

The background is a dark teal color with a subtle grid pattern. Several white gears of different sizes are scattered across the page. Some gears are surrounded by thin, glowing blue circular lines with small dots at their centers, resembling circuit traces or orbits. The text 'THE WAY' is contained within a white rounded rectangular box.

**THE WAY**

**WE  
WORK**

The Sent People of God in the  
Everyday Workforce

*Linda Bergquist*



**THE WAY**

**WE  
WORK**

The Sent People of God in the  
Everyday Workforce

*Linda Bergquist*

**EXPONENTIAL<sup>1</sup>**

# EXPONENTIAL<sup>1</sup>

*The Way We Work: The Sent People of God in the Everyday Workforce*  
Copyright © 2019 by Linda Bergquist

Exponential is a growing movement of activists committed to the multiplication of healthy new churches. Exponential Resources spotlights actionable principles, ideas and solutions for the accelerated multiplication of healthy, reproducing faith communities. For more information, visit [www.exponential.org](http://www.exponential.org).

The vision of Made for More is to see every Christian mobilized into their unique, God-given purpose and for healthy Biblical mobilization to become a normative measure of success in the church. We are passionate about seeing a movement of everyday Christians mobilized into their unique personal callings in the mission fields where they work, live, study and play. Find out more at [www.multipliers.org](http://www.multipliers.org).

All rights reserved. No part of this book, including icons and images, may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission from copyright holder, except where noted in the text and in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

This book is manufactured in the United States.

Unless otherwise specified all Scripture is from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture marked NKJV is taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ISBN-13: 978-1-62424-042-3 (eBook)

*Cover design and interior design done by [Harrington Interactive Media](#)*

# EXPONENTIAL<sup>7</sup>

RESOURCING CHURCH PLANTERS

- 90+ eBooks
- Largest annual church planting conference in the world (Exponential Global Event in Orlando)
- Regional Conferences - Boise, DC, Southern CA, Northern CA, Chicago, Houston and New York City
- Exponential Español (spoken in Spanish)
- FREE Online Multiplication & Mobilization Assessments
- FREE Online Multiplication & Mobilization Courses
- Conference content available via Digital Access Pass (Training Videos)
- Weekly Newsletter
- 1000+ Hours of Free Audio Training
- 100s of Hours of Free Video Training
- Free Podcast Interviews

[exponential.org](http://exponential.org)

[Twitter.com/churchplanting](https://twitter.com/churchplanting)

[Facebook.com/churchplanting](https://facebook.com/churchplanting)

[Instagram.com/church\\_planting](https://instagram.com/church_planting)



# INSIDE

<b><u>INTRODUCTION</u></b>   From More Strategy to More Surrender: The Way We Work (Ephesians 6) .....	6
<b><u>CHAPTER 1</u></b>   Family Workspaces and Ethnic Enclaves (Ephesians 6:1–9) .....	15
<b><u>CHAPTER 2</u></b>   The Informal Economy (Ephesians 6:10–14) .....	27
<b><u>CHAPTER 3</u></b>   Tribal Workplaces (Ephesians 6:16) .....	38
<b><u>CHAPTER 4</u></b>   How We Get to Work (Ephesians 6:17–20).....	48
<b><u>CHAPTER 5</u></b>   Global Carriers (Ephesians 6:15, 21–24) .....	61
<b><u>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</u></b> .....	72

## INTRODUCTION

# From More Strategy to More Surrender: The Way We Work

*Ephesians 6*

### *Work and Workplace by Design*

Pastor, theologian, and author Tim Keller called work “rearranging the raw material of God’s creation in such a way that it helps the world in general, and people in particular, thrive and flourish.”<sup>1</sup> The first act of work is understood as God’s creating work from the beginning of creation and then “by the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all His work” (Gen. 2:2). If we truly believe He formed humans in His likeness (Gen. 1:26), then it is clear we are created with the capacity and calling to work. It is a beautiful thing that God put people in the garden to work and care for it (Gen 2:15). Work helps us become who we were created to be and is meant to help to bring about the future that God intends.

As one who works at starting new churches, I tend to be goal-oriented or future-thinking. As a way of life, I dream, plan, and strategize the months and years ahead for new churches and think about those who

---

1. Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 47.

will start and multiply them. Dreaming, planning, and strategizing is a way of life for other kinds of occupations too: researchers, entrepreneurs, software architects, designers, politicians, parents, and more. It is a privilege to be able to earn one's living, though sometimes there is a tendency to neglect the present. There are many kinds of jobs where the work is oriented around tasks that are accomplished in the moment or by the end of the day: like waitressing, auto repair, house cleaning, childcare, cooking, catering, home repair. In these kinds of jobs there can be the temptation to focus on the task at hand so completely that it might be hard to look beyond the task to see what God is doing in our midst, especially in a world so focused beyond the immediate. In both kinds of work, most people are at least tempted to rely on their own expertise and abilities instead of practicing submission to God's will and ways.

### *Work as Sacred Calling*

Whatever our work, we all must learn to live each day in submission to God's will and wisdom, to His guiding hand and purposes. In Colossians, the apostle Paul tells us, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving (Col. 3:23–24). In his book *Convocational Church Planting*, author and missional strategist Brad Brisco refers to the intentions of Martin Luther, who in his emphatic rallying around the reality that *all* have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23) rejected the divide between secular and sacred. Brisco explains how Luther brought the gospel back to the original intent so that even the humblest of trades can be used by God for His mission. He notes, "Luther argued that regardless of the vocation that God called someone to, it was sacred because it was God

who did the calling.”<sup>2</sup> He claims that the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers does not mean all Christians are to become church workers but that it makes all work into a sacred calling.

### *Work as Discipleship*

In his book *Garden City: Work, Rest, and the Art of Being Human*, pastor and visionary John Mark Comer asks, “Do you see your work as an essential part of your discipleship to Jesus and as the primary way that you join him in his work of renewal? If not, you should.”<sup>3</sup> Engaging the workplace is a place of discipleship. For many, it is the primary slice of life where we can spend time with people who are not already living into the way of Jesus. There is no better way for many to follow the command found in Matthew 28:19–20 than to “go (to work) and make disciples.”

These ideas are dynamically intertwined in Ephesians 6, written by the tentmaker, missionary, and apostle, Paul. What can we learn from this chapter about being the people of God at work, submitted to His purposes, and keenly aware of spiritual forces at play? At the core of what we believe about work is an endorsement that it is a critical way to acknowledge that *the people of God have already been sent and strategically placed by Jesus*. For most Christians, those places are outside the walls of our church buildings, and for that, we should be exceedingly grateful. If Satan restricts the gospel to church buildings, and it doesn’t affect our everyday work, that’s a victory for

- 
2. Brad Brisco, *Convocational Church Planting: Aligning Your Marketplace Calling and the Mission of God* (Alpharetta, GA: Send Network, North American Mission Board, 2018), 123.
  3. John Mark Comer, *Garden City: Work, Rest, and the Art of Being Human* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 138.



Satan! However, in so many work venues, spiritual conversation is not permitted, not tolerated, and certainly not hip. Spiritual warfare is at play, and we must be mindful and aware.

### *What Can We Learn About Strategy in God's Economy?*

*Strategy* can be about gaining control over the time we spend in every space, and that can sometimes be a really good thing. I remember reading the book *Cheaper by the Dozen* by Frank Gilbreth as a twelve-year-old. The stories of a household managed by an efficiency expert still propel me. I'll strategically study while using public transportation or take that extra three minutes I would otherwise waste before leaving the house to sort our clothes to wash them later. Or I'll toast two pieces of bread and pile on the tuna while waiting for the top slices to pop up from the toaster. I believe in the economy of time. The underlying meaning of the word "economy," though, is "how we get things done." Economy isn't just related to money and getting paid but also to the entire management of a sector, be it a country or a household. How do we align with God's purposes in all places outside of the church building? How do we surrender all of those places and spaces to His will, to His economy? Can we acknowledge that our Lord is already at work before we show up? How can Christian leaders, many of whom are completely unfamiliar with the workplaces of their congregations, acknowledge and prepare the church that is at work eight hours or more per day, forty hours per week, for an average of ninety thousand hours over the course of lifetime?

### *The Hours We Work*

In 2017, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the average time all Americans spent on religious and spiritual activities during the week was 0.07 hours, and on weekends or holidays it was 0.29 hours.

The study reported that self-described religious Americans spend just 0.99 hours on spiritual and religious activities during the week and 1.90 hours on weekends and holidays. In some places in the world, and in certain parts of the United States, this can be even less. For example, it is not surprising that in Utah and the American South people spend more time on religious and spiritual activities than in New England. In contrast, consider how much time people spend in paid or unpaid work each day. Employed people, for example, spend more than eight hours each weekday at work, which includes over half of their waking hours.<sup>4</sup>

When sociologists speak about sectors of society, they break these into areas such as government, education, healthcare, business, nonprofits, family, and religion. Some cities have other primary and/or critical segmented sectors such as military, public transportation, or manufacturing. Each of these is an area where people are at work, and all of it has the possibility of being in intentional submission to Christ. Where do you imagine Satan most wants to disengage Christ's followers from the work of the Kingdom? If the message of salvation is restricted to the confines of a church building, including churches that meet in homes, and it doesn't affect our work, that is huge victory for Satan. God, of course, is already doing His work in every space we occupy. (For example, Ying Kai, founder of the T4T church planting movement in China started with networks of factory workers who regularly moved around from one manufacturing plant to another.) God is there during the 8.53 hours each day we sleep, the 4.72 hours we spend on leisure activities, and the 1.11 hours we spend eating and drinking.<sup>5</sup>

---

4. "What Percentage of Our Lives Are Spent Working?" Reference.com, <https://www.reference.com/math/percentage-lives-spent-working-599e3f7fb2c88fca>.

5. "Time spent in primary activities and percent of the civilian population engaging in each activity, averages per day on weekdays and weekends, 2018 annual averages," Bureau of Labor Statistics, Press Release, 2018, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.t02.htm>.

This eBook addresses the everyday, out-in-the-world work of the church in relationship to the vital spiritual challenges of Ephesians 6. It describes a palette of just a few kinds of workspaces and how each permits a different kind of kingdom activity that God can make, and is making, blossom. These suggestions are meant to strengthen us and to propel and release imagination. So many other kinds of work could be considered here, but the following chapters offer a diversity of situations where God is working and show some creativity about how we can listen to His voice and support the kingdom work of everyday Christians.

In chapter 1, we cover the first nine verses of Ephesians 6. The first four verses give godly advice for healthy family relationships, and for some people, those kinship ties include the workplace. The next five verses relate to servants and masters, which in this era is more like employer-employee relationships. Especially in new immigrant communities, children work at the family business from a young age and inherit those businesses when their parents age. Some ethnic groups, through close friendship and extended alliances, become identified with certain kinds of businesses, such as Vietnamese women and nail salons or Gujarati from India and hotel ownership. In this chapter we will look at how these ways of working help our understanding of a biblical cultural view of honoring family and how workplace relationships and leadership look differently if we submit to a different perception of family, as well as work.

