

# THE MARKETPLACE SPHERE

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## *Work, Worship, Stewardship, and Kingdom Influence*

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” — Ephesians 2:10*

When many Christians read this passage, they naturally think of “good works” as acts of charity or ministry—feeding the hungry, visiting prisoners, caring for widows, encouraging one another, or serving in a congregation. Scripture certainly calls us to those things, but I believe this verse reaches even further.

God created each of us with gifts, abilities, experiences, relationships, and opportunities that can be expressed through our daily work. Whether we build businesses, teach children, repair automobiles, raise families, design buildings, practice medicine, farm the land, create art, manage organizations, or serve customers, our work can become one of the primary ways we fulfill the good works God prepared for us.

The marketplace is not separate from God’s Kingdom. For most believers, it is one of the principal places where those good works are lived out.

## Created to Cultivate

Work did not begin after mankind sinned. Before the Fall, God placed Adam in the garden “to tend and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). Work was part of God’s original design. Humanity was commissioned to cultivate what God created, exercise faithful stewardship, and cause what had been entrusted to us to flourish.

The Fall did not create work; it introduced painful toil, frustration, conflict, scarcity, and exploitation into it. That distinction is important. Work itself is not a curse. Work is a gift and responsibility that has been damaged by sin but can be redeemed under the lordship of Christ.

We were not merely created to hold jobs and collect paychecks. We were created to cultivate—to take what God places in our hands and develop it for His glory and the good of others.

This is what the marketplace does at its best. It identifies needs, solves problems, develops ideas, produces useful goods and services, creates employment, and helps communities flourish. Business should therefore ask more than, “How much can we earn?” Kingdom enterprise also asks, “Whom has God entrusted us to serve, and what genuine value can we create for them?”

The marketplace is where gifts become service, service creates value, value produces provision, provision enables generosity, and experience becomes an inheritance for the next generation.

## Work Is Worship

For years, as I disciplined young men, I continually challenged them to become the very best employees they could be. Why? Because Scripture reminds us:

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

Paul does not limit this instruction to religious activity. He says, “Whatever you do.” He also urges believers to offer their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is their true and proper worship (Romans 12:1).

If our lives belong to Christ, then our work belongs to Christ. If our work belongs to Christ, the marketplace becomes one of the primary places where we worship Him.

Worship is more than the songs we sing. It is the life we offer. Work performed honestly, diligently, and lovingly unto the Lord becomes an expression of worship.

## Who Is My Provider?

Early in my career, I worked for an independent insurance agency. Part of my compensation included an annual review with the company president to determine my bonus and salary for the coming year. After several years, I dreaded those meetings. Every Christmas seemed to become a quiet battle over my value—his opinion versus mine.

As I prepared for one of those meetings, determined once again to defend what I believed I deserved, the Lord quietly spoke to my heart:

*“Who are you looking to for your provision—your employer or Me?”*

The question pierced straight through me.

When we sat down together, my employer presented the bonus and salary adjustment he believed were appropriate. Instead of arguing my case, I replied, “If that is what the Lord has put on your heart, then I am completely content with your decision.”

He looked at me in surprise. After a long pause, he smiled and said, “That is a great attitude. Let me respond in kind.” He doubled my bonus and doubled the salary increase he had proposed. As I was leaving his office, he stopped me once more and said, “I would like to buy you a suit.” He sent me to one of the finest tailors in town, who made me a custom suit worth nearly \$500—a remarkable gift in 1978.

That day I learned one of the greatest lessons of my working life. I was not ultimately working for my employer, a paycheck, or even myself. I was working for Christ. If Christ was truly my Master, then He—not my employer—was ultimately my Provider.

That realization did not give me permission to become passive, neglect wise communication, or accept injustice without discernment. It changed the source of my confidence. My security was not controlled by one employer or one annual review. My responsibility was to work faithfully; God remained responsible for my provision.

Work became worship. Vocation became calling. The marketplace became one of the principal places where I could faithfully represent my King.

## From Occupation to Calling

The word vocation comes from a Latin word associated with calling. Yet many people spend years and a tremendous amount of money preparing for a career without ever considering what God has uniquely entrusted to them.

The question asked most often is, “What job should I get?” A deeper question is, “What has God created and prepared me to contribute?”

God has not given every believer the same assignment. Just as a body has many members with different functions, Christ has gifted His people with diverse abilities and callings. Some invent. Some build. Some teach. Some heal. Some farm. Some write. Some lead businesses. Some manage people and resources. Some create beauty. Others serve faithfully as employees whose integrity quietly points people to Christ.

God never intended every believer to stand behind a pulpit. Every legitimate vocation can become holy when surrendered to Christ and used for His glory and the good of others.

