

Working from the Inside Out

Study Guide

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CHAPTER 1: FRAGMENTED LIVES, FRACTURED CULTURE

1. Like Brent, where have you experienced pain or suffering in your work? What unmet longings do you experience in your daily life?
2. What do you think is the greatest issue for our culture when you look at the list of cultural challenges around work: the opportunity gap, the crisis of work, social isolation, the mental health crises, the politicization of everything, or the decline of faith?
3. Which story about work, either creation in Genesis 1 or the fall in Genesis 3, do you most resonate with? Why?
4. What's been your experience of how professionals and working-class employees see their work differently? Do you think the church speaks more to one group than to the other? Why?
5. Where do you see work forming you more into Christ's image? Where is it *deforming* you?
6. The author writes, "I've come to the conclusion that 'faith and work' is not first about impact, success, or even a way to advance the gospel in the world—it's about who we're becoming in the process of our working lives." Do you agree or disagree? Why?
7. What is one area in your work where you'd like to more fully learn to live freely and lightly?

CHAPTER 2: FROM THE INSIDE OUT

1. What do you think is unique about how Don Flow lives out his faith at his work?
2. Which of these three convictions is most important for your own working life: embracing a broadened sense of the gospel,

- recognizing that culture is not neutral, or seeing vocation as an entire life lived in response to the call of God? Why?
3. Which of the author's five guiding principles to living an integrated life most resonates with you: seek deep spiritual health, think theologically, embrace relationships, create good work, and serve others sacrificially? Which is the hardest?
 4. Which of the five stories of people living out their faith through work did you most gravitate toward: Tracy Mathews, Jennifer Wiseman, Dave Meyer, Hilary Oswald, or Karla Nugent? Why?
 5. The author writes, "God is healing the world *first* through our interior life, *second* through our exterior life, and *third* through our civic life." What do you think about this inside-out model of discipleship?

CHAPTER 3: SEEK DEEP SPIRITUAL HEALTH

1. The author shares his personal story of running out of patience with his kids after experiencing stress with work. Have you ever experienced something similar? Or have you ever felt frustrated by your own behavior and not really becoming like Christ in your daily life?
2. With whom in your life can you openly and honestly be vulnerable? Without casting judgment, do you notice what's there?
3. John Calvin once wrote: "Our wisdom, insofar as it ought to be deemed true and solid wisdom, consists entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves." Does your church tradition tend to emphasize knowledge of God or self-awareness? What do you think that means for your spiritual formation?
4. How do you think your workplace culture is forming you? How has it formed your emotions? Your desires? Your habits?

5. What do you think about practicing what Saint Ignatius called “active indifference,” or the ability to hold God’s good gifts in freedom, able to receive them or let them go? How do you think this differs from simple passivity?
6. What rhythms of grace do you want to incorporate into your life? What is the core motivation for you to practice spiritual disciplines?
7. The author ended with a story about experiencing God’s delight after a failure the day before. How do you think God feels about you today? Or when you’re at your worst? What part of the gospel of grace feels hard for you to fully embrace on an emotional level?

CHAPTER 4: THINK THEOLOGICALLY

1. The author defines *secular* as a way of seeing that “systematically excludes any explanation of the world that isn’t built around humans or human action.” In what way have you experienced your work or community as being secular?
2. The author also writes that *secular* can also mean something like *polytheism*, or the belief in many gods. In what way does your workplace, community, or our culture broadly worship many gods? What or who are some gods that you think compete for people’s ultimate allegiance?
3. Like Robin John at Eventide Asset Management, how do you think Christian doctrine might reframe the very purpose of your industry or your organization?
4. How might you answer these questions about what’s good about your company: What’s broken, what might renewal look like, and where do you sense God’s call?

5. The author writes, “Theology isn’t just for academics. It’s for every day, every activity, and every part of the world.” What do you think about this statement? Can you give a practical example—for instance, in a sales role—of how theology might lead you to asking better questions about how you do your work?
6. Of the five practices suggested by the author, which feels like an action step you’d like to take to better think theologically?

CHAPTER 5: EMBRACE RELATIONSHIPS

1. The author writes, “Relationships are the marrow of workplace culture: between management and employees, employees and fellow employees, and employees and customers. They’re the heartbeat of a school or company, and they’re also a source of tension, pain, and ultimately why people quit.” What is the current state of your relationships with your coworkers? How about the culture of the organization where you work?
2. What do you think it means to be connected yet distinct from others as a model for healthy relationships? Where on the scale of differentiation do you tend to land: either overly connected to other people and their thoughts of you, or emotionally cut off from others? Where is your own greatest area of growth?
3. “Maturity is the ability to maintain a relational state under pressure.” What do you think about this idea?
4. What do you think is the connection between healthy relationships and workplace culture?
5. Do you find it natural or difficult to openly address conflict in your workplace? What practices from Rachel Anderson, Shannon Allen, or Stephanie Summers could you apply to your work?

6. Do you feel like work relationships and family relationships pull you in different directions? How might Kate Harris's vision of calling as comprehensive, living with constraint, and consenting to real-life circumstances help address these tensions?
7. What practices can you adopt to embrace healthy relationships in your work and your family? Where is the Spirit prompting you to make a change?

