a native of a large southeastern city. His career has been in a range of companies in the healthcare industry, except for a short time as the CEO of a company manufacturing high voltage switches. Beginning in healthcare biotech startups, Bill then began working in executive recruiting and now leads the firm he founded. Bill also started a non-profit organization to serve communities in the city in which he lives.

Charlie

Charlie now lives again in the large southeastern city where he went to high school. After serving for many years in military intelligence, he decided to pursue a career in teaching. First, he taught at his own high school before returning to school to pursue a Doctor of Jurisprudence and Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science. He is now a member of the government department faculty for the university in the city in which he lives. He has also written on racial reconciliation for a theological journal and has had speaking engagements on the topic.

Dave

Dave has spent all of his adult life working in a small southeastern city. His work has spanned the breadth from car audio installation, to automobile repair, to construction, to internet lead generation, to city planning. He now has 10 companies and has renovated 120 structures located within 10 blocks near his city's downtown. Recently, he has begun to consult with a businessman in a small town to help that businessman revitalize his town in ways they believe reflect the coming Kingdom of God.

Ed

Ed also lives in a large southeastern city. He began working in advertising, then joined a new company as a sales representative and stayed for 20 years in various roles. After being approached by a private equity firm, he decided to join an executive recruiting firm and now works as its president, while continuing to serve select client organizations. In addition, he is interested in Business as Missions and is part of a collaborative effort to promote and support companies pursuing goals that he believes are congruent with the Kingdom of God.

Frank

Frank lives in a large southeastern city and works as an entrepreneur and technologist with success in starting and growing several technology companies.

Gabby

Gabby relocated with her family to a large southeastern city and works in the fashion industry. Following an unexpected turn of events, she used a skill from her

childhood to found a company and help it grow to bless her family, the city where she lives, and a few of the cotton farmers of her state.

Henry

Henry began working with his family's dairy business over 40 years ago. He served in many roles and is now chairman of the board of directors. Near a large Midwestern city, the dairy produces 37,500 gallons of milk product and 25,000 gallons of juices and other drinks every day. The business began over 85 years ago and has remained in the family through four generations.

Describing the Work

The first research question explored how congregants describe their work as integral to God's mission in the world. Four themes surfaced in the research as the participants described their work: 1) they had a vision for their work, 2) they described their work done in the presence of God, 3) they spoke freely about the whole of their lives, 4) they were emotionally engaged in their work.

Vision for their work

Each of the participants spoke about their work in a way that revealed a vision for it. The visions for work became apparent in the way their understanding of their work was framed by the biblical story, in their clear sense of purpose for their work, and in contributing, in one participant's words, "to a larger 'us.'"

Framed by the Biblical Story

Throughout the interviews, every participant expressed how they believed that the story of what God is doing in the world was being worked out in their own lives. The story of Gabby's company is one of her "favorite stories because it's true and a story of God's provision." Bill spoke of his role in his story, while acknowledging that it was part of something bigger: "It's not my story to tell completely. It is my story to write in because you're [God] giving me the pen, but the end of it all is your story." Dave added contours to the story. In the first moments of the interview, he said about his life:

> It has to be that this story of redemption, this beauty from brokenness that won't leave me alone….we're called to this work, a work beyond us but within us. It's something meaningful to us and it's our story. We were broken people that have had a redemptive story to our life and now we see everything through the lens of redemption and we believe that God cares about people and places.

Not only did the participants frame their stories broadly within the story of God's work in the world, but at several points, the creation, fall, redemption, and restoration arc of the biblical story was clearly present. Bill talked about each part of this story as it relates to business almost all at once:

> Business is a beautiful framework… in the ways that are deeply divine… drawing glory and value and dignity to the surface in some really clearly defined ways. That's a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, sanctified part of business. It also has the mechanism and methodology of the fall of mankind, so it has all the elements of manipulation, greed and all these other components that can just as easily be the mechanics of business…. I don't think, quite frankly, heaven will be a complete reverse course of what we have today….Some of the fundamentals of that creating value that creates dignity that creates glory that creates community will all be part of that. So the ability to push on the envelope of that in this life and try to experience and explore and be curious about how you do that in the brokenness of an economy that we all live in today, that's sort of the great adventure.

Creation

For Gabby, the budding idea for her clothing company was rooted in her understanding of the creation. As she was praying for God to provide work for her, she recalled: "He reminded me that he had made man out of the dust, out of the clay and that I could make something out of nothing. I could create, that, that's what He had done." She stated that she went home, bought some fabric, and began to make bowties for her son.

Charlie described the different ways he tries to help students. For some, he is a sounding board to help them stay grounded and intellectually honest. For others, he counsels them as their pre-Law advisor. The reason he helps his students is that "they are individual people with dignity that was built right into them from God Almighty and they are trying to find their way in the world." Frank also drew on the creation as a reason why his work mattered to God, saying, "we're called to kind of a full and rich humanity that God originally intended."

Fall

As much as the biblical story of creation shaped the interviewees' understanding of work, so did the biblical story of the fall. Bill believed that theological errors were reflected in some business structures. One example he shared was when he was working through the union organization to improve relationships with his employees, and he realized the structure could keep work going and keep people in check by enforcing the rules. However, enforcing the rules was fear-based, and in some ways, using the structure would have been easier and less messy, but he saw legalism reflected in it. This stood in the way of building trust and community across the workforce. When Frank thinks about the kind of companies young entrepreneurs can build, the fallen nature of the world is a

necessary part of the backdrop. He said, "given our broken world I think you can try to build a company that is respectful of your employees, that's respectful of your investors, and that's respectful of your customers." For other participants, the theological language for the fall may not have been used, but the concepts were communicated during the interviews. Alan demonstrated this more clearly than anyone when he described the challenge and frustration of working in law enforcement, stating, "There is just a lot of in-built, structural wrong that no one really seems to care to change." He spends much of his time trying to counter many "inner narratives within law enforcement," but he feels that no one is listening. He described both his exposure to the fallenness of the world, and his work and how that has shaped him. His interview was full of stories that fleshed out this theme, including a story of one of his neighbors who was frustrated because cars kept getting broken into. Although his neighbor captured video of men breaking into his car, the police would not come and pick up the video. He said the police gave him these excuses, "We don't have time for it; it's not a big deal; we can't see well in the video who it is anyway; they didn't take much, so 'no big deal." What made the incident worse for Alan was not long after, a story broke on the front page of the newspaper about teens breaking into cars on the other side of town. He and his neighbor could only laugh. Then Alan offered this insight: "That's frustrating once when it happened. When it happens time after time, year after year, that's when it sinks in that, 'Oh my goodness, this is wrong how much we've accepted this status.'"

Alan shared another story of a shooting in his relatively peaceful neighborhood. When the shooting did not make the news, he went to a reporter, who answered: "Well Alan, it's not news. It's not new. It happens all the time, who cares?" He spoke of

structural racism that he's realized pollutes his work. As often as twice a week, he is asked why he doesn't move out of his under-resourced neighborhood. An African-American task force officer who lives in a similar neighborhood told him: "Alan, I've never been asked once why I live where I live. I don't like shootings either." In the interview, Alan exclaimed, "It's like, oh my goodness, yeah, why do we think this is okay?" He reasons, "Unless you're on that side of the indifference, it doesn't sink in."

Redemption

As much of the biblical story of the fall that Alan experiences in his work, he also understands his work in light of the biblical story of redemption. Near the beginning of the interview, he described his work of bridging the gap, primarily between African-American and other minority communities and law enforcement. He said he believes it "fits well with God's call for reconciliation and God's call for justice." Late in the interview, he expressed his opinion, "suburban officers get paid twice as much for half the work." He would like to see law enforcement wage and work hours become more equitable. He now sits on the mayor's crime commission, and he expressed how costly it would be for suburban residents to change. It would require sacrifice, and in his view, Christians are uniquely suited to make that sacrifice because of God's redemption: "Really the only people that you can make that claim on are Christians…'Yeah, this might make you a little bit unsafe, but it might make other people more safe…. Let's sacrifice your advantages for the benefit of others."

Dave also clearly framed his work in light of God's redemption. In one season of his life, he was involved in a wide range of work, including church ministry. During this time, it became clear to him that he was called to meaningful work that he believed

would be redemptive. He said he and his wife learned "step by step, with our own money, how to make a difference in the community using faith and finances and food and stay and all these parts to create a redemptive environment." After years of this work, he believes that he and his wife "have been used by God to redeem this city." He went on to explain such a bold claim: "I mean, when we bought one of those buildings down there, a couple of ladies were executed, just a couple of months before. So, the darkness of poverty and brokenness would be over our city because it took a miracle to do it." Dave also expressed his desire for the future, which doesn't involve the skills he has developed, but: "It has to do with connecting a redemptive focus and business. Because connecting the businessmen to anything is the magic."

Gabby intentionally chose to locate her showroom and offices in the downtown of her city. It is a place that she loves, but an environment that is hostile toward Christians, in her opinion. Though sometimes difficult, she affirms, "I'm also a presence downtown, an intentional presence of salt and light downtown to a very worldly place."

Restoration

While only two participants explicitly framed their work within God's story of restoration, Bill's remarks again bear repeating. Bill described his work collaborating with local artists and chefs to serve under-resourced communities in his city. Together, they work with kids and host events to bring people together. In some ways, the chefs are always putting their reputations on the line for the sake of the beauty of bringing people together. In Bill's view, this reflects God's promised restoration:

> God risks the most of any of us to step into the biggest messy kitchen possible and throw his son into the fire for us. So he invites us to experience risk with beauty as the reward…and we also get the pain of the reality of feeling that risk, [by which] we are being prepared for eternity.

> There's no question about it….I think, 'man, what a beautiful thing that we, in our stress of this life, could get an experience of that stress pointing toward beauty, pointing toward dignity, pointing toward love, in ways that the people we're doing it with have some sense of God and have some sense of what eternity would look like….We're trying to create the here and present as much as possible in the midst of the not yet and future reality of eternity.

Purpose

In addition to framing their work with the biblical story, the participants demonstrated a strong sense of purpose for their work. Often, this sense of purpose was related to the biblical story as well. Henry spoke of his sense of purpose beginning with his father, who started the company in April of 1930 during the Great Depression. His grandfather had refused to extend credit but Henry's father felt a "moral responsibility to customers whose children depended on him for milk." He started his own company with three basic principles: "Perfect Products, Perfect Service, and the golden rule, treat people righteously, treat people right." This same sense of responsibility to children surfaced 20 years later when Henry's father began to serve two local hospitals within the maternity ward. Henry said, "He just said that is the most important thing we can do is supply mothers and their babies with milk." A strong sense of purpose that spread beyond their dairy business ran throughout the conversation, and Henry tied it all back to "an understanding of what's righteous. What does righteousness look like?"

Ed spoke repeatedly of his desire to help clients accomplish something of significance. For Bill, his sense of purpose had grown with his work, as seen in his current role:

> So our mission is really that we believe that if we get the best leaders in the right places at the right time in healthcare companies and we start to connect the conversations between those companies even more and more,

we can really turn the needle on the quality of the American healthcare system.

Later in the interview, Bill reaffirmed what he believes is the purpose of his work, "For us, we don't think it's that ludicrous to say we really are affecting healthcare in ways that will be felt by patients, physicians, and the whole system."

Having told stories of immigrants who were ignored or targeted by police, Alan expressed his sense of purpose that he help "bring law enforcement more in line with the sense of justice." He sees his work is aimed by the U.S Constitution toward ideals that makes him say about problems: "Okay, no. We're not going to let this happen. We're going to set it right." Although this is true, he acknowledged that "law enforcement is a very rough tool." Currently, his focus is to help reconcile law enforcement with minority communities; he can see the good that could be done and hopes to move in that direction.

Charlie also expressed a strong sense of purpose. Having attended and taught in a parochial school, the interview focused on how he views his work at a large public university. He related that whenever deciding to work at a particular place, he has asked himself: "What is the mission of this organization? Is it a good mission? And if it is a good mission, then I'm doing good by working there. But also, if it's a good mission, it's worth me thoroughly internalizing as part of my mission as a person." In addition to being a part of the larger good work that the university was doing, Charlie had a clear sense of purpose for his particular work. As a professor, he is "taking some aspect of the world, how it works,…that for most of my students is utterly opaque to them and my job is to try to make it clear, try and make connections for them, try and help them see things as they are." This understanding, he said, leads to common objectives and to coordinated efforts to achieve them. Later in the interview, he returned to the same theme,

demonstrating it's place in his approach to work: "What I find is I encounter a lot of well-intentioned people and what we're attempting to do is to help them orient themselves to the world, so that they can actually carryout out in a productive way those good intentions." He spoke of this orientation in the most idealized terms. His aim is to help students "seek after the truth and to know it when they encounter it and to act consistently with it."

