



The Cross and Waking

So wake up. How does the cross wake you up? From the very beginning, we hear things like, *“O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice.”* (Psalm 5:3) So we’ve got the foundation laid, framework for how we are to approach life. We set our feet on the ground in the morning. Psalm 143, *“Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go.”* So how does He make us know the way we should go?

We’ve got all kinds of decisions we make during the day—little decisions, big decisions—and so how does God’s will work? Is God’s will just generally for me to love Him and love my neighbor as myself, or is God’s will more specific than that? So what about little decisions? So you’re going out for dinner, for example. Does God will that you go to one restaurant over another? Or does God not care what restaurant you go to? Or when it comes to big decisions, does God will for you to specifically marry this person? And if you don’t marry that person, you’re outside of God’s will? Or does God just generally will that you marry a follower of Christ who’s of the opposite sex?

So if we’re not careful, we can go to one side or the other here. We can get paralyzed thinking, “Well, I want to do God’s will but I don’t know exactly what He wants me to do. Like, what restaurant do I go to?” Or, we can get passive and we can think, “Well, God doesn’t really care about the details of my day, so I’m going to try to figure out whether or not He wants me to go to Mexican or Chinese. I’m just going to pick.”

The Bad News, the Good News, and the Bottom Line

In all of this we come to one of the most common questions that Christians ask in our culture today: “What is God’s will for my life?” And the bad news is, countless people -- Christians -- are confused and wondering, “How do I find God’s will for my life?” The good news is God’s will is not lost. In fact, the really good news is, God desires for you and me to follow His will so much that He lives in you and me to accomplish it. And this is where I want us to see, because of the cross of Christ, the Spirit of Christ in us, and that we have the Spirit of Christ to lead us on a daily basis.

Contemporary Methods for Discovering the Will of God

This means we don’t need these contemporary methods for discovering the will of God. I’ve listed some there. The Striking Coincidence Method. The Random Finger Method. You know, open the Bible, “Well, God’s will is...there. ‘The Lord rescued him from all his enemies.’ Oh, that’s a good word. Or...there, with the north country. ‘All those who go to the north country. I’ve set my Spirit at rest in the north.’ So I need to go north.” I mean, it’s just not good. Or the Miraculous Event Method. Or the Cast the Fleece Method, the Open Door Method, the Closed Door Method, the Still, Small Voice Method. “Well, it is the still voice he heard. Is it small enough, is it still enough? Well, then, maybe that’s God.”

A Biblical Method for Discovering the Will of God

I want to recommend a biblical method for discovering the will of God. It’s called the Read Your Bible Method. So, the primary way God reveals His will is in His Word. Now, obviously this Word doesn’t tell you whether or not to go Mexican or Chinese or exactly who to marry

or this or that. But we've got this confidence that Christ is in us, and if we're giving ourselves to the will He has revealed, He's going to lead us in the things that are not specifically revealed in His Word.

Remember the Two Wills of God

Remember the two wills of God. This means there are two different ways the Bible talks about God's will. I call them here in your notes God's secret will and God's revealed will. Here's what I believe the Bible means by that. First, when it comes to God's secret will, this is what He decrees in the world. So look at this example from Genesis 50:20. Joseph is coming to the end of his life, and he is recounting to his brothers how God worked out their decision to sell him into slavery for His glory. It says, *"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."*

So look at that example: What was God's will? Or think about the passage from Acts 2 that talks about Jesus' crucifixion. Acts 2:22-23 says,

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know -- this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men."

So was that God's will? The answer is yes...and no. Yes, it was God's will. Genesis 50 says God meant this—Joseph being sold into slavery)—for good. And yes, the crucifixion was God's will because God meant Jesus to die on the cross. Nothing happens apart from God's activity and nothing happens accidentally. I have a variety of verses here that illustrate how everything happens purposefully—everything. So you've got God's will that He decrees in the world, and nothing happens in this world, in this sense, apart from God's will. There's nothing that happens in the world in which God says, "Oh, I didn't see that coming." He decrees it all.

But then you also see in Scripture God's revealed will: what He declares in His Word. He declares all kinds of different things. He calls us to be saved. To be filled with the Spirit. To *"understand what the will of the Lord is...be filled with the Spirit."* (Ephesians 5:17-18) Be sanctified. This is the will of God, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, your sanctification.

Ultimately, be submissive. *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."* (Proverbs 3:5-6) So this is the key to walking in the will of God—is trusting in the leadership of God. Because, follow this, knowing God's will is secondary to simply knowing God. So all those contemporary methods we try to come up with for discovering God's will are efforts to shortcut, short-circuit, the mind of God, relationship with God.

God has designed His will for our lives, so that as we walk with Him, we're drawn into deeper relationship with Him. So we have a big decision to make. God obviously has the power to give us a vision or write what we need to do in the clouds in the sky. But He doesn't do that. Why? Because He's designed a process for us to seek His face in His Word, in prayer, in the context of community with other brothers and sisters, and in the process we know Him more.

The will of God is not a roadmap. It's a relationship whereby Christ gradually overtakes our will to become one with His will. And as we grow in that relationship, we no longer find

ourselves asking God, "What is your will for my life?" Instead the question is, "God, what is your will in the world, and how can I align my life every day with it?"

So How Do I Make Daily Decisions?

So how do I make daily decisions? Big, small, how do I walk in the will of God? Here is some practical encouragement the Word gives us. One, if the Word doesn't specifically spell out what to do, commune with God in worship. So do all that we've talked about at this point. Walk with God in prayer, worship. With the start of this day, set aside a time and go to a place. And then consult the Word of God. So, does God's revealed will in Scripture prohibit doing something? Will a certain action cause you to neglect a command in God's revealed will?

And if the Word addresses your decision in one of those ways, then it's clear: Obey the Word. But if the Word doesn't address that decision, then exercise wisdom. "*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*" (James 1) So pray confidently. "God, I don't know what to do here. Give me wisdom." Gather information as you're praying. So it's not just, again, waiting for a vision, like, God calls us to work as we try to pray in wisdom and make wise decisions. Gather information. Consider all your options. Seek godly counsel from other people.

And then choose wisely. In other words, once you've sought God's face, gone to God's Word, you've asked for God's wisdom, you've done all the work that you can do, then do what you want. Don't stress about which restaurant to eat at. Worship God. Realize that God's Word doesn't necessarily prefer Mexican over Chinese, or Italian for that matter. Exercise wisdom and go eat where you want to the glory of God.

When it comes to who you marry—worship God. Walk with God. Realize that the Bible doesn't tell you specifically who to marry, though it does give you a good guide for the kind of person you should marry. Wisely look, then, for a member of the opposite sex who's displaying Christ-like manhood or womanhood, walking with God themselves. And say to them, "Hey, would you like to walk alongside me?"

So, an illustration that I would use. When my wife calls me, she doesn't say, "Hey babe, this is Heather." She had me at, "Hey babe." Like, there's no woman who calls me and says, "Hey babe," and I think, "Ah, I wonder who this is." Like, that would be a sign of much unhealth in a relationship. So as soon as she says, "Hey babe," and she doesn't have to identify her name. The goal is for us to be walking in close relationship with God in such a way that we know His voice. We know His voice. It's in His Word. And when it comes to decisions that we're making, we're in tune with His Spirit. That's what we're after—a relationship with God.

Two Final Words ...

