

VOCATIONAL STEWARDSHIP
FOR THE COMMON GOOD

K I N G D O M
C A L L I N G

Amy L. Sherman

Foreword by Reggie McNeal

Afterword by Steven Garber

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residents in so-called helping initiatives. As Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert explain so well in their recent book, sometimes such “helping” actually hurts.⁷ The biblical approach is one of shared power, mutual respect and equal dignity.

As in pathway two, believers with significant vocational power to draw on must do so without an inflated sense of their importance and with genuine regard for the different skill sets that those they are serving bring to the table. Leaders of a targeted neighborhood initiative must engage the residents of that neighborhood, learning what *their* desires and dreams for the community are. Community residents must be involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of the initiative. Church leaders mobilize parishioners to come alongside local residents to assist them in advancing their dreams by drawing on their own particular vocational assets, knowledge and networks. Similarly, when the focus is on an issue rather than a place, Christians stewarding their vocational power should partner with the people most affected by that issue and seek *their* input into diagnosis, prescription, implementation and evaluation.

Finally, church leaders on pathway four can also help congregants to avoid the temptations of paternalism or superiority by taking care to point out the *mutually* beneficial character of ministry. They should emphasize that both sides can learn much from one another and that God’s desire is to see both transformed.

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Pathway 1

BLOOM WHERE YOU’RE PLANTED

The church exists for the mission, for the sake of the world.

Yet it is organized to build itself up as an institution.

It blesses the work its members do within the institution but pays no attention to the work they do “outside” the church.

REV. DAVIDA CRABTREE

In 1985, Tom Hill’s company, Kimray, was experiencing hard times. The Oklahoma City firm, which produces sophisticated control gauges and thermostats for oil and gas companies, was in a bust cycle. This was not unusual in that industry. In fact, several years earlier, Kimray had gone through an even worse time. Hill remembered that recession all too well. Back then, he had allowed the firm to grow too large during a boom cycle, not placing funds in reserve. When the market tanked, the subsequent layoffs he was forced to make were gut wrenching.

This was an experience Hill never wanted to repeat. He vowed then and there to God that he would operate Kimray debt-free in the future. “We put back reserves in good times to carry us over during the lean times,” Hill says. “That commitment alone enables us to operate successfully under varied economic climates.”¹ When the bust of 1985 arrived, Hill found himself with a financial reserve but more employees than he had work for. His response was that of a *tsaddiq*.

Out of his strong commitment to his city and his employees, Hill contacted Oklahoma City Mayor Ron Norrick to ask if Kimray could put its employees to work for Oklahoma City. Hill recalls,

It took us about two and a half months to make that arrangement, but [we] did, and we also put employees to work in other companies. We had employees who worked for Macklanberg-Duncan and for several non-profits, some where [sic] they could be paid, some at minimum wage, some in jobs with no pay, and we would make up the difference in their wages. It resulted in 92 employees working for somebody else for a period of 18 months, and we paid the difference in their salary or paid all of their salary.

By 1987, Kimray's business had picked back up, and Hill brought all ninety-two employees back to work at the plant.

Kimray's unusual response to the 1985 recession has not been forgotten. In an interview years later, Hill said, "Many of the employees we have now were here then. They remember that [time], and they appreciate it." For his part, Hill says he's just thankful that Kimray was able to demonstrate "our commitment to our employees and our community. . . . Our goal is not just to sell products. Our goal is to provide jobs to the community, to be part of the community, and to have an impact on the community."

Christian marketplace professionals like Hill are not born; they are made. The Word and the Spirit of God form them into people who look out for the common good, rather than focus exclusively on themselves. The nurture of believers like Hill, whose faith shapes their daily work in profound and creative ways, is a primary task of the church.

In this chapter we'll examine what church leaders around the country are doing to disciple these kinds of workers. Without a vision, the Scriptures tell us, the people perish. The stories here about church leaders and church members can help fuel a vision for raising up *tsaddiqim* who advance the kingdom in and through their daily work.

NURTURING *TSADDIQIM* WHO BLOOM

Three key commitments mark congregational leaders who are effective in encouraging their members to steward their vocations for the common good: affirmation, education and support (see table 10.1). A variety of churches around the country offer insights for engaging in these three activities.

Table 10.1. How to Nurture Congregants Who Bloom

Affirmation	Education	Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preach the missional value of daily work • Use workplace illustrations in sermons • Visit members at their workplace • Use "vocational" prayers • Commission laypeople for work in society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer work-related short courses • Hold gifts discovery retreats • Host book groups • Host special faith/work conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor career counseling • Partner with WorkLife, Inc. • Organize vocational groups • Provide tools

Affirmation. Nurturing the *tsaddiqim* to bloom at their job begins with solid preaching based on the theological convictions examined in previous chapters. At The Falls Church, a large Anglican congregation just outside the Washington, D.C., Beltway, Rector John Yates recognizes the vital importance of affirming parishioners in their daily ministry on the job. Yates believes that the church in America today resides in Babylon and that the prophetic word to "seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile" (Jer 29:7) is the relevant paradigm for ministry. In such a context, affirming and encouraging the marketplace vocations of the laity is more important than ever. As Yates advised a group of seminary graduates in a commencement address in 2008,

God has called us to Babylon. This is our home for now, and this is where we are called to build disciples and build churches. God will give you people to shepherd and serve, and they may actually be more effective for Christ's kingdom, and influential in our culture as laymen, than you or I. Encourage them, believe in them, pray for them. Be patient with them. Don't attempt to insulate them from Babylon, but tell them they are Christ's seeds, sent out to produce fruit, and they will.²

