

You Need a Mission

Good morning everyone, it's so great to see you all. Thank you for joining us today to learn from God's word. If you're joining us online, welcome to you as well. I'm so glad you decided to check us out. Just to catch everyone up to where we are today, we are on our 5th week of our series on "Work." What does the Bible say about work, about the way we view it or approach it. Last week we talked about the importance of *sabbath* in our lives and the role it plays in our interactions with work. I think this series has been super helpful for me personally and I think there's a lot to be learned from it. If you haven't caught up on the series, I would strongly encourage you to head to the website or wherever you get podcasts and give the rest of it a listen.

A little about me since it's been a minute since I've been up here teaching: my name is Eric and I am a pastor-in-training here at City Church. If I haven't had the chance to meet you I would love to do that. I grew up overseas because my parents worked for a mission organization. I work full time for the YMCA so I do not actually *work* at City Church. That will be relevant later on in the message today. I'd love to talk more about myself, and maybe we can chat later if you have any questions or you want to introduce yourself, like I said, I would love to meet you. That being said, go ahead and grab your bible and we will get started.

So if you've been coming around for a while or listening through this series, I think a lot of you probably, even if fleeting, have thought at some point *surely* we would be talking about **work** and **mission**, or being on mission in your workplace. Mission, if you're unfamiliar, is just the word most Christians use for the idea that we are called to **share** the good news of Jesus with other people. So if you've made it this far into our series and you're still listening, odds are you probably saw this sermon coming and you were still willing to show up, which is great! Or maybe you were rolling the dice and hoping you wouldn't be listening to this one in particular, but I pray you stick around if that's you. My point with all this is that I feel like most followers of Jesus have no issue at all with the concept of being on mission at work. People are on board with the idea, but at the same time I think we see a huge lack of people being missional and sharing the good news of Jesus in their places of work. So that leads me to conclude that somewhere in the middle there is a disconnect. I really feel like while followers of Jesus would say they agree that work and mission should go hand in hand, a lot of people just need some help with the practicals. Many people just need some input or some encouragement or some challenging to actively live on mission where they are working.

So if you have a bible with you, go ahead and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. We are going to start there soon, but I wanted to take a second to speak into some things I've noticed in the Church at large in the U.S. I think when people hear the word "mission," a lot of the time it's this idea of going overseas and doing a service project and then hanging out at a resort for a couple days. It may not be that way for everyone, but I've scarcely heard the word "mission" mentioned in the Church without it being paired with the word "trip." As if the mission is always somewhere you aren't. But biblically, that is not the case. Followers of Jesus are meant to be living their lives in a way that communicates they have been *transformed* by something outside of themselves. They have been changed in some way and their lives should reflect that. Mission is a way of life for followers of Jesus, not a singular trip or conversation. It's something that should define all our interactions; our interactions at our place of *work* especially.

This concept applies across the board for whatever our "work" is as followers of Jesus. All of our *work* has so much more potential than just being a thing we do every day. No follower of Jesus *just* works at a bank. None *just* teach kindergarten. None *just* raise children. None *just* bag groceries. For any of this to take hold or make sense or be challenging I need everyone to understand one incredibly important fact: **All followers of Jesus have the same job, we just get our paychecks from different places.** This is outlined very clearly in one of the core, baseline passages of scripture for viewing our work as mission in 2 Corinthians 5. I hope you've had time to get there, we're going to jump right in to [2 Corinthians 5 starting in verse 17](#):

[\[17\] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.](#) [If you like to underline things in your Bible, go ahead and underline that word "anyone" - we are going to come back to that in a second. Keep reading with me] [The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. \[18\] All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;](#) [So a quick aside: I've heard a lot of people say things like "you're in ministry, it's easier for you to tell people about Jesus," or, "if I was in ministry I would be so much more inclined to tell people about Jesus." I've got good news for you! If you are a follower of Jesus, if you've been made new through Jesus, you are now officially in ministry. We can coordinate getting you some kind of certificate if it helps. Okay, back to it, "Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation..."] [\[19\] that is, in Christ/ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. \[20\] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.](#)

