

Christianity for the 21st Century

CHURCH SCATTERED

By Dan Greer



*Helping equip Christians to live out the gospel
in the Church Scattered at home, work and in their neighborhood.*

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

The Church Gathered is a vital part of God's plan and is extremely important. The Church Scattered is equally important. Dan Greer has done a great job in Church Scattered to help you develop an intentional plan that emphasizes the mission of the Church out in the communities in which we live. It will help you, who love the Church, make an increasingly greater impact for Christ in your community.

Dan Reiland
Executive Pastor, 12Stone Church

Dan gives our changing cultural conditions thorough and thoughtful analysis. As a Christian leader, we are all asking the same thing, "what next?" Our mission of the Great Commission is the same, but what will happen to our method? As the Church becomes scattered around the world, Church Scattered is worth the read.

Carey Nieuwhof
Bestselling Author of *Didn't See It Coming* and Founding Pastor, Connexus Church

Dan Greer understands the church and the marketplace and has put his finger on some natural tensions between the two. In Church Scattered Dan grapples with the role of Christians in the church—Church Gathered—and then in the marketplace—Church Scattered. Thankfully, when many observers are diminishing the value of the local church in the name of cultural relevance, Dan doesn't do that. Indeed, he maintains that the Church Gathered and the Church Scattered are "one church with the same mission." I commend this book to everyone as a primer on discovering and maximizing our calling as followers of Christ.

Mark DeMoss
DeMoss Partners

The landscape of the American Church is rapidly changing. In order to meet the needs of an ever-changing world, we don't need to figure out how to be more relevant, but rather to go back to the Scripture and look at the biblical blueprint for how to take the gospel to every tribe, tongue, and nation. Dan Greer has written a timely and thought provoking piece that will help pastors and church leaders equip the everyday believer to live on mission and see the gospel advance through a rapidly changing world."

Dr. Matt Carter
Pastor of Preaching and Vision, The Austin Stone Church



Church Scattered could not be a more timely call to action for the church to respond to the Great Commission. Dan Greer shares a clear, concise strategy of how people of faith can lead their clients, co-workers and neighbors through the COVID-19 crisis with faith, hope, innovation and vision right into the kingdom. The only question that remains is whether you are willing to answer the call.

*Kathy Schrader
Judge, Gwinnett Superior Court of Georgia*

Dan Greer has been a keen observer of church life for over 30 years. He has been on the executive leadership team of large churches as well as a church consultant. His observations on the directional focus of the church are spot on. In the coming years, the church will have to be much better at scattering in order to see its God-given potential realized—the church fully released where we live, work and play. Whether buildings remain relevant or not, this is the issue. Dan covers the ground masterfully. So many astute observations. A great read—you will be glad you took time to go through it!

*Jim Sheppard
CEO & Principle Generis*

Get ready to be powerfully convicted of our ambivalence as missionaries to our fallen world, which is right outside our door. If our goal is to enhance our careers to better our lives, we will live unfulfilled. If we live for our calling, our career is just one part of our strategy to reach the world for Christ. It is a means to a greater end. Church Scattered provides the roadmap for reaching and regaining three lost generations for Christ.

*Laurie Tucker
Sr. Vice President of Corporate Marketing at FedEx (retired)*

Disruption is the great initiator of change, and we are in the midst of one of the greatest disruptions in anyone's lifetime. As an excellent leader in the Church Gathered, and a strong enabler of the Church Scattered, Dan Greer shares lessons and insight that will challenge and encourage all of us. There is an enormous opportunity before us and God is on the move. The real challenge is how we respond to the opportunity right before us. Do we revert back to only what we know, or do we move forward into a new space that is very uncomfortable, but can transform our homes, work and neighborhoods?

*Chris Cartrett
Executive Vice President, Aderant*



One of the most refreshing books I've read in a long time. Challenging, practical, dynamic. A must read for Christians who feel side-lined, wounded and disillusioned by the institutional church. There is a place for people like us! And it's the tip of the spear!

*Ed Gillentine
Managing Partner, Gillentine Group*

Church Scattered gives us a blueprint for how to live as the church in the 21st century. Dan is clear on how "we are the church" and how we can live out our faith in our workplace, school and neighborhood. Church Scattered shows us how we can live out the Book of Acts now.

*Phil Reynolds
Sr. Consulting Partner, The Ken Blanchard Companies*

As Dan Greer shares in the Introduction "we have placed more value on the Church Gathered than we have placed on Christ and following him every day in the Church Scattered." Seldom in history has there been a more timely and compelling book for church leaders. If you truly desire to be the effective leader God made you to be in our day, RUN, don't walk to Church Scattered by Dan Greer.

*Scott White
Executive Pastor, Redemption Church*

Church Scattered is the modern-day version of Jeremiah 1:10. It is time to root up and to pull down in order to build and to plant. Dan Greer provides a roadmap for the changes we can implement to bring true kingdom principles into our daily life in order to positively impact the world.

*Diane Kucala
Blueprint Leadership*

This quote from the prologue sets the stage for what follows and provides sufficient reason to read further, "The current church model has failed to equip Christians to live out their calling in the other 95 percent of their lives ... " Dan has been on "both sides of the table" as a business leader and church leader. Readers will receive the benefit from his combined experience and wisdom.

*Bryan Miller
Consultant*

Dan's insights have helped me in a variety of ways over the years. The chapter on personal leadership from his recent work, Church Scattered, challenged me in fresh ways. Each of us is called to lead in our sphere of stewardship, regardless of our place in life. Saying "no" to good things in order to create "yes" margin for even greater things is a powerful, God-honoring concept I am more convicted of and committed to, thanks to Dan.

Dave Nelson
Chief Customer Officer, Armstrong Relocation

Never have we needed a more clarion, convictional voice on the diagnosis, prognosis and prescription of the current health of the church. This book will "disrupt" you personally, professionally and spiritually. It will challenge you to the core about what you have traditionally thought of as an effective church and your role within it. In Church Scattered, Dan gives us the framework and tools to change our approach to the way we relate to our church, our family, our career, our business, our neighbor... all for greater kingdom impact in the 21st century and beyond.

Bryson McQuiston
Home Instead Senior Care, Franchise Owner

Church Scattered—classic Dan Greer—really great content—insightful, practical, relevant, futuristic, disruptive, prophetic—clearly a high leverage message for individual followers of Christ and a playbook for churches which serve us!

C. Ashley Clayton
Vice President for Cooperative Program & Stewardship, SBC Executive Committee

In his life and ministry, Dan Greer is known for offering biblical, precise, practical, and often mind-blowing wisdom. His voice is one of the most valued and trusted in my home because his clarity and sober-mindedness have so regularly bolstered our faith and influenced our actions for the better. In Church Scattered, he does this yet again. This is a book that will sharpen, challenge, and inspire your faith, your church, your thinking, and your methodology. Dan's insight into disruption, the failings of the Church Gathered, and the hope for the Church Scattered is an essential message for the individual believer and institutions alike, especially as we strive to minister effectively during a pandemic that scatters us. Church leader, trust me: this is a "for such a time as this" message. Don't miss it.

