



A GUIDE FOR VOCATIONAL PRAYER

# WISDOM AT WORK

*The modern world  
has scrambled things  
so badly that today  
we worship our  
work, we work at our  
play, and we play at  
our worship.*

OS GUINNESS, THE CALL

## DO WHAT YOU WANT, AND BE WISE.

Dear friends,

90,000 hours. 1/3 of your life. These are just a couple of the estimates of the amount of time the average person will spend at work in their lifetime. Usually, this is followed with challenging questions: are you happy? Are you doing what you are passionate about? There is nothing unspiritual about those questions necessarily, but committed Christians have seemingly even more burdensome questions: Is this work impacting the Kingdom? Is it meaningful? Is it God's will for my life? What is my calling? Should I be doing more "ministry"?

As a pastor, one of my main goals when I counsel folks on vocation is to try to lift as much burden as possible. The truth is that the Christian should experience an immense amount of freedom. There is room in the Christian life for the person who chooses a middle class job that they don't necessarily "love" because it provides more stability for their family; and there's room for the artist, the struggling musician, the dancer who may choose a high level of fulfillment over personal gain or stability. We can start a business, stay at home with our kids, or work for "the man." Manual labor, trades, business, education, unpaid, part-time, seasonal—all biblically good work is open to the Christian, and should be affirmed as a worthy and biblical calling.

So, if you feel content with where things are in your work, but also feel guilty because you "should" be doing something else—my earnest desire for you is that you would be free of that "should."

But saying that we are free is not the same thing as saying we are wise. The struggles we have with questions on work often come down to questions of wisdom. We may be weighing different gifts that God has given us. We wonder if we would have more impact elsewhere. We sometimes wonder if our work is actually producing something good. Perhaps our work encourages certain idolatries that hold us captive.

If you are wrestling with a wisdom question at work, this guide is designed for you. For the next six weeks, I'm encouraging you to go through some biblical passages and use it as a time to actually pray. The Bible says a lot about work, and this guide is in no way comprehensive. But I hope that it leads you into a listening posture, and a joyful dependence on God.

*Gray Ewing*

*Pastor, New Valley Downtown*

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Please use this guide however it is most helpful to you. All I am ever trying to do with these guides is to help you have an intentional life in God. With that said, here are a couple notes on the design of this project that will maximize it's effectiveness:

1. Choose a Vocational Prayer Focus (see next page)
2. Choose a consistent time to pray everyday and stick to it
3. Begin in silence. Rest. Allow a few minutes to pass, and notice any distractions that come along. Let them peacefully pass and focus again on being present with God. You will be amazed at how effectively this centers you into a listening posture. It will take some practice, so be patient and gentle!
4. Read through the passage multiple times and also read the reflection quote
5. From your meditation and reading, use anything that jumps out at you as a launch point into prayer. I've included a sample prayer every day if it's helpful as a running start.

## SABBATHS

On Sundays, I've included a selection of my favorite Wendell Berry "Sabbath" poems from his collection *A Timbered Choir*. It was hard to choose as I love them all. On these days, I encourage you to cease from all work, as this is the heart of biblical wisdom when it comes to our vocations. Use this day to reflect and synthesize what you have been thinking about all week. Has God given any wisdom that directly bears on your situation? Allow a restful and reflective mood for this day. It was given for you (Mark 2:27).



## DAY 1. MONDAY

# Truly, it's all good.

*Silence*

*Meditate*

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...  
...[It] was good  
...it was good  
...it was good  
...it was good  
...And behold, it was very good  
—Gen. 1:1; 4b;10b;12c;21c;25c

*Reflect*

“The Church’s approach to an intelligent carpenter is usually confined to exhorting him not to be drunk and disorderly in his leisure hours, and to come to church on Sundays. What the Church should be telling him is this: that the very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables...No crooked tables legs or ill-fitting drawers ever, I dare swear, came out of the carpenter’s shop at Nazareth..[The Church] has forgotten that the secular vocation is sacred...work must be good work before it can call itself God’s work. “  
—Dorothy Sayers, *Why Work?*

The goodness of God’s work is the best place to start any discussion on work. Before Adam and Eve fell, before work became toilsome and fraught with futility, we have God in his workflow of creation, and the only way to describe it is “good.” This has so many implications for our work-life, but today we can note two: (1) All of our places of labor have God’s good hand on them and so we have every reason to be grateful and awake to his purposes. (2) All of our work should strive to be good so that we bring honor to his original design.

*Pray*

*Take a few minutes to pray. Say out loud or write down a list of everything that is good about your places of work. Give thanks to God for the people, the projects, the outcomes, the beauty, the feedback...all of it. Try to maintain a mood of prayerful gratitude as you move into your day.*

## DAY 2. TUESDAY

# Have Dominion

*Silence*

*Meditate*

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 own 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.”  
—Genesis 1:26-28

*Reflect*

“Many modern novels, poems, and pictures which we are brow-beaten into appreciating are not good work because they are not work at all. They are mere puddles of spilled sensibility or reflection. When an artist is in the strict sense working, he of course takes into account the existing taste, interests, and capacity of his audience. These, no less than the language, the marble, or the paint, are part of his raw material; to be used, tamed, sublimated, not ignored nor defied. Haughty indifference to them is not genius nor integrity; it is laziness and incompetence.”  
—C.S. Lewis, “Good Work and Good Works,” in *The World’s Last Night*

This passage teaches us that it’s part of God’s design for us to “subdue” and “have dominion” over the earth. What does that mean? Dominion does not mean violent domination, surely? CS Lewis helps here with his idea of taking raw materials (in his case, the raw materials of writing) so they can be “used, tamed, sublimated” and ultimately made into something else beautiful.

*Pray*

*Come into God’s presence. Consider what “raw materials” he has given you: your gifts, your opportunities, connections, your stuff. What does God call you to tame or bring into order? Ask for his help to bring wisdom, delight, and imagination into your work.*

## DAY 3. WEDNESDAY

# There is more than work

*Silence*

*Meditate*

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. —Genesis 2:1-3

*Reflect*

“To gain control of the world of space is certainly one of our tasks. The danger begins when in gaining power in the realm of space we forfeit all aspirations in the real of time. There is a realm of time where the goal is not to have but to be, not to own but to give, not to control but to share, not to subdue but to be in accord. Life goes wrong when the control of space, becomes our sole concern.”

