

“The Mission of Renewal: 5 Practices” // Jeremiah 29:4–7 // *Live Sent 2025*¹ // Th 7

- Mayor of Durham: HOPUD. “Tell us what’s going on in this and how we can help.”
- MAYOR/REP
- Imagine the day that in Wake and Durham and Orange and Alamance counties there are no foster kids uncared for—that we have a list of foster families equipped and ready to take in kids who have needs. We can do that, Summit. We should do that. By God’s grace, let’s make it so.

If you have your Bibles, open them, if you will, to Jeremiah 29. We just finished up our study on Revelation, and in a couple of weeks we’re going to start our study of the book of 2 Corinthians, which is going to be awesome, but in these weeks in between we wanted to do a little miniseries on **RENEWAL**.

In the last scene in Revelation, Jesus said: **“Behold, I am making all things new” (Revelation 21:5).** *“Am making.”* Not “some day in the future I’ll make all things new and until then, sit tight, put on your tin foil hats, sing kum-ba-ya and wait for the rapture.” No—that verse is in the present continuous tense, which means **right now** he’s making all things new, through us—as a sign of the world he plans to bring.

Which is what this miniseries is about. *RENEWAL.* Last weekend Pastor Bryan gave an incredible message on personal renewal from **Psalms 32**, and this weekend I wanted to talk about our mission of renewal in our city.

A lot of believers **wonder what a bold, faithful testimony to Christ looks like in an age like ours.**

True story: A few years ago an American Airlines pilot was taxiing his 767 down the runway at LAX, flight 34, getting ready to take off for JFK, and he picked up the intercom to make his usual pre-flight announcements when he had a big idea (and **perhaps, he thought**, maybe even a **GOD-idea!**).

You see, he’d just gotten back from a mission trip to Costa Rica, and y’all, he was ***FIRE UP*** about Jesus. So at the end of his pre-flight announcements, he paused, offered up a quick prayer, and then said, “One more thing, folks: Could I get any born-again Christians on our flight to raise their hands?” People looked around confused, and a few people ***gingerly raised*** their hands. Then he said, “OK, for the rest of you—I’d

¹ Sources consulted: Tim Keller, [“Serving the City”](#), April 17, 2016, Redeemer Presbyterian; Bryan Loritts, [“God’s Welfare Plan,”](#) September 6, 2020, The Summit Church; Skip Heitzig, [“Kingdom Refugees,”](#) October 29, 2023, Calvary Church; Tim Mackie and Jon Collins, [“Exile and the Wisdom Warrior,”](#) February 19, 2018, Bible Project Podcast. And others as noted throughout.

encourage you to use this time to talk to these people with their hands raised, because they can tell you how to know for sure you'll go to heaven when you die."

People totally started freaking out. I mean, the pilot of your airplane telling you to "get ready to meet Jesus"?

Well, thankfully, flight 34 made it safely to JFK, and all the passengers disembarked with a bizarre story to tell their friends, and the zealous pilot disembarked with an immediate summons to see his supervisors.²

Now, if you're anything like me, you admire this guy's zeal, but you think, "*There's just no way I could pull a stunt like that and keep my job.*" And you're probably right.

So let me ask again: **What does a bold and effective witness for Christ look like in society today?** Especially given the fact that we're now in what some sociologists call a "negative" world with respect to Christianity—"negative world" means a world in which Christianity is seen to be a social negative.

- The "positive world" was the world in which Christianity was regarded to be a social asset—the bedrock of society.
- In the "neutral world," Christianity was considered one option among many.
- Now, sociologist Aaron Renn says, we're in the "negative world" (which he says officially started with the **Obergefell decision legalizing gay marriage** in 2014).³ Christianity is no longer even seen as one option among many; it's seen by many to be the problem—an obstacle in the way of progress, an evil to be resisted or even eliminated.

So the question is, what does bold and faithful testimony look like in a society like that?

As you've probably heard, I released a book on Tuesday called *Everyday Revolutionary: How to Transcend the Culture War and Transform the World*, and this is what it is about. This morning I wanted to take a key passage from that book, **Jeremiah 29:4–7**, and show you what a bold witness for Christ looks like in a negative world. (I should add ... I wrote this because it crystallizes the heart of our mission philosophy.)