Caroline Saunders
Ministry Leader and LifeWay Author

This book is cerebral, prolifically honest and direct about the challenges the church faces brought about by a continual and ever-changing worldview, and the economic and technological changes that impact our culture, and how leadership must align themselves spiritually and biblically to effectively lead the church in the future to come.

Kirk Sullivan
Founding member of Gospel Music Hall of Fame Group 4Him



If Bear Bryant only lectured his players on how to play football; only showed films from famous players on how to tackle, block, throw a spiral; and only drew “Xs and Os” on the chalkboard to explain assignments, then what do you think Bear’s coaching record would have been? Instead, Coach Bryant had his boys practice in every condition possible, get dirty, and experience injuries and failure and taste success in preparation for the real games. Dan knows this and wants all of us followers of Christ to get out of the stands and into the ultimate game. And, this game is far more important than college football in the South; it’s about eternity. If I don’t care enough about my neighbor to get dirty and tackle the real issues in life, then I should stay in the stands. But what kind of love would that be?

Charles V. Welden, III
WeldenField Development, LLC

*There are key moments in our lives where we realize we need to think differently to achieve a new outcome. While I wish we arrived at these moments of awareness on our own, they are usually triggered by a disruption that is imposed upon us. It seems that one of these moments of disruption has come to the church. In *Church Scattered*, Dan Greer compels us to think differently about what it means to be the church and guides us through the perspective shifts we need to make to see the church flourish today.”*

Jenni Catron
Author, Speaker and Leadership Consultant

This book revealed so much to me about my role as a disciple of Christ in the church during these trying times. If you are a Christian affiliated with a local church, this book will inspire you to rethink your own personal approach to the Great Commission. If we have the courage to listen to these words and then to let go of our failed “church mindset”, we can create the opportunity for God to grow His people and the harvest will abound.

Kimberly B. Leousis
Senior Director of Institutional Research, University of Mobile

*Early on in my ministry, I had the privilege of serving and being mentored by Dan Greer. *The Church Scattered* is not theoretical in his life; it is what he has lived and breathed for decades of faithful ministry. *The Church Gathered* and *The Church Scattered* is not an either-or approach, they are necessities and more important mandates for each believer. In his book, Dan has disrupted the traditions of many of our churches, and the result will be a church that thrives as it continues to deliver an unchanging message to an ever-changing world.*

Matt Piland
XP Ministry/Leadership at Bethlehem Church



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CHRISTIANITY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

DAN GREER



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CONTENTS

Introduction

Chapter One: Global Disruption **23**

Contextualization

Work-Faith Integration

Theology of Work

Chapter Two: Cultural Disruption **45**

Postmodern

Post-Christian

Post-Evangelism

Chapter Three: Church Disruption **65**

Church Contextualization 2019

Church Growth Movement 1970

Purpose Driven Church 1995

The Emerging Church 2003

Simple Church 2006

Transformational Church 2010

Chapter Four: Great Omission **85**

Lord Jesus

Amazing Grace

Holy Temples

The Process

Good Samaritan

Storytellers

Ambassadors

Leaders

Broken Vessels

Chapter Five: Church Gathered **105**

Church Size

Church Leadership

Discipleship Process

Discipleship Strategy

Ministry Platforms

Missional Networks

Missions Integration Strategy

Leveraging Technology

Chapter Six: Church Scattered **127**

Leadership Development

Relational Networks

Church Planting

Family Ministry

Neighborhood Ministry
Marketplace Ministry
Spiritual Warfare

Chapter Seven: Personal Leadership **145**

Grace Account
Life Plan
Spiritual Disciplines
 Prayer
 Bible Study
 Strongholds

Chapter Eight: Family Ministry **163**

Marriage
 Guilt-Blame Cycle
 Deposits-Withdrawals
Parenting
 Protection
 Instruction
 Correction
 Encouragement
 Coaching
 Friendship
Personal Failures

Chapter Nine: Career Calling **183**

Corporate Shepherds
Leadership Disciplines
 Risk Tolerance
 Relational Network
 Personal Productivity
 Empowerment
 Feedback
Situational Leadership
Speed of Trust
Organizational Culture
Juice Is Gone

Appendix **203**

Notes **207**



Church Scattered: Christianity for the 21st Century

Introduction

The church is not the hope of the world. Christ is.

Your security and significance in this life are not your career, marriage, or children. Christ is.

We live in a time of human history when it seems the whole world exists in almost total chaos, and we wonder every day what will happen next. The coronavirus is just the latest global reminder that we are not in control and how quickly fear can spread faster than any disease. Then, we read the words of Jesus and find comfort for our troubled souls:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. (John 14:27)

Believing this in my heart is one thing but living it out in the daily decisions of life is another. If I can trust Jesus Christ for eternity, why do I find it so difficult to trust him for today?

If the abundant life promised to us is full of love, joy, and peace, why do we struggle under so much anger, fear, and worry?

Why, if we as Christians have been adopted as sons and daughters of God, do we live like slaves?

Why am I often emotionally moved on Sunday only to realize that by the following Saturday nothing in my life has truly changed?

Regardless of how hard we have tried as church leaders, why do my colleagues and I find ourselves just as ineffective in our mission as the average church member?

Consider this answer to the proposed questions: *the current church model has failed to equip Christians to live out their calling in the other 95 percent of their lives at home, work, and in their neighborhoods.* Our equipping strategy primarily requires people to sit in a seat on a Sunday to listen and learn, rather than training them to study for themselves during the rest of the week so they can spiritually mature and

become an effective disciple. We have placed more value on what you will hear me refer to throughout this book as the Church Gathered than we have placed on Christ and following him every day in the Church Scattered—so much so that we have reduced the church to a mere commodity in the marketplace of our culture. The best facilities, family programming, music, and special events are competitive advantages that drive attendance.

This Church Gathered, codependent model meets the needs of the institution because, in the church world, attendance equals success. It is also much easier for members like me to attend a men's conference than to actually be the servant-leader we're called to be in our home and family.

The Church Gathered model in many churches has lost its effectiveness. In fact, Chick-Fil-A has had more moral influence on America's pagan, post-Christian culture than any church or denomination. The tip of the spear in the 10/40 window (a term used to refer to the rectangular area of North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia) is no longer a missions agency, but mission-minded businesses. Christian executives are starting in order to effectively plant new churches.

In short, everything has changed, and this can be scary. In my work with corporate executives of large companies, I have seen firsthand that their number one fear is disruption, or the permanent change of a market's dynamics. Consider how e-commerce has quickly destroyed the strategies of many brick and mortar companies to the degree that many no longer exist. In the face of disruption, incremental change and realignment will not work. The only solution is radical transformation.