So, two final words I've put here as we kind of look toward a day. Surrender every single day. Surrender. Die to yourself daily. Put the blank check on the table, just at the beginning of every day. This is why I think that I believe that time with the Lord, with the Father in heaven in a room alone, is important at the beginning of a day. Because you say, "Lord, here's my life today. Use it however you want."

And then abide throughout the day. Abide all throughout the day. So let the Word of Christ dwell in you. That's why memorizing is so helpful. And if you're abiding in Christ and surrendering to Christ, He's not going to lead you in the wrong direction.

The Cross and Working

So we think through, okay, time in prayer, time in the Word, time eating, exercising. Okay, now off to work. So most of us spend hours every day, every week, every month in our life doing work. If you work 40 hours a week for 40 years of life, you will put in 80,000 hours at a job during your lifetime. And then if you go to college, kindergarten to college is another 15,000 hours preparing to work. Then there's commuting on top of that. Like, that's a lot of hours in your life.

So how do all those hours fit in to this purpose that God has created for you in the world on a daily basis? Your work is in sales, or as a teacher, or as an engineer, whatever you do—is it just to provide food on your table? Or is there more to it than that? So how is your work on an everyday basis a part of God's plan for you to enjoy His grace in a relationship with Him and extend His glory to the ends of the earth?

I've got a quote here from Greg Gilbert and Sebastian Traeger, who wrote a great book on *The Gospel at Work* that I highly recommend. It's in the back of your notes. They say:

If you're like most people, you spend a significant portion of every week of your life at your job. You also spend quite a lot of time thinking about your job. What do I need to do next? How do I maximize profit, or how do I solve that problem, or how do I communicate this need? It may well be that at least some of your thoughts about your job are not just about operations. They're about the meaning of it all. Why am I doing this? What's the purpose of it, and do I want to keep doing it? How is this job affecting me as a human being, making my life better or worse? Is it all worth it, and why? Those are good questions, of course. But if you're a Christian, there's another set of questions that is even more important—questions that have to do with how your work fits into God's intentions for your life. Is my work shaping my character in a godly direction? How can I do my work, not just as a way to put food on the table, but as a sold-out disciple of Jesus? What the point of work, anyway, in a Christian's life? Is there any meaning to it beyond providing goods and services, making money, and providing a living for myself and my family? And why, for that matter, does God have us spend so much of our lives doing this one particular thing?

Well, those are good questions. And you get down to Colossians 3, and it says, "*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.*" So I want you to think about your job and the purpose for which God has put you on the planet.

Consider who God is ...

Let's think about who God is. God delights in work. God works, and God enjoys work. Psalm 104 says He rejoices in His work. So we see that. God works for us and through us. If you think about it, the only reason you're breathing at this moment is because God's working for you. And if He were to stop, so would you. He works for us, and even the work that we do is work that He actually does through us. Great quote from Luther about that right there. So God delights in work.

And God designed our work. So in Genesis 1, God created man and told him to work in the world. Chapter two, verse 15, God put him in a garden and told him to work. So work was not a part of the Fall. It was a part of creation from the very beginning. Tim Keller said:

Work is so foundational to our makeup that it is one of the few things we can take in significant doses without harm. Indeed, the Bible does not say we should work one day and rest six, or that work and rest should be balanced evenly—but directs us to the opposite ration. Leisure and pleasure are great goods, but we can only take so much of them. If you ask people in nursing homes or hospitals how they are doing, you will often hear that their main regret is that they wish they had something to do, some way to be useful to others.

So we're designed by God to work, by His grace, for our good, and for His glory. So this is God.

Consider who we are ...

Now consider who we are. Work is a mark of our dignity. Now I'm excluding here work that would be sinful or evil in and of itself. So you might call stealing cars work, but that's not the kind of work we're talking about here. So apart from that kind "work," we're talking about work—whatever we're doing, whatever job we have—it's a part of our dignity. And we've got to be careful not to think that some have more dignity than others. We have a tendency to base our dignity based on our occupation, or according to how other people view our occupation.

But to do that is not just unbiblical, it's ungodly. Because God has created us to work, and all kinds of work display His glory and His character in the world. Philip Jensen asks the question, "If God came into the world, what would he be like? For the ancient Greeks, he might have been a philosopher-king. The ancient Romans might have looked for a just and noble statesman. But how does the God of the Hebrews come into the world? As a carpenter."

All work is human dignity. Just think about Genesis 1, Psalm 8 there. So we're stewards of creation—this is from the very beginning, Genesis 1, of the Bible—and we're developers of culture. So in our work we are participating in what God is doing in the world, to help the world thrive and flourish. Keller writes:

Farming takes the physical material of soil and seed and produces food. Music takes the physics of sound and rearranges it into something beautiful and thrilling that brings meaning to life. When we take fabric and make a piece of clothing, when we push a broom and clean up a room, when we use technology to harness the forces of electricity, when we take an unformed, naïve human mind and teach it a subject, when we teach a couple how to resolve their relational disputes, when we take simple materials and turn them into a poignant work of art—[in all these things] we are continuing God's work of forming, filling and subduing ... [and] we are following God's pattern of creative cultural development.

Ah, what a great picture. And this is what we realize that this involves all of us doing all kinds of different things. If all of us were pastors, that would be a horrible thing for sustenance in the world. Sure, we'd know how to teach the Bible and shepherd the church, but we wouldn't know how to do anything else. If we were all salesmen and women, we wouldn't have any products to sell in the first place. If we were all police officers, we'd be safe but we sure would be hungry. If we were all lawyers, we'd all be in trouble.

So we need each other. We need every single one of each other. Much the way the body of Christ has different parts, we've got different parts we play in the world. I love this quote from Lester DeKoster:

Look at the chair you are lounging in ... Could you have made it for yourself? ... How would you get, say, the wood? Go and fell a tree? But only after first making the tools for that, and putting together some kind of vehicle to haul the wood, and constructing a mill to do the lumber and roads to drive on from place to place? In short, a lifetime or two to make one chair! ... If we ... worked not forty but one-hundred-forty hours per week we couldn't make ourselves from scratch even a fraction of all the goods and services that we [now] call our own. Our paycheck turns out to buy us the use of far more than we could possibly make for ourselves in the time it takes us to earn the check ... Work ... yields far more in return upon our efforts than our particular jobs put in Imagine that everyone quits working, right now! What happens? Civilized life quickly melts away. Food vanishes from the shelves, gas dries up at the pumps, streets are no longer patrolled, and fires burn themselves out. Communication and transportation services end, utilities go dead. Those who survive at all are soon huddled around campfires, sleeping in caves, clothed in raw animal hides. The difference between [a wilderness] and culture is simply, work.

Do you see this? All of our work is a mark of dignity. This is huge. We should not set up some false dichotomy, some artificial distinction, between some people whose work is nobler than others. So pastors are more noble than bankers, or missionaries more noble than telemarketers. Tyndale said, "If we look externally, there is difference between washing dishes and preaching the Word of God, but as touching to please God," follow this, "there is no difference at all. That's a biblical view of work, that there's no difference when done to the honor of the Lord between preaching and washing the dishes."

You say, "Do you really believe that, that preaching and washing the dishes are just as important to the glory of God?" Absolutely, I believe that. You take something like housecleaning. Imagine—what if it wasn't done? Before long there'd be germs all over the house, viruses, infections threatening to make you sick, that could eventually kill you. That makes dishwashing, cleaning, fundamentally important. So that's why Tim Keller says, "Simple physical labor is God's work no less than the formulation of theological truth." All of it is dignified.

