

Dear Teacher,

The collapse of a condo building in South Florida has brought suffering and loss to many. We use that news story in this lesson as an opportunity to discuss how we build good foundations in our lives and in the lives of those for whom we care.

If you'd prefer a different topic, look at our second lesson, which explores why, in the context of the pandemic and economic stress of the past year plus, many jobs are going unfilled as employees quit, do not return to their previous places of work, or hesitate to enter the job market for the first time. We take the opportunity to consider the meaning of work in the human experience.

We are also happy to announce the results of our recent survey of TWW subscribers. We asked if, now that churches have reopened for in-person meetings -- or will do so soon -- you wanted to us to keep supplying the full lesson in the student version, as we have been doing during the pandemic, or return to supplying only the abbreviated lesson in the student version, as was our practice before the pandemic. By a substantial margin, you told us you like to have the full lesson in the student version. So that will be our standard practice going forward.

You are welcome to email the student version of either lesson to your class members, depending on which lesson you prefer to use for your class time. To do so, [click here](#).

May God bless you as you teach the scriptures this week.

The Editorial Team of *The Wired Word*



Search for Survivors Continues at Florida Building Collapse Site, but Many Still Unaccounted For The Wired Word for the Week of July 4, 2021

In the News

On Thursday, June 24, at approximately 1:20 a.m. EDT, two major sections of Champlain Towers South, a 12-story beachfront condominium building in the Miami suburb of Surfside, Florida, suddenly collapsed. About 35 people were rescued from the uncollapsed part of the building, and two more were pulled from the rubble. Eleven injured survivors were treated at hospitals. As of this writing (on Wednesday), 16 people have been found dead and 147 are unaccounted for. (Check national news for updates on these numbers.)

Search and rescue work continues around the clock, but the likelihood of any more people being found alive in the rubble diminishes as time passes. No survivors have been found since the first day. Rescuers are hampered by the sheer volume of debris, and by the fact that the debris is shifting and some is still falling from the portion of the building that remains standing.

Rescue crews from all over Florida have been helping. The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has sent assistance, and crews from Israel and Mexico are also working at the site. But Col. Golan Vach, the commander of the Israeli National Rescue Unit that's assisting in the search, told CNN's Wolf Blitzer that people who were sleeping in their beds when the building fell in "are under four or five meters [13 to 16 feet] of concrete."

Vach said that of all the places he has done similar work -- Turkey, Haiti, Albania and Mexico, for example -- this site is the most difficult because of the way the building pancaked on itself.

As of Tuesday, crews had removed about 3 million pounds of concrete -- over 850 cubic feet -- but much more is still in place.

The last link in the list below takes you to a surveillance video that captured the building's collapse, which came down in two sections. As seen on the video, the large north-central portion of the 40-year-old building fell first, isolating the northeast section, which dropped about nine seconds later. There were 136 units in the building and 55 were destroyed as the two sections pancaked.

What is striking as you view the video is how quickly it all happened -- so quickly that most people in the first section likely never had a chance to even get out of bed. And the second section fell so soon afterward that those occupants had no chance either. It appears from the video that one or two lights came on in apartments in the second section, but those were quickly snuffed out as that portion collapsed.

While a 2018 inspection of the building found some deficiencies and cracking, which were since scheduled for repair, it's unclear at present what caused the building to give way. It is known that one woman in the building was on the phone to her husband moments before the collapse, telling him that a crater had appeared in the pool deck. That woman is now among the missing.

A six-person team from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), is conducting a preliminary investigation of the collapsed building's materials, history and applicable building codes at the time the structure was built, the ground surrounding the building and numerous other factors. The team includes scientists, structural engineers and a geotechnical engineer.

