

ENDORSEMENTS

What Others Are Saying

"One of the great things about this career ministry is that it incorporates evangelism, discipleship and care, helping people of all ages and stages, from students to seniors, at all socioeconomic levels and ethnicities. The seven-step process and curriculum [in *Created for Good Works*] helps turn messes into masterpieces, and workers into worshippers."

PASTOR DERWIN L. GRAY

*Founding and Lead Pastor, Transformation Church,
Indian Land, SC, Author of *Limitless Life, Hero and
High-Definition Leadership**

"Read the first eight pages of this book and you'll develop a clear vision of the need for career ministry at your church. Then, in the chapters that follow, Brian will show you what goes into an effective career ministry and how to get one started at your church. An important book for pastors and church leaders!"

STEVE GRISSOM

Founder, Church Initiative: Divorce Care & Grief Share

"What a great resource for pastoral care and congregational development as well as for developing a congregational ministry to help people discover their calling from God! It is very pragmatic and spirit-led."

REV. PHIL TOM

Pastor, Eastchester Presbyterian Church, Bronx, NY

CREATED
— *for* —
GOOD WORKS

Why the Church should help people find
JOBS, CAREERS, AND GOD'S CALLING

BRIAN RAY

foreword by Pastor Derwin L. Gray

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For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
Ephesians 2:10, NASB

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FOREWORD

A year after we started Transformation Church, one of our families asked for help to pay an overdue utility bill. The husband was unemployed and discouraged.

Another member of our congregation was in the meeting, and he offered to help him get work. Three things happened. We paid the bill. A career ministry began. The husband got a fulltime job and more of Jesus in his life.

Today our career ministry (led by non-paid servant leaders) provides a weekly support group, quarterly workshops, and one-to-one coaching. The team just launched a four-week course for high school students and their parents. We are partnering with a state prison to develop and train men in a faith-based, Christ-centered, job readiness program.

One of the great things about this career ministry is that it incorporates evangelism, discipleship, and care, helping people of all ages and stages, from students to seniors, at all socioeconomic levels and ethnicities.

Most importantly, the seven-step process and curriculum is based on the truth of God's word by the enabling work of the Holy Spirit. It turns messes into masterpieces and workers into worshippers.

The servant leader in that first meeting is my friend and brother in Christ, Brian Ray, who wrote the Work Book on finding jobs, careers, and God's calling. He not only equipped and trained our career ministry team, but he coached me, my wife and our daughter on college exploration. He has also resourced and supported over 100 other churches across the country.

As a fellow pastor and church leader, I invite you to read through this book. Consider your congregation and community in light of them all being created for good works, but they don't know it, yet.

Founding and Lead Pastor Derwin L. Gray

TRANSFORMATION CHURCH, INDIAN LAND, SC

Author of "Limitless Life, Hero and The High-Definition Leader: Building Multiethnic Churches in a Multiethnic World."

INTRODUCTION

Where does the Church fit in? How can we help those in need? We see the need every day, but figuring out what to do about it can be an overwhelming prospect.

Meet Julie. She is one of over 150 million people in the American workforce, and she can't stand going to work each day. Like Julie, over 50% of people who are employed are dissatisfied with their jobs.

Meet Bill. He has been actively looking for a job like 20 million others who are unemployed or underemployed.

Meet Tom. He loves his job, and he's great at it! But he wants his life to be more purposeful. Tom wants to make a difference with the skills he has.

Everyone desires fruitful and fulfilling work, but most have no idea that God created them for good works. How about you? Maybe you are a pastor or leader in a church. If so, you probably do understand that you are God's creation commissioned to walk in works God prepared for you. However, are you experiencing it every day? Are you clear about how God has made you? Can you discern which works are the ones He arranged for you?

Perhaps you lead or work for a parachurch organization, missions agency, Christian school, or community ministry. Possibly you are paid and on staff or you are volunteering. You might even be an individual who has gone through his or her own career transition or life transformation and wants to help others.

Whatever experience and role you have, do you feel trained and equipped to help others realize that they are masterpieces made for good works not only at work, but also in their whole lives? Can you help people see the good works God has prepared for them? Can you bridge the highly felt needs people have for profitable and meaningful work to the real needs of their heart and soul for Jesus Christ? Consider the ministry connection between these two facts.