—Rabbi Abraham Heschel, *The Sabbath*

There is more to life than accomplishing. Most of us would acknowledge that verbally, but what does our life-pattern reflect? For most of us, if you take away our primary tasks we are unmoored and feel meaningless. God demonstrates for us a pattern where we have a place to develop different hopes and joys. A place where we can delve deeper into ourselves and not feel the burden of doing. It's called the Sabbath.

*Pray*

*Ask God to bring a sabbath to your soul right now. Ask that you will be able to move into this day knowing that you can cease from striving because of what God has done for you in Jesus Christ, giving you an eternal sabbath (Heb. 4:9-10)*

## DAY 4. THURSDAY

# Honest and just work

*Silence*

*Meditate*

Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens.

And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous.

—Ex. 18:21; 23:8; Deut. 16:19

*Reflect*

“It is human nature to endorse our culture, especially if it works well for us. In general, whatever is common seems normal, and whatever is normal seems right.”

—Dan Doriani, *Work*

Christians must become the “incredibly hard to find” honest people that we all want to work with. How many of us immediately trust mechanics, dentists, or any other profession where there is a high degree of ignorance? It's so easy to do things slightly on the edge of dishonest. In fact, most people will assume that you will subjugate your faith to your financial or reputation self-interest. But just because something is common does not mean it is right. Christians should be known for fairness (not partiality) and fullness (not cutting corners).

*Pray*

*Ask God to reveal where there may be injustice in your everyday working habits. Ask him now for courage to face any injustice you see in the work of others or yourself today.*

## DAY 5. FRIDAY

# God delights in skillful work

*Silence*

*Meditate*

You shall speak to all the skillful, whom I have filled with a spirit of skill, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for my priesthood.

...and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship,

...and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship  
—Ex. 28:3; 31:3; 35:31

*Reflect*

"If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say: 'Here lived a great street sweeper.'" —Martin Luther King Jr.

What has God given you to do with great skill? Eric Liddell the runner (You may remember from the movie *Chariot's of Fire*) believed that God made him for a "purpose." But he also said "God made me fast. And when I run I feel his pleasure." When was the last time you felt so lost in your skillful work that you felt the thrill of God?

*Pray*

*Father, give me the thrill of work today. Show me where you have uniquely given me an opportunity to bring you glory and joy.*

## DAY 6. SATURDAY

# We work for safety

*Silence*

*Meditate*

When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house, if anyone should fall from it. —Deut. 22:8

*Reflect*

God gives every good thing, but not just by waving a hand."  
—Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* (Psalm 147)

In ancient Israel, people often slept on the roof. It is a striking feature of God's law that he includes instructions to build parapets (small walls) on top of the roof so that people will not accidentally roll off. What does this teach us about God? Though he indeed is our refuge and strength, our high-tower of safety (as the Psalms say), he uses ordinary means like fences to keep his children safe. Wherever we work, we reflect the heart of God when we keep people from harm. This can include everything from wall-socket protectors placed in the home by mom or dad...to installing anti-virus protections on work computers, to putting a fence around a swimming pool or air-conditioning unit.

*Pray*

*God, show me how I can be a great protector today in my place of work. Where can I bring peace, physical safety, and spiritual protection to those who are around me. Who is the neighbor that needs me today?*

## DAY 7. SABBATH

Whatever is foreseen in joy  
Must be lived out from day to day.  
Vision held open in the dark  
By our ten thousand days of work.  
Harvest will fill the barn; for that  
The hand must ache, the face must sweat.

And yet no leaf or grain is filled  
By work of ours; the field is tilled  
And left to grace. That we may reap,  
Great work is done while we're asleep.

When we work well, a Sabbath mood  
Rests on our day, and finds it good.  
– Wendell Berry, Sabbaths

### *Journal*

*What are the enjoyments, insights, and freedoms you have felt this week? Where are you finding happiness and rest?*



## DAY 8. MONDAY.

# A mind to work and pray

*Silence*

*Meditate*

So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done.” But now, O God, strengthen my hands. —Nehemiah 4:6; 6:9-16

*Reflect*

“The crucible of our formation is the anonymous monotony of our daily routines.”

—Tish Harrison Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary*

When Israel came back from their Babylonian exile, they had to re-establish themselves. God called them to rebuild the temple and rebuild the wall. This seemingly ordinary (although daunting) task was the “crucible of [their] formation.” It became a hard task because it was discouraging (We are so few, and the task is so big) but also because they had enemies. But God gave the people a mind to work, and a mind to pray. That simple formula is often all you need to ask for during a trying season or particularly hard day.

*Pray*

*My God, today I ask for a mind to work. I want to see what you have given me to do and rise to it with ambition and humility. “But now, O God, strengthen my hands” for this work.*

## DAY 9. TUESDAY

# The search for deep gladness

*Silence*

*Meditate*

Blessed is the man

who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,

nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
but his delight is in the law of the Lord,

and on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree

planted by streams of water  
that yields its fruit in its season,  
and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does, he prospers.

The wicked are not so,

but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,

nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous

for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,

but the way of the wicked will perish. —Psalm 1

*Reflect*

“Some journeys are direct, and some are circuitous; some are heroic, and some are fearful and muddled. But every journey, honestly undertaken, stands a chance of taking us toward the place where our deep gladness meets the world’s deep need.”

—Parker Palmer

“Blessed” just means “happy.” Some distinguish between the two words, which is fine to do in some contexts, but it amounts to the same thing. We want a blessed life...a happy, fulfilling life that is full to the brim with gladness. Far from shaming this impulse, the Scripture tells us we should pursue it and it tells us HOW in the masterfully written Psalm 1. As you read and meditate on Psalm 1 today, ask yourself what is its vision for the good life? What should you pursue? What should you avoid? Do you believe this kind of fulfillment is possible in God?

*Pray*

*Father, forgive me for empty pursuits. I have believed the lie that says that fulfillment is only found in what I “do” with my time or for a living. Make me as a tree firmly planted in the good life. Help me to enjoy your word, your timing, your gifts, and the eternal life you have promised me.*

## DAY IO. WEDNESDAY

# Are you giving to the Lord first?

*Silence*

*Meditate*

Honor the Lord with your wealth  
and with the firstfruits of all your produce;  
then your barns will be filled with plenty,  
and your vats will be bursting with wine. — Proverbs 3:9-10

*Reflect*

“If we do not give away our money in remarkable proportions, we have not grasped (or we are not currently remembering) Christ’s generosity in saving us. Let’s put it more starkly: You will always give effortlessly to that which is your salvation, to those things which give your life meaning. If Jesus is the one who saved you, your money flows easily into his work, his people, his causes. If, however, your real religion is your appearance or your social status or personal comfort or pleasure, your money flows most easily into those items and symbols.”

