

The “Mockler Pledge” **for Pastoral Ministry** **for Workplace Discipleship**

Introduction to the Mockler Pledge

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Commentary on the Mockler Pledge for Pastoral Ministry

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The “Mockler Pledge” is a summary of six basic, common sense commitments a pastor or a workplace layperson can make to take some concrete steps to integrate faith and work and help others do the same. It is fairly easy to understand and affirm, in some general way, that Jesus wants and deserves to be Lord of the whole of our lives, including our work. But it is more difficult to know exactly how to make that affirmation real and concrete in our day-to-day lives. The Mockler Pledge is about taking some small but decisive action steps to make it real.

There are two versions of the Mockler Pledge. One is for pastors, no matter what denomination or context to which they have been called. The other version is for workplace disciples, no matter what kind of jobs they have or who they are. The Mockler Center, reciprocally, pledges to support and help all pastors and laity fulfill the pledges they make. We suggest you print out and sign the pledge, mount it in a diploma frame and hang it where you can see it in your work or study area.

After reading the commentaries which follow and explain the pledges (below), visit the “Mockler Memo” and “Resources” pages for further ideas and assistance in carrying out the pledges. Contact us (mockler@gcts.edu) if we can be of further help to you.

Mockler Pledge

for Pastoral Ministry

Recognizing that my calling is to pastor and equip the flock of God for faithful discipleship in the workplace as well as all other arenas of life

I pledge to strengthen my support and service to those under my care so that they may more fully glorify God and carry out his purposes in their workplace lives.

In particular, with God's help and to the best of my ability, I commit myself to do the following over the next year:

1: *study, preach, and teach* the workplace lessons and implications of the Scriptures as I encounter and understand them in the texts before me;

2: *read* at least one article per month and one book per year specifically focused on workplace, marketplace, or economics topics;

3: *visit* at least one of my congregation's workplace disciples per month in his or her workplace environment, asking about their work experiences, challenges, and opportunities --- and offering them encouragement and prayer;

4: *pray* for the workplace disciples under my care, and for their workplace opportunities and challenges, at least once each week in my personal prayers and at least once per month in our congregational worship;

5: *educate*: work with others in my church to offer at least six hours each year of Christian educational opportunities providing some practical biblical perspectives on workplace topics such as calling, stewardship, money, leadership, character, honesty, and ethics;

6: *recognize* and *commission* at least once each year (with a charge and a prayer in the context of congregational worship) our workplace disciples (in general or in a particular specialization such as health care, management, technology, arts, finance, education) for faithful service representing Christ in their work.

Date

Signature

The Mockler Center staff pledges to support you in all six aspects of your commitment --- with educational and study resources, reading suggestions and links, ideas for workplace visits and worker commissioning, and prayer. Contact: mockler@gcts.edu

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Commentary

on the Mockler Pledge for Pastoral Ministry

The Mockler Pledge is intended to help you be systematic and intentional about supporting, equipping, and encouraging your people in their workplace discipleship. Just these six simple commitments have the potential to transform lives and churches. Here is some commentary on each of the components:

1: study, preach, and teach the workplace lessons and implications of the Scriptures as I encounter and understand them in the texts before me;

Why? *Two reasons: The Bible itself demands that we pay attention to its teaching about work. For example, Jesus had more to say about money, property, and wealth than about heaven and hell or many other topics that occupy our attention. We must be faithful and pay attention. Second, our workplace disciples, and our workplace and marketplaces themselves, are in desperate need of creative insight on ethics, management, decision-making, work/life balance, respectful work relations, dispute mediation, and a host of other topics. Are we prepared to share the insights that come from our biblical faith?*

How? *As a pastor you must spend time reading and studying the Scriptures every week if not every day. Your sermons and lessons each week must draw on the insight of God's Word. The most basic way to carry out this pledge is simply to ask, as you study Scripture, no matter what the text, no matter how you have thought of it in the past, "what insight might God be giving us here about our workplace activities?" Make notes and integrate these insights into your sermons and lessons. Explicitly challenge your audiences to think about how to apply God's word to their workplace lives. Ask God to help you. It doesn't need to be very complicated. Let the biblical text speak to our workplace reality.*

Resources: The Word in Life Bible (Thomas Nelson, 1993), if you can find a copy, was an annotated study Bible which emphasized marketplace commentary instead of the usual historical and doctrinal orientation. More up-to-date and in depth, the "Theology of Work" project (www.theologyofwork.org) promises to become the "go to" resource for serious study of the workplace lessons of the Bible.