The problem, though, is that our work has been marred by our depravity. The disobedience of man affects his work in Genesis 3, and as a result of sin, though work was designed to be fulfilling, it's frustrating to us. Though work was designed to be purposeful, it feels pointless. In Ecclesiastes, it is particularly depressing here, and you read through it and just, yeah, it's depressing. Because it says, you know, in the end what's the point of all this stuff that I'm doing? Because much of our work feels pointless. Though work was designed to be selfless, it becomes selfish. In other words, we start looking out for ourselves.

Which leads to two primary distortions of work, and this is what Gilbert and Traeger talk about in their book. It's so helpful. One is the idolatry of work, where we overvalue work, thinking that our work is what provides us ultimate meaning. So when we spend thousands of hours doing work, we start to be tempted to look at our work as that which controls us, or that which is our identity. We wrap ourselves up in our work and can't pull ourselves away from it. This is even more dangerous when we become successful in our work,

because we start looking to work for things that God alone is intended to give us: Meaning, joy, identity.

And in the process, we fail to see God's limits for our work. And when we fail to see God's limits for our work, we find ourselves resisting rest. We can't put our work down. We can't put our phone down. We're always checking emails, always making calls. Our thoughts go into this or that at the office. We're consumed with our work, and we see rest almost like it's an enemy. It's keeping us from doing what we want to do.

And I will be the first to admit I've been totally guilty here. I mentioned just the un-health that my wife approached me with a couple years ago, and part of it was, "You don't put stuff down. You just stay up all night doing this or that, and that's not healthy. It's not glorifying to God." So that's one way that we can distort work.

Well, then there's another opposite side of the spectrum, and some of you are already thinking, "Well, we don't want to just be lazy and not work hard." And you're exactly right. The other distortion of work is idleness in work, where we undervalue work, thinking that it has little to no meaning. Either we're lazy and we don't work, or we look at our work and we think, "Ah, it's not that important. What I do is really not that dignified." And we fail to see God's purposes for our work. We either don't work, or we work and we don't care about what we're doing in our work. It's just a means to an end that we have to endure.

And in the process of this we start to prioritize retirement. So instead of resisting rest, we prioritize retirement. We prioritize rest in a sense. Our work is something we endure until we get to the weekend, and then ultimately it's something we endure until we finally attain the goal of not having to work and we can retire, a concept that is totally unbiblical. People ask me, "What do you mean that you say retirement is unbiblical?" What I mean is it's not in the Bible. It's not a biblical idea at all.

Now I want to be clear. I'm not talking here about those who are physically unable to work. And I'm not talking about those who retire from a job in order to be able to do work that doesn't require a salary. So there are many Christians past a certain age who are no longer employed on a payroll somewhere, but are working to the glory of God around the world and in the community. That's good. That's great. That's biblical.

But this idea that we have in American culture that the goal of our life is to get to the point where we can just rest is not biblical. It's not human. It's not what God has designed for us. We even say, "I can't wait to get to heaven where I can rest." But even that's not true. Because when we get to heaven there's going to be work. And at that point you just throw your arms up and say, "Ah. It's never going to end."

That's when we realize we're missing the point. God's created us to work, by His grace, for our good, for His glory. Work is a good gift from a gracious God that we will enjoy for all of eternity. We'll enjoy it. We won't have the distortions that come in with it in eternity, thank God. But we must not buy into the lie that our culture sells us that work is to be avoided. It's to be endured because we have to do it. No. Work is a fundamental part of God's good design for us.

Consider the cross ...

And God desires to save us from an unbiblical view of work and redeem us to a satisfying life of work. And this is where the cross comes in. Think about how Jesus' life, death and resurrection affects the way we view work, transforms our outlook on work. Three ways: Number one, Christ's work has secured our salvation, freeing us to rest in His work as the

only superior work. This is huge. This is why Martin Luther, for example, is so passionate about all work—not just church work—being equally pleasing and honoring to God. It all went back for Luther to the discovery of the reality that we're justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

If you think about it, if our works—specifically our religious works—earn us favor before God, then it only makes sense that the clergy—priests, popes—do the most noble work and have the most favor before God. Everybody else is second class in that sense. But one of the effects of the Reformation was realizing, no, if we're accepted before God based solely on faith in the finished work of Christ, then there's no work we can do to increase our status before God. Christ at the cross has secured our salvation, so we're free to rest in His work as the only superior work.

So, then Christ's work has secured our satisfaction, freeing us from the idolatry of work. So in Christ, through Christ, you've been reconciled to God, you've found ultimate meaning in God, your ultimate source of joy is not in what you do, but Who you know. Your identity is not your profession. Your identity is in Christ. So in these ways, in Christ you're free from now looking to your job to find what Christ has already purchased for you—ultimate joy and meaning and satisfaction in Him.

Gilbert and Traeger write, "Christ's work provides an anchor for your soul. Without it, it's inevitable that you'll be blown around like a leaf by the winds of stock market gyrations, temporary successes and failures, performance reports, bosses who do or don't treat you well, and your own desires, whether they are met or not." But Christ saves you from that kind of life.

Will you experience frustration, discouragement, despair at work? Absolutely. It's the reality of work in a sinful world. But as soon as you do, those realities will remind that work is not your source of meaning and joy and satisfaction. Christ is, and He alone can provide what your soul most needs. And then, Christ's work has secured our significance, freeing us from idleness in work. So Christ infuses significance and meaning and purpose into even the most menial tasks and jobs.

Consider our everyday jobs ...

So that leads us to then consider our everyday jobs. So you put your faith in Christ. You're in Christ. How does that affect the way you work every day? Well, in Christ every day, we're free to worship God wholeheartedly as we work. That's why Colossians 3 says work hard, because you're serving ultimately the Lord. "*Whatever you do,*" 1 Corinthians 10:31, "*do all to the glory of God.*"

So what you do—follow this—from nine to five every day is not secular work. You know, when you serve in the church on Sunday, that's spiritual work. No, that's not true. It's all work to the glory of God. Every single bit of it. When you write a memo at your desk, when you're talking on the phone with a customer, when you're preparing a lesson for your class, when you're selling an item, when you're serving some food, when you're making a decision, when you're leading a company, when you're placing an order, when you're hammering a nail, you're fixing a leak, you're performing a surgery—whatever you do, you're worshipping God as you work. Discipleship to Jesus is not just what you do when you have a Bible study or you're serving in a soup kitchen. Yes, it's that and it's every other detail of your life on a daily basis. It's all discipleship to Jesus.

So think about practical ramifications of this based on that biblical reality. So what do we do then? We work competently, with excellence. We don't worship God through shoddy, lousy

work. The student in school, employee, boss, whatever—we work hard with competency because we’re serving Christ.

We work honorably with integrity. We work humbly with respect for those we work with. We work eagerly with joy. “*Do all things without grumbling or disputing.*” (Philippians 2:14-16) The workplace can be the most fertile ground for grumbling and complaining. Everybody can find somebody to complain about at work. But it doesn’t honor God when we’re complaining or grumbling. So don’t do it. I find Gilbert and Traeger particularly helpful here. Listen to this quote:

Do you ever experience satisfaction or enjoyment in your work? If not, it might be worth thinking about why you don’t. Do you lack enjoyment in your job because you idolize it, expecting it to do things for you that only Jesus can do? Or is it because you’ve lost sight of the purposes for which God has called you to work in the first place, and you’ve become idle in your work? You don’t necessarily have to enjoy the mechanics of what you do in order to find a measure of enjoyment and satisfaction in your work. Maybe your job is cleaning on the grease pits in a hydraulics factory and you work in a non-air-conditioned metal warehouse in the brutal 110-degree heat of East Texas. Hardly anyone can be expected to enjoy the mechanics of that particular job. Yet if this describes your work, you can still find satisfaction and enjoyment in it by doing your job well and knowing you are doing it for the King’s glory and as an expression of love for him.

