

{Slide: Logo - The Christian @ the Office}

For the next two weeks we want to talk about the concept of The Christian @ the office
What does that mean?

It's a bit ambiguous and deliberately so because for the Christian at their place of employment to be effective for God he/she first need to understand what that means and to do that most effectively we need to step back a bit.

We need to do revision.

Like the students getting ready to write their exams, have to go over what they have learned previously, to refresh it in the minds.

So

A Christian often needs to go back and refresh some of the things that they learned at the beginning.

Because here is where we all start off.

{Slide: Eph 4v14}

Eph 4v14

¹⁴**Then** we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

Paul has just completed a long explanation of what it takes to become a mature disciple of Jesus and we will get back to that later but he ends it with the passage above.

Then, meaning when we get this THEN, he says there is a transition from a common starting point where **all of us** start off from, infants.

What are the characteristics of infants?

They believe anything and are eager to head in that direction with enthusiasm.

{Grandson stories - What I can get away with
Maybe even little water and tap video}

I can teach him anything, it's crazy, he has no idea what is dangerous or not unless I teach him.

It's wonderful - I heard a definition of a grandfather as

"someone who helps their grandchildren get up to the mischief they haven't thought of yet".

Think about the danger of that kind of thinking.

That's what happens without God, when we run round like infants.

Whatever I show him is acceptable to him.

(Just before we became disciples, we followed a path that almost led to the complete destruction of our marriage.

Did someone trick us into it.

No at all, little step by little step.

It didn't need a big leap, as you got used to one level of stupidity the next level did not look too far away, so you took the next one, and then the next one until finally when you looked back, the height that we had fallen was breath taking)

Like little children, even though we were adults.
And then God rescued us by calling us.

Think of the responsibility of raising a child where everything you do is acceptable to the child. They will figuratively be:

tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching
Which means they will be open to:
the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming

The scary thing is, we all start off here before we get to know the Bible.
As cool as you thought you were, out there in the world, this is how the Bible describes you.

Once we make Jesus Lord, we surround ourselves with the wise and mature and head off in the direction that we are all taught to head towards, the one where we all fix our eyes on Jesus

And if we don't?
Tossed back and forth by our opinions (which are of course correct) and others.
No direction, no goal.
It's a choice.
A life changing choice.
But then we make the right choice and we step into our Christian office, where the hours are 24/7 and we are finally at the point where God can start putting us to work.

{Slide: Called to work}

1 - Called to work

So now I'm a Christian and I step into my Christian office.
What do I mean by that?

{Explain the full circle of 'office' life broken into thirds, Sleep, Work, The Rest}

Today we are going to talk about the whole circle.
Next week we will talk specifically about the work portion.

So what do at the office?
I work.
When we hear the word, it usually does not raise warm and fuzzy feelings in our hearts.
We usually consider it a burden, drudgery, have to ...

Let's change that mindset.

Work is good

When some of you hear the word work, you don't automatically associate it with Christianity and yet, the Bible is quite clear on where work fits into our day.

God works

What God does, is called work in English.

As usual though the English does not do the original word much justice.

{Slide: Gen 2v2}

Gen 2v2

²By the seventh day God had finished the work ^(craftsmanship) he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

So let's talk maturity.

What was Paul saying before he told us what our thinking in the world looks like?

What Christian process will lead us on the road to maturity from our infant status?

{Slide: Eph 4v11-13}

Eph 4v11-13

*¹¹So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹²to **equip his people for works of service**, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

Christ gave the leadership group to **equip** "his people" for works of service.

How does one equip people?

You teach them and train them and point them in the right direction.

Similar to the lessons we have received throughout the year.

Flourish - The elements required for a flourishing relationship with Jesus

The Great I am - The nature and consequences of pride

From here to there - Leadership lessons

Life changing lessons from the leader of our church.

Who is being addressed here?

His people, disciples of Jesus, Christians. Us

People who have decided to make the transition from infants.

People who were tired of being tossed around by the world.

People who gave their wholehearted allegiance to Jesus.

People who said, "Jesus is Lord".

Why, For what reason are they being equipped?

For works of service.

To do things.

{Raised two kids.

Fascinating to watch the learning process with my grandson.

How he resists changing what he naturally wants to do.

Smack the dog, turn the dials, eat anywhere, run down the road.