In chapter 2, we cover the next five verses of Ephesians and the informal economy. While Ephesians 6:5–9 offers words for differentiated work statuses, such as servants and masters, employers and employees, the next ten verses help us to be prepared for inevitable spiritual warfare that happens when the people of God take the work of

God outside of church buildings and into their workplaces. Verses 10–14 seem especially pertinent to the kind of work that is often called the informal economy. The term refers to unregulated work and sometimes even underground businesses called the shadow economy. It makes up a large portion of the workforce in developing countries but has been growing significantly in North America over recent years. It is feared that lack of enforceable regulations can lead to lawlessness and rampant spiritual battles. Yet some of the places in the world with the most vibrant church planting movements are also places with the most prolific informal, unregulated economies. In this chapter we discuss how those who are employed in the informal economy can learn to battle the forces of evil in the face of temptation. We will also learn how this economy can help spread the Word of God.

In chapter 3, we look at Ephesians 6:16, which continues to instruct on how to live in the midst of spiritual battle. This particular verse about taking up a shield of faith has instructions for how Christians can learn to stand together in the clash against Satan’s wiles. In this chapter you will read stories about people who use their workplace as a way to evangelize, like the woman who uses an Uber company discussion board to start a small group Bible study they call UberGrace. You will learn how followers of Jesus can learn to live together in ways that allows God to prepare us to get inside our own busy tribal workspaces with the gospel, and at the same time, how your spiritual tribal spaces go beyond church buildings and church groups.

In chapter 4, we look at the next verses in Ephesians, which offer additional tools—“the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (v. 17), plus Spirit-led prayer. We designed this chapter to address the realities of some urban workforces where many people rely more heavily on public transportation than on driving

private automobiles to work. While this can take a good deal of a worker's time each day, often we can miss out on the privilege of using these times for ministry. Instead of sharing our stories or listening for the needs of our drivers, we stay on our cell phones and ignore them. Sometimes we *are* those taxi, Uber, and Lyft drivers because we need flexible part-time work while we are retired, in school, or just in need of some extra income. We'll cover some different ways to talk to curious clients who ask if driving is our full-time work and how to engage a driver in a conversation that clearly calls for prayer. Spiritual warfare is all around us, and even commuting can be an amazing opportunity for God to open doors of all kinds for the sharing our faith stories!

In chapter 5, we look at a beautiful hope for unity among all peoples despite geographic, cultural, or linguistic barriers. In light of today's increasingly connected world, how might God choose to empower a global Christian workforce? What if global interconnectedness is a piece of the Lord's strategy for bringing the reality of Ephesians into present tense? We examine questions such as these as more people are immersed in work that carries them to multiple cities, *and* a larger percentage of people work remotely but still connect to the world that way. Concurrently, a large number of people take advantage of work visas and move to a place for a few years at a time before returning to their own countries. We ask, how can we reach those among them who need Jesus, *and* how can God use global nomads who function as temporary workers to advance His kingdom purposes? Who are those disciples of Jesus that will submit their lives and be used by Him anywhere He says to go?

As I write these chapters, my mind wanders to a recent vacation to the beautiful city of Shanghai. We intentionally wandered around to see the way the city worked and not just the tourist areas. One

curious observation we made was street sweepers at work everywhere to keep the dense, crowded streets immaculate. They swept with large, handmade brooms constructed out of tree branches woven together. As they swept, I thought about this quote attributed to Martin Luther King: “If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, ‘Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.’”<sup>6</sup> May all of us who bear the name of Christ, do our jobs well, to His glory.

---

6. Martin Luther King Jr. “What is Your Life’s Blueprint” (sermon, Martin Luther King Baptist Church, April 9, 1967).

## CHAPTER 1

# Family Workspaces and Ethnic Enclaves

### *Ephesians 6: 1–9*

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

*Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.*

*And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. (Eph. 6:1–9)*



In Ephesians 5, the apostle Paul initiated a conversation about mutual submission in relationships, especially as applied to the body of Christ. This discussion continues into Ephesians 6. The three spheres of relationship he applies are husbands and wives (5:21–29), parents and children (6:1–4), and servants and masters (6:5–9). All of these relationships are to happen in the context of extended households where parents, children, and slaves all lived together. Paul makes it clear that God “does not show favoritism” (Rom. 2:11), for His authority is over all peoples (Eph. 6:9). In this chapter, we will introduce the overlap between work, family, and business relationships, a phenomenon that was normative in Paul’s day.

## *Families*

Throughout the New Testament, the importance of family relationships is made evident through the language used to describe the community of Christians. They are called “brothers,” “sisters,” “brotherhood,” and “children of God,” among other things. Ephesians 6 begins with an exhortation to families, including both children and parents. Children are to obey and honor their parents, and parents are in turn are not to exacerbate, aggravate, or provoke their children. The biblical parent-child relationship referenced here was not intended just for children under eighteen years old but also for lifelong family relationships. It impacted all areas of life. It was also expected in Scripture that there would be generational provision for families: “Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8). It was considered honorable to provide for one’s family. Acquiring wealth began early in the history of the people of Israel: “But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth,



and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today” (Deut. 8:18).

### *The Family Business in Scripture*

Family-owned businesses are businesses in which two or more family members are engaged and the majority of ownership or control lies within one nuclear or extended family. Family businesses are probably the oldest kinds of businesses in history. In the stories of Scripture, children inherited the family trade (such as craftsmanship trades or farms), as well as the family wealth. For example, Jesus labored with His hands in the family carpenter business for many more years than He spent on earth as a full-time teacher, healer, and minister. Adam and Eve worked in the garden, Zebedee and his sons James and John (two of Jesus’ disciples) were fishermen, and even the job of ruling nations was a role passed down to generations. *Oikos* is the Greek word for family, family property, and house. It included those who both lived and worked together in a household, as well as biological families. The early church also met as households (see Acts 2:46, 12:12, 16:40; Rom. 16:3–5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philem. 1:1–2).

### *Family-Run Businesses Today*

Family businesses are different today, but still play a significant part in much of the world’s economy. One study about family businesses showed that in the United States, “Family businesses account for 64 percent of US gross domestic product, generate 62 percent of the country’s employment, and account for 78 percent of all new job creation.” Around 35 percent of Fortune 500 companies are family

owned.<sup>7</sup> Though family businesses can be of any size and owned and managed by persons of any ethnicity in many contexts, in this conversation about workspaces, I am personally reminded of the many small, neighborhood businesses owned and run by new immigrant families. Frequenting these kinds of places is my experience, and supporting them with my business is a passion.

Recently, I attended an Asian-American pastors' luncheon. After a great barbecue lunch (traditional Southern-style barbecue), the speaker was introduced. He shared his experience of growing up a few miles away in West Oakland and told us all the Chinese store owners there were from the same village in China, including his family. As you can imagine, they were well-networked. The community was poor and crime-ridden, but his family was never robbed. They invited an old African-American man, whom the community called Papa, to sit in their shop all day. He was the neighborhood "mayor," and as long as he was invited into a position of honor to "hold court" with people there in that market, they were all family, even across races, and safe from all harm. Papa was family.

My daughter's best friend in middle school was a girl named Iris. Her parents, who are from China, own a thriving fish market close to their school in one of San Francisco's four Chinatowns. Most of their clients are also Chinese, because that is who lived nearby, plus Chinese tend to prefer fresh fish over the cut-up, descaled, frozen or few-days-

---

7. Family Business Facts, Conway Center for Family Business, <https://www.familybusinesscenter.com/resources/family-business-facts/>, and data from Joseph H. Astrachan and Melissa Carey Shanker, "Family Businesses' Contribution to the U.S. Economy: A Closer Look," Kennesaw State University, Faculty Publications, September 2003, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6709/03a3d769442291ba638435fc2ffcb4c18a00.pdf>.

old fish sold at local supermarkets. Neighbors favor their local stores, honor the proprietor, and visit the fish market a few days every week. They share language, culture, and group identity, as well as proximity to one another. Scholar Ira Harris noted, “Family businesses that have an ethnic background in common with customers, employees, and suppliers may receive preferential treatment. Communities may patronize a business simply because of an associated group identity.”<sup>8</sup>

After school, Iris and her brother would regularly walk to their parents’ market, where they would either sit and do homework or assist with chores and help with the business. They never complained as that was just what families did. Though they attended college, the children will probably honor their father and mother by caring for the family business. That is how it generally works, but Iris and her brother will need to decide. Her family also owns a large beautiful home nearby where the whole extended family lives. To outsiders, they are the “limited English speaking” operators of a small, local business. However, in reality it is a priceless, flourishing space where work, neighborhood, and family are beautifully and honorably intertwined. “You have to come to peace with the idea that you’re going to do the same thing that your father did, and your father was pretty great at it. You also have to come to grips with the fact that he started it from scratch and you are never going to do that. It’s an internal struggle that took me 20 years to untangle,” pondered Marc Glimcher, president of Pace Gallery and son of Arne Glimcher, renowned art dealer.<sup>9</sup>

- 
8. Ira C. Harris, “Ethnicity Effects on the Family Business Entrepreneurial Process: Commentary and Extension,” *Family Business Review*, August 27, 2009, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894486509334916>.
  9. Kat Herriman, “When the Family Business Is a Gallery,” *New York Times*, June 16, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/16/t-magazine/art/art-gallery-family-business-zwirner.html>.

## *Some Church Examples*

In the mid-1980s, I helped start two churches among Cambodian refugees. One was in Fort Worth, Texas, where I was attending seminary. When I graduated and was preparing to return to a position at my home church in the San Diego area, one of the key leaders told me I should take her teenage daughter with me. “There are a lot of Cambodians in San Diego,” she said, “and my daughter can help you find them and start a church.” Before we left, she had two requirements. First, she wanted me to sleep overnight on a mat in her living room with the rest of her family. That would make me family.

Second, right as we drove off, she told me that I was not to let her daughter date. If this young woman dated, her mother told me, all the Cambodians in the United States would know about it within a few days, and the family would be shamed. This revealed to me the deep family and social connectedness other cultures have that my own background as a second generation white European-American had not permitted me to experience. Family and community were to be protected and honored. I was not to inflict shame on her people, and as a part of this family, I would make starting a Cambodian church my first priority in San Diego. And it came to pass.

Not long ago, I visited a church made up of Bhutanese Nepali refugee families. The pastor and his wife had just returned from a month-long trip to visit his daughter, who was just married in Nepal. They brought me a gift from their country. The former leader was also back in town that day to care for his sister, who is a member of the same church. She was ill and needed assistance. As a local church-planting catalyst working with this congregation, it was critical for me to be present for the occasion as one who has now been indoctrinated into their church family. In turn, a few days after our recent trip to China, I visited the

Oakland home where many of the church leaders lived together. I presented them with a box of special Chinese candy, because we were now family.