Dave spoke repeatedly and confidently about the purpose he believed God had given him. In the first moments of the interview, he began by saying that God had given him "this idea of transforming an entire city, of stewarding a city." He returned to this theme again later, saying: "We are prophets for this city in so many ways. We say things that God wants to say about this city. I pray for this city, for the flourishing of this city. I have a dream and a vision for this city and I've invested endlessly, beyond my capacity to invest." His vision is expansive. Again crediting God for the idea, he talked about his "miracle matrix" principle and how it applies to everything: "If you can measure it, you can manage it. And if you can manage it, you can multiply it." This concept seemed to propel him toward a purpose far beyond but related to the work he is currently doing. As mentioned, Dave's work over the years had expanded into technology for lead generation that then enabled him to grow into working in city planning. His first exposure to the technology came unexpectedly on a trip to Central America. Dave connected that discovery to a much larger vision for his future, saying: "Because I still think I know what God wants me to do. I mean I think he showed me about this phone because I was supposed to be able to work to help break the spirit of poverty over the people of Latin America." He spoke about the purpose of his work in terms that transcend most people's

expectations. When asked what he hopes he will accomplish, he said: "I'd like to leave a legacy on the hearts of men and not in sticks and bricks. I would like God to give me the wisdom to build content and intellectual property things that would live far beyond me, that would give hope to the broken and those people in poverty and those idiots that got saved."

Though in language less colorful, Frank spoke repeatedly about the importance of a larger sense of purpose for his work as an entrepreneur. He spoke most directly about a sense of purpose for those he employs. For himself, he humbly compared himself to the 'useful' engine on a children's television program, and that he does not "have grand delusions or big lofty ambitions, so much as wanting to brighten my corner of the world." He went on to describe his corner as the communities he can influence through his work. His sense of purpose came out indirectly as he talked about those who work with him, stating that he looks for people who approach work like missionaries, who want to feel close to doing something valuable and who work for a purpose bigger than themselves. He tries to avoid those seeking to be rich, but prefers "the people who are interested in changing the world; they have a purpose."

Gabby expressed her sense of purpose for her work in the fashion industry. When asked why the world needs bowties, she talked about what she believes a bowtie does for the men, many of them young men, who wear them, "Well, I look at bowties as kind of—it's a mannerly way to be….a thoughtful way of dressing to show respect to other people." She expanded this idea to talk about self-expression. With over 150 bowties, she laughingly said, "You can tell a lot about the man from the bowtie he chooses." Bowties,

she said, look "happier than a necktie" and are for happy occasions, such as weddings and derbies.

As much as Gabby believes bowties bring into people's lives, she also expressed her sense of purpose as her mission in broader theological ways. She spoke of how her work has intrinsic value because God created work. Part of her calling is to hire people to use their gifts that God has given them to do what he has gifted them to do. She wants to provide local work that helps her employees provide for their families. This sense of calling to those she employs was solidified by an opportunity to sell her company. After being given a great offer, she declined, because over 200 people would have lost their jobs. She said the thought of that "just broke my heart." Working with her neighbors:

> is so integral to my story and…integral to God's mission in the world for me. That's really the bottom line to me is that I want my neighbor to be part of this company and I'm committed to using the gifts of my neighbors to grow cotton and sew…It's not about making them the cheapest I can make them. It's about making them here.

She concluded the interview by speaking in the most encompassing terms about her purpose: "I know I'm doing what God wants me to do. There's no question. It's more than bowties. It's more about him using me in the lives of those around me." She sees herself as an influence for Christ in ways, "I never anticipated for a bowtie company."

Larger 'Us'

While the sense of responsibility to others in some ways was born out in remarks about their senses of purpose, Bill described a calling to a "larger 'us.' He used the language of a "larger 'us' five times over the course of the interview. Several years ago, Bill began to think about bringing people together across his city for the good of its communities. He wanted to bring entrepreneurs, educators, bankers, musicians, and

others together, take something they were doing vocationally, and with it celebrate not only its value to God but what it might mean for others. He said:

> If I took that part [of what he does vocationally] and just got real creative and thought about ways that I could affect the pure purpose of having a larger 'us', there'd be more of a connected community across divisions and hurdles and things we know are not going to be there eternally. The point would be that we're getting to experience some of what eternally things would look like and we're getting to redeem our own time in some ways across cultural barriers and all these other things and we're getting to do it in a way where we're not having to go out and learn some new thing or go on a mission trip or go wherever, we're actually doing [our] thing, but we're doing it in a connected and collective way that's creating this larger 'us.'

For Bill, bringing people together was integrally related to his understanding of God's mission in the world. He said: "God's always got an eternal vision for a collective people. I can think about that and say, 'How can I step more broadly into that collective and invite people into it." This desire for a larger 'us' had been woven into his life, and he attributed much of this idea to his years as the CEO of a manufacturing company. His time spent with his employees helped grow in him a desire to break down barriers. He implemented structural changes to bring people together across the company. He began to see his work in executive recruiting as bringing people together for good. Presently, he's seen that as people experience the power of a larger 'us,' it changes them for the better, and he believes this idea will change the broader populations of his city.

The aim of a larger 'us' was also integral to Alan's sense of calling and God's mission in the world. About his current position, he said, "Trying to bridge the gap between primarily African-American and other minority communities fits well with God's call for reconciliation and God's call for justice." He was very motivated by the deep divides that exist between people, and shared a story of his work after the Ferguson

riots. He brought many black community leaders, pastors, and deacons from his church to have a conversation with the executive management in his office. After the meeting, the management pulled him aside and told him, "I thought you were bringing in moderates, I thought you were bringing in reasonable people, and I said, 'I did!'" He attributed this to having too few cross-cultural conversations in his city because it is so racially segregated. He said: "There are a lot of under-appreciated perspectives on both sides. There's just no conversation. There's no understanding of where people are coming from." In his view, progress will happen as people are brought together to understand what he called their "common humanity," because "law enforcement are people, protestors are people—we have the same hopes, dreams, fears—the more you can identify what is common the better." This conviction was wedded to his own experience. He related that his pastor would talk about how the rich and the poor need each other. Through relationships, he's come to understand that the poor know what it's like to trust in God in "really tough, dire circumstances, to have faith that we haven't even had the opportunity to exercise because we have all our needs met all the time."

Charlie worked with similar hopes as Alan. In his several different work roles, he regularly found himself building bridges between people—as a translator for the military in Korea, as a mediator at the county courthouse, and as a university professor speaking into cultural problems of the day. He has repeatedly been asked to speak about and promote racial reconciliation. He said: "In meeting with black folks and meeting with white folks, what I tended to find is that there was a lot of bridge building that needed to be done. And I had a perspective that I could offer."

Ed talked about the importance of doing some of his work together with friends. Frank, as an entrepreneur and technologist, viewed his customers, investors, and employees as different communities of which he was a part and for which he had responsibility. When asked about the benefit to the industry of increased minority involvement, he revealed his sense of belonging to a larger 'us':

> The biggest benefit is the benefit for those communities and the people in their communities.…So when there's a young man or woman who could be a great technologist and they were never given that opportunity then we all suffer because they're not exercising their gifting.

For Gabby, bringing people together to use their gifts was a consistent theme during her interview. At one point, she said, "Part of what God has called me to do is pull people in, give them the joy and the pleasure in the work of their hands." She feels called to the downtown community of her city and regularly opens her showroom to raise money for local charities. She enjoys helping, but also said: "I just like to have them over. I don't know, we just like to do things like that."

The roots for Henry's vision for a larger 'us' are found with his father, who always began partnering with farmers and others without binding legal agreements. Mutual need and respect for the sake of the community bound them together. Henry illustrated this well with the desire for the highest grade milk possible for burn patients to reduce the risk of infection. They could not do this without the help of everyone involved. They engaged the farmers to exceed federal requirements for bacteria counts per milliliter and offered to pay a premium for their milk if they did. They invited hospital dieticians and administrators to tour partner farms to see the dedication to herd health and quality standards. Lab tests returned far lower bacteria counts than other milks that met federal requirements. The result has been a dramatic decrease in post-secondary

infections. Their sense of responsibility to community members at risk led them to inspire their employees, reach out to farming partners and hospital staff to do their part for those in need.

Presence of God

In addition to describing their vision for their work they believed is integral to God's mission in the world, each of the participants demonstrated their confidence in the presence of God for their work. This confidence was related through conversational prayer, the frequent use of Scripture, and statements of explicit trust or dependence on God.

Conversational Prayer

Regularly, participants would describe their prayer life with God. Gabby related the apparent spontaneity of her conversational prayers. She remarked of an opportunity to sell her company that arose and the importance of conversational prayer for making the decision. She said: "I just feel secure in him. So as long as I'm speaking to him and really listening to him [I can carry on]. Like when I almost sold and then he said, 'No, no, no.' He didn't want me to sell it. I just have to really really listen to him." When the participants expressed confusion about the next steps, they exhibited a pattern of praying about the situations. When talking about the opportunities and challenges ahead, Alan spontaneously prayed, "Okay, so what do you [God] want me to do with this job?" Bill expressed a similar experience. As he was transitioning from the manufacturing environment back into biochemistry and biotechnology, he prayed, "Okay God, you reoriented my heart and have given me evidence in ways that I can't walk away

from….How's it going to work in those [new] environments?" Bill also expressed his sense of dependence on God through prayer to manage all his responsibilities. He said, "I've learned to become comfortable with the messy realities of [my schedule] and say, 'Okay, if, Oh Lord, you are orchestrating things in our business in such a way that it gives me the freedom…I'll always stretch myself a little bit more to see where you want me to be."

At other times, the prayer expressed was one from a moment of desperation. Henry related the story of a particularly stressful year when their company was in difficult negotiations and his leadership responsibilities on an outside board required many out-of-town trips, as well as a taxing transition for the organization he helped oversee. Remembering how emotional a time it was, he said "it was just crying out for grace and mercy." Dave described a time when he was running out of money, and said, "When that whole thing hit, I was like, 'I don't know what to do. We're going to lose everything if you don't help me!" He spoke of his belief that God answered the prayer. Less for rescue and more for personal growth, Bill prayed, "So God, I have to feel like that is truly what you're calling me to do and that is truly what the best interest and highest purposes are." He continued:

> Am I am willing to surrender moment by moment, day by day, in the
> midst of that stretch to trusting you and saying okay, yes, I could make
> some bad decisions along the way in some of this, and yes I probably
> have. But in that, do I trust that your redemptive purposes are being
> accomplished in the best ways so that I'm knowing you in a deeper way.

Finally, the participants related prayers for specific things. Alan's biggest prayer request was for God to bring others to his office who would share his vision. Dave was focused in praying for what he needed most. He began to ask God for two things:

> God give me front row seats to miracles. They don't have to be my
> miracles, but I do want to see them. I want miracles in my life. And
> number two, bring winners into my life because I can't do what you've
> asked me to do without winners. I need people who are gifted, gifted by
> you.

In these ways, the participants related their confidence in the presence of God through

conversational prayer.

Scripture

Throughout the interviews, patterns emerged of the participants' quoting,

referring, and alluding to different biblical passages. The intentionality seemed to range

from 'bubbling up' in conversation to explicit references to biblical passages. Frank,

when asked at the interview about how he would like to contribute to God's mission in

the world in the future, said:

> So I really think it just comes back to brightening my corner of the world.
> If I can be faithful in small things, all the things God calls me to do, then
> that would be—I guess we all want to hear, 'well done, good and faithful
> servant.' I think that's enough for me. I don't need to dream big if I hear
> that.

The hoped-for presence of God expressed through Scripture was more important to Frank

than any accomplishments he might achieve. Ed also alluded to the "Parable of the

Talents," and purposed not to "bury his talents in the ground." Dave seemed to conflate

the "Parable of the Talents" and the "Parable of the Dishonest Manager." He interpreted

his past success and anticipated future:

> If I'm faithful with another man's things God will trust me with my own
> things. And if I'm faithful with a building he'll give me a block. And if
> I'm faithful with a block he'll give me ten. Now that I've been faithful
> with ten, he's given me a city. And now that I've been faithful with a city
> I'm getting other cities. Who knows what's next? I mean regions, states,
> what will he give me the ability to speak into?

Dave saw his life as an outworking of the Scripture because God is near.