2: read at least one article per month and one book per year specifically focused on workplace, marketplace, or economics topics;

Why? *We are doing this so that we can better understand the context in which our people live and work every day. We ask them to read the Bible and good Christian literature. Let's read some of the literature from our peoples' world so we can better understand their challenges and*

opportunities. Share insights and questions from this reading with your people. They will be delighted to help you understand it.

How? You can go online if you wish, but think about going to the nearest magazine vendor and buying a copy of the Wall Street Journal, The Financial Times, The Economist, Business Week, Fortune, Wired or any number of other newspapers or magazines dealing with business and economics. Buy an issue that looks interesting, get some coffee, and read an article or two. Once a month! If you are really serious about it, subscribe to one of these publications and read it or browse it regularly.

And at least once a year actually read a whole book on business and work. Read the history of a company . . . or an analysis of the recent financial disaster in the banking industry . . . or a CEO's memoir or management theories. Go to a big bookstore and look through the business and management section and look for something interesting. All the business newspapers and magazines mentioned earlier have book reviews and sometimes lists of business best-sellers that can help you decide.

3: visit at least one of my congregation's workplace disciples per month in his or her workplace environment, asking about their work experiences, challenges, and opportunities --- and offering them encouragement and prayer;

Why? Now this can have truly revolutionary consequences for your church and for you as pastor. All too often our parishioners must come to us, on our turf, to our office. If we show up at their workplace it sends a powerful message that we care and it also informs and educates us in an important way. The people we visit in their workplace will come to church with a different attitude. They will listen differently – and more closely. You will speak to them more knowingly. You may illustrate your sermons with vignettes from your visits. This experience will change you and it will change your congregation. Those who are visited will tell others and the buzz will be positive.

How? “Hey Joe/Jane: I would love to visit you where you work some time. Any chance I could do that? I don't want to get in the way but I'd just love to see where you spend your work week and have you show and tell me how you spend your time. I'd love to take you to coffee or lunch also if that works out.” [Note: if the person works in a no-visitor, high security environment, suggest at least meeting nearby. Don't give up! The symbolism of getting close to his or her turf is powerful].

When you get there: (1) “Tell me how you spend your time here.” (2) “How did you get into this kind of work and this company?” (3) “What do you like best about your job and your career?” (4) “Are there any ways I could pray for you especially or support you in your work here?” (5) “Could I just say a short prayer here before I go?” [don't embarrass him/her; only do this if you have a quiet, private moment; thank God for him/her and ask God to bless and strengthen them}. NO SERMONS; you are there to learn and to ask them questions.

4: pray for the workplace disciples under my care, and for their workplace opportunities and challenges, at least once each week in my personal prayers and at least once per month in our congregational worship;

Why? Emergency and crisis prayers are good when called for. We all do them: “We ask for your special help for Joe who just lost his job” . . . etc.. But the Mockler Pledge is about getting more holistic and positive.

How? At least once a week (maybe on Mondays --- first day of typical work week?) spend some time in your personal prayers praising and thanking God for the work our people are doing, paid or volunteer, asking God to bless them, guide them, protect them, and use them as his instruments in our needy world.

And at least once per month, let’s remember our workplace folk, their needs and opportunities, in our public, congregational prayers. Let’s not just pray about our “religious” concerns, not just about political and diplomatic crises or natural disasters or even missionary efforts --- that’s all great ---- but let’s also mention our workers and their needs and opportunities to the Lord.

