“Cure for the Common Life”
(Men’s midweek lesson
based on the book
by Max Lucado)
2/11/13
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• Introduction
  o Here’s my aim in this lesson:
    ▪ That each of you:
      • Finds meaning in your career.
      • Finds your sweet spot at work and at church.
      • Feels great about who God made you to be, and what specifically God’s equipped and called you to do.
      • Enjoys, and excels in, your service to God because:
        o You’re doing what you love to do.
        o You’re doing what you’re good at.
        o And therefore God is glorified in your everyday life.
  • Transition =) Much of the following material is taken from: “Cure for the Common Life”, by Max Lucado.
    o Here is the big idea:
      ▪ Use your unique gifts (strengths)
      ▪ To make a big deal out of God (to glorify God)
      ▪ Every day of your life (at work, home, church, etc.)
  • One: Use your unique gifts
    o Ephesians 4:7-8 = “But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.”
      ▪ We all have unique gifts given to us by Christ himself.
    • Q: What are yours?
      o Romans 12:6-8 = “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. 7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”
      ▪ We all need to “show mercy”, but if it seems to come more naturally to you than others:
        • EXCEL in it
        • Bless us with that gift
        • Show us how it’s done
        • Lead the way in “showing mercy”
We spend half of our lives at work, and yet... (stats from book):
- Unhappiness on the job affects ¼ of the American work force.
- ¼ of employees view their jobs as the #1 stressor in their lives.
- 7 out of 10 people are neither motivated nor competent to perform the basics of their job.
- 43% of employees feel anger toward their employers often or very often as a result of feeling overworked.
- 1/3 of Americans say, “I hate my job.”
- 2/3 of Americans labor in the wrong career.
- Others find employment success, but no satisfaction.
- Most suicides occur on Sunday nights.
- Most heart attacks occur on Monday mornings.

God wants you to:
- Enjoy your work
  - Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 = “A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, 25 for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?”
- Excel in your work
  - Colossians 3:23-24 = “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”
    - The story is told of an observer who wondered why Michelangelo focused so much attention on the details of the corners of the Sistine Chapel.
      - “No one will ever see them,’ he said.
      - Michelangelo’s reply was: “God will.”
- Glorify God in your work.
  - Colossians 3:17 = “And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”
    - “in the name of the Lord Jesus” =
      - by his power
      - and to his credit

Transition =) Q: So, what’s “the cure for the common (unhappy at work) life”?  
- A: Find your sweet spot.
  - Q: How do I find my sweet spot at work, at church, and in life?  
    - When God gives an assignment, he also gives the skill.
      - So, study your skills to reveal your assignment.
    - Matthew 25:15 = “To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability.”
      - Your ability unveils your destiny.
      - As he calls, he equips.
Look back over your life.
  • What have you consistently done well?
  • What have you loved to do?

Stand at the crossroads of your enjoyments and successes and find your uniqueness.

You do something in a manner that no one else can.

Childhood interests forecast adult abilities:
  • Example: A civil engineer remembers that as a boy he loved playing with Legos; loved putting stuff together.

So, to get direction for the future, read your life backwards.
  • Job placement consultants at “People Management International Inc.” have asked over 70,000 clients this question: “What things have you done in life that you enjoyed doing and believe you did well?”

Reflect on favorite memories:
  • Q: What were you doing?
  • Q: What entranced you, energized you, engaged you?
  • The details may vary, but:
    ▪ your bent,
    ▪ your passion,
    ▪ what you yearn to do, you keep doing.

The current of your life’s river keeps dropping you off at a particular bank:
  • Always:
    ▪ Fixing things
    ▪ Challenging systems
    ▪ Organizing facts
    ▪ Championing the small
    ▪ Networking behind the scenes
    ▪ Etc.
  • It comes easily to you.
    ▪ Not without struggle, but with less struggle than your peers.
      • You wondered why others:
        ▪ Found hitting a baseball, or diagraming a sentence, so difficult.
        ▪ You had a knack for it.
        ▪ That’s a gift!

Note: Find your own unique sweet spot; not someone else’s.
  • Exodus 35:30-35 = “Then Moses said to the Israelites, "See, the LORD has chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, 31 and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts-- 32 to make artistic designs for work
in gold, silver and bronze, 33 to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic craftsmanship. 34 And he has given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others. 35 He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as craftsmen, designers, embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, and weavers— all of them master craftsmen and designers.”

