

# Work and Transforming the City

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Good morning, Watermark. That was good. I'm impressed. My name is Eric, for those of you who don't know me. I'm one of the guys on staff here. I'm the community director, which means that I oversee the kids' ministry, youth ministry, some community group stuff, and some men's group stuff.

So I'm very excited to be sharing with you today from God's Word. We're going to be wrapping up our study on faith and work today. And if you've been with us all along, or if you haven't, we've been defining work as anything you do that's not leisure, which means even if you don't have a traditional job, you still have work.

If you're a stay-at-home mom, your work is running the house and taking care of the kids. If you're a student, your work is going to school, because that is definitely not leisure, right? And what we've seen throughout this study is that God created work, and he created it good.

He gave it to us as a way of living in his image, because he is a God who works. He gave it to us as a tool to be able to serve one another. And yet we rebelled and sinned against him.

And as a result of our rebellion, work has become fruitless. Work has become toil. Work has become less than what it was supposed to be. And yet we have a tendency to idolize our work and try to seek things from it that we should only be getting from God and turn it into more than it was intended to be.

[ 1 : 3 1 ] And so there's this picture of what work was supposed to be. There's this problem with work. And yet there's, in the story of the Bible, we find hope.

And we find this story of God coming and working to redeem all things, including work, so that if we're Christians, we now have this opportunity to live in the midst of a broken world and to work in a way that's distinctive, that seeks to serve others and love our city through our work, even though we live in the midst of this broken world.

And today we're going to look at God's call for us to use our work as a way of seeking the transformation of the city around us. And what we're going to see is that God has called us to pursue the loving transformation of our city through our work, but we can only do that through the transforming power of Jesus Christ in our lives.

And we're going to have sort of three steps to this process. First, our command to love the city and seek its welfare. Second, our problem, why we don't and can't do this.

And third, our solution, how Jesus empowers us to live this way through the gospel. Everyone with me so far? So we're starting off with our command to love the city and seek its welfare.

[ 2 : 5 1 ] If you look at the passage today, the passage in Jeremiah 29 that Chris and Justin just read is a letter. Now, I'm sure we all know with letters, the context of a letter is very important.

A letter that says, Dear John, usually means, uh-oh, something's gone wrong in a relationship, right? And so understanding the background of what's going on is going to help us understand the message that's trying to be conveyed.

And what's going on in this passage is Israel is God's chosen people. He's set them apart for a long time. He's given them his special commandments and made them his special people.

He's promised to bless them, and yet they've disobeyed and rebelled over and over and over again. And finally, God says, I need to get your attention.

I'm sending you into exile. And the reigning world superpower of the day, a country called Babylon, comes in, lays siege to Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, and then comes through, kills a bunch of the Israelites, destroys their homes, destroys their temple, and then carries off the survivors to live in Babylon.

[ 4 : 03 ] Not necessarily the people that you would choose as your neighbors if you had a choice, and yet these people don't have a choice, so they are their neighbors now. And the exiles in Babylon got a pretty lenient life as far as exiles go.

Basically, the rule was, come to our city, adopt our culture. You can have any jobs that you want as long as you're qualified for them. The two rules are, you have to adopt our culture, and you can't go back to your home.

But other than that, you can live freely, roam the city, interact with different people. So, it's pretty lenient as far as exile goes. And even a lot of the Israelite youth were given top-of-the-line education and great jobs within the government.

So, it could have been a lot worse, but still, you're away from home, surrounded by the people who killed your family and tore down your house. So, it could be better, too. And God has this letter sent to the Israelites to tell them how they're supposed to live during this time of exile, because a lot of them are just in denial.

They have these false prophets coming and saying, Hey, guys, don't worry. God's going to set you free in two years. You're going to go back home. Everything's going to be just like new. And God sends this letter to say, No, that's not true.

[ 5 : 22 ] You're here for the long haul. And here's what I want you to do in the meantime while you're here. And what he says is, I want you to live normal lives that seek the welfare of your city.

Pretty simple, right? If you look at the letter, he says, Build houses and live in them. It's one of the most simple, basic things that we do in human life. But, what are you doing when you build a house and live in it?

You're making a major financial investment that's tying you to the city. And God's saying to Israel, I want you to settle down in this city in such a way that your financial future is tied to the financial future of this city of Babylon.

That also allows you to be hospitable to other strangers who come into this city. He says, Plant gardens and eat their produce. Simple, everyday things of life.