Congregational leaders at churches from a variety of denominations share this perspective and this commitment to pulpit leadership that affirms members' work in the world. At San Diego's Harbor Presbyterian Church, leaders say simply, "We believe people can—and must—live out the Gospel in and through their work."³ At Grace DC, a Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., former associate pastor Duke

Kwon, who oversaw the congregation's vocational stewardship initiative, explains that,

theologically, we've always maintained what some refer to as a Kuyperian worldview, teaching the Lordship of Christ in all spheres of life, rejecting the secular/sacred divide. . . . That commitment in terms of ministry philosophy was in place from the beginning, and it [is] communicated through our classroom and pulpit ministries.⁴

In addition to preaching, other activities during the Sunday worship service also help affirm congregants in their daily labor. At The Falls Church, for example, in the congregational prayer every Sunday, four or five church members are specifically prayed for by name and vocation. At Colchester United Church of Christ in Colchester, Connecticut, Rev. Davida Crabtree took this notion of vocational prayers one step further. With help from selected parishioners, she composed a special prayer for each Sunday that focused on a different occupation. She placed a symbolic object from that career on the altar (such as a hair dryer for beauticians or various tools of the trade for carpenters or plumbers) and then offered a prayer for church members from that occupational field.⁵

Church leaders can also affirm their marketplace professionals by formally commissioning them during worship services. Many churches currently commission missionaries or laypeople who teach Sunday school. That's not a bad thing, but in the absence of similar kinds of commissioning of laity in the marketplace, it reinforces the message that only "spiritual" or "church" work is truly missional. So, at The Falls Church, Rev. Yates commissions various laypeople in all their diverse callings in the marketplace.⁶ Meanwhile, inside the D.C. Beltway, Church of the Savior has developed special liturgies for ordaining church members for their work in society.⁷

Pastor Tom Nelson from Christ Community Church in Leawood, Kansas, has been preaching on faith/work integration for a decade. To affirm his congregants, he deliberately uses workplace illustrations in sermons and invites testimonies from marketplace members. He and his staff also visit church members at their work sites. "We want to understand their world," he explains.⁸

Nelson's intentional affirmation and frequent preaching on vocational themes has helped businessman Dave Kiersznowski and his wife, Demi,

think more creatively and intentionally about how they can advance foretastes of the kingdom through their business, DEMDACO. Dave reports that Nelson challenged them to think about what their business would look like if they were "viewing all of life through a biblical lens."⁹

So, when the Kiersznowskis were planning the design of their new company headquarters, they began to think deeply about that physical space where their employees spent so much time. They determined that the new office should be "a place that's beautiful, creative, pleasing, and full of light."¹⁰ They also wanted a family-friendly workspace. So the new DEMDACO headquarters included a room dedicated to nursing moms and a room filled with games, videos and arts-and-crafts supplies. The latter is intended to encourage parents who work for the company to have their kids visit them at lunchtime.

Nelson's strong preaching on vocational stewardship also led Dave Kiersznowski to reexamine his company's health insurance policy. He realized that it was "generous to those who wanted to start a family through natural birth," but didn't have benefits for those who wanted to adopt. So DEMDACO "instituted an adoption aid program as a way of meeting the needs of widows and orphans."¹¹

Education. In addition to affirming their members' daily work, church leaders can promote "bloom" by offering adult education opportunities devoted to faith/work integration topics. Harbor Presbyterian, Grace DC and Christ Community Church have all hosted special weekend conferences and retreats, and two have sponsored multiweek adult education classes on the topic. These have ranged from the general, such as teaching on the biblical theology of work, to the specific, such as Harbor Church's mid-week course "StrengthsFinder for Job Seekers."

Under Crabtree's leadership, Colchester UCC sponsored gifts-discovery retreats, using formal assessment tools to help people better think about matching their personality and passions with job choices. The congregation also hosted a weekend conference titled Beyond Sunday Christianity, featuring well-known faith/work integration guru William Diehl.

At Grace DC, Pastor Kwon brought in Steve Garber, author of *The Fabric of Faithfulness*, to teach on vocation at a retreat. Afterward, Garber returned to the church to lead a five-session adult-education class for young professionals on Sunday mornings. As a follow-up, Kwon recruited

a lay member to host a discussion group on the book *Engaging God's World* by Cornelius Plantinga. "It is a wonderful book on the issue of vocation," Kwon explains, "and it's also just a wonderful review of the gospel story."

In Atlanta, Peachtree Presbyterian Church organizes its educational efforts to promote vocational stewardship under its *WorkLife* ministry. The church's website describes the philosophy animating the *WorkLife* initiative in this way:

For followers of Jesus, who we are is a person created in the image of God. Your work—whether you are in banking, or a homemaker, or a teacher, or in medicine, or retired, or whatever you do, is important to God. Your work, your life, is vitally important to God, and He invites you to partner with Him in that, just as he invites you to worship Him.¹²

In 2007, the *WorkLife* ministry launched its *My95* initiative. "No matter if you sign up for everything that moves here at Peachtree," Senior Pastor Victor Pentz explained to congregants, "at most you will spend about 5 percent of your waking hours here on these premises. Ninety-five percent of your life you spend in the world. Now this 5 percent is critical in giving us a navigation system to help orient us in the Christian life. But the scorecard is about the 95 percent we live out there in the world."¹³

The *My95* initiative has included direct teaching through sermons on the missional life and faith/work integration. *My95* small-group gatherings on Sunday nights with facilitated discussion segments allow congregants to analyze their spiritual gifts, discern their calling and identify the purposes for which God has gifted them. Additionally, video testimonies of individual congregants talking about how they serve God through their work help cast vision and build excitement.

