

# *Saltshaker*

A Trinity Methodist Church Publication



TRINITY  
Methodist Church

SEPTEMBER 2017

MCI (P) 002/10/2016



## *The Other Six Days*

OUR WORK: OUR WORSHIP & OUR WITNESS



I AM IN THE  
LAND OF SMILES  
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Cover photo courtesy of Nicholas Leong

# How Faith Affects Our Work

Rev Timothy Keller



I've had some busy people pick up *Every Good Endeavour: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*, look at the subtitle, and ask: "OK, so, in a nutshell, how does God's work connect to our work?" Always a good exercise for an author, to be asked to explain your book in just a few minutes! Here are four ways Christian faith influences and shapes our work.

First, the Christian faith gives us a moral compass, an inner GPS giving us ethical guidance that takes us beyond merely the legal aspects or requirements in any situation. A Christian on the board of a major financial institution—recently publicly embarrassed by revelations of corruption—told me about a closed door meeting there between top executives. Someone said, "We have to restore moral values." Immediately someone asked, "Whose values? Who gets to define what is moral?" And there's our problem. There once was a habitus of broadly felt moral intuitions that governed much behaviour in our society. It went well beyond the legal. Much of the ruthlessness, the lack of transparency, and lack of integrity that characterizes the marketplace and many other professions today come because consensus on those moral intuitions has collapsed. But Christians working in those worlds do have solid ethical guidance and could address through personal example the values-vacuum that has now been recognized by so many.

Second, your Christian faith gives you a new spiritual power, an inner gyroscope, that keeps you from being overthrown by either success, failure, or boredom. Regarding success and failure, the gospel helps Christians find their deepest identity not in our accomplishments but who we are in Christ. This keeps our egos from inflating too much during seasons of prosperity, and it prevents bitterness and despondency during times of adversity. But



while some jobs seduce us into over-work and anxiety, others tempt us to surrender to drudgery, only "working for the weekend," doing just what is necessary to get by when someone is watching. Paul calls that "eye-service" (Colossians 3:22–24) and charges us to think of every job as working for God, who sees everything and loves us. That makes high-pressure jobs bearable and even the most modest work meaningful.

Third, the Christian faith gives us a new conception of work as the means by which God loves and cares for his world through us. Look at the places in the Bible that say that God gives every person their food. How does God do that? It is through human work—from the simplest farm girl milking the cows to the truck driver bringing produce to market to the local grocer. God could feed us directly but he chooses to do it through work. There are three important implications of this. First, it means all work, even the most menial tasks, has great dignity. In our work we are God's hands and fingers, sustaining and caring for his world. Secondly, it means one of the main ways to please

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*TMC has been using Rev Keller's book "Every Good Endeavour" in conjunction with its sermon series, The Other Six Days.*

*This article is reproduced from Rev Keller's blog [timothykeller.com](http://timothykeller.com) with permission from Redeemer City to City.*



*Image source: gettyimages*

God in our work is simply to do work well. Some have called this “the ministry of competence.” What passengers need first from an airline pilot is not that she speaks to them about Jesus but that she is a great, skilful pilot. Third, this means that Christians can and must have deep appreciation for the work of those who work skilfully but do not share our beliefs.

Fourth, the Christian faith gives us a new world-and-life view that shapes the character of our work. All well-done work that serves the good of human beings pleases God. But what exactly is “the common good”? There are many work tasks that do not require us to reflect too much on that question. All human beings need to eat, and so raising and providing food serves people well. But what if you are an elementary school teacher, or a playwright? What is good education (i.e. what should you be teaching children)? What kinds of plays should you write (i.e. what kinds of stories do people need)? The answers to these questions will depend largely on how you answer more fundamental questions—what is the purpose of human life? What is life

about? What does a good human life look like? It is unavoidable that many jobs will be shaped by our conscious or semi-conscious beliefs about those issues. So, finally, a Christian must think out how his or her faith will distinctly shape their work.

How wonderful that the gospel works on every aspect of us—mind, will, and feelings—and enables us to both deeply appreciate the work of non-believers and yet aspire to work in unique ways as believers. Putting all of these four aspects together, we see that being a Christian leads us to see our work not as merely a way to earn money, nor as primarily a means of personal advancement, but as truly a calling—to serve God and love our neighbour.

# CHRIST AT WORK



Samuel Wong

*“Sharing Christ is a way of life as we live out our faith in Jesus,” said Patricia. “This requires daily discipline to start the day with Jesus, praying, and letting the Holy Spirit work in all places.”*

Patricia Zoey Tan runs QiiQ Human Development Centre, an early childhood development centre, with her sister and partner. The centre, which is located in Serangoon Gardens, has a staff of seven.

The centre’s tagline “Seeking Knowledge” is based on Proverbs 3:13: “Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding...”

This is significant as it is the way Patricia, who is TMC’s choir director and a small group leader, steers her business - seeking God for knowledge and wisdom always.

Patricia said that her centre brings her into contact with parents of infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers and that whenever an opportunity arises, she talks to these parents, 50% of whom are pre-believers, about life’s issues using Christ-centred principles.

“Sharing Christ is a way of life as we live out our faith in Jesus,” said Patricia. “This requires daily discipline to start the day with Jesus, praying, and letting the Holy Spirit work in all places.”

Patricia said she also shares with the more receptive parents that a good brain helps a child to learn fast, but it is not enough if the child does not have the right spirit or attitude as he or she grows up, and what is important is that a child bears the fruit of the Spirit, which is written in the Bible.

Although the programmes that QiiQ offers are not based overtly on Christian teachings, Patricia introduces Christian themes subtly with the different rooms named after the fruit of the Spirit – Love, Joy, Peace, Faith, and Hope. The music playing in the background at the centre also mostly consists of Christian tunes.

For the centre’s Christmas story-telling sessions, the children are told stories that proclaim the truth about Jesus’ birth rather than secular stories about Christmas. For instance, the centre created a story based on the lyrics of the Christian carol “Away in a Manger”. Patricia recounted how a two-year-old child started tearing during a story-telling session because she felt for the poor baby Jesus who had no place to stay.

When opportunities arise, Patricia will attempt to invite her clients to TMC. One couple, Nelson and Karen, who were previously attending another church, were looking for a church to attend with their toddler, Oliver. At Patricia’s invitation, they have been attending TMC’s services since early this year.

Patricia sometimes invites pre-believing parents to take their toddlers to TMC’s Children’s Ministry, explaining that it is a place where their children can learn good values.

A cross now hangs on a wall at the centre’s





*Patricia (centre) and her sister, Penny, receiving the Cross from Rev Philip Lim at the Centre blessing*



*Patricia (background) in an activity in the Centre*

premises, a gift from former pastor-in-charge at TMC Rev Philip Lim, whom Patricia had invited to bless the centre at its opening.