First thing: notice who he is addressing here. If who is in Christ? If pastors are in Christ? If international missionaries are in Christ? No, he says if *anyone* is in Christ. That's broad and authoritative to say the least. *Anyone* who is in Christ is an ambassador for Him. So that word "ambassador" is a pretty significant word. Paul could have said something like "representatives for Christ" or "raving fans for Christ," but he didn't. He used this phrase that describes someone who is an official or accredited spokesperson. Someone who goes out and officially represents the person who sent them. In the biblical context, this is someone who is authorized to speak as God's diplomatic appointee, functionally. Followers of Jesus are ministers of reconciliation. Now, like I said before, this is not a call exclusively to people who are working full time in ministry related roles. This is a command to the follower of Jesus who works at Sam's Club, or Starbucks, or Walmart, or a corporate job, or raising a family, or serving food. This isn't a suggestion or a hope, this is a *command* to followers of Jesus. I know some people listening today need to hear that **God put you in your role so people there might come to know him.**

So real quick, take a look back at the beginning of the verses we just read. The last half of verse 17 says:

"The old has passed away, the new has come."

That sentence has a lot going on. It may seem brief, and that's because it is. But this sentence at its core is the whole story of the gospel. This is the exact thing Paul is telling us to be proclaiming. This is the message of reconciliation. All of us, no matter where you are now in your life, were spiritually dead in our sin at one point. We did not have a hope and we had no power to change that situation. Dead bones *can't* raise themselves. But God, because he deeply loved His creation sent His son to die on our behalf and take the punishment for us, the punishment we deserved. And Jesus went to his grave, separated from the Father. But after 3 days, Jesus walked out of that grave and he left death defeated and locked inside. When he did that, he made a way for us to be reconciled to him. He made a way for us to move from spiritual death into life. That's what this sentence is saying. The old is gone for followers of Jesus. We have been born into a new life. That's what we're talking about here. This is the message of reconciliation, and people need to know about it. And I want to make sure you are hearing what I am saying by breaking down what I'm *not* saying. I am not saying, "hey, say these words in a prayer and you get a free pass to Heaven." I'm not saying, "I'm a pretty good person, accept Jesus and he'll make you a pretty good person too!" No, what I *am* saying is through Jesus, there is a way to make you new. Jesus gives us a way to

transform who we are at our deepest level. A way to be reconciled back to the Father as it was intended. It's not a box to be checked or something to be achieved, it's a definition for your life. So I want to spend some time unpacking what it looks like to share it with other people.

For some of us in the room, this may be the first time you've ever considered your workplace as being a primary place to put the gospel on display. For others, you may have thought this or known it for a long time and you've been actively and faithfully pursuing people in those settings to try to show them the love of Jesus and that is awesome. For a lot of people, though, I feel like you would agree with this concept but just be wondering how on earth someone goes about doing it. Am I supposed to be the guy at work who leaves "Turn or Burn" tracts in all my coworkers' mailboxes? Does that mean I have to make sure everyone sees my Bible sitting open on my desk every day? Does this mean I have to come up with really creative, super awkward ways to bring up Jesus in casual conversations? It can feel incredibly daunting to think about being on mission in your workplace and that's where I want to spend the bulk of the time today. I want us to take some time to talk about what it can look like for a follower of Jesus to faithfully be a minister of reconciliation wherever they are. I think it is done primarily in two main ways and we'll spend some time breaking down each into more practical steps. These are two significant but simple categories. Don't get hung up on how complex these ideas are, I promise we can understand them together. We can be missional in our work through **showing people the gospel** and **telling people the gospel**.

Showing

So one of the key ways you can be missional at work is by showing people you are a follower of Jesus. Sounds simple enough, right? But the big question is *how*? How do we practically show people in our day to day life? I'll be totally honest with you, while it may not always be easy and will most certainly take effort, the possibilities are endless.