Peachtree members like Bonnie Wurzbacher, senior vice president for Global Customer and Channel Leadership at The Coca-Cola Company, deeply appreciate Peachtree's *My95* program and the deliberate efforts that Pentz has taken to help marketplace leaders think theologically about their daily work. Raised in a Christian family—a preacher's kid and a granddaughter of overseas missionaries—Bonnie explains that she "grew up thinking that the way to best serve God is in 'full time Christian service' or by supporting your church."¹⁴ It took her years to overcome this sacred/secular dichotomy in her thinking.

Today Bonnie has a deep theology of how to serve God through busi-

ness, honed over years of personal study and rich conversations at Peachtree. "God has an important purpose for every institution," she says. "His purpose for business is to advance the economic well-being of communities throughout the world. And as the sole source of wealth creation, business enables every other institution to exist—schools, colleges, missions, churches, government, everything." This means that when a business fails, everything is impacted. Business "is very important, noble work throughout the world," she says.

Bonnie has been at Coke for twenty-six years now. This mega-corporation is active in two hundred countries, and the majority of the firm's profits remain in the local economies, through its franchised business model. Bonnie reports that economic impact studies show that "on average, for every one job we create directly, another twelve are created indirectly." She says enthusiastically, "I believe that I am helping to bring God's kingdom here on earth when I participate in a successful, ethical, effective business that helps communities improve their economic well-being and enables everyone associated with it to contribute to the larger good in the world."

Support. Some churches have found that gathering members into vocationally based small groups is a good strategy for helping believers deepen their understanding of and commitment to faith/work integration. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, a megachurch of more than four thousand attendees in New York City, leads the oldest initiative of this sort that I found in my research. Its Center for Faith and Work, launched in January 2003, seeks to "equip, connect, and mobilize our church community in their professional and industry spheres toward gospel-centered transformation for the common good."¹⁵ Founder Katherine Leary Alsdorf says the center's work is based on the "practical theory of cultural renewal [that] most [believers] will have our biggest impact through our work." Having a clear vision for that, as well as the perseverance required for being salt and light in secular work environments, requires support. "We wanted to create community," Katherine says. "People need to build relationships and help challenge one another."¹⁶

Today the center boasts fifteen vocationally based fellowships in which everyone from advertising executives to fashion designers to engineers to dancers can gather with peers for prayer, discussion and mutual support.

The newest group is for professionals working in international diplomacy.

The groups bring in older Christians with many years of experience wedding their faith to their work. They host dialogues, book studies, prayer groups and social events. Some seek to serve nonprofits through their specific vocational skills. All the groups aim at encouraging kingdom-oriented vocational stewardship for the common good. As the website for the Fashion Industry Group proclaims,

As Christians involved in the fashion industry, we hope to discover the bursts and inflections of God's restoring work through our creative and vocational endeavors. As we are being restored to His image by the Holy Spirit, both individually and in community, so He also desires to break forth His glory in new creative concepts, designs, partnerships and business models which will produce a foretaste of the coming Renewal of all things.¹⁷

It has been important to Katherine since the beginning that the groups not only talk about issues, but actually "do something." The most mature expression of that is seen in one of the oldest vocation groups, the Entrepreneurship Initiative, which sponsors an annual business-plan competition. Through it, entrepreneurs present their vision and implementation strategy for a venture, for-profit or non-profit, that has a high potential for "gospel-centered social impact" and growth and sustainability.¹⁸ Since the first competition in 2007, Redeemer has awarded twelve winners grants from five thousand to twenty-five thousand dollars.¹⁹

Churches much smaller than Redeemer have also implemented vocationally based groups. At Church of the Good Shepherd in Durham, North Carolina, Associate Pastor Sean Radke taught an adult education class on rejoicing the city over several weeks. Out of this grew interest in establishing vocational groups. Today church members in the legal field gather in the Justice Matters fellowship. Already this group has launched a free legal clinic in the city. A group for medical professionals and one for businesspeople are in formation.

In Washington, D.C., at Grace DC, vocational fellowships began organically when Kwon simply sent out a church-wide email asking if members had interest in meeting with peers in a similar vocational field. He says church leaders expected that perhaps they'd be able to launch two or three small groups as a pilot program. "But," he reports, "120 people ended up signing up for it!"²⁰

Churches can also support their marketplace professionals by partnering with parachurch organizations that focus on faith/work issues. In Atlanta, Peachtree Presbyterian pays for membership in the Crossroads Career Network. This allows parishioners who are seeking new jobs or desiring to explore alternative careers free access to Crossroads's training seminars, workbooks, and online resources and tools. Peachtree also partners with WorkLife, Inc., which offers an online coaching tool called Maestro WorkLife. Maestro provides marketplace professionals biblically based resources that address a variety of topics related to daily life on the job.

Wendy Clark from Durham has developed her understanding of business as mission by reading all the books she can get her hands on, attending weekend retreats and conferences, and dialoging with other marketplace Christians and thoughtful preachers like Sean Radke.

In 1994, at age twenty, Wendy launched a business called Carpe Diem Cleaning. Initially, she says, her sense of what it meant to be a Christian businessperson was that her firm could generate profits—and then she could give generously to missions. Only years later were her eyes opened to see that her business *itself* was a means of ministry.²¹

Today Wendy advances the kingdom value of compassion at Carpe Diem through her attentive care for her employees, mostly Latina moms. She has changed Carpe Diem's hours to accommodate their schedules "so that they aren't stressed out trying to get their kids to school, running late to work and getting home on time." Additionally, instead of holding training sessions in Durham, she takes the women—and their kids—to a family camp in the country. That way, the families get a vacation they probably wouldn't have had otherwise. Wendy says business "is not just about profits. It's about investing in the people who are working with us."