1. *The number one thing that most people want is a good job, according to the Gallup® World Poll.¹*
2. *The number one Person everyone needs is Jesus.*

MISSING MINISTRY FOUND

There is a global epidemic affecting every person, economy, and country on the planet. It is an allergic reaction caused by sin. Millions of people suffer and die every year from this dreaded disease. It causes unemployment, poverty, slavery, and war. Most people who have good jobs suffer from irritability, anxiety, dissatisfaction, and disengagement. Some are workaholics. Others are sloths. All need help, hope, and healing. Everyone needs a healer, including pastors and ministry leaders, as well as members of local churches and communities.

Jesus Is The Healer. His body, the Church, is to minister to its members and offer ministry to all. Yet, there is evidence that most pastors and churches are not equipped to evangelize, disciple, or care for people in their work lives. Even in the midst of the most recent economic and employment crisis, most churches were not even considering a ministry to help their congregations and communities.² In fact, many churches were cutting budgets, laying off staff, and closing their doors.³

The good news is that the missing ministry in most churches has been found. Over the past 15 years, the Crossroads Career Network ministry has served 446 churches and ministries. Pastors and ministry leaders are helping people hear and follow God's calling as it relates to work-life issues, career development, and even job search. Today we have in our network 82 churches and organizations offering faith-based, Christ-centered ministries to help people find jobs, careers, and God's calling. Our latest monthly newsletter emailing went to 33,000 subscribers from jobseekers and career explorers to pastors, ministry leaders, and teammates.

We are not only learning from our own network, but also from Christian workplace-focused leaders.

Tim Keller in his book *Every Good Endeavor* lays a strong foundation for faith and work together, proclaiming "Your daily work is ultimately an act of worship to the God who called and equipped you to do it – no matter what kind of work it is."⁴ How blessed to work as worship. Imagine rejoicing in the midst of labor.

Amy Sherman in her book *Kingdom Calling* describes rejoicing as "dancing in the streets." She writes about vocational stewardship for the common good as "the intentional and strategic deployment of our vocational power – knowledge, platform, networks, position, influence, skills, and reputation – to advance foretastes of God's kingdom."⁵ She goes on to say "If church leaders don't help parishioners discern how to live missionally through that work, they miss a major – in some instances **the** major – avenue believers have for learning to live as foretastes."⁶

As faith-at-work and marketplace ministries seek to bring Christ into people's lives Monday through Friday, they need an entry point where people are ready to listen, hear, and follow God. May I suggest that the tip of the arrow into people's work lives is helping them at decisive moments in their careers. It's called career ministry.

Because the number one thing that most people want is a good job, career ministry addresses a critical part of day-to-day living for three reasons.

1. *Jobs are the primary sources of our income and financial sustainability.*
2. *Work consumes an average of 45 hours/week of a person's life, about 40% of our waking hours.*
3. *People often find their personal identity and well-being in their careers.*

How often have you faced a situation in your ministry where a family is falling apart and the root problem seems to be financial instability? How many times a week does someone come into your church looking for food, shelter, or money to help with rent or utilities? The next time you hear—"Can you help me? I lost my job. I hate my job. I want God's calling"—you can have good answers to these questions, when you have a career ministry in your church. Career ministry can be a catalytic part of the "Big Three Ministries" in every local church...

EVANGELISM because people in the community come to the church for job and career issues—especially if they are unemployed.

DISCIPLESHIP because people in the church also have work issues, many times because they have an incomplete or incorrect view of work life being separate from their spiritual life.

CARE because job loss and work crises are often directly related to personal and individual counseling, financial ministries, and benevolence.

For example, financial ministries typically deal with debt and budgeting—the expense side of the ledger. Career ministry deals with the income side: how to do your current work better or find a different job that pays more.

Benevolence is another ministry in need of career ministry help. A family comes to the church to help get a utility bill paid or for food from the pantry. It's good to help fill these immediate needs, but career ministry can address the root problem: unemployment .

