

Hey, good morning! So glad you're here with us this morning. My name is John, I'm the worship pastor here and part of our Teaching Team.

We've been in this series, Bucket List, for the month of January and I'm excited to continue our conversation here today.

In light of the millions and millions of women across the globe that have gathered to MARCH and to stand up for their rights, and empower one another, I just want to say how encouraging it is to be a part of a community that honors women in leadership, and gives equal opportunity to serve and lead... In a traditionally misogynistic organization, like the Church, it's one of the things I love most about THIS CHURCH. So, if you're new, and you happen to be a woman, I just want you to know that this community will be a place for you to grow and "sky's the limit." We have no discrimination in our leadership. (And men, you're welcome here as well.)

SO this series... How many people here have a "bucket list"? A list of things you want to do or see or experience before you "kick the bucket"? That's what this series is sort of born out of... Wanting to make 2017 the best year yet, and check things off our Bucket Lists...

- But how do you tackle your bucket list when... your bucket is full of holes?

In this series, we're learning how to plug the holes in our lives that constantly drain us, and how to put into practice spiritual disciplines that can radically transform us.

Last week Kelly talked to us about "Putting a cork in it"... Determining the things that constantly drain us and then **DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT**. We gave out little corks as reminders to "Put a cork in it" and I've seen a few of you posting pictures online with that hashtag... Awesome to see you taking action.

And this week, we're talking about "Work & Celebration."

The discipline of work and the discipline of celebration. (One of these, I'm sure, comes more naturally to us than the other). We're going to be talking about the Theology of Work, understanding that God wants us working, whatever our circumstances are, and we're going to be talking about the Discipline of Celebration, and the JOY that God extends to us daily, if we just have the ability to receive it.

The discipline of work and the discipline of celebration.

I'm going to put up a slide here in a minute and I want you to read all 4 options, and pay attention to the one that sticks out to you... I want to see if God might speak specifically (and individually) to us this morning.

- STOP WORKING SO MUCH:
- WORK MORE:
- STOP PARTYING SO MUCH:
- PARTY MORE:

Here's what's really unique about this rhythm we're discussing... Depending on our upbringing, what our parents valued, what we learned to love: We all have natural slants toward either over-working, or over-partying... Or under-working and under-partying.

Some of us, like myself, tend to over-work. We have it in our minds that to be LOVED or ACCEPTED, we have to be productive or successful. This was probably instilled in me by my father, who had an incredible work-ethic (*and still does, which makes the thought of retiring rather unsettling*), and a big part of it was intentional. I'm sure he never considered what happens when the "work hard!" pendulum swings TOO far, which is always what's at stake for me.

Some of you identify with this. How many of you answered work emails over Christmas break? Just couldn't stay away... How many of you ended 2016 still having vacation time you could've taken?

Did you know that 55% of American workers don't take all their paid vacation? There was a study done last summer that showed American workers gave up 658 million unused vacation days... It totaled \$61 billion dollars in forfeited benefits.

Some of us work too hard. And our hard work-ethic can actually lead to sin. (Sidestepping God's plan for our lives) It can lead to cutting corners, being dishonest with co-workers, being absent to our children, stress leading to over-drinking or self-medicating in other ways... Working hard is good, until it's not. Some of us saw this slide and immediately felt convicted when you saw "STOP WORKING SO MUCH."

And before we move forward, I want to share the key to unlock all of this: Our identities are not found in our work; nor are they found in our celebration.

From the very beginning, God's plan was for us to work.

*Genesis 2:15 NLT: The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it.*  
*Genesis 2:15 ESV: ...God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it.*

Work is good. It brings us a sense of purpose, like we're making a difference. It brings us satisfaction at the end of the day. It allows us to participate in the provision that God brings us and our families.

But, as with anything, when we turn it into an IDOL... And we begin worshipping it... God's blessing is withdrawn, and we're left with a cheap, spray-painted Golden calf.

Some of you need to hear this today: STOP WORKING SO MUCH. Your identity is not found in your work. Your children need YOU more than they need their college tuition paid in full. Your children need you.

Here's how our identity works: Our ego grabs the nearest, most impressive part our lives, and it tries to suction itself to it. It tries to super-glue itself to something that will bring recognition; esteem; value to our lives... Our ego is looking for meaning.