When it comes to ministry, I would like you to consider that we are experiencing widespread disruption, and we must begin a radical transformation process. The first step to transformation is confronting the brutal truth: we are not reaching three entire generations effectively because we have not equipped and matured the other two generations before them. If the church was a for-profit organization and our bottom line was the number of disciples we've made, we would have filed for bankruptcy a long time ago.

A disciple's metric for success should be nothing less than prioritizing the Great Commandment and then obeying the Great Commission every single day. When we passionately love Christ with all of our heart and our neighbors as ourselves, then the commission becomes the strategy not the goal.

However, I believe the situation we find ourselves in today is not solely because of the church failures and the implications of the post-Christian culture. I am equally convinced that the Creator is spiritually disrupting his church and scattering it once again as he has done so many times before. He is creating new wine that will not

work in the old wineskins of current church methodology.

The purpose of this book is to inspire and equip Christians to discover their calling in life and release them to leverage every relationship for God's glory and their good. It is the merging of the sacred and secular priorities into a single life plan that is passionately committed to becoming a disciple and living on mission for Christ.

Just to be clear, the greatest responsibility for this change does not lie with the Church Gathered but with each individual Christian. You are not a pre-Reformation Catholic with no direct access to truth, but a Christian living in the 21st century with more biblical resources than at any time in human history.

We are to spend our lives in a passionate journey to know Christ and make him known. This requires the equipping and maturing of the individual believer so they can use every platform in their daily life to be the fragrance of God's grace.

The ultimate truth about discipleship is that the church is called to primarily support believers as they minister in their day-to-day lives, not just on Sundays. Only when we both properly align with our biblical responsibilities will we become the powerful force that can change the world for God's glory.

To the individual Christian who attends church on Sundays but isn't on staff: I am sorry if no one has ever told you that the biblical mandate for you personally fulfilling the Great Commission is no less than any professional clergy. We can no longer hide behind the segmentation of family, work, and faith because this biblical calling means that we are all 100 percent "in the ministry." Regardless of who signs our paychecks, we must integrate faith into every area of our lives and submit to Scripture as the ultimate authority for all priorities. We must also take the primary responsibility to own our spiritual growth and that of our families.

We are to be disciples who totally surrender to follow Christ, but we are also leaders and our most important client is ourselves. The greatest leadership challenge each of us will ever face is to lead the person we see in the mirror every morning. The hard truth is that we cannot pass on to others anything that we have not first lived out in our own lives.

My favorite leadership quote is from Thomas Watson, the former CEO of IBM: "Nothing so conclusively proves a man's ability to lead others as what he does from day to day to lead himself."¹

Until we each accept this spiritual responsibility to lead in every area of our lives, we will never reach our potential for kingdom impact. As Christians, we must become effective leaders in our personal lives first; then, our leadership must extend into our homes; and, finally, it must extend into every platform of our public

lives. It is simply not acceptable to succeed in one area and fail in all the others. One of the most important platforms we have is our family, and one of the most sacred places in life is the kitchen table. We each should make sure we have the spiritual, emotional, and physical margin we need to give them our best—not just our leftovers.

You can lead well at home and still be a great leader at work, with the ultimate goal of leading your team or organization from making a profit to making a difference. Meaningful relationships and bottom-line results are not mutually exclusive. In fact, if leadership is about influence, then the people who will have the greatest future impact on the kingdom will likely be in the marketplace and not in the pulpit. The front lines for the gospel have moved from the churches we attend to the companies where we work.

Think about it: the overwhelming majority of people in America today are not attending any church, but they are still going to work. If they don't see the reality of God in the integrity of our business plans and in the character of our leaders, they will probably never see it at all.

If you as a Christian leader are determined to be successful in every area of your life, then you will make the necessary commitments and adjustments needed to have the margin required for everything that is important.

Consider our current reality:

We take too much work home because we have not developed the leadership skills to get our work done in eight hours or we lack the character to say “no.”

We live our personal lives with guilt and pain because we know that Christ and our families deserve better than what we are giving. Because we are not leading at home, we take our pain and guilt from home back to work and the cycle of failure continues.

We move from worry to anxiety to depression and eventually to burnout. We lose hope that our future will ever be any better than our present.

We lie to ourselves with self-talk that says, “Someday this will all slow down, and then I will make the changes I need to make.” (Remember the accepted definition of insanity is continuing to do the same thing over and over again while expecting different results.)

This is not the abundant life Jesus spoke about. We must have the courage to stop living out the script that someone else has written for our lives and let God help us write our own. As Francis Chan says, “Our greatest fear should not be of failure but

of succeeding at things in life that don't really matter."² If we don't set the priorities for our lives, someone else will gladly set them for us. To do that, we must know what our "yes" is in every area of our lives so we can say "no" with conviction to everything else.

We are living in very dark days, which means that the light of the gospel lived out in the power of the Holy Spirit is still the ultimate good news. As we seek to shepherd our families, our workplaces, and ourselves well, we must also reconsider our church methodology. After all, our message as the church is sacred, but our methods are not.

Most pastors know this and are prayerfully trying to do what is necessary to fulfill the Great Commission, but the concern over their church members resisting any serious change is a powerful force. However, they might be surprised to find more co-laborers than expected.

I was leading a meeting once, and some of these more drastic changes were being discussed with everyone in attendance. After about an hour of lively discussion, one of the senior adults came to the microphone. It is often assumed in a multi-generational church that the greatest resistance to change will come from the oldest members, so everyone (including me) braced for what was about to be said.

"I took my children to church, but now they have not attended in years," she said. "That also means that my sweet grandchildren, whom I love dearly, have never been to church either. What I have heard you say loud and clear is that as a church you want to prioritize reaching these next generations both here and around the world. Do whatever you have to do, and I will be your strongest supporter."

Meeting adjourned.

For Christians, "doing whatever we have to do" is more about total surrender than it is about being more disciplined. Our willingness to be under Christ's leadership is exactly what empowers us to lead others and ourselves.

Jesus Christ is not a commodity—he is the hope of the world. Welcome to Christianity for the 21st century.

Chapter One: Global Disruption

I don't think there has ever been a time in human history where change is occurring more rapidly than it is today. The global integration of the world's economies and the power of technology are two of the primary human factors that are driving this change. This is impacting our personal lives and families more than anywhere else; however, the Divine factor is even more significant. The Creator of the Universe is moving in even more dramatic ways to accomplish his sovereign will in the midst of this very broken world. He has waited patiently for his people to represent him well to the nations of the world, but we have been too busy serving idols that have taken his place of preeminence.

According to recent research, it is estimated that more than a billion people are living in the daily reality of desperately trying to find enough food to eat, water to drink, and a safe place to sleep, just to survive. They are trying to live on less than the equivalent of one American dollar per day. Another two billion people are also struggling to survive as they try to make ends meet with just two dollars per day. Multiple research organizations estimate that 26,000 children are dying daily from something preventable.