The cross almost did not make it to the wall as Patricia initially had second thoughts about displaying the item, out of concern that potential clients who were pre-believers would take offence, and fear that she would be judged for not being a “model Christian”.

But she was eventually convicted to put up the cross as a symbolic gesture of her allegiance to Christ. The presence of the cross reminds her to conduct herself fairly and to always counsel parents in a Christian manner. The cross has also appeared to work to her advantage - its presence means no explanations are required and people accept the Christian perspectives the centre adopts.

She makes efforts to ensure that all parents and children who come to the centre experience the love, joy and peace of the Spirit.

“This is something that I instill in the company’s corporate culture and every member of staff is required to always uphold these values,” she said.

Patricia said she has not faced any resistance from the parents of the children towards her Christian approach and does not face major challenges in incorporating Christian principles in her business.

“It is easy for the parents to accept my Christian principles as I simply love them in the way I think Jesus would love them, and people know that I share out of love for them and their children,” she said.

One of Patricia’s challenges is in recruiting and retaining good staff. She prays for guidance before hiring each staff member, and prays even harder if she has to dismiss staff. She conducts impromptu devotional sessions with the staff, not all of whom are Christians, at their weekly meetings. These sessions are non-threatening and do not force the Gospel on its attendees. For instance, at one staff meeting, she asked the staff to share their definition of love. After everyone had shared, Patricia shared her own thoughts, quoting from 1 Corinthians 13 about God’s love and how it could be applied in work relationships and also at home. Ultimately, Patricia believes that whoever God sends to their organisation, God will make good His plan for them.



# ARE WE FULLY LIVING UP TO OUR PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITIES?

*Robert Banks*



This year [2016] marks the 50th anniversary of two landmark books in English by the provocative French Christian thinker Jacques Ellul. His profound analysis of the underlying social and spiritual forces shaping our age in *The Technological Society* and *Propaganda* were widely respected outside as well as inside religious circles.

After becoming a Professor of Law and Institutions, he developed a wide-ranging critique of society and culture based on sociological and theological perspectives. Ellul's insights into the way our preoccupation with technical solutions and new technologies would increasingly supplant other forms of problem-solving and relating, and of the extent the media and propaganda would increasingly influence all kinds of communication, were breathtakingly farsighted.

During his life Ellul published over 50 books. These included a series of striking expositions of several biblical writings. In other works he was critical of the way churches and theology had been subverted by the forces shaping society. In *The Presence of the Kingdom* he outlined the way thoughtful Christians should approach their wider responsibilities in the world. He wrote:

"Christians were never meant to be normal. We've always been holy troublemakers, we've always been creators of uncertainty, agents of a dimension that's incompatible with the status quo". As such "we do not accept the world as it is, but we insist on the world becoming the way that God wants it to be. And the Kingdom of God is different from the patterns of this world."

The problem is that we have lost our edge. More biblically inclined Christians have largely settled for a privatised faith based on the church and family. More liberally oriented Christians tend to conform too much to the issues and ideologies of the wider society. What is really needed is for us to develop a full-scale vision of life, encompassing every aspect of what we do, that springs out of our faith in Jesus Christ as revealed through the Scriptures.

Ellul argued that it is less important to have views about, or to take up a definite economic or political position, than to create a consistent and distinctive way of life. The early Christians developed this. So did believers during the Reformation. We need a similar movement today.

“The whole of life is concerned in this search. It includes the way we think about present political questions, as well as our way of practising hospitality. It also affects the way we dress and the food we eat ... as well as the way we manage our financial affairs. It includes being faithful to one’s wife as well as being accessible to one’s neighbour. It includes the position we ought to take on current social and political questions, as well as the decisions which relate to the personal employment of our time ... Absolutely everything, the smallest details which we regard as indifferent, ought to be questioned, placed in the light of faith, examined from the point of view of the glory of God.”

How can this come about? According to Ellul, we must resolve to do three inter-related things:

To wake up and become more sharply aware of what is really happening around and within us.

1

This means looking beyond what is given to us through the media and hand-held devices. The news and messages we receive through the day are mainly about secondary matters, coloured by the world’s illusions and values, and permeated by political or personal ‘spin’. The deeper forces shaping both ourselves and our times remain largely hidden. Discerning what is taking place below the surface will only come if attentive prayer and mediation is also part of the search.

To listen to our own and others’ inner selves to detect the personal effects of what is shaping our world.

2

This reveals more specific and profound insight into the forces at work in our society than we get from the news, reports, polls or statistics. But it requires greater self-examination and deeper interaction with others than we are used to. This enables us to work out, for example, how much our technical devices – some of which we check two or three hundred times a day – are changing the way we think, speak, relate and behave. We cannot fully achieve this, however, without drawing on the Holy Spirit’s ability to search the deepest recesses of our minds and hearts.

To act locally even though we think globally, helping to transform that part of the world closest to us.

3

It is Ellul who coined this popular phrase. Only through engaging in our work and play, community and civic life, where we live that most of us can have the greatest public influence. It is precisely there that we confront decisions affecting conscience, issues others find discomfoting, opportunities to make a difference. It is there that we can most challenge the illusions that tend to bind people, inventions that seek to enslave human beings, and destructive or even demonic forces in our society.

Creating such a style of life is a corporate as well as individual work.

- It must be a part of everyday family life. – a topic of conversation with children over meals, joint decisions between husband and wife, private as well as public behaviour.
- It should also be a central part of what local churches are about. They need to create communities within them where members can explore life's responsibilities and changes, pray and search the scriptures about these, encourage and support each other to live out this new style of life. In doing so they will learn how to relate, manage conflict, handle money, deal with political agendas, indeed develop a style of life that provides clues for the wider society.
- It ought be at the heart of what Christian groups based in the work place, sporting activities, and social action discuss and undertake. It also requires the help of Christian institutes, centres and think-tanks which contain special expertise in envisioning a distinctive whole-of-life vision of how faith can leaven and transform the world in which we live.

Ellul's own life provides a model of what he wrote. Though a layman he founded a small church in his locality alongside his denominational commitments. He initiated informal vacation classes for interested students as well as regular University courses. He worked among troubled youth in his neighbourhood and served as Deputy Mayor in the city of Bordeaux. He was a member of the local resistance against the Nazis during the Second World War and was the first to bring the plight of the persecuted Kurds to the attention of the Western world.

A distinctive style of Christian life, he argued, alone has the innovative and explosive force to make a difference in the world today, potentially affecting every part of human life, society and culture. It was also the only way that Christianity today could once again have a compelling point of contact with the world from which to proclaim the Gospel.