Your church has a critical mission in the community where God has placed you and at its core is the commission to reach people with the love of God. This book is designed to help you fulfill that mission by meeting people in the area of their most keenly felt needs. I'm not asking you to start a new program and add it to everything else that you're already doing. I'm asking you to allow God to open your eyes. It's more than likely that you'll discover this ministry already exists, at least in seed form, in your congregation, and that all the people, tools, and things you need for a successful career ministry are well within your reach. All they need is a platform and resources.

IN THE BEGINNING... WORK

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1

Then He made men and women in His image to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the animals.

God saw all He had done and said, "It was very good."

**By the seventh day God completed His work, which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.
Genesis 2:2, NASB**

God worked, and He gave us work. He took man and put him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it with instructions that from any tree he could eat, except do not eat from tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He then created woman with the man, and the two became joined together in work and life as husband and wife.

The purpose of this book is to cast a vision, build a solid case, and call to action the Church to offer career ministry, because...

**We are His workmanship,
created in Christ Jesus for good works,
which God prepared beforehand that we would walk in them.
Ephesians 2:10, NASB**

I first saw the opportunity for this ministry when I joined the Chick-fil-A restaurant chain. I was responsible for human resources, operator ventures, and administration at a time when the corporate purpose had just been established: "To glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us and to have a positive influence on all who come into contact with Chick-fil-A."

Part of my job was recruiting store operators and filling positions at the home office. Over 10,000 people per year were inquiring for less than a hundred

openings. I wondered what happened to the 9,900 who were turned away every year? Perhaps there was a way we could have a positive influence. We developed processes to appreciate and encourage everyone we touched, even though we had to say "no" at the time.

After I left Chick-fil-A and started my executive search business, I invited candidates to career group meetings. Early Monday mornings we met at the office, not only for everyone to share career guidance and job search tips, but also to pray for and encourage one another.

By 1997 we had more people than space. Since my church had empty rooms during some of the weekdays and nights, I asked if there was a place we could meet. During the church leadership meeting, I asked what turned out to be a critically important question: "Since we are receiving support and doing ministry in the church, may we put ourselves under your authority?"

They looked at each other—seemingly not sure what to say. I told them that as a group accountable to God for their church, they had wisdom and prayer power. "Yes!" they said. I reported to an associate pastor, and we were accountable to the church.

God's ministering through us actually became a ministry of the church. Each meeting was an adventure with God. Who would He bring? What would they need? How could we help?

After a Saturday conference with 453 guests hearing speakers and attending workshops, two men walked the center aisle of the empty sanctuary toward me. One man was tall, well dressed, and crying. The other was a friend volunteering at the event, and he looked concerned. He said to me, "I just met John on the front steps, and he had questions. I told him about Jesus, and he accepted Christ. What do we do now?" What a perfect place for that question!

I can still see the scene in my mind. What a priceless moment engraved in my brain, to witness an out-of-work executive meet Jesus and enter into the Kingdom.

ON YOUR MARK, GET SET, GO!

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus. Hebrews 12:1-2, NASB

This book is organized into three main parts:

PART 1: ON YOUR MARK explains the target and the vision for career ministry – “the why” of it. Our starting point is to understand God’s heart for people and how career issues influence people’s walk of faith so we can effectively minister through this area of their lives.

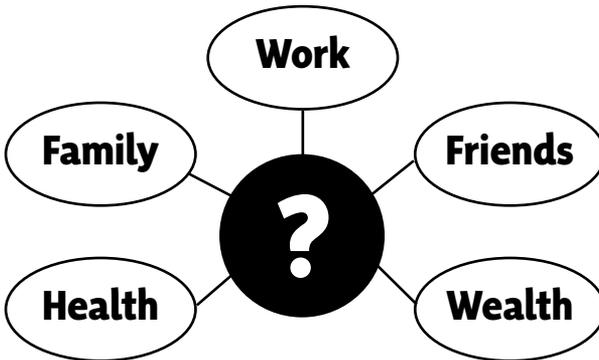
PART 2: GET SET presents “the what” of career ministry, which is the 7-step process we use in ministering to people through the Crossroads Career Network. This section will give you a basic understanding of the concepts of Christ-centered career ministry so you can help people find jobs, careers, and God’s calling.