### *Slaves and Masters*

The exhortation to families in the first four verses of Ephesians 6 is followed by another word on the relationship master and slaves, who at that time in history were considered part of the extended household. In that day, around one-fourth of the population of Ephesus, or over sixty thousand people, were considered slaves.

Slaves who were followers of Christ were to obey their earthly masters respectfully, wholeheartedly, and with sincerity, even when they were not being watched. Likewise, Paul exhorted masters to treat their slaves in the same way, realizing that both were subject to a sovereign who shows no favoritism (Eph. 6:5–9). This was not an endorsement of slavery but an acknowledgment of the reality of Paul’s world.

Some believe that slavery in the days of the Roman Empire was akin to today’s employer-employee relationship. Inasmuch as slavery was part of the social order in the days of the early church, the topic is a common cause of concern and is addressed in other passages as well:

“Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.” (1 Pet. 2:18)

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:28)

“Those who have believing masters should not show them disrespect just because they are fellow believers. Instead, they should serve them even better because their masters are dear to them as fellow believers and are devoted to the welfare of their slaves.” (1 Tim. 6:2)

Often, slaves were persons who had been captured by the Roman army when they conquered new territories. People from all sorts of ethnic groups were sold at markets to wealthy households who could afford to pay not only the purchase price but a per person tax for their slaves or servants. Sometimes they were paid and released after six years. Though they had a low social status as slaves after being captured, some slaves were artisans, agriculturalists, and even physicians and had held positions of high esteem in their former country. They were intelligent and creative—leaders in their own right. Paul is telling them in Ephesians 6 that surrender is not a passive act. It is a decision that must be made with one’s whole heart.

In the mid-1990s, the church where I worked helped resettle the first wave of Somali refugees in our city by collecting furniture for these newcomers. One of the church volunteers was an older professor with a hook for a hand. Despite his age, status, and physical limits, he lifted furniture from the truck while the refugees watched. I quickly discovered that they were from a high social class where physical labor was not expected of them. In fact, it was considered dishonorable. Away from the cultural norms of their birth country, they had to learn how to become servants to one another. The professor, on the other hand, was serving them with all of his heart, going the second mile, and demonstrating well that to be a slave with all your heart is to be an ambassador of the Most High King. We are not simply slaves; we are powerful agents of righteousness when we are willing to go the

second mile and suffer righteously for the sake of others. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr., “Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve.”<sup>10</sup>

### *Honor-Shame Relationships*

Perhaps you noticed how many times the word “honor” and corresponding examples were used earlier in this chapter, especially in relationship to families. The Cambodian woman who sent her daughter to live with me warned me not to dishonor the family by allowing her daughter to date. The Chinese family honorably intertwined work, family, and neighborhood. The “mayor” who kept the Chinese shop safe was treated with honor, and the Somali men protected their honor by not moving furniture themselves. While most Western societies observe what anthropologists call guilt-fear cultures, approximately 80 percent of the world functions in honor-shame cultures.<sup>11</sup> Guilt-fear cultures are individualistic and introspective while honor-shame cultures are collectivist and others-oriented. These two basic ways of operating relate to social situations, government, family life, business, social etiquette, education, and more. In an honor-shame culture, the honor or shame one brings to self is endowed on whatever group to which one belongs. While it can mean entire clans, tribes, and communities, any honor or shame one member enjoys or endures always affects the family.

Author and professor Peter Gosnell at Muskingum College in Ohio claims of Ephesians that there is “a regard for reputation and status

---

10. Martin Luther King Jr., “The Drum Major Instinct,” Sermon Delivered at Ebenezer Baptist Church, February 4, 1968, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/drum-major-instinct-sermon-delivered-ebenezer-baptist-church>.

11. <http://honorshame.com/about/>.

permeating the entire letter. This regard is directly related to the God who has established new honor to be celebrated by those who belong to him.<sup>12</sup> Slaves and their masters, husbands and wives, parents and children who belonged to Christ were to see Him as the highest source of honor and the one from whom their honor is derived. This mirrors Paul's words in Galatians 3:28 that Jews and Greeks, males and females are one in Christ Jesus.

### *Ethnic Enclaves and Businesses*

As previously noted, many businesses owned and managed by new immigrants are family run. Sugarbowl Bakery in Hayward, California, is one of the largest minority owned businesses in the United States and the third largest in the San Francisco Bay Area. It was started by five brothers who escaped Vietnam in 1979. They worked, saved money, and combined their resources to buy a neighborhood coffee shop in 1985. There they sold quality homemade bakery goods and eventually expanded nationally. The company values, even today, reflect their roots: humility, simplicity, family, creativity, and integrity. They also help support multiple Bay Area nonprofits.

Do you see the culture of honor at work?

In Oakland, California, it is said that 80 percent of the corner markets and liquor stores are owned by families from Yemen. Some local families own several corner markets in nearby cities. It is in keeping with the business skills they already have and is preferred over college attendance by many Yemeni immigrants. Though they are often despised and considered shameful by other Muslims for selling

---

12. Peter Gosnell, "Honor and Shame Rhetoric as a Unifying Motif in Ephesians," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* vol. 16.1 (2006), 111.



alcohol, it is the business they know and pass on to their children. The Patel community from Gujarat, India, emigrated to the United States starting in the 1940s. They had roots in an agricultural caste, but here they own a significant number of mostly budget hotels (sometimes called *potels*) where they live and work. Despite a shared surname (Patel), they are not all from one family. Many local hotels in a region, however, are run by extended family members. Over many decades families sponsored other Patel families in India to come to the United States and start more hotels. They are said to own around twenty-five thousand hotels in the States.

Ted Ngoy is called the Donut King. After emigrating to California from Cambodia as a refugee in 1975, he found a job at a Winchell's donut shop. He learned the trade and became a store manager, where he first employed his own family. Ngoy eventually purchased a donut shop, which he expanded to four stores in one year. Soon Ngoy had a whole network of donut shops. He then sponsored countless other Cambodian families to find refuge in California and learn the donut shop trade. In some first-generation immigrant families, the children are expected to become attorneys or physicians, because that is what it means to honor one's family.

A few years ago, my family visited our former San Francisco neighbors—a Japanese family who had moved back to Japan after a research deployment to the United States. During our visit, our friend Tetsuro invited us to the home of his parents in Hiroshima. Almost immediately after greeting us, his mother invited me to the table to share tea. She said, “My son tells me that you know Christians.”

“I am a Christian,” I replied.

She told me that many years ago, she and her husband had lived in Texas during his medical residency. There was a group of Baptist women who had welcomed and included her while she was there. She ended her conversation saying, “Now that I am old, I have come to realize those women had something I do not. I have a religion, but they had a faith. Will you tell me about your faith?” In the background of that living room where I explained the Christian faith to her were pictures of, and statues dedicated to, family ancestors.

I live in a city where the immigrant groups bring with them their own kinds of spirituality. They are Hindu, Jain, Sikh, Muslim, Sufi, animist, and more. Many Vietnamese-owned businesses have altars—an incense burner, a small vase of flowers, an oil lamp, and food offerings—to honor their ancestors.

The local, family-owned Asian market in my neighborhood carries “hell money”—bank notes intended as burnt offerings as a way to resolve the financial problems of their ancestors. How can we live with the truths of family honoring and mutual submission we see in Ephesians while ministering in the context of multiple cultures that consider ancestor respect as a part of their religious worship?

## CHAPTER 2

# The Informal Economy

### *Ephesians 6:10–14*

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place. (Eph. 6:10–14)*



There is an Ephesians 6 Facebook post going around. It is a drawing of all of the armor of God: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. The caption reads, “My favorite outfit to wear. Got it as a gift.” It is indeed a gift, one that God gives to every person who follows Jesus. Throughout the rest of the book, I will reference this armor with different pieces illustrated and applied to various kinds of workplace settings. While

everyday relationships at home and at work are the subject of the first portion of Ephesians 6, starting in verse 10 the apostle Paul moves his readers from the human realm into the spiritual realm, noting that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (v. 12).

One of the places where human relationships and the spiritual forces of darkness collide is in what is often called the shadow economy. Others call it the black market or the underground economy. It is the marketplace of criminal enterprise, tax evasion, and other devious behaviors. These things are included in but are not the primary face of what is now called the informal economy.

### *What Is the Informal Economy?*

The “informal economy” means the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services that are not accounted for in the formally regulated economy. The term was coined by economic anthropologist and author Keith Hart, who worked in Ghana in the 1970s. He described the kind of economic activity that was common to migrants to the urban areas of Southern Ghana who were slum-dwellers unable to procure steady employment. The term caught on.

If it were a nation with its own gross domestic product (GDP), the unregulated, informal, cash-only, micro-enterprise economy would claim the third largest GDP in the world, behind the United States and China. It is referred to by some as the do-it-yourself (DIY) economy. Investigative journalist Robert Neuwirth, who has researched and written extensively on this topic, defines this economy as “businesses that exist solely on individual effort with no help from the

government.”<sup>13</sup> The informal economy includes the woman who used to knock on our front door to sell us homemade tamales, my brother’s side business on eBay, the babysitter who cared for my son in her home when I worked night shifts at a hospital, the Craigslist vendor from whom I bought a twenty-five-dollar Craftsman chair, the homeless person who stands at the street corner asking for donations, and the woman who scours our recycle bin the night before trash pickup and admonishes us in Chinese for not drinking enough soda.

The informal economy includes the farmer in rural Alberta who barter cattle for grain, the woman who sell wares out of her boat in Lagos, Nigeria, and the Tamil street vendor in Kuala Lumpur who keeps a bicycle behind his stall to escape the police who say it is illegal for refugees to hold jobs there. It also includes the drug dealer meeting junkies in Golden Gate Park and the women who hide behind cardboard boxes and bet on mahjong in the corner of Portsmouth Square, both in San Francisco. Informal economy work is usually temporary, without contracts, W9s, or employee benefits.

