

Sermon Transcript

April 26, 2015



Set Apart and Set Among Selected Passages

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on April 26, 2015, at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Dr. Scott W. Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio copy of the sermon on CD is available by request at (860) 563-8286. An audio version of this sermon may also be found on the church website at www.wethefc.com.

Sermon Text

Ephesians 4:25-32

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

John 17:14-19

¹⁴ I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

Matthew 18:21-35

²¹ Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. ²³ “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. ³¹ When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³² Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

Luke 15:1-2, 11-32

¹ Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ² And the Pharisees and scribes grumbled saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

¹¹ And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ ²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²² But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ ³¹ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

Introduction

How does our faith inform our work? That is the conversation we are having right now on Sunday mornings and in the vast majority of our community groups during the week. It is a good conversation to have, because this is where a vast majority of life is lived. How does Sunday, spill into Monday to Friday? If Sunday has no impact on Monday to Friday, we need to ask the question, “What are we doing here?” Do you remember what Dorothy Sayers wrote? “If religion does not speak to our work lives, then it has nothing to say about what we do with the vast majority of our time—and no wonder people say religion is irrelevant. How can anyone remain interested in a religion which seems to have no concern with nine-tenths of his life?”¹ Sunday can’t just be about Sunday.

So here we are, just three weeks into this conversation and we are discovering that Sunday has everything to do with Monday to Friday. We are discovering how to view our work through the lens of the gospel. We are gaining a biblical worldview of work. We are learning that life is not meant to be compartmentalized between the sacred and the secular. Rather, all of life is sacred and lived unto God. In 1 Corinthians 10:31, Paul reminds us, “*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*” We are discovering how to live Monday to Friday “*to the glory of God.*”

I would like you to think of the first three weeks of this series as a long introduction. In this three week introduction, I want you to see how one thought flows into the next and provides for us three major themes that will continue to shape our conversation all the way to the first Sunday in June.

The first theme we discover is that the idea of “work” is anchored in God. We open up to the first page of the Bible and we discover a working God. God creates things. God provides and sustains things. God renews and restores things. Since we are created in the image of God, it only stands to reason that we were made for work. Part of what it means to be human is that we find fulfillment in work. We too create things. We too provide and sustain things. We too renew and restore things. Why? Because we are created in the image of God and this is how we partner with what God is doing in this world. Therefore, our work has meaning and purpose and it can be a source of joy.

But . . . our second theme reminds us that it is not always that easy. When we step into Monday, it doesn’t take long to discover that Monday is filled with difficulty. We live in a broken world that has pulled away from God and there is consequence to living life apart from God. We become self-centered. We are told in Genesis 3 that our work will be toil and it often “works” against us. And this is our lot until the day we die. Therefore, work, can often seem to be meaningless and futile, a “necessity” just to help us meet our needs and get by. Add to that, all the complicated relationships we often find at work. What you discover about Monday is that your not long into Monday and Sunday seems like a distant and often unrelated memory. It is hard to find anything sacred in what seems to often be a very secular environment.

And yet God is very present in your Monday. We were reminded last week that we too are part of the brokenness of our world. God is using our work, with all of its problems and challenges to do his work in us. I read an interesting quote this week. It began with a question. “Wouldn’t it be so much easier if Jesus had asked God to take away the trouble rather than letting adversity be a normal part of Christianity? Wouldn’t it be so much easier to recruit followers to our cause with the promise of a ‘trouble-free life?’” But what did we discover last week? We discovered exactly what this author

discovered in his answer to these questions. “There must be something about the trouble and tension we face in this life that’s important to our journey toward heaven. In fact, trouble and tension helped shape the culture of the early Church and those who were a part of it just as it can help shape our lives and our churches today.”² In other words, the second major theme we discovered is that God is using our work, with all of its challenges, as a place where God is doing his work in us.