Richard Stearns, the recent president of World Vision, states the brutal facts: "There is much at stake. The world we live in is under siege, three billion are desperately poor, one billion hungry, millions are trafficked in human slavery, ten million children die needlessly each year, wars and conflicts are wreaking havoc, pandemic diseases are spreading, ethnic hatred is flaming, and terrorism is growing."¹

Unfortunately, this is not "fake news" but the hard reality of the spiritual condition of the world today. As Christians banded together as the Church, we cannot simply look the other way and cross our fingers that it will all get better. There is little comfort in the thought that we did not cause all of this pain when we are doing so little to help reduce it, either.

David Platt serves as a modern-day prophet when he passionately declares, "I have been successful in my ignorance because they are powerless. Literally millions of them are dying in obscurity and I have enjoyed my affluence while pretending they don't exist."²

I have been a Christian for more than fifty years and grew up in one of the most crisis-filled decades in American history—the 1960s. The Cuban Missile Crisis almost led us into World War III and the daily threat of nuclear destruction was continually in the news. We witnessed an assassination of a president and the leader of the civil rights movement. African Americans were beaten, hung, and brutalized while

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“It will be increasingly difficult to convince the unchurched that our faith is pertinent to the 21st century if the tools of our trade are from the last century.”
- George Barna

many of our major cities were burning to the ground. The National Guard shot and killed four college students who were protesting one of the most hated wars of all time. The culture survived the sexual revolution and Woodstock, rocked with the Beatles, and topped off the decade by landing on the moon.

However, the pace of negative change I have been witnessing over the last twenty years is far more devastating than anything I experienced in the 1960s. In the midst of all the sheer insanity of that dark time, there was still a majority of people who embraced a Judeo-Christian ethic. That is no longer true today, and the significant increase in Christian persecution around the world, even in America, is a clear sign we have reached a tipping point.

In his popular book published in 1990, *The Frog in the Kettle*, George Barna shares an illustration involving a frog in a pot of water. If the water is extremely hot when the frog is placed in the kettle, the frog will immediately jump out. However, if you place the frog in room temperature water, it will gladly stay there, content with its surroundings. Here's the disturbing part: if you slowly increase the water temperature, the frog will not notice its changing environment. Eventually, by the time the water is boiling, it is too late for the frog to change its circumstances, and the end has come.³

Are we like the frog, failing to notice the ever-increasing temperatures around us and becoming complicit in our own destruction? If Christians serving through the church are the frog, and all the places where we live, work, and play are the kettle, the water is the culture. Believe me, it's getting extremely hot in here. One of the most important truths I want you to see in this illustration is that the hand turning up the temperature belongs to our heavenly Father.

Another key point that I don't want you to miss is this: the culture is not our enemy. The culture is simply the missional context in which we are called to live out the gospel each and every day. But, to reach the lost in our current culture, we must take a new approach. Remember, our message is sacred, but our methods are not.

For example, in our society today, if our marriages are no better than our non-believing co-workers and neighbors, then something is desperately wrong and must be changed now.

Barna sums it up well even in 1990: “It will be increasingly difficult to convince the unchurched that our faith is pertinent to the 21st century if the tools of our trade are from the last century.”⁴

It is probably a good time for me to start unpacking some of my story. I have a unique background in that I have served about the same amount of time as a corporate leader and as a non-profit leader.

My time in corporate America included working for Burroughs, State Farm, and Reynolds Aluminum Company. I started my own leadership development company in 2007 and use speaking, training, and coaching to help leaders reach their potential. Two of my largest clients are Anthem and FedEx.

I have several years of seminary training and have had the privilege of serving in some great churches. My primary role was as an executive pastor in large churches, and I also had the great experience of helping start two progressive church plants in schools. I've benefited from a range of experience—from serving at Bellevue Baptist Church, a megachurch in Memphis, when it was averaging over 6,000 on Sundays, to seeing both small church plants grow beyond 1,000 in weekly attendance. Both of these experiences were rewarding and enlightening.

Despite the hours I've clocked in churches as an adult, I grew up during those crazy 60s not attending church at all. That's right, I'm one of those guys you did not want your daughter to date. You know, one of those hopeless, worst-case type people who no one thought would ever come to Christ. Incredibly, I began dating a beautiful young lady who happened to be a Christian. Church attendance became a small price to pay for the pleasure of her company and the enjoyment of her mother's cooking on Sundays.

I became a Christian at seventeen and for the first year I had to look in the Contents section of my Bible to find any book in it. Fortunately, that all changed in my early twenties when someone began to disciple me and teach me how to study the Bible for myself.

The reason my background is so important for you to understand is that at times in this book I will sound a lot like a corporate leader applying best practices. In the next few pages, I may sound like a church leader trying to figure out how to make disciples. Then to that point, my third voice is that of a committed disciple who wants you to passionately fall in love with Jesus Christ and enjoy living out his calling for your life as a Christian. If at some point while reading this book you have a hard time determining which role or voice is speaking, I will have accomplished one of my major objectives. My mission is to help you merge leadership and life, work and faith, personal and professional, and most importantly, the sacred and secular.

I desperately want you to see your work as a “white unto harvest” mission field and your kitchen table as one of the most sacred places in all of life. We have been told that we brought nothing into this world, and we can take nothing out. With that in mind, it's safe to say that “stuff” does not matter at all, but relationships will matter for all eternity.

We have been allowed to believe as Christians that being “all in” for Christ is reserved

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My mission is to help you merge leadership and life, work and faith, personal and professional, and most importantly, the sacred and secular.

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The buildings you attend on Sunday mornings are not the holy places—you are. The God who created the universe actually lives within you and wants the two of you to do all of life together.

for the professionals. Our part is to show up and serve on Sunday (a very good thing!), but after we check that box, we move on with the rest of the week and on to all the other boxes. In this book, I am passionately going to do everything I can to inspire and equip you to put everything and everyone into one box.

The buildings you attend on Sunday mornings are not the holy places—you are. The God who created the universe actually lives within you and wants the two of you to do all of life together. What could be more incredible?

To set up this whole concept of disruption, let's look at some of the factors involved in experiencing or leading change.

One of the hindrances to change is that, bottom line, we as humans don't like change and would prefer to take a pass and stay where we are. We are like the frog, and the water still feels fine.

As individuals who need to change personal priorities or as leaders who are responsible for influencing change, we need to understand two critical approaches. Depending upon the willingness of the people in our care, we will either need to motivate change 1.) through pain of the present or 2.) by casting a better vision for the future.

If there is low or no commitment to change, then the pain of the present has to be greater than the fear of the future. We have to admit that what we are doing is not working and that we cannot stay where we are as the temperature increases.

The temperature of the water is not only increasing in our culture, but also in our personal lives. We are beyond stressed out and we seem to be failing with the people who matter most. Worse than that, we know that as Christians we have trusted Christ for eternity, but we have an extremely hard time walking by faith today. We have substituted busyness for blessedness. (Before we go any further, please hear my heart on this. The reason I am sharing some of these difficult realities is not to put you on a guilt trip but to remind you to embrace the truth you already know.)