So, if we're a doctor, that's what we are. We're a doctor. If I'm a pastor (by profession), I'm a pastor. Those titles become our identities. So you're a banker, or a web developer, or a full-time mom, or a small-business owner. That's fine. It helps describe us.

But here's the problem with that: Who are you when you get fired from your job? What happens when some young-gun that's cheaper to hire and knows all the new technology, and you're kicked to the curb? What happens when your family business dries up and you're left without work?

That's perhaps when we most palpably recognize the "identity problem" with have.

Instead of: "We work, therefore we're valuable." (which is what we're typically trained to believe), we need to recognize that "We're valuable, therefore we work."

Might seem like a silly game of semantics, but it can change absolutely everything about our identity and having a healthy relationship with our work.

A few verses before God sends Adam to work, he recognizes the inherent VALUE of humanity: Genesis 1:31 NLT: *God looked over all He had made, and He saw that it was very good!*

Adam, this archetypal man that we all identify with, before he begins his work, he knows that his Father takes delight in him. God looks across all that He has made, and perhaps the crown of Creation, being formed in His own image: Humanity. And He saw that it was very good.

I wonder how differently we'd approach work if we truly believed that we didn't have to win our Father's approval. (Replace "father" with whoever you want. It could be God, it could be your earthly father or mother, could be your spouse, or your college buddies, or your neighbors... Whoever comprises that silent (but ever-nagging) voice in your mind that we can never impress or satisfy.

We're valuable, therefore we work, and bring our value to the workplace. We BRING VALUE wherever we go.

And if we're no longer working FOR approval, but working FROM approval, we begin to find our identities distance themselves from our work.

You'll notice, if you pay attention, that Mike starts his sermons here by saying, "*My name is Mike, I'm a physics teacher in Lawrence, that's what I DO, but who I am is much different than that: I'm a much-loved child of God.*" Every time, some iteration of that. That's because his identity is rooted in something much more life-giving and secure than a job title or profession.

Here's the thing: Our job titles will change. We'll get promotions. We'll get fired.

Even from titles we find elsewhere:

- Mothers and fathers, I pray that for the rest of your life, you're able to hold that title, but that's not even guaranteed for some of us...
- Husbands and wives, many of you know that those titles can change in the blink of an eye.

- Sons and daughters, our parents will grow old and their bodies will fail and we'll no longer be able to hold the earthly title of being "a child."

I hate to even go there, but to drive this point home, I think we need to.

When we find our identities in anything other than who we are to God, we're on shaky-ground. We're building our house on sand. It's not "if" things change, it's when... And when these things shift, our identities need to be independent from them.

So maybe you need to hear that this morning: STOP WORKING SO MUCH.

Now, for those of us that didn't resonate with that, maybe for you it was: WORK MORE. Maybe God is wanting to call you OFF THE COUCH and into the game. Maybe this morning, you need to be challenged. Maybe you need to be reminded that you're not a victim and that you matter and that you DO have value to bring.

It might not be in a corporate setting, might not be opening your own business, might not even be a formal JOB, but if you're walking through life believing that God can't use you and your effort to produce good in the world, you're living in sin. If you don't believe God created you for a purpose, you're living in sin. God created you for a purpose. And if you're running from that purpose, it's time to turn around, and GET TO WORK.

*Colossians 3:23 NLT: Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.*

This verse is incredible. Paul says, "*Whatever you do...*" If you're washing dishes, if you're filing taxes, if you're driving kids around, if you're volunteering at our Coffee bar or clicking through slides in a worship service... Work as if you're working for the Lord, and rather than for people.

- Can a janitor glorify the Lord while he mops the floor? Absolutely.
- Can a volunteer firefighter glorify the Lord while he sits quietly in the firehouse? Absolutely.
- Can a millionaire investor glorify the Lord while she sits in her corner office and makes boatloads of money? Yes!

As with all things in Christian faith, it's not about outward appearance or strictly about action: It's about the heart behind the action. Wealthy people can be greedy and only care about padding their bank-accounts, but they can also be generous and put money behind the Lord's work in ways you or I could never do. A relatively small check from a wealthy person's perspective could RADICALLY change this church.

