THE DAILY BREAD

The Mission of the Apostles



Faith at Work

A Practical Guide

A FORMATION BOOK BY

Kendall Peterson

The Everyday Apostle

THE DAILY BREAD

The Mission of the Apostles

Faith at Work

A Practical Guide for the Working Man

✦ ✦ ✦

A Daily Bread Formation Book

The Everyday Apostle

INTRODUCTION

Monday Morning

The test of a man's faith is not Sunday but Monday. On Sunday, in the pew, surrounded by fellow believers, faith is easy and natural; on Monday, at the desk or the job site, amid the pressures and compromises and sheer secularity of the working world, faith is tested, and it is there, far more than in church, that a man discovers whether his faith is real. Most Christian men have never figured out how to actually live their faith at work, and so they live a divided life, devout on Sunday and indistinguishable from everyone else the rest of the week, their faith left in the parking lot when they clock in.

This book is a practical guide to closing that gap, to actually living one's faith in the concrete, Monday-to-Friday reality of a working life. It is not a theology of work but a handbook for the working man, the practical specifics of how to bring faith into the workplace: how to begin the workday with God, how to do one's actual tasks as a Christian, how to handle the ethical dilemmas that arise, how to deal with difficult bosses and coworkers, how to witness appropriately without crossing lines, how to keep work in its proper place, and how to find in one's daily labor a real meaning that reaches into eternity. The aim is a man who no longer leaves his faith at the workplace door but brings it in with him and lives it, in practice, through the whole of his working week.

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might. — Ecclesiastes 9:10

We will begin with how to start the workday rightly, bringing God into it from the first. We will take up the practical living of excellence and diligence in one's actual tasks. We will address the ethical dilemmas and pressures to compromise that the workplace presents. We will consider how to deal with difficult people, the trying bosses and coworkers who test a man's charity. We will look at how to witness appropriately in a professional setting. We will face the danger of letting work become an idol and how to keep it in its place. And we will see how a man's daily labor, rightly lived, becomes a service to Christ himself that reaches into eternity.

CHAPTER ONE

Starting the Day Right

Bringing God Into Your Work

How a man begins his workday largely shapes how he lives it, and the first practical step toward faith at work is to start the day by bringing God into it, consciously and deliberately, before the demands of the work take over. The man who plunges into his workday without a thought of God, letting the pressures and tasks immediately consume him, has already surrendered the day to a purely secular mode, while the man who begins by bringing God into his work sets himself to live the day differently. Understanding how to start the workday right, bringing God into it from the first, lays the foundation for living one's faith through the whole working day.

Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established. — Proverbs 16:3

Offer the Day

The first practical step is to offer the workday to God, consciously committing the day's work to him before it begins, which both sets a man's intention and changes the meaning of everything that follows. A simple morning offering of the day's work to God, a brief conscious act of committing the day and its labor to the Lord, dedicating one's work to him, asking his help and his blessing, transforms the day from a merely secular stretch of tasks into an offering made to God. This offering need take only a moment, a brief prayer on waking or before beginning work, but it sets the whole day in a different frame, consecrating the labor to come, reminding a man for whom he ultimately works, and inviting God into the day's activity. The man who offers his workday to God has already changed its character, making it an offering rather than mere toil, and setting himself to live it as a Christian rather than drifting through it secularly. Offer the day, consciously committing the workday to God before it begins, and a man transforms the meaning of his labor from secular toil into an offering made to the Lord, setting the whole day in the frame of faith and inviting God into the work to come.

A Word Before Hard Moments

Beyond the morning offering, a man brings God into his workday by turning to him at its hard moments, breathing a quick prayer before a difficult conversation, a stressful meeting, a temptation, or a trying task, drawing on God's help exactly where it is needed. The workday presents many moments of difficulty, pressure, and temptation, and the man of faith learns to bring God into these moments, pausing for a quick silent prayer before the hard meeting, asking for patience before the trying encounter, invoking help before the temptation, so that God is present not only at the day's beginning but throughout its challenges. These brief prayers at the hard moments, scattered through the day, keep a man connected to God through his work and draw on grace exactly where it is needed, turning the day's difficulties into occasions of reliance on God rather than

purely secular struggles. The man who learns to breathe a prayer at the hard moments of his workday brings God into the very points where faith is most tested, and finds grace for the difficulties that his own strength could not meet. A word before hard moments, turning to God in brief prayer at the day's difficulties and temptations, brings his help exactly where it is needed and keeps a man connected to God through the challenges of the working day, drawing on grace at the very points where faith is most tested.