You have to eat. Do it so that you can stay alive. Take wives and have sons and daughters. Take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage that they may bear sons and daughters.

[ 6 : 30 ] Multiply there and do not decrease. It's interesting. They're in the midst of this land that is opposed to God, that is torn down the temple where God is worshipped, that's doing everything they can to turn the Israelites away from God.

And God says, I want you to have kids there. I don't know if you've ever had one of these conversations where you're talking to someone and they're like, the world is such a messed up place, I can't imagine ever bringing kids into this world.

Their world was probably worse. And God says, I want you to bring kids into this world. Why? Because I have a plan for you in the future.

And I have a promise for you that I'm going to restore things. But for you guys to be able to enjoy and appreciate this restoration that I'm bringing, there has to be people still alive.

And so actually, every kid that the Israelites had while they were in exile was a sign of their faith, that one day God would restore things to the way they were supposed to be.

[ 7 : 35 ] One day God's going to come back and he's going to set things right. Maybe not in my lifetime, maybe not in my kid's lifetime, maybe it's going to be my grandkids. But someday God is going to come back and he's going to set things right.

And so I'm going to have kids and I'm going to have them get married so that they can have kids because we believe that one day God's going to come, God's going to put an end to this exile and God's going to restore us to the life that he's promised to us all along.

He says, seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile. Interesting, God says he has sent them into exile.

This isn't an accident. This isn't just karma coming back at them. No, this is God's plan for them to be in exile, which I don't know about you, but if I'm reading this letter and I'm in that situation, I'd be a little bit angry at God, I think.

Anyone else? But he says, seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile. If I'm in that situation, the last thing I want to do is seek the welfare of that city.

[ 8 : 48 ] They've killed my family and friends. They have torn down my house. They have dragged me hundreds or thousands of miles away from the area that I have known as home my entire life.

I want to see them suffer. I want to see them destroyed. And yet God says, seek their welfare.

Actually, interesting, the word welfare here, if anyone's ever done any study of Hebrew, which I'm guessing is not most of you, but this is a very famous Hebrew word that a lot of you have probably heard, the word shalom.

Anyone heard that word before? Typically, it's translated as like peace, but it means so much more than what we think of as peace. We think of peace and we think, oh, no violence. But shalom means, yes, no violence, but also this actual prosperity and a presence of the good.

And that's the word that's translated as welfare here. And God says, I want you to seek this comprehensive well-being of the city that has murdered your families.

[ 9 : 52 ] I want you to seek this comprehensive well-being of the city that destroyed your homes and dragged you away into exile. And he tells them that they should live counter-cultural lives that seek to transform the city where they are living.

And not only should they live these lives, but he says, pray to God on their behalf. Because in the city's welfare, you will find their welfare. You try and do your best to make the city a great place to live and then beg God to make the city a great place to live.

And why? Because in this city's welfare, you will find your welfare. God says, for the next, he tells them later, 70 years, your future is tied to the future of this city.

If it prospers, you will prosper with it. If it suffers, you will suffer with it. And so even though in your heart, you want revenge at these guys, you want to get them back for all the pain that they've caused to you, you doing that is just going to make things worse for you because your future is tied to their future.

If you want to prosper and grow as an individual, you need to seek the prosperity and growth of the city where you're living right now. And if Israel obeyed God perfectly in these commandments, they would be living counter-cultural lives that couldn't help but point the world around them towards God.

[ 11 : 18 ] Because the reality is that most exiles in Babylon did one of two things. One, there's a group that avoided any interaction with the city. They said, we can't let it corrupt us.

We have to stay away. And they never had a voice for speaking into the city because they never knew anyone in the city or were involved in the life of the city. The other group assimilated completely into the life of the city.

They got involved. They got the top jobs. Everything's going good for them. But in the process, they lost anything that was unique or distinctive about them. And so even though they were very involved in the life of the city, they couldn't actually speak into the life of the city because there was nothing distinctive about them for them to share that would change or impact things.

And God says to Israel, I want you to be a third way. I want you to meaningfully engage this city, build relationships, take important jobs, do things that contribute to the growth of the city, but do it in a way so that you don't lose your distinctiveness.

Do it in a way that seeks the welfare of the city rather than just the acceptance of the city. Do it in a way that seeks this comprehensive well-being of the place where you are living?