The temperature of the water is clearly increasing in our churches. We have watched our churches decline in attendance in the midst of a growing pagan culture that hates almost everything we cherish. We are finally realizing that it is impossible to even parent in a postmodern culture if we have not taken the time to develop a personal biblical worldview as a reference for absolute truth.

We can't keep doing what we have been doing and expect different results. It's time to disrupt the status quo.

In his book *Disruption*, Mark Deymaz puts it this way: “Therefore, at a most critical moment in our nation’s history, when demographic shifts are bringing change to America, most churches and the pastors who lead them are not framing the questions, shaping the narrative, or influencing the conversation beyond their own insulated audiences.”⁵

Even as I urge you toward transformation, know that I am not writing this book to throw rocks and cast blame, but to admit my own failure to lead my family and myself well. As a church leader, it breaks my heart to know I prioritized coming to church over being the church for years. I don’t make any claims to be some super spiritual giant. In fact, it is actually the opposite—I have failed a lot. Anyone can talk about the problem, but it takes someone who has experienced the brokenness of life to speak about solutions that really work.

I strongly commit to do everything I can to help you with all the practical, sustainable solutions you will need for the major challenges we face together. Though I’ll mention big ideas and main points early in the book, I promise to come back to them later with helpful personal applications.

That brings me to the second, more effective way to lead change. Rather than increasing the pain of the present, we can cast a greater vision about a hopeful future that is far better than the negative reality of the present. This is the approach I am taking in this book because I assume if you are reading these words, you are hopeful and searching for a better way.

There has never been a more exciting time to be a Christian because we can leverage the disruptions of technology and globalization to have an even greater impact on the world for Christ. But, as exciting as this time is, it’s also a time of great pain.

In the midst of these dark days, we can hold fast to two critical truths: 1.) Jesus promised to build his Church and the gates of hell would not be able to stop him. 2.) He began a good work in you as a Christian and will complete it and take you home to live with him forever.

CONTEXTUALIZATION

Let me shift into my Christian corporate leader role for a while to deal with one of the major disruptive truths in this book: the absolute biblical necessity of merging work and faith to represent God to the world through every context.

The best place to start understanding the concept of disruption and how it is fundamentally different from ongoing change is in the corporate world. Once we understand how disruption works, then we can apply those principles in all of the different contexts of our life.

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- Mark Deymaz

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One of the major disruptive truths in this book: the absolute biblical necessity of merging work and faith to represent God to the world through every context.

This subject is extremely relevant to Christianity in the 21st century because in our culture, we spend the majority of our waking hours at work and we must leverage that time and opportunity for the gospel.

The book that helped me early on in my career more than any other was *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. In this book, he offers extensive research on why some companies sustain excellence over long periods of time while other once-successful companies eventually fail.

His opening sentence in the book is quite disruptive: “Good is the enemy of the great.”⁶

When any one of us experiences a certain level of success that we consider “good,” we become content with it, and eventually become complacent and resistant to change over time.

A leader who is already “good” in his or her field may develop a prideful attitude over time. He or she may believe they know what is best and will dictate to the market what it should want rather than humbly responding to what the customer actually needs.

Can this application be made to individuals, marriages, once-successful denominations, and churches? Absolutely.

Imagine the impact of “good” on marriages—if a husband begins taking his marriage for granted, one day he may wake up alone. He needs to make changes now before there are devastating consequences later. (I’ll also be talking specifically about companies and change over the next few paragraphs but hang with me. It’s all applicable wisdom for life outside the boardroom, and we’ll connect the dots soon enough.)

When a company hires me to help them with leading change, it is extremely important to determine where they are in the change process. To help with this, I have discerned three types of change:

Developmental Change is the normal, ongoing process in operational efficiencies and in some strategic initiatives. For example, developmental change is at work when companies find more effective ways to produce products at higher speeds and lower costs. (By the way, this kind of change is always necessary.)

Market Change occurs when a major change is introduced, usually through technology or innovation, that permanently impacts at least one part of a company’s value chain. (A value chain is simply the different

steps a company uses to produce and deliver goods or services. A typical value chain is research and development, operations and manufacturing, marketing, sales, customer service, and distribution channels.) A classic example of market change is Kodak, which had a record “good” year in 2000 but was unwilling to walk away from film and shift completely to digital. The company filed for bankruptcy in 2012. The only response to market change is realignment, which means not everything has to change (yet), but something significant must change.

Disruption Change is the most dramatic type of change, and it occurs when major changes, impacting multiple parts of a company’s value chain, happen at an alarming pace and require total transformation within the entire organization in order for the organization to survive much less thrive. For example, if you were in the horse and buggy market in the early 1900s, life was “good.” In 1918, only 8 percent of Americans owned a car. However, in just eleven short years the percentage of car ownership jumped to 80 percent. Goodbye, horse and buggy stores—welcome to full blown disruption. The auto market has settled into several decades of both developmental and market change with success for the most part. However, because of the introduction of new electric battery technology, self-driving cars, and ride sharing, this market is fast approaching another major disruption.

What does any of this have to do with Christianity and church in the 21st century? Everything, if you believe as I do that both our individual lives as Christians and the churches where we gather are in an undeniable period of radical disruption.

For example, as a church, when you live in Judeo-Christian America and all that comes with it, you can successfully use an attractional model to reach people. You can invite them to the Billy Graham crusade, spring revival, Vacation Bible School, and world-class children’s programming, and they will likely come.

But the spiritual value chain has changed. Our culture is now postmodern, post-Christian, and heavily influenced by the often-toxic nature of the Internet that attacks biblical truth on every front. Now, an attractional model will no longer be effective. Because those who do not identify with any faith are not coming to hear the great new sermon series you are pushing on social media, you must radically transform to an intentionally relational approach at work and in your neighborhoods.

While the culture was dramatically moving from committed Berea to somewhere between pagan Corinth and pluralistic Athens, we were comfortably sitting in our institutional warm water. We’ve settled for “good” even though it’s no longer effective, contenting ourselves with the thought that we still really want people to

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Our culture is now postmodern, post-Christian, and heavily influenced by the often-toxic nature of the Internet that attacks biblical truth on every front.

come to Christ—as long as they come by using the same methods that worked for us in the past.

When we elevate our personal preferences above the biblical commissioning to make disciples, it has the same disappointing effect as a grumpy old man complaining about how much he misses rolls of film and going to Blockbuster. As General Eric Shinseki, the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, once said, “If you don’t like change, you’re going to like irrelevance even less.”⁷

Leaders are not only seeing the effects of disruption, but they are seeing leadership itself change.

Let’s go a little deeper into the work context to see how leadership theory has changed due to economic and cultural dynamics, and then we’ll be able to apply it to other contexts and see what it has to do with Christianity in the 21st century.

In America over the last fifty years, we have moved from an agricultural age, to an industrial age, to the information age, and, now, in the last few years, to what many are calling the “idea age.”