Work is good. It's a gift from God. It's a privilege. And it's a response to God's loving approval over us; not a vain attempt to impress Him.

To tie a bow on the WORK thing: If you're having a hard time identifying with one of them; ask your spouse. Or ask a close friend. "Do I work too much?" or "Do I need to get out there and do something with my life?" They'll tell you.

I know someone that owns his own business, and when he started the business, he handed his wife a sealed envelope with signed papers that would essentially dissolve and terminate the business. He gave her the power, at any point, if work became an idol or got in the way of him being a good father, to pull the plug. It was a beautiful, symbolic gesture, prioritizing family and emotional health over "success" by the world's standards.

Here's the wonderful thing about the life that God has given us: It's not all work all the time. In fact, there's an enormous, part of God that we miss if we fail to regularly practice the discipline of celebration. The discipline of throwing parties.

In the life of Jesus, we see Him working hard as a local carpenter, we see him hustling and traveling and working hard...

- But we also see Him withdraw from the crowds and take naps.
- We see him tell Martha to take a break and sit down.
- We see Him chastise Peter for being over-ambitious
- We see Him save parties from disaster by turning water into wine.
  - *Real wine! And not some Franzia, boxed wine. A beautiful, mature wine with balanced tannins.*

Well, which is it, Jesus?! Do we work hard or party hard? Is life about work or play?

His answer, which is always wonderfully frustrating, is: YES.

One without the other is a wasted life. But both, when held in healthy perspective, not finding our identities in either of them, will build a full, beautiful life.

Now, there's a small group of you that, when I put that slide up there, saw that "STOP PARTYING SO MUCH" and we're like, "Dang. You got me." Some of you are party animals. There's no use in hiding! I know. I spent New Year's Eve with some of you. Bunch of party animals.

Some of us have the tendency to over-use God's call for us to celebrate life, and use it as an excuse to over-do things. We work hard through the week and then binge-drink on the weekends. Instead of using "celebration" to enhance our lives, we use "celebration" as a way to escape our lives.

Alcohol is in the Bible... all throughout it. Proverbs is filled with warnings against indulging in wine and "strong drink." But then Jesus likens His own teachings to new wine (Mt. 9:17). Paul warned believers against drunkenness (Eph. 5:18) but then recommends that Timothy "use a little wine" (1 Timothy 5:23) to help settle an upset stomach.

In Acts, on the day of Pentecost, when people began speaking in other languages, skeptics watching said, "These people are just drunk! They're not making any sense." Trying to discredit

what God was doing at that moment. Then Peter steps forward to defend them and his argument is this: *“These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o’clock in the morning is much too early for that...” ACTS 2:15 NLT*

Peter isn’t offended that people would assume Christians were drinking alcohol, he simply says, *“No no no, it’s way too early in the day for that!”*

Now, please hear me in this, I’m not saying that we’re called to drink alcohol. And I’m not saying that celebration even **REQUIRES** alcohol to be present: It absolutely doesn’t. Some of the most incredible celebrations I’ve been a part of didn’t have a drop of alcohol there.

I’m simply trying to speak to the crowd that felt a little twinge of conviction when they read “STOP PARTYING SO MUCH” up on the screen... Statistically, 12% of us in the room will be dependent on alcohol at some point in our lives. It’s a serious issue, and a stumbling block for a lot of people; myself included... People all throughout my family struggle with alcohol.

Some of us need to hear the call to stop trying to escape our lives, to stop suppressing our feelings, and to learn to **CELEBRATE** in a God-honoring way.

7 different times in the New Testament we’re called to be “sober-minded.”

So how do we tap into that "sober-minded celebration" that we see in Jesus?

How do we redeem “celebration” from where our culture has taken it?

Here’s a three-letter word that all of us want, and very few of us consistently experience: JOY.

JOY... Shows up in scripture 333 times. Joy is a **COMMAND**. It’s non-optional. If you’re a follower of Christ, joy is a mandate.

And joy is the key to unlocking the spiritual discipline of celebration.