Set Your Intention

Finally, starting the day right involves setting one's intention, consciously deciding at the day's beginning the kind of man one intends to be at work that day, the integrity one will keep, the charity one will show, the witness one will give. The man who begins his workday with a clear intention, having decided in advance to work with integrity, to treat others with charity, to represent his faith well, is far more likely to live that way than the man who drifts into the day with no intention, at the mercy of whatever pressures and moods arise. This setting of intention, this conscious deciding in advance the kind of Christian one will be at work that day, orients a man toward living his faith and prepares him to meet the day's challenges as a believer rather than being swept along by them. The man who sets his intention at the day's start has decided in advance the questions the day will raise, having resolved to keep his integrity, show his charity, and give his witness before the pressures to do otherwise arrive. Set your intention, consciously deciding at the day's beginning the kind of Christian you intend to be at work, and a man orients himself to live his faith through the day, preparing to meet its challenges as a believer who has decided in advance who he will be rather than drifting at the mercy of the day's pressures.

CHAPTER TWO

Doing the Work Itself

Excellence and Diligence in Practice

The most basic way a man lives his faith at work is in how he does the work itself, through the excellence, diligence, and conscientiousness that make his labor a genuine witness and a real offering to God. Before anything a man says, the quality of his work speaks, and the practical living of faith at work begins with simply doing one's job well, with the diligence and excellence that both honor God and witness to the faith. Understanding how to live faith through the actual doing of one's work, in practical excellence and diligence, is the foundation of the whole working apostolate.

The soul of the diligent is richly supplied. — Proverbs 13:4

Give an Honest Day

The first and most basic practice is to give an honest day's work, to do fully and conscientiously what one is paid to do, without the shirking, time-wasting, and corner-cutting that are so common in the working world. A Christian owes his employer honest labor, the full and conscientious doing of his job, and the practical living of faith at work begins with this basic integrity of giving an honest day's work, not stealing time or effort, not shirking responsibilities, not cutting corners, but doing fully what one is paid to do. This honest labor is both a matter of simple justice, for a man owes real work for his pay, and a witness, for in a working world full of shirking and corner-cutting, the man who reliably gives an honest day's work stands out. The practical faith of the working man shows first in this basic diligence, the conscientious giving of honest labor that both fulfills justice and witnesses to the faith. Give an honest day's work, doing fully and conscientiously what you are paid to do without shirking or corner-cutting, and a man lives his faith at work in the most basic way, fulfilling the justice he owes his employer and witnessing to the faith through the reliability of his labor in a working world where honest work stands out.

Pursue Excellence

Beyond basic honesty, the Christian pursues excellence in his work, striving to do it not merely adequately but well, with the care and skill that make his labor genuinely good, for excellent work is both a fuller offering to God and a stronger witness. The man of faith is not content with the minimum but pursues excellence, doing his work with real care, developing his skill, striving for quality, making his labor genuinely good rather than merely acceptable. This pursuit of excellence is a way of honoring God with one's work, offering him not grudging adequacy but genuine quality, and it is a powerful witness, for the Christian known as the most excellent and skilled worker lends his faith a credibility that careless work would undermine. The practical faith of the working man therefore includes this pursuit of excellence, the striving to do one's work genuinely well, which both offers God a fuller gift and strengthens the witness of a life. Pursue excellence, striving to do your work genuinely well rather than merely adequately, and a man offers God a fuller gift and gives a stronger witness, for excellent work honors God and lends the faith a credibility that careless work would undermine, making the pursuit of quality a central practice of faith at work.