Simply put, in the agricultural and industrial periods people were paid primarily for what they did. In sharp contrast, during the current information and idea age, people are paid primarily for what they know and how well they think.

For the sake of simplicity, I am going to refer to the agricultural and industrial periods as the old model and the information and idea periods as the new model. If I were to describe leadership theory for the old model in one word, I would say, “positional,” and for the new model, I would say “collaborative.” The implications of this shift are huge.

In Stephen Covey’s latest book, *The 8th Habit*, he states that in the 20th century positional model, the most valuable asset of any corporation was the equipment it had and the production process it managed. Under this model, the leaders at the top make all of the decisions, and the followers at every level simply carry out their instructions to the letter.

In sharp contrast is the new collaborative model advocated by Collins in *Good to Great*. The most valuable assets of the information and idea age will be the people within the organization and their knowledge and empowerment to get things done.

Does this new participative model mean that the leader has to surrender his or her role and all authority and responsibility are now totally delegated to others? Absolutely not. What it does mean is that the role of the leader has changed from

the person with positional power to the person with relational influence. Today, if you have to tell someone you are the leader in charge, you probably are not. Add to this mix the power of technology and the rise of the ever-changing and highly competitive global economy, and you get the new realities for corporate leaders in the 21st century.

Let me use a simple illustration to demonstrate how leadership has shifted from the old model to the new:

Imagine a leader operating under the old positional model (in which people were paid for what they did). He walks into the conference room at work, introduces a new program for the year, and gives each employee his or her individual assignment. He would follow up by asking, “Are there any questions?” This is a very directive style.

Conversely, a leader operating under the new model of the information age (in which people are paid for what they know) walks into the conference room and says, “This is the new program we’re considering for the year.” He would follow up with, “What do you think?” and then engage everyone in the room to find the best collaborative solution.

A leader operating under the new model of the idea age (in which people are paid for how well they think), walks into the room and says to the team, “What recommendations are you making for the year and why?”

As the world has transitioned from the older positional model to the new model, the leader’s role has changed from the person with all the answers to the person who knows how to ask the right questions. Leaders must now make the shift to help transform and sustain the right organizational culture that places a priority on developing and empowering other people. Furthermore, many corporate leaders don’t work only in an older American culture. They also have to contextualize their leadership to successfully lead multi-ethnic teams and communicate effectively with customers and suppliers from all over the world. Even more dramatically, the team members’ role and level of personal responsibility have changed. If corporate leaders are going to be willing to delegate, the team members must be prepared to answer the questions “What do you think?” and “What are your recommendations and why?”

For this reason, a leader must ensure he or she has the right people—people who have the knowledge and the passion to make an organization the best in the industry and who will not settle for anything less.

In *Good to Great*, Collins says, “Those who build great companies understand that the ultimate throttle on growth for any great company is not markets, or technology, or competition, or products. It is one thing above all others: the ability to get and keep enough of the right people.”⁸

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Margin is simply the gap between the demands on your life and your capacity to meet them.

The right people are what Collins calls “A players.” As with the key leader, the issue is all about character. He goes on to say, “They will do everything within their power to build a great company, not because of what they will get for it, but because they simply cannot imagine settling for anything less. Their moral code requires building excellence for its own sake.”⁹

Though I could talk so much more about leadership, I don’t want you to miss the relevance of this concept of contextualization to your life and the resulting personal application.

In corporate language, context simply means that an organization fully understands its market, customers, capacity, and competitive advantage, so it can properly align all aspects of its strategy to be the most effective. Personally it means that you know at all times what your spiritual, emotional, and physical margins are in every area of your life. Margin is simply the gap between the demands on your life and your capacity to meet them.

Every day, we will have withdrawals from each of these areas, and it is our responsibility as leaders to make sure we are making the appropriate amount of deposits so we will have the capacity we need at all times.

Contextualization personally then becomes the supernatural wisdom and discernment to know what the demands are today and to make sure you have the capacity to meet them. If you don’t have the capacity, then you have to reset new realistic expectations about what is a priority and what is not. For example: forget the laundry but get to the ballgame.

When we get into the realm of accomplishing the mission of God, we must again discern the context in which we are attempting to minister. In the purest sense, it is the attempt to present the gospel in a culturally relevant way.

Consider 1 Chronicles 12:32:

Of Issachar, men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, 200 chiefs, and all their kinsmen under their command.

To make the point, Paul presented the truth one way in Berea and a different more culturally relevant way in Athens without compromising the truth in either situation. Jesus was the master of contextualization.

WORK-FAITH INTEGRATION

So, what do these changes in leadership culture in the 21st century have to do with

the cultural changes that impact reaching three entire generations for Christ? Billy Graham foresaw this years ago and said, “One of the next great moves of God is going to be through the believers in the workplace.”¹⁰

In the next several chapters, we are going to see how we as Christians, and the church as a whole, must radically change to contextually reach those who are without Christ. As the data shows us, the existing Church Gathered, Sunday morning focused model alone is overwhelmingly ineffective in making disciples, and thus the outcome is bleak. That is, until the church re-prioritizes all the work it has been called to do by embracing the Church Scattered model of discipleship in which all members and all unbelievers still live, work, and play together. This is not devaluing the Church Gathered at all—it’s actually God’s plan to save it.

In God’s sovereignty, he has moved in corporate leadership theory at exactly the perfect time for Christians in the marketplace to relationally connect faith and work together. This is one of the major reasons why he is bringing radical disruption all over the world. He wants to be represented by a people living on mission seven days a week—not represented by a place we attend on Sunday morning.

Because ultimately all truth comes from God, some of the best leadership skills come directly from the Bible. The Book of Nehemiah is Harvard Business School-worthy, and, through the example of Jesus in the New Testament, it’s clear that our Lord invented servant leadership.

Beyond dealing with disruption, the number one hot topic in corporate leadership is answering the question of how do existing Baby Boomer leaders (ages 55-73) learn how to effectively lead Generation X (ages 43-54), Millennials (ages 24-42) and Generation Z (age 23 and under) employees.

Sound familiar, church leaders? God is using corporate leaders to help figure out how to contextually lead three entire generations, which are exactly the same people we are trying to reach. Most of them are not regularly attending any church, but almost all of them are still going to work.

If we think like missionaries, we realize that these same three generations that value relational leadership over directive leadership would respond well to a relational approach from other Christians and a church that talks a lot about Jesus. Can you imagine the result if the church senior staff walked into a meeting with lay leaders and stopped trying to be Moses, handing down commands inscribed upon stone?

What if the conversations changed from, “How do we get more people to attend and serve?” to “What can we do to more effectively reach our city and change the world?” What if everyone in the room started asking questions like “What are the most challenging issues Christians are dealing with every day at home and at

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“One of the next great moves of God is going to be through the believers in the workplace.”

- Billy Graham

work?” Then, as they asked these kinds of questions, what if they collaborated to find practical ways to equip individuals to be more effective in fulfilling their calling in life?