It is well documented that in some places in the world, the informal economy is by far the largest source of income for the inhabitants. In 2018, the International Labor Office (ILO) in Geneva compiled their third edition of *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*. The preface begins, “More than 60 percent of the world’s employed population earn their livelihoods in the informal economy. Informality exists in all countries regardless of the level of socio-economic development, although it is more prevalent in developing countries.” This document claims that this number includes 2 billion people over the age of fifteen. The largest percent of this kind of

---

13. Robert Neuwirth, *Stealth of Nations: The Global Rise of the Informal Economy* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2011), 22.

employment is in Africa (85.8 percent) and the next highest are the Arab States (68.6 percent) and then Asia and the Pacific (68.2 percent). A large number of jobs are in the field of agriculture, and when agricultural work is excluded, closer to 50 percent of the world's adult population works in the informal sector.<sup>14</sup>

### *The Informal Economy in North America*

In North America the informal economy has grown significantly in recent years. After retirement from full-time work, many senior adults now find they need to supplement their retirement income, and they choose to work various kinds of side jobs. During and immediately following the 2008 economic downturn in the United States, many workers were laid off, and their survival skills kicked in. They became informal economy micro-entrepreneurs. The 2015 Enterprising and Informal Work Activities Survey (EIWA) showed that 36 percent of US adults over eighteen worked in informal sector jobs in 2015, even if they had other work. Around 64 percent of them were white, non-Hispanics, 31 percent of whom had college degrees, and 30 percent of whom had some college.<sup>15</sup>

People who are undocumented, don't speak a country's language fluently enough to find sustainable work, or simply overstay their short-term visas can be found working in the construction business, factories, or behind the scenes in restaurants. They informally barter for goods and services and perhaps even live in restaurant-owned dormitories.

- 
14. "Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture," 3rd ed., International Labour Office, 2018, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_626831.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_626831.pdf).
  15. Paulina Restrepo-Echavarria and Maria A. Arias, "What Is the Informal Labor Market?" *The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis* blog, April 18, 2017, <https://www.stlouisfed.org/on-the-economy/2017/april/informal-labor-market>.

They tend to send any extra money they have back to family members in their countries of origin. In the survey cited above, however, just 18 percent of those who were questioned reported earning less than \$25,000 annually.

### *The Bible and Informal Economies*

Whatever way one defines the informal economy, it has existed since humans first worked in and cared for the garden. Before there was anything like a formal business, the Bible tells us something about how complex trading economies worked. Ezekiel 27:12–23 is a wonderful example. Here we see many types of trade agreements mentioned in just one Old Testament chapter. The prophet Ezekiel is lamenting over the city of Tyre, a commerce center at the time. Tarshish was a customer because of the abundance of all kinds of wealth; they paid in silver, iron, tin, and lead. Greece, Tubal, and Meshek were wealthy traders who paid for merchandise with “human beings and articles of bronze” (Ezek. 27:13). People from Beth-togarmah traded horses and mules for wares. The sons of Dedan were traders who brought ivory tusks and ebony as payment. Aram paid with emeralds, purple, embroidered work, fine linen, coral, and rubies. Judah and the land of Israel were traders who paid for merchandise with wheat, cakes, honey, oil, and balm. Damascus dealt in wine and white wool. Dedan traded in saddlecloths for riding. Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were customers for lambs, rams and goats. The traders of Sheba and Raamah paid for wares with spices, precious stones, and gold. This was all informal and relationally driven.

### *Spiritual Challenges*

Much of the work of the informal economy is relational. It requires personal interaction, high trust, and generous reciprocity. Unlike in

many traditional workplaces, informal workers have great opportunity to share the gospel and even pray with people because there is nobody watching over them to regulate their conversations. In many countries, laborers are less protected by laws of their land and, therefore, must find ways to look out for one another. Some countries have laws that are designed to protect the informal labor force. For example, in India there is a law to protect the work of street vendors, and some countries have laws to protect domestic workers. But competitors from the formal business economy say that the mistreatment of informal workers is one reason this economy will shrink or disappear as formal economies grow. It is challenged in multiple ways, all the while providing for the needs of a large segment of the world's population. The enemy would like nothing better than to fill the minds of this large portion of the working population with discouragement and defeat. Ephesians reminds us to stay aware of Satan's wiles.

There is another challenge with the shadow economy: the temptation to underreport your income and cheat on your taxes. Because the informal economy is unregulated and governments do not have the ability to tax it, many governmental organizations are antagonistic towards this sector of business. Neuwirth wrote, "what happens on Rua 25 de Março and in all the unregistered markets and roadside kiosks of the world is not simply haphazard. It is a product of intelligence, resilience, self-organization, and group solidarity, and it follows a number of well-worn though unwritten rules."<sup>16</sup>

There is an inherent human struggle to be truthful in such situations where one's integrity is not monitored. If nobody is sending you W-2 or 1099 tax forms, will you pay taxes on your earned income? Say

---

16. Neuwirth, *Stealth of Nations*, 18.



you offer childcare at your home, sell produce from your garden, or make muffins to sell to local restaurants, do you report these things as income? How about the woman who collects soda cans from our recycle bins each week? Should she bother to count those cans and keep a list of what she earns? (It is probably so little she will not be required to pay taxes anyhow!)

However, Ephesians reminds us to “put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (v. 11). While not every form of income is considered taxable earned income (for example, gifts are not taxable), could choosing not to pay tax on earned income actually be aligned with the devil’s schemes? If you think not, how do you know? There is a clear call for followers of Jesus to “stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place” (v. 14). To be righteous means to do what is right in God’s eyes not our own:

“A person may think their own ways are right, but the Lord weighs the heart.” (Prov. 21:2)

“All our righteous acts are like filthy rags.” (Isa. 64:6)

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matt. 6:33)

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Cor. 5:21)

In the battles of Paul’s day, soldiers fought with swords, shot arrows, and threw spears. It was absolutely necessary for one’s heart and lungs to be covered and protected. In fact, I imagine that if a soldier did not have their torso protected, the enemy would aim for that person first.

## *Informal Church Starting Stories*

I often share the story of my first church plants. A few months after deciding to follow Jesus, I quit my job for the summer and made my second trip to an Apache reservation in Arizona. I arrived the Sunday the pastor was praying about starting a new church in another part of the twenty-six-hundred-square-mile reservation. Later I asked him why we didn't just go and start the church. I told him I saw there were people with time to give, plus Bibles, pens, and paper lying around the church. The next day, his wife came to me and said we would start the next week, and that I would be leading the initiative. That was almost forty years ago, and I remember only that we began with some children's material that was left at the church, plus some Apache Bibles, and a group of indigenous volunteers.

Two years later, I left my home church in the San Diego area to attend seminary. Before I left, I asked my pastor about finding a church where I could both learn and engage in ministry. He suggested a church near the seminary that was starting a network of house churches in its community. He suggested I help start house churches that met on Sunday mornings and then attend evening discipleship classes at the main church on Sunday evenings. The first song in the first worship service at that new church was a song my home church sang every week. I strongly sensed the Spirit telling me I was in the right place, so I joined the church and immediately began planting a house church along with another student who subsequently became a missionary in Africa. We knocked on doors and invited people to attend Sunrise Baptist House Church. Sometimes people gave us things to give away: fruit, vegetables, used clothing, and so forth. So I drove around the neighborhood giving and receiving, telling people about Jesus, and

inviting them to church. I don't think we ever had a church checking account. We paid for most things in cash or by bartering.

Two years into this church plant, I knocked on a door and met a family of new refugees from Cambodia. They invited me in, and we told stories (see chapter 1). The next Sunday I was prompted by God to visit another local church where I had never before been. Much to my surprise, the Cambodian family I had met just a few days before was there, along with a few dozen other Cambodian refugees. Excitedly, I approached them. "Remember me? I was at your house last week!" We began to talk, and the pastor came over to join the conversation. When I told him that I was a seminary student, he told me that the group were Christians and wanted to start a church that met in his building. "Will you help us start a church for them?" he asked. I agreed, and for the rest of my seminary career, I helped them start a Cambodian speaking church.

I am not certain if anyone ever filed for these churches to obtain 501(c)(3) status. It never occurred to me to do so, but they were churches nonetheless. They were uncomplicated, with easy access to leadership, with much in common. The bar was low in terms of experience, skills, and formal education but high in terms of character. Set up costs and expenses were almost nothing. My model was Scripture and really not much else in the way of rules or regulations. They functioned as businesses do in the realm of the informal economy.

### *Why the Big Deal?*

Besides its growing size and significance, what makes the informal economy so interesting? First, it is noteworthy because these economies are largest and strongest in some of the places in the world that have experienced the most significant church planting movements, such as

Africa, where it accounts for around 90 percent of the jobs in the lowest income parts of sub-Saharan countries (Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo). It is hard, but exciting, to imagine church multiplication happening when we lose track of what the Spirit is doing, when there is no reporting agency keeping track! The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that as a percentage of GDP in sub-Saharan Africa the informal economy equals 41 percent. A 2017 Pew Research study showed that by 2060 more than four in ten Christians are expected to live in sub-Saharan Africa. This figure is up from 26 percent in 2015.<sup>17</sup>

One study showed that in 2015, if the US Latino GDP was considered an economy in its own right, it would have been the seventh largest in the world. It is an industrious and entrepreneurial culture. Additionally, in a 2012 study sociologist Chenoa Flippen wrote, “The dramatic increase in Hispanic immigration to the United States in recent decades has been coterminous with fundamental shifts in the labor market towards heightened flexibility, instability, and informality.”<sup>18</sup> The informal economy makes up a significant portion of this labor market, partially because of language barriers, sometimes because of the numbers of undocumented workers, and sometimes because of educational opportunity.

At the same time, one of the church planting movements with which I am familiar in the United States originated with CityTeam, a disciple-

---

17. David McClendon, “Sub-Saharan Africa will be home to growing shares of the world’s Christians and Muslims,” Pew Research Center, April 19, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/19/sub-saharan-africa-will-be-home-to-growing-shares-of-the-worlds-christians-and-muslims/>.

18. Chenoa Flippen, “Laboring Underground: The Employment Patterns of Hispanic Immigrant Men in Durham, NC,” *Social Problems*, February 2012.

making ministry based out of San Jose, California, that spread to over two hundred cities. It grew quickly and was over 95 percent Hispanic. Again, here is an example of a Christian movement in the context of a culture with a strong informal economy sector.

The sphere of the informal economy is highly relational and values healthy, well-connected relationships, a trait we already noticed in the first nine verses of Ephesians 6. Like I mentioned in the last chapter on ethnic family businesses, the informal economy is so connected with people's daily lives, it makes no sense for it to be seen as simply vocational work. The informal economy is also inherently flexible. In Kenya, for example, the informal economy is referred to as *Jua Kali*, which in Swahili means "the ability to solve any problem." It is easier for small, relationally based churches, as seen in disciple-making movements, to be more flexible than the institutional church.

Of all of the types of church planting movements, I can imagine for North America, the leadership models and methods of the informal economy is the most exciting to me. It has unlimited potential, and it is accessible to groups of people sometimes marginalized in the formal church planting world, such as refugees or those who cannot read or write well enough to engage in formal training. It is not hampered by spending long hours of administrative work that most catalytic type leaders abhor or by waiting until standardized training materials are available in one's own language. At the same time, breaking into new population segments and utilizing more people as catalytic leaders is bound to greatly anger Satan. Sustained spiritual warfare and the discipline of putting on the full armor of God will need to overtake our reliance on business models and seminary training.

