

Discipleship in Real Life

Week 4 - Jesus + Our Time

All right welcome here tonight! This is our last Friday together! It has been awesome meeting together to talk about what following Jesus looks like in different areas of life. And my prayer and hope is that these Friday nights have not just been 1 more thing to do or just more head knowledge but I want them to be so practical for us...we won't go over what we've talked about for the past 3 Friday's but just as a reminder, if you've missed one I've been uploading my teaching notes on our website so you can have them and look over them....if you go to our website and click on "news" then all of the teaching notes are on there.

Tonight we want to talk about what it looks like to follow Jesus with our time. Now here's the thing....we all are given the same amount of time...for all of us, there are 24 hours in a day and 7 days a week and so we are all locked into that time system. God has given us all the same number of hours in a day and the same number of days in a week. Tonight we want to talk about how we honour God with what we do with our time.

I believe we live in a "time-starved" society...and really we live in a society that finds worth and celebrates busyness. Most people work far too much (40 hrs is almost seen as part time), we cram our evenings full of activities (kids sports, music lessons, church things even, life group, etc.), many families do not eat together anymore because of our busyness, and we put our kids in so many extra-curricular activities to make sure that they are well-rounded. We celebrate being busy...being busy and having too much on our plate almost = importance. If you aren't busy then you're seen as lazy and maybe you need to do more.

Even the way we talk to each other shows us this. "How are you doing, Andrew? OH, busy..." "Hey Andrew, how's it going? Keeping busy??" And it's seen as a good thing. I have had lots of people who maybe want to go for lunch or coffee and always when they ask they say: "Hey Andrew I would love to lunch with you but I know how busy you are!" And I always say: "I'm not busy....let's have lunch."

Stats on Busyness:

- more than 1/3 of working adults say they get less than 6 hours of sleep a night (33% of adults are sleep-deprived)
- 4 out of 10 Christians admitted they rushed from task to task
- 6 out of 10 Christians admitted that busyness of life gets in the way of developing a relationship with God
- U.S.A. Today did a multi-year poll started in 1987-2008 - every consecutive year, people identified as being more busy than the year before (69% said busy or very busy)
 - what are you sacrificing for your busyness?
 - 56% - sleep
 - 52% - recreation
 - 51% - hobbies
 - 44% - friends
 - 30% - family
- in 2008 only 20% said they ate at least 1 family meal per day

So we are busy. And I like to think of each day broken up into segments and we only have enough energy and time to do certain things...so we work, we play hockey, we do

household chores, family time, etc. (average person spends 28 hrs a week watching TV (4 hrs a day) / 16 hrs a week on computer 2.3 hrs a day) Something is going to suffer when we cram so much into our lives. So tonight we want to talk about how we honour God and follow Jesus as his disciples in our time...what we fill our lives with...how we spend our 24 hours a day. Now, just so you know where we are going, first off we need to talk about work. Because for most of us, work compromises a large chunk of our time...so how do you follow Jesus with your work?

Work

Ok so first off how do we follow Jesus in our work? Here's the thing...many Christians have a dualistic worldview...so we kind of distinguish between the sacred and secular...so sacred is our church life and life group and Sunday mornings and VBS and all of the religious things we do and then the rest of life exists in this secular realm...oftentimes including our jobs. So many Christians I know struggle with how they follow Jesus if they work in a bank, or they are a mechanic, or a carpenter, or a school teacher. In their minds, those things exist in the secular realm...so its hard to wrap our minds around this.

Also, we tend to place a higher emphasis on so-called "Christian work". So to follow Jesus with our work we can sometimes think that to follow Jesus with our work we need to become a pastor or a missionary or work for a non-profit agency or a Christian school or college. But here's where we are going to dig into - the Bible places value on all human, done by all people as a channel of God's love for his world. There is no sacred/secular divide. What this can mean is sometimes we think to follow Jesus in our workplace means we have to overtly mention him...hang up Christian posters or pray out loud in the break room for our lunch, or only write and perform Christian music or plays, or I have to lead a Bible study at my workplace. So we want to look at how we do this.

A Biblical View of Work

First off, we have to ask, is work bad? Is work a necessary evil? What are some views or thoughts on that...is work just something we have to do because of the Fall? Have you heard thoughts or heard comments on this? Why do we have to work? If there hadn't been a fall, if Adam and Eve hadn't sinned wouldn't we all be on a beach sipping margaritas?

First off, work was a part of God's design for humanity before the fall. If you look at Genesis 1 and 2, the chapters before the fall of mankind, you see hard work woven into the narrative. First off, God created the world and everything in it in a sequence...that built on the last day...yes God simply spoke things into existence but each day he did a certain amount...and after each day it says: "And there was evening and there was morning, the first day." I believe God was laying out for us a rhythm of work...because on the 7th day, God rested. Now God didn't need to rest because he was tired or had worked too hard...I believe he was ingraining in the human race a natural rhythm towards work and rest.

When God creates mankind this is what he says. Genesis 1:26-28: "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 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.”