Isn’t that a good word? Christian, in Christ, you’re free to worship God wholeheartedly in whatever work you’re doing.

And we’re free to love others selflessly in and through our work. This is part of the way we love our neighbor as ourselves. It’s part of the way you provide for your family, which is obviously important. To not do that, you’re worse than an unbeliever (1 Timothy 5:8). And we serve our co-workers and customers. We better our world. I know that sounds cheesy, but it’s part of God’s purpose for our work in the world. So He’s commissioned us to work for the thriving and flourishing of the culture around us for His glory. And all of our jobs and tasks are part of that plan.

You go back to the guy in the grease pits of the hydraulics factory. This is a guy who is serving with his life, hours every week, in what many would call a menial task in a factory, so that factory can run, so that it can serve society in important ways. Our jobs are huge opportunities for loving people in the world through the different things we do. In Christ, we’re free to do what we do on a daily basis to better the world around us. And then we are to care for the needy with the money that we make in the process, Ephesians 4:28. We’re free to love others selflessly in and through our work.

And finally, we’re free to trust God completely with our work. So work can often be a source of worry, anxiety. What’s going to happen to the economy? What’s going to happen in the market? What’s this boss or that employee going to decide to do that’s going to affect me? What if this or that happens? Am I going to lose my job? And this is where Proverbs 16 reminds us, be confident in the reign of Christ. He’s in control. He’s in control of all things.

Be responsible with your rest. It’s good to put the phone down, put aside the email, stop thinking about work, turn attention to other things. When we do that, we’re saying, “Work does not consume me. Ultimately this world is just fine without me working all the time.” And in the end be focused on His reward. That’s what I love about Colossians 3, “*Work*

heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward."

Consider the eternal effects of everyday work ...

This leads to consider the eternal effects of everyday work. We're looking forward to a new earth where everyone and everything will work perfectly. So we're not going to sit around on clouds in boring, endless daydreaming. We're going to work. But imagine, we're going to work with delight and joy and meaning. No frustration. No futility. Nothing to complain or grumble about, but in perfect harmony with God and with each other.

We're living now then for the sake of eternity. So approach your job, then, working hard to adorn the gospel of God. Work in a way that sheds light to others on Christ in you. Let them see your good work and give glory to your Father in heaven. And work strategically to advance the mission of God. This is the beauty, the creativity of God. We're all in different places. We're working in different settings. And in those settings we have the opportunity to build meaningful relationships with the people around us, to weave gospel threads into those conversations.

So think about this: Even when we think about going to Turkey, or other places in the world where they have little to no knowledge of the gospel, there are so many opportunities for workers to go to places like Turkey. There are many places in the world—particularly among the least-reached peoples in the world—that you can't go on a Christian missionary visa there. A pastor can't get in. But there are places where you can work in Turkey and Saudi Arabia and numerous countries—jobs where they'll pay you to be there to build meaningful relationships in the process and to weave gospel threads and to do disciple making there, just like we're called, commanded, to do it here. So I put here, weave gospel threads.

And engage unreached peoples through your work. Oh, what avenues there are for the spread of the gospel in the world if we would stop thinking the default for our work has to be the United States. Like, it doesn't. If there are this many people who've never heard the gospel, what if the default is to actually go and find our jobs and using the skills and training and education we've got in other places in the world where there are very, very few Christians.

The Cross and Playing

Biblical Foundations ...

All that leads to play. Work and play. What about the cross and our playing? Hobbies. Sports. So, biblical foundations here. Hobbies are a good gift from a gracious God given to us for the glory of God. So sports are a gift. Hobbies that we play—they're gifts. So again, we've got to be careful not to compartmentalize God, as if God has God's church over here, and then has nothing to do with sports. No. By the nature of the fact that God is God, He's God over everything. And everything that's good is because He's given it as a good gift, James 1:17.

So the problem is sin happens when we take that which is good and we turn it into a god. So we turn good things into gods we worship and serve, instead of the God who gave us the good thing in the first place. We take sports or hobby—a good thing—and we turn it into a god, an ultimate thing that captivates and consumes us and subtly and unknowingly controls us in different ways. The danger is—third biblical foundation here—good gifts make lousy gods. Because idols always disappoint.

Hear this quote from Tom Brady, winner of three Super Bowl rings, interviewed on *60 Minutes*, in the middle of an undefeated season with the New England Patriots, having an MVP season as a quarterback, relationship with a super model—all this while making millions of dollars. And this is what he said: “Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still think there’s something greater out there for me? There may be a lot of people who would say, ‘Hey, man, this is what it is. I reached my goal, my dream, my life.’ Me, I think, ‘God, it’s got to be more than this.’ I mean, this isn’t...this can’t be what it’s all cracked up to be.” The interviewer asked him, “Well, what do you think the answer is?” And Brady responded, “I wish I knew.”

Idols always inevitably disappoint. And far more serious, idols ultimately destroy. Idolaters, 1 Corinthians 6, those who live in fundamental orientation away from God—even towards something good besides God—will not inherit the kingdom of God. J.C. Ryle said, “Thousands have trodden the path you are pursuing (they have fought hard for wealth, and honor, and office, and promotion, and turned their backs on God, and Christ, and heaven, and the world to come) and have awoke too late to find it end in misery and eternal ruin.” Be warned.

Personal Examination ...

So in light of this, we need to personally examine our lives. Examine yourselves. Examine your heart. So, it’s different for different people. So for some it’s college football. For some it’s basketball. For some it’s baseball. For some it’s this hobby or that. Maybe it’s college sports or professional sports, or maybe it’s your kid’s sports. There are just so many different hobbies. Maybe it’s video games. Whatever it might be, examine your heart. So when people look at your life, would they say, “That’s a heart that is wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord”? Or would they say, “That’s a heart that is divided”?

Examine your mind. What occupies your mind when you have nothing else to think about? Does your mind go to sports when you don’t have anything else to think about? Does your mind go to this or that hobby? Is your mind consumed by this video game? Tim Keller says, “The true god of your heart is what your thoughts effortlessly go to when there is nothing else demanding your attention.”

Examine your conversations. Remember, what’s on your mind and heart comes out of your mouth? What are your most passionate conversations about? I mean, we were just talking about the need to talk about Jesus. Well, we’re in Birmingham, Alabama. Here people talk about college football all the time. It’s just everyday conversation. What’s on our mind and our hearts comes out of our mouth, in a way that’s showing there’s something wrong. College football is not a bad thing in and of itself, but you look at our conversations and it’s clear: We’ve taken that which is a good thing and turned it into a god.

Examine your emotions. Do sports or hobbies incite and ignite your affections in unhealthy ways? So does a game cause your emotion to swing in such a way that you’re sad, grumpy, even angry when your team doesn’t win? Or on the other side, maybe even more potentially dangerous, are you inordinately happy and fun to be around because your team won? When your emotions, happiness and sadness, depend on the outcome of a game, it may be that your heart is at least in some ways consumed and controlled by games and hobbies.