As the search for more survivors and victims continues, so does the work to explain the cause of this disaster, in hope that knowing that may help head off similar catastrophes.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[Death Toll Rises to 12 in Surfside Building Collapse as Search and Rescue Teams Hold Onto Hope of Finding People. *CNN*](#)

[After the Collapse of Surfside's Champlain Tower: a Day of Dread, Helplessness, Heroism. *Miami Herald*](#)
[Miami Condo Collapse: Woman Told Husband on Phone She Saw Pool Cave in Before Building Fell, Report Says. *Fox News*](#)

[These Are the Challenges Rescuers at the Collapsed Building in Surfside Are Facing. *CNN*](#)
[Video Shows South Florida Building Collapse. *Fox 13 Tampa Bay*](#)

Applying the News Story

Although it is likely to be several months before we will have conclusive answers about the cause -- or causes -- of the building collapse, a structural engineer TWW consulted said that among the possible factors that will need to be investigated are these:

- Poor maintenance leading to loss of capacity in lower floor columns.
- Design mistake that led to a failure 40 years later.
- Improper construction, whether unintentional or due to fraud.
- Geotechnical issues, such as ground settlement or even a sinkhole.
- Improper structure modification, such as removing a column to change the layout of a floor.
- Intentional malicious act.

While the answers are not yet available, we know that buildings need to be constructed on suitable sites and with good foundations. It's not a stretch to apply the same principles -- laying solid foundations on good sites -- to our lives. In one sense, the importance of this is so obvious that it can seem trite to even talk about it, and in another sense, spelling out what this means in one's life can be so nebulous as to spur an unwillingness to spend time on the topic. But good life-foundations is a topic the Bible takes seriously, and that's an important reason for us to discuss it in this installment of *The Wired Word*.

The Big Questions

1. What sorts of qualities do you consider essential to make a good foundation for one's life?
2. How are the qualities you named in #1 gained and assimilated in one's life?
3. If you somehow missed getting a good foundation when you were young, what can you do about it now?
4. For the individual, Christian faith can begin in any of several ways: an "ah-hah" moment, accepting its claims as one grows up in the church or by the gradual persuasion of what one studies, or by a determined pursuit of the truth, or by other routes. How do one's foundational values fit into all that?
5. How do your foundational commitments help when having to make a decision where the right thing to do is not obvious? or where the way forward seems to call for making an exception regarding your foundational commitments?
6. What can cause erosion in the good foundations of a Christian life? How do you maintain your life foundations?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Matthew 7:24-27

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell -- and great was its fall!

(The whole Sermon on the Mount -- Matthew 5-7 -- is the context for these verses.)

Jesus told this parable at the end of his Sermon on the Mount. In the parable, neither man is chided for not starting with a good foundation. As far as we can ascertain from this short account, both men built equally well. They may even have used the same house plans and same sort of building materials. Neither one cut corners.

But then bad weather hit. Rains fell, floods rose, winds blew and beat on the whole area. And only one of the two houses survived. The reason? The house that endured had been built on rock; the other had been constructed on sand. That builder had made a fundamental mistake in site selection.

So with the parable, Jesus tells us that having a good foundation for our lives is not the whole story. We also need to build our lives on good sites as well.

But what does that mean? Jesus actually tells us. This story of the two builders comes at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus talked at length about godly attitudes and behaviors. He began with

the Beatitudes, which call for his followers to hunger and thirst for righteousness and ask them to be peacemakers. He went on to say that murder is evil, but so is the hate and unrestrained anger that leads to it. Adultery is wrong, but so is the lustful spirit. Loving our neighbors is good, but loving our enemies is even better. Coming to the altar is good, but only if you've first made peace with your brothers and sisters. Turning the other cheek, withholding criticism, doing good without seeking credit, living without greed -- all of these things are part of the way of life he called for.

This parable then, is a fitting conclusion, for Jesus begins it by saying, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock." In other words, those who take Jesus' teaching to heart and live their lives accordingly are building on solid ground.

More than just a good foundation or upbringing, Jesus is getting at the things to which we commit ourselves. Where is it that we have planted our spiritual feet? Jesus says that those who first, *listen* to his words and second, *act* on them, are like the wise man who builds on rock.

Questions: To what degree are listening and doing at the heart of Christianity? At this point in your life, is your need to learn more or to put into practice what you already know? or both?

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home ... (For context, read 6:1-9.)

Proverbs 22:6

Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray. (No context needed.)

These passages are both about providing the stuff of good foundations to our young people. The Deuteronomy verses are explicitly about giving children what they need for a good religious foundation, but the proverbs verse can be applied more broadly.

It's characteristic of children not to take the long view. They want to do something now because of the immediate benefit. The fact that there may be unpleasant consequences down the road generally does not come into the picture. We expect that of children, and we try to help them grow in perspective. But it's also characteristic of many adults.