Do the Small Tasks Well

A particular mark of faith at work is doing even the small, unglamorous, and unseen tasks well, for the man who is faithful in the small things reveals a character and a faith that the man who is diligent only in the visible and important tasks does not. Much of a man's work is small, routine, unglamorous, and unseen, and it is in these small tasks that a man's real diligence and faith are tested, for anyone will do the visible, important tasks well, but only the man of real character and faith does the small, unseen ones with the same care. The practical faith of the working man shows in this fidelity to the small tasks, the doing of even the unglamorous and unseen work with genuine care, which reveals a character formed by faith rather than merely by ambition. This faithfulness in small things is both a witness and a sanctification, for it forms a man in genuine diligence and witnesses to a faith that works even when no one is watching. Do the small tasks well, bringing the same care to the unglamorous and unseen work as to the visible and important, and a man reveals a character and faith formed by more than ambition, for fidelity in the small things witnesses to a faith that works when no one is watching and sanctifies a man through the humble labor that tests his real diligence.

CHAPTER THREE

When They Ask You to Cross a Line

Handling Ethical Pressure in Practice

Sooner or later, the working world will ask a man to cross a line, to shade the truth, to cut an ethical corner, to go along with something he knows to be wrong, and how he handles these moments of ethical pressure is a central test of his faith at work. These dilemmas are often not dramatic but subtle and normalized, the small compromises that everyone seems to make, and the Christian needs practical wisdom for recognizing and handling them. Understanding how to handle ethical pressure in practice, the concrete dilemmas and the costs of refusing, equips a man to keep his integrity when the workplace asks him to compromise it.

A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight. — Proverbs 11:1

Recognize the Compromise

The first practical skill is to recognize the ethical compromise for what it is, even when it is normalized, subtle, or dressed up as mere practicality, for a man cannot resist a compromise he has not recognized, and many compromises come disguised. The workplace often presents its compromises not as clear wrongdoing but as normal

practice, practicality, or what everyone does, so that a man can slide into them without recognizing that he is being asked to do something wrong, the shaded truth presented as salesmanship, the cut corner as efficiency, the dishonesty as the way things are done. The Christian must therefore cultivate the clear sight to recognize these compromises for what they are, to see through the normalization and the disguise to the actual ethical question, to notice when he is being asked to cross a line even when everyone treats it as normal. This recognition is the necessary first step, for only the man who sees the compromise clearly can resist it, and many fail not through deliberate wrongdoing but through failing to recognize the ethical question beneath the normalized practice. Recognize the compromise, seeing through the normalization and disguise to the actual ethical question, and a man gains the clear sight that is the necessary first step to resisting the workplace's pressures, for only the compromise recognized can be refused, and many fail not by deliberate choice but by failing to see the line they are being asked to cross.

Find the Third Way

Often the apparent choice between compromising one's integrity and suffering serious consequences is a false dilemma, and the practical skill is to find the third way, the creative alternative that neither compromises nor needlessly provokes disaster. Many ethical dilemmas at work present themselves as a stark choice between doing wrong and suffering badly, but this is frequently a false framing, and the resourceful man can often find a third way, a means of declining the wrong without needless confrontation, a creative alternative that preserves his integrity while avoiding the worst consequences. This might mean finding a different way to accomplish the legitimate goal, raising a concern constructively, offering an honest alternative, or quietly declining without making a scene, all of which preserve integrity without the needless provocation of a stark refusal. The practical wisdom of faith at work includes this searching for the third way, the creative alternative that neither crosses the line nor needlessly courts disaster, which is often available to the man who looks for it. Find the third way, the creative alternative that neither compromises integrity nor needlessly provokes disaster, and a man often escapes the false dilemma between doing wrong and suffering badly, for many ethical binds at work yield to the resourceful search for a means of declining the wrong without needless confrontation.

Pay the Price When You Must

Yet sometimes there is no third way, and a man must simply refuse the wrong and accept the cost, paying the price of his integrity when the only alternatives are compromise or consequence, and this willingness to pay the price is the bedrock of faith at work. There

are moments when no creative alternative exists, when a man faces a stark choice between crossing a line and suffering for refusing, and in these moments the Christian must simply refuse and accept the cost, keeping his integrity even when it is expensive, for some things a man will not do whatever the consequence. This willingness to pay the price, to accept real cost rather than compromise on a matter of genuine right and wrong, is the bedrock on which all integrity at work rests, for a man whose integrity bends whenever the price is high enough has no integrity at all. The practical faith of the working man includes this readiness to pay the price when necessary, to accept the cost of refusing a genuine wrong, which both preserves his integrity and gives a witness of real power. Pay the price when you must, refusing the genuine wrong and accepting the cost when no third way exists, and a man keeps the integrity that is the bedrock of faith at work, for the willingness to suffer for one's principles rather than compromise them is what makes integrity real and gives the costly witness that marks a man whose faith is more than talk.