—Timothy J. Keller “The Power of Money”

The fact is, where our money goes first and most reveals what we believe is the most important. The idea of the “first fruits” is a theme throughout Scripture beginning with one of it’s earliest stories (Cain and Abel). The idea is that you bring to God your first and very best. It is an honor to him, and puts several things in proper perspective for you, namely, that everything you have belongs to him and is a gift from him, and also that nothing besides Him should take the first place in your heart. This principle holds true for every resource we have: Time, Talent, and Treasure.

*Pray*

*God, I have kept other things as the first-place holder in my heart. Change my heart so that all of my resources flow effortlessly to your causes in the world.*

## DAY II. THURSDAY

# Riches are good, relationship is better

*Silence*

*Meditate*

I love those who love me,  
and those who seek me diligently find me.  
Riches and honor are with me,  
enduring wealth and righteousness.  
My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold,  
and my yield than choice silver. — Proverbs 8:17-19

*Reflect*

“It is God with whom we have to do. People go for long stretches of time without being aware of that, thinking it is money, or sex, or work, or children, or parents, or a political cause, or an athletic competition, or learning with which they must deal. Any one or a combination of these subjects can absorb them and for a time give them the meaning and purpose that human beings seem to require. But then there is a slow stretch of boredom. Or a disaster. Or a sudden collapse of meaning. They want more. They want God. When a person searches for meaning and direction, asking questions and testing out statements, we must not be diverted into anything other or lesser”

— Eugene H. Peterson, Working the Angles

It is beautiful that our faith recognizes the goodness of riches while recognizing their inherent limitations and dangers. If you take a moment to think about it, you will see this to be the epitome of wisdom. God does give riches and we thank God when we can enjoy them. But wisdom teaches us that there is something much better: To diligently seek God, find him, and have a changed life because of Him.

*Pray*

*Ask God to help you in your schedule today. With whatever is on the agenda, pray that He will help you seek him and find him. Pray that you will increasingly see him as the greatest good!*

## DAY 12. FRIDAY

# Wealth does not give you security

*Silence*

*Meditate*

A rich man's wealth is his strong city,  
and like a high wall in his imagination.  
One gives freely, yet grows all the richer;  
another withholds what he should give, and only suffers  
want.  
—Proverbs 18:11; 11:24

*Reflect*

“Mammon (Money) is a genuine rival to God. The recurring biblical demand confronts us: “You shall not worship the work of your hands.” Jesus challenged his hearers to choose one master or another—God or Mammon. Either we will serve God and use money or we serve money and use God. Ultimately we follow what we have loved most intensely to its natural destination—eternity or death—’for where your treasure is, there will your heart be too.’”  
—Os Guinness, *The Call*

Money makes us feel protected, free, and invincible. Whether this is a minimum wage earner who gets the thrill of freedom with Friday's paycheck or the well-off person who obsessively watches their stock portfolio grow every day—the principle is the same. It says, “Now that I have this, I'm safe for a while.” But this is not wise, and not true. It may feel like a “high wall” but it's only in your “imagination” as proverbs says. In fact, the logic sometimes works in reverse, those who have less or give more away, end up more well off in money, opportunities, or happiness. Money is a terrible god.

*Pray*

*Help me today, O Christ, to find ultimate security in you. Because of you, I am a child of God, an heir to your inheritance. Thank you for purchasing my security with your blood. Help me, more and more, to see you as my only true hope.*

## DAY 13. SATURDAY

# Rejoice the City

*Silence*

*Meditate*

When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices.  
—Proverbs 11:10

*Reflect*

“All life is interrelated. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality...Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly...This is the interrelated structure of reality.”  
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

We are not islands. We do not live unto ourselves. As the week draws to a close, it is good to reflect on the fact that what we have done has contributed to the whole. When we demonstrated hard work, skillful problem solving, compassion for our coworkers, care for our families...all of this has added to the common good. Sleep well tonight. The city rejoices because of your labor.

*Pray*

*God, draw me ever deeper into connection with others. Show me a glimpse of the impact that my calling is having on those around me. I ask this not for my pride, but so that I can be encouraged with what you are doing in the world.*

## DAY 14. SABBATH

How long does it take to make the woods?  
As long as it takes to make the world.  
The woods is present as the world is, the presence  
of all its past, and of all its time to come.  
It is a part of eternity, for its end and beginning  
belong to the end and beginning of all things,  
the beginning lost in the end, the end in the beginning

What is the way to the woods, how do you go there?  
By climbing up through the six days' field  
kept in all the body's years, the body's  
sorrow, weariness, and joy. By passing through  
the narrow gate on the far side of that field  
Where the pasture grass of the body's life gives way  
to the high, original standing of the trees.  
By coming into the shadow, the shadow  
of the grace of the strait way's ending,  
the shadow of the mercy of light.

Why must the gate be narrow?  
Because you cannot pass beyond it burdened.  
To come in among these trees you must leave behind  
the six days' world, all of it, all of its plans and hopes.  
You must come without weapon or tool, alone,  
expecting nothing, remembering nothing,  
into the ease of sight, the brotherhood of eye and leaf.

—Wendell Berry, Sabbath 1985 V, A Timbered Choir

### *Journal*

*What are the enjoyments, insights, and freedoms you have felt this week? Where are you finding happiness and rest?*

DAY 15. MONDAY

## Lost in hard work

*Silence*

*Meditate*

The hand of the diligent will rule,  
while the slothful will be put to forced labor.  
In all toil there is profit,  
but mere talk tends only to poverty.  
—Proverbs 12:24; 14:23

*Reflect*

“No piety in the worker will compensate for work that is not true to itself; for any work that is untrue to its own technique is a living lie.” —Dorothy Sayers, *Why Work?*

Sometimes, there is an idea that floats around in Christian circles that hard work is bad. Certainly working so hard that you ignore commands of rest and other responsibilities is wrong. Certainly working hard as your only identity is idolatry. But beyond those things, to lose yourself in an arduous and rewarding task is a spiritual boon. To advance, to become better day by day, to get more responsibility (and make more money) is something innately beautiful and spiritually enriching.