## CHAPTER 3

# Tribal Workplaces

### *Ephesians 6:16*

*“In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” (Eph. 6:16)*



### *What is a Tribe?*

Author and former business executive Seth Godin, defined “tribes” this way: “A tribe is any group of people, large or small, who are connected to one another, a leader, and an idea.”<sup>19</sup> Scott Perry, a coach in Godin’s organization, reflects on Godin’s work. In his eBook *Endeavor Better: Fly Higher and Make a Difference*, Perry notes, “Tribes share a vision, speak a common language, and can spot the shibboleths [customs and traditions] and signifiers that distinguish them from outsiders.”<sup>20</sup> A group of corporate professionals called the 2% Factor say, “We define a tribe as a group of individuals that has organized on the basis of social, economic, philosophical, and/or political ideologies and beliefs.” They

---

19. Seth Godin, *Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us* (New York: Portfolio, 2008), 1.

20. Scott Perry, *Endeavor Better: Fly Higher and Make a Difference* (Floyd, Va.: Creative on Purpose Press), 16, [https://s3.amazonaws.com/kajabi-storefronts-production/sites/794/themes/750489/downloads/dQSkBDrkRviRdJr704a3\\_\\_\\_FREE\\_eBOOK\\_Be\\_Creative\\_On\\_Purpose.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/kajabi-storefronts-production/sites/794/themes/750489/downloads/dQSkBDrkRviRdJr704a3___FREE_eBOOK_Be_Creative_On_Purpose.pdf).

claim that “we are all tribal in nature,” and agree with other definitions that talk about tribes as a group of 20–150 people. Any larger a group than that has the potential to be a tribe of tribes.”<sup>21</sup>

### *Tribes Have One Another's Backs*

My husband works with a nonprofit organization that assists those who are battling things like homelessness, substance abuse, and PTSD. Somewhat regularly, a client will become loud, overbearing, or even combative. When that happens, everyone stops whatever they are doing to help guard the well-being of other clients. Nobody has to call for help; they are simply there for one another. They speak a common language, are aware of common threats, and care about each other. They are a tribe. In hospitals, nurses work in shifts. There is a period between shifts when they communicate the needs of the patients. The nurses work as teams toward a shared goal of caring for and saving patients. First responders are tribes. Police have their teams. Firefighters rush to fires together in trucks. And in a crisis situation, it is not unusual for a tribe of tribes (firefighters, EMTs, and police) to all arrive together to help one another, shield one another, protect one another, and in general, to assure one another that there is covering for them.

The shield of faith depicted in Ephesians 6 is significant to the current discussion about tribe. It is the only piece of defensive armor listed. The Roman shield of the apostle Paul’s day was called a *scutum*. It was large enough to cover the soldier almost entirely. When the soldiers of the ancient world fought, they stood close to one another and moved forward in phalanx, or formations of several rows at a time. Their

---

21. “Workplace Conflict Still the Result Of A Tribal Mentality,” 2% Factor, November 17, 2017, <https://www.the2percentfactor.com/blog/workplace-conflict-still-the-result-of-a-tribal-mentality>.

shields interlocked, so they could one another from the sides, and the back row would sometimes hold their shields over the heads of the whole phalanx to form a covering. This protected the soldier from those who were elevated on horseback or from flying arrows. The enclosure the soldiers formed with their shields was referred to as a *testudo*, which means tortoise. By working together they assured the whole group was sheltered.

In individualistic societies, it does not usually occur to us that this shield of faith Paul wrote about was meant for a group, a team, or a tribe—but it was. The shield of faith is meant to draw around one another and is critical for the community of faith, as well. The first time I remember encountering Christians helping one another through spiritual battles, a friend drew my attention to the story of Joshua in battle against the Amalekites. God directed Moses to hold his arms up high, and as long as he did, the Israelites would be winning. But when Moses' arms got tired and he let them down, the Amalekites started winning. Aaron and Hur helped Joshua and Moses win the day by holding up his arms on each side when he was tired and could not hold them up himself (Exod. 17:8–13). Our faith is stronger when we work together, trusting Him and His word above our own faith and capacities. That's how the shield of faith in Ephesians 6 works.

### *God as Our Shield*

Because it is God Himself who is our primary shield, we can walk in faith, and we can overcome. “Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). Scripture often refers to God as our shield:



- “The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.” (Ps. 28:7)
- “The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” (Ps. 18:2)
- “We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.” (Ps. 33:20)
- “Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.” (Prov. 30:5)
- “But you, Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high.” (Ps. 3:3)

Faith is described as a real thing in Scripture. The Bible tells us that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1, NKJV). *Substance* means something that is concrete, and *evidence* means there is solid proof. Faith is not based on emotions but is steeped in reality. It operates as a protective barrier between those who follow Jesus and the constant, wearisome schemes of Satan. The shields of Paul’s day were formed from leather that was soaked in water before going into battle. The word used in Ephesians 6:16 is *sbennumi*, which means “to quench by dousing or to extinguish by drowning in water.” The early readers of Ephesians would have understood that fiery darts thrown by enemy soldiers were a real concern. They also would have understood that a prepared, soaking wet shield was able to put out those darts. In spiritual battles, Satan throws his fiery darts, but when we believe God’s Word, the lies of the enemy lose their power. The shield of faith deflects the Enemy’s attacks. It is pretty much guaranteed that those who enter the battle against Satan will have fiery darts thrown against them in every space of life—marriage, family, neighborhood, and business. However, the time we spend in God’s

word, “because faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ” (Rom. 10:17), and in building up our individual faith and the faith of others, prepares us to defend against the wiles of Satan.

### *Tribal Experience*

In her essay “In Search of the Good Family,” Jane Howard wrote, “Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one.”<sup>22</sup> That’s how the soldiers mentioned above operated with the shield of faith. They were a tribe. I began my missions adventure at a time in my life when I had few family support systems around me. It was on an Apache reservation in Arizona where the local Baptist church found me at a campground and took me in. It was there that I first heard “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10–11). Then, I heard about John’s vision when before him in heaven “was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9). This tribe really believed that, and I thought it was the most beautiful thing I had ever heard. What a unique experience to watch how the Christians in this Apache tribe belonged to one another and how they shared ideas, relationships, needs, food, and even their land with one another! Even though I was not a member of their tribe, there was an expectation that the food I purchased for myself and placed in the church refrigerator was supposed to be shared. Likewise, they collected empty soda cans and

---

22. Jane Howard, “In Search of the Good Family,” *The Language of Composition*, eds. Renee Shea, Lawrence Scanlon, and Robin Aufses (Boston: Bedford St. Martins, 2008).

left them at my door so I could exchange them for cash to buy gas for my car. At least for that summer, they became my tribe. Even today, Christians who are audaciously committed to the vision that someday every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus as Lord are always my number one tribe.

A few years ago, I attended another tribal event that was open only to Burmese people and a few of their closest friends. The speaker was political leader, diplomat, and Nobel Peace Prize-winner, Aung San Suu Kyi. Lines formed around the auditorium entrance several hours before the event began. Almost every attendee was dressed in colorful clothing representing several tribes from Myanmar. The different ethnic groups were gathered together and to sat together. They also all recognized one another as Burmese peoples who belonged to a tribe of tribes. Though they were gracious, I was an outsider who did not really belong to any of the Burmese tribes.

### *Tribes and the Workplace*

When I was a child, I was fascinated with the field of medicine. I have an old photo of me playing doctor and leper with a friend. She was willing to play only if she was the doctor and I was the leper. I volunteered in nursing homes as a teen, and when I was sixteen, I had a summer job drawing blood from patients in a hospital. It was my first real job. Eventually, I transitioned into full-time work as a unit secretary in an intensive care unit. Back then, I considered myself an atheist, but I was thrilled to be a part of helping people thrive and flourish. For some years, I worked full-time nightshifts in hospitals, attended college part-time on weekday mornings, and slept in the afternoons before my son came home from school.

Besides my son, the most important people in my world were my coworkers from the hospital. Many night-workers experience social isolation from everyone except their coworkers. Besides the irregular hours and energetic pace, what I liked most was that we were a team that depended on each other as we worked toward common goals. Nurses and doctors needed X-ray technicians, who needed unit secretaries, who needed lab workers, who needed janitors. We shared lumpia, enchiladas, fried chicken, and the candy that was given by grateful patients. After work we all partied together. We spoke the same language and laughed at the same jokes, regardless of our ethnicity, task, or position. The ICU, where I worked, was its own tribe within a tribe of tribes that worked together in that hospital.

While working at a hospital, two of us became radical followers of Christ and shared our faith openly. When I was baptized, I invited a long pew-full of hospital friends to the event. Nobody told me to do that. They were my people, and I wanted them there. As a result of our radical transformations, coworkers began to watch and listen. Others came to Christ, and we were disciplined together. Many years later, I visited that hospital and could trace a long trajectory of conversions back to those days when two of us became Christians. Tribes hear one another's voices and are influenced by their lives. Think of your own tribal workspace. How do you hear and submit to God's voice in the midst of the tribal voices?

### *Tech Tribes*

In the San Francisco Bay Area, thousands of employees participate in businesses that foster tech tribes. Five days a week, they hop onto company-owned buses that take them to and from Apple, eBay, Electronic Arts, Facebook, Google, and Yahoo. As soon as these buses

pick them up, they are at work. They are thinking and dreaming with peers or surfing the Internet for ideas, work memos, and team correspondence. At Google, for example, workers can eat free breakfast, lunch, and dinner; use the gym; take laundry to a mobile laundry service; and get their hair trimmed at another mobile service provider. Some even take their dogs with them to work. After work they may take public transportation together and meet to socialize somewhere on their way home.

It is a Google-centric world, where people are connected in ways that mean they don't act as if they necessarily need anyone else. However, some outsiders are averse to these Google-centric tribes. Many San Franciscans actually avoid relationships with these tech tribes, blaming them for the soaring cost of rent. They even protest at the Google/Facebook/Apple bus stations. As downtown San Jose begins to open up space for more tech workers, protesters went as far as to disrupt the mayor's state of the city address, chanting loudly, "Say it loud, say it clear, Google is not welcome here." But being ostracized only serves to draw tribes closer to one another.

A blog post by the 2% Factor starts out, "We are all tribal in nature." It identifies tribal mentality as a primary source of workplace conflict and lists some ways to identify the tribes within a company, as well as ways to identify the needs, beliefs, and values of people from other tribes within the same organization. It offers ideas of workplace wisdom.<sup>23</sup> The most effective way to help these tribes get along is to help them become Christ-centric. How can we empower, encourage, and release the body of Christ already inside the companies?

---

23. "Workplace Conflict Still The Result Of A Tribal Mentality," 2% Factor, November 17, 2017, <https://www.the2percentfactor.com/blog/workplace-conflict-still-the-result-of-a-tribal-mentality>.