CHAPTER FOUR

Difficult People

Charity Toward Bosses and Coworkers

The workplace throws a man together with people he would never choose, and some of them are genuinely difficult, the overbearing boss, the backstabbing colleague, the lazy teammate, the hostile rival, and dealing with these difficult people in a Christian way is a major part of faith at work. A man cannot usually escape his difficult coworkers, and how he treats them, day after day, is one of the truest tests and clearest witnesses of his faith. Understanding how to deal with difficult people at work in a Christian way, with charity, patience, and wisdom, equips a man to live his faith in the trying relationships that the workplace imposes.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. — Romans 12:18

You Cannot Choose Them, but You Can Choose Your Response

The first practical recognition is that while a man cannot choose his difficult coworkers or escape them, he can always choose his own response to them, and his faith is lived precisely in that choice. A man has little control over who his boss and colleagues are, and often cannot escape the difficult ones, but he always retains control over his own response, over whether he meets difficulty with charity or returns it in kind, and it is in this choice of response that his faith is lived. The difficult person will be difficult

regardless, but the Christian can choose not to be dragged down to the same level, to respond with patience rather than retaliation, with charity rather than resentment, with the steadiness that his faith provides. This focus on one's own response, rather than on the difficult person one cannot change, is liberating and practical, for it directs a man's energy to what he can control, his own Christian response, rather than to what he cannot, the difficult person's behavior. You cannot choose your difficult coworkers, but you can choose your response to them, and a man lives his faith precisely in that choice, meeting difficulty with charity and patience rather than returning it in kind, directing his energy to the response he controls rather than the person he cannot change.

The Difficult Person as a Teacher

The Christian can even come to see his difficult coworkers as teachers, occasions of growth in the very virtues he most needs, for the difficult person tests and develops a man's patience, charity, and self-control as easy relationships never could. The trying boss teaches patience, the hostile colleague tests charity, the frustrating teammate develops forbearance, so that the difficult people at work, far from being merely obstacles, are occasions of real growth in virtue, the resistance against which a man's character is strengthened. This reframing of the difficult person as a teacher transforms a man's experience of them, turning the trying relationships from mere burdens into opportunities for the growth in patience and charity that he needs, and helping him bear them with something other than pure resentment. The Christian who learns to see his difficult coworkers as occasions of growth, teachers of the virtues he most needs, both grows through them and bears them more peaceably, finding in the trying relationships a hidden gift. The difficult person as a teacher, an occasion of growth in patience and charity, transforms a man's experience of the trying relationships at work, turning burdens into opportunities for the virtue he needs, and helping him bear difficult people with growth rather than mere resentment.

Keep the Peace You Can

Finally, the Christian aims to keep the peace so far as it depends on him, doing his part to live peaceably with even difficult people, while recognizing that he cannot control whether they respond in kind. Scripture counsels living peaceably with all so far as it depends on oneself, acknowledging both the duty to seek peace and the reality that peace is not always within one's power, since it takes two, and the Christian at work applies this by doing his own part to keep the peace with difficult people, refusing to escalate, seeking resolution where possible, maintaining his own charity, while accepting that he cannot force a peaceful response from others. This keeping of the peace one can, doing one's own part toward peaceable relations while leaving the other's response to them, frees a man

from responsibility for conflicts he cannot resolve while holding him to his own duty of charity and peaceableness. The Christian keeps the peace he can, does his part toward peace with even difficult people, and leaves the rest, refusing both to escalate conflict and to take responsibility for the other's refusal of peace. Keep the peace you can, doing your own part to live peaceably with difficult people while accepting that their response is not in your control, and a man fulfills his duty of charity and peaceableness without taking responsibility for conflicts he cannot resolve, keeping his own peace and charity whatever the difficult person chooses.

CHAPTER FIVE

Letting Your Light Show

Appropriate Witness in a Professional Setting

A man of faith is called to witness at work, but the workplace is a professional setting with its own boundaries, and so he must learn to let his light show appropriately, being known as a Christian and sharing his faith when the opening comes without becoming the obnoxious coworker who makes everyone uncomfortable. This requires a practical wisdom about how to witness in a professional context, how to be unmistakably Christian without being inappropriately pushy. Understanding how to let one's light show appropriately in a professional setting equips a man to witness at work in a way that draws rather than repels and respects the workplace while representing the faith.