Calling, however, is larger than a job title, and it is not always revealed as one dramatic lifelong assignment. It is often discovered gradually as we faithfully use what God has placed in our hands today.

A person may serve as an employee in one season, a business owner in another, a caregiver in another, and a mentor in retirement. Joseph served in a household, a prison, and a palace. Paul made tents while proclaiming the gospel and equipping believers. Different seasons may involve different responsibilities, but each can be offered faithfully to God.

The appropriate prayer is therefore not only, “Lord, show me the final destination.” It is also:

*“Lord, what have You placed in my hands today, and how can I faithfully represent You where You have placed me?”*

## The Character of the King in the Marketplace

Discovering our assignment is important, but the way we fulfill it matters just as much. The Marketplace Sphere is not transformed merely by placing Christians in influential positions. It is transformed when believers consistently represent the character, wisdom, justice, and love of the King.

Our witness is demonstrated when we tell the truth even when dishonesty would be profitable; pursue excellence when mediocrity would be accepted; keep promises when breaking them would be convenient; treat employees, customers, vendors, and competitors fairly; refuse corruption and manipulation; and accept responsibility when mistakes are made.

Scripture repeatedly condemns dishonest scales and measures. God is concerned not only with what happens in worship gatherings, but also with contracts, wages, pricing, promises, products, and the treatment of workers and customers.

Believing employers should never view people merely as expenses, resources, or instruments of production. Every employee bears the image of God and should be treated with dignity, fairness, and

respect. Employers should provide clear expectations, honest compensation, safe conditions, and opportunities for people to grow whenever possible.

Believing employees also carry responsibility. We should work diligently, respect legitimate authority, avoid dishonesty and theft—including the theft of time—and contribute to the success of the people and organizations we serve. Excellence can open doors for influence that religious language alone never could.

This does not mean believers will never face conflict or injustice. There may be times to speak truth, establish boundaries, seek correction, or leave an unhealthy workplace. Working unto the Lord does not require participating in wrongdoing. Our allegiance to Christ remains above every employer, customer, contract, or opportunity.

Kingdom influence is not about Christians attempting to control the economy or dominate other people. We enter the marketplace to serve—not to build our own kingdoms. Authority, influence, and success are trusts to be exercised under the lordship of Christ.

## **Profit, Provision, and Generosity**

Money is one of the most powerful tools in the marketplace, and one of its greatest tests.

Profit is neither inherently righteous nor inherently evil. A healthy profit can sustain a business, reward innovation, create employment, provide for families, finance ministry, meet community needs, and make future service possible. A business that continually loses money will eventually lose its ability to serve anyone.

The more important questions are how wealth is obtained, how it is used, and whom it serves.

Has money become a servant or a master? Does prosperity produce gratitude, generosity, responsibility, and greater service—or pride, self-sufficiency, extravagance, and exploitation? Are employees and vendors treated fairly? Is the product beneficial? Are customers being served truthfully? Is success measured only by accumulation, or also by faithfulness and fruit?

Scripture does not condemn possession; it warns against being possessed by what we possess. We are stewards, not owners in the ultimate sense. Everything belongs to God, and one day we will give an account for what He entrusted to us.

The Kingdom marketplace must also remember those who lack influence or purchasing power. God repeatedly expresses concern for the poor, the worker, the stranger, and those vulnerable to exploitation. Believers can create employment pathways, apprenticeships, second chances, training, and businesses that meet genuine community needs while preserving human dignity.

Provision is not intended to end with us. God blesses His people so that they may become a blessing.

## **Educated—but Not Yet Equipped**

Many years ago, I attended the University of Texas at El Paso, studying marketing and management. For the most part, my professors in the business college were impressive men for whom I had great respect.

My education strengthened my writing, analysis, critical thinking, historical understanding, knowledge of economics, and ability to communicate.

Yet when I entered the business world, I discovered an important difference between being educated and being equipped.

I had studied marketing and management, but I knew very little about prospecting, securing interviews, making presentations, answering objections, building relationships, or closing a sale. I possessed degrees, but from a practical business perspective, I had much to learn. My academic education gave me a valuable foundation; experienced practitioners had to help me turn that knowledge into competence.

Later in life, I developed a relationship with a brilliant man who viewed education through a biblical worldview. He carried a vision for a Christian university that would recognize rigorous learning while also valuing demonstrated ministry experience. From what he shared, I was able to develop a mission plan focused on helping qualified pastors, ministers, missionaries, and others document their learning, experience, and accomplishments through a serious application, evaluation, and interview process consistent with the standards then available to us.

The men and women who completed advanced degrees could then help teach and mentor others. Education was joined with experience; knowledge was joined with practice; achievement was joined with responsibility for the next generation. I will always be grateful for the years I spent working with my mentor before he went home to be with the Lord.