5: educate: work with others in my church to offer at least six hours each year of Christian educational opportunities providing some practical biblical perspectives on workplace topics such as calling, stewardship, money, leadership, character, honesty, and ethics;

Why? We have Sunday School classes and retreats on all manner of topics, especially on straight ahead Bible study. Most churches have classes on parenting, marriage, prayer, evangelism, and the defense of the faith. This is all great but if we want to get serious about a 24/7 approach to discipleship we need to make sure we have some Christian education about work – for all age groups.

How? The six hour minimum in the Mockler Pledge could be six one-hour sessions during Sunday School --- or six sessions of a small group’s schedule --- or six hours on a Saturday (or over a weekend retreat).

The Mockler Center will soon have its own downloadable, free curriculum to use at church. An alternative is to organize the study around a common textbook --- such as Ben Witherington’s recent little book (with 7 chapters) Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor (Eerdmans, 2011) or Your Work Matters to God by Doug Sherman and William Hendricks (NavPress, 1990), or Mastering Monday A Guide to Integrating Faith and Work by John D. Beckett (InterVarsity Press, 2006).

6: recognize and **commission** at least once each year (with a charge and a prayer in the context of congregational worship) our workplace disciples (in general or in a particular specialization such as health care, management, technology, arts, finance, education) for faithful service representing Christ in their work.

Why? *The final component of the Mockler Pledge is about recognizing and actually commissioning some of our workplace disciples to serve the Lord in their work. The pledge is to do it once in the year; once every three months would be even better. This process could have an amazing impact on a congregation. Already we call forward our short-term missions teams for commissioning and prayer . . . we call forward and commission our deacons and elders . . . and of course our pastoral installations are often powerful occasions of commissioning and joint prayer. But our workplace disciples deserve no less. The message this sends to them and to the rest of the congregation is powerful and clear.*

How? *The Mockler Center web site will soon have some well-developed liturgical help for pastors who wish for it. Here is a sample of what we are talking about here:*

Pastor: [Call the people to the front] "This morning we would like to recognize, commission, and pray for the health care givers in our congregation. Would all of you who work in this field in any capacity and all of you students preparing for such vocations, would you all come up and stand in front of the congregation this morning so we can pray for you? If you are a doctor or nurse, a chiropractor or massage therapist, hospital administrator or orderly, pharmaceutical researcher or manager --- if you work in any capacity in health care, would you come up here now?"

[Address them and challenge/commission them] Now we all want to remember very clearly that our God is a healer. The mission of our Lord was to heal as well as to proclaim the gospel. The Apostles were sent out to heal as well as preach. Throughout the history of the church our greatest missionaries brought medicine and health care as well as the gospel to the ends of the earth. Health care is at the very heart of the way of Jesus Christ.

So this morning my friends we want first of all to thank you: thank you for hearing God's call and being willing to serve our Lord in health care. We are so grateful for your service in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Second we want to challenge and encourage you to carry on, to be the hands of Jesus Christ reaching out with a healing touch to those who suffer. And third, we want to join together in prayer for you this morning.

[Pray for them. Invite the congregation to step up and lay hands on the gathered health care workers at the front]. Our Father, we thank you for each of these your servants. We pray that you will work your healing and caring purposes through their hands, their minds, their skills, and their efforts, wherever they are working on the health care team. Lord, would you give them strength. Would you protect them from danger and harm. Would you provide for them and supply them with the resources they need for their work. Would you keep them from temptation and discouragement? Work through them O God, just as you worked in Jesus Christ our Lord. Help their colleagues and their patients to see Jesus Christ in them each day. Bless these dear servants of yours, our brothers and sisters, for we pray in Jesus' name, Amen"

[Credential them if you wish --- you could create a diploma-size certificate to pass out to each person commissioning them as ministers of God in health care].

In addition to health care workers, you could easily call up all your people in (1) education (teachers, home schoolers, principals, school boards, teachers aides, yard duty superintendents, janitors, coaches, etc.), (2) finance people (bank employees, insurance folk, etc.), (3) technologists & engineers, (4) artists and musicians, (5) food service folk (grocery store employees, farmers, chefs, waiters, etc.), and (6) the unemployed or those looking for jobs. The possibilities are endless. In a small congregation one could commission students one time, employees another time, and volunteers on a third occasion.