One super practical way to love someone around you is to be interested in their lives. I don't mean those interactions where all you do is the "how was your weekend? Good? Yeah, not long enough, haha!" and check the box of interacting with a human for the day. I mean actually taking an interest in someone's life. Asking them intentional questions about their interests, their goals, their life outside of the context where you normally see them. Ask them questions and follow up with them. If you say you care about someone then show them you care about them. **Like I said at the beginning, I am not employed at City Church, I have a full time job during the week. Just this week at**

work I have been able to have conversations with coworkers and I know that one has a family member in the hospital and is struggling with it. One is going through some really rough things with a spouse and they are taking active steps to try to work on things but it's incredibly difficult. One is dreaming of traveling the world and making plans to try to achieve that when we can travel again. And I get to keep those conversations going. I get to ask how their family is doing and I can be excited with them about seeing the world and share my experiences of traveling. But I can only do those things because I know some of what is happening in their lives, and I can only do that because I asked. I care about the people I'm around and I am trying to show them that, and our relationships are deepening because of it. Now, hear me say this. There are days where I don't say a word more than absolutely necessary to get the job done. There are days when I get super frustrated with coworkers and want nothing to do with them, so I am by no means saying I do this perfectly. But we have to actively pursue opportunities to show people we care about them.

Another super practical way to show people you care and show the love of Jesus is to invite people to do stuff outside of work. Invite people into real life. Another way to make this even easier, and arguably better depending on the way people interact with new folks, is to invite them to meet your friends. Invite them to hang out with people in your LifeGroup. This is the exact reason we encourage our groups to have weekly rhythms outside of sundays and outside of homes so that there are easy, non-threatening environments to invite people to. Going up to a coworker and saying "do you want to come to my church small group Thursday night? It's at some guy's house you don't know. Sometimes we talk about our deepest fears and shame and stuff and someone will probably cry, pretty cool stuff" would be a pretty tough sell. Going up to a coworker and saying "do you want to go to trivia at this brewery on Wednesday? It's exactly what it sounds like" is a great way to develop a relationship. I'll also say this: it might also mean becoming interested in what they are interested in even if you aren't interested in it in the first place. I mean if Daryl down the hall loves birdwatching and you're still trying to figure out if you are even sure if birds are real, it wouldn't kill you to take 30 minutes out of the 4 hours you spend on Netflix or gaming to read about warblers and kestrels. And in case you're wondering, yes I did look up birds for this, and yes those are both actual bird names. Taking interest in someone else's interests is a massively practical way to show them that you care about them and care about building a relationship with them.

One last quick practical way to show people the love of Jesus is to pray. To pray for them, to pray for what's going on in their lives, to pray for boldness in yourself to go out of your way to engage people. And pray for God to create opportunities for you to do all

these things. One of the most important things to remember when we are thinking through what it looks like to show people what being a follower of Jesus is like is the specific end goal. What are we actually trying to accomplish? What do we want people to come away with? When we understand this idea, the practical outworkings start to become more straightforward. Our goal in this should be that when people see us as followers of Jesus and the way we interact with others, they should be thinking, “that person really cares. They care about me, about her, about him, about working hard, about my life. I wonder why.” Growing up, like I said my parents were international missionaries in South Asia for 13 years and obviously they talked about the concept of mission a lot. One thing always stood out the most to me though. When talking about *showing* people about the Lord my dad would always say, “you may be the only picture of Jesus someone ever sees.” It has always stayed in my head that one of the most important ways to communicate the love of Jesus is in the way we interact with people.

Now, maybe you're hearing all this and going “honestly, I would **love** if I interacted with enough people regularly to show people the gospel.” Maybe for you, you spend most of your time in your home office, or locked in an office or storage closet at work, or some other setting where you don't get to interact with hardly anyone through your work. Maybe you're a stay at home parent, and you're thinking “yeah I don't really get the opportunity to interact with non-Christians.” And to be sure, some of us are going to have to put a little more thought and creativity into it. Teachers for example: most of your interactions are going to be with children who, at least if you teach in public schools, you can't talk to about Jesus. You might have to go more out of your way to build those relationships and have gospel conversations. Maybe that means grading papers or making lesson plans together with other teachers, or maybe going out of your way on weekends and evenings to connect with some of those people. People whose role is mostly at home; a stay-at-home parent for example: odds are pretty good there are other stay-at-home parents in your city. And odds are pretty good there are social media pages or get-togethers that would provide a lot of context and common ground to build with others. Also, children aren't born Christian, so you probably have some little non-Christians running around the house and teaching them is very much a mission. It will look different in different contexts, as it should. And it's not always going to be easy. We need to be willing to think critically to find ways for it to take place where we are.