Questions: Whose responsibility is it to help children learn life values? learn religious values? find faith? Why? In what ways is the willingness to take the long view a foundational value?

Psalm 28:1

To you, O LORD, I call; my rock, do not refuse to hear me, for if you are silent to me, I shall be like those who go down to the Pit. (For context, read 28:1-9.)

Here, the psalmist calls God "my rock," which is a common image in the Old Testament for God (see, for example, Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 18:31; and Isaiah 17:10, but there are many more). As used in these verses, "rock" seems to denote the eternal strength and unchangeableness of God (i.e., "Rock of Ages"). At the same time, the Rock that is God is a place of shelter from the wind and in the rock's shadow, from the heat (see Isaiah 32:2).

Yet it can also mean something like "a solid place on which to stand," indicating that trusting God means that the ground does not get yanked out from beneath one. As the psalmist says above, if God is silent, "I

shall be like those who go down to the Pit [the place of the dead]," but his confidence is that God *does* hear him.

Jesus declares that those who hear and practice his words are like a man who builds his house on the firm foundation of a rock (Matthew 7:24-27). Jesus renames his disciple Simon to be "Peter" (*petros*, a piece of rock) in acknowledgment of his confession that Jesus is "the Christ the Son of the living God," which he proclaims the "rock" (*petra*, mass of rock) upon which he will build his church (Matthew 16:16-19).

Elsewhere in the New Testament, the apostle Paul applies the rock image to Jesus (1 Corinthians 10:4).

Questions: Read Jesus' remarks in Matthew 7:24-27 (above) about the house built on sand versus the house built on rock. How does the Old Testament "rock" image for God add to your understanding of his comments? When have you experienced God as a rock?

Ephesians 2:20-22 (CEB)

As God's household, you are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. The whole building is joined together in him, and it grows up into a temple that is dedicated to the Lord. Christ is building you into a place where God lives through the Spirit. (For context, read 2:11-22.)

In this passage, Paul is addressing people who grew up without the knowledge of God and Christ (see vv. 11-12) but who now through Christ have become part of "God's household." As such, Paul says, "you are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone."

With those words, Paul seems to put to rest the notion that you can't gain a foundation later in life. In terms of the Christian faith, meeting Christ is enough to start one's life over -- which may be why we sometimes call it being "born again" -- and thus we are "young" enough to start foundation building at that point. Paul is saying that a certain amount of foundational material comes along with receiving Christ.

Questions: When has your commitment to Christ caused you to make a decision you would not have made otherwise, or agreed to do a task you would not have done otherwise? What was the outcome? How do you feel about that decision or task now? Assuming Christ is the chief cornerstone, what other building materials go into our lives of faithfulness?

For Further Discussion

1. The possible death toll from the building collapse is 163 (the 16 known dead plus the 147 still not accounted for). That's a high number, but less than the number lost in some plane crashes. Why do you think that this particular tragedy has garnered so much attention and empathy?
2. Comment on this: There's an old story about a dying Scotsman who was alone with his daughter in their cottage when a ferocious storm hit. There was strong wind and heavy rain, and the daughter thought her father might be worried. Thinking to put him at ease, she offered to read the Bible to him. But he said it wasn't necessary. "I thatched my roof before the storm began," he told her.
3. Respond to this, from TWW team member Mary Sells: "I live in Bay Harbor, adjacent to and within 1/2 mile of the collapse. I was awakened at 6 a.m. on Thursday to a text and phone call from our 'red alert' that comes whenever there is something people in the three communities of Bay Harbor, Bal Harbour and Surfside need to know. I have more or less been in shock ever since.

"I do not know anyone personally who lived in the building, yet friends of friends are among the dead and missing. The young boy pulled alive from the rubble is the baseball teammate of my landlord's

son and, tragically, his mother was killed. Another knows the family from Puerto Rico who came to attend their grandfather's funeral and now six family members are lost. Another is a longtime friend of an elderly woman who is lost.

"To watch and listen and read news and consider the families and friends, what they are experiencing, is beyond words ... it seems to me the experience of these survivors, and maybe of those of us in the area, will be a shared grief."