[ 12 : 35 ] And if we think about it, this passage has a lot to say to us today about the way that we approach our work. Number one, God wants our work to be a blessing to the world around us even if that world is violently opposed to him.

Think about it. The Israelites are living in a world that just murdered their families and tore down the temple where they worshipped God. And God says, I want you to seek their welfare. If that's true for Babylon, how much more true is it for Hong Kong?

I know some people who are very opposed to the gospel here. I've never met someone here, as far as I know, I could have met them and they just didn't share this with me, who murdered someone because of how opposed they are to Christianity.

I've never, again, as far as I know, met someone in Hong Kong who like tore down a church because they were opposed to what that church was teaching. The people in Babylon had done those things and God says, I want you to seek their welfare.

And if he wants them, Israel, to seek their welfare, how much more does he want us to seek Hong Kong's welfare through the work that we do? Number two, we should pursue excellence in our work, not because the people we work for are worthy, but because we work for God and he is worthy.

[ 13 : 52 ] Again, someone murders your family, you don't want to work well for them. You want to be slothful and lazy and maybe stab them in the back when they turn around.

And yet, God tells Israel, do your best to work hard and do a good job so that your city can prosper because it's God's worthiness, not Babylon's worthiness or Hong Kong's worthiness that determines how we should work.

Number three, God has designed the fabric of the universe in such a way that his people prosper when they make the world around them prosper. You know, if I was in Babylon and I received this command from God that he wants me to make the city around me prosper, I would be angry about that.

I would be plotting, I'd have like a chart in my mind of like damage to me versus damage to Babylon and I would have like a scatter plot of how I can inflict the most damage on Babylon with the least damage to myself.

Most of the scenarios probably end up with me being killed if I'm caught but I would try and find one that can inflict maximum damage without resulting in my death so that I can do more and more of these things because I would hate them because you hate people who kill your family typically.

[ 15 : 13 ] And God says, I want you to seek their welfare. I want you to make them prosper. Don't suffer so that you can get revenge. Seek their prosperity so that you can grow and you can prosper because as someone who lives inside this city, your welfare is tied to the welfare of the city in every way.

Economically, if the city prospers, there's more jobs so that you can stay employed and prosper. Ecologically, if the city cleans up its pollution, you have cleaner air to breathe.

Culturally, if the city is thriving, you are able to be exposed to more culture and grow more as an individual. Spiritually, imagine in Hong Kong if 7 million people became Christians, how that would impact your faith.

On every level, emotionally, if the city is full of depressed people, that's going to impact you one way. If the city is full of joyful people, that's going to impact you another way. And God says, your future is tied to the future of the city that you live in.

And if you care about your own future, whether you're a Christian or not, you should seek the prosperity of the city where you live. You know, I sometimes struggle with this idea. I have a news flash for you if you didn't know this already.

[ 16 : 30 ] Working in a church is not the best way to get rich and make your millions. Despite that, I try and be good with budgeting and set aside a little money at the end of every month, but there's no way I could ever dream of buying a house in Hong Kong.

But sometimes I have this thought that maybe after a few years of saving and saving and saving, there will be a housing crash in Hong Kong. And the property prices will drop so low that we could afford a down payment and this will be fantastic.

And I believe this lie in that moment that my welfare lies in the disaster and destruction of Hong Kong. But again, it's a lie because what happens if Hong Kong has a housing crisis, Hong Kong is going to have a wider financial crisis, which means people start losing their jobs, which means donations to the church go way down, which means I might not have a job anymore.

And so, even if I can afford a down payment on a house, I can't afford any payments after that down payment. I'm just going to lose the house and the down payment. And then on top of that, people are going to lose out on opportunities to hear the gospel because the church just won't be able to do as much to reach out to the people around them.

And so, even in those moments when I believe this, it's a lie. The truth is that my well-being is tied to the well-being of the city that I live in. And God has designed the fabric of the universe in that way so that if we care about our own futures, we should be seeking the well-being of the city that we are living in.

[ 18 : 08 ] And fourth, the way that this should impact, the way that we approach our work right now is especially, this one is especially for Christians, we should engage our city meaningfully yet retain our distinctiveness as Christians so that we can point the city towards our unique God.

We shouldn't avoid the city, we should engage it, but we shouldn't assimilate to the city, we should stay distinct so that we have something meaningful and distinct to contribute to the city, to contribute to its well-being.