CHAPTER 6: CREATE GOOD WORK

1. Josh Mabe felt called to be a craftsman and that the work he was doing was important to God. How do you believe God sees the product you make or the service you provide? Why?
2. Work was created good, but is now fallen (Genesis 3). Which of the three thorns of work the author mentions—distraction, overvaluing or undervaluing our work, or being underpaid or underappreciated—have you experienced? Can you share a story?
3. The author makes the case that work “is meaningful because it is the form in which we make ourselves useful to others.” He also argues that for most, satisfying work is one key ingredient to a meaningful life. Do you agree with this view?
4. Which of the four doctrines mentioned—the doctrine of creation, the priesthood of all believers, the resurrection, and the stewardship of our gifts—do you think has the potential to breathe new life into your own work? Why?
5. The author mentions that professionals often see the key challenge around their work as discerning between many good choices, and that the working class tends to see their work in terms of summoning the discipline to do what they'd often rather not do. What do you think about this difference?

6. What does sabbath look like for you? What do you feel God calling you to say no or yes to for sabbath?
7. All of us experience pain in our work. Yet people like Josh Mabe show us work that “is beat up and has got scars, and is discarded lumber. But if you take that stuff and see beyond some of those scars, you can make something really beautiful out of it.” How might God be weaving beauty from the thorns of your daily work?

CHAPTER 7: SERVE OTHERS SACRIFICIALLY

1. Dave Collins, who works as a housekeeper at a hotel, sees his work in terms of hospitality and sacrificial service of his neighbor. What do you think is the public good of the work you do, however big or small?
2. The author writes, “People need a reason to sacrifice for something beyond themselves. It’s what puts wind in sails, feet on the ground, and energy in a workday. Paradoxically, what we’re really looking for is the right cross to bear, not the best throne from which to rule.”
3. Julie (Sapp) Stone grew up at a truck stop. How did her parents’ example influence her vision of work? What kind of sacrificial work in our culture—like that of truckers—do we all benefit from, but rarely recognize? Can you give other examples?
4. How might you define the word *salvation*? How about *redemption*? What do you think about Brian Gray’s definition of redemption including our relationship with God, our own lives, our neighbors, systems and structures, and the created world?
5. The author argues that justice should not be only abstract and that we can participate in healing our world through our

vocation. What issues around biblical justice touch your own work or workplace? What can you do about it given your current circumstances?

6. Rather than only volunteering for justice, what opportunities do you have to integrate a vision of biblical shalom into your current life responsibilities, whether in your family, your work, or your community?

CHAPTER 8: HOW TO CHANGE

1. What do you think about changing the question from, What impact am I having? to Who am I becoming? How might this reframe the purpose of your work?
2. What do you think is your current understanding of how we change? How about your church's understanding? Why do you think most of us stay stuck?
3. Do you agree that the beginning of change tends to be addressing suffering or pain?
4. What high commitment communities are you a part of? And are you vulnerable with them? Really?
5. How do the stories you believe shape your character? How do they shape your emotions and your habits? What stories and habits operate under the surface in your life but determine much of your behavior?
6. The author says that a part of change is rethinking "the ideas you know, the people you meet, the work you do, and the recognition you receive for that work." Of these four, which of these are most shaping you? Where are you most being formed?
7. The author believes the long journey of real interior transformation happens at the intersection between growing

self-awareness and a deepening experience of God's grace through the practice of spiritual disciplines. Do you agree? What practices have you integrated into your life to more deeply experience God's transforming grace?

CHAPTER 9: TRANSLATING YOUR CONVICTIONS

1. How have you felt tension around sharing your faith with your coworkers? Is this easy or difficult for you? Why?
2. Where have you felt a disconnect between language your church uses and language that's common in your industry? What do you think it means to be an interpreter between these two worlds?
3. Would you describe your company as faith-persecuting, faith-avoidant, faith-tolerant, faith-friendly, or faith-based? How might that shape how you go about sharing the gospel in your work environment?
4. Trish Hopkins works as a real estate agent. She has worked to reimagine her daily work in light of the gospel story. How might you reimagine your work or industry in light of the biblical narrative?
5. Which practices in your current work context can you fully embrace as a Christian? Which must you abstain from?
6. What kind of language in your own work environment is out-of-step with God's revelation? What kinds of words might you use instead, which gently point people to your foundational *why*?
7. What stories are told in your work environment? What might it mean to insert more beautiful stories into your work or industry?

CHAPTER 10: A LIFE OF LOVE

1. Love is the defining mark of the Christian. In a contentious, polarized age, what do you think it means to be a person of love first?
2. The book has made the case for transformation from the inside out. Where are you currently at in this journey? What would your spouse or a best friend say about where you are on this journey?
3. The author believes that all five principles are necessary for a holistic vision of Christian discipleship. What do you think we lose if we omit:
 - Create Good Work
 - Think Theologically
 - Serve Others Sacrificially
 - Seek Deep Spiritual Health or
 - Embrace Relationships
4. “Do not live from the outside in. Live from the inside out. Choose to become a reservoir, overflowing with life from God for the world.” Does this describe your previous week? Why or why not?
5. Culturally, what do you think it would mean for the Christian mission in the world if Christians were publicly known for their love?
6. The author writes, “God is already initiating, inviting us into his triune life, and working inside us. He is summoning us to work alongside him, and in so doing, become like him.” Where is God summoning you to work alongside him?