*(This article was first published by Ethos Institute for Public Christianity in Oct 2016 and has been reproduced with its permission.)*

**Robert Banks is a biblical and practical theologian, based in Australia but with teaching experience in universities and theological colleges in Europe, North America and Asia. He has written a number of books on such biblical themes as God the Worker, Jesus and the Law and Paul's Idea and Community, He has also written or co-authored others on The Tyranny of Time, Private Values and Public Policy, The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity and Re-envisioning Leadership**



# Bibliothèque

These new CDs and many other resources are available for borrowing at the TMC Resource Centre, situated at Benjamin Room, Level 2.



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| 1 D1371 Hillsong United - Wonder<br><i>Hillsong Church</i> | 2 D1372 WOW Gospel<br>2017                  | 3 D1373 Top 25 Gospel Praise<br>Songs 2017 Edition |
| 4 D1374 Here I Am/Send Me<br><i>Darlene Zschech</i>        | 5 D1375 Top 50 Modern<br>Worship Songs 2017 | 6 D1376 Ultimate Collection<br><i>Delirious?</i>   |
| 7 D1377 The World's Favorite<br>Hymns                      | 8 D1378 100 Bible Songs<br>for Kids         | 9 D1379 Right Here<br><i>Charles Billingsley</i>   |



# I AM in the Land of Smiles

*Chew Kim Ling*



I was assigned to work in Bangkok in Aug 2016 when I ended a one-year sabbatical from work. God prepared me physically and mentally to go to Bangkok even before I knew I was going, including leading me to co-facilitate an Alpha @ Home session with a sister in Christ from another church.

When I was told of this position, I remembered the prophecy and vision of fellow sisters in TMC, Anna Goh and Alice Lim, who had prayed for me. The messages were that I needed to get out of my comfort zone to a city where there would be broken hearts. As it turned out, two months after I arrived in Bangkok, the whole country went into deep mourning when their beloved late King Rama IX passed away.

Months before I knew of this work assignment, Pastor Alvin had encouraged me to attend marketplace ministry conferences which emphasised that “as Christians, we cannot not be missionary”. I learnt that regardless of our vocational context, as Christians we are all called into the “missio dei” or God’s mission. I was reminded that, to minister in a different culture, we need to have a humble and servant attitude like Jesus emptying Himself for us.

The business restructuring assignment in Bangkok was a difficult one, in a division I had no experience in. I had never retrenched any staff before, let alone more than 1,000 people. The lives of the locals would be impacted, and I felt totally inadequate to deal with the fallout.

Yet, a year into the assignment, my faith has increased by leaps and bounds.

I have had many opportunities to interact with colleagues who were confused, hurt and frustrated with the business restructuring. For each encounter, I remembered BLESS – Begin with a prayer, Listen, Eat, Serve and Share my story. These encounters built up my courage in witnessing and I prayed each time that my pre-believing colleagues would move one step closer to knowing Christ Jesus, the true Light and everlasting King.

I know I’m totally dependent on His provision to face the challenges in the workplace. God comforted and assured me when I was on my knees and in tears. I am reminded to fix my eyes on Jesus through the storm like Peter walking on water, and like Nehemiah, when he faced opposition in rebuilding the wall, to pray unceasingly in the face of strife and conflict.

By God’s grace, in May this year, five of my colleagues, including four Thai brethren in Christ, came together for a Wednesday lunch fellowship during which we gathered to worship, pray and read His Word.

At the time of writing, it has been 11 weeks, and this lunchtime fellowship is continuing. We had our first pre-believing guest on 12 Jul. We sang Amazing Grace, read from 1 Corinthians on the topic of love, heard the testimony of a sister-in-Christ, and prayed together the confession of our sins. God's favour has been upon us. Our guest said he was touched by the words in 1 Corinthians 13, and he would share with his team and newcomers that there is a Wednesday lunchtime Christian fellowship in the organisation. He also expressed interest in attending the session again the next week.

God has led me to Bangkok to form a community of believers in my marketplace, in a country where it is common for Christians to practise their faith behind closed doors. It is my prayer that the seeds planted in my workplace will take root, grow strong and bear fruit for His glory even after my assignment likely ends this year. I am excited to see how God will complete this good work which He has started and hope to have the opportunity to testify of His marvellous works in time to come.

As it is, I stand amazed at God's hand at work when I submit all to Him in trust and obedience.



*Visiting Oasis Home in Pattaya with Evangelical Church of Bangkok's JOY Life Group in Dec 16.*



*With colleagues outside the Grand Palace in Bangkok in Mar 17, at a memorial service for the late King Rama IX.*

# BEING BOLD FOR JESUS

*Pamela Lim*



I have known my colleague, B, for more than nine years.

Like me, she is an ambitious and driven woman, who learnt from a young age that one needs to strategise, network, work smart and work hard to climb the corporate ladder. (At least, that was what I used to think one had to do!)

B had always been an extremely staunch and religious Hindu woman. She made special “holy trips to special mountaintops” to seek peace, blessings and guidance. She always returned with some strings or bracelets for blessing and protection, which she put on faithfully.

I must confess that I very rarely share my testimony about Jesus, especially in the corporate world. The only thing I have done over the years has been to regularly pray for the salvation of all my pre-believing loved ones and colleagues, including B.

My salvation prayers became more intense, with many tears at times, in the last three to four years. I also began to realise that I had not been bold for Jesus, who has done so much for my family and me. I started to feel really remorseful, and cried often about my “take-and-take” relationship with Jesus, i.e. my self-centred living.

Recently, B faced some extremely difficult human resource challenges. I took the opportunity to ask B whether she wanted me to pray for her. B quickly agreed and thanked me. I guess she had become quite used to me mumbling under my breath during our conversations, that I would pray for this and that.

The next day when I prayed for B, I saw a vision of a person all bent down and in such great pain. The next thing I felt was immense sadness, anger, hurt and frustration. Hot tears flowed down my cheeks. Jesus later told me that the bent-down person was B! I felt really sad for her.

By God’s grace, B called me the very next day as she was still feeling very down. I decided to pluck up my courage to ask her whether she wanted to know the vision I saw when I prayed for her. She eagerly agreed. She started to cry after I finished sharing. She said that bent person was indeed her.

As B was travelling to Singapore two days after our chat, I decided to arrange for a face-to-face meeting. She agreed. I spent the weekend praying for her salvation. On the day of our meeting, I went to the meeting room to pray over the room and invited the Holy Spirit to be present with us. I also asked God to give me courage and even asked our TMC prayer intercessors to intercede for me during my meeting with B.

When I met B, I reminded myself to quickly ask her, before I chickened out, whether she would like to accept Jesus as the Lord and Saviour of her life. The next thing I knew, I heard myself asking her that question and leading her through the sinner’s prayer, emphasising that Jesus is the only one true God and that there are no other gods apart from Him. I later heard myself asking her why she wanted to accept



## " I WANT THAT PEACE THAT YOU HAVE "

~ B

Jesus as Lord and Saviour of her life. Thinking back, I know it certainly wasn't I who put those questions in my mouth – it was the Holy Spirit. I thank the Holy Spirit for His guidance and courage, and also all our prayer intercessors.