Participants often referenced the wisdom literature of the Bible. Frank described how he leads his team, referring to Proverbs 29:18, "without a vision people perish." During the interview, he described the importance of connecting his people to the impact they are having on their customers, and how he shares customers' stories with them to show employees' impact. Dave alluded to Proverbs 15:11, about his need for a "multitude of godly counselors." Gabby believed God called her to give others "the joy and pleasure in the work of their hands." She said, "And I got that from Ecclesiastes…it does talk about how you should take pleasure in the work."

Ed made the most intentional references to Scripture. He understood office dynamics in light of the Bible's teaching on the various gifts of church members. His aim is to "create an environment where everyone can bring their own unique skills to build things, which is biblical saying, we're not all hands, we're not all the feet." Ed integrated his understanding of the Bible into the different roles he plays. Regularly, he walks leaders through a decision-making rubric of power, love, and self-control, based on 2 Timothy 1:7. After expressing his desire to help clients do things of significance through their work, I asked him about what shaped his understanding of significance. Then he reached for his Bible and opened it, reading: "So, God created us to do work. And work in and of itself is serving God and being…fruitful, and being good stewards of what he has called us to do. So, this is Genesis 2:15, 'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till and to keep it.' Tilling and keeping is called work." For Ed and the other participants, their belief that God was present surfaced in their use of Scripture.

Explicit Trust

The participants explicitly stated trust or dependence on God, which demonstrated their confidence in the presence of God with them in their work. Bill recounted a time in which he grew to trust God more through surrender. He spoke of trusting that God would lead him through the decisions he makes about cost-investment risk, and how he came to surrender moment by moment to God. Seven to eight years ago, he was going through a discipleship curriculum with his pastor and others. God had done great work in his life, and he had been serving as an elder for 15 years but he hated the idea of surrender. He lived as though everything he was involved in still depended on him. As the subject of surrender surfaced again and again in his discipleship group, Bill realized he was "struggling with all the stories that seemed unfinished in my life that I wanted to finish." Through this discipleship group, he said, "Surrender became my reality…that's really how I feel and that's really how I'm doing life…trusting in the right God and smiling at what He's doing versus feeling like I've go to make all these things come together at the right time in the right way." Trust helped him move away from what he described as a very heavy burden, and move away from the feeling that he was always to blame for the crises and suffering of those around him.

Dave did not use the language of surrender, but he expressed a similar sense of trust in God through frustrating circumstances. He said: "But I have to live with it because God knows and I have to do what he told me to do no matter what. I gave my life away the day I believed and I'm going to do whatever he says. It's the best I know how. I don't care about the other stuff. It's up to him." He later expressed the same trust, stating he is convinced he has been more blessed by the things he did not get to do than by the things he did. This trust in God extended to opportunities for his work. As business ideas

come to him that energize him, and as he begins to pour over the possibilities, he depends on more from God. He said, "I'm not quite sure until I begin to experience, I begin to have that confirmation that I'm on the right path, that God puts bread crumbs on the path for me of encouragement and relationships and things that help me know that I'm on that journey."

As Gabby related her story, she spoke of how she learned to trust that God was with her. Before founding her company, her family had moved for her husband's work, which ended unexpectedly. As the months went by and they were running out of money, friends began putting money in their newspaper in the morning to help them make it financially. She said about the experience, "God was showing us that he was taking care of us, so we knew God was there." Experiences shaped her dependence on God. Later, she said about her risk tolerance, "Because I mean it's God's company and He's built this and I just trust him with it." Finally, Ed and Charlie expressed their trust in God's presence, less through narrating their stories and more through statements of what they believe. Ed expressed his conviction that God gives us all we need to thrive, for the things he calls us to do, including his Holy Spirit who dwells in us. Charlie also expressed his confidence in the indwelling Holy Spirit and how "the Lord can bless what we are doing and guide what we are doing. That, I think, is unique to the Christian carrying out this particular vocation." In different ways, the participants expressed their confidence in God's presence through explicit expressions of trust and dependence on Him.

Whole Lives

In describing their work as integral to God's mission in the world, the participants spoke with vision for their work, the presence of God with them in their work, and how their callings engaged the whole of their lives and their whole selves. Life was 'seamless,' and so theirs became shepherding lives that engaged a range of emotions.

A 'Seamless' Life

Alan told a story of an initiative that he pursued in his work with the FBI to promote cross-cultural communication. Through other life channels, he became aware of a nonprofit organization that promoted cross-cultural communication. Alan proposed that the FBI partner with it and sponsor an event to foster community dialogue. When his superiors said, "Ahh, no…that's too far," Alan pressed ahead out of personal convictions and attended the event as an FBI agent, even if the Bureau did not sponsor it. When asked about the event's relation to his work, he reflected more broadly about the whole of his life, "Sometimes it's hard to imagine or draw a line, 'Okay, am I working or am I at church or am I at home or am in the community?' It all kind of really melts together sometimes."

Dave used a similar metaphor for a 'seamless' life, "I don't have this disconnect between work and faith and life and relationships—all that is just jumbled together in a big pile." Charlie pushed against the idea that his calling would not include his work and life. He said, "I think there's something impoverished about the idea that Christian vocation only consists of direct evangelism or proselytizing or something like that." He saw life without lines or seams because at a young age his imagination had been "baptized to see that this whole universe is God's." Therefore, everything matters, even

has "cosmic significance," and when people do their work or relate to others half-heartedly, it "is because we don't really recognize the significance of what we're doing." This baptized imagination for an integral life is what he is trying to pass along to his students, his children, his colleagues, and his friends at church in everything they are doing. Henry concurred, "There's a high calling for all of us."

Ed shared how early in his career he had learned from a mentor that "life is whole and if you're a follower [of Christ], that means that you're also doing that in every facet of your life." He related how he reached the point where he began to "de-compartmentalize everything and see it holistically and if it's all ministry and it's all predicated upon doing things of excellence and working as though you're working unto the Lord in all that you do, then that's going to yield fruitfulness." His experience with a 'seamless' life led him out in ministry to men whom he believes often live compartmentalized lives. He says he has known many who are faithful to go to church on Sunday but have never connected their work to their faith. They show up half-heartedly to work and much else in their lives. He concluded, "The thing that I've discovered is that so many men live lives of quiet desperation because they don't see life holistically."

Frank did not live in "quiet desperation" but still felt the tension between his own limitations and the many good things he could pursue. He offered, "In some sense our Christian lives are multifaceted and we're called to a kind of a full and rich humanity that God originally intended,…[but] it's hard to keep all of the pieces in mind at one time." He is moved by unreached peoples who need the gospel and has wondered if he should devote himself to them as a missionary. He also loves developing software. To hold the tensions, he says, "there are many things that God calls us to do and I guess the key is

becoming comfortable with your gifting and to realize that … the work I do fulfills many of the giftings that God has given me." He relies on this 'big-picture' view because there "are many other things that are critically important in the world around us, …[and] you hold those things together in a way that fits with your gifting."

Bill and Gabby both relayed how they followed their gifts for the work they do into other meaningful ways of loving their neighbors. For Bill, there was great joy when he started "living more fluidly and openly, realizing your work matters to God." He began to see "there's stuff that I know that I deeply care about that's not going to be part of what I do everyday, that I want to figure out ways to carve out parts of my life, invest in those things, still using what I do every day and the things that I know how to do." The perceived value to God of the skills he had developed at work enhanced what he believed he might do with them for the kingdom of God in other areas of life. For Gabby, the love of her work spread to other opportunities to serve because of it. She said, "I wouldn't have the impact on people that I do now. I don't know that I would be asked to be on boards of Christian ministries—boards that I love—if I didn't have this business."

A Shepherding Life

Seeing their lives as wholes, the participants could not describe their work without also describing the breadth of care they feel called to provide for others. In this way, they could not only describe their work but described their lives as integral to God's mission in the world.

Bill best encapsulated the breadth of care he and others felt called to show. After telling a long story about how the Lord transformed the work culture of the manufacturing company he led, he said, "I think that's when my vision of vocation and

the culpability of a shepherding life totally changed." He believed he was morally responsible to care for the whole of his employees' lives, not just pay them to make the products their company sold. Bill learned to manage in such a way that gave his employees a voice and recognized their dignity, and consequently racial and age barriers began to come down. He told the story of how business slowed for a season, and he asked for input on the decision as to whether to shorten the work week or lay off some employees. He was pleased that senior African American workers asked for a shorter work week so that younger Hispanic workers would not lose their jobs and put their families at risk. He said that a year and a half before, that would not have happened. They hosted workshops for their employees that helped them with conflict resolution, marriage counseling, and the healing of psychological wounds from their pasts. Later, this idea of a shepherding life influenced the model he developed for executive recruiting. Rather than try to fill as many jobs as they can, his company works with fewer clients and companies whom they then get to know much better and provide what he calls "a pastoral experience." Charlie demonstrated the same kind of care for students who sometimes would meet him at his office to discuss why they missed class, but would end up having a conversation about other things going on in their lives. Charlie said that he likes being approachable in that way to comfort them, guide them, and help them however he can.

Henry shared a similar care for those who work for their family's business. Often families find themselves in hardship and need help. The business can provide loans for hardship cases up to $5,000 interest-free because they want care for them. His father had instilled in him the responsibility of a shepherding life. After World War II, he started the Penn Hills Service Association in their suburb of the city. It provided clothes, food, and

hospital equipment free of charge for residents who needed it. He also started the YMCA and was active in the local chamber of commerce "to direct it not just for commerce but for citizenship." Today, the service association is still serviced by the dairy company and provides food to 360 families a month who need it. They expanded this area of their care to include 26 other food banks, and at Easter they provided 10,000 dozens of eggs. In the last two years, they have not been able to add additional food banks because it now costs almost $100,000. Henry says it is "the understanding that we have a corporate personal responsibility to the people in need." Henry's family's business partnered with the local hospital system to provide care for pediatric cardiology patients and their families. On the family's farm, they host a picnic with a corn roast for the families needing care, the families who have received care, and for the caregivers. It's a picnic, and they husk corn for 700 people each year who get to know each other in a relaxed and fun setting.

Dave's commitment to a shepherding life led him to take on the formal role of a pastor on the side as well as provide informal counseling to peers and associates. Dave had been part of a small house church and was very close to the pastor, who died unexpectedly. When he was asked to try to hold the little church together until they could find someone else, he reluctantly agreed and served as their pastor for 12 years. This he did while growing his business. And, among his business associates, he said at times he did "20 plus hours of counseling a week for broken businesses and broken marriages and stuff."

Ed had similar experiences with his work. He is regularly approached by other men seeking his counsel and help with their careers. Glad to help, he said he often begins by talking about vocation as a calling from God. He said this "can start a really great

discussion that unpacks their lives more holistically." He relayed a story of a conversation with an attorney who had wanted to do something more significant. Ed encouraged him to see his work with his clients as his ministry. He challenged him to love his clients with excellent work done with integrity, "Are you taking the best of what you know and providing the best guidance and advice that keeps them off the shoulder of the road and out of the median?...And who are you working for and unto?" He shared that the attorney later came back and said, "I love going to work now." Ed was shepherding him through life in whatever ways he could.

Gabby's breadth of care seemed to be such natural expressions of her work and her life as a mother and friend and neighbor. When asked why the world needed bowties, she replied, "It's a way to show that you know, that your momma brought you up well— just a fine way of behaving." She expresses her motherly heart to continue to help raise the young men who wear their ties. Gabby loves hosting fundraisers in their showroom for different causes in their community, like the fight against juvenile diabetes. She tells them, "Why don't y'all have an event at our showroom for all your supporters—we'll just have, you know, cookies and cake and whatever and have an event." In this way, she wants to be salt and light in the downtown of her city, that in her eyes is a "very worldly place." And she loves evangelism. To be clear that she wants to be more than 'nice,' Gabby said: "But I'm definitely trying to reach others for Christ in a very difficult mission field. There's a lot of hatred down there right now towards anybody who's a Christian." And she loves them and is thankful that her church is downtown to have an influence there.

The breadth of care and concern was far-reaching for many participants. Frank, Gabby, and Henry shared their love for missions without being asked about it. As someone who was once a short-term missionary, Frank said he has a heart for missions and remains involved in supporting missionaries financially and socially. Gabby stays involved in other ministries, and Henry chairs his church's missions committee.

An Emotionally Engaged Life

Each of the participants spoke as those whose whole selves were involved in their work, and this was demonstrated as they spoke with emotion about their work and their lives. They described how their work energized them and elicited joy, gratitude, and sadness.