*Pray*

*Help me this week to lose myself in hard work for the common good. I don't want to be ruled by my passions, but I do want to feel passion.*

DAY 16. TUESDAY

## Work for the King

*Silence*

*Meditate*

Do you see a man skillful in his work?  
He will stand before kings;  
he will not stand before obscure men. —Proverbs 22:29

*Reflect*

“The most determinative moral formation most people have in our society is when they learn to play baseball, basketball, quilt, cook or learn to lay bricks.”  
—Stanley Hauerwas, *Discipleship As A Craft*

The old distinction between sacred callings (spiritual) and secular (temporal) is tired, unhelpful, and unbiblical, and yet it still rests in our imaginations. To state the matter clearly, it is not spiritually better to be in a ministry calling rather than a non-ministry calling. It is spiritually enriching, God-honoring, and personally fulfilling to do whatever God has gifted you to do with skill at the highest level. When you do this, you work for God the King.

*Pray*

*Holy Spirit, enrich me today with the full and motivating knowledge that you have called me to do tasks in this world at the highest level. Give me an audience with kings so that all can benefit. Above all, help me to perform for the audience of One, the King of Kings.*

## DAY 17. WEDNESDAY

# Fast is dangerous

*Silence*

*Meditate*

Wealth gained hastily will dwindle,  
but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.  
— Proverbs 13:11

*Reflect*

“In our workaholic, image-barraged, over-caffeinated, entertainment-addicted, and supercharged culture, submission to our creatureliness is a necessary and often overlooked part of discipleship.”  
—Tish Harrison Warren

Limitation is beautiful. I love how Tish Warren describes this as “submission to our creatureliness.” We want things faster, bigger, better than the day before. We daydream of receiving a big payout, an inheritance, or landing the better job. How would our lives be different if we made that much more, or could take that vacation, or fill up our kids college funds all at once? There are exceptions to every proverbial wisdom piece that we get in the Bible, but in general, God is honored by slow, meaningful buildup: Saving money, building relationships, increasing skills and knowledge over time. This is His way of wisdom. Is this how we dream of the good life?

*Pray*

*I submit to you, God, as the Creator. I am the creature. I am limited, temporal, weak, located in a particular place with particular struggles and boundaries. I trust you for my daily bread. Give me wisdom to gather little by little.*

## DAY 18. THURSDAY

# Things better than money: Wisdom

*Silence*

*Meditate*

How much better to get wisdom than gold!  
To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.  
— Proverbs 16:16

*Reflect*

“To live, we must daily break the body and shed the blood of Creation. When we do this knowingly, lovingly, skillfully, reverently, it is a sacrament. When we do it ignorantly, greedily, destructively, it is a desecration. In such desecration we condemn ourselves to spiritual and moral loneliness, and others to want.” —Wendell Berry, *The Gift of the Good Land*

Over the next 3 days we will consider three things that the Proverbs tell us are better than having gold and riches. The first is wisdom. There is a particular joy in wisdom. There is a thrill in knowing the right course of action; of so arranging your day, your tasks, your relationships so that they bring flourishing. Wisdom also involves stewardship and treating people, places, and tasks as gifts of God. Greed destroys these sacred places by bringing a self-focus.

*Pray*

*Ask God to root out all greed in your heart and replace with wisdom and stewardship of his good gifts.*

DAY 19. FRIDAY

# Things better than money: Peace

*Silence*

*Meditate*

Better is a dry morsel with quiet  
than a house full of feasting with strife. —Proverbs 17:1

*Reflect*

“Ordinary love, anonymous and unnoticed as it is, is the substance of peace on earth, the currency of God’s grace in our daily life.”

—Tish Harrison Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary*

As the rapper The Notorious B.I.G. has famously reminded all of us, “Mo money, Mo Problems.” The wisdom of this is undeniable. We may really believe that being well off will solve problems, but in reality it almost always creates just as many. Peace is an under-rated resource. Have we stopped and asked ourselves: Will pursuing this create more difficulty in my life than will be good for me?

*Pray*

*Holy Spirit, bring into my life the joy of simplicity. Give me ordinary loves that give unspeakable joy. Give me a peace that passes all understanding.*

DAY 20. SATURDAY

# Things better than money: Integrity

*Silence*

*Meditate*

Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity  
than a rich man who is crooked in his ways.  
—Proverbs 28:6

*Reflect*

“All good, enduring reformation begins with ourselves and takes its starting point in one’s own heart and life.”

—Herman Bavinck, *The Christian Family*

It’s pretty easy to assume that because the world is broken, and systems are messed up, and most people are dishonest, that Christians are forced to play a similar part as everyone else. How can we get ahead if everyone else is doing the wrong thing? Surely God understands this? We must begin by asking the question: Is it necessary to “get ahead” financially, vocationally, or in your reputation? Some things are better than advancement. The Bible says that integrity (doing right) is one of those things.

*Pray*

*Help me, O God, to be above reproach today. Help me to realize that integrity matters more than advancement. I trust in you to bring me the exact place where you want me, and I’m believing that following you will get me there.*

## DAY 21. SABBATH

The body in the invisible  
Familiar room accepts the gift  
Of sleep, and for a while is still;  
Instead of will, it lives by drift

In the great night that gathers up  
The earth and sky. Slackened, unbent  
Unwanting, without fear or hope,  
The body rests beyond intent.

Sleep is the prayer the body prays  
Breathing in unthought faith the Breath  
That through our worry-wearied days  
Preserves our rest, and is our truth.

—Wendell Berry, Sabbath 1990 V, A Timbered Choir

### *Journal*

*What are the enjoyments, insights, and freedoms you have felt this week? Where are you finding happiness and rest?*



# The Sluggard

*Silence*

*Meditate*

Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes?

There is more hope for a fool than for him.

The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road!

There is a lion in the streets!"

As a door turns on its hinges,

so does a sluggard on his bed.

The sluggard buries his hand in the dish;

it wears him out to bring it back to his mouth.

The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes

than seven men who can answer sensibly.