This leads us to the third theme I want us to think about as we make our way through this series. The reason God wants to do a work in us is because God wants to do a work through us. If your work is a place where God is doing a work in you, then it also is a place where God wants to do a work through you. Therefore, how you respond to the challenges and difficulties of work is not just about what God is doing in you and how God is growing you. Rather, what God is doing in you is on display in front of those you work with and therefore your life becomes an opportunity for God to do a work through you. So we need to think about how we respond to the challenges of Monday. And my concern is this. I think there are two temptations we face as people of faith who are trying to make it in the workplace. We either “blend in” to the point where no one really sees a difference. Or, we “isolate ourselves” failing to be the people of mercy and love God has called us to be. In each case, we fail to see what God has called us to be and we fail to let the gospel shape our view of the workplace.

So this morning I want to group things in two’s.

- If you are in Christ, there are two realities for you to embrace. You are to be “set apart” and at the same time you are to be “set among.”
- If you are in Christ, there are two temptations to avoid. We need to avoid the temptation of “blending in” and the temptation of “isolation.”
- If you are in Christ, there are two gospel solutions. We need a greater vision of God and a honest and humble assessment of ourselves.

Two Realities: Set Apart and Set Among

I want to begin by identifying two things that are true of us if we are followers of Jesus. At the outset, it may sound like they are saying opposite things, but they really aren’t. In fact, they are complimentary and they are a good starting point for us this morning as we consider the idea that our work is a place where God wants to work through us. It is important that we embrace these two realities. We are “set apart” and “set among.”

When we say that we are “set apart” it means that Jesus makes a difference in the way we live. In Ephesians 4, Paul talks about the difference Jesus makes in the way we live.

He tells us to “put off” the old way of life that controlled us before we came to faith in Christ and to now “put on” the new way of life. By the way, this is a daily thing we must do. Just like every day you change your clothing, you need to daily “put on” this new way of life. It is something that starts inside of us. Through renewing our minds in the Word of God, the change begins in the heart and then is demonstrated on the outside. But when you get to Ephesians 4:25-32, one thing is clear. This change that Jesus brings does not stay on the inside. It is seen in the external actions of our lives. This is what “sets us apart.” It is noticed and seen.

If I can just summarize “what is seen” in the life that is set apart according to Ephesians 4:25-32, here is what you find. You find a person of honesty and integrity. He says what he means and does what he says. He keeps his commitments. This person keeps their anger in check, knowing that if it festers it creates deeper hurts and wounds. This person does honest work and the work that is done enables this person to contribute to the needs of others. This person uses their words to encourage and bring life to others. It is all summed up in verses 31-32, “*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*”

When these things are “seen” through your life in the workplace, it opens doors for God to use you. I think people long to see these things, but don’t know why they seem so elusive to them. David Brooks wrote an *Op-Ed* in the *New York Times* two weeks ago. The title of the article was “A Moral Bucket List.” It was an essay adapted from his recent book “*The Road to Character.*” He begins the article by admiring those rare people who seem to be “deeply good.” He says that about once a month he runs into such a rare person and that when he does it both brightens his day and, at the same time, saddens his heart. It saddens him because he feels that he has achieved a level of “career success” but not necessarily “that generosity of spirit, or that depth of character.” In the article he tries to identify where those virtues come from. He calls those virtues “eulogy virtues.” It is those things you want said of you at your funeral. They typically have nothing to do with career accomplishments. Rather they are virtues of kindness, bravery, honesty, faithfulness—and of course the capacity for deep love.

He wanted to know how these “deeply good people” got that way. He writes, “I came to the conclusion that wonderful people are not made, not born—that the people I admired had achieved an unfakeable inner virtue, built slowly from specific moral and spiritual accomplishments.”³ That is Ephesians 4. These things can’t be faked or conjured up. It is an inner spiritual transformation that “sets us apart.” I am struck by the very last sentence of the article, “Those are the people we want to be.”⁴

This is what moves us to the second reality we need to embrace in the workplace. We are “set apart” in the way we live but we are also “set among” the people we work with day after day. If you have been in the church for a long time, you may be familiar with a popular phrase that seeks to describe our relationship with the world around us. It goes like this, “we are in the world, but not of it.” It is a phrase that needs to be reworked. It is true, but it is often misconstrued. It comes across as though we can’t help the fact that we are here in this world, but because we are “not of it” we are trying to pull away from it and its influence in our lives. But Jesus has another slant on this in John 17. Yes, we are not “of this world.” That is what he says of us in John 17:16, *“They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”* It is the same thing we were saying when we said that we are “set apart.” Jesus comes into our lives and reshapes how we live. Yes, we are not of this world. But this work Jesus does in our lives does not distance us from the world, but rather it sends us into the world.