Church planter Roy Tinklenberg has done just that. He started Compass Church, in Mountain View, California, home to the Googleplex, Google's headquarters with around twenty-five thousand employees. Mountain View is also the home to thousands of employees working at firms such as Symantec, Intuit, Microsoft, and LinkedIn. The church has been involved in an outreach called the Faith and Work movement. On their website they say, "We exist to positively impact companies that impact the world, to create sacred space in the workplace, and equip those in the marketplace to cultivate good."<sup>24</sup> They encourage Christians in the workplace to "start a group in your company, or an inter-company group, get resources as leaders, build a community, and network with those called to the marketplace to integrate their faith and work." Locally the Faith and Work group has sponsored prayer gatherings, workplace worship, a Gospel Patrons film night, and other events with groups from VMware, Google, Uber, Facebook, Dolby, and other groups. They collaborate with other similarly minded groups such as Gospel Patrons, TransformWorkUK, and AllThingsNewTech to bring Christ into the labor force.

The entrepreneurial mindset of such spaces aligns wonderfully with church planting strategies. I sometimes encourage church planters to use organic sociologically defined gathering principles to gather people together as church. These are shared identity (such as language, culture, or educational background), shared deep relationships (such as family or clan), shared proximity (such as an apartment community or workspace), and shared experiences or causes. Inside of these networks there are often acknowledged persons of peace (Luke 10:5–7). There is a sense that these factors all mean these workspace tribal spaces are well structured for potential gospel movement.

---

24. [faithandworkmovement.org](http://faithandworkmovement.org).

Who is your tribe? Is your business structured in such a way that tribal networks exist, and is there also some kind of a tribe of tribes? So your tribe mates hang out together before or after work, or on weekends, too? How does intentional tribal networking permit you to engage the gospel and speak in faith? Are there other followers of Jesus in your workspace who have your back and hold up that shield of faith with you?

## CHAPTER 4

# How We Get to Work

### *Ephesians 6:17–20*

*Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. (Eph. 6:17–20)*

.....

Soldiers in Paul's day always suited up for battle, and at the very end is when they would put on the helmet. Can you imagine how vulnerable that soldier would be if everything else was in place, but the head was left uncovered? How would they be protected from blows to the face or the top of the head? This piece of armor was usually made with strong metal, but poorer soldiers sometimes had to handcraft theirs from leather that was simply fortified with some metal. The helmets of salvation that most Christ followers wear are not fortified with seminary degrees or Bible School training, but it is helmet enough for the everyday battles in which God's people find themselves.



Paul says that the sword used in spiritual battle is the word of God. There are two basic Greek words for the concept “word of God”: *logos* and *rhema*. Most people are more familiar with the Greek word *logos*, which technically means divine plan or reason and is used to mean the whole inspired Word of God. For example, John the disciple used *logos* to make his Trinitarian claim that:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was With God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.” (John 1:1–4)

The world could experience reason, organization, and a plan from the very beginning of creation because Jesus *is logos*. The concept is used commonly in the Old Testament, as well. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scripture, it was translated from the Hebrew word *davar*.

The Greek word *rhema*, however, is what Paul used in Ephesians 6:17. It refers to a portion of Scripture supernaturally brought to our present reality by God’s Spirit when we especially need to hear it. As Paul wrote to Timothy, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). John noted that, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7). In Ephesians 6, the context is a battlefield. The soldier is in a position to win the battle while equipped with the active, living Word of God. One advantage that most pastors and others have is that they commonly carry God’s Word into planned, orderly settings where they have some kind of leadership position. They spend hours on sermon preparation, prayer, and Bible study before engaging church members

in these pastoral functions. They are ready for real spiritual battle, and it happens. However, spiritual battles that happen in the workplaces are spontaneous, and people need to be ready “in season and out of season [to] correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Tim. 4:2).

### *Paul's Missionary Journeys*

According to the book of Acts, the apostle Paul, knowing that the purposes of God were meant for all peoples and not just the Jews, made four missionary journeys to take the gospel to other parts of the world. It is estimated that on those expeditions, he traveled ten thousand miles, mostly by foot, but also by ship. He spent long portions of that time with companions such as Barnabas, John Mark, Silas, Timothy, and others. He traveled the Roman roads from his sending church in Antioch to places like present-day Israel, Syria, Turkey, and Greece. Sometimes, Paul traveled back to places where he had already preached the gospel and started churches. His first and second journeys, for example, were initially quite similar. Starting in Antioch, he sailed with team members to Cyprus and then traveled through Pamphylia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, Lystra, Iconium, and Derbe before returning to Antioch by way of Attalia. On his second trip, Paul also went to Corinth and Ephesus, where he established churches. On journey one, his primary traveling companion and helper was Barnabas; on journey two, it was Silas.

Those ancient roads were fraught with roadside bandits, so it made sense for people to travel in groups. I imagine Paul and his friends probably traveled with others who were not part of their Christian band sharing Christ as they weathered the long days together. Excursions by sea were also anything but comfortable, and there was constant

exposure to the hardships of the weather. Spiritual warfare was real, and the difficult walks were arduous. I imagine those traveling companions on land and sea learned much about being the church together as they weathered those days and years. Can you imagine the ministry learning curve that happened while trudging around with the Paul for months on end?

At the end of Paul's third missionary journey, he went to Jerusalem to bring a significant contribution to care for Christians who needed financial assistance. The apostle was imprisoned and confined in Herod's palace prison in Caesarea for two years. His fourth journey began as an effort to seek justice from long-term imprisonment (Acts 27:1–28:16). Paul was taken to Rome under escort, during which time he and all those onboard were shipwrecked. Then, upon reaching his destination in Rome, he was placed under house arrest but was treated well and allowed to preach the gospel. It was at this time in his life, when he had endured these harrowing missionary trips, that Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians.

Paul was in Ephesus both at the end of his second missionary journey and for a much lengthier time on his third journey. On that third journey, he met Tychicus, who was apparently himself an Ephesian. He is mentioned five times in the New Testament: Acts 20:4, Ephesians 6:21, Colossians 4:7, 2 Timothy 4:12, and Titus 3:12. While we know very little of him, he is called a “dear brother and faithful servant” and a “faithful minister and fellow servant” and was the individual Paul trusted to deliver his letters and messages to both the Ephesian and the Colossian Christians. In Ephesians 6:21, Paul wrote, “Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing.” Paul and

Tychicus forged this close relationship while working together and traveling together.

### *Commuting to Work*

Just as traveling strengthened the friendship between Paul and his companions, commuting to work has the potential for deepening friendships and providing opportunities to share Christ with the people one meets along the way. In the city where I live, and the kind of places I like to travel, it often makes sense to leave the car at home rather than paying for metered parking, or a small fortune for a parking garage. It can be faster and more relaxing to take a train into downtown neighborhoods. However, some are noting that how people get around, including how they get to work and home again is becoming a piece of the ideological divide in North America. In a recent article, urban studies theorist Richard Florida claims, “We are cleaving into two nations—one where daily life revolves around the car, and the other where the car is receding in favor of walking, biking, and transit.”<sup>25</sup> He refers to the US Census Bureau’s recently released commuting data from the 2017 American Community Survey.<sup>26</sup> It covers around 270 of the largest metropolitan areas.

This same study claims that nationwide, more than three-fourths of all commuters drive vehicles to work alone. However, in the New York metro area, only half do. Just 57 percent of San Franciscans drive alone to work, while two-thirds travel this way to work in Seattle,

---

25. Richard Florida, “The Great Divide in How Americans Commute to Work,” CityLab, January 22, 2019, <https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2019/01/commuting-to-work-data-car-public-transit-bike/580507>.

26. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/library/keywords/commuting-and-transportation.all.html>.

Washington, D.C., and Boston. The research also showed that small, denser college towns also had larger percentages of persons who use alternative means of transportation. And, as might be expected, a smaller-than-average share of workers drive to work alone in more compact college towns such as Boulder, Colorado; Corvallis and Eugene, Oregon; Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Ames and Iowa City, Iowa. Naturally this reflects things like the values of millennials, their greater level of physical activity, such as walking or riding bicycles, and a stage of life when car ownership is too costly for their budgets.

### *Alternative Transportation*

Additionally, just 5 percent of US commuters use public transit to get to work. In New York City, however, home to complex subway and rail systems, over 30 percent of workers get to work via by transit. The only other metropolitan areas where 10 percent or more of workers commute via public transportation are San Francisco (17.4 percent), Boston (13.4 percent), Washington, D.C. (12.8 percent), Chicago (12.3 percent), Seattle (10.1 percent), and Bridgeport-Stamford, Connecticut (10 percent).<sup>27</sup> In San Francisco, the public transportation system carries workers of all classes—from government workers to homeless people—and from every cultural background. While many spend the entire time on their cell phones, not everyone does, and it is still a great place for starting conversations about anything in the world. If you use public transportation, how do you use that time, and what kind of interactions do you initiate with others?

Around 9 percent of US workers carpool to work, but in tech hubs that hire large numbers of workers that live and work in proximity, that

---

27. Richard Florida, “The Great Divide,” <https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2019/01/commuting-to-work-data-car-public-transit-bike/580507>.

number is higher. For example, 10 to 11 percent of workers carpool in West Coast cities like San Jose, San Francisco, and Seattle, as well as in San Antonio, Houston, and Phoenix.<sup>28</sup> Unlike public transportation, carpooling more often includes the same small group of people each day, and sometimes it is easier to have personal conversations on the way to work in these settings than it is in the hectic workplace environment.

### *People Who Take People to Work*

And who are the people who transport those people who need timely, inexpensive, relaxing (somewhat), and environmentally responsible options? They are bus drivers, train operators, and Yellow Cab, Lyft, and Uber drivers. Obviously, the bus drivers and train operators aren't going to be accessible. But those who drive cars are, and you can easily engage them in conversation. Another way to get to work is through ridesharing. One active website with blogs and podcasts for rideshare drivers is *The Rideshare Guy* by Harry Campbell. He conducted a reader survey of rideshare drivers in 2017 to discover “the experience, income and demographics of rideshare drivers working for services like Uber and Lyft.” Their national demographics indicate:

- Around 19 percent of Uber and of Lyft, and a little less than 13 percent of taxi drivers are female.
- While passengers are younger, 54 percent of rideshare drivers are fifty-one or over and 77.5 percent of drivers are forty-one or older.

---

28. Richard Florida, “The Great Divide,” <https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2019/01/commuting-to-work-data-car-public-transit-bike/580507>.

- Over 53 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher. The national average is 33 percent.<sup>29</sup>
- Ethnic origins: white 78.3 percent (includes Middle Easterners, North Africans and more). This number is comparable to the US workforce as a whole (78 percent).<sup>30</sup> Hispanic/Latino 7.1 percent and black/African Americans 6.8 percent (other groups are less than 1 percent each). The taxi/chauffeur workforce is 51.9 percent white, 25.9 percent black, and around 10 percent Asian.<sup>31</sup> These breakdowns will certainly vary for different cities.