B responded to say that she has seen how I have changed over the years. She said she noticed that I now have peace in me, especially during very turbulent times. She also observed that, over the years in the organisation, I always sailed through the many corporate downsizing exercises unscathed. She then said: "I want that peace you have. I also want to sail through unscathed in all my challenges. I know your Jesus is the one who has been helping you. That's why I want to accept Him as Lord and Saviour of my life. I want Him to help me too!"

Since that glorious day, I have arranged for a Christian brother to introduce B to a church in her home country. I have also asked him to pray for her alongside me. I am now praying for guidance on what other things I need to be doing for her, as I have never led anyone to Christ beyond my family members.

I have slowly learnt over the years that all my Father God wants of me is to have a willing and obedient heart, which can only come about when I spend much time reading His Word, worshipping Him and being in His presence. I have also learnt that I need to be very intentional for Jesus, both in prayers and in works. I notice that when I am intentional, I can see His hands moving my mountains, be it giving me courage to share my testimony, or leading me in lone prayer walks in my office with no interruptions.

This journey of being bold for Jesus in the marketplace and beyond has just started for me. I still have a lot to learn. I am thus very thankful that God has blessed me with a supportive and loving husband, parents, and three children, who have always stood by and earnestly prayed for me during my very challenging career moments. I now constantly remind myself that I must learn what the Holy Spirit leads to me to learn, quickly obey what He prompts me to do, and then leave the rest in His big, strong hands to unfold His plans in His time before my very eyes.





# The Two Kingdoms: A Christian Perspective on Church and State in Singapore



Darius Lee



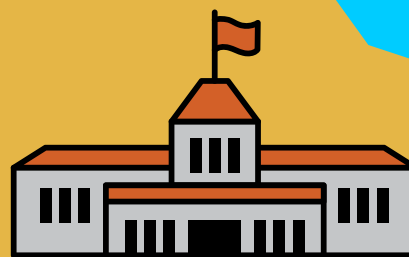
From the “culture wars” and heated debates over casinos, abortion, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) issues, to evangelistic efforts and charitable works, many wonder what the proper relationship between religion and state should be.

Aggressive secularists argue that Christians should not “impose” our religion on others in a multi-religious society like Singapore and “keep religion separate from politics”. Some Christians think that we should not be concerned about “politics”, but should focus on “preaching the Gospel”. Others think that we should be deeply concerned about laws like Section 377A of the Penal Code which criminalises sodomy.

How should Christians understand the relationship between Church and State?

It is well-known that Jesus did not come as a political Messiah to establish an earthly kingdom. As then-Minister for National Development S Dhanabalan once said, *“one of the reasons why Jesus Christ disillusioned the Jews of His time was... that He refused to become a political leader to help the Jews throw off the Roman yoke. And He was interested in changing individuals, not the society directly, but change society by changing individuals.”* [1]

Nevertheless, we can learn much about the roles of Church and State in Jesus’ response when the Pharisees asked whether they ought to pay taxes to Caesar. Referring to the image of Caesar on a denarius, Jesus replied them, “render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.” (Matthew 22:21, KJV)



During the Protestant Reformation, German reformer Martin Luther saw in Jesus’ profound statement a distinction between Two Kingdoms which God has ordained: first, the Kingdom of God (the Church) which He rules through His Gospel and, second, the Kingdom of the World (the State) which He rules through His Law.

This became known as the Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms, the basis for much of our modern understanding of the Separation of Church and State.

The Doctrine emphasises that the Church should focus on preaching the Gospel for the salvation of all. As a result, it is not the role of the Church to govern matters of life and property, which are matters for the State.

On the other hand, the State should devote its full time to governing temporal matters, as servants sent by God “to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right” (1 Peter 2:14ff). Just as the Church should respect the political independence of the State, the State should also respect the autonomy of the Church in its religious affairs. For example, the State has no right to dictate how the Church should preach the Gospel, choose its clergy, or conduct itself in worship.

[1] Maintenance of Religious Harmony Bill, Singapore Parliament Reports (23 February 1990) at col. 1170

The Protestant emphasis on justification by faith led to a third principle – freedom of religion – which is now recognised as a fundamental human right. Since faith is the work of the Holy Spirit and “a free work, to which no man can or should be forced”, human authority should not try to coerce religious belief.

Because human authority is delegated by God, there are limits to human government. Hence, if any human authority commands things that are contrary to God's Laws, we should "obey God rather than men", as the apostles did when the Sanhedrin commanded them to stop preaching in Jesus' name (Acts 5:29ff). In a modern context, Christians should exercise conscientious objection by refusing to participate in abortions or same-sex marriages, even when threatened with punishment.

The final principle is that of vocation (i.e. God's calling). Implicit in Jesus' teaching to "render unto Caesar" and "render unto God" is a call to discipleship; if the denarius belonged to Caesar because it bore his image, then we ought to render ourselves to God because we bear His image (cf. Genesis 1:27)! It is a call to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:29).

Thus, each of us is called to live out the Gospel in full wherever God has called us, whether as pastors, politicians, teachers, doctors, lawyers, or any other vocation. Given that disciples of Jesus Christ are 'in' but not 'of' the world (John 17:6-19), we cannot ignore political developments around us. Instead, a faithful preaching of the Gospel will always minister holistically to people at all levels of their being, i.e. heart, soul, mind and strength (emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and physically).

Taken holistically, the Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms has several important implications for the Church in Singapore.

Firstly, the Church and pastors should always focus on preaching the full counsel of the Gospel both in season and out of season, including on “controversial issues” such as the sanctity of human life from conception and the sanctity of marriage, and to equip believers for

every good work (2 Timothy 3:17). We should never compromise our calling to speak the truth in love, however politically-incorrect certain parts of the Gospel may be for the season.

Secondly, while it is not the vocation of pastors to advocate for political causes, it falls to individual Christians to minister the Gospel at our workplaces, schools or in the public square where God has placed us. Furthermore, in a democratic society like Singapore, each individual Christian can and should exercise his or her rights to freedom of speech and religion to speak truth to power.

Thirdly, in the midst of an increasingly complicated world, we should remember that politics is not salvation. While a godless world has to rely on human politics to build its Tower of Babel – its own idea of utopia here on earth – we look to Christ our true salvation, whose kingdom “is not of this world” but “from another place” (John 18:36).

Ultimately, as citizens of Two Kingdoms and “aliens” in this world, we know that God’s kingdom is both here and not yet. Meanwhile, we are each called to remain faithful with all that God has entrusted to us as we look to the day that Jesus will return as King to manifest His kingdom in full.