Jesus goes on to pray in John 17:18, *“As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.”* So perhaps we need to tweak the saying a bit this morning. Perhaps we should start the saying where the old one left off. The old one went like this, “We are in the world, but not of it.” Let’s start the saying the way Jesus starts it. “Yes, we are not of the world.” David Mathis writes, “But notice that for Jesus being “not of the world” isn’t the destination in these verses but the starting place. It’s not where things are moving toward, but what they’re moving from. He is not of the world, and he begins by saying that his followers are not of the world. But it’s going somewhere. Jesus is not huddling up the team for another round of kumbaya, but so that we can run the next play and advance the ball down the field.”⁵ In other words, the saying should go like this. “We are not of the world, but sent into the world.”

We need to approach our work with the idea of being “sent.” This is not just a thought for a missionary. This is a thought for every follower of Jesus. You are “set apart” unto Christ wherever you go and you are “set among” a people. You are “sent” and God wants to work through you wherever you are. This is our reality.

Two Temptations: To Blend In or To Isolate

When you step into the difficulty of Monday, there are two temptations that often work against us being “set apart” and “set among.” These temptations minimize our ability to be used by God in our place of work. I would like to identify the root of these temptations by considering two parables Jesus told. The first one is in Matthew 18 and the second one is in Luke 15.

The Temptation to Blend In: The first temptation works against the call to be “set

apart.” Instead, it is here where we are tempted to “blend in” and be no different than the people around us. Jesus tells a parable in Matthew 18 and he tells the parable in response to a question Peter asks Jesus. Peter asks, “*Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?*” Peter thinks he is being pretty magnanimous, since the going rate for forgiveness was “three times.” Three strikes and you are out! In response to his question, Jesus tells the parable of the Unforgiving Servant.

The parable went like this. There was a servant who owed a debt way beyond his ability to pay. For the purpose of the illustration, the amount that was owed was an absurd amount of money. It was a debt of “*ten thousand talents.*” According to the *ESV Study Bible* notes, that is equivalent to \$6 billion. Do you get the point? There was no way for this servant to pay the debt. And so the king pursued his legal right and ordered that the man and his family be sold into servitude. This was the common practice in the ancient world for those who could not pay their debt. When the servant was brought before the king, he fell down before the king and pleaded for patience and mercy. Out of pity for the servant, the king forgave him his debt. You would think mercy like this would be life changing. But it wasn’t. There was someone who owed this servant \$12,000. While this may be substantial, it is nothing compared to the \$ 6 billion this man had just been forgiven. But when his debtor pleaded for mercy, none was given. Unlike the mercy he experienced, he threw his debtor into prison. When the king heard of this, he was furious. He summoned the unforgiving servant and said to him, “*You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt.*”

The point with this parable is that with God’s grace comes expectation. God’s grace is life changing. When it comes to the workplace, the temptation is to rationalize your actions by saying, “well I am forgiven in Christ so it doesn’t matter what I do.” “Blending in” means that you do sinful or immoral or unwise things because that is the value of the workplace. “Everyone does it,” becomes your excuse and you “blend in.” I think of the story Tim Keller tells of a man by the name of Howard. Howard had an opportunity to move to a larger company with a modest increase in responsibility and the possibility of greater movement in the future. When they were negotiating his salary, he was asked to share his current salary with his prospective employer. He pumped up the figure by 4 percent, thinking that the higher they thought his current salary was, the more they would offer him. He rationalized it because they were offering two weeks less vacation and so he was figuring the value of the loss vacation into the numbers. But then he added this, “he was pretty sure everyone did this sort of thing. So he offered, was there anything wrong with that?”⁶ That is “blending in.”