Then comes the lesson.

Resistance, defiance, wrestling, testing and then acceptance}

Remember this process.

I used to read “*works of service*” as my service to the church, you know, Kids Zone, ushering, counting, audio, video, we have a whole bunch of church service related work that needs to be done.

Or what about leadership of various ministries, Family Group Leader, SGL, Compassion and so on.

However, I was a tad mistaken.

It’s much broader than that.

Works of service is not only to the church, **it defines my life as a whole.**

It’s indistinguishable from church.

It’s my service to my neighbour.

In fact if my works of service in the church differed from my works of service outside the church, that would be hypocritical.

It’s like when Jesus taught us about prayer in Mat 6v5,

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.”

Life in Christ is not about being seen and so my church service and my everything else service is an extension of who I am in Christ.

It’s just who you are.

And we keep ‘working’ until:

The body of Christ is built up

When will that be?

I’m not sure the endpoint is for us to decide.

But he doesn’t end there. He says,

*“until we all reach **unity in the faith** and in the **knowledge of the Son of God** and become **mature**, attaining to the **whole measure of the fullness of Christ**”*

There are some powerful, all encompassing words in that sentence.

Unity in the Faith

The knowledge of the Son of God

Mature

Whole measure of the fullness of Christ

He says we need to work until we get here.

If I look at myself individually. I have a lot of work to do.

Why is this concept of working important for us to understand?

**Because as a Christian, a believer, someone with the indwelling Holy Spirit.
We demonstrate, by our good works, that there is divine activity within us.**

Remember what Jesus said in Mat 5v16.

{Slide: Mat 5v16}

Mat 5v16

¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

My light needs to shine before someone can see it.

What light?

I personally don't have the ability to shine.

However, I am able, like the moon reflects the sun, through my works of service, my good deeds, to reflect God's light in a way that makes it visible to others.

The result?

God, who is in Heaven, is Glorified.

Let's look at another example.

Jesus usually had a crowd that followed Him and at some point they asked Him this question.

{Slide: Joh 6v28-29}

Joh 6v28-29

²⁸Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?"

²⁹Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

"The works that God requires".

This crowd knows there some is some work involved.

Jesus tells them to believe in Him, Jesus.

How do we do that?

By obeying what He said.

And He said, Get To Work, show your good deeds.

Let your Light shine

What's the opposite of this?

The man who has no faith, demonstrates by his evil works his separation from God.

Even doing no work can be considered an evil work, because there is no reflection.

So what can hinder us from getting the work of God done?

{Slide: The Gap}

2 - The Gap

Before I answer that I want to unpack a process I have observed.
I believe that our awareness of this process and our awareness of where we fit into this process will help us see our path to working for the Lord, more clearly.

So, we have decided to make Jesus Lord.
We can see we are called to work.
We are at the office with the Lord.

We desperately want to reflect the light of God through our good deeds.
How do I do that?

Let's study a typical journey.
I want to show you a phenomenon that I have observed over the years.
I call it the Gap.

Have you noticed over the years that you have been a Christian, that knowledge and obedience do not necessarily grow at the same rate.
As a disciple of Jesus, I always thought it was linear.
When I was a young disciple anyway.
The more you read the Bible, the more Christian-like you became.
I know it's a bit naive.
But I thought it looked like this

{Draw: Graph of Knowledge vs Obedience - Linear}

I learned it I did it.
I felt like the 4th soil.
Invincible.
God and I were one.

When Jesus described the 4th soil He said:

²³*But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and **understands** it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown*

What does hearing and understanding mean?

Hear, understand what it is saying, produces a crop.

The 4th soil at the Christian office is easy to spot.

Let's take three bread and butter Scriptures and let's look at our attitudes towards them.

- Making disciples, becoming fishers of men - Mat 28v18/Mar 1v17 (while I was still studying the Bible I was also studying the Bible with a work colleague. In regular studies)
- Seek the Kingdom first - Mat 6v33 (when the body of Christ got together we were there, moved stuff, canceled stuff, made the world unhappy and didn't care)
- Love one another, as I have loved you - Joh 13v34 (All marriages should work as both spouses love like Jesus, everyone is easy to get on with as we all love like Jesus)

All disciples are naturally hovering around the 4th soil, so this makes it easy.

