

TOM LUTZ & HEIDI UNRUH



Equipping Christians *for*  
**KINGDOM PURPOSE**  
in their Work

A GUIDE  
FOR ALL WHO  
MAKE DISCIPLES

“What does it really mean to see your work life as a ministry and a calling? In *Equipping Christians for Kingdom Purpose in Their Work*, Tom Lutz and Heidi Unruh have given us one of the most researched and practical books on this topic. It is filled with scriptural applications for anyone who wants a biblical basis for seeing our work life as a holy calling from God. It’s a must read for any disciple of Jesus who works and wants to better understand our calling through our work. Well done, Tom and Heidi!”

—Os Hillman, President, Marketplace Leaders  
Author of *TGIF: Today God Is First*

“Tom Lutz heard a voice one day, and I am confident it was the voice of God. It went like this: ‘Until every Sunday, from every pulpit, every sermon is illustrated from and applied to the workplace, the work will not be done.’ Today, the work is still not done, but Tom and his co-author Heidi Unruh have made a giant leap forward in helping all of us to help one another turn the Sunday stuff into Monday stuff for better lives and better businesses. In their book *Equipping Christians for Kingdom Purpose in Their Work: A Guide for All Who Make Disciples*, Tom and Heidi take rock-solid theological concepts and turn them into deeply practical day-to-day ideas you can put to work right away. They remind us that we are all image-bearers and disciple-makers. They help us discover who we are and what our life purpose is. I am thrilled that at Convene we were able to be a living lab of Christian leaders who learned together with Tom and Heidi. Want to be a better image-bearer of Jesus Christ? Start reading this book!”

—Greg Leith, CEO, Convene Corporation  
([www.ConveneNow.com](http://www.ConveneNow.com))

“From a deep and diverse reservoir of theological reflection as well as life experience, Tom Lutz and Heidi Unruh offer to the church an accessible and practical resource aimed at narrowing the perilous Sunday-to-Monday gap. In the broader faith and work movement, I am convinced there is no greater or more urgent need today than equipping apprentices of Jesus to more dynamically and fruitfully live out their disciple-making mission in the marketplace. I highly recommend it!”

—Tom Nelson, President, Made to Flourish  
Author of *Work Matters* and *The Economics of Neighborly Love*

“This book is for ‘vocational disciplers’—those eager to coach and equip fellow believers in our glorious calling to be image-bearers. God created each of us to create abundance, bring order, and cultivate potential. Yet the ‘discipleship’ offered to many Christ-followers falls short in helping them connect the dots between their faith and this calling. Lutz and Unruh have given us a highly practical guidebook with multiple tools to rectify that.”

—Amy L. Sherman, author  
*Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good*

“Heidi Unruh and Tom Lutz have teamed up for a major contribution to the intersection of discipleship and vocation. With backgrounds in business and the non-profit sector, their combined experience, passion, and sharp acumen provide an important voice to this conversation. Unruh and Lutz set up a framework that helps Christians ask the right questions, establish a formative model, and apply text to context. Together, they have graciously exercised their talents to create an excellent work that will leave readers with an integrative approach with plenty of tools. This is a must-have for those entrusted to equip people for ‘ministry’ in a variety of vocational callings.”

—Travis Vaughn, Executive Director,  
Metro Atlanta Collective

“In their new book *Equipping Christians for Kingdom Purpose in Their Work: A Guide for All Who Make Disciples*, Tom Lutz and Heidi Unruh have added a missing ingredient to the “Faith and Work Movement”—discipleship. In this practical, resource-filled book, they show how to use vocational discipleship to help Christians find ‘clarity around their kingdom purpose,’ bringing transformation to the world around them. This is one of the most important new books in our movement and a must-read for everyone in the church.”