And so, we see what the passage says, we see what we should do in response to that, everything's good, sermon's over, we all understand it, we can go home, right? Not quite. Because we have a problem.

Point number two, our problem, we don't do this, or at least I don't do this, and I think I'm normal. On a daily basis, I fail to do this.

And it's not just that, like, I don't put in enough effort, it's that no matter how much effort I put in, I'm incapable of loving my city in this way. And all of us are true.

[ 19 : 17 ] It's not just that we don't do this, it's that we can't do this. Because our hearts are broken. Last week, Chris talked about work as idolatry, and said that work has a tendency to become an idol in our lives.

Idol not in the sense of like a statue that we bow down to, but an idol in the sense of we seek our meaning and purpose in life at an ultimate level from our work.

And we elevate our work to a position in our life higher than God because of what we're seeking from our work. And so we'll seek things like status, power, comfort, security, and believe that we can find those on an ultimate level from our work and what we do.

And because of that, we're willing to exploit others and take advantage of others in our work to hold on to our grasp of those things. And so, what we do is we seek our own welfare at the expense of the welfare of our city around us.

on a practical basis. What does this look like? It means I give an assignment to someone who's working for me at the office and I come in later to check on them and they haven't done it yet.

[ 20 : 30 ] And rather than seeking to understand why they haven't done it yet, I blow up at them and get angry because them not doing what I told them to do cuts into my idol of power and tears away at my identity and so I need to lash out at them rather than seek to love them.

Maybe it looks like a supervisor in an office making a mistake and because they care so much about the prestige of their position and the comfort they can get from their paycheck that they blame a subordinate for that mistake and let the subordinate get fired in their place because they hold on to these idols of status and comfort.

They're willing to exploit those who work for them in order to hold on to those things. Maybe it's the new graduate. We just celebrated our new graduates so we should pick on them a little.

The new graduate who gets into their first job out of university and realizes no one appreciates me here. I'm going to switch to a new job. After a couple months of the new job realizes no one appreciates them there either maybe because they're 22 and have no work experience in the real world.

They say I need to jump to another new job and another new job and another new job and they never settle down and plant themselves and develop the relationship somewhere so that they can make a difference because they're so concerned about having a status and being recognized and appreciated that they just jump around from place to place to place because they need to find that place that's going to appreciate them and give them the status they feel they deserve.

[ 22 : 06 ] Every single one of us in some way idolizes our work and seeks to get meaning an identity from it and as long as our hope is built on our own advancement on our own promotion on our own status power security comfort fill in the blank with whatever it is for you we will always exploit others to get these things rather than love others sacrificially and seek to work in a way that transforms the city and seeks its welfare.

As long as our hearts are set on these things rather than on God we will always exploit others through our work rather than seeking to transform the city through our work and seeking the welfare of the city through our work.

All of our hearts are broken. All of us idolize our work in some way shape or form and because of that all of us end up exploiting others rather than seeking the welfare and transformation of our city through our work.

And the harder we try to fix it the more messed up it gets. But there's a solution. The solution is that Jesus empowers us to live the way that we're commanded to in this passage through the gospel.

See the Bible is in one sense a story of two cities. The Bible says that in the beginning God created Adam and Eve and he placed them in a garden and he told them to cultivate it to develop it, to make it grow into something more than a garden, maybe a city.

[ 23 : 46 ] And for a time Adam and Eve lived in this garden and it was wonderful, it was peaceful and they had all these things that we crave, that power, status, security, comfort, they had it perfectly because they were in this perfect relationship with God where they were designed to get all these things.

But then they rebelled, they disobeyed, they ate the fruit that God told them not to, and brokenness into the world. They were kicked out of this garden that was going to become a city of God and moved into this fallen, broken world.

And in this fallen, broken world, we still have this desire to get back to that original city that we were created for. That's the source of our idolatry.

we crave that security that we were created to have in God. But because we're broken, we seek it in other places. We crave that comfort that's supposed to come from God's presence alone, but because our hearts are broken, we seek it through the things we can buy with our paycheck.

We crave all these things, we pursue them through our jobs and through our idols. And every time we turn to these idols, rather than fulfilling our desires, they make life worse for us by pulling us further and further from who we were created to be.

[ 25 : 11 ] Think about it. We pursue this comfort through the things that we can have. So we buy more stuff and we save more money. And the more stuff we buy and the more money we have, the more aware we are of how easily we can lose it all.