And all of this, regardless of our roles or functions, creates opportunities for our next practical which is **telling people about the gospel.**

Telling

A lot of the ways people are going to know something is different about us as followers of Jesus is in the way we live. Our lives should be markedly different than the world around us. A huge piece of what it looks like to show people the love of Christ is through some of the things we just talked about. But the nature of the Gospel is that it is *good news*. And I have some breaking news about *news*. It can only be heard if someone says it. Paul in Romans 10:14 puts it like this, we'll put it on the screen:

"[14] How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?"

It sounds a little elementary when you think about it, but incredibly profound at the same time. Paul is right, how will people hear about something if someone doesn't tell them? How will your coworkers hear about what Jesus has done in *your* life if you don't tell them? How will they know how you've started to experience some freedom from addiction or depression or anxiety because of the identity you've found and the rest you've experienced for the first time? How will they know the ways that only Jesus could have sustained you in the midst of what you were experiencing, and he *did*? Steve from HR isn't going to tell them for you.

I get it can feel incredibly intimidating. And speaking for myself personally, I feel the most overwhelmed by the idea of doing this when I find myself thinking how much it could affect me. Does that make sense? When I think about how my social image might change because of talking about Jesus. Or when I think about how this person *might* look at me or think about me or *talk* about me if I have this conversation. Notice how most of the times I get hung up on how difficult or intimidating it might be, those are the same times I'm making the gospel of Jesus all about me. I'm boiling the eternal story of the saving grace of our Heavenly father down to how someone *might* respond to what I'm saying. To put it another way, I am making my personal comfort and reputation more important than that person encountering the God of the universe. And let me just go ahead and tell you, you might have a stellar reputation, but I can definitively tell you that it is not more important than someone coming to know Jesus. I think it says a lot about my view of the Father in those moments. I will also say this: in my opinion, a lot of people feel intimidated by telling people about Jesus because they honestly feel like they don't practically know what to do. I want to give a couple quick examples that are by no means

exhaustive to help paint a little piece of the picture. I want these examples to serve as a helpful guide and on-ramp to start shaping our minds to think in gospel-centered, outward focused ways.

Every follower of Jesus has a *testimony* or their own story. Everyone has unique experiences and lenses through which they view the world because of their life story. And all of you have a story. You can tell people your story. You *should* tell people. What seems like a more tangible way of understanding the transformative power of Jesus: telling someone a passage from scripture that talks about how Jesus saves or telling someone, “hey, for decades I was controlled by my desire to be praised by others and my need for attention and my desires. I was being crushed under the weight of needing their approval to have any worth at all. And here’s how Jesus has given me a new identity and what that means for me now.” Your story has power because it’s a story of being raised from death to life. No one has ever been more dead than another person. No one’s story of being saved by Jesus is insignificant compared to someone else’s. Jesus raised you into spiritual life from death and that *is* significant. Another pointer: you can ask people about their spiritual background and talk about your’s. It doesn’t matter what someone’s beliefs are, everyone has some kind of spiritual background. Whether that’s anti-spiritual or hyper-spiritual or anywhere in the middle, you have a background. And that opens so many doors for spiritual conversations. Because it is a *spiritual conversation*. Last example for this part before we move on: you can use truth from scripture to try to encourage people when they are having a hard time at work or a hard time in life. You can share something that was encouraging to you from scripture. You can use the words of *Jesus himself* to encourage someone. That’s not a bad resource. You have access to literal quotes from the son of God. Those words can stir things in people’s hearts.

Whenever I think about this idea of telling people about Jesus, it always reminds me of a quote by Penn Jillette. Penn is a well-known magician and a very outspoken atheist. During an interview they were talking about the idea of *proselytizing* which is the idea of trying to convert someone to a religion. When talking about it, this is what Penn said:

“I’ve always said that I don’t respect people who don’t proselytize. I don’t respect that at all. If you believe that there’s a heaven and a hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life or whatever, and you think that, well, it’s not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward... How much do you have to hate somebody to *not* proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?”

It is always incredibly convicting for me when I think about it this way. He puts it strongly, and in all honesty I would say appropriately so. We have this message, this transformative power we've experienced. Why on earth would we keep it to ourselves?