—Hugh Whelchel, Executive Director  
Institute of Faith Work & Economics  
author of *How Then Should We Work?* and  
*Reweaving Shalom: Your Work and the Restoration of All Things*

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 **HENDRICKSON**  
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THEOLOGY OF WORK

PROJECT

## **Equipping Christians for Kingdom Purpose in Their Work: A Guide for All Who Make Disciples**

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*To Sherry, my beautiful wife of many years, our seven children,  
and (at current count) our twelve grandchildren—  
the purpose behind my kingdom purpose.*

*—Tom*

*To my daughter, Elise, whose life gives delight.*

*—Heidi*



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# PREFACE: TELLING OUR STORY

## **Tom's Story**

As a young man in high school, I had the honor of being viewed as a leader in most of my group activities, whether Young Life or Sunday school. As a result, I was frequently told by mature Christians whom I admired and trusted, "If you really want to serve God, you'll become a pastor." I was flattered, but I didn't really know what to do with this. Of course, I wanted to "serve God," but I didn't sense that pastoral leadership was where God was leading me. I frequently asked myself: Is there anywhere besides church to fully serve God? Where could I find my purpose?

Feeling pushed in this direction of "serving God," I eventually attended seminary and gained my master of divinity degree. After graduation, I ultimately was ordained as a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church. The church was in the inner city of Baltimore and was not able to pay me very much. At that time, several Christian friends of mine were starting a business. They offered to allow me to work for them with flexible hours, to enable me to continue to work at church. When I entered the workplace, I recognized almost immediately that this was what God had put me on earth to do. I had truly found my kingdom purpose. I told my pastor friends, "After several years in the pastorate, God called me to the ministry."

As I developed my workplace ministry, I began reading the Bible quite differently from many of my pastor friends. They tended to read and teach the Bible as if it were written only to church members, while I learned to read it and to teach it as if it were written to every individual created in God's image, charged with doing God's work in the world he created.

So, my passion has become discipling image-bearers who are also church members. I want others to experience hearing God say "Well done, good and faithful servant" as they leave their place of work.

## **Heidi's Story**

As a ministry consultant and trainer specializing in helping Christians care well for their neighbors, my career has primarily centered on the world of churches, parachurch organizations, and nonprofits. My abiding passion

is to see struggling communities and families restored in the abundance that God intended when he pronounced creation “very good.”<sup>1</sup> This passion led me to a master of arts in theological studies at Palmer Seminary to become biblically anchored and spiritually prepared for this work. My college and seminary work focused on how Christians participated in the kingdom of God through mission work, volunteerism, and civil service.

Outside of church-based job training ministries, I had little experience with the faith and work arena—until I was asked to write a faith and work curriculum for a church! In the crash course that followed, I found many assumptions in my worldview being challenged and reconstructed.

I had accepted the hierarchy that puts “worldly,” profit-seeking work at the bottom of the God-serving pyramid, and reveres church ministry positions at the “spiritual” peak (bonus points if unpaid!). Since I rarely heard church sermons and teachings meaningfully reference the world of work, I assumed it was peripheral to spiritual growth. I presumed that the main value of work (outside of meeting basic needs) was to supply funds and develop skills useful for the ministry of the church.

I needed my eyes opened to a new way to read the Scriptures about our anointing for God’s kingdom purpose! I needed a spark to light up my imagination for work that is “well done,” at the nexus of productivity, innovation, justice, and faithfulness. Becoming a student of the faith and work movement vastly expanded my vision for the “good works” to which each image-bearer is called (Eph. 2:10). Tom’s insights bring exceptional clarity and drive to that vision.

Now, *you*—as a vocational discipler—can help others find that spark!

I am excited and honored to be a part of the development of this book, because it breathes fresh life into our calling to join Jesus in his work of reclaiming and restoring a very good world. “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21). My dream is that vocational discipleship can ignite a movement where showing up for work means showing up for love of God, creation, and neighbor.