Right in the creation of man and woman God has given them work to do....have dominion over all of creation...fill the earth and subdue it. That's hard work...having dominion over all of the animals...subduing them.

Now Genesis 2 is a detailed account of God creating the first people, Adam and Eve. And Genesis 2:5 says: “When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up - for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground...”

Verse 15 says: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” There was manual labour before the fall....humanity was in charge of working and keeping the ground....Adam named all of the animals...he was in charge of the garden. He worked the ground.

So work was a part of God's plan, his design before the fall...God did not create the humans and say “relax, creation and the animals kind of take care of themselves, so here's a drink and here's a TV and relax.” NO! He said work the ground, have dominion over creation, subdue all the animals.

Now we know that Genesis 3 happened, the fall happened and actually it affects our work. This is what God says to Adam after they sinned. Genesis 3:17-19: “And to Adam he said, ‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.’”

The fall, Adam and Eve choosing to sin really did fracture all of creation, including our work.... Sin leads to the disintegration of every area of life: spiritual, physical, social, cultural, psychological, temporal, eternal. Genesis 3 really goes for the jugular - “you find the two great tasks in life - love and work - to be excruciatingly hard? This explains why!” Work was never meant to be draining or extremely hard or frustrating but sin entering the world caused that. Because of sin a few things happened.

- work becomes fruitless - “thorns and thistles” - we experience frustrations and setbacks and not being able to accomplish what we want to
- work becomes pointless - Solomon struggled with this...Ecclesiastes 2:22-23 says: “What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.” There can be a pointlessness to our work because of the fall. Whether quickly or slowly all the results of your toil will be wiped away by history.
- work becomes selfish - Genesis 11 talks about the tower of Babel and how they wanted to work and make this tower to make a name for themselves....oftentimes our work becomes incredibly inward focused and selfish because of sin.

So what do we do? Do we all quit our jobs and become pastors or nuns or theologians? I don't think so...because here is the beautiful thing about the gospel...the gospel, Jesus is about redeeming all aspects of culture. Jesus is about the redemption of all of creation...Jesus didn't just die and rise from the dead to purchase our souls and whisk us away...Jesus wants to redeem the universe back to it's original glory before sin jacked everything up. And the incredible thing is that redemption of creation happens on a micro-scale now...it obviously won't be fully realized until Jesus returned...but Jesus announced the kingdom of heaven was here when he walked on the earth...so Christians now live in this in between time where we advance his kingdom and redeem aspects of culture with the truth of the gospel and I think this includes our work.

So what does this look like? Ephesians 6:5-9 gives some incredible insight into employees and employers. Now the text talks about slaves and masters but we have to understand that slavery in the first century by and large was night and day different from modern day, American slave trade type of thing our minds go too...slavery in the first century was not based on race and was hardly ever life long...it was almost like working to pay off a debt, or becoming a slave for work...which is why we can apply it to employee-employer relations today.

Paul says this to employees: "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but at servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free."

As Christians we are called to work hard for our bosses...because we actually know we are working for Jesus...we don't work hard just to please our bosses...our work hard only when they're looking to trick them but we genuinely work as hard as we can...Christians should not be ruthless in the workplace...they should be genuine and generous...not just working for a pay check but intentionally working hard for their employers.

Now employers are also spoken too...so if you are a boss, or own a business, or have people underneath you verse 9 applies to you: "Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven and that there is no partiality with him." Employers treat their employees with respect and fairness...they genuinely want the best for them and pays them fairly. The gospel redeems workplace relationships.

And it is amazing because our work has incredible meaning when we understand the gospel and serving Jesus with whatever we do. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." So actually whatever your job is, whatever you do for your work, being a Christian in the workplace or following Jesus in the workplace doesn't just mean leading a workplace Bible study...that can and should be part of it...but its bringing beauty and redemption to all areas of our culture...so being a carpenter and building a house is making that house beautiful and not cutting corners and taking pride in your work....God modelled this for us...after each day when he is done creating the scriptures say: "And God saw that it was good." And on the last day God looks at everything and says: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." God did a good job with creation....he said it was very good.

This translates into whatever field or area of culture you work in...banking, transportation, oil, carpentry, mechanics, McDonalds....whatever we do has tremendous value and worth when it is done in the mindset of bringing glory to Jesus. Martin Luther said this in 1522 about married life and the mundane chores of watching over a baby:

“Now observe that when that clever harlot, our natural reason (which the pagans followed in trying to be most clever), takes a look at married life, she turns up her nose and says, “Alas, must I rock the baby, wash its diapers, make its bed, smell its stench, stay up nights with it, take care of it when it cries, heal its rashes and sores, and on top of that care for my wife, provide for her, labour at my trade, take care of this and take care of that, do this and do that, endure this and endure that, and whatever else of bitterness and drudgery married life involves? What, should I make such a prisoner of myself? O you poor, wretched fellow, have you taken a wife? Fie, fie upon such wretchedness and bitterness! It is better to remain free and lead a peaceful, carefree life; I will become a priest or a nun and compel my children to do likewise.”