So we become stressed and anxious about what if I do lose it? We believe that security and status come from having a higher position in the company, so we work our way up the corporate ladder, but the higher we get, the more concerned we are of who will I be if I don't have this job anymore?

So we feel this need to defend ourselves and it's us against the world and we become more and more isolated from the people around us. Our idols promise us life and they give us nothing but anxiety, stress, isolation, and death.

And our best desires leave us further and further from where we're trying to get. But the good news is that when Adam and Eve sinned and were kicked out of the garden, God did not abandon this city.

No, the story of the Bible says in the last two chapters of the last book, the book of Revelation, that God has been working on this city, that one day God's going to send this city back to his people.

[ 26 : 31 ] It's called the new Jerusalem, the new heavens and the new earth. And the last two chapters of the Bible describe this incredible beauty and incredible joy that's going to exist in this city.

And it's promised to his people and yet we still have this problem of sin that keeps us from getting in there. And so the amazing news of the gospel is that in Jesus, God himself steps down to earth.

He becomes an exile for us. That in Jesus, God suffers and pays the punishment that each of us deserves for our sin.

He bears our punishment himself so that we can be given access to this new city of God. Jesus perfectly embodies every command in Jeremiah chapter 29 on our behalf.

God bless. He is the ultimate one who seeks the welfare of his city and his people through great sacrificial loss to himself. And it's only when we properly understand the amazing gift that we've been given through Jesus and the way that he loved us sacrificially that we will ever start to love our city in the way that we are called to in this passage.

[ 27 : 49 ] You know, if anyone here is a fan of Les Miserables, you know that John Valjean was a terrible man until he received grace when he was given the candlesticks. And yet after that, that receiving grace totally transformed his life and turned him into someone who sought to transform the cities where he lived and make them better places for everyone.

That's a picture of what happens to us when we understand the amazing gift that we've been given through Jesus. And so if you continue down in this passage, verse 11, God tells Israel, I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

That promise was true for Israel and it was intended to inspire them to love the city where they were living, knowing that in the future God would restore them to their home.

And this promise is also true for us, that God has plans to give us a future and a hope. And that promise from him is intended to give us the strength that we need to love the city around us today.

And it doesn't start by us trying harder to do better, pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps. It starts with turning to him. He says in verse 13, you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

[ 29 : 09 ] That's where this process starts. So I want to take a couple minutes to dream with you about what this can look like sort of at an on-the- ground level in our real-life world in Hong Kong.

There's a pastor in New York, Timothy Keller. He has a book called Every Good Endeavor about faith and work. I think we have some copies for it, copies of it for sale outside. In the intro to that book, he goes through a number of ways that we can seek to transform the world around us through our work.

I want to just share a couple of these with you and then we'll look more like practically to specific situations. This is going to be a quick list, so if you're taking notes, jot down quick.

He says we can use our work to further social justice in the world. In our jobs, we can support others in the Christian community through the trials they face at work and by doing this, stick out as a countercultural community for the world around us to see.

We can use the relationships we build through our work as opportunities to share the gospel with non-Christians. we can recognize the dignity of all work and do any job, even the ones that society would label as menial, with an attitude of joy because we know that we are being used by God to provide for the needs of the others in our world.

[ 30 : 26 ] We can use our work to help shape and create a culture that honors God and enables people to thrive. We can work to make lots of money so that we can be really generous and give it away, not just to build our own big houses, but for generosity's sake.

And on a tangible level, what do these things look like? Let's say you're a manager or a boss in an office. How can you use your influence to shape a culture of welfare and thriving within your office?

Here's one idea, possibility, that hopefully can help you dream a little bit. Hong Kong is not known for having a good work-life balance. I think that might be an understatement a bit.

But there's this society and expectation of constant work, and if the boss is sending emails at 3 a.m., there's an expectation that the employees are checking emails at 3 a.m. How is the culture that you as a manager or a boss are setting for your people, enabling them to thrive when it comes to adequate amounts of rest and a good work-life balance?

And how can you use your position of influence in the company to help shape that into a healthier work-life balance so that your people can thrive?

[ 31 : 43 ] Maybe you're new in the office, and you're like, well, I don't have that power. That's true. At this point in your career, you don't. But one of the things I've seen is that the further up the corporate ladder you get, the more and more isolated it can feel.