## Why This Book?

Throughout twenty years of building and then selling a business, and then another twenty years of coaching other business leaders, I (Tom) have had a ringside seat to the kingdom battle. God has enabled me to disciple people who work outside the church into an understanding that their work is an integral part of God’s kingdom purpose for their lives. Over the years, this discipling has occurred in many arenas—Christian CEO Roundtable groups, discipleship groups, one-on-one conversations, and conferences.

The call to write this book came to me at one such event. While attending a faith at work conference here in Atlanta, I was struck by several things.

Over the past thirty years, I had been involved with many such conferences, and while hundreds had come to hear and understand the faith at work message, our movement essentially remained static. In fact, I noticed that most of the attendees at this conference were the same people I had seen at all the other conferences. We were, proverbially, preaching to the choir. We needed to figure out a way to send more laborers into the fields of kingdom purpose.

At that point, I heard a voice say to my spirit, “Until every Sunday, from every pulpit, every sermon is illustrated from and applied to the workplace, the work will not be done.” I heard it as a call to turn my attention to discipling the disciplers.

My first step on that road was to return to graduate school to earn a doctorate. In 2017, I completed my doctoral dissertation “Discipling Christian C-Level Business Executives,” from Covenant Theological Seminary. The vocational discipleship curriculum I developed and tested for my dissertation became the foundation for this book.

My desire to share this resource more broadly led to a collaboration with Heidi. Though our backgrounds are quite different, we discovered a convergence on the main ideas and goals of vocational discipleship.

We agree with Amy Sherman’s blunt assessment: “Discipleship that doesn’t equip people for the activity they spend forty percent of their waking hours doing is not discipleship.” Together, we dream of a critical mass of Christians who are influencing church culture from within while impacting their workplaces and communities through the vocation in which God has called and equipped them to be productive. We dream that as more church leaders develop a focus on vocation, the prevailing paradigm of discipleship will shift to include following Jesus on the job as a matter of course. We envision a future in which every book written about discipleship includes a chapter (or several) about work, every church conference has a track dedicated to vocational ministry, every seminary program equips pastors to preach and teach about vocation, and the term “vocational discipleship” becomes redundant.<sup>2</sup>



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I sit here at Corners End, as we call our little oasis north of Atlanta, I am humbly aware of the many tools God has used to craft in me a kingdom purpose.

It started with Vernon and Rose Lutz, who welcomed me into a special, totally functional family of origin. The educators who invested in me at Calvert Hall High School, University of Maryland Baltimore County, and Covenant Theological Seminary. Professor John Sanderson of Covenant Seminary, who instilled in me what has become the lifelong thrill of reading the Scriptures as God intended them to be read. Uncle Ron Hastie, who taught me that businesses are an essential element in the flourishing of a community. Arol Wolford, my senior partner at CMD Group and friend of many years, and our other partners, who collectively taught me that you can lead a business with godly integrity. The members of Faith Christian Fellowship in Baltimore, Maryland, where I was at one time active in leadership, who allowed me the privilege of testing out the formational ideas that became *Equipping Christians for Kingdom Purpose*.

Randy Pope, long-time lead pastor of Perimeter Church, who taught me what it means to disciple another Christian. Randy Schlichting, my pastor and the president of Metro Atlanta Seminary, as well as many seminary students, who gave me the opportunity to test out many of these kingdom purpose ideas in the laboratory of my classroom. Each of the godly business leaders who have allowed me to walk alongside them through the Convene organization, and the staff and co-chairs at Convene who make it easy for me to do so. The men who were the “guinea pigs” for my doctoral research.

Heidi Unruh, my collaborator on this project, who made the book better than it would have been otherwise through her many contributions, and who truly thought my thoughts after me, making me sound so much wiser than I really am.

And of course, my wife of nearly forty-six years, who not only bore a total of sixty-three pounds of Lutz children, but who was also active in developing them into the seven wholesome individuals of whom we could not be prouder.

TOM LUTZ  
PEACHTREE CORNERS, GEORGIA  
SEPTEMBER 2021



To my wise, gracious and patient colleague, Dr. Tom Lutz: Our collaboration has been a blessing. May your vision continue to lead many—including me—to approach work with renewed devotion.