In some cities, rideshare drivers and passengers have much in common and can communicate readily around many topics, including faith. In other cities, the God-encounters with drivers, as well as other passengers (such as in UberPOOL) are definitively cross-cultural. I am excited to share a few stories.

### *Rideshare Encounters*

Being a passenger in my city with some frequency makes me think about evangelism as something like a relay race. In the brief time I am with drivers and other passengers, I can carry the message to a certain point and trust the Spirit of God to pass the baton to the next carrier He chooses. Recently, a fellow passenger taking UberPOOL told me that he was Nepali. I asked him from what group in Nepal was he a

---

29. Camille L. Ryan and Kurt Bauman, "Educational Attainment in the United States: 2015 Population Characteristics," US Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, March 2016, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p20-578.pdf>.

30. "Labor force characteristics by race and ethnicity," 2017, Bureau of Labor Statistics, August 2018, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2017/home.htm>.

31. <https://datausa.io/profile/soc/533041/#demographics>.

part of. He told me he was Tamang (a Tibeto-Burman ethnic group in Nepal), and I asked if he was Buddhist. He said yes, and both he and the driver were surprised I had even heard of the Tamang people, no less guessed correctly about his faith background. In the four city blocks we shared, I was able to tell him about a Tamang Nepali pastor, the wonderful church he leads in Oakland, and extend an invitation for him to visit. Just because he was so surprised that this Caucasian ride-sharer knew about Tamang people, he may attend sometime.

My husband and I were visiting London in the fall of 2017 and decided to take a taxi from the airport to our hotel. The minute we got into the cab, our Muslim driver started a conversation. With no warning at all (maybe he saw my cross necklace) he startled us by requesting that we pray that someone would kill the dictator in power in his home country. Yikes! No thank you!

“Where are you from?” I asked, inviting him to tell us his story. It was the month before the five hundred-year anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, so that was very much on my mind as we traveled around Europe.

I told him about Martin Luther and the Reformation and how I felt like the widening observation of that era that all had sinned and fallen short of God’s perfect design was a really good forerunner of democratic principles. I told him that contrary to how dictators rule and to his faith’s belief that something like twelve hundred prophets were sinless, democracy set up a balance of powers leaving nobody except Jesus outside of the reality of sin. We talked for a long time, exchanged e-mails, and he refused our tip because “now we are friends.” This kind of conversation is not infrequent for me with taxi and other kinds of drivers. Some tell me that only around 20 percent of their passengers talk to them, and their days are lonely and empty.



Not too long ago, I was riding to the Asheville, North Carolina, airport via Lyft. My young driver was new to the area and just trying to gain a foothold in the real estate business. He told me that the majority of his customers were senior adults. Because I was familiar with the area, I knew that his community was actually a haven for seniors, and some were probably moving out of their homes into a few large assisted living communities nearby. I suggested that he learn about senior adults, develop relationships with these senior communities, consider better how to serve their needs, and perhaps offer classes for them about the aspects of this kind of move. I suggested that he collaborate with local movers, antique dealers to help those who were selling household goods, and others to offer a package service that was easy, reliable, and trustworthy. My driver was intrigued and asked how I came up with that idea so quickly. I told him that like him, I was an entrepreneur, but that my field of interest was starting new churches. Because I started with an area of interest to him, he was willing to engage in spiritual conversation.

Author and church-plant trainer Peyton Jones shares a story about leading a young Uber driver to Christ. He was on his way home from an overnight trip and must have been exhausted. Peyton described this driver as a hipster from China in pursuit of a film directing career in Hollywood. He had been sensing God trying to speak to him but wasn't sure what to do about it. He believed in a God but rejected Christianity. They talked for forty minutes, after which this young man bowed his head and prayed to receive Christ.<sup>32</sup> In this situation, Peyton responded to God's prompting to enter the relay race to carry the baton

---

32. Peyton Jones, "Uber Cool Evangelism," *Church Planting Ninja*, August 14, 2017, <https://peytonjones.ninja/uber-cool-evangelism/>.

over the finish line and he made use of his time, even when it would have been fine to simply fall asleep after his long night.

### *Evangelistic Drivers*

Cornell Swain is an Uber driver and a highly committed follower of Jesus. In a recent phone conversation, he told me that we are only in church a few hours a week, and he wants to take the church where the building isn't. During his Uber workday, he has the opportunity to share his faith almost every day. He said people are willing to engage in spiritual conversations because they feel safe with him. For example, he told me the story of a woman he picked up who reeked of beer. She confessed to Cornell that she had tried to commit suicide by drinking large quantities of alcohol and had swallowed thirteen pills. She spoke of lingering pain from her service in the military. Cornell asked her if she believed in God, and she said, "no one ever asked me that." Then, he told her the story of someone else who tried to commit suicide but heard a beautiful clear voice that said, "God loves you." He told his passenger about this God of love, quoted Scripture, and took her to the VA hospital. She told him again that nobody had ever told her about these things. As he dropped her off, he asked if he could pray for her, and after he prayed, he hugged her. You guessed it—nobody had ever done this before either.

In March 2018, *Outreach* magazine published an interview with Jane, the "Uber Evangelist." She keeps a Bible in her backseat the way you find Gideon Bibles in hotel room drawers. Jane finds ways to start faith conversations and she prays for passengers that express a need. What

I think of as a spiritual relay race, she calls planting seeds of faith in people's lives.<sup>33</sup>

The blog *Walking in His Steps* published a piece by Cheche Agada from Rockland, Maryland, who was originally from Lagos, Nigeria. When he arrived in the United States, one of the ways Agada supplemented his income was by driving with a rideshare company. He noticed being a Christian in America was different than in Nigeria and wondered, "How do Christians get the gospel to people around here?" He found that as a driver he had many unique opportunities.<sup>34</sup>

Driving to evangelize? Why not? It is not just while we are at work, but while we are on our way to work that we can put on our spiritual armor and engage in the work of God. A man who simply calls himself "Pastor Jason" writes a blog called *Word and Testimony*. He wrote a post he entitled "Why Evangelism Works on Uber/Lyft." Here is an abbreviated version of what he says,

1. When it comes to religion, it's easier to talk to strangers than to friends/family.
2. Different from a taxi, they know you're just a regular person, like them, and this might be just a side job. It's a level playing field.
3. People expect to talk to the driver . . . In contrast, this is a lot more natural than approaching people at a park or street corner.
4. It's pretty easy to go from superficial conversations about the weather, or "What job do you have?" to talks about God, purpose of life, or religion.

---

33. Ed Stetzer, "Interview: Jane the Uber Evangelist," *Outreach*, March 25, 2018, <https://outreachmagazine.com/features/evangelism/27358-interview-jane-uber-evangelist.html>.

34. Cheche Agada, "Uber Evangelism," *Walking in His Footsteps* blog, January 24, 2017, <http://walkinginhisfootsteps.com/blog/xgoi00b6byvukxwjz6nuxqc2jsdyoa>.

5. You get to meet and talk to people from all different backgrounds and all walks of life.
6. There's a time limit to the conversation (when the ride ends), so people are more willing to discuss controversial issues or anything uncomfortable.
7. There's a fast learning curve. You don't have to be an extrovert or talkative person. You can practice with ten people per day on how to talk to random strangers about anything . . .
8. You can't get this exposure from a church seminar or book on evangelism because real people can't be put in a box. You get to talk to people outside of your circle of friends or workplace.
9. You can do this less than 30 minutes per month, or whatever. There are no minimum hours you have to drive, and you can drive whenever you want.<sup>35</sup>

---

35. "Why Uber Evangelism?" *Word and Testimony* blog, <https://www.wordandtestimony.com/driver.html>.

## CHAPTER 5

# Global Carriers

*Ephesians 6:15, 21–24*

*Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you. Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love. (Eph. 6:21–24)*

.....

### *A Gospel of Peace*

Paul refers to still another piece of armor: “. . . and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15). This gospel of peace characterized the person of Jesus. Before He entered the world as an infant, there was already a desire for and an inclination towards peace:

*“How beautiful on the mountains  
are the feet of those who bring good news,  
who proclaim peace,  
who bring good tidings,*

*who proclaim salvation,  
who say to Zion,  
‘Your God reigns!’” (Isa. 52:7)*

The announcement of Jesus’ birth was one of peace. The angels declared, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those with whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:14), and towards the end of his earthly ministry the Lord declared peace to his followers, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27). In one of Jesus’ most beloved teachings, the Sermon on the Mount, He took time to acknowledge the peacemakers and called them blessed: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matt. 5:9). Peace was also a theme of the apostle Paul’s writings:

“Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.” (2 Thess. 3:16)

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.” (Col. 3:15)

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” (Eph. 4:3)

In the closing verses of the book of Ephesians, Paul continues with the idea of peace. Here, he offers words of blessings: “Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 6:23).

## *The Act of Sending*

These above words of blessing from Paul were sent to the Ephesians by way of Tychicus, whom he refers to as a dear brother and faithful servant of God. As we saw earlier, Tychicus is mentioned several times in the New Testament (Acts 20:4, Col. 4:7, 2 Tim. 4:12, and Tit. 3:12). He is first mentioned in relation to accompanying Paul on his third missionary journey on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem. Then Paul asks Tychicus to venture out without him. He transcends the role of fellow traveler and functions as a sent one and a part of the kingdom call: “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14).

## *The Inclusivity of Ephesians*

The book of Ephesians has always been my favorite book of the Bible because its theme is so brilliantly universal and utterly inclusive. The ultimate design of God is to reconcile *all* creation to Himself through Christ. This is “to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to *all* things in heaven and on earth under Christ” (Eph. 1:10, emphasis mine). God’s plan includes uniting people from *every* nation, tribe, and language to Himself and to one another in His church. Earlier in Ephesians, Paul told us that this reconciliation of people has been God’s plan since the beginning, as He decided even before the creation of the world (Eph. 1:4). The real struggle of which we are called to be aware is not with people who are different than ourselves but against the real spiritual forces of Satan, as already attributed to Ephesians 6:10–18. Especially in this era of disunity, the amazingly broad scope of this planet-wide promise brings me such hope and offers a beautiful assurance of healing. How can we use the ways we work to participate in this great calling?

In conclusion, it seems right to reflect on the opportunities Christians have through their occupations to act as global carriers of the glorious gospel. Several themes will dominate here. First, we will look at some cities in the world that are truly globally connected. Sometimes these are called “alpha cities.” Workers may “belong” to more than one geographical place, spending time regularly in multinational corporations where they become more connected to the world. This conversation extends to both physical and virtual global workspaces. Second, we will discuss the role of temporary work visa holders, including an emphasis on US employment of workers from India. We will discuss not simply how to reach these visa holders but also how the visa holders can reach one another and reach others living around them. Finally, we will discuss the potential roles of kingdom workers whose employment carries them from place to place, potentially, and hopefully, sharing Christ’s gospel of peace as they go.

