

Disciples in the Marketplace

Episode Three: My Spirituality is My Work

Quick Look Discussion Guide

Check out the *Disciples in the Marketplace* [landing page](#) to view the **streaming video interview** with sign painter, Ruben Torres. You will also find additional backstory/bonus clips, as well as links to a [full transcript of this video](#) and the bonus/backstory clips. See group discussion questions for this episode about seeing grace at work below.



“My spirituality is my work.”
-Ruben Torres

In Episode Three, “My Spirituality is My Work,” the witness of Ruben Torres helps us see how our working life is itself a spiritual activity as we improvise and respond to the demands of our particular tasks – and learn from the ‘great masters’ who continue to help us see ourselves and others with grace.

Our Work is Our Spirituality

In the category of ‘**my work life is a prayer**,’ take a few minutes to reflect on and/or discuss one or two of the questions below.

Opening Group Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- Can you remember **a time when you prayed at work?** What was happening at the time? Was it a crisis (‘Help!’ or ‘Get me out of here!’) or more of a simple awareness that you needed assistance with the work at hand? This could include any time your work made you aware of God’s nearing or the gap between what you felt capable of doing and what was required of you in the moment. It could also be a moment of sheer delight (“I get to do this!”).
- If you chose a delightful workday memory above, **what kind of prayer fits that experience?**
- **How could prayer**, like the one from the first episode (“Jesus help me here, help me hear, help me heal, help me help”) **help you see spirituality in your work?**

Video Discussion Questions: What Did You See?

Cut to the chase: Watch the [Episode Three: My Spirituality is My Work](#) clip. See the video discussion questions below. Rubén Torres identifies his working life as the place where he senses God’s nearness. Whether it’s painting signs (his paying gig) or doing self-portraits through the style and technique of the ‘great masters’ like Monet or Van Gogh, he learns to see himself and others through the eyes of grace, making him a witness to grace at work, for life.

Choose one or two of the questions below to ask yourself and/or the group gathered as you consider what it means to be disciples in the marketplace:

#SEETHEPEOPLE

- What did you hear/see in Rubén's story? What will you remember?
- Do you see grace at work in Rubén's signs and paintings? Where?
- Do you ever sense God's presence at work? Share an example. What would it mean to experience your entire working life as life *with* God? Give an example of what a typical day at your job might look like if you (if you don't already) practiced the presence of God?
- Rubén says his first job working in the bakery was not about the work as much as just being with his dad. Have you taken or stayed at a job because of the people you got to work with?
- What jobs have taught you the most about work and life? What job would you do if compensation/money was not the primary concern?
- Rubén says that if you enjoy your work then that is probably your calling. Do you think that's true? Has it been true in your own working life? What, in your experience, is a healthy ratio of toil to bliss in a satisfying job?*
- Who taught you to do the thing you do at work? Do you think growth in grace we see at work has a learning curve? Who continues to this day to be an 'influencer' in your work?
- Do you ever sense that you are getting "help from above" when you are at work? Share an example.

Rubén Torres Quotes from the *My Spirituality is My Work* Video

"I think there is something of God in each of us because he made us to his image. And sometimes you don't have to be very artistic, but we have creativity – sometimes just to – finding creative ways to get through life, wherever – we have to be intelligent, smart or creative. And yes, I think we have a lot of God in us."

"When I am working very often, you know when I am trying to get the good work, I feel God's presence and I have a lot of resources through my experience, or whenever I am stuck with some project, I tried to see the way to get through and solve the problem in that moment."

"...my work [is] making me [a] better person."

Bonus/Backstory Video Discussion Questions: Stories Behind the Paintings

Los Amigos (02:00)

Bonus/Backstory Questions

- How have you seen grace in one situation illuminate another? Do our struggles and losses rhyme or resonate with other stories of trouble and the way love meets us there?
- Do you think learning stories of God's nearness in others' experience of loss and resilience sheds light on some of the ways God has been at work in your own life?

Self-Portraits (02:00)

Backstory/Questions

- How do you see yourself in the different life roles you must play? Father/mother, brother/sister, friend/supervisor, boss/employee, neighbor/church member?
- Is your 'work' face different from your resting 'home' face? Do people in your life notice these differences?

*Note that Rubén does not say that there are no challenges/problems to be solved or bad days in his sign-painting work. He also conveys to us that most of his compensation comes from sign painting.

#SEETHEPEOPLE

- Do you think your engagement with other faces in your daily life transactions might be remaking your face and the way others see you?† What does that say about the ways our labors can remake our very expressions?

Casa Azafrán Mural (01:30)

Backstory/Questions

- What kind of collaboration with others is required in your work? If you mostly work alone, who do you bounce your best (or questionable) ideas off of?
- Do you prefer flying solo or team work? Where do you see grace (and difficulty) in both?

43 Students (02:00)

Backstory/Questions

- Does your work create opportunities to humanize those with and for whom you labor? Are there times when you and those you work with feel like cogs in the machine of a get-things-done “grind culture”?
- Would it help in your work to be given an opportunity to really see all the people for whom you work – and then be given time to adapt your best work to their concrete life stories? Would this even be a value in your workplace?

† Like the furrowed brows from stress or the laugh lines from the joys and absurdities of working life.