

“Thanks God It’s Monday”

A summary of a 6 week teaching series at Toowoomba Community Baptist church



Introduction

In August-September 2013, the Toowoomba Community Baptist Church conducted a six week sermon series on the topic, *Thank God It’s Monday* (TGIM).

Our goal was to attack the **sacred-secular divide** – the pervasive belief that there are some segments of life that are really important to God (prayer, church services, church-based activities) while others are not (work, school, university, sports, the arts, music, sleep, hobbies etc.)¹

We have a leisure-time Christianity, not a whole-life Christianity²

Our contention is that this belief undermines the effectiveness of the church in witness and evangelism by ignoring the contexts where Christians spend most of their time; the places where they have most opportunity to be fruitful; but also the places where they often struggle to see the relevance of their faith.

Our desire was to encourage our congregation to see themselves as **full-time Christian workers** (FTCW) wherever God has placed them. We called these places **frontlines** - places where a Christian spends the majority of their time outside the church where they are in contact with non-Christians. We challenged our people to see themselves afresh as **whole-life disciples**.



This report documents our first tiny steps over a six week period on what we suspect will be an ongoing journey as we think through the implications of what it means not just for individuals but also the church as a whole to have a commitment to being **whole-life disciples**.

98% of Christians are not properly envisioned or equipped for their mission in the 95% of the time that they're not involved in church?

¹ Mark Greene, 'The Great Divide', LICC, 2010, p.10 (available from the Transforming Work)

² The quotations on the grey boxes are from the LICC

Key Elements

Six sermons

The program was built around two major elements – a 6 week sermons series and a supporting small group set of studies (see below).



Pastor Sam Jackson preaching the final sermon of the series – note the banners in the background & the TTT space

Broadly, the first three sermons were the ‘theory’ that set the background and painted the big picture of how the Bible thinks about work. The final three sermons were designed to be case studies looking at a boss (Boaz), a public servant (Daniel) and three people whose lives in many ways were examples of faithful service (Esther, Nehemiah and Esther). Hyperlinks to listen to the sermons are provided and you can contact the author for a PDF of the relevant PowerPoint presentation (info@transformingwork.com.au).

The topics and broad content of the sermons was as follows:

Title	Bible	Key Points
Is work a blessing or a curse?	Gen 1-3	Creation and Corruption: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work is good, part of God’s intention • Work is fallen, it gets hard! • Sacred/secular divide
Mango or Mandarin?	Rom 8:18-25 Rev 21/22 1 Cor 15:58	Cross and consummation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus as a worker (carpenter) • Jesus as our redeemer – his work on the cross • Redemption of all creation, new heaven and new earth • Church gathered and scattered (link to Jeremiah 29 from small

Title	Bible	Key Points
		studies) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole life discipleship
Can I really make a difference in my workplace?	Various	The 4M Model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model Godly character and service • Minister grace and love • Make good work and culture • Messenger of truth/justice and the gospel
Case Study – Boaz the considerate Boss	Ruth 2	Looking at Boaz, an example of the 4Ms as a boss
Case Study 2 – Daniel the dedicated public servant	Daniel 1-6	Considering Daniel as a public servant with a lifetime of service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Identity • Integrity
Case Study 3 – No Ordinary People	Esther	Summary of the series looking at the example of Esther: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God has uniquely designed you to be where you are • God desires for you to consider others above yourself • God desires that you clothe yourself with humility

“This Time Tomorrow” segments

Each Sunday we included a ‘TTT’ session where a member of the congregation was asked three simple questions about their frontline in an interview format:

- What will you be doing this time tomorrow?
- What is the best part about being a Christian in doing that?
- How can we best pray for you?

Each segment went for 3-5 minutes and concluded in prayer for that person on their frontline.



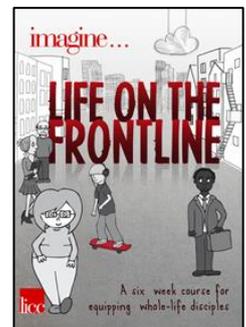
Small Group Studies

Alongside the sermon series, about 15 of our small groups used the LICC’s [Life on the Frontline](#) DVD material.

While the focus on this series is broader than the workplace, it was an excellent complement to the sermon

series and enabled everyone in the congregation to engage with the key ideas mentioned earlier.

The key focus of the LOFL resource is to help participants explore the concept of frontline and how, in a small group and in the wider context of the church, we can support one another on our frontlines – work or otherwise.