That you may be blameless and innocent… shining as lights in the world. — Philippians 2:15

Be Known Without Being Pushy

The appropriate witness begins with simply being known as a Christian, letting one's faith be visible and unhidden through natural means, without forcing it on anyone, which is very different from either hiding one's faith or pushing it aggressively. A man can let it be known that he is a serious Christian through natural, unforced means, not hiding that he goes to Mass, letting his values and reasons be known when relevant, being openly though not obtrusively a man of faith, so that his colleagues know what he is without his constantly talking about it. This being known without being pushy is the foundation of appropriate workplace witness, making a man's faith present through his person without imposing it on anyone, and opening the door for those who become curious to raise the subject themselves. The goal is to be unmistakably but un-obnoxiously Christian, known for one's faith without constantly broadcasting it, so that the faith is present through the

man without being forced on his colleagues. Be known without being pushy, letting your faith be visible and unhidden through natural means without forcing it on anyone, and a man witnesses appropriately in the workplace, making his faith present through his person and opening the door for the curious, while respecting the professional setting and avoiding the pushiness that repels.

Let Them Raise It

In the workplace, the most fruitful sharing of faith usually happens not when the Christian initiates but when colleagues, drawn by his life, raise the subject themselves, and so the man's task is largely to live well and be ready when they do. The attractive life, the integrity, the charity, the peace of a genuine Christian will, over time, raise questions in colleagues' minds, and some of them will eventually ask, in a quiet moment, about his faith, and these unforced openings, created by the witness of a life, are the real opportunities for sharing faith at work, far more fruitful than any initiated preaching. The Christian's task is therefore not to push but to live well and be ready, to be the kind of man whose life raises questions and then to respond honestly and gladly when colleagues bring the subject up. Much workplace witness is simply this: living in a way that provokes curiosity and being prepared to share one's faith genuinely when someone, moved by what they have seen, finally asks. Let them raise it, living well and being ready to respond when colleagues bring up the subject of faith, and a man shares his faith at work in the most fruitful way, in response to the genuine curiosity that his life has provoked rather than through an initiated preaching that imposes, letting the witness of his life open the door that his readiness then walks through.

Respect the Setting

Witnessing appropriately also requires respecting the workplace as a professional setting with its own proper purposes and boundaries, not using work time inappropriately for religious conversation or making colleagues a captive audience, but keeping explicit sharing of faith appropriate to the context. The workplace is not a church and colleagues are not a congregation, and the Christian owes his employer his work and his colleagues a workplace free of imposition, which means respecting the professional setting, not using work time for extended religious conversation, not pressuring colleagues, not making them a captive audience, but keeping the explicit sharing of faith appropriate to the setting and the relationship. This respect for the workplace is itself part of the witness, showing that the Christian is a considerate professional rather than a zealot who imposes, and it preserves the credibility and relationships through which, in appropriate moments, deeper sharing can happen. The man of faith witnesses within the proper bounds of the workplace, primarily through his work and character, with explicit sharing

kept appropriate to the professional setting. Respect the setting, keeping explicit sharing of faith appropriate to the professional context and not imposing on colleagues, and a man witnesses as a considerate professional rather than an imposing zealot, respecting the workplace while representing the faith, and preserving the credibility and relationships through which deeper sharing can happen in its appropriate time.

CHAPTER SIX

Keeping Work in Its Place

When the Job Becomes an Idol

A particular danger of the working life, especially for the ambitious and capable man, is that work can become an idol, consuming a man's time, energy, and devotion until it crowds out God, family, and everything else, and a crucial part of faith at work is keeping work in its proper place. The practical living of faith at work is not only about how a man works but about work's proper place in his life, and the man whose work has become his god has failed at faith at work no matter how well he does his job. Understanding how to keep work in its place, resisting the idolatry of work, is essential to a genuinely Christian relationship to one's labor.