For Bill, the continuity of value, glory, and dignity that can be gained through work now that anticipates the value, glory, and dignity of heaven is inspiring. He said in a pace that reflected his excitement, "So the ability to push on the envelope of that in this life and try to experience and explore and be curious about how you do that in the brokenness of an economy that we all live in today, that's sort of the great adventure." Bill went on to relate a story of how this hope had played out in his work. After discovering at the manufacturing plant what he believes is God's design for work that is full of dignity, respect, and community, he set out to apply it to biotechnology startups. He said, "I think it just amplified and amped me up even more about it—this works in either end of the [work] spectrum in different ways."

Charlie was energized by "the excitement of knowing, okay, here's what I've prepared for them." His students give him feedback that encourages him more. He said excitedly, "Some small part of the world in some small way is now more intelligible

because of a course that I taught." When Ed described why they do what they do, he said, "It's because we believe if we do these things, we're energized to get out of bed every morning because in doing them we doing things of significance and leaving a positive lasting legacy." Dave's interview was full of energy. He says his work is the best way for him "to get jazzed up." He compared the thrill to the high that drugs induce, saying, "I think it's beautiful that God built us with drugs inside of us that pump when you get excited…[like] the excitement of doing something cool." He said, "I love getting to think about doing a deal, even if I don't get to do it" and then went on to compare deals to sexual intercourse.

Gabby bubbled with energy during much of the interview. At one point, she described the process of coming up with 25 new designs every season. It takes 2-3 months because of other responsibilities. She said, "I just have to sit down and do it— draw the design." It's tedious, but she lit up describing the design, "They're little wood ducks and they're so cute!....I don't know; it's not that hard for me. I love it." Frank, during their interview process for new hires, looks for candidates who will be as excited about the work as he is. He says they look for people who think of their work "more like a missionary than a job." He continues, "We want a person who can be passionate for their work and is willing to do their best in the work environment."

In addition to the energy with which participants talked about their work, they described their work and their lives as fun or a source of joy for them. Dave, Ed, Charlie, and Henry talked nonchalantly about the fun they did have and wanted others to have at work. Dave talked about his approach in working with others in "building something that's fun." He approaches partnerships with this mindset, "I want it to be, 'How can we

win together?' and 'I want you to make more money and have more fun than you've ever had in your life and if you don't do that, then I want you to leave." Ed was describing his involvement with business as mission where he and others use skills developed primarily through work to bless others on the mission field. He interjected, "We have fun. Yeah, we have fun together." Charlie called his life as a professor a "charmed existence." Henry said he was delighted by the company's transition over the last ten years in how they serve local schools.

Gabby, Alan, and Bill spoke with more focus about the enjoyment their work provides. Part of what Gabby has been able to do with her company is revitalize the local textile industry. She works with local cotton farmers and seamstresses and says, "I get the joy of enabling them to use their God-given gifts." One of her fears about selling the company has been the likely loss of work for those near her. For Gabby, 'joy' is integral to calling. She says about her work, "I'm not doing it for the money; it's really the pleasure of the work…I could tell that I'm doing what God's called me to do because I enjoy the work so much." Alan sometimes has to respond in the middle of the night, but said of crises like trying to find a missing kid, "There's a real sense of importance to the work. That's enjoyable." Bill said that working now in light of eternity is "just a blast."

Energizing and enjoyable, the work that the participants described was also gratifying. Through the different jobs that Charlie has had, he said, "I really realized the aspects of my job I really love the most were the parts of my job that really just didn't feel like work because it was so rewarding." Dave used similar language. In commenting about construction, he said: "We build artfully. It's expensive and slow. It's aggravating, but it's so rewarding." In describing his work and what he believed about all good work,

Frank said that when one does what he or she does well, there is "an intrinsic sense of accomplishment and value…where I realize that's what I was designed to do." Henry used the language of affirmation to describe the sense of satisfaction of being one of the few companies in their industry that has continued to thrive with the challenges that unionized works presents. Ed spoke of his work as meaningful, as did Bill. Bill said of a life lived in response to God's calling, "I can rest more (not completely but more) in the meaningfulness of it."

The emotions the participants described also included a sadness and even fury that motivated them in their work. When Gabby contemplated the sale of her company, and the outsourcing of jobs to China, she said it "just broke my heart. We have over 200 people that would lose their jobs just in [our area]." This made her want to keep the company and continue to employ those around her. Alan related a story:

> Like, two weeks ago there was a domestic incident on a street: a woman screaming for help and I ran out to help, cautiously. We call the police; the police finally come. The couple runs off and I point the police to where the guy was, 'Hey, he's right there.' They drive past; they literally drove past and waited for him to leave and then came up and said, 'Oh we couldn't find him.' I was just so furious! I went and told everybody. I went and told my boss, 'Hey, so you know, this is what happened last night. This is why people get frustrated with the police."

As participants described their work that they believed was integral to God's mission in the world, they spoke of an emotionally engaged life.

The Work Environment

The second research question explored how congregants relate their work environments to their belief that their work is integral to God's mission in the world. The research surfaced two themes as the participants discussed their work environments. They

related characteristics of their working environments to their beliefs about their work, and they related people within their work environments to their beliefs about their work.

Characteristics of Their Working Environments

Participants related three characteristics, autonomy, creativity, and risk, of their working environment to their belief that their work was integral to God's mission in the world.

Autonomy

Charlie and Alan talked about the autonomy they have on a daily basis in terms of the freedom to structure their days. Charlie enjoys that he has a job with the flexibility to meet students when and where he wants. Some come to his office. Others he will meet elsewhere for a cup of coffee. Alan loves that his work is "not desk-bound; that it's out talking to people; it's out meeting people. So you're moving around, you're covering different parts of the city. I really enjoy that." Alan also talked about the autonomy he has to choose short-term assignments and the course of his career. He says, "You can change your career. So we can change career specialties or we could move to D.C. if we wanted to or—I would love to go overseas." He related how he had exercised that autonomy in shifting from investigating civil rights abuses to financial fraud cases and now to community relations following the riots in Ferguson, MO. Frank acknowledged, "I do have a lot of autonomy," and later used the language of control to describe it. He said, "I have more control over more pieces of the puzzle so it's easier for me to think about all of those pieces." In his view, autonomy is part of being an entrepreneur.

Bill saw autonomy for everyone as a reflection of God's image, even if they did not feel it. He said, "At some level, we all have a lot more autonomy than we think we do because we are making choices everyday and nobody is literally holding our hand or holding our head and making us choose those things." Dave also tied autonomy to God's creation, saying:

> Autonomy I love…I think God wires us. I think there are different types but I divide people into two categories: pioneers and settlers. Pioneers do not want to go where there's already a road and settlers do not want to go anywhere there's not a road….And I really believe in my heart that I'm a pioneer.

Autonomy was an important feature of the participants' working environments as they related them to their belief that their work was integral to God's mission in the world.

Creativity

Several of the participants talked about creativity as they related their work environments to their belief that their work is integral to God's mission in the world. Frank and Charlie mentioned the opportunities they have to design. Frank said, "As an entrepreneur and a technologist I love the design aspect of what we do, just the designing of something well, where you know it works for the intended user, where you've done something that's simple, beautiful and elegant." When talking about designing courses in the summer, Charlie said:

> When I'm saying, 'okay, we're going to talk about this in this way and then we're going to move on to that, and then we're going to explore this, and delve into that, and these are the questions I'm going to ask, and this is where I hope to move the discussion, and this is the big payoff that I hope that we reach.

Bill and Henry talked about creativity employed when their companies were started. Henry told of how his father had adopted principles that were not currently in use at that

time. Bill described how he had wanted to create a new kind of executive recruiting company. He said, "What was a business that doesn't have the greatest reputation in the world, being sort of headhunting and executive recruiting, at least we were doing it in a whole different way that gave it a whole different kind of [feel]." Bill recounted how he wanted "to do something even more directly infused with sort of this vocation-life look, and create this community of leaders we could get behind and sponsor at a high level and do it at a really high level." This creativity has allowed them to work with C-suite leaders whom he says sense what differentiates them from others. Their clients "come and spend time with us as leaders thinking about their careers and where they want to go."

Risk

All of the participants related risk in their work environments to their belief that their work was integral to God's mission in the world. Each participant experienced risk. Gabby and Bill spoke excitedly about risk. Gabby exclaimed, "I love risk." Alan spoke more soberly of what risks had cost him in his work. He related that living in an under-resourced neighborhood was very beneficial for his work, but there had been risks. When he decided to move in, there were risks to their personal safety. There were also social risks. Regularly, when colleagues find out where he lives, they are surprised and ask why he does not move. There have also been financial risks of deciding to live where they do. He said: "You know, I can't sell my house; it's upside down on the mortgage. It's worth 30 percent less than what I paid for it 10 years ago. I mean we knew going in that it was going to cost that. We're not going to have that asset or resource. There are vacant homes all over."

Others described the risks that are inherent in their work or business models. Charlie discussed the risk of not publishing enough to be tenured, and the risks of being too challenging or not challenging enough in his teaching. He says sometimes in academia there is the risk of moral courage to speak against the status quo. Dave said one of the risks of doing what he loves is, "there is no guarantee all these bills will get paid." Ed led their company to expand to service other industry sectors. His company intentionally limited the number of clients within their established sectors. This risk of not taking easy clients in favor of expanding to other sectors could have hurt his company. Henry described how his father started their dairy company during the Great Depression. He insisted that they extend credit to customers so they could buy milk for their children.

Risk was a common thread that ran through the conversations with all the participants, and many of them described their attempts to manage it. Dave said, "And risk is risky when you're ignorant. And the more you know, the less risky things become….When I do deals, there's a lot of math behind it." Gabby, who said she loves risk, manages it by keeping risks small. She explained how she experiments with a new item. She might spend $2,000 and make fifty shirts. If they sell well in her downtown showroom, she will make more and take them to her top twenty stores. If they do well, she rolls them out to the next 100 stores, and so on. Henry described how he calculated risk. He wanted to take greater risks with second-level managers. He said the risk was worth it because of the difference it would make in the long term. He said: "So when you measure risk, you want to think in terms of long-term decisions not short term. If I make

this decision, will it just affect today and tomorrow or will it have an impact on future employees or this department or this performance."

Charlie related risk to the autonomy and creativity he experienced in his work. He saw risk "in with a lot of autonomy [because] you have a lot of time you can waste." He sees risks in creativity as well whenever someone "is deviating from what the popular conventions are." Bill related risk and autonomy in this way, "So the autonomy to step further into risk is something we all have. The choice to do it in a business context puts us, again I think, closer and closer to the character of God." He continued, "because of the risk takers out there, again, He is the ultimate risk taker. He has taken more risk than any other conceivable being."

Bill develops his 'theology of risk' further. He said, "I think about risk as something that's such a deeply spiritual dynamic." Bill sees the biblical storyline as full of risk. God is "the author of all risk because he risks the most of any of us." In Bill's view, God risks in creating a world and then letting it fall into sin. He risks "to throw his son into the fire for us" to save us. Then God "invites us to experience risk with beauty as the reward for that risk, and we get little bitty tastes of that and we also get the pain of the reality of feeling that risk." In his view, the experience of risk is preparing us for eternity.

When asked if Gabby related risk to her faith, she said with enthusiasm, "Absolutely! Yes. Because I mean it's God's company and He's built this and I just trust him with it." Frank expanded on the relation to risk and faith:

> Well, I think risk is a lot about—I think it really is the other side of our fears and so in—you know, perfect love casts out fears—and so in some sense our fears are what are keeping us from taking steps of faith that may appear to be risky to us, even if God is calling us to do those things. So, there's the risk-is-part-of-life, but I think there's something beautiful about taking steps of faith when there is risk, when you don't know the future.

> We all do that everyday; all of us do that. But in the work environment we can do that voluntarily. We can do that because it was our choice, we were willing to do something. But I think in some sense it's beautiful when people take on risk and people are willing to take steps of faith in that way.

For Frank, this willingness to risk is related to love. He continued:

> Well you know, we're in a broken world and a lot of risk flows out of love. You know, love is risky. Loving your wife well is risky. She might reject you or she might misunderstand you. Loving your church—well, you're certainly going to be misunderstood….I just think risk is part of love and a great enough love compels us to overcome the risk and do it anyway.

Similarly, Alan related risk and love, specifically the sacrifices that Christians should be willing to make for the sake of loving others. When talking about sacrifices that place us at risk, he said:

> You have to get people to sacrifice [to help under-resourced communities]. Really the only people that you can make that claim on are Christian; from 'love your enemies' and pay the cost- yeah this might make you a little bit unsafe, but it might make other people more safe…lets sacrifice your advantages for the benefit of others.