John Ortberg says this:

*“Joylessness is a serious sin, one that religious people are particularly prone to indulge in. It may be the sin most readily tolerated by the church...”*

Joy is different than happiness because happiness is dependent on circumstances. If you win the lottery, you’re happy. If you’re having a good hair day, you’re happy. If your kids are behaving, you’re happy.

But one of the best tests to determine if you have joy is this: Its' compatibility with pain. One test of authentic joy is its compatibility with pain.

Joy, at least here on earth, is **ALWAYS** “in spite of” something.

- Joy, in spite of the financial hardships.
- Joy, in spite of the marital struggles.

- Joy, in spite of the pulled muscle in your back.
- Joy, in spite of the cancer.

— How do we tap into that type of JOY?  
 — If we're commanded to be joyful, how do we do it?

The most substantive and profound suggestion I could make is this: Start today.

How do we pursue joy? We begin now. Today. Joy takes practice.

Despite every reason that's popping up in your mind. In spite of the way you feel and the things you have on your plate and the stress and the worry and the confusion you're feeling...

PSALM 118:24 NLT

"This is the day the Lord has made.  
 We will rejoice and be glad in it..."

THIS IS THE DAY... Today.

Joy takes practice. Might as well start practicing today.

We all live with the illusion that JOY will come someday when conditions change. Another quote from Ortberg: *"We go to school and think we'll be happy when we graduate. We are single and are convinced that we'll be happy when we get married. We get married and decide we will be happy someday when we have children. We have children and decide we'll be happy when they grow up and leave the nest—then they do, and we think we were happier when they were still at home."*

But that's not JOY, that's chasing happiness.

True joy, as it turns out, comes only to people that devote their lives to something greater than personal happiness.

*True joy comes only to people that devote their lives to something greater than personal happiness.*

Are you lacking joy? Do you find it difficult to celebrate? Maybe it's because you've been obsessed with pursuing personal happiness... Such a paradox, isn't it?!

PSALM 118:24 NLT

"This is the day the Lord has made.  
 We will rejoice and be glad in it..."

Just a few verses before that, the writer gives us both the reason and the source for our joy:

PSALM 118:22-24 NLT

*22 The stone that the builders rejected*

*has now become the cornerstone.*  
23 *This is the Lord's doing,*  
*and it is wonderful to see.*  
24 *This is the day the Lord has made.*  
*We will rejoice and be glad in it.*

The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone... Other translations call this the "capstone," and the capstone of an arch gives the structure its shape and its strength. You have two stacks of leaning rocks; what's more unstable than that? And then you find the perfect stone: The capstone... And it immediately makes the arch STRONG and durable.

Jesus is the CAPSTONE. He's the stone that the builders rejected, and yet: He is where we find our strength.

He's the one that takes our toppling stacks of rocks: all of our unhealthy ways that we WORK, and all of our JOYLESSNESS or bad habits... And He joins them in the middle. He's the capstone to our lives.

I want to close with this:

Some of us work too hard, and some of us don't work hard enough.  
Some of us party too much, and some of us don't celebrate enough.

Wisdom isn't black and white. Wisdom is hearing what God has to say to you TODAY and doing something with it.

What is He trying to say to you?

Healthy, Christian spirituality balances the fasting and the feast. It calls us to work hard, as if we're working for the Lord, and it calls us to rejoice, on this very day, in spite of our circumstances.

Some of you need to go home and plan a vacation, and some of you need to go home and work on your resume. Some of you need to put DOWN the bottle of alcohol, and some of you need to buy a bottle of champagne and celebrate tonight.

I don't know where you're at. But God does. And He promises to walk with us into HEALTH, no matter what starting point we're at today.

If you're ready to respond, and to take a step (even a baby step) towards one of these things, TELL SOMEONE ABOUT IT. That's the other beauty of our faith. We're not called to "go through it alone." If you're ready to #Putacorkinit, like Kelly shared last week: Do it. Post a photo online, tell a friend. If you're ready to lose some weight, get your little cork to the gym and START. If you're in an unhealthy relationship that you need to end... or if you're ready to grow spiritually, tell someone here.

That's the beauty of the church. We have family, even when we don't have family... Here, in this church. You're not alone. We're all side by side as we grow; united in our brokenness and united in our identity as God's beloved children.



Let's pray...