PART 3: GO is all about “the how” to equip your church or organization to start and grow your own career ministry. This section will give you the tools to identify leaders, build a team, and help people follow God’s calling and strengthen the Church.

PART 1

On Your Mark

FIVE HIGHEST FELT NEEDS



THE ONE REAL NEED

CHAPTER 1

The #1 Thing MOST PEOPLE WANT

The largest behavioral economic research company on the planet, Gallup, Inc., created the World Poll that represents what seven million people think in nearly every country and every demographic and socio-graphic group imaginable. The chairman of Gallup, Jim Clifton, reported:

“Six years into our global data collection effort, we may have already found the single most searing, clarifying, helpful, world-altering fact.

What the whole world wants is a good job. This is one of the most important discoveries Gallup has ever made.”¹

If the number one thing most people want is a good job, then what are the implications of this highly felt need in ministering to their real spiritual needs?

How does unemployment, underemployment, misemployment, and even happy employment relate to the church’s core ministries of evangelism, discipleship, and care? Does helping people with their jobs, careers, and God’s calling link to their salvation, sanctification, and service?

I LOST MY JOB!

When someone you know or a member of your church asks for help because they lost their job, what thoughts come to your mind? How do you feel? Do you have a good answer? What can you do to help?

At the height of the employment crisis, *Christianity Today* reported:

“A February 2009 LifeWay Research survey of 1,000 Protestant churches nationwide found that 31% were considering creating or expanding ministries for the unemployed. Sixty-two percent had been approached for help by persons from their community, while 31% had been approached by their own church members.”²

When just one person asks for help because of unemployment, it can be a big, multi-faceted, potentially life-threatening problem.

First of all, if you lose your job, paychecks quit coming. No work, no money, no eating, no clothing, no place to live. Financial insecurity leads to personal loss of identity and vulnerability. Health is endangered by illness, accident, or assault. Wounds and sickness might go without care.

Second, job loss threatens marriage and family. Spouses can become anxious and angry. With the average period of unemployment exceeding six months, husbands and wives wonder what is the matter that another job is so hard to find. As I am writing these words, I am helping the spouses of two different marriages that blew up because one of the spouses in each was laid-off and had trouble finding the next job.

Third, it is tough to keep friends. You can't go do stuff with them, because most things cost money. Going to dinner. Seeing movies. Golf. After a while, they don't want to have to pick up the tab again. They wonder what's wrong. They are not sure what to say, so they say nothing. They don't call, email, or text. It's tough to make new friends, especially when most conversations start with, "So what do you do for a living?"

Fourth, being alone turns to feeling lonely. Emotions range from embarrassment to shame. Feelings of hurt, fear, and anger take turns beating you down. Self-respect leaves. Depression follows. Professional counseling is often needed but cannot be afforded.

God created us for good works. Even in the perfect place with everything provided, man had to keep and cultivate the Garden of Eden. If we are not working, then we must be sinning, right? Doesn't the Bible say that if a man will not work, do not let him eat?

Here is just one of millions of stories of distress. A 57-year-old software saleswoman in Seattle lost her job. After three years of looking and not finding a job, the solution she sought was swallowing a bunch of pills.³

"There was a reason: I had no hope. There was no point for the future. I had just lost another job opportunity that I thought I had done a really good job at, and they just dismissed me. I was old, and they're not going to hire me. With that, I couldn't have my life back."

She did not remember calling 911, but she did. Now she is managing more successfully since connecting with a local church and finding part-time work. "The fact that I've been able to get some temp jobs makes me feel like I am still worth something."

While she survived, others have not. With both the Great Depression in the 1930s and the more recent Great Recession starting in 2007, suicide rates spiked with the downturn of the economy and employment, according to studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Suicide Prevention Resource Center.⁴

A couple of years ago, a prayer request with the keyword “suicide” was flagged on our website. We were able to find the long-term unemployed man and connect him to a local church and a government-funded career center.

I HATE MY JOB!