BLOOMING AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

Every church leader is familiar with the Great Commission of Matthew 28. Pastors typically preach this as the missionary call to go "to the ends of the earth" to spread the gospel. In his book *To Change the World*, James Davison Hunter offers a different spin on the Great Commission. He argues that it can also "be interpreted in terms of social structure." In

other words, the call to go is not only geographical but also sociological. He writes,

The church is to go into all realms of social life: in volunteer and paid labor—skilled and unskilled labor, the crafts, engineering, commerce, art, law, architecture, teaching, health, and service. Indeed, the church should be *sending people out* in these realms—not only discipling those in these fields by providing the theological resources to form them well, but in fact mentoring and providing financial support for young adults who are gifted and called into these vocations. When the church does not send people to these realms and when it does not provide the theologies that make sense of work and engagement in these realms, the church fails to fulfill the charge to “go into all the world.”²²

For church leaders who want their members to bloom, this is a vital perspective. It properly expands our understanding of the mission in the world that we are calling members to. That call is to go into every sector of society and there bring shalom.

To help their people catch and live that vision, congregational leaders should tell stories—lots of them. It’s imperative to make the call three-dimensional. I was once teaching third-graders about missions, and asked them if they knew what a missionary was. Their responses showed how their imaginations had been captured by missionary biographies, missions conference slide shows and the film *The End of the Spear*. “A missionary,” one little girl told me soberly, “is like a superhero.” We need to get to the point in our churches where even children can describe what “vocational stewardship” is. They will be able to do so if we regularly tell the stories of what it looks like in every sector of society.

Toward that end, below are some short stories to start with.

ACADEMIA: A HISTORIAN PROMOTES RACIAL RECONCILIATION

Historian Anne C. Bailey from SUNY-Binghamton focuses her research on what Christians in earlier ages did to combat the injustices and prejudices of their day, in the hope of learning lessons for today. Her research into European missionaries who sought freedom for individual slaves uncovered the uncomfortable truth that these Christians did not always leverage their power and privilege to the extent they could have to oppose the

slave trade. Bailey says, “It made me think in which ways I had other opportunities, other things that I can do, right here in the place that I stand, in order to effect change for the places that I care about.”²³

One thing Bailey cares a great deal about is racial reconciliation. “Coming to the Lord helped me to look at racial reconciliation issues in a different and [deeper] light,” she told an interviewer in 2008. “And frankly with much more hope.”²⁴ That hope has been bolstered further as she has learned of the tenacious and often generous faith of slaves. A believer in the concept of “living history”—that events of the past are connected to contemporary issues—Bailey chose as her research specialty African American history and African Diaspora studies.

In studies that led to her book *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and Shame* (Beacon Press, 2005), Bailey found that “a number of the slaves were deeply committed Christians.” Among some, love for Christ led them to a remarkable place: intercession for their masters. “So you have many ex-slaves talking about their masters, worrying about their nominal Christianity and wishing that they had a heart for a relationship with Jesus,” she reports. “They would pray for themselves, and they would also pray for their masters.”²⁵ Telling of their exemplary faith through her writings affords Bailey the opportunity to promote racial reconciliation among Christians today.

ART: A DANCER PROMOTES SOCIAL JUSTICE

Jeannine Lacquement has been dancing all her life. She did ballet as a little girl and jazz and modern dance in high school.²⁶ She then majored in dance at Goucher College in Maryland. For her, dance has always been about serving others. When working in a nursing home, Jeannine launched a therapeutic dance class. Later, as the live-in director of a residential facility for the handicapped, she involved several disabled kids in a dance troupe she formed.

Today, as head of the nonprofit youth development organization Children of the Light Dancers, Jeannine takes her troupe of teen dancers out to perform at nursing homes and inner-city Vacation Bible School programs. In 2007 and 2008, the troupe composed and danced a special “Seek Justice” performance to highlight the tragedy of international human trafficking and raise funds for International Justice Mission, a leading Chris-

tian human-rights organization. Two teens from the troupe, Megan Parker and Alys McAlpine, have also choreographed dances to dramatize the plight of terrorized children in Northern Uganda, who nightly flee to hide from forced recruitment into the Lord's Resistance Army.

BUSINESS: AN ENTREPRENEUR CREATES ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Milt Kuyers from Milwaukee has stewarded his vocational power to create economic opportunity for African Americans from a distressed inner-city neighborhood. Years ago he became president of Star Sprinkler, a struggling manufacturer of fire protection equipment. Milt already had more than two decades of business experience and was ready for the new challenge of turning a company around. Shortly after, a friend invited him to a conference on microenterprise. There, with several other Christian businesspeople, Milt dialogued late into the night about how God could use them to fight poverty at home and abroad. The conference put a fire in his heart. "For the first time he recognized that his position and skills as a businessperson were gifts from God, entrusted to him for a significant function in God's kingdom."²⁷

Milt decided to find an urban ministry partner with whom he could work to provide job opportunities for the unemployed. Several ministries turned him down, suspecting this white "do-gooder." Milt persevered. He met one day with Pastor James Carrington of Light House Gospel Chapel, a small congregation in one of the more dangerous neighborhoods of Milwaukee. He told Carrington of his dream to provide jobs to unemployed church members, who would then be supported and kept accountable by the rest of the congregation. After turning Milt down twice, Carrington finally said yes.