What then does Christian faith say to this? It opens its eyes, looks upon all these insignificant, distasteful, and despised duties in the Spirit, and is aware that they are all adorned with divine approval as with the costliest gold and jewels. It says, “O God, because I am certain that thou hast created me as a man and hast from my body begotten this child, I also know for a certainty that it meets with thy perfect pleasure. I confess to thee that I am not worthy to rock the little babe or wash its diapers. or to be entrusted with the care of the child and its mother. How is it that I, without any merit, have come to this distinction of being certain that I am serving thy creature and thy most precious will? O how gladly will I do so, though the duties should be even more insignificant and despised. Neither frost nor heat, neither drudgery nor labour, will distress or dissuade me, for I am certain that it is thus pleasing in thy sight.”

A wife too should regard her duties in the same light, as she suckles the child, rocks and bathes it, and cares for it in other ways; and as she busies herself with other duties and renders help and obedience to her husband. These are truly golden and noble works. . . .

Now you tell me, when a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other mean task for his child, and someone ridicules him as an effeminate fool, though that father is acting in the spirit just described and in Christian faith, my dear fellow you tell me, which of the two is most keenly ridiculing the other? God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling, not because that father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith. Those who sneer at him and see only the task but not the faith are ridiculing God with all his creatures, as the biggest fool on earth. Indeed, they are only ridiculing themselves; with all their cleverness they are nothing but devil's fools.

Wasting Time

So the time we spend at work has tremendous value when you are following Jesus...not just opportunities to share the gospel and advance the kingdom that way but simply in how we work, our work ethic to serve Jesus and bring redemption into areas of business and culture. Any questions on that?

For the remainder of our time we need to talk about priorities we make when it comes to following Jesus and what we use our time for. Cause like we've just talked about, our work the

whatever we spend a week working, 40-50-60 hours....hopefully not more than that for your families sake, but that can be used to bring glory to Jesus....your attitude at work, how you work, the idea of bringing redeeming qualities into whatever your work is. But what about the rest of your time? Because here is the thing...there are many verses that talk about the use of our time:

Ephesians 5:15-16 - "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil."

Colossians 4:5 - "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time."

Psalms 90:12 - "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."

James 4:14 - "...yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes."

Like I said earlier, most of us if we're honest are busy and we say things like: "I just don't want time to work out, I just don't have time to read my Bible, I just don't have time to go to church or to pray....to meet for lunch ,etc." But here's the thing...we find time for what's important to us...if you really love golf, you will find and make time for golf. I don't think its that we don't have enough time...I think we don't prioritize correctly. Most of us are convinced that the way we're living is absolutely necessary and right....our culture really has brainwashed us into believing that this is the only way to live.

Craig Groeschel says this in his book: "The biggest reason why many people surrender to the normal overwhelmed, overly driven, unsustainable pace is because we don't have faith. We don't honestly believe that God is on his throne, that he can and will handle the details of our lives, that he wants what's truly best for us, and that his way of doing life is better."

I think in order for Christians to actually prioritize and fight back against our culture of busyness it is going to take drastic decisions....maybe my kids don't need to be in 10 different extra-curricular activities...maybe 1 is okay. This was my families policy growing up....we were allowed 1 extra-curricular activity as long as it wasn't on a Sunday...and if you wanted to do something else you quit the other thing. Now I had picked baseball and was getting up into competitive leagues and travelling for games and one season the travelling schedule was a game on every Sunday...and my dad sat me down and told me I would no longer be playing baseball....because church and Jesus and going to church was more important than a game...now I wrestled with that as a kid, being mad at my dad but looking back the value that my dad put on spiritual things was ingrained in me. My relationship with Jesus is more important than baseball.

Christians may need to make tough decisions like that....what do I need to cut out from my life...am I making the most of my life? The time i'm given? One author I read makes a to-do list and every year cuts things out of his life that are time wasters. So maybe it's TV....maybe its being on 3 hockey teams...maybe its working so much overtime....now we can't control all of the busyness of our lives but we can control an awful lot of it.

And really it has to do with what are you living for? Are you living for the 70 or 80 years of this life or are you living for eternity....if my family had been living for the here and now of course I would have skipped church and played baseball. But look at these verses:

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 - "So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."

Colossians 3:1-3 - "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you had died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Mark 8:36 - "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?"

Conclusion

Serving and following Jesus with our time is being intentional with what we do. Actually weighing and balancing and making decisions based on eternity. I have been hoping and praying that these Friday nights would not just be a check list or legalism or follow these steps to be a disciple....because it is so much more than that. Following Jesus really is about changing the entire way you view the world...from money, to sex, to marriage, to work, to relationships, to family....all of those areas are affected by the gospel....and I believe that the more you pour over God's word and spend time in prayer God will change your heart and you worldview....and that you would look radically different then the world around you. Any last comments or thoughts or questions?