Tracing the roots of this project, I am grateful to Travis Vaughn for introducing me to the faith and work arena, as well as to Tom. Collaboration with Travis and Chip Sweney at Perimeter Church laid the groundwork for my part in this book and opened doors to conversations with great thinkers and practitioners. Gratitude also to my colleague Andy Rittenhouse, who first sparked my interest in discipleship for mission in the workplace.

Given the richness of the faith and work community, nearly every sentence in this book deserves a footnote. Special thanks to the brilliant Amy Sherman for taking time to comment on early drafts; to pioneer Tom Nelson and the innovative team at Made to Flourish; and to the incomparably thorough Theology of Work Project, whose print and online resources I frequently consulted.

To all who provided feedback on our outline and drafts, and who allowed us to share your quotes: Your insights made this a better book.

We are grateful to Hendrickson Publishers for your patient partnership, and for paving the way with your investment in faith and work resources.

On a different note, I offer tribute to the many image-bearers I know who struggle daily with difficult, unfulfilling jobs. As you work so hard to make ends meet for your families, you motivate me with a reminder of what is at stake.

As always, deep gratitude to my husband, Jim, for sharing your wisdom, keeping me grounded, and supplying me with coffee. Your encouragement helped keep my writing candle burning through a difficult season. And loving thanks to Yu’Nique, Elise, Jacob, and Maurice, for hanging in there through another writing project. You are all in this world for a very good purpose.

Finally, honor is due to all in my life story who have taught and modeled what it means to do good work in a good way.

HEIDI UNRUH  
HUTCHINSON, KANSAS  
SEPTEMBER 2021

PART ONE

# VISION AND INVITATION



# 1

## WHAT COULD BE POSSIBLE?

This book aims to help you equip other followers of Christ to live out their kingdom calling through their vocation. What does this look like? Rather than sketching out a vision for vocational discipleship in abstract terms, let's tell a story.<sup>1</sup>

### **Imagine Christians with Clarity around Their Kingdom Purpose**

*The adult Sunday school class at Northside Presbyterian, a mix of white- and blue-collar workers, had always featured lively discussions. One week, their long-time class instructor, Herb, announced they would be starting a new series on God's calling into ministry.*

*Robert squirmed uncomfortably. When he accepted Christ in college, he had felt a tug to dedicate his life to serving God, but exploring what that meant kept getting postponed while he pursued a career in business—first to pay off student loans, then to raise a family, and now because he was a leader of the company.*

*Miranda also felt a twinge. She and her husband had talked about signing up together for a summer mission project overseas, but she had just accepted a promotion with significant responsibilities and didn't know if she could leave.*

*Meanwhile, Craig was wondering if he might skip class the next few months, since he knew this topic didn't apply to him. He figured he would write a support check to whoever accepted the call to ministry.*

*Herb started the series by reading Ephesians 2:10: "We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Then he said something that got Craig's attention. "What is the good work that God has prepared for us? This doesn't just mean work in or for the church. This includes work in the office and the factory and the garden. Your calling to good work begins when you wake up on Monday morning." That's when Craig realized he was not off the hook.*

*Six weeks into the study, Robert's vague sense of guilt was replaced by a growing excitement. He had never imagined that "God's calling into ministry" might mean God's plan for his work. No one had ever shown him in Scripture how he served God through his business. Before, he had assumed that "good*

works” meant volunteering or making a generous donation. Now he could see how his business—manufacturing retail shelving—was a part of God’s good design for feeding and clothing people.

When Robert saw a newspaper article about a neighborhood near the church being a food desert, he felt a nudge from the Spirit. He began envisioning ways his company might partner with local retail entrepreneurs to spark economic development. He found himself looking forward each week to learning more about how to dedicate himself to his ministry at work.