Even though this “blending in” seems rather minor and somewhat innocent, it actually has far reaching effect on Howard and the workplace. Keller writes, “As Howard tells the story now, he shares that a real breakthrough in his thinking happened when he realized that the desire for just a little more money would so easily cause him to forsake his integrity. Why couldn’t he be honest? . . . Why couldn’t he just trust God? . . . Was he basing his interest in the job on the salary or the work God was giving him to do? . . . With integrity sacrificed on the altar of money, the next lie would be easier . . . Others would be tempted to do the same . . . Everyone would trust one another a little less . . . To work for the money instead of the value that the work itself might bring would damage the culture of the company he was joining.”⁷ When we give into the temptation of “blending in” we are contributing to the culture that everyone complains about and knows is wrong. And so, by God’s grace, we are to be “set apart” so that God can do a work through us.

The Temptation to Isolate: The second temptation we often face in the workplace is to “isolate.” This works against the call of being “sent” or being “set among.” In Luke 15, Jesus tells three parables. Here is what strikes me about the setting of these three parables. The religious people were wondering why Jesus so readily hung out with irreligious people. In Luke 15:1-2, it says the Jesus was so much “among them” that irreligious people were drawn to be with Jesus and that he readily received them and ate with them. So when we talk about being “set among” we are not talking about just trying to tolerate the people we work with on a daily basis. Jesus had such a sense of being “sent” that he welcomed and embraced the people around him. This is what led Jesus to tell the familiar parable of the Prodigal Son.

There are three main characters in the story of the Prodigal Son. There is the Father who happened to have two sons. The Father appears to be somewhat wealthy. There is the Prodigal Son who has the audacity to ask for his share of the inheritance before his father dies. He takes his share and squanders the whole thing. He finally get the courage and the humility to return to his father. When he humbly returns to his father and confesses his sin, his father receives him and throws a party for him. His father can be heard saying in verse 24, “*For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to celebrate.*” But then there is a third character in this story, the older brother. The older brother has a hard time celebrating his younger brother. In fact, in this story, he represents the religious leaders. The reason the religious leaders “isolated” themselves from the “sinners” is because they were self-righteous. They possessed a spiritual pride from striving to “be good” that caused them to look with disdain on those who operated under a different moral code and ethic.

The temptation for us is to be like the older brother and to sit in judgment and to lack

compassion for those we happen to be “set among.” And so we just keep to ourselves, do our job, collect our paycheck and forget that we have been “set among.” We forget, that it is all by the grace of God. We forget that it is not our own righteousness that makes us acceptable to God. It is only the righteousness of Christ applied to us by faith that makes us acceptable to God.

Think about it. Does your faith and the moral code you seek to live by as one “set apart” to Christ cause you to look down on those you work with day after day? Or, does your faith, anchored in grace, cause you to look with compassion on those who are only doing what comes natural to them without Christ in their lives? We may have more of the “older brother” in us than we care to admit. Perhaps, the extent to which we isolate ourselves is the extent to which the older brother, spiritual pride, rules in our hearts. We need to remember, that our place of work is a place God wants to work through us and that we are “set among” people who need to know the love of God.

Two Gospel Solutions: God’s Love and Our Humility

As we look at the call to be both “set apart” and “set among” we recognize that there is a tension between these two realities and we need the gospel to help us live this out. Robert Alexander asks a good question as we hold these callings in tension. “How can I, as a child of God, uphold God’s commands and meet the true needs of the workplace?”⁸ It is a difficult question to answer because our workplaces are filled with ethical challenges and we can see how easy it is to either “blend in” or just “isolate” ourselves from the environment. Alexander poses some hypothetical situations to illustrate this. He talks about the supervisor who wants you to make copies of articles that are copyrighted by your competitor and are not your company’s intellectual property. Or the student who is working hard to be in the top 5% of the class to open up opportunities for internships and grad schools. And yet, one of his closest competitors is cutting corners on their research. Or the group of moms who like to talk about the new mom in the neighborhood who is from a different cultural background and they wonder why you don’t join in with making stereotypical jokes about the family.⁹ How do we remain “set apart” and “set among” when these difficult issues present themselves to us?

The key is keeping the gospel in front of us at all times. Do you know when we keep the cross in front of us? It gives us a greater vision of God and it gives us a greater awareness of ourselves. It is the gospel in clear focus that causes the unforgiving servant to forgive. It is the gospel in clear focus that causes the older brother to rejoice over the return of his wayward sibling. It is the focus of the gospel.