Most people are dissatisfied with their jobs. In 2013, the percentage of workers satisfied with their jobs was only 47.7%, according to The Conference Board’s annual survey of job satisfaction.⁵

The Gallup 2013 survey report of Employee Engagement shows that 7 in 10 American workers are “not engaged” or “actively disengaged” in their work, meaning they are emotionally disconnected from their workplaces and less likely to be productive.⁶

While unemployment is most urgent and critical, those who are misemployed are more plentiful and pouting, because 50 to 75% of everyone who works is either dissatisfied or unengaged or both. Symptoms range from showing up for work just for the paycheck to being rebellious.

Since more of our waking hours are spent working than any other single activity, **misemployment can destroy attitudes and undermine aptitudes**. Here are some of the more common indicators you may be experiencing if you’re disengaged at work:

- *Stress*
- *Dislike the work*
- *Working for a bad boss*
- *Not very good at the job*
- *Spending too many hours*
- *Not making enough money*
- *Worried about being laid-off*
- *Bored in a rut or a dead-end job*
- *Feeling used, abused, and refused*
- *Do not believe in the organization’s culture, products, or services*
- *Want to be “on your own” as a contractor or maybe own a business*
- *Spending too much time “on the road again” traveling or commuting*
- *All of the above*

In the 1950s, popular singer Tennessee Ernie Ford recorded “Sixteen Tons” about a coal miner’s toil and trouble. It quickly sold over a million copies. Perhaps the lyrics would still resonate with millions of people today.

“You load 16 tons, and what do you get?
Another day older and deeper in debt.
Saint Peter don’t call me ‘cause I can’t go.
I owe my soul to the company store.”

Pastors and ministry leaders are largely unaware of the negative impact of being miserably employed, because, as Henry David Thoreau described in his book, *Walden*:

“The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation.”

The same is true for most women, and that’s important for two reasons.

1. *Nearly 60% of women are employed.* ⁶
2. *Women make up more than 40% of the American workforce.* ⁷

So, in summary, misemployment is a bigger problem than anyone imagines, which means it is an equally great opportunity for ministry.

I WANT GOD’S CALLING!

For most of my career, I have worked with successfully employed executives. Many of them loved their jobs, but they found that earning another dollar was neither motivating nor satisfying. They were looking for meaning, purpose, or significance. Some retired and started giving back, but even the philanthropy of time, talent, and treasure left them empty.

One of my clients was president of an insurance company and owner of a football team. He had more of what seemed like everything than anybody I know. Yet, I rarely saw him smile. He was always reaching for more and was never satisfied.

Even one of the most successful men in the history of the world had his issues with work. As the author of Ecclesiastes, he summed up his feelings of futility this way...

Vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun? Ecclesiastes 1:2-3, NASB

It is not until you submit all of who you are, what you do, and what you possess to the Lord that you can receive the hope of His calling, the riches of His glory, and the greatness of His power. Then, and only then, can you delight yourself

in the Lord and receive the desires of your heart. Then you can realize that you are employed for life, whether you love, hate, or lost your job.

THE LORD IS MY EMPLOYER

After 20 years of working with small groups of Christian job-seekers, my friend Barbara Rarden has written a great perspective in her book *Employed for Life*.

*“The Lord is my Employer.
I shall never be out of work.
He makes me to be His representative.
He leads me to places where I can be a blessing.”⁸*

All of a sudden this point of view redefines employment. God made us to work for Him, as He works in and through us. With God as our Employer, we are always employed, regardless of whether we are unemployed, underemployed, misemployed, or happily employed.

Being employed for life has two meanings for me...

1. *I am employed by God all of my life.*
2. *God’s employment is my life.*

God’s word and Gallup research seem to agree that work is simply about what we do every day, whether we are students, employees, employers, homemakers, or retirees. If we are breathing and reasonably healthy, we are to be occupied with work in some form or fashion.

If God is our Employer and we are employed for life, then we have to take another look at employment statistics. Instead of focusing only on the 150 million plus Americans in the workforce, we should look at our total population of over 300 million. Maybe it is even better to consider shifting our focus globally from a workforce of 3 billion to our entire planet’s population of 7.3 billion people. Or perhaps it is more helpful to look at the local workforce and population statistics of your own county, knowing that **each person was created on purpose and for a purpose**. Whether local or global, what a high calling to help people realize that they are God’s workmanship created for good works prepared for them.