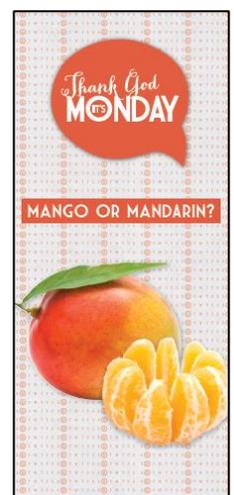
Copies of the DVD are available from the author for a cost of \$15. The [leader](#) and [participant](#) guides are downloadable from the LICC site, Supplementary notes were also developed which are also available from the author,

Key Language and Symbols

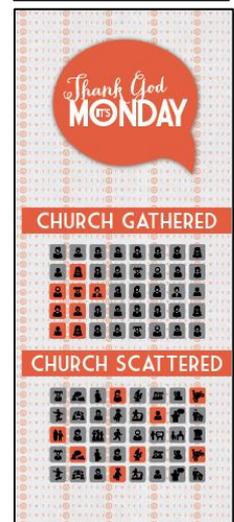
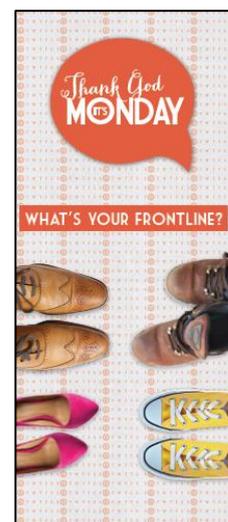
Language

In presenting the series we wanted to keep the key concepts in front of people. This served two purposes:

- As a teaching tool, so that key ideas and concepts were in the foreground
- Developing a common language – for some people these ideas were completely new, while for others they resonated with long held beliefs or suspicions about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus



The key concepts and the associated graphics used in the banners and PowerPoint presentations were as follows:



Whole-life-discipleship: A commitment to allow the Lordship of Christ to impact

every area of the individual disciple’s life. We asked people whether the Christian life was like a mango or a mandarin. Answer: Like a mango because it is a whole, not broken into segments only some of which God is interested in.

Frontline: The place where a Christian spends the majority of their time outside the church where they are in contact with non-Christians. To emphasize the concepts that frontlines are ‘out there’ we used a variety of shoes to symbolise the many different contexts in which our people live out their faith.

Church Gathered/Church Scattered: The understanding that when the church gathers (Sunday services, home groups), a key task is to affirm, inspire, train, equip and encourage Christians for the times when they are the church scattered (workplaces, neighbourhoods, schools etc.)

Symbols

During the sermon series, two symbols were used – a Baskin-Robbins pink taster spoon and the FTCW badges mentioned above.

The pink spoons³ reminded people that they were to be a foretaste of the coming kingdom on their frontlines. We encouraged people to post pictures of themselves on their frontlines with their pink spoon on the church Facebook site



A final symbolic event was the commissioning for frontline work in the final service. People were encouraged to bring along a symbol of their frontline and Pastor Sam Jackson read a [commissioning prayer](#) (see opposite).



I spend an hour a week teaching Sunday school and they haul me up the front of the church to pray for me. The rest of the week, I'm a full-time teacher and the church has never prayed for me. That says it all.'

The Response

So what has been the response to this series? The term Frontlines is now a part of the language used in our congregation. There is frequent reference to being on the frontline and the church leadership is grappling with what it means to be a church that equips its members for frontline ministry. We think we may have started on a journey!

2 strategies of evangelism: (1) To recruit the people of God to use some of their leisure time to join the missionary initiatives of church-paid workers, or (2) to equip the people of God for fruitful mission in all of their life" Which strategy do we use most? Which is most likely to bear fruit?

A Commissioning Prayer⁴

God our Father, as disciples of Jesus, we accept our commission from you to invest our lives in others.

Give these workers in your harvest the power, wisdom and courage to boldly live the Kingdom life in all the places of your choosing.

May Jesus be seen in their lives and may they always and everywhere model the life of Christ with authenticity and great zeal.

Give them eyes to see the path of service you desire for them and ears to hear the cry of the world's needs that you have equipped them to meet.

Father, as your Son modeled for us what it means to be a servant by washing the feet of the disciples, may they exhibit a servant attitude in all they do.

May you be their Lord, light, and guardian in the work you call them to. Grant them perseverance when tired, that they would not grow weary in doing well.

We commission them into your service, in Jesus' name.

Amen

³ See Amy Sherman, "Kingdom Calling – vocational stewardship for the common good", IVP, p.23

⁴ <http://www.soul-purpose.info/userfiles/file/Commissioning%20prayer.pdf>