Let me give you the context for this passage. **Jeremiah was written during the time period of Daniel.** Israel has been carried off into captivity into Babylon because of their sin, and apparently a lot of Israelites were wondering how to respond. There were a number of would-be prophets who

² "American Airlines Pilot Reportedly Promotes Christianity on Flight," Canadian HRReporter, February 9, 2004, www.hrreporter.com/news/hr-news/american-airlines-pilot-reportedly-promotes-christianity-on-flight/283846.

³ Aaron M. Renn, "The Three Worlds of Evangelicalism," First Things, February 1, 2022, www.firstthings.com/article/2022/02/the-three-worlds-of-evangelicalism. The Supreme Court issued the Obergefell decision in 2014, saying that the Fourteenth Amendment requires all states to license marriages between same-sex couples and to recognize all such marriages. Renn (and many others) see this as a watershed moment in how the Christian worldview was regarded in public discourse.

were urging the Israelites to resist any form of social integration in Babylon because, they said, any day now God was gonna raise up a new Moses to drop some serious plagues on Babylon like he had on Egypt and lead his people back to the Promised Land.⁴ Don't listen to them, Jeremiah said, because these are false prophets. Rather, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce... Take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:4–7).

For right now, God tells them, don't seek Babylon's overthrow, and don't sequester yourself in a little isolated holy huddle, holding hands and waiting for the rapture. No, put down roots; get involved in the city; seek its prosperity; make your home in it; devote yourself to making it a better place to live in; make its problems your problems. It's *NOT* your real home, of course—your real home is my Kingdom; but for right now, while you're living as exiles here, testify to my Kingdom by bringing my blessing and renewal into the kingdom of Babylon.

These were not special, isolated instructions given to one specific generation of Israelites at one unique period of history either.

No, in the NT, the apostles Paul and Peter build on Jeremiah's instruction to exiles. Peter even opens his epistle to the church by saying, 1 Peter 1:1, that he's writing to "exiles" living in Babylons all over the world.⁵ When Peter wrote those words, by the way, the actual city of Babylon had been destroyed for over 400 years; like John did in Revelation, he uses Babylon as a metaphor for the age Christians live in now.

I want to turn Peter and Paul's instructions into five action steps,⁶ five ways we can "seek the welfare of the city into which he has sent us into exile." These five things constitute the daily job description for every Christian, whether you go to work every day teaching 3rd graders, directing the operations of a multinational business conglomerate—or piloting a 767 from Los Angeles to JFK. ***If you are seeking the welfare and renewal of the city, Peter and Paul tell us, your work will be ...***

1. Creation-Fulfilling

⁴ Jeremiah 28:1–4

⁵ 1 Peter 1:1–5; 2:11; 5:13.

⁶ When Peter writes his epistle, he explicitly addresses it to "exiles" and refers to the Roman Empire as "Babylon," conjuring up the imagery of Jeremiah. These 5 things are what I built *Everyday Revolutionary* around.

Most of us are familiar with “the Great Commision,” which is to go to all the nations of the world and make disciples. But did you know that the Great Commission is not the *first* commission given to us? No, the *first* commission is to develop the world and make it a better place to live in. It’s what we call “the creation commission.”

You see, God put us into his world as his “co-creators.” That’s part of what it means to be made in his image. He put us as his co-creators into an unfinished world. In fact, when God created the world, do you remember the word he used over and over to describe it? “Good.” “And God saw all that he had made, and it was ‘good.’” Scholars point out: Good means “good,” but good is not *perfect*. “Perfect” means complete, cannot be improved upon. “Good” means that the raw materials are there, but there’s still improvements to be made.

The first time I explained the difference between those two things at this church, I said that when you all see Veronica at church, she’s perfect. Her outfit, her makeup, her hair—it’s all 10 out of 10. Perfect. Cannot be improved on. When I wake up next to her in the morning, she’s ... good. The raw materials of beauty are all there, but there’s a little work between the good and the perfect you see. That’s what I used to say, but I don’t say that anymore, but you still get the point.

God put us into a world that was good—a world where the raw materials of flourishing are there, but he leaves it up to us to turn seeds into gardens, to shape sand and rock into buildings, to turn musical sounds into symphonies, to codify principles of justice into legal systems, to blend colors together into art. We extend the beauties of the Garden of Eden to the ends of the earth.