Examine your use of money. “*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” (Matthew 6:19-21) Did you know that the combined athletic budgets of the twelve schools in the SEC is over \$800 million? It’s close to a billion dollars. That’s more than the GDP, gross domestic product, of 24 of the world’s poorest countries. So across the South, in a

land that's covered with churches, we've got to ask the question, "Where is our heart? Where is our heart? Where are we spending all our money?"

Examine your use of time. How much time do you spend in this hobby, or in that sport? Examine your perspective. You put all that together, and you begin to realize we are so easily deceived by artificial battles on ball fields, and we think they matter, when the reality is there are Turks, Kurds -- there's 75 million of them, and there's 4,000 believers like me. There are real battles we need to be fighting from our knees, and fighting in our lives, that are far more eternally important. And so we lose perspective.

Practical Application ...

So how do we avoid losing perspective? How do we make sure to honor God with our minds and our hearts and our money when it comes to hobbies and sports? Practical application. First, use hobbies to draw attention to God's greatness. This is a good gift that God's given us, so how can we use it then for the glory of God? I'm talking about something deeper than just, "Okay, you score a touchdown and you kneel down and you point up to the sky." I'm talking about something more than that. So maximize hobbies for their intended purpose, as a way to worship God. So the goal in sports or hobbies is not winning. The goal in sports is worship. And not the worship of an athlete, but the worship of God.

Hear this quote from Eric Liddell in *Chariots of Fire*, how he—a future missionary—medaled as a runner in the Olympic games, and he said, "God made me for a purpose." He knew that purpose was to glorify God, so he said, "God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure." In other words, this is him saying, "I run really fast to the glory of God." That is the purpose of sports. Keep hobbies in their proper place, far behind your family and your church and a host of other things.

So where do sports or hobbies fall on your priority list? Families all across our communities spend a majority of their time at sporting events sometimes. It's where the family time is together. Or men, ask your wife if sports is in any way a hindrance to your intimacy with her, and wait for her to answer. And if they are a hindrance, consider what major adjustments need to be made in order to put them in their proper place behind your wife, loving and serving her. Moms and dads, if you're carting your children all across town doing this or that, are they getting a healthy perspective of sports, hobbies, in their lives? Particularly when compared to learning God's Word, participating in things like family worship, worship with the church?

Liddell is a brother who withdrew from the race he was best at in the Olympics because running that race would mean running on Sunday, which was the Sabbath, which we'll talk about in a second. He refused to run. I mean, talk about a clear picture that sports were not his idol. How far we've come from this, when Sundays, we're playing sports all the time in a way that oftentimes pulls people away from the gathering of God's people for worship.

So use hobbies to draw attention to God's greatness. Second, use hobbies to express appreciation for God's grace. So again, anything good here is a gift from God. So intentionally and continually offer thanks to God. If you have something enjoyable happen in a sport you're playing, a sport you're watching, let that just overflow in gratitude to God for this. Let the enjoyment of hobbies lead to ever-increasing affection for God.

When I give my kids a gift, they start playing. It honors the gift I've given them when they play with it, they enjoy it, and they're having fun with it. It doesn't just sit on the side. So it's a good thing when we're enjoying a good gift that God's given us, to enjoy it in a way that increases affection for Him. So this is from you—thank you. Like, you've given this as

an enjoyment. Recreation is a good thing. Use hobbies to express appreciation for God's grace.

Third, use hobbies to grow in sanctification. So as we discipline ourselves in different sports or discipline ourselves in different activities, we're cultivating humility. We're learning to demonstrate honor to other people, to other teams, to develop self-discipline in training. Sports are tools in God's hand to help us learn to maintain self-control, to model self-sacrifice. Now, in it all, we need to make sure that we're valuing growth in godliness over personal achievement.

But this is the goal, that we're looking more and more and more like Christ as a result of what we're doing, and that we're teaching our children that's what's most important. I love this quote from C.J. Mahaney. I recommend a resource from him called *Don't Waste Your Sports*, in the back of your guide. He said, "Our children will pursue what we applaud. They will emulate what we celebrate. If we celebrate scoring and winning, then our children will define success in these terms. But if we celebrate evidences of godly character in our children, we will help them define success [far] more biblically."

And so encourage them. As parents, maximize sports for children's growth in godliness.

Every practice, every game, is an opportunity to lead our children. Often as parents we think we've fulfilled our duty by simply attending our children's games and cheering. Not so. We're called to so much more, informed by the gospel. We're called to lead our children wisely. Before the game, this means preparing them to keep biblical priorities in mind while they play. After the game, this means celebrating their expressions of godly character more than they celebrate their skill for the final score. Every moment our children spend in sports is a teaching moment.

This is something we need to be intentional about. Prioritize what really matters in eternity over what seems to matter on earth.

And then, use hobbies to lead others to salvation. Sports, hobbies, are oftentimes some of the most common and enjoyable means for bringing people together in our culture, and so how can we maximize that for the spread of the gospel? The Cross and Playing.

The Cross, Social Media, and Entertainment

That leads to the cross and listening, watching, reading, texting, sending, receiving, posting, Tweeting, Instagramming, blogging, messaging, tumbling, liking, poking, following, unfollowing, emailing, snapping, chatting, vining, networking, and all sorts of othering.

Did you know that if social media companies were countries, Facebook would be the world's most populous behind only China? One out of every seven minutes spent on-line is spent on Facebook. Every single day, Facebook users spend 10.5 billion minutes on Facebook -- every single day. That is almost 20,000 years on that social network. Did you know that there are 58 million tweets a day? That's over 9,000 tweets every second. We interact with our mobile devices on an average of 40-80 times a day. 91% of mobile Internet access is for social activities. Half of Smartphones connect to Facebook every hour of every day.

And the effects are not limited to adults. Research continues to show with overwhelming numbers that heavy media exposure in children greatly increases the risk of harm, including obesity, smoking, sex, drug and alcohol use, attention problems and poor grades. So what are we to do with this world? Are we just to hide our head in the sand and have nothing to do with social media, or entertainment for that matter? Or is there a way to do social media, to listen to music, to watch movies, to post and tweet and email and do whatever, to the glory of God?

10 Cross-Centered Commandments for Entertainment and Social Media

Fear God.

I think there is. But it involves intentionality that goes against the grain of the culture in which we live. So what I've put in here are ten cross-centered commandments for entertainment and social media. So if we've been crucified with Christ and Christ lives in us, then how does that affect the way we approach entertainment and social media? The first cross-centered commandment is fear God. Fear God. It is easy to forget when we're interacting with each other and entertaining one another that ultimately God is watching every single thing we watch, write, post and send. Nothing is hidden from Him, especially in the moments when we're on our phone or computer and nobody else is watching. He sees all and knows all.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7) and *"The eyes of the Lord are in every place."* (Proverbs 15:3) Jesus calls us to deal with any sin in our lives seriously. *"And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire."* (Mark 9:43-48) So do whatever it takes in entertainment and social media to be holy as God is holy. This is the starting point. Fear God. Don't disconnect God from what you're doing on your phone. God is there in what you're doing on your phone. He cares about what you're doing on your phone. So, fear God.

Flee sexual immorality.

Second, flee sexual immorality. We've talked about this earlier, but it bears repeating. Flee sexual lust, having wrong sexual desires yourself. *"Everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* (Matthew 5:28) So think about desiring anything sexually outside of your wife or your husband—it is just as easy to commit that kind of adultery through entertainment and social media today as it is anything else. Flee all sexual lust.