4. Here are a couple of additional articles that may be of interest regarding the building collapse:

[Miami Is Used to Disasters. The Surfside Collapse Felt Different. *TIME*](#)

[A Devastated Jewish Community in Surfside, Florida, Begins Burying Its Dead. *Religion News Service*](#)

Responding to the News

Pray for all those involved in the building collapse, whether they be victims, survivors, family members, emergency workers, administrators or investigators.

This is a good time to listen to the hymn "[On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand](#)" or "[How Firm a Foundation.](#)"

Prayer

We pray for your merciful presence with those keeping watch in hope their loved ones may yet be found alive. Strengthen the rescue workers, comfort those who have lost friends and family members. Be with all who do your work of mercy and care, in whatever form they are charged or able. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Other News This Week

Labor Shortage Complicates Efforts to Reopen the Economy as Public Health Restrictions Ease The Wired Word for the Week of July 4, 2021

In the News

With higher Covid-19 vaccination rates and easing travel restrictions leading to greater demand for tickets, American Airlines recently announced plans to cancel around 1% of its flights in July due to a labor shortage at some of its hubs.

While demand for goods and services is rising in Long Island, New York, other businesses are reducing hours or making other adjustments due to an inadequate number of workers available. Few or no job seekers are knocking on their doors this year, despite lucrative incentives such as signing bonuses, higher wages, and housing designed to attract workers.

A record 44% of small businesses said they could not fill open jobs in April, according to the National Federation of Independent Business.

"Demand for workers is literally off the charts," said chief economist Stephen Stanley of Amherst Pierpont Securities.

"That really is the vaccination job boom," said Julia Pollak, labor economist for online job site ZipRecruiter.

In the early days of the pandemic, when New York City residents were hit hard by the virus, many fled to Long Island, scooping up available housing stock, leaving precious little affordable housing for seasonal workers who normally rent. In some cases, closed borders, public health regulations and more limits on

visas and immigration, have made it more difficult for temporary foreign workers to come to the United States to work.

More 16- to 19-year-olds are working nationwide, but many find working at a camp with friends after being isolated for months more appealing than bussing tables or working at a cash register in a short-staffed business.

Economists cite different factors that are contributing to the shortfall of workers: ongoing concerns about Covid-19; limited childcare, eldercare, transportation and affordable housing; stimulus checks that may be financially more advantageous than wages from low-paying jobs. Another \$300 in federal weekly unemployment benefits, approved in March, is set to expire in September. Some workers also struggle to manage remote learning and family obligations.

The labor shortage is exacerbated by the fact that some workers have retired, changed careers, enrolled in classes to retool, launched their own companies, became discouraged and discontinued their job search, or decided to hold out for better opportunities.

Nearly half of job seekers say they would like a remote job, even after the pandemic, according to ZipRecruiter. But not all jobs can be performed remotely, and some workers would need to be retrained to work in completely different fields.

In the early stages of the pandemic last year, job openings fell to 4.6 million. Job openings in the United States topped 8 million this March for the first time ever, the Labor Department said in May. The number of job openings is now well above pre-pandemic levels.

This April, 4 million people quit their jobs, marking the highest level of U.S. resignations since 2000, when the Bureau of Labor Statistics began tracking this number.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of non-farm job openings reached 9.3 million on the last business day of April. Hires were little changed at 6.1 million.

Marketer Cathy Cowan and a handful of other job seekers recently attended a job fair featuring 45 hospitality businesses in Kansas City. Cowan is contemplating switching to food service or event planning, which she hopes might give her more time for family and pay a better wage. The pandemic caused her to reevaluate whether her career path was adding to her quality of life. She dismissed the idea that extra unemployment benefits were keeping people from going back to work.

"A lot of people were forced [by the pandemic] to say, 'What's my passion in life? What do I really want to do? What are my choices?'" said Pat Sullivan, vice president of Human Resources for the Raphael Hotel in Kansas City.

Carol Schmidt, a senior director for human resources recruitment at staffing firm Morgan Hunter of Overland Park, Kansas, said potential recruitees are increasingly concerned about "company culture and work-life balance."

"I think people just want to be able to work a job where they're respected, that gives them a pay that they can live on and be able to support and enjoy their families," Cowan said.