As we wrap up, I wanted to give us 2 important things to keep in mind when thinking about all of this. The first is that **showing** people and **telling** people about Jesus always go hand in hand. If all we ever do is **show** people the gospel, but never **tell** them about it, people are gonna walk away going "man, what a nice guy. What a nice lady she is." They're just going to end up thinking we're just some sort of miraculously compassionate person the likes of Gandhi and Mr. Rogers. And believe it or not, that's not the point. **The point isn't that people would just find us to be pleasant people, but that they would realize that we are different because of the good news of Jesus.**

But at the same time, if all we ever do is **tell** people about Jesus, without ever embodying the implications of it, we might be no better than a screaming street preacher. We're just a clanging cymbal, telling people that something is important but never showing them **why** it's important. We end up **telling** them that the gospel is the most important thing in the universe, but never **showing** them any proof that that's true.

And the other thing we need to keep in mind with all of this is the main reason for doing it. We've talked about this a little, but the reason we as followers of Jesus show people the love of Jesus and tell people about it is because we should want to share what we have experienced. We want other people to have the opportunity to be set free from the weight of sin and shame, we want other people to have a *hope* for the future. An assurance of what Christ did for us. And we do it because we have been tasked by our Father in Heaven to be His ambassadors. We are meant to be ministers of reconciliation. And as followers of Jesus, our goal is faithfulness, not results. Our job is to faithfully pursue and love and pray and ask the Holy Spirit to move. I know someone listening today needs to hear this, whether you are feeling defeated and discouraged or you are feeling prideful and over-inflated or in the middle and you just need to be reminded: you cannot save people. That is not your job. And thank God for that. We are free to pursue people and build relationships and love people imperfectly because it is the Lord's power that saves us that will work in others. Paul said it well in 1 Corinthians 3:6:

"[6] I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."

God is actively working through His people and the Holy Spirit to grow His kingdom and to see more and more become reconciled to Him. We are God's hands and feet in this world. We as the Church are the means by which His name will be made known. We are part of God's plan to save the world and we get to participate in that with Him and with each other. One last thing to consider as we close out: God's mission is huge and it's amazing and we are participants in it all. It means nothing we are doing as followers of Jesus is wasted. Just because you aren't in full time ministry or leading a non-profit that is digging wells all across the world does not mean your role is any less significant. Jesus is your savior and all He's asking is for you to live faithfully on mission. Even if you feel like it is insignificant, God can move. God can work through you where you are. I want everyone to consider this question this week: would you stay at a job you did not enjoy when there were other options popping up but God has been giving you opportunities and favor with current coworkers? Think of it this way: if the Holy Spirit told you today "I know you don't like your job, I know you'd love to take these other opportunities, but I have a **mission** for you, with this coworker, and I want you to stay where you are now for that reason"...would you do it? Would you be willing to even consider it? I think it's something for all of us to consider.

What I want to do right now to wrap everything up is just to try to give some really practical "**next steps**." I know broad-sweeping concepts can be difficult to connect to everyday, real life. I want everyone to either grab a pen and paper or your phone to take notes and write these things down: **Write down the name of one person you come into contact with on a regular basis through your work.** Could be a client you interact with regularly right now, could be a coworker, a colleague, a boss, an employee. Like I said before, even if you're a stay-at-home parent, there are opportunities for mission for you throughout our city. Write down the name of that person, or maybe you wanna be bold and write down several. Next, **write down one way you can "show" them the gospel.** Maybe that's asking them out to lunch this week. Maybe that's asking them how they're doing with all the craziness going on in the world right now. Maybe it's taking an interest in one thing you know they're interested in. Maybe it's you or your LifeGroup meeting a practical need they have right now. Whatever it is, make a list of at least one accomplishable way that you could "show" them an implication of the gospel this week. Lastly, **write down one way you could "tell" them the gospel in the near future.** Maybe you already know them fairly well, and it would not be weird at all for you to just share a little of your story at some point with them. Maybe you ask them if they've ever had any interactions (positive or negative) with church or religion, and ask that God would use that to create an opportunity to share some. Maybe it's that you know them **really** well, and they've shared with you some specific ways that they're struggling, and

you know **exactly** how the gospel brings hope into their situation, but just haven't worked up the courage to say something, and maybe this week you pray for the courage to say something.

Right now, I would love for everyone to take just a little time to pray for God to *empower* you to do the things we've talked about. Pray for boldness and for opportunities. Pray *specifically* for the people around you every day and the interactions and conversations you could have. And lastly, pray for the Holy Spirit to work and move and make effective those efforts.