*(This article was first published by Ethos Institute for Public Christianity in Oct 2015 and has been reproduced with its permission.)*

Darius Lee is a lawyer in private practice and a member of the Global Young Reformers Network Steering Committee of the Lutheran World Federation.

Darius holds religious freedom, marriage and the sanctity of human life in high regard, and has defended these important values and rights on various platforms. He has written about his journey of discipleship and passion for matters of justice and righteousness in his book, 'Like a Fire in My Bones: A Journey of Discipleship'.

# PLOUGHING THE GROUND



Lim Sue Yien

“I’m an ox.”

This was how our conversation started. The interviewee was Associate Lay Leader, Robert Yeo, whose Chinese zodiac happens to be an ox.

However in this instance, he was describing his over-arching view on how he sees his ministry in the workplace.

“I plough the ground to prepare the soil, so that others can come and plant seeds, and later, maybe others will enjoy the harvest.”

Robert believes God led him to his current posting some nine years back, in order to provide him a platform to reach out to pre-believers. He leads a team of four in his office.

He bases his management approach on role-modelling Christian values and behaviour. Examples of these values are an interest in building people, not in meeting targets. He always tells his staff that they should prioritise family above work. The office environment is like a family, where people are open with one another, care for and love one another like Christian brothers and sisters would.

During Monday morning meetings which Robert chairs, he shares relevant pointers from the previous day’s sermon to his colleagues, spending a lot of time on learning. He also uses this platform to check behavioural issues, using biblical principles to build character. In the same spirit of making disciples who make disciples, he challenges his employees to use this season in the company to learn from what he can impart, to equip themselves, and to leave the “nest” when they are ready.

**“We should point people  
to God, and seize occasions  
that God has given to us.”**



Robert (second from right) engaging in a casual setting



Once, when a pre-believing colleague was struggling with personal issues, she asked if she could borrow the bible that Robert kept in his drawer. As he was on his way back to his office at the time, he took the chance to swing by SKS bookstore to buy this colleague her own bible.

It is God's encouragement that has given Robert the passion to continue in this role. He is able to openly discuss religion in the work context. He feels that one can initiate conversations about God in different ways. When speaking to people who are of other faiths, he tries to build bridges by using the term "God" and avoiding Christian jargon. This encourages people to open up. It brings people together as opposed to causing them immediately to focus on how our faiths are different.

Once, at a conference in the Philippines, several people asked if he was a pastor. In Malaysia, he was approached by a Christian couple who thanked him for acknowledging God in his remarks at a seminar.

Robert considers the place where he is placed as God's blessing.

**"But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." (Jeremiah 17:7-8).**

This verse has come as an affirmation more than once that he should continue to depend on God, draw strength from His word, and plough the ground (i.e. the hearts of pre-believers) where God has placed him.



*Robert with his colleagues*





Christabel David

## MY MOM'S SOME SAHM

SAHMs is an acronym for "Stay-At- Home-Mums", and a homonym for "Psalms" (which in Hebrew means praises or hymns). One author says it may well be called the "Hebrew Prayer and Praise Book". As much as we often speak of Christians as witnesses for Christ in the marketplace, we thought we would highlight what some SAHMs are doing for the Lord. Contrary to popular thought, SAHMs do not "just stay at home and take care of the children".

My mother made the decision to take on the role of an "on-site manager" of the home when my youngest brother, Samuel, was born in 1997. By then, she had already been working for 19 years and had three children.

I'm glad she did because her role as a SAHM has had a profound impact on our family, our home and beyond.

### A MINISTRY THAT TRANSFORMS THE FAMILY

I can safely say that who my siblings and I are today are in many ways a direct result of my mum's strict discipline and around-the-clock investment in our formative years.

My mum was firm but loving. She chided and punished when there was a need for it but she also taught us what sacrificial love was.

It came in the form of staying up late and helping me complete my homework.

It came in the form of home-cooked meals and clothes that were always neatly ironed, and for a period of time, handwashed when our washing machine broke down.

She prayed for us and with us before big tests or in the midst of stressful times. I think when your sole ministry is to your family, you pour every fibre of your being into earnestly interceding for them and doing all you can to bless them throughout the day.

As my mum grew in her relationship with God over the years, her approach toward raising us also changed. She adopted a very spiritual perspective for every problem or situation that we brought to her, asking us questions like "what is God trying to teach you here" and "how is your relationship with God"?

When my commitments at work grew, she would also remind me to slow down and draw strength and wisdom from God and not allow my work to affect my ministry.

The ministry of a SAHM prepares the other members in a family to go

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**"She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her."**

---

out and serve in various other avenues because we know things at home are taken care of.

It is a ministry that reveals God's tireless and sacrificial love for us all.





And it is the only ministry that never gets an official “day off”, but also the one that brings fulfilment and flexibility to serve in different ways.

Perhaps Proverbs 31:27-28 best encapsulates how I see my mum: “She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.”

### **A MINISTRY THAT GIVES TIME FOR OTHER MINISTRIES**

Being a SAHM can be pretty tiring too but it doesn’t mean you serve only your family. In the right season and time, God calls and opens doors for

more ways to serve beyond the home.

Now that we have all grown up (or so we’d like to think), my mum has more capacity to do more outside the home. She has been attending weekly bible study lessons with the Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) for the past eight years and even began serving as a group leader for the past three years.

The homework for BSF has to be done on a daily basis. As a leader, she now has to attend a weekly leaders’ meeting on top of the regular weekly lectures. She also has to call up each one of the twelve ladies in her group to follow up with them

and ask for their prayer requests before collating them and sending them out.

It is amazing seeing how my mum has served God in her role as a SAHM for the past 26 years and how her ministry has continuously evolved over the years.



Tan Wei Chian

# WHEN YOUR WORLD TURNS NMOD UPSIDE DOWN

This is a testimony of how God sustained me when I suffered a major life-threatening illness.

My memory of how it all unfolded on that fateful night is vivid.

On 9 Mar 15, I was having a meal with three good friends at a coffee shop. Little did I know that a catastrophic event was about to befall me that would have an unimaginable impact on me, my family and friends.

As we were about to leave the coffee shop, I suddenly felt a spinning sensation. It felt like the worst dizziness and headache ever. I could not stand up and my body swayed to the side. I desperately called for help but could not seem to get my message across to my friends. They eventually realised something was amiss and frantically tried to help me by holding onto me to prevent me from falling off the chair. I vomited all the undigested food I had ingested just moments ago. Then I blacked out.

When I regained semi-consciousness, I was already in the hospital. I was diagnosed with a brain aneurysm and subarachnoid haemorrhage after a blood vessel ruptured in the cerebrum. An emergency brain operation was scheduled for the next day. My wife and friends were told to prepare for the worst as the prognosis was uncertain.