Carrington invited his parishioners to hear Milt out; nineteen showed up for the meeting, wanting jobs. It was "overwhelming," Milt remembers, but he dutifully took down everyone's name. And then God performed a miracle: he sent a huge surge in orders to Star Sprinkler. Milt was able to hire every person on his list. Light House Church rallied behind the newly employed, providing transportation and, later, childcare services. Over time, Carrington and Milt became friends, with the pastor contacting Milt whenever one of the church-member employees was having unusual

difficulties. Eventually, more than one hundred members of the church benefited from this unique partnership.²⁸ They weren't the only beneficiaries, Milt reports. "I've had more joy in that part of my life than any other time in my work life."²⁹

ENTERTAINMENT: A COMEDIAN PROMOTES TRUTH

Professional comedian Carlos Oscar is a salty presence in the entertainment industry. He integrates his faith into his work first by being a clean comic. He doesn't use profanity, and his humor isn't prurient and sexualized. "I think it makes me a more creative person because I don't have to go that route," he says.³⁰

Carlos's dream is to land a contract with a television studio for the production of a sitcom starring an Hispanic family, a sort of Latino version of the *The Cosby Show*. He wants to be able to portray family life in a healthy way, where the dad is "silly but not stupid" and where the kids are respectful. "Today," Carlos says, "television tends to show that the kids are in charge, to show the dumb father. . . . Kids look at these shows and they see grownups as just 'in the way' instead of being there to help them get to the next level in life." He wants to push against that trend by offering a truer, more godly version of parent-child relationships. "I believe God wants all of us to go into different areas of the world and to hopefully show some of the values, the Christian values, that we hold dear, because the entertainment industry is a very influential industry."

GOVERNMENT: A SENATOR ADVOCATES FOR THE VULNERABLE

Pia Cayetano, the youngest member of the Philippines Senate and one of only three women in that body, expresses her faith by being an advocate for the vulnerable.³¹ Trained as a lawyer, Cayetano first ran for political office in 2004. While in the senate, she has been a consistent voice for the underdog, particularly women, children and senior citizens. She has worked to pass legislation facilitating access by the poor to cheaper prescription medicines, to establish a Food and Drug Administration to promote food safety, and to bar the detention of indigent patients on account of unsettled medical bills.

Cayetano has been a vocal advocate for the protection of women and

children in war-torn areas, particularly against the problem of sexual abuse by peacekeeping forces. As she said in a 2005 interview with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, "There are specific sex crimes that happen to women and children which a lot of people either do not recognize, or just turn a blind eye to. In a lot of areas the situation arises where such crimes are almost tolerated, because men are occupying the field and men have needs. It has to be made known that it is absolutely not acceptable."³²

FASHION: A DESIGNER PROMOTES CREATION CARE

Fashion designer Bora Aksu, a Briton from a Turkish background, made headlines when graduating in 2002 from the prestigious Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design. At its annual fashion show highlighting the work of its MA graduates, Aksu's designs garnered the loudest acclaim. This led to contracts with high-fashion companies like Dolce & Gabbana.³³

Today the successful designer promotes the kingdom value of creation care through his work. In 2007, Aksu joined People Tree, a leading voice internationally for eco-friendly fashion, as one of their signature designers.³⁴ From the beginning of his design career, he has made a point of using only natural fabrics—100-percent wool or silk—in his designs. Work with People Tree has enabled Aksu to branch into some new materials. "I was really excited about using People's Tree's handwoven and hand dyed fabrics," he says.³⁵ Now he will also be designing creations using recycled materials.

AGRICULTURE: A FARMER PROMOTES SAFETY IN HIS INDUSTRY

Chicken hatchery owner Jacob A. Schenk, a Pennsylvania Mennonite, launched his business at age thirty-two.³⁶ In multiple ways he worked for institutional transformation in his field. His business practices with vendors and suppliers, for example, were remarkable. Schenk paid above-market prices for the eggs and chickens he bought in order to get the highest-quality products and to ensure good relationships with his suppliers. He even had a policy of profit sharing with his suppliers, giving them bonuses according to how profitable his hatchery had been that year.

Schenk's unconventional practices gained him significant financial

success and great respect from those in his field. He then leveraged his platform to lead his industry in consumer and product safety. Well aware of the devastation that could be caused to farmers by contagious diseases among the livestock, he instituted annual flock-owners meetings, which drew chicken farmers from a wide region. Schenk would bring in special speakers to talk about innovations in ways of preventing disease and controlling its spread when chickens get sick.

BEYOND WEARING A WWJD BRACELET

The professionals profiled throughout this chapter demonstrate that it is possible for Christians in the marketplace to go far beyond the traditional ways of connecting faith and work (that is, practicing personal morality and studying the Bible with others in the workplace). Their stories point to several additional arenas where kingdom values can be advanced, such as how employees are selected, treated and managed; how a firm's profits are used; how an organization practices environmental stewardship; how its products are designed; how it relates to others in its industry; and how it contributes to its community. As church leaders encourage their members to wed their faith and work, they should challenge them to ponder this question: "In my current job, am I doing all I can to deploy my vocational power to promote kingdom foretastes? Am I truly blooming where I'm planted?"

BUT I'M NOT THE CEO

As church leaders share stories like those in this chapter, they may hear a question from some members: "Those people were high up in their companies. How can I, not being the CEO, really make any difference at my work?"

Fear that one lacks any authority to influence positive change in the workplace is a legitimate concern. The good news that pastors can share, though, is this: even believers with limited authority at their workplaces can be creative about stewarding the level of influence they *do* possess. Specifically, church leaders can respond with the following.