### *Globalization: The Compression of the World*

Globalization has been defined as the “compression of the world,” which can be seen as all at once cultural, economic, and political.<sup>36</sup> The challenge is that the socio-cultural factors related to globalization should not be ignored for the sake of economic gain nor used to promote paternalism while responding to community needs. Neither should it be used to subdue religion for the purpose of theoretical or philosophical unity in the name of tolerance. We must have faith that God is able to tear down “the dividing walls of hostility” between ourselves and other people (Eph. 2:14–16).

---

36. *Religions and the Powers of the Common Life*, volume I *God and Globalization* series, ed. Max L. Stackhouse with Peter J. Paris (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2000), 53–54.



IBM has around four-hundred thousand employees operating in over 170 countries. They claim that over 95 percent of banks all over the world depend on IBM services. One employee I know of who travels to cities all over the globe keeps several translations of Scripture, plus Google Translate on her phone, so she can stay ready to share Christ wherever she travels for work. A Florida mother and daughter started a company that has become global. It empowers women trapped in poverty and the sex trade by helping them start sustainable businesses. When the family travels overseas, they spend time in slums helping build homes and schools while engaging a missional business model. It *is* a small world after all.

### *Global Gospel Carriers in Global Cities*

When I began my church planting work in San Francisco in 1996, a local leader showed me his vision for San Francisco, the Silicon Valley, and beyond. He noted that we were known for sending all kinds of things out into the world: technology, innovation, the arts, fashion, and culture. His dream was that the Bay Area would become a sending base for global spiritual vitality, making Christ known throughout the world. Over the last few decades, we have seen some real movement to this end. One new church is starting a church in Singapore, another is on mission in Nepal, another is well connected to church planting work in a remote place in India. A Korean church is sponsoring a new Afghan church, as well as a church being started by a Caucasian surfer. A group of Latino church planting leaders from the Silicon Valley is going on mission in Africa in 2020, and multiethnic churches are being started with African American and Filipino lead planters. It is starting to happen. We are hoping this global/local way of thinking and acting becomes a way of life for all Christians.

My former neighbor in San Francisco was an anesthesiologist from Japan who came to the United States to study how methodologies from the two countries could learn from one another. He and his family invited my husband and I to visit them in Japan, so we did. He invited us to his parents' home, where immediately upon our arrival his mother served us tea and surprised me with a story of a time thirty years earlier when she and her husband were studying in Texas and a local Baptist women's group befriended her. She told me how years later she was thinking about that experience and realized that while she had a religion, they had a faith. "Would you tell me about your faith?" she asked. A Nigerian man moved to California to work and to reach Japanese with the gospel. He figured that since all three of the remaining mainland US Japantowns were in California, where people speak English, it would be more expedient to move to California where he could use his English than it would to move to Japan and learn Japanese. Japan is only around 1 percent Christian, but God has been at work over the decades.

### *Temporary Work Visa Holders*

A work permit is an employment letter issued by an employer to the employee who requests to enter a country for the purpose of work. This kind of permit is usually extended by a national or international company that hires professionals or other technical staff from outside of its own country. Different countries have different types of visa categories, including those for immigrants and others for non-immigrants, such as a work, tourist, or study visa. Along with a corresponding work permit, immigration visas allow people to acquire residence and to work for a longer period of time.

Each year, more than three-hundred thousand foreign workers come to Canada on temporary work permits. The easiest ways to get into Canada include:

1. Business or investor immigration programs where immigrants create or invest in a business.
2. [The Skilled Worker](#) and [Skilled Trades](#) programs, open to only a few professions that require a high degree of education and experience. Only three thousand people per year are allowed in under this program.
3. A few professions do not require visas to enter Canada to work, including artists and farmers.
4. Canadian companies can petition for university-educated persons to get a permit if they can convince the Department of Human Resources Development in Canada that no Canadian can do that job.

The Netherlands is looking for entrepreneurial workers to create new products and jobs, and that includes recruiting foreign innovators and scientists. Persons with start-up ideas can apply for one-year residencies. Australia and New Zealand allow stays of twelve months to US citizens between eighteen and thirty years old who come to their countries on easy-to-obtain work visas. Regulations in a number of other countries allow easy access to work visas, especially for young adults.

### *The United States: H1B Visa Holders and Green Card Petitions*

In the United States, there are many kinds of work visas, but the most prevalent and sought after is called the H1B visa. It is reserved for a special category of highly skilled workers. Every year, companies petition for these workers, and lotteries are drawn for potential

candidates. These workers stay for three to six years, and some can apply for green cards and permanent US residency. I include these here because even though green card holders are more permanent residents, they still have many influential relationships in their countries of origin. In 2019, the top green card petitions by country of origin are overwhelmingly from India (51,250). The next highest numbers are from China (8,597), and then South Korea (6,783) and Canada (3,413).

New York City had more green card petitions than any US city in 2019 (4,694) but second is College Station, Texas, with 4,256 applications from Cognizant Technology Solutions alone. College Station, home to Texas A&M University, is ninety miles northwest of Houston and eighty-seven miles northeast of Austin. According to [myvisajobs.com](https://myvisajobs.com), the city of Houston is the fourth largest H1B visa-requesting city in the United States with 12,721 requests. New York is number one with 40,413 requests, and San Francisco was number two with 18,359 requests. Chicago is now number three with 12,897.

Cognizant Technology was the largest corporate requester for green card petitions in 2018, with twenty-nine thousand positions made available. Cognizant is an IT service provider, an American multinational corporation with multiple US locations. The CEO founder was Sri Lankan-American Kumar Mahadeva (Tamil), who was succeeded in 2003 by Lakshmi Narayanan. Other large H1B visa requesting companies include Infosys (20,637), headquartered in Bengaluru, Karnataka, India; Tata Consultancy (13,536), headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India; IBM (11,286), headquartered in Armonk, New York; Capgemini (9,715), one of the few European IT companies, headquartered in Paris, France; and Tech

Mahindra (8,548), headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.<sup>37</sup> Other largest H1B visa requesters with roots in India include Wipro, headquartered in Bengaluru, India; Microsoft (Satya Narayana Nadella is the CEO); HCL, headquartered in Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India; DeLoitte Consulting, headquartered in London with Punit Renjen as CEO. It was reported in 2017 that 37 percent of all H1B visa holders in the United States work at just twenty companies.<sup>38</sup> Currently, the largest single location H1B visa employers and their locations are Redmond, Washington, headquarters for Microsoft (3,830 requests for 2019), Mountain View, California (home to Google (3,760 requests for 2019), and Seattle, Washington, home to Amazon (3,011 requests for 2019).<sup>39</sup>

### *What Does This Mean?*

India is said to have the most unreached people groups—more than seven thousand—of any country in the world. Only 2.3 percent identify as Christian, and most of the Christian movements in India have happened among poor people and in more tribal areas. It may be that the large numbers of temporary visa card holders in the United States offers a critical opportunity for an evangelistic church planting movement among upwardly mobile Indians. Christians who are employed at some of the above companies may learn how to reach out and befriend newcomers from India or China. Perhaps the Christian CEO of VMWare in Palo Alto, California—with 676 H1B visa holder requests in 2019 alone—will ask Christian friends to sponsor a Bay

---

37. This is all 2019 data from [myvisajobs.com](https://myvisajobs.com).

38. Grace Donnelly “37% Of H-1B Visa Holders Work At These 20 Companies,” *Fortune*, August 3, 2017, <https://fortune.com/2017/08/03/companies-h1b-visa-holders/>.

39. See [myvisajobs.com](https://myvisajobs.com).

Area tour for newly arriving workers and their families, or assistance helping them navigate the public school or health care systems. Maybe invite a work friend from somewhere else in the world over for Thanksgiving, Easter, Christmas, or just because! What can you do?

Additionally, according to a 2010 study by the Pew Research Center, it is estimated that while 2.3 percent of India's population identified as Christian, 19 percent of the emigrant population leaving the country were Christians. Half of those leaving India emigrate to one of three countries: the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, or the United States. This means there are many Indian Christians called to serve, called to plant churches, and even called to help lead US citizens to Christ. Just a few days ago, an Indian pastor in the Silicon Valley told me he was called to pray for and reach out to all kinds of people without Christ in the United States. Two brothers I know from Hyderabad, plus a few of their friends (mostly H1B visa holders), have started a Friday-night pan-Indian worship service. Their worship team recently served as back up for a boy-band from India that drew hundreds to worship in Hindi.

### *Nomads and Sojourners as Kingdom Carriers*

In a 2018 book I coauthored, entitled *City Shaped Churches*, I referred to four types of relationships church planters have to their communities. They are natives (indigenous planters), nomads (like the apostle Paul—always on the move, starting something and moving on), sojourners (staying a few years and raising up another leader before moving on), and settlers (move to a place and settle down).<sup>40</sup> We need to recognize the role and value of the nomads and sojourners. There are kinds of jobs—entertainment industry, organic farming, hospitality industry

---

40. Linda Bergquist and Michael Crane, *City Shaped Churches: Planting Churches in a Global Era* (Skyforest, CA: Urban Loft Publishers, 2018), chapt. 3.

work, language teaching, *au pair* (nanny) work, backpacker jobs—that would allow an evangelistic-type leader to penetrate a community with the gospel. This does not seem to be as common of a way to plant in the West as it is in other places in the world. Why not?

## Conclusion

In the first pages of this eBook, we claimed that at the core of what we believe about work is the acknowledgment that the people of God have already been sent and strategically placed by Jesus.

As we conclude the eBook, I close with a prayer from Brad Brisco, director of Bivocational Church Planting for the North American Mission Board. Brad calls this, “Prayer for the Workplace”:

*Heavenly Father, in your divine and gracious providence you have presently placed me in my workplace. It is my heart’s desire that I glorify you in and through my work today. May I do my work well, and may my mind be renewed as I meditate on the truths of your Word. Draw me near to you. Lord Jesus, let my workplace be a place of discipleship where I am learning from you as I work. As I walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, may the character qualities of Christlikeness increasingly be evident in my life. Lord, use my life and my work to further your redemptive purposes in the world and to enhance the common good. Amen.*<sup>41</sup>

---

41. Brad Brisco, *Covocational Church Planting*, 129.

## About the Author

**LINDA BERGQUIST** has been involved in church planting for forty years as a catalyst, mentor, and midwife for healthy baby churches. She has coauthored *Church Turned Inside Out*, *The Wholehearted Church Planter*, and *Planting City Shaped Churches*, as well as the Exponential eBook *The Great Commission and the Rest of Creation*. She and her husband, Eric, live in San Francisco, where she is a catalyst for the Send Network of the North American Mission Board.