The operation was a success. I regained full consciousness the day after the operation. To everyone's surprise, especially the doctors and nurses in the

high dependency unit, I was able to talk and respond.

However, due to some post-operation complications, my third cranial nerve was affected and I couldn't open my right eye, a medical condition called "ptosis".

It was the beginning of a long fight back to recovery.



Tan Wei Chian and family.

The incident changed my life forever. My whole world was shaken, and I was plunged into deep confusion. I struggled for survival.

In summary, I struggled with self-doubt,

physical pain and discomfort, and the loss of some body functions. I endured sleepless nights due to disturbed sleep, and suffered a brief period of depression. At some point, I contemplated suicide as a result of my hallucinations and perceived helplessness.

It took me almost a month of intensive treatment before I regained some form of independence, like having the strength to shower myself with the nurses' supervision.

I underwent daily intensive physiotherapy and occupational therapy. Slowly, I regained my ability to perform basic activities. This included the ability to get out of bed, walk in a straight line, feed myself, change my clothes, button my shirt, brush my teeth, and take a shower. All these activities which I had taken for granted seemed impossible tasks when I was undergoing therapy.

It made me more determined to get well and fight the illness.

With the help of my therapists, I was discharged and returned home after only one week of therapy. It took me at least another four months of treatment and rehabilitation before I made significant improvement in my recovery. Gradually, I also regained my eyesight.

I was able to return to work by September. The doctor certified that I could perform lighter duties. I also cleared my driving assessment, and was able to drive again.

I continued to work full-time as a polytechnic lecturer for almost one year before moving on to my current job as a community mental health worker. I have been serving in the TMC worship ministry by playing the electric guitar since the end of 2015. I have attended two church camps and am thankful for the privilege to have been able to serve at the recent Relevant church camp alongside many worshippers. I will continue to use my

God-given talent to serve Him.

My recovery could not have been so smooth without the constant love, support and encouragement from my wife, loved ones, family members, friends and members of God's household praying for my recovery.

Reflecting on the last two years and four months, God's abundant blessings warm my heart and amaze me even though I still cannot understand why I needed to go through the suffering and trials.

My suffering, in any case, is nothing compared to His glorious presence, provision, and protection for me and my family.

I give thanks to Him, our sovereign God, whose divine power orchestrated all these events in my life, sending His servants and church friends to minister to me during my hospitalisation.

Despite the trying period, I had a deep sense of assurance and divine peace which I had never felt before.

Through it all, He has been a faithful and loving God, preserving my life and my talents. He showers me with His blessings, even though I fall short of His glory and into sinful ways and sin's snare every now and then.

I've learnt to put my trust solely in Him and to wait patiently for His deliverance whenever faced with life's challenges, uncertainties and sufferings.

Hopefully, I can become more like Christ as I press onward in the process of continuous sanctification.

**"I WILL PRAISE YOU, O LORD,  
WITH MY WHOLE HEART; I WILL  
TELL OF ALL YOUR MARVELLOUS  
WORKS. I WILL BE GLAD AND RE-  
JOICE IN YOU; I WILL SING PRAISE  
TO YOUR NAME, O MOST HIGH."  
– PSALM 9:1-2 NKJV**



# Relevant

AS WE ARE & WHERE WE ARE

ROMANS 12:1-2

Relevant  
Feelings

God has used the sermons Ps Benny shared to remind me always to be child-like in my faith and to be teachable - to always press in for more and to know that, no matter how long one has been in church or whether grown up with bible stories, His Word is always fresh. No matter how familiar His Word is, we should embrace it with a posture of excitement and of longing.

I was also challenged to be a daily clean vessel for Him, and not to allow the insidious sins of gossip to dishonour Him.

Post-camp, God has inspired and excited me with fresh insights and convictions each day. Even as I had committed to loving a colleague despite her being very political at work, He has honoured my obedience (I learnt that she resigned the day I returned from camp!). I felt God show me that it's more the process of choosing to love, and as we do so, He works in mysterious ways.- Eugenia Koh



"A Community United in Love" - these words stood out for me this camp as I reflected on the relationships built with the new people I met at camp, all the little and big experiences I had, and all the bonds that were strengthened.

The church community isn't a place filled with perfect people who always get it right. It is a family filled with broken and imperfect people in need of a perfect and loving God. It's a community where we can love and be loved authentically as we spur one another on in this journey of faith and life across generations. - Blossom Chan





I signed up for camp because I wanted, and was looking forward, to a time of special worship, fellowship, and receiving the Word from the Lord, together with his people. My biggest takeaway was where I am in the 5 phases of spiritual formation:

1. Providence
2. Preparation
3. Prioritisation
4. Personal Calling
5. Personalisation of ministry.

- Anon



The BEST church camp I have attended - and I have been to 7 to 8 camps.

Ps Benny was a great speaker. The message of getting rid of all my sins, hurt and anger so that my heart can have room for the fresh filling of the Holy Spirit was poignant.

I want to grow my desire for the longing for our God everyday. I pray not to respond with my own strength and might, but by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Tan Kim Lam



This was my first church camp, and it was imperfectly perfect.

I served as an Intergenerational Group IC and an AV personnel, both of which I agreed to purely by faith since it was my first church camp and I did not know what to expect. Was I the most charismatic Group IC who led everyone in my group to feel like it was the best church camp? Was I superb in doing my AV duties? No. But beyond the opportunities missed and the mistakes made, I was thoroughly blessed with newly-forged friendships with the people in my group and an invaluable experience in operating a new visuals system.

Most importantly, God allowed me to bond much more deeply with everyone in my small group during the camp. Although I left the camp feeling physically tired, I was spiritually filled and emotionally blessed. Can't wait to do it again.- Joshua Loke







*Christabel David*

## CONSECRATION OF GLORY TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH

On 27 May 17, more than 60 members and friends of TMC made their way up to Phnom Penh to witness the consecration of our sister church – Glory Trinity Methodist Church.

It was possibly the largest group that TMC has sent to Cambodia.

We were an interesting mix of people, the youngest being 7-year-old Jordan Tang, and the oldest (possibly) being Dr Fu Dunyi who is soon to be an octogenarian.

Some of us were visiting for the first time, and others had been there more than 30 times. But one thing we all felt in unison was the excitement and anticipation of dedicating a brand new church building to God alongside our GTMC siblings-in-Christ.



The consecration service marked the completion of 13 months of construction and many years of planning and praying.

On the day of the consecration, with much enthusiasm, Pastor Chamnap and his team showed us around the building. Pastor Chamnap shared his plans for the church and the new building. The plans include computer and music classes that will be open to those who are not part of the GTMC congregation. He also shared how he would share God's Word through these classes, for example, teaching people to type on the computer by using material from the bible.