This was to be, in and of itself, an act of worship. In fact, this is interesting—the Hebrew word for “work,” “abad,” also means “to worship.” The *work* of beautifying the earth was itself an act of *worship*. As Tim Keller says, “God’s first command to Adam wasn’t to grab a harp and compose, but to grab a knife and shape.”

Or consider this: The first time the phrase “filled with the Spirit” is used in the Bible, it refers to a man’s “secular” skills. In Exodus 31 we read, “*The LORD said to Moses, ‘See, I have called by name Bezalel ... and I have filled him with the Spirit of God (to) ...’*” What comes next, do you think? To preach? To write worship songs? To pray in tongues? No. “*... I have filled him with the Spirit of God with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.*”⁷

⁷ Exodus 31:1–6

Filled with the Spirit of God to be ... *an interior designer*? Yes, that's exactly what the Bible says. **Get your mind around that:** The first time the phrase "filled with the Spirit" is used in the Bible, it's about a man's artistic ability, not his preaching ability.

But why, you ask, would the Spirit of God be involved in *that*? It's because renewing and beautifying creation is part of *how God makes himself known*. It's the first commission he gave us, one of the first ways we experience being made in his image. Theologians talk about liminal spaces, which means "thin" spaces between the divine and the earthly, where we experience the divine. Our work is one of the first places that happens.

And a well-done job is a **foretaste** of the world as God intended it to be. It's an act of worship and an important part of our testimony. Does that make sense?

I remember one of my Sunday school teachers telling me a story about the nineteenth-century evangelist D. L. Moody. The story went that D.L. Moody walked into this gigantic meeting hall where he was to hold an evangelistic rally later that evening. The only other person in there was a janitor cleaning the place. Moody struck up a conversation with the janitor, and the janitor told him he had become a Christian at one of Moody's previous rallies. Moody pointed at the broom the man had and asked the man, "Is this your full-time job?" The man responded, "No sir, Mr. Moody. I'm a full-time witness for Jesus Christ. I just do this to pay the bills." And the story was supposed to inspire me toward evangelism. And hear me, I do believe telling people about Jesus is the most important thing we can do.

But that story also distorted my view of secular work, making me think of secular jobs as something we do **ONLY** to pay the bills. A kind of necessary evil—just a means to an end for funding real kingdom work, which is preaching and teaching and leading worship.

But friend, hear me: Being a full-time witness of Jesus Christ is not something we do after we pay the bills; it's what we do *as* we pay the bills. Cleaning up a room for others to meet in, whether that's so they can hear an evangelistic sermon, enjoy a music concert, or watch a basketball game, is a way of serving God and making him known. A well-done job gives people a foretaste of the world as God intended it to be. That's the first way we live out the Jeremiah 29:7 command, and it brings me to the second way. ***To seek the welfare of the city, in our jobs we should be ...***

2. Excellence-Pursuing

How we do our work gives people a picture and a foretaste of Jesus.

Let me use Daniel himself as our example here. Daniel 6:3 says that **"Daniel had an 'excellent' spirit in him ... [and they] (Daniel's enemies) *could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.*"** Neither corrupt **NOR** negligent. Not only was Daniel

honest, but he never cut corners or did shoddy work. He did his stuff right on time, the first time. In fact, Daniel 1:20 says that *“... in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times **BETTER** than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.”* In every subject—math, science, literature—Daniel and his friends were 10x better than everyone around them. And that was the foundation of their witness in Babylon.

Paul develops this idea in the New Testament by saying, *“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him”* (Colossians 3:17).⁸ “Do it in the name of the Lord Jesus” means do it in a way you’re comfortable attaching the name of Jesus to. So that’s the question:

- Is the quality of your work something you’d want Jesus’ name attached to?

Because you see, as with Daniel, people judge our God by the quality of work we do. A businessman in our community told me recently that he doesn’t like partnering with other Christian businesses because the ones he’s worked with didn’t honor deadlines or meet agreed-upon budgets and expected him to excuse their sloppy work because of “grace.” To give you the “Christian” discount. He told me, “I’ve learned when they put a Bible verse in their logo or a Christian fish under their name, you better watch out.” Now, that’s probably an unfair generalization, but the point is few things, practically speaking, damage the reputation of Christ in our community like a poor work ethic.