—Proverbs 26:12-16

*Reflect*

"Whenever I have encountered any kind of deep problem with civilization anywhere in the world—be it the logging of rain forests, ethnic or religious intolerance or the brutal destruction of a cultural landscape that has taken centuries to develop—somewhere at the end of the long chain of events that gave rise the problem at issue I have always found one and the same cause: a lack of accountability to and responsibility for the world." —Vaclav Havel, *In Civilization*

Sluggards have several faults that our passage highlights:

(1) They use anxiety as an excuse to not work ("Hey there are lions in the streets I might get hurt" vs. 13) (2) They have become addicted to pleasures of sleeping and eating (vs 14-15), and for all that, (3) they still believe that they have more to contribute than wise, working individuals. As many have pointed out, the fundamental problem with those who are closed off to working for good in the world is a lack of responsibility. They feel no obligation other than to themselves. Scripture runs contrary to this line of reasoning. As Steven Garber puts it, "we are implicated" by definition of being made in the image of God.

*Pray*

*Help me, O Christ, to not turn away from my responsibilities today.*

*Urge me into rightful concern, proper care, and burdened action.*

*Help me not to be wise in my own eyes, but rather to committed to doing what I can as a limited human being.*

# Do you know when to stop?

*Silence*

*Meditate*

Do not toil to acquire wealth;

be discerning enough to desist.

When your eyes light on it, it is gone,

for suddenly it sprouts wings,

flying like an eagle toward heaven. — Proverbs 23:4-5

*Reflect*

"The Desert Fathers (a protest movement against worldliness in the early church) spoke of busyness as "moral laziness." Busyness can also be an addictive drug, which is why its victims are increasingly referred to as "workaholics." Busyness acts to repress our inner fears and personal anxieties, as we scramble to achieve an enviable image to display to others. We become "outward" people, obsessed with how we appear, rather than "inward" people, reflecting on the meaning of our lives." — James Houston

Think about that: Busyness is moral laziness. Ironically, to busy, means that you aren't good at something, you aren't "doing enough" which is of course the lie that propels us into busyness in the first place. But to stop working takes "discernment." You have to realize more and more what it is costing you.

*Pray*

*God, teach me how to order my life so that stopping work is expected and even easy. So fill me with purpose, identity, and calling that ceasing work does not challenge my identity.*

# Giving Attention

*Silence*

*Meditate*

Know well the condition of your flocks,  
and give attention to your herds,  
for riches do not last forever;  
and does a crown endure to all generations?  
— Proverbs 27:23-24

*Reflect*

“It is not only prayer that gives God glory but work. Smiting on an anvil, sawing a beam, whitewashing a wall, driving horses, sweeping, scouring, everything gives God glory if being in his grace you do it as your duty. To go to communion worthily gives God great glory, but a man with a dungfork in his hand, a woman with a sloppail, give him glory too. He is so great that all things give him glory if you mean they should.” - Gerard Manley Hopkins

Scripture challenges us to keep watching what God has given us to watch. Even though there is an obsessive kind of watching that reveals an idolatry for our work or our riches, nevertheless there is a watching that is careful, skillful, and honoring to God. You are already in his grace, and so doing the “duty” that he has given to you gives him great glory. What has God given you to watch over, know, and give attention to?

*Pray*

*In my tasks today, I ask for a holy attention. I want my duties to turn into careful delights. I want security so deep and stable, that I can find joy in rhythms that are uniquely mine. Please provide this today, Father!*

# Moderation is ultimate humanity

*Silence*

*Meditate*

Remove far from me falsehood and lying;  
give me neither poverty nor riches;  
feed me with the food that is needful for me,  
lest I be full and deny you  
and say, “Who is the Lord?”  
or lest I be poor and steal  
and profane the name of my God. — Proverbs 30:8-9

*Reflect*

“The glory of God is the human person fully alive.”  
—Irenaeus

Moderation is one of the pinnacles of wisdom. The writer of proverbs asks for food that is “needful for me.” That statement begs a question: What is needful? What do we really need when it comes down to it? We need food, shelter and clothing to survive of course. But we also need to recognize our dependence on God. God gives everything from the basics to the extras. Moderation is wisdom because it gets at the nature of our humanity. We are both dignified crowns of creation, and limited broken creatures. We are “glorious ruins.” As such, we need both purpose but also humility. Moderation gives us this unique combination.

*Pray*

*My God, I never want to get to a place where I feel I have no need of you. I also never want to be wondering when my next meal will arrive. Only you know the intricacies of my needs. I trust in you today.*

DAY 26. FRIDAY

## Nothing better to do

*Silence*

*Meditate*

There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? —Ecclesiastes 2:24-25

*Reflect*

“God crowns creation with humanity, who awakens its life, arouses its powers, and with human hands brings to light the glory that once lay locked in its depths but had not yet shown on its countenance.” — Abraham Kuyper

We need to recover the magic of creating. When we labor, we are ultimately creating and doing something uniquely God-like. We are unlocking potential in the earth and showing its glories. That’s why Solomon tells us there is “nothing better” to do than to do the basic things of life: Eating, drinking, working. They are gifts that bestow dignity on us and make us alive. What else are you going to do with your life? Do the thing you were made to do!

*Pray*

*Help me, O Holy Spirit, to unlock potential in my workplace today. I long to see how my daily tasks, which seem to me to be mundane, will break open dormant beauty in your good earth. Instill in me today the dignity of my calling and the joy of my accomplishments.*

DAY 27. SATURDAY

## Companionship in work

*Silence*

*Meditate*

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.

And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken. —Ecclesiastes 4:9,12

*Reflect*

“These are the truest truths of the universe: We do not flourish as human beings when we know no one and no one knows us; we do not flourish as human beings when we belong to no place and no place cares about us. When we have no sense of relationship to people or place, we have no sense of responsibility to people or place.”

—Steven Garber, *Visions of Vocation*, 133

We need each other. Working with others is practical (some things you simply can’t do alone) profitable, and just more fun. To the degree that we seek isolation in our work, we need to evaluate where that desire originates. Usually, it does not come from a good place.

*Pray*

*I pray today for my work relationships. Would you move my acquaintances at work into meaningful friendships, and my friendships into even deeper bonds of belonging and love. Help me to freely show my need of others and respect their gifts. Guard me from envy. Help me to belong.*

## DAY 28. SABBATH

I go among the trees and sit still.  
All my stirring becomes quiet  
around me like circles on water.  
My tasks lie in their places  
where I left them, asleep like cattle

Then what is afraid of me comes  
and lives a while in my sight.  
What it fears in me leaves me,  
and the fear of me leaves it.  
It sings, and I hear it's song.

