



Consider the challenge to gospel work ↗



PEER GROUPS
STRAND 2



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MTS Recruit 2024

**“For we are His
workmanship, created
in Christ Jesus for good
works.”**

EPHESIANS 2:10





Welcome

to MTS Recruit Peer Groups!

Peer Groups give you the chance to meet with other people who are at the same stage of thinking and discuss, “What will it look like for me to serve God with the rest of my life?”

During this time you’ll be led by an experienced Ministry Worker and MTS Apprentice to discuss the Bible, reflect on encouragements and challenges from our speakers, and consider decisions about ministry.

Sessions One & Two:

Why do Gospel Ministry?

The following content is to be split over Peer Group Sessions 1 and 2. Take your time getting to know everyone in the group. Make time for prayer at the end of Session 1 before morning tea, regardless of where you're up to in the content, and pray again at the end of Session 2.

A. Meeting Your Group

To get started, go around the group and share:

1. How did you become a Christian?
2. Where and how are you currently involved in ministry?
3. Why did you decide to be a part of MTS Recruit?
4. What questions do you hope to explore at MTS Recruit? (Collect these questions as a group and see if they've been addressed by the final peer group session.)

Pray for your time together.

B. Looking at God's Word: Why Do Gospel Ministry?

1. What would you say to the godly and gifted Christian who says 'everything I do at work is just as much of a priority as doing ministry. Why would I do gospel ministry?'

2. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-34, 50-58. Discuss any initial comments, questions and first impressions. (try not to get stuck in v29)

(Note: v29 is most likely talking about Christians who had left their marks on others before they died, who later converted 'on account' of them. So the idea is "people who are baptized [as part and parcel of their conversion] on account of the influence of believers who are now deceased.")

3. What does Paul say the implications are if Christ has not been raised?

4. What are the implications if Christ *has* been raised?

5. What do you think the work of the Lord is (15:58) and why is it not in vain (how does the argument of chapter 15 help)? (try to answer this question before looking at the two following quotes)

- a. Read and discuss the following quote which describes a 'maximal view' of 'the work of the Lord'.

1. The Maximal Interpretation of 1 Cor 15:58: Everything We Do As Christians in Light of the Resurrection

At a number of points in *Surprised by Hope*, Tom Wright considers Paul's exhortation in 1 Cor 15:58. He suggests that this exhortation, coming as the conclusion to Paul's great defense of the bodily resurrection of believers, implies, 'All that we do in faith, hope and love in the present, in obedience to our ascended Lord and in the power of his Spirit, will be enhanced and transformed at his appearing'. He later expands on this to specify that on the basis of this verse, 'What you *do* in the present—by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbour as yourself—all these things *will last into God's future*'. Finally, towards the end of the book he again cites 1 Cor 15:58 and concludes,

"Every act of love, gratitude and kindness; every work of art or music inspired by the love of God and delight in the beauty of his creation; every minute spent teaching a severely handicapped child to read or to walk; every act of care and nurture, of comfort and support, for one's fellow human beings, and for that matter one's fellow non-human creatures; and of course every prayer, all Spirit-led teaching, every deed which spreads the gospel, builds up the church, embraces and embodies holiness rather than corruption, and makes the name of Jesus honoured in the world—all of this will find its way, through the resurrecting power of God, into the new creation which God will one day make. That is the logic of the mission of God. God's recreation of his wonderful world, which has begun with the resurrection of Jesus and continues mysteriously as God's people live in the risen Christ and in the power of his Spirit, means that what we do in Christ and by the Spirit in the present is not wasted."

In particular, then, the resurrection's affirming and securing the future of creation leads Wright to draw the ethical conclusion that *everything* done in this creation is worthwhile since it will continue into eternity.

Paul Stevens also articulates this idea when he cites 1 Cor 15:58 as teaching that the resurrection 'is proof positive that work in this world is not resultless'. This teaching brings new meaning to those whose toil is in so-called secular work: the arts, education, business and politics. They too are shaping the future of creation in some limited way just as are missionaries and pastors. Most people think that only religious work will not be in vain (1 Cor 15:58) but if Christ is the first-born from the grave, then all work has eternal consequences, whether homemaking or being a stockbroker. . . . [W]e are co-operating with what Christ wants to do in renewing all creation.

Similarly, in his recent book on mission, Christopher Wright argues that because of the resurrection '[a]ll human productive work . . . has its own value and eternal significance' and that 'we know that "the work of the Lord" does not mean just "religious" work, but any work done as "unto the Lord", including even the manual labour of slaves (Col 3:22-24)'.

We could label this approach to 1 Cor 15:58 as the '*maximal* interpretation' in that it understands the 'work of the Lord' to be essentially *anything* that Christians do *because* of the resurrection. In other words, this gives weight almost exclusively to the *general* motivation that the rest of the chapter provides rather than to the *specific* meaning of the phrase itself. This understanding of 'the work of the Lord' in 1 Cor 15:58 thus draws on both the doctrines of creation and resurrection. Given that the latter affirms and validates the former, Paul exhorts the Christian to work in this world since that work is 'not in vain' but has an eternal future.

- b. Read and discuss the following quote which describes a 'specific interpretation' of 'the work of the Lord' (evangelism and edification).

When Paul tells the Corinthians to 'abound in the work of the Lord', he is not issuing a call to *general* Christian living in light of the resurrection. Rather, 'the work of the Lord' refers to *what believers do to advance the gospel among unbelievers and to establish believers in the gospel*.