Some of you know that I’m on the board of directors for Chick-fil-A, and the Cathy family, who own Chick-fil-A, are very committed Christians. Part of their corporate statement is to glorify God in all that they do. Dan Cathy, the chairman of the board, often says Jesus commands us to *“let our light so shine before men, that they may taste our waffle fries and glorify your Father in heaven.”*⁹ Well, amen and amen.

Or, in the memorable words of **Martin Luther King Jr.**, *“Whatever your life’s work is, do it well. . . . If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, like Shakespeare wrote poetry, like Beethoven composed music; sweep streets so well that all the host of Heaven and earth will have to pause and say, ‘Here lived a great street sweeper, who swept his job well.’”*¹⁰

3. Holiness-Reflecting

⁸ Colossians 3:17

⁹ Matthew 5:16.

¹⁰ Martin Luther King Jr., “Facing the Challenge of a New Age” (speech, First Annual Institute on Nonviolence and Social Change, Montgomery, Alabama, December 3, 1956), in *The Papers of Martin Luther King Jr.*, vol. 3, *Birth of a New Age*, December 1955—December 1956, ed. Clayborne Carson et al. (University of California Press, 1997)

Our work should not only be creation-fulfilling and excellence-pursuing; it should be holiness-reflecting. Peter's overarching command to exiles in his epistles: "But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:15–16).

Everything about your life, including your work, should reflect the holiness of God. This is another idea Paul develops in Colossians: "Masters," he says, (Colossians 4:1, and we can read that word here as "bosses") "treat your servants" (which we can read as "employees") justly and fairly, knowing that you ALSO have a Master in heaven."¹¹

And then Paul says something similar to employees (3:22), "Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord."¹²

- Bosses, it's not about what you can get away with with your employees, because you have your own boss you're going to have to answer to. Everything you do, you do first and foremost for him.
- And employees, it's not about the boss sitting across the desk from you, and what you can get away with with him. Your real boss is not the one sitting across from you, but the one sitting on the throne in heaven. You may be able to fool this boss (HORIZONTAL), but you'll never fool this (VERTICAL) one.

It always baffles me how SOME churchgoers can maintain faithful church attendance, tithe regularly, raise their hands in worship—but all while cheating on their taxes, skimming off the top, or doing shoddy work: ***Our God is not just the God of church on Sunday; he's God of the whole creation every second of every week.***

Listen, I read this this week: A recent study showed the American employee does an average of 2 hours and 53 minutes of work per day; the remainder is spent socializing, browsing personal things online, and engaging in other distractions.¹³ And you probably get away with it because your boss doesn't know. But see, THIS BOSS does.

Or how about this: A recent study asked 74,000 high school students whether or not they ever cheated on their school work. 95 percent of them answered "yes."¹⁴ And by the way, that one struck me as really high, so I checked around. And it may be high, but studies consistently show at least 70 percent of high school students cheat in some way.¹⁵

Proverbs 11:1 says, "A false balance is an *abomination* to the LORD, but a just weight is his delight." "Abomination" is a varsity-level word in the Bible, normally associated with things like sexual perversion, exploitation, and murder. The writer of Proverbs, however, puts shorting a customer in

¹¹ Colossians 4:1

¹² Colossians 3:22

¹³ <https://www.demandsage.com/employee-productivity-statistics>

¹⁴ <https://academicintegrity.org/aws/ICA/pt/sp/facts>

¹⁵ <https://www.the74million.org/article/high-school-cheating-increase-from-chatgpt-research-finds-not-so-much/>

the same category. *It is an abomination* to God to not give our employer his money's worth, our employees what they're due, or our professors what they require.

"Daniel had an 'excellent' spirit in him ... [and they] (Daniel's enemies) *could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.*" And this was a huge part of his testimony in Babylon. ***What does your work make people think about your Jesus?***

When I was growing up, my church had a wall of gospel tracts we could choose from to give to people around town. It looked like this (PIC) and we called it the "tract rack." Anybody have one of those in their home church growing up? I always checked each weekend to see if we'd gotten any new additions, and one Sunday my eye was drawn to what looked like a \$100 bill poking out of one of the slots. I thought, "Is Jesus giving me a reward for checking out these tracts?" But when I pulled it out (PIC), I was disappointed to find that on the other side of this fake \$100 bill was the message "Here's the real tip: Find Jesus." "Some things are better than money," it explained. You were supposed to leave this tract with your waiter at the restaurant, who would then rejoice when he opened it to find that you had given him something even better than tip money—the path to eternal life!

