

Intro: Garrison. Lead Team, Deacon. Grab a bible, go **2 Corinthians 5**.

Cole's Decorating. My wife and I have now lived in a few different places since we've been married. And I've started to notice a trend. Whenever we have guests over, and maybe you've experienced this as our guests. You'll enter our house and you'll look around and say, "Oh my gosh, it looks so GOOD in here. I LOVE what you did with the space." Every time. And I respond the same way every time, "Oh thank you, I did it myself." Which is a lie, but its okay cause its a joke.. Its weird because I lived in our apartment before she moved in and never heard that sentence until after we got married. Hurtful. Truth is My wife does it all. I'm just there. Sometimes I think I helped bc I drilled the hole, but she could do that; she just wants me to be part of the process. I bring nothing to the table. She's amazing at it. I'm not. She makes an average apartment unit look like something out of a magazine. I had it looking like a wasteland.

What makes her so good at it is she has the ability to imagine what could be. Eyes that see what is and what could be.

Throughout this series our big idea has been that we need to reorient the way we view our work:

- We need a new story
- We need to see work as a calling
- We need a new identity
- We need our work
- We need a meaning for our frustrations

In order to do that, you have to have imagination. In order to step into the new way to approach work, you have to see what is and see what could be. Today is no different.

Today we're concluding our series by talking about **mission**. Our work as mission. Our jobs as mission. Our work at home as mission. Our parenting as mission. That God has given you a mission in all of the work he has given you.

So as we start tonight I want to ask you two questions:

- 1. Do you believe God is on a mission to save the world?**
- 2. Do you believe you are a part of it?**

Tonight, my goal is to help you believe the answer to both questions is yes. **I want to show you what the Bible is inviting us to see. Lot of Bible to cover. 2 Cor 5.**

2 Corinthians 5:14-20

14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;

We're hopping into the middle of this letter written to the Corinthians, but what Paul has been talking about in the beginning of chapter 5 is the sufferings that Christians face and the reality that this suffering should make us long for eternity, long for heaven. Paul says we groan, we long for when we can be with God, we'd rather be there than be here.

But then he turns. And he says - hey we'd rather be there. We'd rather be in the presence of God. But, **The love of Christ controls us.**

And He says what that love is: *that one has died for all, therefore all have died;*

He reminds them of what Christ Jesus has done for them - one has died for all, therefore all have died. In other words - **Christ has died for you, and now if you believe in Him you too have died** - died to your sins, died to your old way of living. Those things are dead. They're done away with. He continues on.

15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. 16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

He shows that the Gospel will bleed into our life. So we don't live for ourselves, we live for God, we live for Jesus who died for us and was raised. All of us who trust and believe in Jesus, because He died for us, our lives are now about Him. We live for Him.

And you are made new. **A new creation. With a new way of living, a new way of thinking, a new way of believing. We are made new. V 18**

18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; (hold on that last part)

You and I were meant to be in a relationship with God, but sin broke that, and so **when God reconciles us, he's restoring, he's redeeming, he's renewing all things to to make them how they should be.**

Reconciliation here is bringing things back to the way they're meant to be.

Paul says - all this dying to old self and being made new, new creation, God did all of it. God pursued you. God chased you down. God loved you when you didn't love Him. God wanted you when you didn't want Him.

We had no potential, no hope of redemption. But Christ made away. We've been reconciled to God by grace through faith. **And when we believe, we begin to be made new.**

But reconciliation isn't just something that happens to us. It's bigger:

19 That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself,

God is not only reconciling people to himself, he's also reconciling the world to himself. In other words, this has both a spiritual and a physical reality...

Reconciliation is both a spiritual and a physical reality. All of us who are in Christ have been brought back into right relationship with God, and one day the whole world, including the earth, will be brought back to the way it should be. **All the broken things: are being made new and will be made new.**

This is what we're invited to see. God is inviting us to reimagine our approach to daily life. How you approach your work. How we approach our coworkers. How you approach your boss. Your frustrations. Your kids. In light reality of God reconciling the world to Himself.

God actually pulls back the curtain even further to show us what the beauty that's ahead.