First, they can encourage church members to educate themselves about the working conditions of everyone *below* them in their organization. Believers can strive to develop friendly, respectful relationships with those

Better let's be conversant

workers, learning their names, inquiring about their families. This little step may have more punch than expected. Too often, the lowliest workers in a company can be virtually invisible to those above them. Others fail to acknowledge them, fail to see them. And that's problematic, since Christ-followers should never treat people like furniture.

Church leaders can encourage their parishioners to take time at work to notice the janitor, the woman who empties the trash, the groundskeepers and the folks down in the basement mailroom. They should observe the conditions these employees labor under. They might discover, for instance, that the janitorial staff doesn't have as nice a lounge as do the white-collar workers, or that lower-level employees face overly restrictive rules concerning phone use or break times.

Second, aware of such things, believers in the firm—including those not high up themselves—may be encouraged by church leaders to improve the quality of life for the lowest-level workers in some simple, practical ways. What if, for example, a mid-level Christian employee at a hotel took up a collection from her peers to buy a nice coffee maker, some comfortable chairs and some green plants to fix up the housekeeping staff's break room? That would be a practical way to introduce a little bit of the kingdom foretaste of beauty.

Moreover, regardless of what position a believer holds at the firm, he could start a quiet, intercessory prayer ministry. Step one might be to get a few other believers at the company on board. Step two could be requesting permission to place a prayer box in some common space in the office (a locked box with a slot where index cards—provided next to the box—can be inserted). Employees can be informed that a prayer group has started and that anyone with a prayer request could jot it down on an index card—anonymously if they desire—and put it in the box. Then the intercessory group would open the box once or twice a week and pray for those matters. This would be a tangible demonstration of love for fellow workers.

Third, church leaders should remind their congregants that, in many firms, even employees in the lower echelons can offer suggestions about ways the organization could be more engaged in the community. It could not hurt for a believer to ask for a meeting with the head of the firm's human resources or marketing departments, for example, and propose that the company start a corporate volunteering program.

There is also nothing to stop a small group of believers at an organization from forming their own emergency benevolence fund. They could seed the fund with their own contributions and then invite other employees to contribute. They could also invite participation in a benevolence committee that would be in charge of distributing the funds. To keep things as simple as possible, the committee could outline a limited eligibility—for example, the fund would only help employees in cases of serious medical illness in their immediate family.

Additionally, even employees with modest positions or low seniority can suggest small, doable reforms in terms of the organization's energy and resource use, to inch the firm in a "greener" direction. Such suggestions could include using energy-efficient light bulbs, launching a campaign to help remind all employees to turn off their computers over the weekend, recycling used paper, or encouraging a serious reduction in the use of plastic and paper cups.

Another strategy involves tweaking initiatives that already exist at the company in order to promote the values of equality or opportunity. For example, suppose an organization already has a job-shadowing program or a summer internship program for young people. A Christian employee at the firm could learn who tends to benefit from these initiatives. If the programs largely cater to white, middle-class (or wealthier) kids, the believer could suggest an alternative approach to the program's director. The program could be expanded or redirected in ways that could spread its benefits to young people with greater needs. If the director is open to the suggestion, the Christian employee might volunteer to do some of the legwork in identifying new partners—such as a Christian school in the inner city that is eager to expose its youth to professional careers.

The point is this: congregants need to understand that wherever they are, regardless of their status, they can probably do at least one thing that advances kingdom values like justice or beauty or compassion or economic opportunity or creation care.

WHAT ABOUT THE TRADITIONAL CHURCH TEACHING ON WORK?

Many of the stories in this chapter have something of a "sexy vibe" to them, as my twenty-something friends say. How astonishing it is that Tom

Hill paid his employees to work for Oklahoma City for a year and half; how impressive it is that young Wendy Clark has created not just jobs but a deeply supportive work environment for low-income Latinas who would more typically face grueling labor conditions. As the twenty-somethings would say of these actions: "How cool is *that!*" And these actions are indeed impressive.

In addition to telling these kinds of inspirational success stories, though, there remains a role for church leaders to continue to teach on some less "sexy" familiar topics as they disciple their people for blooming. One is *ethics*. Since the workplace is fallen, there will always be a place for strong teaching from the pulpit on personal holiness on the job. The second is *evangelism*. Church leaders should regularly remind their flocks that the amazingly good news of the good news needs to be shared with our non-believing coworkers. Finally, church leaders should continue emphasizing one other E-word: *excellence*.

Recently I learned that a friend has a malignant brain tumor. Right now, more than anything else, I want her doctor to be *really good* at brain surgery. Right now, I care more about that than I do about whether he offers his services pro bono at the free clinic or if his management style is hierarchical. Similarly, when I'm driving over a long bridge, I trust that the bridge inspector is someone who takes her job very seriously, who is highly competent and vigilant. I want the chemists and engineers at our region's nuclear power plant to be *diligent, careful experts* in the safe operations of the facility. I want my veterinarian to be on top of the latest research that can help my sick pet. The quiet, faithful, diligent pursuit of excellence in a vocation can be absolutely vital.

Telling stories of excellence may feel less exciting than showcasing the sorts of stories we've looked at here. But every vocational stewardship initiative should be careful to include teaching on this virtue. Indeed, in some cases, given the weight of their individual responsibilities, some believers may need to view excellence as the highest among the kingdom values they are seeking to live by as they bloom for Jesus in their profession.

Pathway 2

DONATE YOUR SKILLS

I want [congregants] to have moments with God that take their breath away because of the activation and deployment of a gift that He gave them that makes them feel like difference-makers in a broken world. And we as church leaders have that gift to give every volunteer.