Flee sexual immodesty, provoking wrong sexual desires in others. So stop posting pictures that provoke sexual desires in others. It's sin. That's sin. Flee sexual allurements, including inappropriate emotional attachment outside of marriage. Multitudes of divorces today are caused by discontented spouses rekindling old relationships through Facebook. *"Keep your heart with all vigilance."* (Proverbs 4:23) Keep your heart. Flee sexual allurements. And obviously this goes both ways—men enticing women and women enticing men.

Flee all sexual looking outside of marriage. Make a covenant with your eyes not to look at anything that doesn't honor God, Job 31. What are you watching? Not just on line, but in TV and movies. This quote from Kevin DeYoung is so helpful:

We have to take a hard look at the things we choose to put in front of our faces. If there was a couple engaged in sexual activity on a couch in front of you, would you pull up a seat to watch? No, that would be perverse,

voyeuristic. So why is it different when people recorded it first and then you watch? What if a good-looking guy or girl, barely dressed, came up to you on the beach and said, "Why don't you sit on your towel right here and stare at me for a while?" Would you do it? No, that would be creepy. Why is it acceptable, then, when the same images are blown up the size of a three-story building?

This makes no sense. So flee entertainment. Flee entertainment that exalts, glamorizes, jokes around about and/or makes light of sex outside of marriage. Flee it. Ephesians 5:11-12 says, "*Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.*" Again, Kevin is so helpful here. I know it's a long quote, but this is huge.

It's one thing to describe evil or even depict it. I'd never suggest that good writing or film making must avoid the subject of sin. There are many thoughtful, tasteful movies, television shows, plays, musicals, and books out there—and the good ones usually deal with sin. Sin by itself is not the problem. The Bible is full of rank immorality. It would be simplistic and morally untenable—even unbiblical—to suggest you cannot watch sin or read about sin without sinning yourself.

But the Bible never titillates with its description of sin. It never paints vice with virtue's colors. It does not entertain with evil (unless to mock it). The Bible does not dull the conscience by making sin look normal and righteousness look strange. And there are no pictures of plunging necklines. If we're honest, we often seek exposure to sexual immorality and temptations to impurity and call it 'innocent' relaxation.

Commenting on Ephesians 5:3, Peter O'Brien observes that, as Christians, we should not only shun all forms of sexual immorality, we should "avoid thinking and talking about them." Even our jesting should be pure, lest we show "a dirty mind expressing itself in vulgar conversation." If, as O'Brien remarks, "talking and thinking about sexual sins creates an atmosphere in which they are tolerated and which can . . . promote their practice," how can we justify paying money to see, taste, and laugh at sexual sin? How can we stare at sensuality which aims to amuse and arouse and weaken our conscience and deaden our sense of spiritual things (even if it is on ordinary cable or only rated PG-13)?

We must consider the possibility that much of what churchgoing people do to unwind would not pass muster for the apostle Paul. Not to mention God. Brothers and sisters, we must be more vigilant. With our kids, with our families, with our Facebook accounts, with our texts, with our tweets, with our own eyes and hearts. Are we any different than the culture? Have we made a false peace with ourselves whereby we have said, we won't do the things you do or be as sensual as you are, but we will gladly watch you do them for us? The kinds of things Paul wouldn't even mention, the sort of sins he wouldn't dare joke about, the behaviors too shameful to even name—we hear about them in almost every sitcom and see them on screens bigger than our homes.

Here is worldliness as much as anywhere in the Christian life. Try turning off the television and staying away from the movies for a month and see what

new things you see when you come back. I fear many of us have become numb to the poison we are drinking. When it comes to sexual immorality, sin looks normal, righteousness looks very strange, and we look a lot like everybody else.

We need to hear this. God help us to fear you and flee sexual immorality. If we apply these two cross-centered commandments, it would radically revolutionize the way we approach entertainment and social media. And some people might say this is extreme, but we read a lot of the words of Christ to us, the presence of Christ in us, the glory of God above us—how can we not be extreme in this culture?

Speak wisely.

Third, speak wisely. So the power of words is all over Scripture. Now we're kind of moving specifically in to social media. "*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*" (Matthew 12:33-34) You might say out of the abundance of the heart the finger types and the message posts. So, think before you speak. Social media is built on spontaneity, immediacy. You text back and forth quickly. You post this or that in a moment. You fire off this or that message. You tweet in real time. And if we're not careful, we'll do a lot of this without thinking, without stopping to think.

Hear the warning of Proverbs 10, "*When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.*" Proverbs 11—you've got to love this one. "*Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman without discretion.*" Proverbs 13:3, "*Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.*" Look down at Proverbs 29:20. "*Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*" Don't be hasty with your words. "*Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak,*" James 1.

So think. Ask questions like, "Will what I say adorn the gospel?" "Is what I say," Colossians 4:3, "going to be gracious, seasoned with salt, wise, kind?" Will it reflect positive light on the picture of Christ in me? Will what I say glorify God?" Let your tweeting, posting, blogging, instagramming so shine before men that they see it and glorify your Father in heaven. Think before you speak.

Avoid evil and angry speech. Fools quarrel, especially over texting, messaging and email. Somehow we start to think that evil and angry speech are okay if we're not saying it out loud. It's still sin when it's digital. Avoid retaliatory and inflammatory speech. There's no shortage of arguments online over politics, sports, religion, whatever, arguments that often inflame. "*The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out.*" (Proverbs 17:14)

Avoid gossip and slander. Is everything you say on the Internet useful for building up others according to their needs in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 4:29? Avoid grumbling and complaining. "*Do all things without grumbling.*" (Philippians 2:14-15) Resist the temptation to make social media an outlet for your grumbling. And finally, avoid saying on the screen what you wouldn't say in person. It is so much easier in an email or Facebook message or blog to say something to or about someone that you would not say if you were looking that person in the eye. If that's the case, don't say it. And if it's particularly strong, then say it in person, not via text, email, Facebook, whatever. Don't be a lion behind the keyboard and a lamb in front of people. There needs to be consistency there.

Communicate honestly.

Fourth, communicate honestly. This virtual world we live in, we can make ourselves out to be whoever we want to be. Facebook is full of personas where everybody looks perfect, like they've got it all together, but nobody really does. So communicate honestly about yourself. Now, that doesn't mean we need to bare everything, our entire soul, online, or every struggle we have. Believe it or not, there are things in our lives that don't have to or need to be shared with the entire world. But share with people who are closest to us. But resist the temptation to put forward a false image of yourself—or others, for that matter. Obviously, do not be communicating lies about others, Proverbs 19:9.

Cultivate humility.

At the root of all this is pride, so, fifth commandment, cultivate humility. "*With the humble is wisdom.*" Think John 3:30 here. He must become greater, I must become less. Approach social media with that mindset, which means when somebody else says something good about you on Twitter, you don't need to retweet it so everybody else knows that thing that's good about you. Proverbs 27, "*Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.*" Avoid the humble brag, saying how humble and honored you are to achieve something, when in reality you're just letting everybody know what you achieved and that you're humble about it.

"If you have been foolish, exalting yourself, or if you have been devising evil, put your hand on your mouth." (Proverbs 30:32) Don't base your identity or your mood on how many likes you get or retweets or pokes or follows or whatever it is. Focusing on these things reveals a desire for man's approval that is undercutting the contentment that we're intended to find in Christ alone. Cultivate humility before Him and before others.

Have accountability.