## **Imagine Church Members Whose Work Is Their Ministry**

Miranda found the concept of her work as ministry difficult to absorb. She took notes as Herb taught: “Like God, we are also workers. He made us with creative minds. He created us with the ability to solve problems. We honor and glorify God when we use the skills and passions that he has given us to be productive and efficient. We bring him glory when we commit to giving our all no matter what the task or job.”

For the first time, she began to look at her promotion as an opportunity to glorify God with her skills. But she couldn’t stop thinking about that opportunity for summer service with their sister church in Honduras. She finally approached Herb about this after class.

“What’s the purpose of mission?” he asked.

Miranda answered with confidence—she had thought about this for a long time. “To share the good news of the gospel with others. To love our neighbors around the world.”

“What kinds of things would you do on a mission trip to pursue this purpose?”

Again, Miranda’s reply was eager. “I want to help out any way I can, of course. But I’m especially drawn to studying the Bible with other women.”

“Is anything stopping you from doing that at your workplace?” Miranda didn’t have an answer. At that moment, a young woman in her workplace, a new believer, came to mind. Miranda decided she would delay her plans for a mission trip—but she wouldn’t wait to pursue her mission.

## **Imagine Discipling People Where They Minister—at Their Work**

“Hello, Robert.” Members of Northside had gotten used to seeing their pastor show up at their workplace. Today, Rev. Park had arranged to meet Robert for coffee in the company break room.

Robert looked frustrated. His pastor listened as he described a competitor whose underhanded practices had cost his company a major customer. Some

*in the company wanted to retaliate against the competition; others were pressuring Robert to imitate their tactics. This led to an energetic conversation with Rev. Park about productivity versus prosperity, revenge, praying for those who mistreat you, and the cost of integrity. Rev. Park opened the Bible app on his phone to Luke 16 and read a story Jesus told that related to dealing with dishonesty in business.*

*“As you consider how to respond,” the pastor advised Robert as he got up to leave, “remember that you bear God’s image and your actions will reflect that.”*

*Robert returned to work with greater peace and clarity.*

*Meanwhile, Miranda invited Caroline, the young woman God had put on her heart, to meet for lunch. Caroline was thrilled to get to know a mature Christian in the office. They hit it off and decided to meet for bagels and Bible study every Thursday morning.*

*A church member who worked nearby asked to join them. That week, sitting in a corner booth at the deli next to Miranda’s investment firm, the three women read through Psalm 8. When they reached verse 5—“You have given them dominion over the works of your hands”—the conversation steered toward best leadership practices. As Miranda shared points from a recent management seminar, the newest member of their trio grew increasingly impatient. Finally she burst out: “I thought this was going to be a spiritual group!” Gently, Miranda invited her into a new understanding of how every domain of life—including management—is intended for God’s glory.*

## **Imagine God’s Image-Bearers Enabling the World to Flourish**

*When Craig opened his eyes on Monday morning, he felt something was different. After a moment, he realized he didn’t hate the prospect of going to work today.*

*As he put on his uniform, he reflected on the change in his attitude. He usually dreaded the question, “What do you do for a living?” Having the title of “sanitation engineer” helped, until people figured out what it meant. But Herb’s teaching had given him a new lens to view his work. The turning point had been the question: What would happen if no one did your job? In his case, the answer was obvious! The image of a world overrun with trash spurred him on as he headed to work.*

*Herb had encouraged Craig to memorize Genesis 1:28: “God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.’” Knowing that his work was part of how God had designed humankind to bring order to creation led Craig to perform his tasks with more care. He became less touchy and disagreeable. That Monday morning, his partner on the sanitation truck even joked how it was nice not having to work with Oscar the Grouch.*

*Craig considered this for a moment and then said to his partner, “Every day, we make this city cleaner. People rely on us to keep out rats and bugs and disease. It’s God’s work, and we’re good at it. Why shouldn’t I be in a good mood?”*

*As the truck made its next stop, Craig said a prayer for the household as he disposed of their trash. It was a habit he had started recently. He thought about talking to his partner about that too.*