BILL HYBELS, FOUNDING PASTOR,
WILLOW CREEK CHURCH

Paper chemist Dan Blevins doesn't see himself as an extraordinary guy. He grew up in a small town in Michigan, went off to college and got a job after graduation. He found a wife, started a family. They joined a church. At Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church in Atlanta, Dan sang in the choir and volunteered with the recreational ministry as a soccer referee.¹

In April 2003, Dan turned fifty. He'd worked for Dow Chemical Company for nearly a quarter-century. He heard about a missions conference coming to downtown Atlanta in June and decided to attend. Given his recent milestone birthday, he chose to follow the track at the conference organized by the Finishers Project. (Finishers Project's mission is to connect midlife adults with "global impact opportunities for God.")² On the last day, Dan attended a workshop titled "Finding Your Place in Ministry: Your Skills are Needed."

"The instructor began his presentation stating that regardless of what

News (November 25, 2009) <www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/11/25/eveningnews/main5777661.shtml>.

¹²Hammack, "Gourmet Giving," p. 64.

¹³Stan Grossfeld, quoted in "The Pulitzer Photographs: A Glimpse of Life," produced by the Newseum, Washington, D.C.

¹⁴Ronald J. Sider et al., *Linking Arms, Linking Lives: How Urban-Suburban Partnerships Can Transform Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), p. 127.

¹⁵John Philips, real estate developer, interview with the author, Chicago, June 28, 2010.

¹⁶Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from Helen Bach, administrative supervisor, Olive Crest, are from a telephone interview with the author, September 23, 2010.

¹⁷Kevin Brennfleck and Kay Marie Brennfleck, *Live Your Calling: A Practical Guide to Finding and Fulfilling Your Mission in Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), pp. 36-39.

¹⁸Craig Pitman, "The Christian Artist in Ministry," ArtsReformation.com (April 12, 2006) <www.artsreformation.com/a001/cp-ministry.html>.

¹⁹"Our Impact," Carson Scholars Fund <<http://carsonscholars.org/content/about-csf/our-impact>>.

²⁰Brad Bell, "A Dislocated Heart," sermon delivered at The Well Community Church, Fresno, Calif., September 5, 2009 <<http://thewellcommunity.org/podcast/the-feed-sermon-podcast/1/dislocated-heart-nehemiah-11-4/220>>.

²¹All quotes from Tim Schulz, founder, ReVive Industries, are from a telephone interview with the author, September 2, 2010.

Chapter 8: Formation

¹I'm indebted to Tim Keller for this insight.

²Rabbi Michael Strassfeld, "Avodah: Vocation, Calling, Service," My Jewish Learning <www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ethics/Business_Ethics/Themes_and_Theology/Value_of_Work/Work_as_Calling.shtml>.

³Kenton Beshore, *Rooted: Connect with God, the Church, Your Purpose* (Irvine, Calif.: Mariners Church, 2010), p. 108.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁵Mark Labberton, *The Dangerous Act of Loving Your Neighbor: Seeing Others Through the Eyes of Jesus* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2010), p. 96.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁹Tim Keller, "A New Kind of Urban Christian," The Christian Vision Project (June 15, 2006) <www.christianvisionproject.com/2006/06/a_new_kind_of_urban_christian.html>.

¹⁰Gary Haugen, *Just Courage: God's Great Expedition for the Restless Christian* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2008), p. 18.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 20, emphasis added.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹³Brad Pellish, associate pastor, Bethany Bible Church, interview with the author, Phoenix, December 3, 2009.

¹⁴Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (New York: HarperOne, 2006), pp. 16-17.

¹⁵Steve Gillen, campus pastor, Willow Creek North Shore Community Church, telephone interview with the author, September 7, 2010.

¹⁶As vice regents, our stewardship responsibility is to *develop* the creation (that's the Hebrew word *abad* in Genesis 2:15, where it says Adam was to work the garden) and to *protect* it (that's the Hebrew word *shamar* in Genesis 2:15, translated as *tend*).

¹⁷I'm indebted to Andy Crouch for this insight.

¹⁸Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2008), p. 230, emphasis added.

¹⁹Quoted in Amy L. Sherman, *Being There: Faith on the Frontlines—Successful Models of Faith-Based, Cross-Sector Collaboration from the 2006 Partners in Transformation Awards Program* (Indianapolis: Sagamore Institute for Policy Research, 2006), p. 41.

Chapter 9: Deploying Vocational Power

¹Tim Keller, "Cultural Renewal: The Role of the Entrepreneurs and Intrapreneurs," Center for Faith and Works, Entrepreneurship Forum 2006 <www.faithandwork.org/2006_ci_forum_page3037.php>.

²Steve Garber, president, Washington Institute, personal conversation with the author, October 13, 2010.

³Kim S. Phipps, "Prologue: Campus Climate and Christian Scholarship," in *Scholarship and Christian Faith: Enlarging the Conversation*, ed. Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 174.

⁴James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 252.

⁵See Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

⁶Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2008), p. 67.

⁷Brian Fikkert and Steve Corbett, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2009).

Chapter 10: Pathway 1

¹All quotes by Hill are from Matthew Myers, "CEO Profile: Tom Hill, President, Kimray Incorporated," Christ @ Work <www.christatwork.com/data/PDFFiles/Tom%20Hill%20interview.pdf>.

²Rev. Dr. John Yates, "Seek the Welfare of the City: A Vision for Pastors and Pastoring," Commencement Address at Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., May 16, 2008.