Scriptures are exciting and challenging and we get a mentor and we surround ourselves with others that can help us on the journey.

As I grew older and more experienced in things Christian, I realized that the graph probably more closely resembled a tangent.

{Draw: Graph of Knowledge vs Obedience - tapering off}

As I observed myself and others, it appeared as if sooner or later, at some point we stop growing in our obedience.

Why?

Because life happens.

- We don't get that job
- We make some ill advised or non advised decisions that steal our time
- Our health is not as great as we would like it to be.
- Our finances are continually under pressure.
- Growing in our relationships is hard work
- People hurt us, something we didn't expect from church people
- Getting numb to the Scriptures, enthusiasm drops off, stop asking questions

Jesus had a great way of categorizing the process when He described the 3rd soil:

²²*The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.*

We are still regularly having time with God but it has become a routine, we grow in knowledge but it does not result in an increase in obedience.

We are on the road to becoming religious.

Our three Scriptures haven't changed, but our attitude towards them has.

- Making disciples, becoming fishers of men - Mat 28v18/Mar 1v17 (Believe the theory, remember being active once but now I only invite people when the church has a push for visitors)
- Seek the Kingdom first - Mat 6v33 (Absolutely believe it but it can feel a bit inconvenient because it's too far or too late or I'm tired. The importance of the Kingdom seems to have faded)
- Love one another, as I have loved you - Joh 13v34 (Many marriages are struggling, people are not as loving and compatible and like Jesus as I thought, some people are actually quite tough to get on with and I seem to have an increasing amount of conflict with certain people.)

Then I grew a bit older and again, as I observed myself and others, modified my perception of the graph, because it appeared to me to become more like this.

{Draw: Graph of Knowledge vs Obedience - decreasing}

Here one keeps increasing in knowledge, but obedience actually decreases.

Which happens when?

You get older.

More set in your ways.

Your opinions harden.

You obey less than you did at first.

You're standing in the office of the Lord, but the work you do is getting less.

Your light starts fading.

The second soil is described as:

²¹*But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.*

We squeeze in a time with God, when we have the time.

Ritualistic reading with no attempt to understand either myself or the Scriptures.

Our three Scriptures haven't changed, but our attitude towards them has fallen off sharply

- Making disciples, becoming fishers of men (We believe a push for visitors is for the young disciples. We complain when asked to do a Bible study, we've actually forgotten how to study the Bible with people, it's been that long)
- Seek the Kingdom first (we think it means making 3/4 Sunday services, when challenged we get angry, we've been to enough marriage and parenting workshops, nothing new to learn, when all the planets line up we may come out to a midweek)
- Love one another, as I have loved you (Increasing differences with people, strong opinions on how things should be, don't need a mentor or a bond-servant, I'll call you when I need help)

So what is the problem?

There is a growing gap between what I know and what I do.

Have you noticed that the more disobedient I become, the more I become like the infant that Paul spoke about in Eph 4v14, tossed about by my own opinion and less influenced by God's Word.

If I see that I can add another descriptor on the left, parallel to Obedience.
Immature vs Mature.

The more I obey, the more mature I become in the faith.
The less I obey, the more immature I am.

{Slide: Put it into practice}

3 - Put it into practice

So how do we close the Gap?
Just like Showmax says, "there's a show for that".
I can tell you, "there's a Scripture for that".

{Slide: Mat 7v24-25}

Mat 7v24-25

²⁴"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and **puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

What a simple teaching.
Hear the word, put it into practice.
Not, filter it through your opinion.
What word?

- Make disciples
- Seek the Kingdom first
- Love one another

Is any of this new?
Why is this important?
Because of the conclusion of the Scripture.

{Slide: Mat 7v26-27}

Mat 7v26-27

²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and **does not put them into practice** is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

What distinguishes the foolish man from the wise?

So the less we put into practice the more foolish we are.

That's the Gap - the difference between what we know and what we do.

The bigger the gap, the bigger the fool.

If we go back to our graphs we realise that the scale on the left which I marked Obey, and we added Maturity, can actually measure some other metrics:

Light - no Light

{Slide: Logo - The Christian @ the Office}

When we look at all this it puts the Christian @ Work in a clear light.

It's all about obedience.

We are all HERE.

We want to be THERE, which is where more obedience lives.