That experience reinforced a Kingdom principle: information alone is not enough. People need sound teaching, but they also need examples, practice, correction, encouragement, and opportunities to perform the work themselves.

Education can tell us what others have learned. Mentoring and apprenticeship help us learn how to do the work faithfully.

## The Ecclesia's Opportunity

This is where the Ecclesia has an extraordinary opportunity.

Jesus did not commission His followers merely to fill buildings. He commissioned us to make disciples. Discipleship includes helping people know Christ, understand His Word, grow in character, discover what He has entrusted to them, and become equipped to serve faithfully in every sphere of life.

Imagine an Ecclesia in which experienced believers intentionally invest in the next generation:

- Business owners mentoring emerging entrepreneurs.
- Physicians encouraging young people called to medicine.
- Farmers training future stewards of the land.
- Craftsmen and tradespeople teaching apprentices.
- Teachers developing future educators.
- Engineers inspiring future innovators.

- Artists cultivating beauty that reflects the Creator.
- Retired professionals passing decades of wisdom to those beginning their journeys.

This is discipleship in the marketplace.

Paul proclaimed Christ, disciplined believers, appointed elders, entrusted responsibility to faithful people, and continued the mission. His purpose was not to make people permanently dependent upon him. He prepared them to carry responsibility and equip others.

That same principle applies beyond congregational leadership. Every mature believer should eventually ask:

*“Who am I preparing to take my place—and perhaps go farther than I have gone?”*

Not merely in formal ministry, but in every sphere of society.

## Living Stones

Peter describes believers as living stones being built together into a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:4–5). The passage speaks primarily of our shared identity as God’s people, but it also offers a helpful picture of how we can relate to one another.

In a well-built structure, stones are not isolated. They are supported by others and help support what is being built around them. In the same way, each of us should seek people ahead of us from whom we can learn, people beside us with whom we can walk, and people coming behind us whom we can strengthen.

Learn from those above you. Build relationships with those around you. Teach and strengthen those coming behind you.

No believer possesses every gift or all wisdom. We need one another. The experienced need the energy and fresh vision of the young, and the young need the wisdom earned through years of faithfulness, success, disappointment, and correction.

Retirement from employment is not retirement from Kingdom purpose. Knowledge, experience, relationships, and wisdom become an inheritance that can be invested in those who follow.

## When Work Does Not Go as Planned

Not every believer is currently working in a position that seems to match his or her gifts. Some are unemployed, underemployed, caring for family members, enduring an unhealthy workplace, recovering from failure, or wondering whether years of labor have accomplished anything meaningful.

They must not be forgotten.

A failed undertaking does not necessarily mean a failed calling. Closed doors, mistakes, economic loss, and disappointing seasons can become places where God develops humility, endurance, compassion, wisdom, and clearer direction. Peter’s failure did not end his calling. Moses’ years in the wilderness were not wasted. Joseph’s prison was not his final destination.

Our identity cannot rest in a title, position, income, or business achievement. We are first sons and daughters of God and servants of the King. Work is an arena of calling, but employment does not determine our value.

Faithfulness may sometimes mean doing necessary work that is not our preferred work. It may mean providing for a family while preparing for another assignment. It may mean serving excellently in obscurity. God can use every honest season when it is surrendered to Him.

The question is not simply, “Have I achieved the success I imagined?” The better question is, “Am I faithfully using what God has entrusted to me in this season?”

## Wherever You Are, Begin There

The reader of this chapter may be a student, employee, employer, entrepreneur, caregiver, tradesperson, professional, or retiree. Wherever you are, begin there.

If you want to start a business, find someone who has built one with integrity. Ask how that person began, what mistakes were made, how obstacles were overcome, what help was needed, and what should be done differently.

If you are already in business, make yourself available to someone who wants to learn. Do not allow hard-earned wisdom to disappear when you retire or die. Pass it forward.

If you are an employee, become trustworthy. Learn your work. Solve problems. Serve people. Honor your commitments. Ask God how your presence can strengthen the organization and bless those around you.

If you are an employer, examine the culture you are building. Ask whether people are treated with dignity, whether your products create genuine value, and whether your practices reflect the character of Christ.

If you are retired, ask whose future could be changed by what you have learned.

Everyone is somewhere, and everyone who has walked faithfully has something to offer.

Begin with what is already in your hand. Identify one person ahead of you from whom you can learn, one person beside you with whom you can walk, and one person behind you whom you can encourage or equip. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal one practice in your working life that should more clearly reflect the King.

## Summary — Faithful in the Marketplace

Long before we were born, God knew the generation into which we would come. He formed us with gifts, personalities, experiences, and opportunities that can be surrendered to His purposes. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works that He prepared beforehand for us to walk in.