- ³Faith and Work Ministry," Harbor Presbyterian Church—Downtown (San Diego) <www.harbordowntown.org/get-involved/faith--work-ministry>.
- ⁴All quotes from Duke Kwon, former associate pastor, Grace DC, are from a telephone interview with the author, November 3, 2010.
- ⁵Davida Foy Crabtree, *The Empowering Church: How One Congregation Supports Lay People's Ministries in the World* (Herndon, Va.: The Alban Institute, 1989), p. 6.
- ⁶Additionally, every Labor Day, Yates invites a lay member to preach a sermon on faithfulness in vocation.
- ⁷Visit <www.vocationalstewardship.org> for a copy of Church of the Savior's "Service of Ordination."
- ⁸Tom Nelson, senior pastor, Christ Community Church, telephone interview with the author, October 21, 2010.
- ⁹Susan Olasky, "An 'Integral Life' at Work," *World*, November 29, 2008 <www.worldmag.com/articles/14692>.
- ¹⁰Ibid.
- ¹¹Ibid.
- ¹²"Work Life at Peachtree," Peachtree <www.peachtreepres.org/Worklife.aspx>.
- ¹³Victor Pentz, "Soli Deo Gloria: Calling of Peter and the Fisherman Disciples," Sermon Series: Vintage Jesus (August 31, 2008) <www.peachtreepres.org/downloads/sermons/20080831sermon.pdf>.
- ¹⁴All quotes from Bonnie Worzbacher, senior vice president for Global Customer and Channel Leadership, The Coca-Cola Company, are from a telephone interview with the author, August 25, 2010.
- ¹⁵Center for Faith and Work <www.faithandwork.org>.
- ¹⁶All quotes from Katherine Leary Alsdorf, director, Center for Faith and Work, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, are from a telephone interview with the author, February 6, 2009.
- ¹⁷Fashion Industry Group, Center for Faith and Work <www.faithandwork.org/fashion>.
- ¹⁸"Entrepreneurship Initiative: The Competition," Center for Faith and Work <www.faithandwork.org/the_competition_page1234.php>.
- ¹⁹Winners have been diverse. Threads Theater Company, a 2007 winner, aims to "start inclusive conversations about faith and contribute to cultural renewal." A 2009 winner, Alphabet Scoop Ice Cream, provides job training and mentoring in an ice cream shop for at-risk youth. Entrepreneurship Initiative has also helped jump-start initiatives to provide legal aid to those in extreme poverty, jobs in the toy-making industry in Honduras, holistic health care for the underserved on Staten Island and a safe house for victims of sex trafficking.
- ²⁰Duke Kwon, former associate pastor, Grace DC, telephone interview with the author, November 3, 2010. Grace Church launched twelve groups, creating the categories for them inductively based on congregational responses. These included groups for artists, educators, businesspeople, engineers, health care professionals and Capitol Hill staffers, among others.

- ²¹All quotes from Wendy Clark, owner, Carpe Diem, are from a telephone interview with the author's assistant Sally Carlson, September 27, 2010.
- ²²James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 257, emphasis in original.
- ²³Anne C. Bailey, plenary address, Following Christ Conference, Chicago, 2008 (audio file) <<http://media.intervarsity.org/mp3/AnneCBailey.mp3>>.
- ²⁴Gordon Govier, "InterVarsity Alumni—Anne C. Bailey," InterVarsity (October 16, 2008) <www.intervarsity.org/news/intervarsity-alumni--anne-c-bailey>.
- ²⁵Ibid.
- ²⁶Jeanine Lacquement, founder and director, Children of the Light Dancers, telephone interview with the author, May 16, 2010.
- ²⁷Timothy Stoner, "Milt Kuyers: Redefining Success," in *My Business, My Mission*, ed. Doug Seebeck and Timothy Stoner (Grand Rapids: Partners Worldwide, 2009), p. 23.
- ²⁸Ibid.
- ²⁹Milt Kuyers, former owner, Star Sprinklers, telephone interview with the author, August 25, 2010.
- ³⁰All quotes from Carlos Oscar, professional comedian, are from a telephone interview with the author, August 10, 2010.
- ³¹Information about Pia Cayetano here is taken from her blog at <www.mydailyrace.com> and website at <www.senatorpiacayetano.com>.
- ³²Interview with Philippines' Senator Pia Cayetano," *The World of Parliaments*, July 2005, p. 4 <www.ipu.org/PDF/wop/18_en.pdf>.
- ³³"Profile: Bora Aksu," *Artisan*, vol. 1 <www.artisaninitiatives.org/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=75333>.
- ³⁴Bonnie Alter, "People Tree Goes Designer," *Treehugger* (May 10, 2007) <www.treehugger.com/files/2007/05/people_trees_ne.php>.
- ³⁵Ibid.
- ³⁶This account is based on the profile of Schenk in *Entrepreneurs in the Faith Community: Profiles of Mennonites in Business*, ed. Calvin W. Redekop and Benjamin W. Redekop (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1996), pp. 18-38.

Chapter 11: Pathway 2

- ¹Unless otherwise noted, information and quotes from Dan Blevins are from a telephone interview with the author, September 16, 2010.
- ²"Finishers Project Mission Statement," Finishers Project <<http://finishers.org/index.php?id=75>>.
- ³Quoted in Daniel Blevins, "Baby Boomer Finds New Calling," *American Family Association Journal* (October 2009) <www.afajournal.org/1009default.asp>.
- ⁴"Volunteering," Mt. Pisgah Methodist Church (Johns Creek, Ga.) <www.mountpisgah.org/Mission/Volunteering.cfm>.
- ⁵PLACE, a discovery tool that assesses congregant's gifts, talents, skills, life experiences and passions, was developed by Jay McSwain. See <www.placeministries.org>.