And the new people, the entry-level jobs and companies oftentimes are the ones who are more likely to just go out for drinks together after work to socialize for a number of reasons. Less responsibility at work and probably no kids, less responsibility in other areas in life.

Having that group around you that's willing to actually spend time together gives you amazing opportunities to get to know the people you work with, to build relationships, and to impact people's lives on an individual level.

You know, when we think of culture, we typically think of this big thing, but in reality, there's not necessarily one big thing called culture. There's a number of micro-cultures in the world.

And we each have an opportunity to impact the micro-cultures that God has placed us in. So as an entry-level person in your office, maybe your micro-culture that you can impact is with other entry-level people.

[ 32 : 56 ] Or maybe it's in the way that you treat your boss. What if we're students and we're not even in the workplace yet? You know, again, Hong Kong is a very me-centered place, especially when it comes to school, because I'm in school so that I can get the best grades, so I can go to the top university and or grad school and then get the top job, hopefully in investment banking, maybe as a doctor or a lawyer, but I need to make my millions and school is my way to do it.

But what if we learn to see our studies as not just a way of impacting our own futures, but of impacting the world around us? What if algebra isn't just something to learn for a test, but a tool that God gives you that you could use to tutor an inner-city student who needs to learn for their future?

What if poetry isn't just something to analyze and memorize for exams, but it's a tool that God gives to you to create beauty and bring hope to a broken world around you?

What if studying history isn't just something we do because we have to at school, but what if we learn to see it as an invitation from God to step into the story of history and impact the future to create a better city for the people around us, especially those who are typically overlooked by society?

No matter where you are, whether you're in a management position, entry level, a student, a homemaker, unemployed, anywhere else, God has placed each of us in the exact place that he has us now because he has a contribution that he wants us to make for the transformation and welfare of our city that we are uniquely equipped to make based on where we are right now.

[ 34 : 41 ] And even the small things we do can make a huge difference. Something like learning the name of the security guard in your building or talking to the secretary at your office gives dignity to people who are normally overlooked by society and can go a huge long way towards transforming and impacting the culture.

And I know me as a church worker standing up here and just brainstorming is one thing, but seeing it at work in everyday life is something different. So I have my friend Edmund Lee.

He's somewhere back there. He's going to come up and share with us briefly about what this has looked like in his life and how God has used him to seek the welfare and transformation of the city through his job.

So welcome Edmund. No chair today. Sorry. You can sit on the stage if you want. Okay. So can you introduce yourself to us and just tell us what your job is?

Can you guys hear me? Yeah? Okay. Well, it won't be recorded if you don't talk into the mic. Okay. Hello, testing. So I work in... My name's Edmund. I work in education, which is really just a more pretentious way of saying I'm a teacher.

[ 35 : 55 ] Yeah. Yeah. And so what is your job involved or what will you be doing tomorrow morning when you go into the office? Hopefully teaching. Hopefully we'll do some teaching. It does include a lot of lesson planning.

We have to mark homework. We have to make the kids engage and have fun in their education and wants to learn. But really it's about creating a safe place to steward God's children and hopefully turn underdeveloped, well, underdeveloped people into hopefully people sometime.

Yeah. That's essentially what it is. All right. And you weren't always a teacher, right? So what made you get into teaching? So, yes, I wasn't always a teacher. I guess what got me into teaching was talking to students and talking to people in Hong Kong.

We tell people that they're important. We tell people that they're loved, that what they have to say is important. We say that people have dignity. We say that people have, well, they're valued.

But essentially we put them in a system where if they don't get good academic grades, they're not important. Where if they don't have certain skill sets, people won't care about what they have to say.

[ 37 : 14 ] If they're not successful academically, they're going to fail in life. We put kids in a system in Hong Kong especially where we say education is so important to you and then we fail 82% of them because only 18% will get to university.

And we read things like why is Hong Kong the most unhappy place in Asia really. And it's not surprising. So for me, when I got into education, it was about what does it look like to show people that they have dignity, that they're dearly loved by God, that they're valued.

What does it look like to become a steward of people that helps them go into community thinking that everyone is valuable? And so how does your faith change the way that you view your job?

Sorry, I lost my place. Well, oh, there we go. Okay. It's actually really difficult.

I think the hardest part about being a teacher is actually working with kids when they don't want to be helped. They look at you like you're the monster chasing after them for their homework, for their tests.