These same generations that hate celebrity-driven, egotistical leaders at work tolerate them even less in the church. On the other hand, they are willing to work extremely hard for character-driven leaders whom they can trust and respect.

These three generations get a bad rap and are often considered lazy and shaky when it comes to what they believe and why. But lamenting the stereotype won't help when the greatest responsibility lies with the lack of leadership from the previous generations that created the global mess they are determined to clean up.

My generation is made up of men and women who were taken to church and emulated the hypocrisy displayed by our parents. We argued in the car on the way to church but held on tight to our smiles once we were inside. But the generations who have come after absolutely hate this—to the point they refuse to even be a part of this type of Christianity and church.

When I get the opportunity to coach these new generations, I understand completely why they distrust this type of behavior. The actual character qualities I address most often at these large corporations are honesty, humility, integrity, compassion, servanthood, caring, fairness, authenticity, and transparency. These generations are “all in” with profit-making, as long as the organization also prioritizes difference-making.

Because of this, it's been easy for me to steer their training toward things of faith. For example, because the hot topic of “mindfulness” is nothing more than a rebranded form of prayer, that opens the door to spiritual conversations. Additionally, because these generations are deeply interested in work-life balance, it's natural to introduce the role of faith in their total life plan.

Here's the truth: at a time when the cultural context is growing more difficult for the Church Gathered to be effective, there has never been a greater opportunity for the Church Scattered at work. Work moves up the priority list as something that must be valued if for no other reason than the tremendous amount of time we spend there. Bottom line, God wants you to take your faith to work. When it comes to work, however, there's another major disruptive issue that needs to be addressed: is work sacred or is it merely another secular activity we must leverage for good? Before we can cast a hopeful vision for a better future, we must deal with some of the hard truths of this important area.

In my opinion, the major problems that exist today in the work-faith conversation are more cultural than biblical. This is at the very essence of why it so hard to

change, and it is why nothing short of disruption will work.

Any institution, even the church, will create systems and culture that ensure its long-term success. This is understandable and expected. However, our existing church institutional dynamics have created a dependency upon the church establishment that cannot be found in Scripture.

For many centuries, the man-made distinction between the professional clergy and the regular laity was almost solely for the benefit of the institution and not the people. I am not suggesting that our current church institutional dynamics are as harmful today among protestant evangelicals as they were prior to the Reformation, but some of the systemic issues are still with us today and are still very alarming. Even in modern churches, there are extreme examples of church leaders establishing themselves as the necessary dispensers of grace. When the church becomes the mediator between God and man instead of Jesus Christ, we have moved into a completely false gospel.

Thanks to the Reformation, the message of the gospel among evangelicals today has been restored to salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone and not through good works or church membership. However, the real biblical mistake is that the primary work of gospel proclamation is placed upon church organizational culture instead of upon individual Christians where they live, work, and play.

Someone said the first Reformation was about restoring the Word of God to the people, and the next Reformation should be about restoring the work of God to the people as well. It will take full-blown biblical disruption from the Father for this to happen. Why? Well, we are still having difficulty restoring the Word of God to the people. Most churches, though certainly not all, practice the belief that trained professionals are more effective dispensers of truth on Sundays than the ministry of the Holy Spirit working through personal Bible study during the week.

I am not diminishing the importance of gifted preachers and teachers. I am, however, questioning a culture that measures success on disciple-making more by how many people show up to listen on Sunday than by how many live out their faith at home and work during the rest of the week.

As a church leader, I helped create this codependent culture in which attendance is the primary metric for success, both for the church and the Christian. The absolute greatest mistake was to assume that because someone was very active in church that automatically translated into spiritual maturity.

I do a significant amount of executive coaching of leaders in corporate life. One of the questions on my initial assessment of needs is “What role does faith play in your life?” I have been absolutely shocked and convicted at the number of Christians who have been active in church for decades and still do not know even

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My personal experience has taught me that spiritual maturity does not really start in any Christian's life until they are getting more out of the Word on their own than through the ministry of others.

the basic truths of the faith. It makes me think of Hebrews 5:12-14:

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

My personal experience has taught me that spiritual maturity does not really start in any Christian's life until they are getting more out of the Word on their own than through the ministry of others. There is simply no substitute for God speaking to you directly through your time alone with him. Consider these biblical truths:

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. (John 14:25-26)

But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. (1 John 2:27)

No one can be effective in doing the work of God as a spouse, parent, neighbor, co-worker, friend, or small group leader unless he or she has understood and applied the truths of God's Word in their lives over time. If we are counting on hearing two or three sermons or lessons a month to adequately prepare us for the spiritual realities of living in pluralistic Athens in 2020, no wonder the work of God is suffering.

I don't wish to dismiss the calling of God upon certain people to serve in the biblical role of pastor or staff members, but I do desire to appropriately elevate the role of every Christian back to our biblical priority in accomplishing the work of God in the world.

This book is not primarily about right versus wrong, but the degree to which we are prioritizing some things over others. The Church Gathered and the powerful ministry it accomplishes for the kingdom is extremely important. On the other hand, if you look at just the amount of time we spend as the Church Gathered compared to the amount of time we spend as the Church Scattered, we must dramatically change our priorities.

The work of God has been given to all of us—not the select few. The calling of

God is not primarily about a vocation or location but a relationship. The highest expression of this relationship can be summed up in the term “Christian,” which points to our position as adopted sons and daughters. The second most important term may be “disciple,” a fully devoted follower of Christ and a servant leader of others.

Yes, the person who stands behind the pulpit has a sacred calling, but that calling is to be a Christian first and a disciple second. It is the exact same sacred calling that has been given to every person sitting in the pews who has trusted Christ for salvation.

Therefore, the expression of the work we do on a daily basis may be different, but it should not be any less sacred. As J.D. Greear, pastor and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, says, “Answering the call of God is as pertinent for the business professional as it is for the pastor.”¹¹ Actually today, the pastor who stands behind the pulpit will have far more challenges reaching lost people than the manager at work who interacts with hundreds of people every week.

The front lines of the gospel have moved from the churches we attend to the neighborhoods where we live and the places where we work. Divine disruption is behind this, and we can trust that God is doing a good thing.

THEOLOGY OF WORK

Pastor and author, John Stott, says, “Work is the expenditure of energy in the service of others, which brings fulfillment to the worker, benefit to the community, and glory to God.”¹² In short, work can be—and should be—sacred. Because I wholeheartedly believe in the important and biblical foundation for this concept, I would like to offer you plenty of Scripture to make the biblical case that we should view our work as worship and as a vital avenue for God to accomplish his work in us and through us.

One critical text on this subject is in the first book of the Bible:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that

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In fact, the Hebrew root word for work is “avodah,” which means “service,” and its derivations are translated as both “work” and “worship.”

is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.
(Genesis 1:26-2:2)

The major takeaway in this text and the most important truth is that our great God worked and is still working today to leverage global disruption to reach more people for Christ. In fact, the Hebrew root word for work is “avodah,” which means “service,” and its derivations are translated as both “work” and “worship.”