As participants related their working environments to their belief that their work was integral to God's mission in the world, they described them as allowing for autonomy, creativity, and risk.

People Within Working Environments

All of the participants spoke about how important the people were within their working environments. Dave expressed this well, saying, "You know, every great season of my life has started with people and every horrible season of my life has started with people. It's relational." When Alan was asked about what he doesn't like about his work, he talked about how frustrating people can be. He said, "You can get people who are

really focused on the minutia, and the rules and kind of lose the forest in the trees." He

continued, "A wise old agent told me when I was starting, 'It really doesn't matter what

violation you're working, it just matters who you're working for.' Your supervisor makes

all the difference. If you have a good supervisor, things are enjoyable. If you have a petty

one, it can be really miserable." He said there is often so much more they could be doing

if the right people were in place. Surrounded by people early on, Dave said he began "to

ask God, 'Who should be in my life?' If relationships are from God, I need the right

people." He said that one of the two most important prayers he prays are for God to

"bring winners into my life because I can't do what you've asked me to do without

winners. I need people who are gifted." Henry said that of all the gifts and talents they

have, "the most important is human capital." He said, "We understand that life is

relationships so our coworkers and co-employees are part of our family." Ed said, "See,

it's all about relationship and God really wired us to be a part of communities." He

continued, "I think some of the best things that you can accomplish, you accomplish with

others."

Not only did the participants discuss the importance of people, they went on to

describe what makes for good people in their working environments. Dave said:

> Environment matters. The key to the environment piece is that—boy, I
> learned so many relational lessons—You can't lead people you need. If
> you need their approval and you need their acceptance, you can't lead
> them because that'd end up being your god and people are bad gods.
> That's one thing. The second thing is there can't be too much disparity
> between you and them [financially, intellectually, work capacity]….And
> so often we are out of alignment in our relationships, so I try to make sure
> that we keep continually talking about alignment. What do you want?
> What are your dreams? Where are you going? How does that relate to
> where we're going?

Frank works with many aspiring entrepreneurs and says that many do it because they think they will become rich. Then he said, "You know, there are some that want to change the world and those perspectives are valuable." He said that he is much more comfortable with those trying to change the world than with those who are trying to become rich.

Participants also described the culture created for and by the people in their work environments. Ed wants, "an environment where you can build a sense of teamwork, where you can change it from a culture of 'I' to 'we'… an environment where everyone can bring their own unique skills to build things." Bill and Henry described the challenges that unionized work environments presented for their companies. Henry claimed that they do not have union grievances because of the culture they have been able to create. They tell their employees, "You have a complaint? You know our doors are open. Come talk to us." This culture was also created by actions they took to encourage working together. They put in higher tailgates and automatic transmissions on all their delivery trucks to reduce risk and increase ease of operation. They host employee picnics. They give small, interest-free loans to employees in times of emergency because they want to help. Henry said, "We tried to create an environment that recognizes and respects individuals and their families." Together, he said, it all contributes to a "win-win mentality."

Frank also described the value of respect for the culture of his working environment. He said:

> Given our broken world, I think you can try to build a company that is respectful of your employees, that's respectful of your investors, and that's respectful of your customers. I think people…like to be a part of companies like that. They want to know that what they're doing matters

and that the people around them care about them as individuals and are trying to draw out of them their best, trying to draw out of them the best that they can do.

For Frank, the culture of the work environment begins with the hiring process. He looks for people willing to view the work as valuable, who want a purpose for their work, and whose passion for it makes them willing to do their best in the work environment. Ed agrees, "When we hired somebody to bring him in, I wanted him to not only know what we do, how we do it, but why we do what we do." He goes on to tie this to his calling to help others accomplish something of significance. Frank goes on to say about the importance of the culture of their work environment, "I think I've always tried to balance building a great product and a valuable service to our customers with having a good work environment." For Frank, this includes providing meaningful work that is suited for employees' skills and abilities, not expecting people to work continuously, giving people a voice at work, and fostering an understanding of the role they play in doing something bigger than themselves. As participants related their work environments to their belief that their work was integral to God's mission in the world, they discussed the characteristics and the people of those environments.

The Impact

The third research question explored how congregants describe the impact of their belief that their work is integral to God's mission in the world. The research surfaced three themes as the participants discussed their work. They described their commitment to their work, the extra effort they put into their work, and the legacy they wanted for their work.

Commitment to their work

Alan talked often about his commitment to his work. The ideal of justice and helping victims made him say this about his work, "You know, there's a sense of 'Okay no! We're not going to let this happen. We're going to set it right!'" And still this was difficult. He explained that in law enforcement, they are allowed to lie to a point during interviews. But it was his commitment to the long term that made him say: "My credibility is so important. I'm just not going to lie. I just won't do that because I'm building long term relationships, having to talk to these people four, five, six, seven times over the years and I have to be credible." Gabby told the story of their opportunity to sell her company for a nice profit. She said:

> And I ended up saying, 'No' to this great offer. Everybody thought I was crazy! But really the reason was that I wouldn't be able to tell my story anymore—the story of God's faithfulness and His provision for my family. I wouldn't be a light in downtown Raleigh anymore in that regard, you know?

Her commitment extended to the 200 people who would lose their jobs if she had sold the company. She was committed to them as part of her work.

The participants described the perseverance that was required to remain committed to their work. Gabby said it was hard not to sell the company: "So I have really prayed many times about leaving. You know my heart would be—I would be so happy to not be there because it's so hard." Dave related the relative indifference and sometimes opposition that he has felt from others in the town he has worked and served. He said, "Man, in this place I feel tolerated, not celebrated. And it's so hard. It's huge. I've fantasized about quitting." His sense of calling is what has kept him committed. He said:

> I'm disappointed in what we've accomplished in most everything. It's not
> what I was dreaming of. I had so much bigger dreams. So that's the
> challenge, you know? Because I still think I know what God wants me to
> do. I mean I think he showed me about this phone because I was supposed
> to be able to work to help break the spirit of poverty over the people of
> Latin America.

Alan described the way the integral nature of his life and work helped him persevere.

Before he began work in community relations for the FBI, his family decided to move

into one of the under-resourced communities in the city where they lived. The thought of

moving out of the community made him say:

> I just don't think I would've had the staying power [for my work]. Not
> that it's my staying power anyway, but that it would've just been too hard,
> too frustrating, 'I quit.' You see that so often in urban settings or poor
> settings. People come in with this program, last for a year or two and say,
> 'Whoa, it's a lot harder than we thought. I'm out…. I just have to keep
> going because there's no one else to do it that I can see.

The integral nature of his life and work enabled him to persevere in it. Alan has given up

job promotions to stay committed to what he is doing now. He said, "I think God has

given me a sensitivity to these issues, but it's bigger—the times, which are many, that I

want to quit or get frustrated or just 'this is too hard,' I just have to keep going because

there's no one else to do it that I can see."

Effort for Their Work

As participants described the effort for their work, they described how their belief

that their work is integral to God's mission in the world helps them do their best work

and how it helps them work beyond their work.

Henry shared how his father repeatedly put more effort into his work than would

have been required. When the company began, there were no uniform milk laws to guide

inspectors. At times, this allowed for corruption from the different inspectors who had to

approve the plant. His father would identify the most stringent inspectors and make sure he met his expectations. This initial effort to achieve the best quality often repeated itself through the company's history. Henry's father was proud to serve local hospitals and expended great energy to insure that they provided the best milk products they could produce. He said, "We determined that this milk better be perfect. The quality of our milk was going to be better than the grade A standards." And two hospitals grew to 59 hospitals. They continued to pursue higher standards of excellence. They achieved even higher quality milk to service hospital burn units. Their work has been recognized nationally with many awards won at competitions. Henry said that rather than think of the minimum specifications required, they say, "Let's continue to think of the customer." That motivates them to continue to improve their products.

Dave described the effort he expended with a view toward the future. For Dave, it was effort in pursuing his dream of breaking the spirit of poverty over the people of Latin America. He acknowledges, "I'm no closer to it than the day he, [God] told me [to do it]," but he keeps trying things. He told how he's writing a book and bought film equipment and is learning from Hollywood friends how to develop content. In his experiments with unique router technology in his buildings, he developed hundreds of thousands of followers on social media. He says, "It's a journey that looks like a detour." When other people say that his efforts are random and don't make sense, he is not deterred. He believes God has called him to it and will give it his energy. He says:

> If I'm faithful with a building, he'll [God] give me a block. And if I'm faithful with a block, he'll give me 10. Now that I've been faithful with 10, he's given me a city. And now that I've been faithful with a city, I'm getting other cities. Who knows what's next? I mean, regions, states, what will he give me the ability to speak into?

Dave attributes the extra effort to discovering what he's made to do. He said, "If you're on the right track, there's so much energy to do whatever you need to do. I never lack the energy to do it."

Ed's effort was applied toward the nearer future. He told the story of adapting his business model to serve his clients better. He's also chosen to write materials and teach to push his company forward. Gabby described new initiatives that she pursued and what this required. The campaign "From dirt to shirt" pushed her to learn so much more about cotton farming that she said, "I feel like a farmer, I've learned so much!" In taking a new position, Alan had the freedom and responsibility to initiate new programs to improve community relations. He spent the energy to design a program for children in under-resourced schools to become more familiar with law enforcement and the justice system.

Alan and Charlie described the effort they gave to their work that was not required of them. Alan related a story of five immigrant families who pooled "absolutely all the money they had" and gave it to a man to buy a house. The deal was a fraud, and he brought the complaint to the appropriate people in his office. In his opinion, it would have been an easy investigation but they decided not to pursue it because it was not enough money to justify their interest. Alan saw this as an injustice against the poor. They had the freedom to pursue the case but not the motivation. He said:

> They weren't required to do it, so they didn't have to, but they could've pushed it. And I was on that a few times, where my supervisors would say, 'Nah, don't work this,' and I would say that I really want to, and they would say, 'Okay, well if you really want to. Go ahead. I won't stop you.'

In many cases he was not required to pursue but chose to expend the extra effort because of what he believed about his work.

Charlie liked to be available for his students more often than was required of him. He said, "I'm here, you know, any number of hours just to meet with students." While not a teacher, Gabby works with students from a local university as well. She chose to be downtown because she wanted "to invest in those kids." She hosts a design contest for students. The winning design gets made into ties and she pays the student a portion of the proceeds from its sale.

Frank described a similar effort, not with students, but with young entrepreneurs. He told a story of a son who came back from a summer program where he was introduced to entrepreneurship. The son said he was not interested because he was taught that an entrepreneur had to step on or step over or kick someone off the ladder to build a company. That motivates Frank to work with aspiring entrepreneurs to help them see what difference they can make in the world. He especially likes helping minority workers who are underrepresented in science and technology industries. He believes that everyone wants meaningful work and that entrepreneurs become "more of a mercenary when they don't think it's possible to have a meaningful job anymore." So, he spends time mentoring them.

Bill described well what several of the participants did to employ their vocational skills and talents in settings outside of their work. He said:

> You know there's stuff that I know that I deeply care about that's not
> going to be part of what I do everyday that I want to figure out ways to
> carve out parts of my life, invest in those things, still using what I do
> everyday and the things I know how to do, but it's part of my passion kind
> of stuff that I can invest in.

Bill realizes that many think they will do this when they retire and have greater margins, but he wants to do this now with the time he has. He began the work outside his work to

develop a film initiative and restaurant initiative to bless under-resourced communities in his city. Similarly, Ed has taken skills and abilities developed through his work, and along with friends, expends great effort with Business as Missions. They have an entrepreneurial incubator that invests in budding companies pursuing what he calls a 'quadruple bottom line,' seeking financial, social, spiritual, and environmental returns. They've helped others in other cities to develop similar programs. Narrowly, his role with some of the companies they support is to help them find someone with a specific vocational talent when they need it. He is using the skills and abilities he's developed at work for other needs outside of work.

Henry also told a similar story of their business doing its best work outside of work. In describing how they provide for food banks in their region, he told the story of a letter he received from one of the food bank directors. They had been providing products for three years. The letter read:

> You know I just now realized in three years of getting product from you, you're the only contributors that give the first fruits. Everybody else gives us—whether its supermarkets or whether it's another company—everything they donate to us is close to code or out of code. It's un-sellable. The things you give us have the birthdate on it. Everything you give us is first run. It's your best product.

Henry went on to say that he told the director that they do planned production for the food banks, "It's going to have the same quality, same packaging that everybody pays for."