Look with me at **Revelation 21**, it'll be on the screen:

Revelation 21:1-5

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

I want to make sure you read this correctly → When the apostle John, the writer of Revelation, says that "the first heaven and earth had passed away," he's not saying that this thing gets erased off the map all together. Look at verse 5, it doesn't say that God will make all new things, but that He will make all things new. Word order is important. **All things new. He is taking what is, and bringing it back to what it's supposed to be.**

Jesus is the ultimate example here. Jesus died, He passed away, and when He was raised to life, His body wasn't destroyed. It was glorified! It was made new. It will be the same with us, and it will be the same with the world.

We get the invitation to reimagine our present reality in light of our future reality.

Now let me show you how this bleeds into mission. Reread with me:

verse 18:

18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

God is taking what is broken in this world, and making it new.

And He wants you to be a part of it.

God has reconciled you to Himself and given you the ministry of reconciliation.

In other words: God has reconciled you to Himself - now go be reconcilers. He's given you a mission. His mission.

And He uses this specific word to describe our jobs as ministers of reconciliation:

Ambassadors. You are an ambassador for Christ. An ambassador of God's reconciling work in the world.

An ambassador speaks on behalf of a sovereign nation to another entity. We are ambassadors sent to Charlotte on behalf of Christ. As ambassadors OF CHRIST we are taking His message to the world on his behalf. So like the United States has ambassadors sent to specific places to invest in our interests there, you're like the ambassador of Christ sent to (your company's name) to protect and proclaim the interests of Christ.

Entrusting to us. He's given to us for us to steward. Feel the weight of that...

God is taking what is broken in this world, and making it new, and he wants to use you to do that.

We are ambassadors for Jesus. You are His ambassador. You are a representative of the King. You go forward proclaiming the good news of the King and doing the work given to you by the King. You go forward proclaiming the good news of reconciliation.

So back to those questions I asked at the beginning, pretty loaded right?

- 1. Do you believe God is on a mission to save the world?**
- 2. Do you believe you are a part of it?**

Functional belief vs confessional

Struggling to believe that God wants to use you as an ambassador to bring about reconciliation in the world isn't just about apathy. It's not about gifting. It's about your heart. It's about actually

believing we serve a God who is in the business of saving people and reconciling the world to himself...

Heard someone say one time in a sermon - 99% of Christians would share their faith if they knew the person would believe. It's not that we don't know how or what, it all boils down to fear of failure and rejection which come from disbelief.

And this struggle is not in spite of your job → Your work doesn't get in the way of this. It's not - well I do this from 9 to 5 and then I go do ministry, or I go do work for the Lord or service for the Lord. I go to my job and then I go do the church stuff, that's what really matters.

No God wants all of your life, everything you do, everything you give your resources to and time to and energy to, everything you give your emotions to to be in service to Him. Doesn't mean you have to go be in Christian ministry or go work for a church or work for a nonprofit.

God wants to use you exactly where you are with the job you have, with the work He's given you to bring reconciliation as an ambassador for Him. God has a plan to make all things new, and that includes your direct sphere of influence in your job, in your home, in your neighborhood, in our city.

Through you. You are the plan. You are God's plan to reconcile where you are.

God wants to use you and your work as a means of reconciling and renewing the world.

So how? How do we partner with God in this? How do we step out as His ambassadors?

Let me give you what I hope are some helpful steps toward being an ambassador for God in reconciling the world to Him.

This applies to all of our kinds of work in different ways. You're going to have to do some transferring to your work, but I'm going to give us some categories. Office, parenting, whatever, this applies, but you're going to have to do some work of your own to transfer it directly to where you're at...

1. Live life from a reconciled heart.

14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;

I was listening to a sermon earlier this week. And the pastor on the podcast said something that's been clicking around my mind this week:

Care more about the work God wants to do in you, than the work He wants to do through you.

Because the work through you comes from the work in you. If we want to give hope and give grace to those we work with, we have to have something to give.

If we are called to be agents of reconciliation first and foremost we have to be changed by God, and then experience a deep, ongoing renewal through the Holy Spirit day in and day out, week in and week out.

Your inner reconciliation and renewal is absolutely critical to outward reconciliation and renewal. You cannot invite others to know and follow Jesus if you first and foremost do not know and follow Jesus. Ongoing. Ongoing. **NOt saying be perfect. Need for the Gospel is beautiful.**

Our own hearts are in need of reconciling and renewing, and a life that has been remade and made new is a beautiful picture in your work to everyone else.