Secondly, this text clearly shows that man was given work to do for God. Because it came from God and is ultimately for his glory, it is most definitely sacred.

Of course, some of these verses describe the world prior to the Fall, so some of the dynamics have changed. It helps to divide the work of God into four major sections: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. Prior to the Fall, work was clearly good and part of God’s plan for his people. Now that we are fully into both the redemptive and restorative parts of God’s plan, merging work and faith is vital.

Our own experiences testify that work is one of the primary means that God uses to both mature the Christian and then to use that witness to move others closer to Christ. We also see evidence throughout Scripture that work can be redeemed and used for the glory of God—more than I could possibly include in this book. (Side note: God is at Work by Ken Eldred is a deep dive on this subject and provides great insights.)

Jesus more than anyone else in history understood the importance of accomplishing his work so that our redemption could be provided and all of fallen creation restored. Notably, he is the most disruptive leader who has ever lived as well.

Consider these few verses:

And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:17-19)

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:17)

Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.” (John 4:34)

I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. (John 17:4)

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:30)

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. (John 17:15-18)

When re-reading these familiar passages, we might think, “Well, after all, he was God in the flesh, so of course his work is sacred.” But, on the other hand, we must not deny Jesus’ humanity, and we must acknowledge that he went to work and shared his faith in every context of life as an example for us to follow. Here’s a compelling question: when we become Christians, why doesn’t God immediately take us to heaven? Re-read the last part of John 17 when Jesus essentially says to the Father, “Please don’t take them out of the world but protect them and set them apart for the work I have given them to do.” That work is nothing less than Jesus’ work, representing the Father to the world in everything we do.

In addition to Jesus’ example, there are also some clear admonitions in Scripture on the importance of working so you can provide for your family and help others.

Notice the connection in these passages between personal faith and sacred work:

But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Timothy 5:8)

For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage

in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. (2 Thessalonians 3:7-12)

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. (Ephesians 4:28)

The Bible also clearly communicates the ways in which work is used to help with the character formation of a mature Christian and how God then uses that example to influence others toward Christ:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Luke 12:34)

No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (Luke 16:13)

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. (1 Corinthians 10:31-33)

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17)

So, why is all this merging of work and faith so important? Why does it matter that we strive to be humble and committed to excellence at work even when our circumstances at work don't reward us? Why should we continue to do the right thing even if we are criticized, attacked, or even fired?

Scripture is clear on this as well:

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. (John 15:8)

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for 'righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile our good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. (1 Peter 3:13-16)

The reason is simple but eternally profound. Eventually, because of your character, conduct, and conversations, people are going to know that you are a Christian. When others perpetually speak badly about other people behind their backs, by the grace of God, a Christian will not. When others take credit for work they did not do or cast blame on others for their failures, by the grace of God, a Christian will not.

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Eventually, because of your character, conduct, and conversations, people are going to know that you are a Christian.

Instead, the Christian who knows his or her work is sacred will strive to build up others, encouraging everyone from the CEO to the new intern. Eventually, through this ministry, people will start to see Jesus in that person. At some point in time, they will wonder, “What is the reason for the hope that lives in that man/woman?” When that conversation happens, the believer’s life will be supernaturally changed forever. When that happens for you, work will immediately become worship, because the God who saved you is also now living in you to empower you to accomplish his will to redeem and restore. I can promise you that when we go to work instead of me, work becomes one of the most fulfilling facets of life.

This experience is what occurs when we are faithful to merge faith and work in order to make a difference in the place where we make a profit. In Christianity for the 21st century, what you do is no longer as important as why you do it.

I can say with absolute confidence that I have had more personal God moments working in the corporate world than I have ever had as an ordained minister. By the time I was in my mid-twenties, I was 100 percent in the ministry while working for a large corporation. To me, a “disciple” meant nothing less than a fully devoted follower of Christ and a servant leader of others. God had his hand in every area of my life and seemed to bless all that I was doing. New responsibilities and promotions came quickly, and I prayed fervently about the big decisions and the seemingly small ones that occurred every day at work.

My company had an executive leadership development program to equip high potential future leaders. In this program, they took a team of leaders out of their day-to-day roles for six months to travel and be trained to learn how to lead across the entire corporation.

The initial kickoff meeting was held in the corporate boardroom with all of the company’s key executives in attendance. This was clearly my mission field, and, during the luncheon, I said to God, “It would really be cool if one day I could open a meeting in this room with prayer.”

We traveled as a team and, of course, we shared a lot of meals together. My colleagues began to notice my simple practice of praying silently before every meal—especially the team leader who was not a Christian.

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Over those months, as people would ask about my story, there were many opportunities to have conversations about faith. At some meals, the team leader would ask me to pray before we ate our food.

Fast forward to the same boardroom where we were having our final celebration event with all the same important people. One of the executive vice presidents stood up to start the event, but our team leader interrupted him. He began to share with the group that it had become our practice as a team during some meals to have a blessing. He then asked me to lead that prayer.

I stood up to speak—because, after all, I had been doing this for years and why should this be any different? But five words in, it hit me, and I had to pause briefly to compose myself. The Father, in the middle of my prayer, took the time to remind me of my request six months earlier to be able to one day pray in that very boardroom. It was one of the most sacred moments of my life as we finished the prayer together and sat down.

After the meal, an executive, whom I had never met before but was a committed Christian, pulled me to the side and said, “I have no idea what just happened, but I have worked here for over thirty years and that is the first prayer I have ever heard in this building.”

Maybe now more than any other time in history, the world needs mature Christian leaders to be “all in” by merging all of the secular and sacred areas to fulfill God’s calling on their lives. I love this quote:

The world needs men and women...
Who cannot be bought,
Whose word is their bond,
Who put character above wealth,
Who possess opinions and a will,
Who are larger than their vocations,
Who do not hesitate to take changes,
Who will not lose their individuality in a crowd,
Who will be as honest in small things as in great things,
Who will make no compromise with wrong,
Whose ambitions are not confined to their own selfish desires,
Who will not say they do it because everybody else does it,
Who are true to their friends,
Who do not believe that shrewdness, cunning, and hard-headedness are the best qualities for success,
Who are not ashamed or afraid to stand for the truth when it is unpopular,
Who can say “no” with emphasis although all the rest of the world says “yes.” – Author Unknown ¹³

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

In every chapter, I will summarize the major disruptive truths presented and in the Appendix will offer practical ways to respond to them. This is my attempt to connect you with additional organizations and resources that will be worth your time to research and partner with moving forward.

DISRUPTIVE TRUTHS

God is leveraging global disruption to dramatically change the priorities for Christians and the church to accomplish his mission of redemption and restoration in the world.

We have allowed the institutional culture of the church to define our success more than Christians living out the gospel at home, work, and in their neighborhoods.

Every Christian is called to be a disciple and to leverage his or her work as part of God's sacred mission for his or her life.