Several participants talked about the effort they expend that is not directly related to their work but that their work allows. Gabby often hosts fundraisers for organizations in her community. She serves on the board of a Christian study center at a state university where she sometimes puts up a tent for her company and then talks about her faith and

work for those who are interested. She is a guest lecturer in collegiate entrepreneurship classes. She speaks to Christian Fellows programs for recent college graduates. All of these are opportunities that arose because of her work. Henry shared other opportunities that have been his father's and his because of their company. His father helped start a local YMCA and a community hospital. They use their farm to encourage cancer patients from a local hospital. Henry has served on the board of his denomination's seminary for years. Within their work and without, the participants expended extra effort because they believed their work was integral to God's mission in the world.

Legacy of Their Work

All of the participants, in one way or another, had an eye on those who would follow after them. What Ed wants for himself and all the clients with whom he works is "to do something of significance and leave a positive, lasting legacy." He said this repeatedly. Dave also used the language of 'legacy.' He said:

> I'd like to leave a legacy on the hearts of men and not in sticks and bricks. I would like God to give me the wisdom to build content and intellectual property things that would live far beyond me that would give hope to the broken and those people in poverty and those idiots that got saved.

Henry, who is in his early 70's, said, "I'm committed to the next generation." This is why he attends sales meetings with all area sales managers, other meetings of managers, and other leadership meetings. He says, "I want to continue to have an influence, a presence that reinforces these values."

Frank also spoke about the next generation and his commitment to help them mature. He said:

> And I think we have a responsibility to the next generation, so I've spent most of the last 10 years trying to work with first time entrepreneurs and

help them. And most of the people I've worked with are believers who want to serve God with all of their life. So I think there's an opportunity to try to walk alongside some of those folks and share some of my own experiences with them in their walk.

He continued, "So if I leave people behind who have learned to pay attention to the details and to do things well, then I think that may be what I leave behind more than any particular invention or advancement." Charlie was glad to be a part of an institution "to train the next generation." The importance of the young people who would be impacted by their work was apparent in a story that Bill told. In organizing local chefs, food providers, and restaurateurs to engage under-resourced teenagers, one of the kids bumped into someone while carrying the dish and spilled it everywhere. The natural thing for the chef to do was "to chew somebody out and throw them out of the kitchen." Bill said that because of the effort to help the kids, the attention turned to what was best for them. The chef had to think, "how do I let her know both that mistakes happen but they're expensive and there's some pain in that. That's what this whole thing of taking your vocation [into] the pain of this other group." This was one example of his efforts with the other participants to leave a legacy for those who would come after him.

Summary of Findings

This chapter explored how congregants in leadership roles understand their work as integral to God's mission in the world. It began by relating how participants described their work. They spoke with vision for their work that was framed by the biblical story, included a clear sense of purpose and contributed to a larger 'us.' Also, participants demonstrated their confidence in the presence of God for their work. They related conversational prayers, frequently made use of Scripture, and stated explicitly their trust

or dependence on God. Finally, in describing their work as integral to God's mission in the world, the participants spoke about how their whole lives and selves were engaged in it. For them, life was 'seamless,' so that their lives had a broader shepherding focus and engaged a range of emotions.

Following the contours of the second research question, this chapter showed how the participants related their work environments to their belief that their work is integral to God's mission in the world. There were important characteristics of their working environments that helped them see their work as integral to God's mission in the world. Above all, the people within their work environments affected their work more than any other factor.

The final research question traced the impact of participants' beliefs that their work was integral to God's mission in the world. There was a high degree of commitment to their work that enabled them to persevere through difficulty. They expended great effort to be excellent in work, adapt for the future, and apply their skills and abilities developed at work in other spheres of influence. Finally, the participants wanted to leave a legacy of their work in which the impact on the next generation was the most prominent feature.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Recommendations

Across the U.S., many workers are disengaged from their work, and many Christians have trouble connecting their work with God's work in the world.[259] To help address this dilemma, this study was designed to explore how congregants in leadership roles understand their work as integral to God's mission in the world. It is believed that the Church can equip its members to see their work as contributing to God's mission in the world, and there is much to learn from those who have come to see their work in that way already. A literature review provided the necessary context for the study. In addition to a biblical background, literature of a Christian theology of vocation and employee engagement was reviewed. Three research questions then guided interviews of eight participants who worked in various fields and locations:

1. How do congregants describe their work as integral to God's mission in the world?

2. How do congregants relate their work environments to their belief that their work is integral to God's mission in the world?

3. How do congregants describe the impact on themselves and others of their belief that their work is integral to God's mission in the world?

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[259] Gallup, Inc., "State of the American Workplace: Employee Engagement Insights for U.S. Business Leaders," 2013, http://www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/163007/state-american-workplace.aspx., 12; Darrell Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 14.

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

Summary of the Study and Findings

This study provided insight into the understanding of work that is integral to God's mission in the world. The literature review of a Christian theology of vocation provided background for the participant responses and explored two important themes. The first theme was vision for work. The belief that one's work is integral to God's mission in the world can grow out of the belief that the whole of one's life is integral to the way God created the world and is at work in it. This belief can lead to an understanding of work as cooperation with God in his work that should be shaped according to God's intentions for the world. As good as work was created to be, and as much as one may cooperate with God through it, workers must be prepared for the alienation that now characterizes work in a fallen world.

Another theme for a Christian theology of vocation was the assessment of work. To understand that work is integral to God's mission in the world, one can see how his and other work connects to it. Workers must choose a sphere of work in which to labor. This allows for the focus necessary to cultivate the knowledge and skills that have been developed for that sphere by others. This knowledge and skill base can enable one to clear away what should not belong and create something new that aligns with God's intentions for the world. Ongoing self-assessment helps workers who would understand their work as integral to God's mission in the world reflect on how God has equipped, gifted, and called them to the work they do.

The second area reviewed was literature on employee engagement. This created a context within business management and psychology for understanding the participants' experience of work. The responses generally reflected the definition of employee engagement as a motivational state that results in motivated work behavior. The review further characterized the activated cognitive-affective state by degrees of vigor, dedication, and absorption. This activated state is affected by available resources and job demands. Special attention in the review was given to the resources of meaningfulness, environment, and personal resources. Finally, outcomes of employee engagement were considered, with attention given to discretionary effort, proficiency, adaptivity, and proactivity. When engagement is high, the literature noted that gain spirals can occur that result in higher degrees of employee engagement. The outcomes seemed to align with participants' descriptions of the impact of their belief that their work was integral to God's mission in the world.

The participant interviews yielded rich descriptions to help answer the three research questions. The participants described the work they believed to be integral to God's mission in the world with a vision for the work. This vision was framed by the biblical story that included a clear sense of purpose and contributed to a larger 'us.' Participants also described their confidence in God's presence as they related conversational prayers, made use of Scripture, and explicitly stated their trust in God. The description of their work was completed by the way they told of how their whole lives and selves were engaged in their work.

Reponses addressing the second and third research questions followed the description of the work itself. The participants demonstrated the importance of the work

environment. Characteristics and the people of their work environments were conveyed.

The third research question traced the impact of their belief that their work was integral

to God's mission in the world. They described high levels of commitment to their work,

the effort expended within and outside the work roles themselves, and the legacy they

hoped to leave through their work.

Discussion of Findings

This study showed that there is help available for those who would understand

their work as integral to God's mission in the world. The need for this help became clear

throughout the study. In the literature on Christian theology of vocation, Volf explored

the theme of alienation in work at length to provide a theological framework for

understanding people's frustrations with it, "Work is alienating when it does not

correspond to God's intent for human nature."[260] This is further described by Crouch,

Cosden, and Sherman, who recognized the need people have for help understanding their

work as integral to God's mission in the world. From a different perspective in the

employee engagement literature, high job demands and a lack of job resources hinder

engagement and produce what seems similar to Volf's "alienation."[261] The participants

had experienced and seen in others alienation in work, and it was reflected in the stories

they told. Alan had seen abuse in law enforcement. Bill and Henry had experienced the

challenge of working with union structures in which antagonistic relationships could

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[260] Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2001),160; See also: 37-40, 186.

[261] Evangelia Demerouti and Russel Cropanzano, "From Thought to Action: Employee Work Engagement and Job Performance" in *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research* (Hove, England ; New York: Psychology Press, 2010), 153.

fester. Gabby was moved by the thought of workers cut off from the opportunity to use the gifts God had given them if she sold the company. There is a great need and potential for grasping how work can be understood as integral to God's mission in the world. A synthesis of the literature, the interviews and personal reflection has yielded three themes that I believe are the most important from this study: integral lives, formative environments, and fruitful working. They will be discussed now in greater detail.

Integral Lives

The desire to witness and understand better people whose faith and work are integrally related to one another and whose lives demonstrate wholeness animated much of this study. What I found is not what I expected, and looking back I am not surprised. I expected to find participants who were passionate about their work and able to give fairly robust theological visions for their work, and I did. Bill spoke easily, offering essentially a theology of business. John had a very clear sense of how God had used his work to help "redeem his city" and expected God to do much more, to help him "break the spirit of poverty over Latin America." There was vision and passion. What I did not anticipate was how fluid the conversations would be. For most of the time during the interviews, my aim was to stay more narrowly focused on the participants' work. Yet, the participants would take the conversations to their families, their churches, to the ministry in which they are involved. Henry talked about the picnics they hosted on their farm, his church's missions committee and community group, his desire to make it possible for his daughter to serve at a church camp, and their broader philanthropic efforts for the community. Gabby talked about making cookies, being an evangelistic presence in their downtown, her adult-aged boys, state politics, and her church. I wanted to talk about their

work that they believed was integral to God's mission in the world, and they talked more about their lives that they believed are integral to God's mission in the world. This was not what I expected, but it is not surprising. Schmemann writes, "All that exists [in the world] is God's gift to man, and it all exists to make God known to man, to make man's life communion with God."[262] This integrality is the beginning of all Christian mission. As Volf writes, each is fundamentally a "being-in-communion." When someone's experience of life is proximate to God's intended whole, fluid conversations are most natural. They range across the many interests held by a person whose whole life is integral to God's mission in the world.

The Purpose is the People

I was also surprised in the participants' responses by the importance of people for lives that are integral to God's mission in the world. What I expected to find is a vision for work that valued the work itself. This was certainly there in the literature and the participants' responses. Sherman writes: "Christianity insists that our lives-including our work-are all about God and his work, his mission. This should be inspirational, because it provides profound meaning to our labor."[263] Newbigin writes, "The primary action of the church in the world is the action of its members in their daily work."[264] Volf argues that work should promote individual freedom and dignity, the flourishing of all people and the

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[262] Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*, 2nd rev. edition (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 14.

[263] Amy L. Sherman, *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011), chap. 6 (location 1097-99), Kindle.

[264] Lesslie Newbigin, "Evangelism in the Context of Secularization" in *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church,* ed. Paul W. Chilcote and Laceye C. Warner (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 51.

protection and stewardship of nature. This corresponds roughly to the well-founded conception of God's work of reconciliation as four-fold: with God, with others, with creation, and with self. The theological underpinnings for purposeful work are strong. The same is true of the employee engagement literature as it describes meaningful work. According to Richardson and West, "The opportunity to carry out meaningful work can facilitate both intrinsic motivation and personal growth."[265] From his study, Shirom concluded that meaningfulness accounts for 46 percent of employee engagement resources.[266] To the literature of Christian theology of vocation and employee engagement, the participants added their own convictions about their work. Bill believes that their work "can really move the needle on the quality of the American healthcare system." Alan expressed his sense of purpose to help "bring law enforcement more in line with the sense of justice." Charlie has internalized the mission of his university as part of his mission as a person. Dave believed God gave him "this idea of transforming an entire city, of stewarding a city." The literature and the participants spoke with vision for the value of the work itself. This is well-established and was anticipated.

The unexpected nuance that came out clearly in the interviews was that the vision for the participants' work seemed to have a closer eye on those who would be served by it. The calling seemed to be more to the people through the work than to the work itself. Most often, participant responses mentioned directly the affect their work had on others and, when this was not explicit, a connection to the effect on others could be easily made.

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[265] Joanne Richardson and Michael A. West, "Engaged Work Teams" in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 330.

[266] Arie Shirom, "Feeling Energetic at Work: On Vigor's Antecedents" in *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research* (Hove, England ; New York: Psychology Press, 2010), 77.