Your own inner reconciling and renewing is absolutely crucial to your ability to be an ambassador, your ability to be an agent of reconciliation.

Trampoline. Really helpful way I've heard mission talked about is by comparing it to a trampoline. We're all familiar. Jump up and down. The more you press into the trampoline, the higher you bounce. The same is actually true about mission and the Gospel. The more you press into the Gospel, the more depth you have, the more you will be launched out.

What I'm trying to get at: Some of us struggle with mission because we don't spend enough time with Jesus. You haven't pushed into the Gospel. We lack depth in our relationships with Jesus.

Listen, this is one of the 100+ reasons why spiritual disciplines are so important. Things like Bible reading, prayer, Sunday worship, fasting, silence and solitude - those aren't just rote things we say we should all do so that we can get more busy or feel bad when we don't - those are the means by which God wants to do a reconciling and renewing ongoing work within your soul such that you are actually a blessing through your work and to those around you. **(this why we're doing a spiritual disciplines seminar. I'd encourage you to be there, even if you think you know it all, or were here for the Rhythms and Formation series).**

God wants to do a work within you that spills out to those around you. One of the best gospel witness/evangelism tools you have is your own changed life.

Point 1 live from a reconciled heart

2. See the potential in your work.

We know there's a mess where we work. We talked about it last week. There are particular frustrations, there are particular pitfalls, there is a brokenness that is a part of your work. That is the reality. **There are specific ways in which your job is going to manifest this brokenness and mess.**

You as an ambassador for Jesus, you now have the eyes to see what could be. How can God restore through me the specific parts of my job that are broken? Where is the potential in your specific place?

God, in his better than us-ness. God in his mercy and grace, sees what could be. In us, in others, in the world around us. He knows his plan, that's a sure thing - **He is going to make all things new.** Bet on it. Count on it. Count your chickens because they're going to hatch.

Do you have eyes to see?

God in his goodness and sovereignty placed you where he placed you so that you could be an ambassador and agent of reconciliation. You're commissioned by God of the Universe. Go get busy.

Examples:

- So if your office is one where everyone's heads are down achieving and striving because it's all about produce, produce, produce - recognize that, see it, see that it doesn't have to be that way, and then do something that could bring hope and renewal and life into that office. Something that helps restore a little bit of your coworkers humanity. **Have a running calendar where everyone's birthdays are on it, and if it's someone's birthday, bring them a donut and say "happy birthday"**. Organize a thing where one a week everyone pauses from their work and just takes a break, 45 minutes to each lunch together and talk about anything other than work.
- **Mom & dad, you are God's means of grace to your kids.** You have the time with them to show them the beauty of God and who He is. Reading a bible story at night with your kid matters. Teaching them to pray matters. God has put you in your work as a parent to show your kid Himself. That's incredible!
- Many of us work from home. Most likely you have a lot of neighbors that do too. Organize a happy hour in person. How beautiful would it be if we started breaking the trend where you live in your neighborhood for years and years and don't know a single neighbor's first name?

Do you have eyes to see there is potential where you work:

- **That frustrating coworker** is not just a frustrating coworker. There is potential that the spirit of God could infiltrate their heart and make them new just like He's made you new.
- **Your boss** is not just meant to give you a hard time. They are a human being with a soul. There's potential.

- Parents, **your kids** are not just what keep you from your freedom. And, your kids have so much potential in what they could grow to be.
- **Your work** itself is not just pointless. We've said it throughout this series and it's worth saying again. Your work is partnering God in taking the world somewhere. He is in the process of making all things new, bringing order out of chaos, and your work tasks is a part of that.

You bring the role as an ambassador to work. Everyone in here, you bring a presence to the work you do. **And through that presence you're either aiding to God's plan of renewal and reconciliation or your aiding to the mess and brokenness.** There's no middle. And part of bringing a presence rooted in the gospel is that you do good work and you work hard and you labor well.

1. Live from a reconciled heart.
2. See the potential.

Final takeaway---->

3. Invite others to be reconciled.

2 Corinthians 5:20

20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

Part of our role in partnering with God to take the world somewhere is to do good work. That is a true thing. We've talked about it a ton the last few weeks. And a part of taking the world somewhere is telling people about the gospel.

