

## Small Group Guide: PRIORITIZING WHAT MATTERS - Prioritizing Character Building

**Opening Question:** What was your very first job, and what's one funny or memorable story from it?

**Opening Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, thank you for bringing us together today. As we talk about character and work, help us see our jobs, our homes, and our responsibilities the way you see them. Use this time to show us where you're trying to grow us, and give us open hearts to listen and respond. We invite your Spirit to lead our conversation. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.*

### KEY SERMON POINTS

#### Main Ideas

- **Work is not a curse.** God gave Adam work in Genesis 2 *before* sin entered the world (Gen. 2:15). Work is part of God's good design, not just a necessary evil.
- **God's goal is Christlike character.** God is using every area of life—including our job, retirement, school, or home—to shape us into the image of Jesus (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 4:15).
- **Work is a major spiritual formation space.** If we spend 30–40% of our lives working, then our job is one of God's primary "classrooms" for spiritual growth.
- **Character is who you are in private.** Public behavior can be a facade; true character is revealed when no one is watching.
- **God uses three things at work to shape us:**
  - **Pressure** – to test and refine our values (Eph. 5:15).
  - **People** – to teach us how to love, live in harmony, and pursue peace (Rom. 12:16–18).
  - **Problems** – to build patience and strengthen character (Rom. 5:3–4).
- **We ultimately work for the Lord.** Our promises, deadlines, integrity with money, and effort when unsupervised reveal who we truly believe our "real boss" is (Eph. 6:5–8; Luke 16:10–12).
- **God is more interested in our character than our comfort.** Often, instead of immediately removing us from a hard situation, God uses that situation to grow us, then releases us when we've learned what He wanted to teach us.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

#### Work as God's Design

##### Read Genesis 2:15.

- How does knowing that work existed before sin change the way you view your job, your home responsibilities, or even retirement?
- Where have you maybe treated work as a curse instead of a calling?

#### God's Goal for Us

##### Read Romans 8:29 and Ephesians 4:15.

- Pastor Dan said God's primary goal is to make us more like Jesus.
- In what ways can you see God using your current work or life situation to grow you in Christlike character?

**Promises, Responsibility, & Integrity (Psalm 15:4; Matthew 5:37; Luke 16:10–12)**

**Read Psalm 15:4, Matthew 5:37, and Luke 16:10–12.**

- Where do you find it hardest to let your “yes” be “yes” and your “no” be “no”?
- How might your handling of commitments, deadlines, and finances at work be either opening or closing doors for God to entrust you with more (both materially and spiritually)?

**Working for the Lord, Not Just a Boss (Ephesians 6:5–8)**

**Read Ephesians 6:5–8.**

- How would your attitude and effort at work (or at home) change if you consciously remembered, “I’m ultimately serving Jesus here”?
- Is there a specific situation right now where you need to shift from “I’m working for this company/person” to “I’m working for the Lord”?

**Difficult People & Harmony (Romans 12:16–18; 1 Corinthians 16:14)**

**Read Romans 12:16–18 and 1 Corinthians 16:14.**

- Think of a difficult person you interact with regularly (at work, school, home, church). What part of these verses challenges you the most in that relationship?
- “As far as it depends on you” – what *does* depend on you in that relationship that you might need to change?

**Problems, Patience, and Character (Romans 5:3–4; 2 Corinthians 1:8–10)**

**Read Romans 5:3–4 and 2 Corinthians 1:8–10.**

- Pastor Dan said God often teaches us through the *opposite* of what we want (e.g., patience through frustrating circumstances). Where have you experienced that?
- Is there a current problem or trial that you’ve mainly been asking God to remove? How might your prayer change if you began asking, “Lord, what do you want me to learn here?”

**Personal Reflection – Character in Private vs. Public**

- Pastor Dan said our real character is who we are in private. Without sharing anything you’re not comfortable with, what’s one area where the “private you” and the “public you” don’t fully match yet?
- What step can you take this week to invite God—and maybe one trusted person—into that gap?

**PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS** (Choose 1 or 2 that apply to you.)

1. **Reframe Your Workday in Prayer (Daily Start).**

Each weekday morning this week, pray briefly: *“Lord, I’m reporting for duty. Help me remember I’m working for you today. Use the pressures, people, and problems I face to shape me to be more like Jesus.”*

2. **Honor One Commitment This Week at All Cost.**

Identify one commitment you’ve made (at work, home, or church) that will cost you something to follow through on. Ask God for strength and keep that promise, “no matter how much it costs” (Ps. 15:4).

3. **Do One “Unseen” Act of Excellence.**

Do one task this week with extra care and excellence that nobody will likely notice—except God (e.g., a report, cleaning, organizing, helping at home)—as a practical way of “serving the Lord, not men.”

4. **Lean Into One Difficult Relationship with Love.**

Choose one challenging person in your life.

- Pray specifically for them every day this week.
- Look for one concrete way to show love or kindness to them (a kind word, extra patience, an offer to help, refusing to gossip, etc.).

5. **Journal One Current Problem as a “Class.”**

Take a current problem (especially at work or in your responsibilities) and write it down as: “God’s character class in \_\_\_\_\_.”

Then answer:

- What might God be trying to teach me?
- Which fruit of the Spirit might He be growing (love, joy, peace, patience, etc.)?
- Pray over it, asking God to accomplish His character work in you.

**MEMORY VERSE for the Week:**

*“Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.” (Ephesians 6:7, NIV)*

**Closing Prayer:** *Father, thank you for speaking to us through your Word and through Pastor Dan’s message. Thank you that our work, our problems, and even difficult people are not wasted, but are tools you use to shape our character to look more like Jesus. As we go back into our week, help us remember that we ultimately work for you. Give us strength to keep our promises, to love people well, and to trust you in our pressures and problems. Grow our character, even when it’s uncomfortable. We trust you, and we love you. In Jesus’ name, amen.*