"The balance of power has shifted toward the workers," said economist Frank Lenk of the Mid-America Regional Council. "Demand has snapped back faster than supply."

More on this story can be found at these links:

[There Are Now More Jobs Available Than Before the Pandemic. So Why Aren't People Signing Up? NBC News](#)

[U.S. Job Openings Soar to Record 8.1 Million, But Businesses Can't Find Enough Workers. MarketWatch Job Openings and Labor Turnover Summary. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

[There Are Jobs in the Hamptons. If Only Workers Could Afford the Rent. Yahoo.com](#)

[Labor Crunch Gives Kansas City Workers Leverage as Employers Scramble to Find Workers. The Kansas City Star](#)

Applying the News Story

There are hundreds of references to work in the Bible, with evidence of guilds, job training and apprenticeships, the establishment of standards and qualifications for specific jobs, a variety of responsibilities across agricultural and non-farming economic sectors, civilian and military positions.

People toiled as burden bearers (manual laborers), stonecutters and masons, carpenters, ironworkers, metal workers, handymen, lumber workers, woodworkers and carvers, construction workers, architects, skilled artisans, musicians, textile workers, jewelers, priests, judges, government workers, officials, tax collectors, census takers, overseers, administrators, scribes, inventors, cooks, bakers, winemakers, shepherds, hunters, agricultural workers, sanitation workers, gatekeepers, security guards, soldiers, traders, educators, childcare providers, healers, etc.

Some work environments, such as the Egyptian system of slavery seen in Exodus 5, are toxic. In that situation, Pharaoh fought Moses and Aaron (vv. 4-5), who were advocating for a few days' break for the Israelite slaves. The ruler ordered the supervisors to make the work harder, not easier, to require that they meet quotas without giving them the resources they needed to fulfill the demands (vv. 9, 13-18).

While hard work was honored in the Mosaic law, rest from labor was also given its due, in the form of a weekly sabbath or day of rest (Deuteronomy 5:13-14).

The Big Questions

1. Have you ever experienced unemployment for an extended period of time? Describe what that was like?
2. What, if anything, might prompt you to consider refusing a job offer, or leaving a job?
3. What, if anything, might incentivize you to accept a position, or remain in a job?
4. How does your faith help shape the way you approach work?
5. Has the pandemic (or some other crisis) caused you to contemplate whether you are using your time and talents in ways that bring satisfaction and meaning to your life? Have your spiritual, financial, career and life goals changed since the pandemic began, and if so, how?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Ecclesiastes 3:9, 12-13

What gain have the workers from their toil? ... I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. (For context, read 3:9-13; see also 2:18-26 and 5:13-20.)

The writer of this book ponders the meaning of work. He is frustrated that after his death, he won't be able to control what will happen to all he had gained from his labor (2:18-21). Would his heir be wise or foolish? Would his heir squander everything the author had worked so hard to get, or handle his legacy with care? Who could tell?

Another source of frustration for many workers is that their toil causes them strain, pain, anxiety and sleepless nights (2:22-23.)

Questions: What stress or frustration, if any, does work add to your life? What might contribute to the feeling some people have that they do not gain sufficient reward for their toil?

What gain or pleasure, if any, do you get from your work? What might increase your sense of happiness and joy in the work that you do?

Psalm 111:2

Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. (For context, read 111:1-10.)

Ephesians 2:10 (ESV)

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (For context, read 2:1-10.)

The great works of God are lauded in the Psalms and throughout the Old Testament. Among those works are the creation of the universe itself, God's generous provision for his creation, and redemption of his people.

Paul wrote that out of his great love for us, God raised us to life out of the grave to which our sins had led us (vv. 1-6). As great as the Creation was in the beginning (Genesis 1 and 2), this new creation is even greater, since it involves God's work to rescue human beings from moral failure.

Questions: What works of God do you find particularly fascinating and delightful? Which of God's works would you like to study further, and why?

Where do you see God's work of resurrection and restoration of hope in the world today? What are the good works God has prepared for us to do? Compare the good works we are to do to God's work of raising people dead in sin to new life in Christ.

Matthew 21:28-32

[Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders:] "What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' He answered, 'I will not'; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir'; but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him." (For context, read 21:12-16, 23-32.)

