

Connecting work & God's Mission

Hi. This week, I started reading *Reframation: Seeing God, People and Mission Through Re-enchanted Frames* by Alan Hirsch and Mark Nelson. Both of these men have spent years in pastoral ministry and engaging in mission. Yet, they found that, as they engaged with people who have nothing to do with church, that many of them had the view that church and Christianity has nothing to offer them in their own spiritual search. They started to think that, maybe there's a problem with how Christians have become small minded and reduced the 'big' story of God, to a series of formulas, do's and don'ts and gospel tracts. We can tend to forget how 'big' God is, what an amazing narrative we share in and that this news is for the whole world.

"We live in a world that is constantly on a pilgrimage, searching and longing for so much more. Yet ... followers of Jesus struggle to articulate the story of God in a way that brings clarity and understanding to these longings, this world, and our place within it. ... We want to consider what it might look like to enter into the story of God, allowing that good news to personally transform us in such a way that any communication of that story recognises and addresses the deep longings and hungers of those around us. It is therefore a vibrant story of God that we invite others into – one that literally changes and transforms everything about them and their world."¹

GETTING STARTED: Many of our non-Christian work colleagues and neighbours have had either first or second hand experience with Christians or church. But many see that our faith is irrelevant to them and their lives. Some might even see that we would immediately reject them, because of our 'religious beliefs'. What sort of comments have you had from people around you, when you have mentioned that you are a person of faith / follower of Jesus?

READ: ROMANS 12:1-20

🗣️ What things stood out for you, from the sermon this week?

🗣️ Clive shared about his small business and being able to get alongside people in the pub and club industry. He spoke of going into places and situations that he never expected to be in, at this stage in his life and dealing with people from all walks of life. Also, he spoke of intentionally preparing himself, by consciously putting on the armour of God, being reliant on the Holy Spirit, reading the word and constantly praying. What things stood out for you, from Clive's testimony?

TEAR APART THE TEXT

❗ This passage starts with the powerful word, "therefore ...". In the previous chapter, the Paul wrote about the Israelites "stumbling" so that salvation would come to the Gentiles, to whom Paul was an apostle. (Rom 12:11-13) Both Jews and Gentiles were familiar with 'sacrifices', but Jews were especially aware that the animals used for their sacrifice had to be carefully chosen, so that they did not have any imperfection. Similarly, Jesus was our perfect, unblemished sacrifice. (1 Pet 1:19)

🗣️ What do you think of when you hear the words: "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship"? What actions are anticipated by these words? How does this challenge your view of what constitutes "worship"?

❗ In Rom 12:2, we read: "do not be conformed ... but be transformed by the renewing of your minds". In the NLT, we read: "Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." Our behaviour flows from allowing God to change the way we think. We do that firstly by constantly absorbing ourselves in the Word of God and learning what God thinks about us, our world and how we should live. We secondly allow God to change us, by being obedient to his word and, in reliance on his Spirit, seeking to live in a way that honours him. Thirdly, we allow God to change us and the way we live, by being prayerful and responding to promptings of the Spirit, in the course of our day. As we start thinking about our world and its priorities, from the perspective of God's word, we need to intentionally think through how we live distinctively in our particular context and bring God's love into that place.

🗣️ Phil highlighted that competitiveness and comparison are some common aspects in our work world. What are some of the distinctive challenges that you face in your workplace, including aspects of the work culture and attitudes among your colleagues, that you find hard to avoid? How do you respond when these issues surface?

☞ It is important to have self-confidence, especially in doing our work and exercising our skills. Yet Paul says to “not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think ... but to think with sober judgement.” (Rom 12:3) Is confidence (and even assertiveness of a viewpoint) inconsistent with having “sober judgement” of ourselves? Is Paul saying that we need to be ‘shrinking violets’? How should Paul’s words impact how we conduct ourselves, especially when we are in conflict situations at work or when we have made mistakes? How should it impact how we approach job interviews?

☞ In Rom 12:4-8, we read a list of spiritual gifts. Phil encouraged us to also see those spiritual gifts as things with which to bless our workplaces. Which of the gifts listed, do you see in yourself and in others in your group? How do you also use those gifts at work?

☞ In some workplaces, there are a large number of people with specific gifts. Eg there are lots of teachers in a school and lots of compassionate people in a welfare organisation. In any church, there is a ‘mixed bag’ of people with different gifts and we have to learn to work together. Paul uses the idea that the church is like a body and implies we are necessarily inter-dependent on each other. However, the challenge comes when people from different backgrounds have to co-operate in a workplace, especially when there are competing priorities and egos. How transferrable is the ‘church as body’ metaphor to a workplace? In what ways can we encourage cooperation, rather than competition, and promote good working relationships, among competing parties?

☞ In Rom 12:9-21, we read a section that NRSV titles as “Marks of a True Christian”. This is like a code of Christian conduct, on how to live in the world. Below is a ‘word cloud’ of some of these verses. What words stand out for you? Which words would you not expect to be there? In what context are those words mentioned in this passage?

☞ Re-read these verses – one at a time. Then think about:

- What action is being asked for?
- What attitude or attributed is an expected counterpart of that action?
- What do you think would be the outcome, if we acted like that, every day, as we go to work?



APPLICATION: Phil commented that we need to reflect God’s values in our workplaces and when we bring the attitude of Christ into our workplace, it will have a transformative effect. However, we should not be ‘anonymous Christians’. We need to name Jesus as the reason for our countercultural behaviour.

☞ **HEAD** – What have you learnt from the study this week?

♥ **HEART** – What has challenged you, personally?

☞ **HANDS** – What are you going to do about it this week?