EARTHLY GOOD

Jesus connected with people and their felt needs. He started with where people were, and then He brought them to where He wanted them to be. In other words, He was relevant to the needs that people felt.

Have you ever heard the phrase “So heavenly minded, you’re no earthly good?” Did you know it was in a song by Johnny Cash? Let me give you a few lines.

Come heed me, my brothers, come heed, one and all.
 Don't brag about standing or you'll surely fall.
 You're shining your light and shine it you should.
 But you're so heavenly minded, you're no earthly good.
 If you're holding heaven, then spread it around.
 There's hungry hands reaching up here from the ground.⁹

It is easy to be so taken with the glory of God that we forget many people are daily struggling at work and at home and in between. It's easy to get so focused on Sunday that faith seems to be irrelevant Monday through Friday. If you sat down with most church leaders today and asked them about the biggest challenges they face, they will probably mention disengaged members somewhere near the top of the list. Apathy spreads like a virus through the American church, and it's difficult to stamp out. Could the root of this epidemic have something to do with the disconnect between Sunday and Monday? Is it possible that members *want* to be more engaged, but just don't see the relevance from what's taught in the pulpit to what they do from nine-to-five each weekday?

Researcher George Barna in his book *Growing True Disciples* reported "**eight out of every ten believers are more likely to count dimensions of life other than spirituality as the springboard to success and meaning.** Elements such as family, career development, and financial achievement are among the emphases most likely to divert people's attention from their spiritual growth."¹⁰ To reach and minister to people, it is critical to know their felt needs and how they think about them.

Imagine a family walking into your church for a Sunday service for the first time. They've put on their best clothes, so they look nice on the outside, but inside they're desperate. It's been seven months without income from a job, and it's become a struggle to put food on the table and pay the rent. They haven't come because they know their need for salvation. They have come because they know their need for hope. What will they see, what will they hear at your church? Will it give them hope for their future? People come hungry for hope ... are we feeding them?

JESUS KNOWS WHERE THE FISH ARE

Seven men had spent all night fishing. It was early morning, and they had caught nothing. All of them were uncertain about their future. They had been part of something great together, but now they weren't sure if that particular line of work was going to continue. A few of them had been professional fisherman before, so it added insult to injury that they couldn't seem to net one fish.

And then some stranger starts yelling at them from the shore, telling them to cast their net on the other side of the boat. Can you imagine how astonished Jesus' disciples were when they cast their net and felt the boat lurch? The haul of fish was nothing short of miraculous. For Peter, it was reminiscent of how Jesus first called him away from his occupation as a fisherman and into his calling, so he threw himself overboard and swam to shore. The rest paddled and struggled with the boat and the net. How tired and hungry everyone was. Arriving on shore, they discovered Jesus had already made a fire and was cooking.

I love the way Jesus teaches. After three years of discipleship, He is now getting His men ready to launch the ministry He is giving them. It is like the last lesson before He leaves the planet, and they graduate to conquer the world. He knew their immediate need for food and rest, so He prepared everything and invited them to eat. I imagine everyone had seconds. They are full and feeling their fatigue. What a perfect time for the punch line.

FEED MY SHEEP

Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." John 21: 15-17, NASB

In asking these questions and giving these commands, **Jesus was meeting a greater need in Peter than his hunger for fish and bread.** Peter needed a purpose, and that purpose was to feed God's people. Jesus knows where the fish are. He knows how to give us what we need, when we need it. He knows how to meet our felt needs in order to bring us to a place where we understand our true need to follow Him.

Jesus was giving Peter a new perspective on his career and calling. Peter was ready to go back to his old career in fishing, but Jesus was telling him it's time to be a shepherd. Career ministry isn't just for the jobless and disgruntled individuals who walk through the doors of our churches. It's for all of us—sheep and shepherds alike. Everyone needs career ministry.

To learn more about and purchase a copy of
Created for Good Works, go to
www.CreatedForGoodWorks.org.