God is calling the people you work with and around you to turn from their sin, their old ways of living and striving and attempting to be and to do, and to be brought back to Him, to be in a loving, life-giving relationship with their Creator, and as His ambassadors we have to hold that out, not hide it.

That honestly may make some of us uncomfortable. Genuinely. It feels like we might start leaning into making people into projects. Feels like it puts too much pressure on the forming relationships with people who don't know Jesus. I get it. I don't want to make people uncomfortable either.

Look there's a very real threat that some of us could swing too far. I don't want you to be the weird person that tries to body slam Jesus into every conversation: **But I'd rather you be weird and awkward than unfaithful and controlled by fear.**

And I'd rather you lovingly make someone feel uncomfortable because you shared the Gospel with them than spare their feelings. Because their feelings are certainly important, but their soul is more important.

If you think that intentionally building, forming relationships with non believers in hopes that they would become Christians is not a good thing... then I think you've actually missed what you're being invited into. You're an ambassador for Christ. **And ambassadors have to share the truth about who they are representing.**

We talk about mission a lot as a church. And I think we have grown a lot in our courage when having conversations with friends/ coworkers about Jesus. And I want us to keep pushing in that direction. Possibly the one take away from this sermon is to open your mouth. Or keep opening your mouth. We have to talk to those around us who don't know about Jesus about the Gospel.

We work hard, we're good employees, we serve and care for our coworkers, we try to be a blessing and a gospel presence in our office because we love God and we love others.

Look I know every workplace is different. Every job has different rules and different regulations, I get that. You know what you can and can't do and I'm just trying to invite you to take a step. Take a little step, and see what God does.

Want to close with a story from one of our members. Courtney.

Conclusion

When I first started my job in Rock Hill, South Carolina, I went in with the expectation of "putting in my time" so that I could gain experience and move on to a bigger and better hospital in Charlotte. It was never in my plan to have to commute across state lines to go to work everyday and it definitely did not feel like a calling. Looking back, it is so evident that Rock Hill is exactly where God wanted me to be, because it is also where he put my coworker Casey.

We became work friends fairly quickly. It was easy to do when there were only 3 Registered Dietitians and we all happened to be new graduates. Casey was the type of coworker that was always positive, always kind, and always willing to help out where she was needed. We would laugh about how unbelievably friendly Casey was to anyone she met. The department custodian would stop by just to follow up on their conversation about his garden, and the grill cook would talk to her about his kids. She wasn't just kind but genuinely cared for the people around her in such an unusual way.

I had always known that Casey was a Christian not only by how she talked about church, but also in how she cared for and served others. When I would get frustrated over kitchen staff interrupting my work to ask questions, she would instead be grateful for the opportunity to help someone with less healthcare knowledge manage their conditions. When I would get frustrated and rant about bad management in our department, she would tell me about how she was praying for wisdom and guidance in her response. When I would work myself into exhaustion then complain about it the entire week, she would remind me that work

was not and should not be my sole priority in life. When I found out my roommate had COVID and I couldn't stay at my apartment, she opened up her home to me and my dog. Never out of duty, but out of love for myself and our department staff.

Naturally after living together for a week, we became close friends and Casey quickly became my confidant for life's problems because of the wisdom and kindness she would speak into my problems. When a really tough situation presented in my personal life a few months later, she was the first person I wanted to talk to. She suggested that I visit Citizen's church that Sunday with her friend Lindsay who helped plant the church. She said it would help me feel grounded and comforted when my life ultimately felt like it was spinning out of control. Then one Sunday turned to two, which turned into joining a community group, and eventually becoming a member last month. Throughout the entire process, Casey stood beside me, encouraged me, and prayed for me. I could not be more grateful for the guidance and love that God has shown me through her.

Courtney is a member of our church and walking with Jesus because of her coworker. She's in a group, getting baptized later this fall, serving, a part of our family because of her coworker. A COWORKER!"

Pray for more stories like that. We hustle, God provides. So let's step into our work, any work, with love and with joy, looking for ways that we can join God in renewing and reconciling the world to Himself.

Pray.