The question is not whether every believer has something to contribute. The question is whether we will discover what God has placed in our hands and faithfully use it.

Some will build businesses that create opportunity for others. Some will teach, heal, invent, write, farm, design, manage, govern, or raise families that influence generations. Others will serve in occupations where their integrity quietly displays the character of Christ every day. No legitimate calling is insignificant when surrendered to the King.

The Marketplace Sphere is not merely about careers, commerce, or financial success. It is about cultivation, service, stewardship, character, provision, generosity, and reproduction. It is where believers demonstrate that Christ is Lord not only on Sunday, but also in the office, shop, field, classroom, hospital, boardroom, studio, and home.

The Ecclesia has an extraordinary opportunity. Rather than preparing people only for congregational activities, we can equip them to fulfill God's purposes throughout society. Through discipleship, mentoring, apprenticeship, and faithful example, one generation can prepare the next to stand where it once stood—and perhaps accomplish even greater things for the Kingdom.

We are not called to dominate the marketplace, nor to use the name of Christ to build personal kingdoms. We are called to serve, create genuine value, conduct ourselves with integrity, care for people, steward resources wisely, and represent the King.

One day each of us will stand before Him. On that day, the final measure will not be our title, income, influence, or public recognition. The question will be whether we were faithful with what He entrusted to us.

Until that day:

Offer your life as worship. Discover your assignment. Serve with excellence. Create value. Practice generosity. Equip others. Represent King Jesus wherever He has placed you.

*"When the King returns, what did I do with what He entrusted to me?"*

Occupy until He comes. Do business until He comes.

## Questions to Consider

- Do I view my daily work as an act of worship and service to Christ?
- What gifts, experiences, relationships, and opportunities has God already placed in my hands?
- Whom does my work serve, and what genuine value does it create?
- Do my conduct, promises, financial practices, and treatment of people reflect the character of the King?
- Has money become a tool entrusted to me or a master directing me?
- Is there someone ahead of me from whom I should learn?
- Who is walking beside me, and whom am I preparing to follow after me?
- What is one practical change I can make now to represent Christ more faithfully in the marketplace?

## Biblical Foundation

### Creation, Work, and Purpose

- Genesis 1:26–28 — Humanity commissioned to exercise stewardship over creation.
- Genesis 2:15 — Adam placed in the garden to cultivate and keep it before the Fall.
- Psalm 139:13–16 — God’s intimate knowledge of our formation and days.
- Ephesians 2:10 — Created in Christ Jesus for good works prepared beforehand.

### Worship Through Daily Living

- Romans 12:1–2 — Present your bodies as living sacrifices and renew your minds.
- Colossians 3:17 — Whatever you do, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.
- Colossians 3:23–24 — Work heartily, as unto the Lord and not unto men.
- 1 Corinthians 10:31 — Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

### Character, Justice, and Stewardship

- Leviticus 19:35–36 — Honest weights and measures.
- Deuteronomy 24:14–15 — Fair treatment and timely payment of workers.
- Proverbs 11:1; 20:23 — God’s concern for honesty in commerce.
- Luke 16:10–13 — Faithfulness in little and the danger of serving money.
- James 5:1–6 — Warning against wealth gained through injustice and exploitation.

### Gifts and Diverse Callings

- Romans 12:3–8 — Different gifts according to God’s grace.
- 1 Corinthians 12:4–27 — One body, many members, and different functions.
- Ephesians 4:7–16 — Christ gives gifts to equip and build His Body.
- 1 Peter 4:10–11 — Use your gifts faithfully as stewards of God’s grace.

### Excellence, Enterprise, and Provision

- Proverbs 22:29 — Excellence in work creates opportunity for influence.
- Proverbs 31:10–31 — Enterprise, diligence, provision, generosity, and stewardship.
- Ecclesiastes 9:10 — Whatever your hand finds to do, do with your might.
- Ephesians 4:28 — Honest labor that provides something to share with those in need.
- 1 Timothy 5:8 — Responsibility to provide for one’s household.

### Faithful Stewardship and Kingdom Mission

- Matthew 5:13–16 — Salt, light, and good works that glorify the Father.

- Matthew 25:14–30 — The Parable of the Talents and faithful stewardship.
- Luke 19:11–27 — The Parable of the Minas: “Do business until I come.”
- 2 Corinthians 5:20 — Ambassadors for Christ.
- Philippians 2:14–16 — Shining as lights in the world.

## **Discipleship and Equipping**

- Matthew 28:18–20 — Make disciples of all nations.
- Ephesians 4:11–13 — Equip the saints for the work of ministry.
- 2 Timothy 2:2 — Entrust truth to faithful people who will teach others.
- Titus 2:1–8 — Older believers investing in younger generations.
- 1 Peter 2:4–5 — Living stones being built together into a spiritual house.