After Jesus entered Jerusalem to the cheers of the people who hailed him as the messianic Son of David (vv. 8-9), cleansed the temple of money changers and buyers and sellers of animals for sacrifice (vv. 12-13), and cured the blind and the lame (v. 14), the religious leaders challenged his authority to do these things (v. 23).

Jesus responded by asking them where John the Baptist got his authority: from heaven, or from earth (vv. 25-26). When they refused to answer, Jesus told the parable in our text about two sons who had mixed

feelings about going to work for their father. He linked the first son to tax collectors and prostitutes, whose more obvious sin might seem to disqualify them from entering the kingdom of God. But in spite of their initial resistance to God, they believed John the Baptist's message, repented, and turned back to God. The chief priests and elders were more like the second son, who declared his willingness to do his father's bidding, but who didn't follow through.

David Cho, a reporter for *The Washington Post*, recently told the story of his own spiritual journey. Early in his walk with God, he thought he would go to seminary and become a missionary to China. But God opened doors for him to become a journalist, even though he never aspired to that position. Although he actively resisted going in that direction at first, he said he could now see the hand of God pointing him to the career where he could deepen his relationship with God and do meaningful spiritual work.

Questions: What might have caused the two sons to be ambivalent about working in their father's vineyard? Why do you think the first son changed his mind and decided to go to work after all? Why do you think the second son reversed his position and did not go to the vineyard?

When, if ever, have you felt ambivalent about doing some work you thought God wanted you to do? What competed for your time, attention and commitment?

When, if ever, have you felt God redirecting you to a personal or career path that was not part of your original concept of how you could best serve God? How did you react to that redirection?

Luke 5:4-7, 9

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. ... For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; ... (For context, read 5:1-11.)

On this occasion, people crowded around Jesus to hear a message from God. On the lakeshore he saw fishermen washing their nets beside their two boats, an indication that they were done fishing for the time being. Jesus asked Simon to take him out in his boat a little way from the shore so he could speak more easily and effectively to the crowd (v. 1-3).

After he finished teaching the people, Jesus turned his attention to the tired fishermen, who had worked all night without a single bite. "Try again!" he suggests. Simon Peter may well have thought Jesus' request unreasonable when he and his crew would have preferred to head home for a well-deserved nap.

Perhaps he agreed to do what Jesus asked just to humor the teacher and teach him a lesson or two about fishing that a carpenter couldn't be expected to understand. But it was Simon who got the surprise of his life, when they caught so many fish that the nets began to break. Even with the help of their partners in the other boat, they couldn't handle the enormous catch!

Somehow, Simon knew that before him stood an extraordinary person, in whose presence he felt unworthy and sinful (v. 8). Jesus reassured him and his companions, urging them not to be afraid, for in the future they were destined to catch people (v. 10).

Questions: Have you ever quit a job, or been tempted to quit? What factors would you consider in making such a decision?

What do you think prompted Simon to agree to do as Jesus asked, even though it may have seemed unreasonable at the time?

What lessons do you think Simon and the other fishermen learned from fishing that they might later apply to the work of fishing for people?

For Further Discussion

1. What are some reasons people might give for why they work?

What do the following verses tell us about the purpose of labor?

- Ephesians 4:28 *Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy.*
- 2 Thessalonians 3:8-9, 12-13 ... *we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. ... Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.*

2. What other benefits of diligent work do you see in [Proverbs 31:10-31](#)?

3. Has your experience during the pandemic caused you to reconsider the importance of work that is often less visible and frequently unpaid or underpaid, such as childcare, housekeeping, or eldercare? How can we recognize the value of work that is done inside the home?

Responding to the News

This might be a good time to consult with your denomination or local church officials to determine what resources and ministries are available to assist the unemployed, underemployed, overworked and underpaid in your community.

It might also be a good time to ask small business owners how your community of faith might assist them in acquiring, training, supporting, and retaining needed employees.

Prayer

Creator God, who models for us both diligent, creative work and rest and refreshment, help us to follow your example, taking pleasure in labor and joy in times of relaxation and rejuvenation. Help us to support those who are transitioning between jobs and uncertain about the nature of work moving forward. In the name of Jesus, who offered rest for the heavy-laden laborer and burden-bearer. Amen.