

# St. Paul: On The Same page

for 09.21.14



## Day One: 1 Corinthians 7:17

*Each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.*

There is a (sort of) famous essay that was first published in 1958 called “I, Pencil.” It is the story of the life of a Number Two wooden pencil, and of all the people who were needed to manufacture that one, simple item.

From trees grown and harvested in Oregon to zinc and copper mines in Colorado, graphite from Sri Lanka and clay from Mississippi, an amazing number of products and millions of people go into the making of a simple pencil.

If the ingredients of a pencil are so amazing, then what are the ingredients of a person’s life, all those people who made the pencil?

How many lives did your life touch today? If someone smiled at you and caused you to smile in return, how many people smiled because of you? If you spoke to 50 people today, how many went away feeling valued, encouraged, loved?

“Live as a believer in whatever situation,” Paul said. What does that mean in your life? No one can give you a simple set of instructions for you to witness in your life or work, except this: live like a person who has been forgiven for an enormous debt, who has been given an amazing treasure, who has no fear for the future because you will live forever. Live like a person whose every word and action is a part of building the kingdom of God, touching the eternal souls of God’s precious children.

**Prayer:** *O Holy Spirit, take my work today, my leisure, my every moment and let them be your instrument to proclaim Jesus. Only Jesus, every single day. Amen.*

## Day Two: Genesis 2:15

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*

You're familiar with that verse from the story of God's creation of the world. But it's important to remember this: it takes place before the fall into sin.

God did not give the world to Adam and Eve as their possession. He placed them in the garden to "work it" and take care of it. What does it mean that they were to "work it"? Obviously, God did not need them to produce bushels of fruit to sell or to give to God. But Adam and Eve were created as "partners" with the Garden. Their work was needed for the Garden to fulfill its purpose, and the Garden gave Adam and Eve opportunity to fulfill their lives in service to God.

Work was fulfillment because it a part of how God cared for them, and how they worshiped him. But work was not a burden, or a chore, or a punishment. Work was a blessing, and it was a blessing enjoyed in community. Adam and Eve worked together.

How do you see your work – the stuff you face every day when you get ready for your commute? Perhaps these words fit better, "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life."

Our sin has made work less pleasant. It has inserted weeds into our work. And our relationship with our partners is also tainted by sin.

But even so, our work is still good. Still an opportunity to serve God and our neighbor. Still a place where we are partnered with others, God's creation, to use the gifts God has given us.

Besides producing "fruit" at work today, do you have opportunity to nurture the people you work with, to help them flourish and grow? As plants require water and nutrients and sunlight, God's people require a listening ear, a word of encouragement, and above all a reminder of his love.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, you called your Father the Gardener. Let me serve in his garden today. Bless my work to be a blessing. Amen.*

### Day Three: 2 Cor. 5:17-21

<sup>20</sup>*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.*

As our weekly themes follow the chapters of Andrew Fitzgerald's book, "Make Him Known," we come to the chapter that he titled, "BE." He urges us to witness to others, not just by preaching or by knocking on doors, or by going to far away countries, but by BEING God's messengers where we are already called to be, in our vocations, our daily lives.

The word "be" might make it sound like we are just passive in this – the way that an inanimate object continues to just be what it is. But that's not what it means to be a believer. Instead, if we live as believers in Christ, then wherever we are we will act as believers in Jesus act. We will be in grace.

Paul compares our calling to serving as the ambassador of a king. A diplomat does not go from place to place, roaming around telling people about his home country. He goes to the place where he is

appointed, and he remains there. And while he is there he studies and learns to understand the people in this strange place. He establishes ties with them, not just for his own benefit or to collect souvenirs, but so that he can connect them to his master, the king.

An embassy is a little piece of the home country in the middle of a foreign place. But the ambassador does not just reside there, like an animal in a hole. He lives there, and ventures out from there, and welcomes others there in order to show these far away people what his master is like. All that he does and says represents the king and country that he serves.

You have learned to speak the language of this world, but do you still remember your mother tongue – the word of God? With God's help, can you live like a representative of the King of Kings?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, don't let me start any wars today. Instead, let me bring peace. Let me extend your treaty, your offer of peace and forgiveness to those who fear you. Let me reach your enemy today and bring them to you. Amen.*

## Day Four: “How Clear is Our Vocation, Lord”

(LSB #853)

*How clear is our vocation, Lord, when once we heed your call: to live according to Your Word and daily learn, refreshed, restored, that You are Lord of all. And will not let us fall.*

We want to witness. We want others to know Jesus Christ and so to find eternal life in him. But how? How can we witness to Jesus simply by living out our vocation?

The hymn that Fred Green wrote (Thank you, Lord, for his vocation!) reminds us that in our calling we are learning every day. We are refreshed and restored. And God will not let us fall – that is, he will always be there with his forgiveness and grace.

*But if, forgetful, we should find Your yoke is hard to bear; if worldly pressures fray the mind, and love itself cannot unwind its tangled skein of care: our inward life repair.*

You might fear that your failures at work or at home imperil your witness. And sometimes they may. But they also become God’s instrument for witness. You know what it’s like to be “frayed” by the constant pressures of work and responsibility, but as Jesus

“repairs” you, he restores you’re your ability to love, and he reveals the gift we most want to share.

*We marvel how Your saints become in hindrances more sure; whose joyful virtues put to shame the casual way we wear Your name and by our faults obscure Your power to cleanse and cure.*

“Wearing” the name of Jesus: what an excellent way to think of what we do each day. Some days I wear a clerical collar that immediately tells people around me that I am a servant of God. But at times I wear it too casually. That is, I forget I have it on. When I remember how others see me, then I am more ready to act like what and who God calls me to be.

*In what You give us, Lord, to do, together or alone, in old routines or ventures new, may we not cease to look to You, the cross You hung upon – all you endeavored done.*

Our work is never done. That’s a common lament. We are often weary and we fear that we will fail. But Jesus’ work is FINISHED. For us.

**Prayer:** *Dearest Jesus, take my work and take my play. Make them instruments today, of your amazing mercy. Amen.*