The what I am afraid of comes.  
I live for a while in its sight.  
What I fear in it leaves it,  
and the fear of it leaves me.  
It sings, and I hear its song

After days of labor,  
mute in my consternations,  
I hear my song at last,  
and I sing it. As we sing,  
the day turns, the trees move.

—Wendell Berry, Sabbath 1979 I, A Timbered Choir

### *Journal*

*What are the enjoyments, insights, and freedoms you have felt this week? Where are you finding happiness and rest?*

# What do you love?

*Silence*

*Meditate*

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.  
— Matthew 22:37-39

*Reflect*

“And over many years, after many conversations, my conviction is this: moral commitment precedes epistemological insight. We see out of our hearts. We commit ourselves to living certain ways—because we want to—and then we explain the universe in a way that makes sense of that choice. It is why Augustine’s long-ago question still rings true: you cannot really know someone by asking, “What do you believe?” It is only when you ask: “What do you love?” That we begin to know another. We see out of our hearts? Yes, because we live out of our loves.”  
—Steven Garber, *Visions of Vocation*, 123

A question for this Monday morning that gets right at the heart of vocational wisdom: When it gets down to it, what do you love? We are desiring creatures who order our lives based on our affections. Above, Jesus is summarizing all the law and the prophets—it all comes down to this. Do you see an increase of love and affection for God and his people? If not, something is out of order. What do you love the most?

*Pray*

*God, I pray with the psalmist this morning: Create in me a new heart, and put a right spirit within me! On my own, I love things that are good gifts but not God. Re-order me from the inside. Change my heart of stone for a heart of flesh.*

# Show the world what God has done in you

*Silence*

*Meditate*

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. — Matthew 5:14-16

*Reflect*

“A cobbler, a smith, a farmer each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops, and everyone by means of his own work or office must benefit and serve every other.”  
—Martin Luther

Do you see yourself as a priest? A priest is a human representative of God to man, and man to God. Priests in the Old Testament were set apart for the service of Israel. In the New Testament, the church is called a “Kingdom of Priests” (1 Peter 2:5-9). The idea of the “priesthood of all believers” was one of the central themes of the Protestant Reformation. What does it mean? It means that all of us in our various vocations (work, family, marriage, citizenship) are representatives or ambassadors of God to the world. We have a mission to show the world what it means to be set apart to God. We do this through “good works” that demonstrate that we are different. How does what you will do today at work demonstrate the goodness of God to a watching world?

*Pray*

*Father, I confess I have sometimes hidden my good works. Worse, I have displayed them and subtly taken glory for myself. I’ve let opportunities to bring you recognition and glory pass me by. Give me a firm foundation in your love for me, so that I have freedom to speak and act courageously for the glory of your name.*

## His kingdom come

Silence

*Meditate*

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.  
—Matthew 6:9-13

*Reflect*

The Lord's prayer is a snapshot of our entire life in God. It teaches us dependence, forgiveness, longing, measured-expectations, and hope for a God-filled future. Today we pray that our work will be a natural outflow of his will and his Kingdom.

*Pray*

*"God of heaven and earth, we pray for your kingdom to come, for your will to be one on earth as it is in heaven. Teach us to see our vocations and occupations as woven into your work in the world this week. For mothers at home who care for children, for those whose labor forms our common life in this city, the nation and the world, for those who serve the marketplace of ideas and commerce, for those whose creative gifts nourish us all, for those whose callings take them into the academy, for those who long for employment that satisfies their souls and serves you, for each one we pray, asking for your great mercy. Give us eyes to see that our work is holy to you, O Lord, even as our worship this day is holy to you. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen."*

—Steven Garber, *Prayer for Vocations*

## A normal hint of hope

Silence

*Meditate*

And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages." —Luke 3:10-14

*Reflect*

"We are not great shots across the bow of history; rather by simple grace, we are hints of hope."  
—Steven Garber, *Visions of Vocation*

Some of us may be called to work to end world hunger or save the lives of children in a far-away place. Those ambitions are great, and God has undoubtedly gifted some people with passion and ability to make large scale changes in the world. However, Jesus' words above direct most of us to be normal hints of hope. Can you imagine getting the opportunity to ask Jesus: What should I do (with my life??!) ? Jesus' answers are so "normal" we have to do a double-take: Most people should be more generous (Share whatever you have that is extra). Tax collectors should be good tax collectors who are doing their jobs without stealing from people. Soldiers should also just protect people without taking advantage. They should also be content with the money they are making. God has given you something to do today. It may be normal. But the question is rarely: Am I making a big enough impact? The question is most often rather: how can I be faithful with what I've already been given?

*Pray*

*As I walk in the way of Jesus today, give me ordinary opportunities to be a hint of hope. Give me a glad simplicity in my tasks and teach me to be content with where I am, and what I have.*

# Doing what God wants

Silence

*Meditate*

Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. — John 4:34

*Reflect*

“While David knelt at the brook, the world was bounded on one side by the arrogant and bullying people of Philistia and on the other side by the demoralized and anxious people of Israel. To the north of the brook the powerful but stupid giant; to the south of the brook the anointed but deeply flawed king. No one could have guessed that the young man picking stones out of the brook was doing the most significant work of the day.”

—Eugene Peterson, *Leap Over a Wall*

Obedience to God often looks like insanity to other people. Tell people that you give away a significant portion of income to the church or other causes; tell people what the Bible says about sexual morality; tell people you believe in eternal destinies of human beings; tell people that often God tells us to deny ourselves, endure suffering, etc. Why? It’s a legitimate question. Why was David (a shepherd) told to fight Goliath (a warrior) or why did God instruct the judge Gideon to defeat the Midianites using a bizarre combination of water drinking habits, trumpets and clay jars (See Judges 7)? Every culture and time period has found something about God, the Bible, Jesus and/or his gospel deeply offensive. However, what Jesus models is faith in who God is. He not only implicitly trusted the Father, but used every spare moment he could find to escape and be “fed” by time with God.

*Pray*

*I know, O Father, that my limits prevent me from knowing what is best. All I have is a little light in front of me to see the next step. Help me to take that step in faith, trusting that, even and especially when I don’t understand, my faith is being strengthened in You!*

# Are you numb?

Silence

*Meditate*

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

—Romans 8:18-23

*Reflect*

“We know in our deepest places how hard it is to keep our eyes open to the complexity of the broken world around us, to keep feeling the pains of a world that is not the way it is supposed to be and, knowing the difficulty, choosing to engage it rather than being numbed by it.”