Now, let me be clear: **I 100 percent agree that finding Jesus is worth more than all the tip money in the world, and eternal life is something you never have to pay taxes on, amen?** But let me be equally clear about this too: Unless this tract is accompanied by a real \$100 bill, it is unlikely to cause the recipient to start thinking about the goodness of God. In fact, the best way to help someone think the right things about your Jesus is by giving a proper tip, even a generous one, to that waiter. And look, I get it. Tipping is often super awkward these days. The waiter brings over that little device, and then he says, "*OK, you'll just need to answer a couple of questions.*" Then he takes a half step back and acts like he's politely looking off to the side. And you're like "What questions? Oh ... the question of how much extra I'm going to give you." And they're still hovering right there, not watching you but watching you, and you can just tell, judging you, and it seems like every time I go, they subtly raise the percentage on me. So I get it, tipping is awkward, but listen: You just don't get many opportunities in life to be generous with a stranger. So be fair, but if you're going to leave a gospel tract or a Summit Church inviter card for your waiter, and I think you should, accompany it with at least a 25 percent tip. Now, if you don't leave an inviter card, you can go down to 15 to 20 percent, but if you do, *be generous*. You're much more likely to give them a feel of who Jesus REALLY is that way. A holy God of love and grace and extravagant generosity.

Which leads me to ...

4. Redemption-Displaying

Our conduct in Babylon should demonstrate that our King is a generous, gracious, and redeeming King. Few things in life give us a chance to put Jesus on display like unexpected generosity.

Throughout Peter's and Paul's letters, their repeated refrain is, "Treat others like Jesus has treated you as a way of pointing them to him!"

I once heard about a young college graduate who landed a job in one of New York's most prestigious advertising agencies on Madison Avenue. Shortly after she started, she made a mistake that cost the company tens of thousands of dollars, and she expected to be fired by the end of the day. Her boss, however, went to the board of directors and said, "I should have done a better job preparing her; be patient with her, give her another shot; let the rap for this one fall on me." Saved her job. Well, that kind of thing just does not happen on Madison Ave, and when this young woman heard about what her supervisor had done, she came to him in tears, asking him why he would do something like that for her—she knew this kind of thing just did not happen up here on Madison Ave, especially for someone as insignificant as her. "Well," he said, "Because you asked—my life was forever altered because of someone who took the blame for me. Jesus took the punishment for my sin and gave me new life, and so now I like to do something like that for others when I can."¹⁶

Redemption-displaying. Now, let me be clear here: I'm not trying to overturn the whole free-market system here when I say that. A healthy economy runs on reward: You do the work, you get the pay; you do the work better, you work harder, you get paid more. That's how God intended the system to work. It's like Joby Martin says, **"You're saved by grace; you're not employed by grace."**¹⁷

I'm just saying that even within that system, Christians have an instinct for grace that just pops up from time to time in moments of radical, unexpected grace.

Here's another story, closer to home for me: When I was a teenager, my dad, who is a member here at Summit Church and whom many of you know, was the production manager at a textile factory. The factory had about 1,000 workers, and from time to time Dad had to make some decisions, like any supervisor does, that some of the employees didn't like, and there was this one lady in particular who was very vocal in her dislike of my dad because he'd had to make some decisions she didn't agree with. And whenever my dad would come around, she'd be rude to him, she'd say snarky and derogatory things about him, and generally just complained about him and badmouthed him to others. Really, she kind of hovered right below that line of probably needing to be fired, but Dad tried to be patient with her. Well, tragically, one day her son got killed in a car wreck and my dad went to his funeral. He walked up to her to hug her and tell her he cared and she said, "Why are *you* here?" And Dad said, "Because I care, and I'm brokenhearted for you. And even more importantly, God cares." And he prayed with her. A few weeks passed by and she came into his office and said, "I need to know why, after all that I've said about you to others, why you'd come." He said, "I told you, it's because I care and I'm brokenhearted for you, and more importantly, God cares for you." That started a relationship that led, a couple of months later, to this woman accepting Christ. That was the part of the story I knew, but I found out this week that this woman keeps in touch with my dad. He heard

¹⁶ Tim Keller shared this story in a message I heard years ago. I have the notes from the sermon, but not the location or date of hearing it!