Henry stated that his father's purpose in starting the company in 1930 was the "moral responsibility to customers whose children depended on him for milk." Their calling to the people in hospitals and schools drove them to raise the standards and produce excellent milk products. Charlie taught for the students. Dave wants his legacy to be "on the hearts of men and not in sticks and bricks." Gabby loves the people working with her more than the bowties themselves. She said: "It's more than bowties. It's more about him using me in the lives of those around me." Alan feels called to bring people together, "Trying to bridge the gap between primarily African-American and other minority communities fits well with God's call for reconciliation and God's call for justice." The calling to the people was clear for Bill in the ways that he spoke about the 'larger us' that went beyond his work. He wants to bring people together with the skills and talents they have for the greater good of others. He said: "God's always got an eternal vision for a collective people. I can think about that and say, 'How can I step more broadly into that collective and invite people into it." This vision for the people had affected his work in manufacturing, his work in executive recruiting, and his volunteer efforts. The call to people was also demonstrated as the participants described what was called 'a shepherding life.' Bill felt morally responsible to care for the whole of his employees' lives. Henry's company provides loans for hardship cases. Dave took on the formal role as a pastor and counseled friends on many issues outside of their focus on business. Ed and Frank mentored younger men. More than describe their work narrowly, the participants expressed how their purpose was the people they served in, around, and through their work. Though this nuance surprised me, I think this is the way it should be

for those who believe that not only their work but their lives are integral to God's mission in the world.

Understanding the Experience

My time with the participants was rich, full, engaging, and varied. This was true of the interviews themselves, whether in person or over the phone, and of the time spent before and after. After our meeting in his office, which is one of the historic buildings he is restoring, Dave showed me before and after pictures of the downtown he loved and felt called to serve. Then we walked downtown and looked at some of the buildings and enjoyed lunch together there. Charlie and I met on his department floor where I got to meet one of his colleagues. Ed gave me a tour of his building. Bill introduced me to his team, showed me posters of upcoming events for their community collectives, and invited me to come to the events. As good as this time was with them all, it was brief and unstudied. For this reason, the employee engagement literature, especially that which described the activated state of someone engaged in work, provided a helpful framework for understanding participants' experiences. Schaufeli and Bakker offer that employee engagement "entails a behavioral-energetic (vigor), and emotional (dedication), and a cognitive (absorption) component."[267]

Vigor is at the other end from exhaustion on the energy spectrum. It is characterized by high levels of energy and the motivation to act in ways that are needed. Bill spoke of his work as "the great adventure" and how the desire to make work full of dignity, respect, and community "just amplified and amped me up even more about it [the

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[267] Wilmar B. Schaufeli and Arnold B. Bakker, "Defining and Measuring Work Engagement: Bringing Clarity to the Concept," in *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research*, ed. Arnold B. Bakker and Michael P. Leiter (Hove England ; New York: Psychology Press, 2010), 13.

work].” For Ed, the hope of significance and leaving a positive lasting legacy energized him to get out of bed every morning. Concerning his energy, Dave said, “I think it's beautiful that God built us with drugs inside of us that pump when you get excited…[like] the excitement of doing something cool.” It was not only what the participants said but how they said it that carried so much energy. The literature on vigor as a component of the activated state of engagement helped me recognize the importance of this energy and understand it better.

Dedication “refers to being strongly involved in one's work, and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge.”[268] It is in contrast to cynicism on the 'identification' spectrum. This aspect of the activated state captures the experience of hope, joy, and gratitude that infused the participants' responses. Dave and Ed talked about how much they wanted to have fun with their work. Gabby understands the joy of enabling others to use their gifts. When Alan gets called in the middle of the night about a missing kid, there's a “sense of importance” that makes the work satisfying. Frank expressed this sense of identification with his work when he said there is “an intrinsic sense of accomplishment and value…where I realize that's what I was designed to do.”

Absorption is “being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work.”[269] This characteristic of the activated state was not as closely studied in the literature and it surfaced less in the interviews. Gabby did seem to indicate some

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[268] Ibid.

[269] Ibid.

absorption when she talked about the tedious work of a new design. A new design may take 2-3 months, but she said it's not hard because of how much she loves it. Further illustration of absorption might have been seen if more attention had been given to the daily experience of work tasks. Together, vigor, dedication, and absorption provided helpful categories for understanding similarities in the experience of the participants' work and lives that they believe are integral to God's mission in the world.

Formative Environments

The second important theme that emerged from this study was the formative nature of environments. This theme assumes and flows from the first theme that all of life is integrally related. The effect of environments cannot be separated from the people who inhabit them. Smith writes about the unavoidable influence of a person's social environment, "There are no private practices; thus our hearts are constantly being formed by others, and most often through the cultural institutions that we create."[270] He continues that whether we choose the practices or not, they condition us to respond in certain ways. Hunter makes the same point that cultures shape people and direct their lives.[271]

The potential of environments to form workers for engagement was well-studied in the employee engagement literature. The most gripping demonstration of this was the Walker et al. study of physicians training in underserved environments. The authors found that 81percent of physicians who trained in or were from underserved environments went on to serve them. Of those studied who did not train in underserved

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[270] James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 71.

[271] James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 45.

environments, none went on to work in them. They also found that the difficulty of

working in underserved environments was often named as a decisive factor when

deciding to leave those environments. The environment's effects overpowered the sense

of mission or moral obligation that many had reported as the primary reason for

beginning to work there.[272] The environment played a significant role in engaging and

then disengaging them from their work.

Many other features of working environments that may form people for

engagement were discussed. The literature describes the importance of strong orientation

programs, training, mentoring, job rotation, mechanisms for 'voice,' access to

empowerment structures and decision-making, work group size, and structures to convey

values of the organization. The importance of these features did not surface in the

participant interviews.

The interviews did serve to illustrate well several features of work environments

described in the literature that promoted engagement. A Gallup study suggested that the

most engaged workers benefitted from the autonomy, camaraderie, and collaboration of

working in community.[273] Richardson and West also discovered the importance of

autonomy. They found that work teams who could control their proximal working

environments and delegate responsibility experienced higher levels of engagement.[274]

Bindl and Parker found different features of working environments that encouraged

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[272] Kara Odom Walker et al., "Recruiting and Retaining Primary Care Physicians in Urban Underserved Communities: The Importance of Having a Mission to Serve," *American Journal of Public Health* 100, no. 11 (November 2010): 2168–75, doi:10.2105/AJPH.2009.181669.

[273] Gallup, Inc., "State of the American Workplace: Employee Engagement Insights for U.S. Business Leaders," 2013, http://www.gallup.com/strategicconsulting/163007/state-american-workplace.aspx, 30.

[274] Richardson and West, "Engaged Work Teams," 332.

creativity, "Being responsible for different tasks prevents feelings of monotony and enables employees to feel stimulated in their jobs."[275] These characteristics of autonomy and creativity, along with the importance of the people in the working environment, were well illustrated by the interviews.

Each of the participants acknowledged high degrees of autonomy and creativity. This may be due largely to their respective positions at work. Six participants have served as the heads of their companies. As a professor and an FBI agent, respectively, Charlie and Alan's environments also allow much freedom for autonomy and creativity. Still, the participants illustrated that their environments in allowing for these characteristics promoted engagement. Dave said, "I love autonomy!" and Frank said, "I do have a lot of autonomy…I have more control over more pieces of the puzzle so it's easier for me to think about all of those pieces." The same was true for creativity. Frank said, "As an entrepreneur and a technologist I love the design aspect of what we do, just the designing of something well, where you know it works for the intended user, where you've done something that's simple, beautiful and elegant." Bill talked about the creativity he employed to start a new business that would be run in a new way in an industry that does not have the greatest reputation– executive recruiting. Their environments that allowed for autonomy and creativity helped them stay engaged in their work and contributed to their seeing their work and lives as integral to God's mission in the world.

The importance of people was also clearly illustrated by the participant responses. In the literature, Kahn reports, "Good working relations enable us to play off one another,

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[275] Uta K. Bindl and Sharon K. Parker, "Feeling Good and Performing Well? Psychological Engagement and Positive Behaviors at Work" in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 394.

such that working together is better—more creative, interesting, productive—than working alone."[276] Saks and Gruman found that efforts to strengthen relationships outside of the workplace strengthened the overall working environment by making it more trusting and supportive.[277] None of the participants expressed the importance of people in the working environments as well as Dave, "You know, every great season of my life has started with people and every horrible season of my life has started with people. It's relational." The two prayers he regularly prays have to do with seeing miracles in others' lives and needing 'winners' to do the work God has called him to do. Alan, who works most closely with a supervisor, said: "Your supervisor makes all the difference. If you have a good supervisor, things are enjoyable. If you have a petty one, it can be really miserable." Much like the literature reported, Henry related the things his company had done to promote better relationships with its employees and how this had made for a better environment. He hosts picnics at the farm and does more than is required for workers' safety. He makes it a point to be approachable to the workers. He provides emergency loans. This has all resulted in the support and trust to promote engagement, and in Henry's words, "a win-win mentality."

One interesting connection between the literature and the interviews was on the importance of leadership. The participants, as leaders, were in a sense backlit by the literature. Shirom reports, "Transformational leaders exhibit energizing emotions in order

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[276] William A. Kahn, "The Essence of Engagement: Lessons from the Field" in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 22.

[277] Alan M. Saks and Jamie A. Gruman, "Organizational Socialization and Newcomer Engagement" in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice* (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 303.

to arouse similar emotional states among their followers."[278] Richardson and West add that leaders boost engagement when they "empower followers, delegate autonomy, develop followers' self-confidence and encourage learning behavior."[279] Without the researcher talking with those they lead, the participants seemed to be these kinds of leaders. The energy and emotion that they demonstrated has been discussed already. Dave demonstrated a desire to empower and develop followers when he said: "I try to make sure that we keep continually talking about alignment. What do you want? What are your dreams? Where are you going? How does that relate to where we're going?" Ed said he wanted to change the culture of 'I' to 'we.' Gabby spoke of her desire to see people around her use the gifts God had given them to serve others fruitfully. Frank said, "I think I've always tried to balance building a great product and a valuable service to our customers with having a good work environment." Henry came across as an encouraging man and said that of all the gifts and talents they have, "the most important is human capital…our coworkers and co-employees are part of our family." Each of the participants seemed to be the kind of leaders described in the literature who make for great environments that foster higher engagement.

There was one characteristic of working environments from the participants that did not surface directly in the literature—risk. The point of indirect connection is found in the literature's discussion of job demands that can stimulate engagement. Generally, job demands inhibit engagement but when there are sufficient resources, cognitive job demands were aligned with vigor and dedication. In challenging and interesting jobs,

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[278] Shirom, "Feeling Energetic at Work: On Vigor's Antecedents," 78.

[279] Richardson and West, "Engaged Work Teams," 335-6.

what would be negative stressors can become positive.[280] This is the way the participants

described their relationship to risk in their work environments. All participants

experienced different kinds of risk. At times, these were experienced as negative

stressors. Alan's house is worth 30 percent less than the purchase price. Charlie lived

with the risk of not getting tenure. There have been times when Dave was unsure whether

their bills would get paid. The participants attempted to manage risk with common

workplace resources. Dave said, "The more you know, the less risky things

become….When I do deals, there's a lot of math behind it." With new product lines,

Gabby manages the risk by starting with smaller production quantities. These resources

are available whether someone is a Christian or not. What was most interesting was how

the participants' faith served as, what the literature would call, a personal resource. Bill

said strikingly, "I think about risk as something that's such a deeply spiritual dynamic."

According to what he believes, the biblical storyline is full of risk, of God's risk of

creating a world that would fall into sin and of the risk of Jesus going to the cross to

redeem a people for himself. Both the beauty and the pain of risk, he believes, are

preparing us for eternity. Bill believes that assuming risk reflects the character of God.

Frank described risk as the other side of our fears that keep us from taking steps of faith.

Some risks in life are unavoidable but in the work environment, steps of faith through

risk can be voluntary. He says that it's beautiful when people take on risk in this way,

because "I just think risk is part of love and a great enough love compels us to overcome

the risk and do it anyway." Risk, autonomy, creativity, and the people of the working

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[280] Saija Mauno et al., "Job Demands and Resources as Antecedents of Work Engagement: A Qualitative Review and Directions for Future Research," in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice*, ed. Simon L Albrecht (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 114.

environments were factors that demonstrated how formative work environments are for those who are in them.