Six, have accountability. Every single one of us needs this in our lives. We all need brothers and sisters who have access to all the social media that we have access to, and who know what we're doing in these social media outlets. I do not have an email address, for example, that somebody else can't get into, or Twitter or Facebook or whatever. Don't put yourself in a position where you have a social media outlet that other brothers or sisters in Christ don't know about. Don't trust yourself that much. Don't trust yourself. So come, "*Cease to hear instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge.*" (Proverbs 19:27) Iron sharpens iron. You need people sharpening you. This is huge for all of us.

I would even go a step further to say this particularly huge for children and teenagers. I would encourage us as parents not to let our children and teenagers have independent Internet or social networking access. Now, I don't have teenagers yet, but I've spent a good bit of time talking about this with brothers and sisters who do, and we must be vigilant to protect our children's minds and their hearts in the midst of social media, to know everything they're watching, playing, hearing, experiencing, know everything they're interacting with, know what they're posting, how they're chatting. You say that takes a lot of work. This is all we remember. Nobody told us that parenting was going to be easy. We don't trust our own sinful hearts; we certainly don't trust the sinful, vulnerable hearts of our children either. Have accountability. We build in accountability. It's a good thing.

Maintain mastery.

Seventh, maintain mastery. "*All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything.*" (1 Corinthians 6:12) Are you controlling social media in your life, or is it controlling you? Is your phone a constant pull, that whenever you have a free minute, you're on it? Or even when you don't have a free minute—you're in conversation with others, you're sitting around with your family—but

you're still pulling it out and checking it. Are you a slave to social media? Are you a slave to your phone? Are you a slave to Facebook? How many minutes, hours a day, are you spending on it?

We'll talk about time more in a minute, but much of this comes back to mastery. So walk in the Spirit, not controlled by anything else but Him. He's your constant master. He's your guide, not your phone or Facebook or Twitter, Instagram.

Guard your heart.

In all this, number eight, guard your heart. With all diligence, guard your heart from envy and jealousy. Social media can so quickly kill contentment. You see this person who has that or that person who has achieved this, and you suddenly start to think, "Well, I want that" or "I need that" or "I'd like to achieve this." And suddenly, almost knowingly, you see what everybody else is doing, or just know about what somebody else is doing, and it's fueling covetousness and insecurity and discontentment in what you have and where you are.

What's crazy is, what hardly every crosses our mind, is to think that these other people might not be content either, and they're looking at others in ways that fuel covetousness and discontentment in their own lives. All of a sudden social media just becomes this massive circle of envy and jealousy, and into this, Scripture says, "*Godliness with contentment is great gain.*" (1 Timothy 6:6)

Guard your heart from envy and jealousy. Guard your heart from pride and ambition. Guard your heart from unhealthy friendships and unhelpful associations. So who and what we're liking on Facebook is communicating something. Who are we following? Who are we friending? Who are we associating with online? What if a pastor or a close trusted Christian friend saw and knew every bit of your online association and interaction? Would that change anything about that interaction? Then, if so, how much more should Christ's seeing and knowing all of that change these things? "*Bad company ruins good morals,*" 1 Corinthians 15:33, and that's true just as much on line as it is off line.

Renew your mind.

Commandment nine, renew your mind. "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.*" (Romans 12:2) So is this what's happening in your mind on a daily basis? We talked about loving God with all our minds. The problem so many of us face, though, is our minds are so full with so much from social media that we don't have any room for God's Word—a little bit of God's Word, a lot from the world. That doesn't mean we have to avoid social media altogether and just read the Bible. But are there even ways you can use social media to renew your mind? So are there apps, Twitter streams, Facebook pages that are going help fuel the renewal of your mind in healthy ways?

And then, even if it's not particularly helpful in that, but it's not contaminating your mind, beware of certain things. Beware of falsehood. Beware of outright lies. Don't fill your mind with lies on the Internet or on social media. Beware of filth, which is available at our fingertips at any moment of the day. Beware of frivolity. Beware of filling your mind with endless drizzle. We can fill our mind with so much meaningless via social media, which is not healthy or profitable.

Redeem your time.

And we can waste so much time, which leads to the last cross-centered, Christ-compelled commandment: Redeem your time. "*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.*" (Ephesians 5:15-16) Our

lives are a vapor. They're a mist. They're here for a little while and then we're gone, which means every moment counts. So let's make the most of our time. Let's make the most of every opportunity, walking in wisdom toward outsiders.

So there are so many ways social media can be used for the spread of the gospel. Let's not disconnect this conversation from what we were talking about in 1 Corinthians 9. Rearrange your use of social media for the spread of the gospel. I was talking with these guys about Turkey, and some of the believers that we heard from, some of the believers that they met when they went over and were interviewing different people, came to Christ online. So God has given us something great. So let's maximize it—not promote ourselves, not to fuel discontentment, to go back and forth with people in unhealthy ways—let's maximize this good gift for the spread of the gospel, the glory of God.

Even in that, let's maximize the opportunities through social media, but don't neglect other priorities, including your time at work. "*We hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies.*" (2 Thessalonians 3:11-12) Maybe not busybodies but Facebook fiends, Twitter scrollers, picture posters, whatever. God has created you and I to work hard for His glory. If we're not careful, social media will kill productivity in ways that don't honor God.

Don't neglect time to rest, which we're going to talk about more in just a second. But I'm totally guilty of this. So many different things along here, but when I have a free minute I think, "I don't want to waste it just sitting here," so I pull out the phone and I need to do something productive. But what if it'd actually be good to sit there and let my mind rest? There's health in that.

Don't neglect your time with people. Don't neglect your time with people. Social media can't replace personal interaction with friends, with family. Have boundaries in your family on the use of social media, so you actually have quality face-to-face time with each other, even if you're sitting around—God forbid—just talking.

And don't neglect your time with God. So, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "*Pray without ceasing.*" Not, "Text without ceasing" or "Check messages without ceasing." What if prayer was a more automatic reflex in our lives than checking our phones was? The Cross and Social Media.

The Cross and Resting

All that leading to the cross and resting as we think about sleep. So think about it. Why did God design us to need sleep? We sleep for about a third of our life. God didn't have to create us like this. We're made in His image; He doesn't sleep, so why did He imagine sleep for us? He could have made us in a way that we didn't have to sleep. Think of what we could do. We could all have two jobs. We could have this non-ministry job and ministry jobs. We could be spreading the gospel all over the world, right? Why do we have to sleep? Why do you have a longing right now to go to sleep? I love how John Piper sums this up. He said:

Sleep is a daily reminder from God that we are not God. Once a day God sends us to bed like patients with a sickness. The sickness is a chronic tendency to think we are in control and that our work is indispensable. To cure us of this disease God turns us into helpless sacks of sand once a day.

How humiliating to the self-made corporate executive that he has to give up all control and become as limp as a suckling infant every day.

Rest in the Old Testament ...

Oh, that's great! So why? Well, think about sleep in Scripture. Look at rest in the Old Testament. We know God rested after He created the sixth day. Then He rested on the seventh day. And then God commanded rest for His people every seventh day. So, He rested, and then He commanded them to rest. And on that seventh day they'd cease from self-sufficiency, trust in divine grace to provide for all they need.

Further, God commanded rest for the land every seventh year. So there was the Sabbath year when the land would have rest. And then God promised rest in a land according to His people's obedience. When He was leading His people to the Promised Land, He said, "This is going to be a place of rest," specifically in that land. And in that land God provided rest from their enemies according His people's righteousness. Summed up in Joshua 23, they took the whole land and they had rest from war. They had rest from their enemies.

Rest in the New Testament ...