¹⁷ I've heard Joby use this in multiple places, most recently in an interview with Josh Howerton, "Two Megachurch Pastors DEBUNK Megachurch Myths," Resurge, March 1, 2025.

from her just a few weeks ago. Forty years later, she still reaches out to my dad sharing prayer requests; she follows what we do here at the church and prays for us now. Friend, that's why God puts you into the marketplace. To live out the love of the gospel, to put his redemption on display. And how you do that points people to your extravagantly generous King.

And that leads me to our fifth and final way we seek the prosperity of Babylon ...

5. Mission-Advancing

This is familiar territory, Summit, but let me not assume anything and let me again make it clear. In **Matthew 28:18–20**, the only verb Jesus uses is **mathēteúsate**, “make disciples.” Everything else that looks to us like a verb in those verses is a participle. You say, “Well, that’s an interesting grammatical observation, but so what?” In Greek, participles grow out of, and gather their force from, the verb. So in other words, everything else the church does is done under the banner of “making disciples”; that’s the verb around which all our other activities are organized.

And that applies to you regardless of your line of work.

Here’s a myth we really try to debunk at The Summit Church. It’s a widely believed one: **It’s the idea that “calling into ministry” is a sacred privilege reserved only for a select few super Christians**, bestowed upon them by some kind of mystical manifestation—as in, God appears to you in some burning bush or he writes a message to you in the clouds. That’s why I’ve called it “the Cheerios method” of discerning the call of God, meaning that you expect that if God wants to call you into his service, he’ll do something magical like spell out in your Cheerios: *“Be a missionary.” “Teach Sunday School.”* And unless he does that, all he wants is for you to be a good person, go to church, and pay your tithes.

But that’s not usually how God calls you. To be clear, if God does spell out something to you in your Cheerios, you should probably pay attention. But I’ve stared at my Cheerios for years and all they ever spelled out was “Ooooooooooooo.” (That joke never gets old.)

But see, the truth is that *every* Christian is called to ministry. The call to be his witness and make disciples was, in fact, *included* in the initial call to follow Jesus. In **Matthew 4:19** Jesus said to his first followers, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” Which means that when you accepted the call to follow Jesus, you accepted the call to ministry. We say the question now is no longer *if* you are called, it’s only where and how.

And **for many of you, the workplace is WHERE God has called you.** In the workplace you’ll encounter people who would never step foot in a church, and God expects you to make his name known *there* and to make disciples *there*.

Billy Graham famously said that the next Great Awakening would happen in the workplace, not in the stadiums—and that is exactly where many of you go each day at 8 a.m.!

Furthermore, like I've told you, skill in secular work can give you access to some of the least evangelized places in the world. (PIC) This is what they call the "10/40 window," which is where the least reached people on the planet live. I've told you this stat before, but mission agencies report a total of 40,000 professional Christian missionaries working to bring the gospel into the 10/40 window. But the State Department says that the number of American citizens working in so-called "secular employment" in the 10/40 window is ... 2 M ... 240K. You see, for many of you, the 10/40 window is not a window at all; it's a wide-open door! Maybe God has given you that skill so you can take the gospel into those places!

This is one of my favorite Summit stories: One of our elders here, Mike, is head of neurology at one of our nation's most prestigious medical universities, the top-ranked neurosurgeon in the world. Every year, his university sends him to medical conferences around the world as their representative. Mike often finds himself in some of the least evangelized places on the planet, the special guest of Communists, Buddhists, and Muslims. He opens every talk by explaining how his experience with the gospel impacts his view of medicine. I asked him, "How is your university OK with that? They are, after all, not at all interested in world evangelization. In fact, they'd be downright opposed to it." He said, with a twinkle in his eyes—and he's not arrogant at all, he's quite humble—"Well, J.D., I'm one of the top-ranked neurosurgeons in America. I can say whatever I want." Mike's life and ministry reminds me of **Proverbs 22:29**, where King Solomon says, "*Do you see a man skillful in his work? I tell you, he will stand before kings!*" Mike does his work excellently, and he stands before kings because of it. And while he's got their attention, he points them to King Jesus.

