Lead Yourself
Lesson 2-3: Your Work

Discussion Guide – Confidentiality Reminder
One Word Check-in
Update – Personal, Business, Leadership

"Then I told them about how the gracious hand of God had been on me, and about my conversation with the king. They replied at once, 'Yes, let's rebuild the wall!' So they began the good work." Nehemiah 2:18 (NLT)

It is our responsibility as individuals to understand our giftings and then find work that complements those gifts. Work should inspire us to get out of bed each morning, as we look forward to a day of productivity. Below are the requirements for finding the most value in work. Having one requirement is sufficient but having both is a great dynamic.

- **The work matches your gifting.** Gifting is what you are just naturally good at. This was a gift to you that was freely given. As an example, a person that fits perfectly in a sales position might be frustrated in an engineering or finance position, but in sales, his or her gifts shine, and those around him or her see it, especially the customers.
- **You perceive that your work produces something that is good (meaningful, valuable or important).** This can be a mental or spiritual exercise that is specific to each person. No matter what your job is, you can find meaningful purpose if you look hard enough. Martin Luther King illustrated this point when he said, "If it falls to your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, sweep streets like Beethoven composed music, sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say, 'Here lived a great street sweeper who swept his job well.'"

It is the responsibility of organizations to value individuals who work there and to help them see the purpose of their work and their value. Simon Sinek has eloquently defined the importance of an organization's "why" (see page 2). The following are ideas that an organization should earnestly explore to help people see the meaning in their work:

- The organization and its leadership build trust by having a high level of integrity. The leaders are always truthful.
- Leadership throughout the organization treats people with respect.
- Performance issues are dealt with quickly, directly and compassionately.
- There are opportunities to learn and grow into new positions.

Shared Experiences:

- Can someone share when they have or have not felt meaningful purpose in their work? What did you do about it, if anything?
- What would it take for you, in your current position, to have a more meaningful purpose? How should your thinking change?
- How might you help someone see that the value of their work is good?
- Has anyone seen a company create a positive environment to help their staff understand the "why" of their work? What was the result?
- Even if a company does a poor job of helping people see their value at work, how might a team leader help people see that their work is good?
- Does anyone see a connection to their spiritual life and their work life? Why or why not?

Bottom line: Seeing that your work brings value to others is essential to understanding that your work is good. When an organization clearly articulates the why of the work, there is tremendous synergy in which impossible things can be accomplished through ordinary people.

One Word Check-out

Want to learn more?

The story of Nehemiah – Nehemiah was a Jewish captive who ended up serving as the cupbearer for the king of Persia. He held a trusted and esteemed position. When Nehemiah learned of the extreme hardship being endured by the Jewish people migrating back to Jerusalem, he prayed and fasted for four months. With the king's blessing he went to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls and gates. The walls were rebuilt in a miraculous 53 days by the people of Jerusalem under Nehemiah's leadership. Nehemiah gave the people an inspired vision and organized the people to rebuild the walls and reconstruct its gates, which ended up changing their world. This was good work.

Information for individuals:

- *Article:* The 5 Biggest Myths About Meaningful Work by Rebecca Fraser-Thill published in Forbes. This article is based on research by Bates College and Gallop. Relevant quotes from the article:
    - "Individuals who had high purpose in work were *ten times more likely* to experience overall well-being."
    - "Any of us can make our existing work more meaningful if we make the effort. Researchers have focused on three methods of enhancing our sense of purpose and engagement in our work:
        - Changing our thoughts (cognitive crafting)
        - Changing our tasks (task crafting)
        - Changing our relationships with co-workers, supervisors and/or clients/customers (relational crafting)"
- *Video:* Be the Idiot by Simon Sinek is a challenge to keep asking questions so that you fully understand an issue or task.
- *Video:* How My Journey Began by Simon Sinek

Information for companies or team leaders:

- *Video:* Finding your Why by Simon Sinek is his story of going from a work life he called "stupid" to finding his "why." It started with the event of 9/11.
- *Article:* Talent 2020: Surveying the Talent Paradox from the Employee Perspective by Alice Kwan, Neil Nevera, Jeff Schwartz, Bill Pelster, Robin Erickson and Sarah Szpaichler from Deloitte Consulting
- *Quote*: At the Future of Everything Festival (and published in the WSJ), Delta CEO Ed Bastian said, "Management philosophy has shifted over time from customers-are-always-right to take-care-of-shareholders and now to emphasizing employees."
- *Video*: The Story of Noah by Simon Sinek
- *Video*: Teamwork by Patrick Lencioni, "You have tremendous impact on people's lives."

Additional follow up to consider:

- **For individuals:** Write down what you need to do help you change your thinking about finding more meaning in your work. Next, write down action items to get there.

- **For companies or team leaders:** Write down what you need to do to create an empathetic and caring organization that supports the people that work there.