- God:
  - chose Bezalel and Oholiab for a specific task.
  - filled them with:
    - the Spirit of God,
    - with skill,
    - ability
    - and knowledge in all kinds of crafts
  - to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze
  - to cut and set stones,
  - to work in wood
  - and to engage in all kinds of artistic craftsmanship
  - And He gave them the ability to teach others.
    - He filled them (those they taught) with skill:
      - to do all kinds of work as:
        - craftsmen,
        - designers,
        - embroiderers in blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen,
        - and weavers
      - all of them master craftsmen and designers.”
- God specifically prepared Bezalel and Oholiab for that task.
  - They couldn’t do what Moses did.
    - And Moses couldn’t do what they did.
    - They needed to find their own sweet spot.
  - And when they led the work on the tabernacle, they were in their “sweet spot”:
    - The intersection of:
      - Their strengths
      - God’s glory
      - And their everyday life (their work)
- Like Bezalel and Oholiab, God has:
  - called you to a unique work
  - equipped you specifically for that work
  - and wants you to live in that sweet spot.
  - Envision the Sculptor who carved “the Thinker” out of a rock.
• The sculptor:
  • chisels away a chunk of stone,
  • shapes the curve of the kneecap,
  • sands the forehead…
• Now envision God doing the same thing when he made you:
  • Engraving you with:
    • An eye for organization
    • An ear for fine music
    • A heart that beats for justice and fairness
    • A mind that understands math and science
    • The tender fingers of a caregiver
    • The strong legs of a runner.
  • M.P. = He made you unique!
    • He made you and then broke the mold!
• Every single person is unique:
  • Their own DNA
  • Their own personalities and temperaments
  • Their own experiences
• Steven Curtis Chapman song: “Fingerprints of God”:
  • “When I look at you
    I can see the fingerprints of God.
    And I know it's true –
    you're a masterpiece
    that all creation quietly applauds,
    and you're covered with the fingerprints of God.”
    Never has there been, and never again
    will there be, another you.
    Fashioned by God's hand, and perfectly planned
    to be just who you are.
    And what he's been creating
    since the first beat of your heart
    is a living, breathing priceless work of art.
    You're covered with the fingerprints of God.”
  • M.P. = You’re a masterpiece of God…
    • Hand-crafted for his purposes.
    • Perfectly prepared for your destiny.
    • Now, you just need to find your “sweet spot”…
• Two: Use your unique gifts to make a big deal out of God.
  • Rom 11:36 = “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To
    him be the glory forever! Amen.”
    • We exist to exhibit God, to display his glory.
    • We serve as:
      • canvases for his brush stroke,
- papers for his pen,
- soil for his seeds,
- glimpses of his image.

- Don’t be selfish and greedy. Use your gifts to glorify God.
  - 1 Peter 4:10 = “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”
  - We learned this in “The Treasure Principle” series:
    - Matthew 6:19-21 = “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

- God endows us with gifts so that we can make him known.
  - 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 = “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”
  - God endues:
    - the Olympian with speed,
    - the salesman with savvy,
    - the surgeon with skill.
  - Q: Why? For gold medals, closed sales, or healed bodies?
  - A: Only partially. The big answer is:
    - to point people to God
    - to herald him
    - to proclaim God’s praises
      - 1 Peter 2:9 = “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”
    - Live so that He’ll get the credit.
    - Exhibit God with your uniqueness.
    - Magnify your Maker with your strengths
    - Enrich God’s reputation.
    - When people are impressed with you, point them to your Maker.

- M.P. = Use your unique gifts to make a big deal out of God (glorify God).
- Three: Use your unique gifts to make a big deal out of God every day of your life.
  - Your career consumes half of your lifetime.
Shouldn’t it glorify God?
Shouldn’t those 40-60 hours a week be done “in the name of the Lord Jesus” too?

- Our work matters to God as much as our worship.
  - Romans 12:1 = “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.”
    - Our weekdays matter to God as much as our Sundays.

- Transition =) Q: What if my job is a misfit; I’m not in my sweet spot there?
  - A: Consider changing careers.
    - It’s your life; take charge of it.
  - BUT… before you change professions, try changing your attitude toward your profession...

- Transition =) Three keys to having a great attitude at work, even if you don’t love your job:
  - One: Do what you can, remembering that God uses little things to make a big difference.
    - (Read story from page 115 of book...)
  - Two: Remember that God loves every act of kindness – no matter how small.
    - Matthew 10:42 = “And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”
      - Small acts of kindness mean a lot to God.
    - With God:
      - Every person matters.
      - Every day counts.
      - Every deed counts.
  - Three: Don’t underestimate the importance of “good deeds”
    - Ephesians 2:10 = “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”
    - Acts 10:38a = “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good...”
    - 1 Timothy 5:9-10 = “No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, 10 and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.”
      - One stay-at-home mom keep this sign over her kitchen sink: “Divine tasks performed here.”
      - An executive hung this plaque in his office: “My desk is my altar.”
      - Helen Keller once told the Tennessee Legislature that when she was young, she had longed to do great things and could not, so she decided to do small things in a great way.
• Examples:
  o Letting a guy go before you in check-out line because he looks like he’s in a hurry
  o Giving a dollar to the boys in front of Publix who are raising money for their basketball team
  o Giving change to the beggar on the street corner
  o Taking the time to talk to a child in fellowship
  o Pick up a piece of trash on the carpet
  o Let someone in who’s trying to merge in traffic
  o Open doors for people
  o Say something encouraging to the cashier
  o Etc.
• Ephesians 6:7-8a = “Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does…”
  o M.P. =
    ▪ Do all the good you can,
    ▪ by all the means you can,
    ▪ in all the ways that you can,
    ▪ in all the places that you can,
    ▪ at all the times that you can,
    ▪ to all the people that you can,
    ▪ for as long as you can.
  o Clarification…
    ▪ Q: Jeff, are you saying, “Just let your light shine?”
    • What about:
      o evangelism?
      o and making Disciples?
    ▪ A: No! You proclaim the gospel with BOTH your mouth AND your life!
• 1 Peter 2:9, 12 = “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light… 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”
  o You proclaim the praises of God with BOTH your mouth AND your life!
• Close
  o Proverbs 10:1 = “A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son grief to his mother.”
    ▪ Let’s spend our lives:
      • Bringing joy to God
      • Making him proud of us
      • Glorifying Him in our everyday lives
• And proclaiming Him to others.
  o Q: Cure for the common life? A: Live in your sweet spot.
    ▪ Use your unique gifts (strengths)
    ▪ To make a big deal out of God (to glorify God)
    ▪ Every day of your life (at work, home, church, etc.)
  o Result:
    ▪ God will be glorified
    ▪ And you will be happy and productive!
  o D-Groups (handout summary of lesson and discussion questions)