No one can serve two masters… You cannot serve God and money. — Matthew 6:24

The Idolatry of Work

Work becomes an idol when it takes the place that belongs to God, when a man's deepest devotion, identity, and sense of worth come from his work rather than from God, so that work has become, in effect, what he worships. This idolatry is subtle and respectable, often praised as dedication and ambition, but it is real, and it shows when a man's work consumes his devotion, defines his identity, drives him relentlessly, and crowds out God, family, and rest, when he serves his work as men are meant to serve God. Scripture warns that a man cannot serve two masters, cannot give to work the devotion that belongs to God, and the man whose work has become his idol has, however unwittingly, chosen the wrong master. Recognizing this idolatry, the subtle enthroning of work in the place that belongs to God, is the first step to keeping work in its place, for the respectable idol of work is easily missed precisely because it is praised as virtue. The idolatry of work, the subtle enthroning of work in the place that belongs to God, consumes a man's devotion and identity and crowds out God and family, and recognizing it, even in its respectable guise of ambition and dedication, is the first step to keeping work in its proper place and refusing to serve the wrong master.

Boundaries That Protect What Matters

Keeping work in its place requires practical boundaries, deliberate limits on the time and energy work is allowed to consume, that protect the higher goods of God, family, and rest from being devoured by work. Without deliberate boundaries, work tends to expand to fill all available time and energy, consuming the hours that belong to prayer, family, and rest, and so the man who would keep work in its place must set and defend practical limits, protecting time for God and family, refusing to let work devour everything, maintaining the boundaries that keep work from crowding out what matters more. These boundaries might include protected family time, a refusal to let work consume the Lord's Day, limits on working hours, and the deliberate reservation of time and energy for prayer and relationships, all defended against work's tendency to expand. The practical keeping of work in its place depends on these boundaries, for good intentions alone will not hold against work's expansive pressure, and only deliberate, defended limits protect the higher goods. Boundaries that protect what matters, deliberate limits on the time and energy work is allowed to consume, protect God, family, and rest from being devoured by work's expansive pressure, and the man who would keep work in its place must set and defend these practical boundaries, for good intentions alone will not hold against work's tendency to consume everything.

Your Worth Is Not Your Work

At the root of keeping work in its place is the recognition that a man's worth is not his work, that his deepest identity and value come from being a child of God rather than from his job or achievements, which frees him from the tyranny of finding his worth in his work. Much of the idolatry of work comes from a man's seeking his worth and identity in his job, his achievements, his success, so that he is driven to work relentlessly to secure a sense of value that he is looking for in the wrong place. The liberating truth is that a man's worth comes not from his work but from God, from being a beloved child of God regardless of his achievements, and the man who grasps this is freed from the need to find his worth in his work and can therefore keep work in its proper place. This recognition cuts the root of work idolatry, for the man who knows his worth is secure in God no longer needs to earn it through his work, and is free to work hard without being enslaved by the need for work to supply his value. Your worth is not your work, for your deepest identity and value come from being a child of God rather than from your job, and this recognition frees a man from the tyranny of seeking his worth in his work, cutting the root of work idolatry and freeing him to keep work in its proper place because he no longer needs it to supply the value that God has already given him.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Working for the Lord

The Eternal Meaning of Your Labor

We come finally to the deepest truth that transforms the whole of a man's working life, that he works ultimately not for his employer, his pay, or himself, but for the Lord Christ, so that his daily labor is a service rendered to God that carries an eternal meaning and reward. This truth lifts a man's work above the merely secular and temporal, revealing that his ordinary labor, done for the Lord, is woven into the eternal purposes of God and will receive an eternal reward. Understanding that a man works finally for the Lord, and that his labor carries an eternal meaning, completes the practical guide to faith at work by revealing its ultimate significance.

You are serving the Lord Christ. — Colossians 3:24

Working for a Higher Master

The transforming recognition is that a man works ultimately for the Lord Christ, not merely for his earthly employer, so that all his labor is a service rendered to God, which changes both its meaning and his motivation. Scripture tells the worker that he is serving the Lord Christ, that behind and above his earthly employer stands the divine Master for whom he ultimately works, and this recognition transforms a man's labor from service to a human boss into service to God himself, dignifying the work and freeing the worker from dependence on human recognition. The man who works for this higher Master does his work as a service to Christ, offering it to God, laboring for his approval rather than merely for human reward, which both elevates his motivation and frees him from the tyranny of human appreciation. This working for a higher Master is the deepest frame of faith at work, revealing that a man's labor is finally a service to Christ, and transforming the whole of his working life into an offering to God. Working for a higher Master, serving the Lord Christ behind and above his earthly employer, transforms a man's labor into a service rendered to God himself, dignifying the work, elevating the motivation, and freeing the worker from dependence on human recognition, for he labors finally for the divine Master's approval rather than merely for human reward.