## **Imagine Every Worker Making This World More Like Heaven**

*Rev. Park launched into his annual sermon on heaven. In previous years, he had preached about what it took to enter heaven, how God would bring an end to mourning and pain, or the joy of living eternally in God’s presence.*

*This year, in consultation with Herb and after paying many visits to various members in their workplaces, a different sermon emerged. He talked about how the work done by people in his congregation reflected the kingdom of God that would be realized fully in heaven.*

*Rev. Park started by pointing out those who continue the work originally commissioned to Adam and Eve at creation: from landscapers to store shelving manufacturers to sanitation engineers. Wouldn’t God’s New Jerusalem still need its residents to work to keep the city beautiful, orderly and well provisioned? What could be more meaningful than working to create, cultivate, organize, build, manage, and discover in the “new heavens and new earth”?*

*He closed by encouraging those members whose work foreshadowed God’s kingdom of perfect love, healing, and justice: counselors, healthcare providers, law enforcement, social workers. Rev. Park added that he himself might be unemployed on entering heaven, since everyone would already know the Lord!*

*Individuals in the pews nodded as they heard a reference to their line of work. Miranda thought about her job at the investment firm. Surely there was no money in heaven, so what was the eternal relevance of her career?*

*Then she tuned into the pastor saying, “Heaven will be like Jesus’ story of selling our entire livelihood to gain the pearl of great price. Everything we work for our whole lives is not lost when we die—it is transformed, and its kingdom value is revealed.” That sounded like investment work to Miranda. She made a mental note to talk to Herb further about how to bring this heavenly perspective into her daily efforts on behalf of clients.*

## **Inviting God’s People to the Vision**

This story, while fictional, draws from real experiences with vocational discipleship. It illustrates what is possible when church leaders focus on the goal to “help God’s people work well for Him” (Eph. 4:11–12 NLV), and

when members take ownership of doing God's kingdom ministry through their daily occupations (whether paid or unpaid).

The vision for how church and community could thrive as followers of Christ live out their kingdom calling is compelling. The role of intentional discipleship in shepherding this vision is vital. That's why we wrote this book.

We envision churches and disciple-makers teaching people how their so-called secular jobs honor God, helping their fragmented lives come together around their kingdom purpose. We envision Christians animated by how their job matters to God and to the flourishing of the world. More workers will be invited to discover and reflect the image of a God who also is a laborer. Workplaces will be endowed with greater dignity, joy, fairness, and productivity. And out of all this, we envision communities reaping the benefits of God's design for effective, eternally meaningful work.

As someone committed to vocational discipleship, sharing this vision and bringing it to fruition is your work.

## **RESOURCE**

### **Start with Listening: Faith at Work Interviews**

In their book *Discipleship with Monday in Mind: How Churches across the Country Are Helping Their People Connect Faith and Work* (Made to Flourish, 2017), Skye Jethani and Luke Bobo share stories about churches that feature faith and work interviews with members. These interviews serve "to communicate the sacredness of work," to affirm workers in various occupations, and to influence the culture of the church around the purpose of work.

We have adapted their questions below for usage in a vocational discipleship context. Engaging in this kind of conversation—and really listening to what workers have to say—could be encouraging and eye-opening. Some of the questions may be challenging, however, for those who have seldom been asked to consider their day-to-day workplace experience from a theological framework. Regardless of whether or how they answer, merely asking the questions can be transformative.

1. Describe what your work day is like on a day-to-day basis.
2. How did you come to be in this work? Do you feel called to do what you're doing?
3. What does it mean to you to do your work as a Christian?
4. How does sin affect your work? Where do you experience brokenness?
5. Where do you experience restoration and redemption in the work you do?



6. What opportunities or obstacles are you facing in your work?
7. How do you try to serve others through your work?
8. In what ways can you express the gospel in relation to your work?
9. How do you experience the presence of God, or reflect God's image, as you work?
10. How would you like prayer in relation to your work?