Fruitful Working

The third important theme that emerged from this study was fruitful working. Those who have come to understand their work and lives as integral to God's mission in the world, whose formative environments support it, bear fruit through their work for the kingdom of God. I like the imagery of fruitful working to describe the impact of believing their work is integral to God's mission in the world. It has the deepest biblical roots, as it can be traced to the Creation story and the earliest work of gardening. As Crouch commented, "Adam, like his Maker, will be both gardener and poet, both creator and cultivator."[281] Fruitful working both honors the employee engagement findings and broadens them. The Gallup study discovered, "An intrinsic connection to one's work and one's company is what truly drives performance, inspires discretionary effort, and improves wellbeing."[282] It was encouraging to discover that the employee engagement literature recognized the benefits of engagement extended to "improves wellbeing," but the focus of most of the literature was more narrowly on increased productivity and workplace performance.[283] The literature demonstrated needs to differentiate employee engagement from workaholism,[284] for "respite and recovery" from work,[285] and "to mitigate

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[281] Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013), chap. 6 (location 1250-1251), Kindle.

[282] Gallup, Inc., "State of the American Workplace: Employee Engagement Insights for U.S. Business Leaders," 28.

[283] Ibid., 428.

[284] Schaufeli and Bakker, "Defining and Measuring Work Engagement," 14

the possibility of negative health" from over-engagement.[286] These indicate that work engagement is not always fruitful. Congruently, the participants' descriptions needed more than the language of workplace performance and productivity to describe their beliefs' impact on their work.

Fruitful working, as I saw it in the participants, included the characteristics that one might expect. There was growth, productivity, and success in their work. Dave talked about his "miracle matrix" principle, where "If you can measure it, you can manage it. And if you can manage it, you can multiply it." His businesses have multiplied through the years and his co-workers have made "more money," as he hoped they would. Ed had expanded his executive recruiting firm successfully into new sectors and employees were excited about it. Charlie received positive reviews from his students. Frank successfully delivered new products to the market. There was also a fruitful presence about the participants. They exuded an energy and joy and a warm-heartedness as we spoke. Gabby said, "I'm not doing it for the money; it's really the pleasure of the work…I could tell that I'm doing what God's called me to do because I enjoy the work so much." As has been mentioned already, there was broad care for others—coworkers, clients, and investors—that went beyond a narrow focus on productivity. For Henry, the care included picnics and emergency loans for employees' families. For Charlie, the care included helping students with their decisions about their futures. Dave wants employees to have lots of fun with their work.

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[285] Simon L Albrecht, "Employee Engagement:10 Key Questions for Research and Practice" in *Handbook of Employee Engagement: Perspectives, Issues, Research and Practice*, ed. Simon L Albrecht (Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar, 2012), 13.

[286] Jari J. Hakanen and Gert Roodt, "Using the Job Demands-Resources Model to Predict Engagement: Analysing a Conceptual Model" in *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research*, ed. Michael P. Leiter and Arnold B. Bakker, 1st edition (Hove, England ; New York: Psychology Press, 2010), 98.

As much as they love their work, the participants seemed to hold it with a somewhat open hand. This may have guarded them from the dangers of over-engagement. Gabby was jealous for her calling to include local farmers and sewers in her work. That was an important reason she did not sell her company. Yet, she freely acknowledged that the business was God's, "He's built this and I just trust him with it." Bill related his prayers about surrendering his mistakes to God's will, saying, "I trust that your redemptive purposes are being accomplished in the best ways so that I'm knowing you in a deeper way." Dave had seen God lead him from the brink of bankruptcy to new opportunities that at first seemed unrelated to what he was currently doing and had learned to trust him with the journey that "looks like a detour."

The attribute that I did not expect to characterize fruitful working was the participants' commitment to their work. I did not think it would move me emotionally as much as other outcomes because it seemed too pedestrian compared to them. Kahn found that people could use varying degrees of their selves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in the roles they perform, and the more engaged people are with their roles, the more satisfying and productive their work would be.[287] I believed I would see great creativity, adaptivity, proactivity, and discretionary effort. I thought that the interviews would demonstrate that the participants give high degrees of their selves in these ways because of their belief that their work is integral to God's mission in the world. There was correlation between these outcomes and the participants' efforts. However, this did not seem to be the most important characteristic of their fruitful working.

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[287] William A. Kahn, "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work," *Academy of Management Journal* 33, no.4 (December 1990): 692.

The participants' commitment to their work was the most striking characteristic of it. It was the fruit of feeling called by God to participate in his mission through their work. They felt compelled to persevere because God had called them to it. Their responses remind me of the employee engagement literature on identification with work. May et al wrote, "Individuals who experience deep engagement in their roles should come to identify with their jobs."[288] Kahn said that when there is identification, workers "fully inhabit their roles, not just do their jobs….The self is crucial here. When we are engaged, we express that self, rather than defend or withdraw it from view."[289] The commitment of the participants was an ongoing offering of their whole selves to what God had called them to do, despite what it cost them. In other ways, their commitment reminded me of the engagement gain spirals that Hakanen and Roodt described. Identification, or similarly calling, "is a personal resource that may develop over time and result in even deeper engagement and commitment over the work career."[290] The spirals of deeper engagement did not only 'happen' to the participants. They were the fruit of commitment spirals that drew on resources for the outcomes of proficiency, adaptivity, and proactivity. They were the commitment spirals of cultivating, clearing, and creating from the language of Christian vocation. In all, the participants' perseverance through difficulty was most inspiring.

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[288] Douglas R. May, Richard L. Gilson, and Lynn M. Harter, "The Psychological Conditions of Meaningfulness, Safety and Availability and the Engagement of the Human Spirit at Work," *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 77 (March 2004): 12.

[289] Kahn, "The Essence of Engagement: Lessons from the Field," 21-22.

[290] Hakanen and Roodt, "Using the Job Demands-Resources Model to Predict Engagement: Analyzing a Conceptual Model," 98.

Alan was a great example of this commitment spiral. For the FBI, he had demonstrated a level of proficiency throughout his career. He had cultivated the knowledge and skills to serve well. When assigned as a field agent to the new field of community relations, he was stretched to adapt and proactively find ways to foster better relationships between the community and law enforcement. He is trying to clear away misunderstanding and mistrust and to create new opportunities for conversations that might bring people together. He loves the ideals of justice and the satisfaction of helping people in crisis. He laughs at the craziness of their lives. All of this was fascinating to hear, and most impressive was his commitment to it all, even through difficulty. He had lost money and passed on opportunities for promotion. He was often frustrated by the brokenness of the justice system, especially for the poor. He lamented and understood why others give up, yet still said humbly, "I just have to keep going because there's no one else to do it that I can see." I found this extraordinary.

Alan did not have to stay in this work. He had opportunities to do other things. Often, he has been encouraged to move out of the under-resourced neighborhood in which his family lives, but he has chosen to remain and to voluntarily make sacrifices. He is living out what he thinks can be expected from all Christians:

> You have to get people to sacrifice [to help under-resourced communities]. Really the only people that you can make that claim on are Christians; from 'love your enemies' and pay the cost- yeah this might make you a little bit unsafe, but it might make other people more safe…let's sacrifice your advantages for the benefit of others.

This commitment to persevere through difficulty was true for Gabby too. She confessed that as much as she loves her company, "I would be so happy to not be there because it's so hard." This made the opportunity to sell her business alluring. Her life could have been

much easier. Dave presses on, though he feels he's only "tolerated" by the town in which he's invested his life.

The participants demonstrate that fruitful working, as engaging as the work may be, requires commitment that entails voluntary sacrifice. They had the freedom to avoid sacrifice and chose to endure it. In this way, the participants reflected God's character and Jesus' words from John 12:24, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."[291] Jesus bore great fruit in his work through sacrifice, and because the participants are united to him by faith, they do too. In my experience as a pastor, a desire for a comfortable life tempts many with the same freedoms in their work to eschew sacrifice for the kingdom of God. We desire to work with an activated cognitive state marked by vigor, dedication, and absorption. We want to cultivate, clear, and create, so long as it is easy. Sherman's penetrating questions are good for those tempted in this way: "What are the reasons—and are they good reasons, kingdom reasons, God-honoring reasons [for the work we do]? How much of a role do comfort, convenience, pride, fear or materialism play in explaining why we're staying in our current jobs?"[292] The participants appeared to have answered questions like these and were committed to their work, and they persevered through difficulty because they believed it was integral to God's mission in the world.

Recommendations for Practice

The church can address the frustration that many of its members feel within their work. The importance of vision for work and life in the literature and participant

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[291] John 12:24.

[292] Sherman, *Kingdom Calling,* chap. 6 (location 1196), Kindle.

responses should encourage pastors and ministry leaders to help congregants develop a theological vision for life that is integral with God's mission in the world. The first chapter of Schmemann's *For the Life of the World* lays a good foundation for a vision for an integral life. The participant responses underscored how important that a vision be a vision for life, and not only for work. The vision also needs to include the formative nature of environments and the reality of alienation in work. In some Christian circles, there is a tendency to believe if we think that our work is meaningful, we will experience it to be meaningful. Pastors need to help their congregants understand the structures that shape their experience of work, especially the influence of people within their working environments. It is good to recognize and cultivate the supportive features and to acknowledge and mourn the alienating ones. Many congregants may be motivated to work in alienating work environments because of their sense of calling. For them the church can provide encouragement and support to help sustain them in their work they believe is integral to God's mission in the world.

Pastors and ministry leaders need and can help congregants develop simple frameworks for thinking about their work. I found the theological framework of 'connecting, cultivating, clearing, and creating' to be helpful. This framework can help us honor and affirm work that is connected to God's mission in the world, cultivate and steward the knowledge and skills that have been developed by those who have gone before, clear away what should not belong, and look for the opportunity to create something new. The framework for employee engagement, previously diagrammed above, shows the relationship of resources and demands to the activated state and the

outcomes. This framework helps us understand what we want in work and out of work, and helps us pay attention to the resources and demands that influence work.

Pastors and ministry leaders would do well to spend time with their congregants, exploring the details of their experience of work. Few of the participants had talked at great length about their work until this research study. The participants found it to be an encouraging experience. Pastors need a basic understanding of different fields of work, so they can help those who believe, "Christianity does not have much, if anything to say to their chosen profession or field."[293] Pastors might begin by asking questions like these: "How are you experiencing God's nearness in your work? How have you been able to love and serve others through your work and promote harmony with God's creation? What are your frustrations with work? What would you like for God to bring about through your work?" Pastors and ministry leaders might expect the trust of congregants to grow through these conversations. Men and women at work need to know that their pastors and ministry leaders understand them and the challenges they face in their work every week. These conversations should then color the way pastors preach and pray. The conversations might lead to different sermon applications that minister to needs of the congregation more broadly. Prayers that reflect an understanding of the struggles of day-to-day life outside the church may be used by the Holy Spirit to strengthen congregants for the work that God has called them to do. When stories of people at work can be told, they should be told to honor workers and encourage others to share in their joys and struggles. Pastors and ministry leaders can gather people from the same or similar fields into cohorts to learn from and support one another in their work. Corporate prayer that

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[293] David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church– and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 78.

seeks God's blessing for congregants in particular fields demonstrates a conviction that work in those fields is integral to God's mission in the world.

Managers looking to encourage others in their working environments should familiarize themselves with the basic features of employee engagement. They can learn to gauge employees' degrees of engagement, provide resources to meet the job demands, and celebrate outcomes as they observe them. They must recognize that their presence with others will probably have a greater impact than other workplace structures.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study sought to discover how congregants understand their work as integral to God's mission in the world. As with any study, there were other potentially helpful areas of study that emerged. Six of the eight participants in this study either work for themselves or lead the companies they serve. The other two participants work with high degrees of autonomy. An interesting future study would be to explore the experience of those with less control over their work, especially if they experience high degrees of alienation in their work. The findings of this study could be mapped against the findings of a new study. Other interesting angles would be to design a study with participants from the same field of work or place within a company. It would be interesting to compare the work experience of those in much larger companies with those in smaller working environments. My expectation is that paying closer attention to the people in the working environments, especially in larger companies, would show that the people in the working environments affect one's work experience much more than identification with the mission of the company.

The reading surfaced challenging questions for congregants about their work. Sherman wrote, "Why, as a follower of Christ, would you choose to give your creative talents to these sorts of exercises, when you could employ them instead in businesses or organizations that are meeting genuine needs?"[294] It would be fruitful to find people who had asked themselves tough questions like this and chosen to leave stable and better paying working environments for something they believe is aligned more with God's intentions for the world.

Finally, with God's love for the materially poor in mind, I have come to believe that we need those who are metaphorically pulling people from the river, and we need those who are working on the dam that has broken. A study that explored those who intentionally work for the materially poor on the dam would be helpful for others who wish to use their vocational power for the common good.

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[294] Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, chap. 6 (location 1120-1121), Kindle.

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