So that was rest in the Old Testament in 60 seconds. Then we see rest in the New Testament. First and foremost, Christ invites us to experience His Sabbath rest. "*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" (Matthew 11:25-30) Much like God designed the Sabbath rest in the Old Testament, we come to Christ for a Sabbath rest to cease from self-sufficiency and to trust in divine grace. Jesus gives us the rest that Joshua and Moses couldn't provide. Hebrews 4 talks about that. This is the cross and resting. We rest in the obedience of Christ. We rest in the righteousness of Christ.

Augustine said, "You made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless till they rest in you." Spurgeon wrote:

Do not tell me that there is no rest for us till we get to heaven. We who have believed in Jesus enter into rest even now. Why should we not do so? Our salvation is complete. The robe of righteousness in which we are clad is finished. The atonement for our sins is fully made. We are reconciled to God, beloved of the Father, preserved by his grace, and supplied by his providence with all that we need. We carry all our burdens to him and leave them at his feet. We spend our lives in his service, and we find his ways to be ways of pleasantness, and his paths to be paths of peace. Oh, yes, we have found rest unto our souls! I recollect the first day that I ever rested in Christ, and I did rest that day. And so will all of you who trust in Jesus as I trusted in him.

Now, with that said, the church disagrees—meaning Bible-believing, gospel-embracing Christians disagree—on whether the old covenant command to observe a Sabbath rest one day every week is binding for new covenant Christians. In other words, are we to rest on one day in the same way that old covenant Israel was commanded to rest? I want to be clear: This is not one of those issues we need to divide over in the church. This doesn't separate Christians from non-Christians or Bible-believing Christians from Bible-denying Christians—as if there were any such thing. That doesn't exist.

So, to sum this up, some say yes and others say no. This is revolutionary for you, wasn't it? And I don't have time to go into all the arguments, but there are verses in your Study Guide for both. Some would say yes, one day a week we should rest just like they did in the Old Testament. Others say no. The New Testament doesn't ever command Christians to observe

the Sabbath day like they did in the Old Testament. In Christ, we have entered into a Sabbath rest, so every day is a day of rest in that sense.

Now, even among those who think the old covenant command still applies today, there is more debate on which day of the week the Sabbath should be observed. Saturday, Sunday, any day? And then some even there—okay, Saturday people, Sunday people, or any day people—disagree on what is permissible to do on that Sabbath day. What level of work can you do on the Sabbath? And what level of recreation is permissible on the Sabbath? So I don't know how many potential positions that makes, but that makes a lot of different positions.

Regardless, what I want us to see is the church agrees on two main things. One, we all celebrate blood-bought rest at the start of every week. Now I even use the word "start" here based on Acts 27, "*On the first day of the week,*" when the pattern we see in the New Testament church were gathered. But I'm not saying it has to be Sunday even necessarily. We've got brothers and sisters who are in Muslim contexts who oftentimes gather together for worship at the start of the week to celebrate Christ, and they do that on Friday in different contexts. So I'm not trying to be even legalistic about that right there. But we set aside—we do, as followers of Christ—we set aside a day to celebrate together the rest we've found in Christ.

And then all Bible-believing Christians agree that we prioritize God-glorifying rest over the course of every week. So even those who would say the old covenant command is not binding on New Testament Christians still don't think, "Okay, then, that means I need to work seven days a week and all day long and never rest." Because that clearly doesn't square with Scripture.

Rest in Our Lives Today ...

So that leads us to think about how does Scripture call us to look at rest in our lives today? God has designed us to rest in many ways, according to His Word. He's called us to rest and designed us to rest from physical labor. So, even if the Old Testament command is not still binding in the same way it was then, we still have God's own pattern of working six days and then resting. So He rested from physical labor. So we have this pattern in God Himself. We're created in His image.

Now, rest from physical labor should not be excessive. Scripture explicitly warns against laziness in places like Proverbs 6 and Proverbs 24. And then, it shouldn't be excessive, but at the same time, rest from physical labor is definitely essential. So we need to rest from physical labor at some point, in some way. We also rest from fear, worry and anxiety. Restlessness shows a lack of faith in God. Rest itself is a sign of trust. Psalm 37 is a command. "*Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him.*" "*Do not be anxious about anything.*" (Philippians 4:6-7) We must in a sense work to rest like this.

"Rest in the Lord," Spurgeon said. "What? Where? When? Why? How? This ... is a most divine precept, and requires much grace to carry it out. To hush the spirit, to be silent before the Lord, to wait in holy patience the time for clearing up the difficulties of Providence—that is what every gracious heart should aim at." This is only possible in Christ. So, see the cross of Christ and rest in your life, and rest in Christ, even amidst trial and trouble. Psalm 116, in the middle of storms raging around us, God's design is to rest in Him.

So God's design is to rest in many ways, and God has designed our rest for many purposes. Think of all that rest does by God's good design. Rest refreshes us. The Bible says in Genesis 31 that God rested and was refreshed. Jesus and His disciples did the same in Mark

6. Second, rest restores us. Psalm 23, "He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul." And then rest reminds us that sleep is a gift. Sleep is a gift from a gracious God to us. Psalm 127:2 says, "He gives to his beloved sleep." It's a gift.

It reminds us that our sustenance comes from God. "I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me." (Psalm 3:5) Sleep is a daily reminder from God that we're not God. We're not God. And this is a reminder we need every single day. And as a result we can rest with trust in His ultimate sovereignty. When you lay down and go to sleep, you put yourself in a very vulnerable position. You're losing control in a sense. It's not just of your body, but your mind. And you're quite literally resting in God. Piper put it this way:

Sleep is a parable that God is God and we are mere men. God handles the world quite nicely while a hemisphere sleeps. Sleep is like a broken record that comes around with the same message every day: Man is not sovereign. Man is not sovereign. Man is not sovereign. Don't let the lesson be lost on you. God wants to be trusted as the great worker who never tires and never sleeps. He is not nearly so impressed with our late nights and early mornings as he is with the peaceful trust that casts all anxieties on him and sleeps.

Ah, you're wanting to lie down in your bed right now. And listen to this. We rest with hope in His ultimate salvation. So the Bible uses sleep as a metaphor for death for a reason. So one day your body and your mind will stop and rest for good on the earth. It could be tonight. It could be tomorrow. And for some that's overwhelmingly frightening—unless we come to the point where we're resting with hope in His ultimate salvation.

Jesus said in Revelation 22:20, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.'" So we respond, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" Look at this hymn that Charles Wesley wrote. He said:

Lord, I believe a rest remains
To all Thy people known,
A rest where pure enjoyment reigns,
And Thou art loved alone.

A rest where all our soul's desire
Is fixed on things above;
Where fear, and sin, and grief expire,
Cast out by perfect love.

So he's looking forward to eternal rest. But then he comes back to the everyday, and he says:

O that I now the rest might know,
Believe, and enter in!
Now, Savior, now the power bestow,
And let me cease from sin.

Remove this hardness from my heart,
This unbelief remove:
To me the rest of faith impart,
The Sabbath of Thy love.

Because of the cross of Christ by which He saves us from our sin, fills us with His Spirit, there is rest for us to experience on this earth every moment of every day, a rest that will last for all of eternity. We need the grace of God to flow out toward us, and it's that which we live on—His streams of mercy that just keep coming and coming and coming. And we're prone to wander every day, but He's constraining us by His grace every day. And in the end we're looking forward to eternal rest with You.

So this is how we'll close. So thanks for being a part of this time. May God give us grace to apply the cross to every single detail of our lives and to proclaim the cross in every single day of our lives.

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