For some of you, your skill in your career is going to enable you to stand before kings, like Daniel did, and when you're there, God intends for you to tell them about Jesus. Listen: It's *WHY* God made you good at what you do—why he gave you that success, why he gave you that platform, why he gave you that skill or ability—to make Jesus known from that platform. To leverage that platform for his glory. And if you're not making Jesus known from that platform, you're wasting it, and one day you'll have to answer to Jesus for why you didn't use that platform for the purpose he gave it to you for.

Creation-fulfilling; excellence-pursuing; holiness-reflecting; redemption-displaying; mission-advancing.

Living out these five ways may not seem like aggressive mission work to you—but see, in a secularized, post-Christian environment, it's where we begin.

Lesslie Newbigin was a British missionary to India for almost 40 years between the 1930s and 1970s. When he returned back home to Great Britain, he said that the rapid secularization of the West that had occurred while he was gone meant that Christians living in the West were going to have to learn the skills of the foreign missionary to reach their home culture. And he said that in a secularized, negative world, a place where the people

around us don't even share our basic worldview commitments anymore and often see us as the enemy, **distinctiveness in the workplace and neighborhoods and school buildings is where mission starts.** These five things cultivate the soil in which gospel witness flourishes.¹⁸

Well, there's a lot more to say on this, obviously; it's why I wrote the book, and you'll just have to get it :), but let me end with a vision—it's one I built the whole structure of *Everyday Revolutionary* around: **Daniel's witness in Babylon.** Daniel was the one, I think, who best lived out Jeremiah's command to seek the prosperity of his earthly city and make it a better place to live.

Daniel was not shy about sharing the truth, right? I mean, Daniel was so courageous in speaking truth that he ended up in the lion's den. And yet, Daniel is so beloved by the king whose wicked decree put him there that the king stays up all night outside the lion's den weeping, hoping against hope that Daniel will make it through the night!

Personally, I don't think King Darius stood outside the lion's den all night just because he missed Daniel's prophetic rebukes; I think it was because he genuinely knew Daniel was his friend, that Daniel cared about him. Because Babylon was a better place because Daniel was in it, and the king couldn't imagine Babylon without Daniel.

My question is, "How do we become like *that* in our society?" It's like we've said for 20 years, Summit: We want people here to say, "We may not believe what those crazy people over at Summit believe, but thank God they're here, because if not, we'd have to raise our taxes."

And that means taking care of the homeless, the orphan, the prisoner, the unwed mother, and the high school dropout.

Which is why I want to end today directing your attention to this:

(Card)

Let me start with the back side: Each month your campus hosts something called Serve Saturday, which is one way you can LIVE SENT in your community. Our next one will be happening this coming Saturday, and it is a great starting point if you've never served with us before. It's how you can engage the homeless, the orphan, the prisoner, the unwed mother, and the high school dropout. I want you to sign up for one of these if you've never done so before.

But I really want you to take a look at the front side. We're going to host a Live Sent Night here on Oct. 17, and this night is nothing like we have done before at the Summit. It's going to be an interactive and eye-opening look inside the foster care system. As you heard, foster care is one of the most important and neediest ways we can be involved in blessing and renewing our cities. Foster care is an intersection of several of the things we've talked about today. All you have to do is scan the QR code right on the card. You are NOT committing to anything by attending: It's just to learn more and prayerfully consider how you can support vulnerable children and families. And, by the way, it may not be by becoming an actual

¹⁸ Lesslie Newbigin, "Can the West Be Converted?" *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11.1 (January 1987): 2–7.

foster family yourself—your role might be supporting and encouraging foster families. What we’ve learned is that while the foster family is important, there’s a whole system behind that foster family that is essential too. Maybe some of you can become part of that supporting network.

BOW HEADS

- Where is the Holy Spirit telling you to get involved? Where is he calling you?
- I invite you to come and put your “yes” on the table. Pray.
- Maybe you have needs of your own. You’re like, “Pastor J.D., I can’t even begin to think about blessing others, my life is such a mess.” That’s OK. This is where you start. I want you to come and pray around these altars. I’m going to ask our prayer teams to stand off to the sides; if you want to pray with them, you do it; otherwise, you can just kneel here at the altar.