An Eternal Reward

Because a man works finally for the Lord, his labor carries an eternal reward, for the work done faithfully for Christ is not lost at death but receives from him an eternal recompense, so that a man's ordinary labor is woven into eternity. Scripture promises the

worker that from the Lord he will receive an inheritance as his reward, that his faithful labor for Christ is not merely temporal but carries an eternal recompense, so that the work a man does for the Lord reaches beyond this life into eternity. This means a man's ordinary labor, done faithfully for Christ, is not spent and lost like merely secular work but is woven into the eternal purposes of God and will receive an eternal reward, which gives even the humblest faithful labor an eternal significance. The recognition of this eternal reward transforms a man's view of his work, revealing that his faithful labor for the Lord is an eternal investment rather than a merely temporal toil, and motivating him to work faithfully for a recompense that lasts forever. An eternal reward awaits the man who works faithfully for the Lord, for his labor is not lost at death but receives from Christ an eternal recompense, weaving even the humblest faithful work into eternity and giving a man's ordinary labor an eternal significance that transforms it from temporal toil into an eternal investment.

The Dignity of Your Daily Work

Seen in this light, a man's daily work, however ordinary, possesses a profound dignity, being a service to Christ, a participation in God's purposes, and an offering with eternal significance, so that the man of faith can approach his ordinary labor as the dignified and meaningful thing it truly is. The world often regards ordinary work as merely a means to a paycheck, drudgery to be endured, but the man of faith knows that his daily labor, done for the Lord, is a service to Christ himself, a share in God's work in the world, an offering with eternal meaning, and therefore possesses a dignity far beyond its secular appearance. This recognition of the dignity of daily work transforms a man's experience of his labor, allowing him to approach even his ordinary tasks as meaningful and dignified, a service to God rather than mere drudgery, and to find in his daily work a significance that the merely secular worker never sees. The man of faith therefore works with a sense of the dignity of his labor, knowing that his ordinary work, done for the Lord, is a dignified and eternally significant service to Christ. The dignity of your daily work, which is a service to Christ, a participation in God's purposes, and an offering of eternal significance, transforms a man's experience of his labor from mere drudgery into meaningful and dignified service, and the man of faith approaches even his ordinary tasks with the sense of dignity that comes from knowing he works, finally, for the Lord.

CONCLUSION

Live It Monday to Friday

The test of a man's faith is Monday, not Sunday, and this book has been a practical guide to passing that test, to actually living one's faith in the concrete reality of a working week. We have seen how to start the workday by bringing God into it; how to live faith through excellent and diligent work; how to handle the ethical pressures to compromise; how to deal with difficult bosses and coworkers in charity; how to witness appropriately in a professional setting; how to keep work in its proper place against the idolatry of work; and how a man's daily labor, done for the Lord, carries an eternal meaning and reward.

None of this is beyond an ordinary working man, for it is simply the practical living of faith in the ordinary circumstances of a job, through habits and choices within the reach of anyone willing to take them up. The man who closes the gap between his Sunday faith and his Monday work, bringing his faith into his workplace and living it there, has reclaimed the largest part of his week for God and discovered that his ordinary job is a field of real holiness and mission.

So live it, Monday to Friday. Offer your workday to God and bring him into it; do your work with honest diligence and real excellence; recognize and resist the pressures to compromise, paying the price when you must; deal with difficult people in charity, choosing your response; let your light show appropriately, known as a Christian without being pushy; keep work in its proper place, refusing to make it an idol; and know through it all that you work finally for the Lord Christ, who gives your ordinary labor an eternal dignity and reward. Do this, and your working week will cease to be a faithless stretch between Sundays and become what it was meant to be, a field of your holiness and mission, where you live your faith not only in church but in the place where you spend your days, working all the while for the Lord.

✦ ✦ ✦

Faith at Work: A Practical Guide for the Working Man is part of The Daily Bread Library.

The Everyday Apostle · everydayapostle.com