Throughout this letter to the Corinthians, this is precisely what Paul has exhorted them to do (1 Cor 10:31–11:1; 14:12). What this looks like in practice will, of course, vary. It could mean risking their lives like Epaphroditus (Phil 2:30); it could be serving the needs of other believers like Stephanus (1 Cor 16:15); and it could be speaking the truth in love like the Ephesians (Eph 4:12). But crucially the *goal* of this work is building the church, and it is this that the Corinthians are to prioritise. Because there is a resurrection and those who are 'dead in Christ' will be raised to bear glorious bodies like Christ, believers must give themselves to the work of calling men and women to faith in Christ and to the work of ensuring they remain in Christ.

In some contemporary evangelical circles, it is not popular to speak of priorities. To prioritise one thing is seen as demeaning and devaluing another. Writers are quick to point out that there is nothing more 'meritorious' or 'valuable' in overtly *Christian* work as opposed to *secular* work and that we should reject the idea of 'our "secular work" in our office or laboratory as having no eternal consequences, whereas our "sacred work" in our Sunday school class has'. But this understanding, in turn, effectively downplays any sense of eschatological priority.

Unquestionably, the road sweeper and the pastor stand equal before God, and as the road sweeper does his work, he *is* serving the Lord and will be rewarded (Col 3:23–24). Whatever their employment, Christians can and must glorify the Lord through their work. The way that they do their work means that their work has meaning and significance and is valuable. We must not lose this Reformation and biblical emphasis. Nevertheless, it is also true that the work of evangelism and edification, is *the* work that the Lord is doing in the world through his people. We must not lose this priority. It is *this* work that Paul gave his life to. It is *this* work that Paul's colleagues risked their lives for. The resurrection means that it is *this* work that every Christian can and must give themselves to.

Both quotes are sections of an article from Peter Orr which more fully fleshes out these views. It is worth reading later by scanning the QR code.



6. Would you now change or sharpen how you initially answered question 5?

C. Putting It All Together

1. How does this passage help shape our view about the priorities of life now?

2. How does this passage stir your heart for the Lord?

3. What does it currently look like for you to abound in the work of the Lord?

4. What things do you need to consider in light of 1 Cor 15:58? How might you increasingly abound in the work of the Lord?

5. How would you now answer the godly and gifted Christian who says ‘everything I do at work is just as much of a priority as doing ministry. Why would I do gospel ministry?’

D. Prayer

Break into small groups and pray for God to grow you to be driven by the hope of the resurrection and grow in abounding in the work of the Lord.

Session Three:

Character and Gospel Ministry

A. Reflection

From what you've heard from God's Word so far at MTS Recruit, can you share one thing that has been particularly encouraging to you?

Pray for your time together.

B. Looking at God's Word: Character and Gospel Ministry

1. What kind of character and what kind of characteristics do you think someone should have if they're considering gospel ministry?

- a. What kind of character or characteristics do you notice in a gospel worker that you look up to?

2. Read 1 Timothy 3:1-13. This focuses on the qualifications for someone aspiring to be in ministry (the things Paul is looking for in a faithful minister). List the qualifications in this table according to gifts and godliness:

Gifts	Godliness

3. Any questions or comments about the things in this list?

4. What is the main emphasis - gifts or godliness?

5. How does this emphasis shape your thinking as you consider vocational gospel ministry?

6. Discuss the statement: "if I'm struggling with sin in any of the areas from 1 Tim 3 then I shouldn't consider vocational gospel ministry."

a. How does 1 Tim 4:15 help this discussion?

7. If you decide not to pursue vocational gospel ministry, does growing in these areas of godliness matter less? Why/why not?

C. Putting It All Together

1. As you think about vocational gospel ministry, do you find yourself thinking more about the gifts or the character that the Bible requires?

2. Go back to the table you filled out for 1 Tim 3. In which of these areas has God already been growing you in the last year? In what way?

3. Which areas of this list do you want to grow in? How could you grow in this? Eg. what can you pray for, who could you speak to for help? Spend some time reflecting on this now.

4. How would you know if you have the character required to pursue vocational gospel ministry?

D. Prayer

Break into small groups and pray that God would grow you in godliness.

Session Four:

Decisions and Gospel Ministry

A. Reflection

From what you've heard from God's Word so far at MTS Recruit, can you share one thing that has been particularly challenging to you?

Pray for your time together.

B. Looking at God's Word: Decisions and Gospel Ministry

1. What are some good reasons for a person to decide to do a Ministry Apprenticeship?

Read Ephesians 4:1-16.

2. What is the same among all believers?

3. What does v7 mean?

4. What are the gifts that God gives?

a. How are these gifts different from the gifts Paul talks about in 1 Cor 12:4-11?

b. What is the common theme among the gifts in Eph 4:11?

5. Why does God give these gifts to the church?

- a. What could it look like for these gifts to function in the way God intends? How have you seen shepherds and teachers at work in this way?

6. Why does God NOT give these gifts to the church? (think of ways that we might wrongly view evangelists, shepherds and teachers in our churches)

- a. What would it look like to see shepherds and teachers function in this way?

C. Putting It All Together

1. What's the significance of Eph 4:12-13 for those who are considering gospel ministry?

2. How have you personally benefitted from God's gifts of evangelists, shepherds and teachers?

3. Has anyone told you that you should consider being an evangelist, shepherd or teacher?

4. What are some good reasons for not pursuing vocational gospel ministry?

5. What are some bad reasons for not pursuing vocational gospel ministry?

6. What's stopping you from taking the next step to pursue vocational gospel ministry?

a. Are they good reasons?

7. What's the next step for you in considering vocational gospel ministry?

8. Are there any questions you haven't had a chance to ask or want to come back to before we finish?

D. Prayer

Thank God for his gift of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. Pray that God would help you consider how you will best serve Christ and his church.