Here is what the gospel shows us about God. God is love! Jonathan Edwards made much of God being Triune and therefore at the heart of who God is, he is love. The implication is this, “The purpose for creating the world was to create a world where God could enjoy relationship. God created us not to receive love and honor, but to share the love and joy and honor he already enjoyed.”¹⁰ The more we grow in the knowledge of that love, the more we drawn to be “set apart” in love and “set among.”

The gospel also sheds a light on our own hearts and it humbles us. It causes us to see that we have no right to be an “older brother” and to sit in judgment. When David Brooks compiled his list of character traits that led to developing what he called “deeply good people.” The first trait was humility. Here is what he wrote, “We live in a culture of the Big Me. Social media wants you to broadcast a highlight reel of yourself. Parents and teachers are always telling you how wonderful you were. But all the people I’ve ever deeply admired are profoundly honest about their own weaknesses. They have identified their core sin, whether it is selfishness, their desperate need for approval, hardheartedness, cowardice or whatever. . . They have achieved a profound humility, which has best been defined as an intense self-awareness from a position of other-centeredness.”¹¹ This is the very thing that comes from keeping the cross in front of us. But by the grace of God.

Conclusion

God wants to do a work through you. Remember, you are “set apart” and “set among.” Avoid the temptations of “blending in” and “isolating” yourself. Keep the gospel front and center in your life and remember that the goal of God is love and the more the cross is in front of you, the more you see your need for Christ. This will create within you a humble dependence upon God and a love for those around you.

¹Dorothy Sayers *Creed or Chaos* (Manchester, NH.: Sophia, 1949) 77

²Todd Wilson *Igniting a Culture of Multiplication* (Spark: 2014) 35

³David Brooks “A Moral Bucket List” *The New York Times* April 12, 2015, Sunday Review, 6

⁴Ibid

⁵David Mathis, “Let’s Revise the Popular Phrase, ‘In, But Not Of’” www.desiringgod.org 8/2012

⁶Tim Keller *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work* (New York: Dutton, 2012) 200

⁷Ibid., 202-203

⁸Robert Alexander *The Gospel-Centered Life At Work* (Greensboro: New Growth Press, 2014)41

⁹Ibid., 39

¹⁰Keller, 205

¹¹Brooks, 6

Getting To Know Me Questions

1. What are you most thankful for about your job? (If you don't have a job, apply this to school or to home or to wherever you are in life.)
2. When it comes to your job (or whatever your current situation is) where do you need the most help?
3. What is one thing you are taking from Sunday's sermon?

Diving Into The Word

4. Read Ephesians 4:25-32. Discuss what it looks like to be "set apart?" Compare this passage to what David Brooks writes in *The NY Times*. "About once a month I run across a person who radiates an inner light . . . They seem deeply good . . . They are not thinking about themselves . . . They achieved an unfakeable inner virtue . . . Those are the people we want to be." How does Ephesians 4:25-32 apply to what Brooks is looking for?
5. Read John 17:14-19. What is the difference between being "in the world and not of it" and "not of the world and sent to it?" How does the latter statement change your attitude about being "set among?"
6. In Matthew 18 is the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant and Luke 15 is the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Have someone in the group tell the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant in their own words. Discuss how it is easy to "blend in" with the moral and relational dynamics of the workplace.

Have someone in the group tell the Parable of the Prodigal Son from the vantage point of the older brother. Look at Luke 15:1-2 to see what prompted this parable. Discuss how easy it is to simply "mind your own business" and pull away from the people you work with day after day.

Are you most tempted to "blend in" or to "isolate" yourself?

7. Read Matthew 18:21-22 and Luke 15:1-2. How does the gospel help us live out what it means to be "set apart" and "set among?"

Taking It Home

8. Which of these two do you need to work on the most? Being "set apart" or being "set among?" How will you use the gospel to help you grow in this area?
9. Based on what you discussed, what is one "thank you" prayer you would like to offer and what is one "help me" prayer you would like to ask?"