It was wonderful to hear all the plans in store for GTMC. It was even more encouraging to learn that TMC will also have a part to play in helping to establish the church once Pastor Chamnap and his team firm up their plans further.

Let us remain expectant.









## CONSECRATION OF GLORY TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH

About 7 years ago, I was part of the Communications team that headed to Cambodia to observe our church missionaries at work. Back then, the original piece of land which the new GTMC building now sits on was overgrown with grass. Returning to Cambodia was such an interesting experience because we could see how the place has been physically transformed, how the congregation has changed, and how the people have been empowered to make a difference in their community. You can see how God has really worked in their lives.

– Olivia Ng

Olivia (second from left) serving in the worship team at the consecration service





It's been a humbling experience for both of us to attend the consecration service, and to know that so much work and planning has been put into the development of GTMC. The vision and courage of the people at GTMC, despite the challenges ahead, is indeed commendable. We are so grateful for their hospitality.

– Steven & Soo Yee Koh



From this trip to GTMC, I learnt the importance of Fellowship...I could feel the happiness of our fellowship. I could touch the closeness of our fellowship. I could see the intense cooperation of our fellowship. It made me want to belong as a member of our TMC Fellowship forever.

– Jeffrey Koh

Brothers Jordan (left) and Dylan (right) receiving communion at the consecration service



# EVENTS

## **Tues 22 Aug,**

and every 2nd and 4th Tuesdays  
until 28 Nov. 10.00am The Way of  
Transforming Discipleship  
[www.tmc.org.sg/highlights.html#td](http://www.tmc.org.sg/highlights.html#td)

**Sat 2, 16 Sep, 7, 21 Oct, 4, 18 Nov**  
10.00am Youth Ave Leaders Captains'  
Development  
[www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123](http://www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123)

**Sat 2 Sep,**  
and every Sat 3.00pm Youth Ave  
Sport Activity  
[www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123](http://www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123)

**Sat 2 Sep**  
3.00pm Youth Family Day  
SAFRA Mount Faber  
[www.facebook.com/TMCYouthMin](http://www.facebook.com/TMCYouthMin)

**Tues 5 Sep**  
1.00pm Youth Ave Dark Room  
Returns Part 2  
[www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123](http://www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123)

**Sun 10 Sep**  
9.00am TMC 61st Anniversary  
service followed by lunch  
1.00pm Vision Launch  
[www.tmc.org.sg/highlights.html#anniv](http://www.tmc.org.sg/highlights.html#anniv)

**Sat 16 Sep**  
8.00am Last Local Conference

**Thurs 28 Sep, 26 Oct, 30 Nov**  
2.00pm GYM Line Dancing

**Sat 30 Sep**  
1.00pm Youth Ave Leaders Captains'  
Development Pizza Party  
[www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123](http://www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123)

**Sun 1 Oct**  
Children's Sunday

**Sun 8 Oct**  
Installation of the Local Church  
Executive Committee

## **Sat 21 Oct**

12.00pm Youth Ave Deepavali  
Celebration  
[www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123](http://www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123)

**Sun 29 Oct**  
Children's Ministry - Primary Six  
Graduation  
[www.tmc.org.sg/cm.html](http://www.tmc.org.sg/cm.html)

**Sun 22, 29 Oct, 5, 12, 19, 26 Nov, 3, 10 Dec**  
2.00pm Baptism & Membership Class  
[www.tmc.org.sg/baptism.html](http://www.tmc.org.sg/baptism.html)

**Sun 5 Nov**  
WSCS As-Good-As-New cum Food  
Sale in aid of Mission Trip to Glory  
Trinity Methodist Church

**Wed 22 Nov**  
7.00am Youth Ave Cycling  
[www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123](http://www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123)

**Wed 22 Nov to Sat 25 Nov**  
Children's Ministry Camp  
[www.tmc.org.sg/cm.html](http://www.tmc.org.sg/cm.html)

**Fri 24 Nov**  
3.00pm Youth Ave Nerf Game  
[www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123](http://www.facebook.com/YouthAvenue123)

**Tues 28 Nov**  
11.00am Youth Ave Cooking Class

**Every Sun**  
9.30am Mandarin Service Prayer  
Meeting

**Every 2nd Sun**  
After the 11.15am service Young  
Adults' Lunch Fellowship

**Last Sun of the month**  
9.00am Visit to Institute of Mental  
Health by Outreach & Social  
Concerns.  
Contact Yvonne Tan at 9091 8589 /  
[yvonnatangb@gmail.com](mailto:yvonnatangb@gmail.com)  
[www.tmc.org.sg/osc.html#imh](http://www.tmc.org.sg/osc.html#imh)

## **Every Wed (not 18 Oct)**

8.00pm Church Prayer Meeting  
[www.tmc.org.sg/prayer.html](http://www.tmc.org.sg/prayer.html)

**Every 1st Wed**  
10.00am-12.00pm  
Yum Cha@10 is an opportunity  
for people to come together for  
fellowship, and serves as a platform  
for TMCers to meet one another  
as well as non- Christians in the  
community mid-week. Contact the  
church office / [churchoffice@tmc.org.sg](mailto:churchoffice@tmc.org.sg)  
[www.tmc.org.sg/ministries.html#gym](http://www.tmc.org.sg/ministries.html#gym)

**Last Thurs of the month**  
10.00am-12.00pm  
St Luke's Eldercare Centre Devotions  
at Blk 217 Serangoon Ave 4. TMC's  
ministry to SLEC brings hope, help  
and the love of Christ to many  
needy elderly. If you wish to join in,  
contact Eddie from the church office  
/ [eddie@tmc.org.sg](mailto:eddie@tmc.org.sg).  
[www.tmc.org.sg/osc.html#slec](http://www.tmc.org.sg/osc.html#slec)

**Every Fri**  
8.00 – 10.00pm  
Healing Ministry at the Prayer Chapel

**Every Sat**  
9.00 – 11.30am  
Fellowship of Ukulelians  
[www.tmc.org.sg/regular.html#ukulele](http://www.tmc.org.sg/regular.html#ukulele)

**Every 1st Sat**  
4.30pm  
Youth Ministry - Worship, Word and  
Community  
[www.facebook.com/TMCYouthMin/](http://www.facebook.com/TMCYouthMin/)

**Monthly**  
WSCS Visitation to Homebound.  
Those interested to bring the church  
into the homes of the homebound,  
please contact Lucy Chan at 9678  
4046. Group leaves TMC at 10am.

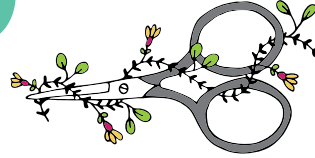
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## WORK IS AVAD



Claire Lowe

*This article is adapted from a sermon delivered by Claire at TMC on 3 Sep 17.*

What kind of work do you think God wants of us?

If you are a cafe owner, should you play Christian songs all day long?