—Steven Garber

One of the biggest themes of Steven Garber’s masterwork *Visions of Vocation* is the question: “Knowing what I know [about the world or a person], can I still love?” God knows us intimately, and yet loves us at the same time. In our quest to be like God in our work, we seek to know things as they really are, and continue to love, work, strive toward better outcomes. The Bible is honest about how hard this life is. It even says that all creation is longing for something better. What you do with those longings makes all the difference. Do we use the hard things in life/work to excuse becoming numb and indifferent. Or are we energized toward new creation? Importantly, we must always say that we do NOT bring in the Kingdom. It’s not up to us. But, we are instructed countless times in Scripture to rise up, feel, have compassion, take responsibility and work for change.

*Pray*

*Awaken me to your cause in the world, O God. I feel the groaning of creation even in myself. Help me to neither become passive, nor hyper-active. Rather, give me a trust in your power and an energy toward your purposes.*

## DAY 35. SABBATH

Coming to the woods' edge  
on my Sunday morning walk,  
I stand resting a moment beside  
a ragged half-dead wild plum  
in bloom, its perfume  
a moment enclosing me,  
and standing side by side  
with the old broken blooming tree,  
I almost understand,  
I almost recognize as a friend  
the great impertinence of beauty  
that comes even to the dying,  
even to the fallen, without reason  
sweetening the air

I walk on,  
distracted by a letter accusing me  
of distraction, which distracts me  
only from the hundred things  
that would otherwise distract me  
from this whiteness, lightness,  
sweetness in the air. The mind  
is broken by the thousand  
calling voices it is always too late  
to answer, and that is why it yearns  
for some hard task, lifelong, longer  
than life, to concentrate it  
and make it whole.

—Wendell Berry, Sabbath 1987 I, A Timbered Choir

### *Journal*

*What are the enjoyments, insights, and freedoms you have felt this week? Where are you finding happiness and rest?*



# You are under authority

*Silence*

*Meditate*

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment...Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.  
—Romans 13:1-2; 5-7

*Reflect*

“Mere freedom per se does not in the least solve all the problems of human life and even adds a number of new ones. Two hundred or even fifty years ago, it would have seemed quite impossible, in America, that an individual be granted boundless freedom with no purpose, simply for the satisfaction of his whims...All the celebrated technological achievements of progress, including the conquest of outer space, do not redeem the twentieth century's moral poverty.”  
—Alexander Solzhenitsyn

There is perhaps no more quintessential American value than freedom. While we cherish religious freedom, free speech, etc. it is important to note that freedom does not mean (and never has) that we only always do what we want. We may possess an inner daydream about really having absolute freedom, but it is undeniable that it would turn in reality into a nightmare. We are created to be under authority. God's authority, yes, but human authority as well. Authorities are “ministers of God.” Where is God calling you to give up freedom and submit to another in your place of work?

*Pray*

God, forgive me for prizing independence and whimsical self-interest over responsibility to others. Please show me today where you are calling me to give respect, money, deference or anything else to those who have charge of me.

# Humbly unqualified

*Silence*

*Meditate*

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. — Romans 12:3

*Reflect*

“In a very real sense not one of us is qualified, but it seems that God continually chooses the most unqualified to do his work, to bear his glory. If we are qualified, we tend to think that we have done the job ourselves. If we are forced accept our evident lack of qualification, then there's no danger that we will confuse God's work with our own, or God's glory with our own.” — Madeline L'Engle

There is a trend that happens in our hearts the more confident we get. When we are just starting out in the workforce or receive some kind of honor, job, or position, sometimes we feel overwhelmed and unqualified. Why me? Then, as we get used to things, we lose that sense of wonder and it is replaced with entitlement. We begin to assume that we deserve what we have, and probably more. Our narrative changes so that it becomes obvious that we were bound toward honor the whole time. This is a dangerous narrative to believe. With whatever work or responsibility he or she receives, the Christian should never feel entitled to anything. To the extent that our work is valuable, it is also a complete gift—an opportunity granted us by God. God does not call the best and greatest, he calls the least and transforms them into the greatest through his own merit.

*Pray*

I need help today, Jesus, to not regard myself as more important than I am. I know that my status rests entirely in your finished work. I need reminders of my limits, my humanity, my mistakes. More than that, I want to experience again the greatness that comes from being a servant in your house. Help me exalt you today, and in so doing, find my servant identity.

# This day is for the common good

## Silence

## Meditate

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. —1 Corinthians 12:7-11

## Reflect

“But the story of sorrow is not the whole story of life either. There is also wonder and glory, joy and meaning, in the vocations that are ours. There is good work to be done by every son of Adam and every daughter of Eve all over the face of the earth. There are flowers to be grown, songs to be sung, bread to be baked, justice to be done, mercy to be shown, beauty to be created, good stories to be told, houses to be built, technologies to be developed, fields to farm, and children to educate.”

—Steven Garber, *Fabric of Faithfulness*, 35

Think about the biblical metaphors for the church: parts of the body, structures of a house, sheep of a flock. These are all metaphors that don't make sense on an individual basis. They only make sense as parts of a whole. We must take the labors of our hands, hearts and minds today and zoom out. What is the purpose of this in the scheme of the body of Christ? Think about it: You have been given a “manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” You are being “empowered by one and the same Spirit.” What will be the good outcome of this day?

## Pray

Take a moment to run through your daily schedule. Pause after each section. Pray that God would use that time to (1) give Himself glory (2) Affirm your calling (3) actually help someone (4) Lead someone to faith in Christ (5) Other?

# Work for the Lord

## Silence

## Meditate

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men — Colossians. 3:23

## Reflect

“How [do we make every moment count for God]? Not by frenzied rushing to pack a quart of activity into a pint of time (a common present-day error), but by an ordered life-style in which, within the set rhythm of toil and rest, work and worship, due time is allotted to sleep, family, wage-earning, homemaking, prayer, recreation, and so on, so that we master time instead of being mastered by it.”

—J.I. Packer, *Growing in Christ*

Packer's wisdom above cannot be improved upon. There is great comfort and practicality here. How do you know if you are “working for God and not men”? That seems like an unanswerable super-spiritual question. But according to Packer, it doesn't come by doing more and more. It comes by having the wisdom to step back and look at your life and re-ordering it so that it looks like spiritual wisdom. How much you rest, how much time you spend with your family are not unspiritual questions—they are vocations in and of themselves. Look at your calendar. When can you get away for a half-day retreat, or spend an evening with your spouse—where the only agenda item is to take stock of your life and see how your priorities are lining up with God's?