[ 38 : 22 ] You tell them to do the homework. They don't do it. And then you give them a C and then they ask why they don't have an A. And these are conversations you have every single day. But being Christian gives me perspective.

It helps remind me that, well, that they're sinners, really. It helps remind me that I myself am a sinner that was chosen by God, that was used by God.

And at the same time, students are people who just don't know Christ yet. They're people who are learning what their value is. They're trying to figure out life, and we all know that it's difficult.

They're trying to figure out where their value is, and then they're being told by teachers and parents that it's in academics. So when I look at them, I see people who need to learn what their value is.

And it gives me perspective. It gives me a little more patience, a little more grace in how I deal with them and a little more compassion, hopefully, because it's pretty important.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. All right.

[ 39 : 23 ] And can you share a story of a way that God has used your work to bring about the welfare or transformation of Hong Kong in a big or small way? Yes. That's good.

Be in trouble if he said no. I hope so. Well, like I said, the way I see teaching, it's about giving people value. To be honest, it's really, really difficult as a teacher to see the impact of your work because you never know how your students are going to turn out.

You never know if what you see is getting through to them, and most of the time it feels like it does, and then the next day it's just completely the opposite. So when I look at teaching, I don't know how much I'm impacting them, but I can tell you what my students have done for me, myself.

How, when I see them, how excited I am and how blessed I feel to know that they love people. How amazing it is to see students who are top students who are willing to cut timeouts to help others.

How amazing it is to see people learn empathy and help people who are in need. They see a friend who is alone, sitting by themselves, feeling undervalued, I guess, and talking to them.

[ 40 : 39 ] So for me, when I look at that, I get excited to see how some of these students who are able to see a model of what it means to be loved and Christian, what they would do. So I don't know if I have impact right now, but hopefully long term I can see my students having a much greater impact than I could ever have.

All right. I kind of want to try and experiment. It could go terribly wrong, and we didn't plan this. But I know that there are people here who are here today because they or someone close to them had Edmund as a teacher.

And I think it would be cool if the church could see a little picture of how God has worked through Edmund to transform even this church. So if you're here today because you had Edmund as a teacher, could you stand up or someone close to you?

Okay. And then one more step. If you're here today because of them and the influence that they've had on your life, can you also stand up? Thank you. Thank you.

So I think these guys are an awesome reminder to us that even when we don't see necessarily the difference that our work is making, that God is definitely working through us and using us for the transformation of our city.

[ 41 : 57 ] And that, again, like we discussed today, it doesn't start with us just trying harder and doing better, but with us—yeah, sorry, you can sit down. It doesn't start with us just trying harder to do better, but with us learning to trust in God, learning to rely on the gospel, learning to understand how he's loved us through Jesus, and then living out of that understanding and seeking to love our city in that way.

So one last question for you. How can we pray for you? Well, one of the verses you mentioned earlier really hit me. I've always thought about what does it mean to continue to be like David, to be a man after God's own hearts.

And so I guess for me it's always keeping perspective to be a man after God's own hearts. What does it look like to be undignified so that God can be magnified? And what does it mean to expect great things from God and attempt great things for God?

So for me it's just to be faithful to all three of those things, to be a man after God's own hearts in a system that may overlook it, to continue to rely on him.

All right. So if you're here and you're an educator, we also want to pray for you so you can stand up. Or if you're a student also in that education field or someone who works with students, can we get you to stand up so we can also pray for you?

[ 43 : 19 ] So teachers, students, educators, the youth should all be standing now. Yes, Sunday school teachers, that too.

All right. Let's pray. God, we thank you for all the people that you've brought to us who are somehow connected to this field of education or impacting the next generation or being impacted by those who have gone before us.

And we thank you for the opportunities that you've given to all of us to impact our city and to seek the welfare and transformation of the world around us. I pray that we would be a people who seek you, who, like Edmund says, seek to be people of integrity, to be people after your own heart, who love you, who desire to love the city because we've been loved by you first.

I pray that we would be a church that is known as a people who love the people around us, who seek the welfare of our city, who seek for your name to be honored through our lives.

God, you're awesome. You're great. We thank you for the gospel. We pray that you'd be with each of us as we go to work tomorrow, that you'd empower us to love the people around us, to seek their welfare, and to work not just for our human bosses, but mostly, first and foremost, for you.

[ 44 : 46 ] And in Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.