If you are a doctor, should you be finding every opportunity to hand Christian tracts to your patients?

If you are a pilot, should you stand at the entrance of the aeroplane to say: "Hello, welcome aboard, are you ready to meet your Maker?"

In The New York Times magazine, there was an article featuring a Christian bank whose employees would lay hands on their clients.

Do such acts of piety make a Christian Christian at work?

### ***How should we be working as image-bearers of God?***

After God created Adam, He "took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it." (Gen 2:15)

The word, "work", is translated from the Hebrew root word *avad*.

*Avad* carries several shades of meaning in Hebrew not captured in the English word "work".

### ***Avad is cultivating work***

An English word that comes close to the word *avad* is "cultivate".

Tim Keller in Chapter 3 of his book, *Every Good Endeavour*, describes the idea of work as cultivation.

But the word "cultivate" does not apply only in the agricultural setting. It is used in many other contexts in Scripture as well.

The production of flax fibres from the straw of flax plants (Isa 19:9), and weaving them into linen is described as *avad*.

Producing metal alloys from natural metals in the ground, and forging them into instruments, including weapons, is *avad* (Gen 4:22; Isa 54:16).

Cultivating involves taking good natural resources that God has created and developing them so as to create something wonderful out of them – something that brings out their full potential.

Such cultivating work is, in essence, creative. This creativity reflects the image of God.

By this definition, *avad* would also include the cultivation of a child's mind, scientific discoveries, invention of new technology, and a range of artistic productions.

But *avad* is more than just the development of cultural products.

***A Marketplace Mission “is not simply about the conversion of individuals at work; [it] is about the conversion of work itself, giving it the power to shape people...”***

***Michael McLoughlin,  
YWAM Marketplace Mission***

It applies also to the cultivation of social order. The word “culture” comes from the word cultivate. How people live together needs to be cultivated too.

The work of those in governing positions, the military and the civil service is described in Scripture as *avad*. The work of judgment and executing punishment to the guilty is described as *avad* (Isa 28:21). The building of a city, not just the construction of the physical buildings, but also the formation of social and regulatory systems is described as *avad* (Eze 48:18).

*Avad* also refers to work that keeps and maintains order in God’s creation. So all work pertaining to environmental sustainability, financial management, healthcare, and social services can be considered as *avad*.

Even waste management, as in what to do with excrement, was spelt out in the Old Testament: “You shall have a place outside the camp, and you shall go out to it. And you shall have a trowel with your tools, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig a hole with it and turn back and cover up your excrement” (Deut 23:13). Even the latrine system mattered to God.

All cultivating work – *avad* – is important to God.

If you get a landscape designer to create a beautiful garden for you, you can’t just leave it and expect it to tend to itself. You need a gardener to continually cultivate it. Similarly, all the human work that we do – the various works of cultivation

- ensures that this huge Garden of Eden, this world and all the life in it, will continue to grow and flourish.

Creation out of nothing was a one-time event a long time ago, exclusively the work of God. Maintaining the created order is, in part, our work. All of our work - paid or unpaid - plays a critical role in the continuing process of creation.

### ***Avad is Worship/Service***

“As for me and my household, we will *avad* (serve) the Lord” (Josh 24:15).

“You shall fear the Lord your God and you shall *avad* (worship) Him” (Deut 6:13).

Moses told Pharaoh that the Lord said: “Let my people go, so that they may *avad* (worship in the NIV; serve in the NASB) me” (Ex 8:20).



***“Each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them.”***

***(1 Cor 7:17)***

*Avad* is also used to mean serve and worship.

The Hebrew concept of worship is somewhat different from our modern English understanding of worship, and has at least these two elements: the worship of God in ritual expression (*shachah*) and the worship of God through work (*avad*).

In the Jewish mind, a worshipper of Yahweh did not consider worship as something he did at particular times only.

Worship is a continuous activity, intimately tied to work. There is no sacred or secular, because everything under the sun belongs to God.

This idea of work as worship may seem strange to us, because we are so used to the idea of worship as singing, and serving God as serving in “ministries” in church. These are acts of worship as well, but we need to enlarge our understanding of what it means to worship and serve God. And *avad* tells us how.

By integrating the two meanings of *avad*, we can say: we worship God by serving Him through our work.

Thus, from Mondays to Fridays, when you’re in the board room at a meeting, or closing a deal with a client, or disciplining your children, you won’t suddenly break into a Hallelujah chorus. We don’t worship God merely in song. We worship Him through our work.

Worship is not just singing, praising and being caught up in the heavens. Worship is also found on the ground, in seemingly mundane work situations. There is a “sacredness in the ordinariness of work. This is worship without singing.

“Each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them.” (1 Cor 7:17)

We don’t have to enter into full time ministry to really serve God. We can really serve God in the very situation that God has already assigned us to.

Tomorrow morning, go to your workplaces and continue to do what you have been doing – be it grandparenting or leading a corporation - but do it with a different mindset. Do it with the Hebrew understanding of *avad*. See your work as part of God’s continuing work of creation, creatively cultivating something and seeing what you do as your service and worship to God.

By working, by doing what you are doing, you are essentially obeying God’s Genesis instruction and fulfilling that very first mandate God gave to humankind. And because work is an act of obedience, there is nothing ungodly or secular about your work.



## How should we be working as image-bearers of the Creator?

As image-bearers of God, we need to cultivate work norms that honour God. We need to do our work just as God would have it. And the creation of such godly, faith-embodied work cultures is very powerful and transformational.

In Cambodia, an Australian missionary and I started a social enterprise which made children's costumes and clothes out of leftover fabric from garment factories. The production was great, but what was even better was working with the seamstresses themselves.

Thavy was one of the seamstresses. She was a talented and ambitious girl. But she just couldn't sew a straight line. It was torture for her, and for me to keep telling her repeatedly, to unpick and re sew. Eventually she did master the skill of sewing a very neat line.

Soon, Thavy found herself doing everything as if she was sewing a straight line. She did many things carefully, beautifully and excellently. She grew into a very fervent Christian and became one the best worship leaders in her church.



Thavy at work

I'd like to think the impact of teaching a person to excel in the little tasks of work is immeasurable. The tool of discipleship used here was not a Bible study guide book. The tool was work.

From learning to sew a straight line and other work tasks, Thavy learnt about excellence, perseverance, hope and faith. She met the God of Gen 3:21, the loving and caring Father who tailored leathered garments for Adam and Eve. Thavy met also Tabitha of Acts 9 who used her tailoring skills to bless the poor and needy. Thavy's coming to know Jesus and growth as a follower of Christ came out of the context of work.

When we *avad* - when we worship God by serving Him through our work - very powerful and life-transforming work environments are created. I dare say these bear far greater witness than uninvited and untimely proselytisation.