## Pray

O God of Wisdom, I have never “arrived.” My life has never felt like the balance of all good things. But help me, nonetheless, to strive toward being mastered by a love for you. I need help for this. Bless my attempts.

# Warning about laziness

*Silence*

*Meditate*

Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. — 2 Thess. 3:6-10

*Reflect*

“Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is the probable reason why so few engage in it.” — Henry Ford, 1929

There is an attitude that Christians in the workplace must fight: The feeling that just because something is hard, it is undesirable. Common in any workplace from Fortune 500 office suite to cleaning a bathroom at home is the sigh of “I really don’t want to do that.” While we need to be realistic about not always having a cheerful spirit (all of us have unmotivated days), we also need to see that there is something fundamentally misdirected about this sigh. Work, even common and seemingly menial tasks, can be infused with meaning and can be a meeting place with God. There is deep satisfaction in work. Idleness can seem like a desirable state, but in actuality, it’s the easiest way to feeling vocationally lost.

*Pray*

*Father, help me today when my motivation starts to slip and I believe that doing nothing is much better than doing something. Teach me real rhythms of rest so that I don't feel the need to escape into lethargy.*

# Responsibility

*Silence*

*Meditate*

But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. —1 Timothy 5:8

*Reflect*

“The secret of man is the secret of his responsibility”  
—Vaclav Havel

One of the themes of the last few weeks together has been “responsibility.” Behind every ambition, every calling, every biblical command is the idea that we **MUST** pursue what is good, true and beautiful for the sake of others. It is necessary. This does not mean that we are saved by our responsibility. But it does mean that if we never take responsibility, we should wonder if God is in fact at work within us (See 1 Tim. 5:8 above). At the heart of our faith, as Timothy would have a see, is a deep care for others. That care goes in concentric circles around us, starting first with our immediate family. If we can’t care for those we love, what hope do we have of being a good neighbor (2nd greatest commandment).

*Pray*

*Help me not to “move past” the needs of my family today. Help me, Father, to see them as dependent on me, and help me to feel responsible for them. Keep me from pursuing any worldly grandeur that feels false to the primary calling you have given me.*

## DAY 42. SABBATH

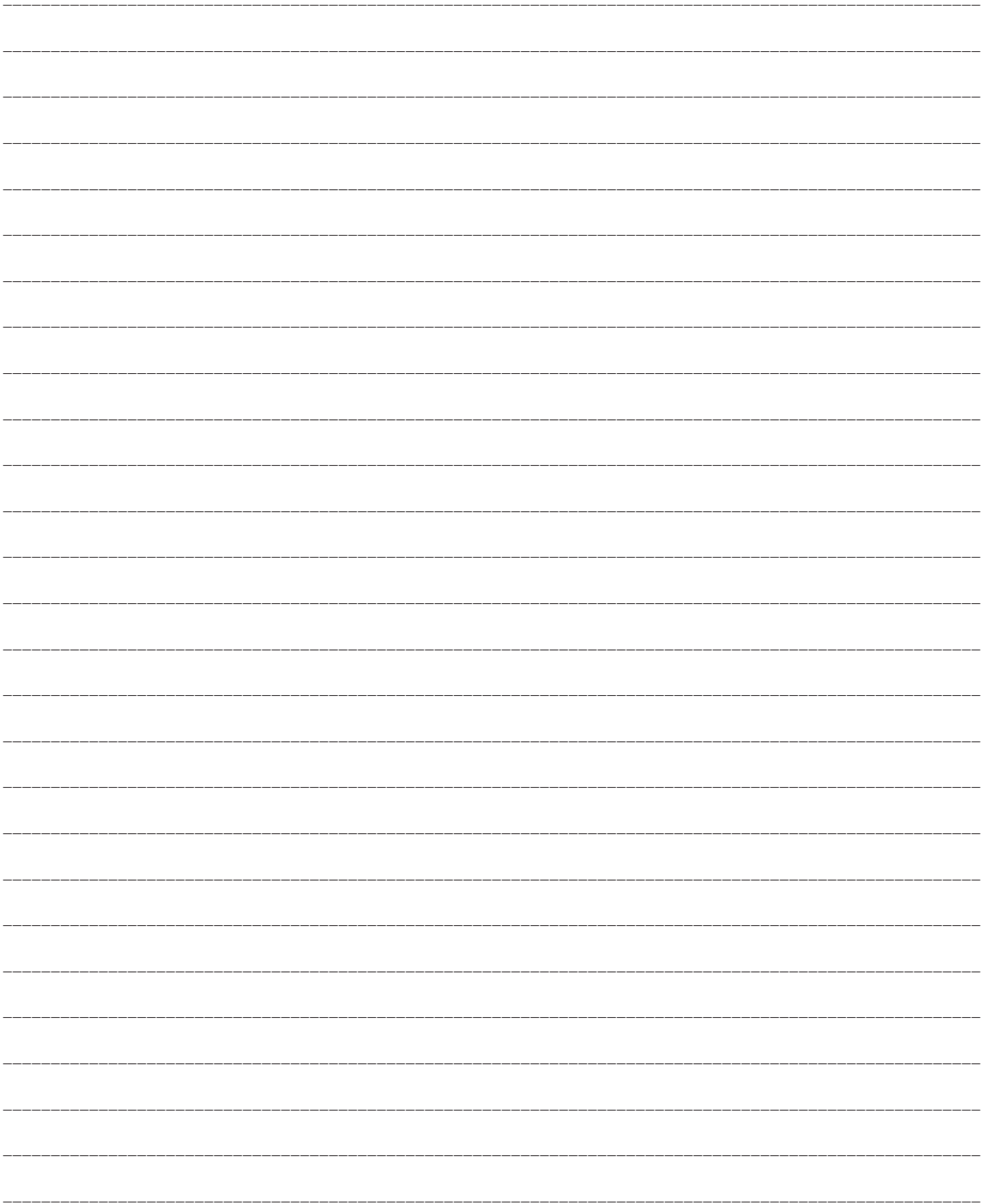
There is a day  
when the road neither  
comes nor goes, and the way  
is not a way but a place.

—Wendell Berry, *Sabbath* 1997 VII, A Timbered Choir

### *Journal*

*What are the enjoyments, insights, and freedoms you have felt this week? Where are you finding happiness and rest?*







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