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Vocation Is Mission:
CAN YOU KNOW THE WORLD AND
STILL LOVE THE WORLD?
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Spring Series
Dr. Steven Garber

"The secret of man is the secret of his responsibility."
Vaclav Havel

The following is transcribed from Part 1 of the spring "Vocation Is Mission" lecture series delivered by Steve Garber in the Restoration Anglican Church, Arlington, Virginia, on Wednesday, April 18, 2012

It is good to have you here tonight. Thank you for coming.

As part of a three-part series, tonight I am going to take up this question: "Can you know the world and still love the world?"

For thousands of good reasons, most of the time we decide that the more that we know, the less we care. I am the father of five little people who are now bigger people, and I have watched them and others along the way be given new and strange things to put in their mouths. So often, of course, the response is "yuck." Getting to know something, often a little person says, "of course I cannot love that. I won't put that in my mouth." At ages 10, 15, 20 or 25, it is surprising what things we allow in our mouths when before we would have said "never, never, never."

I think about conversations with World Bank economists, here in this part of the world and Northern Virginia, who have been in places where I have been and come from other parts of the world. I get to know them and they say to me at certain points along the way, "you know if there is wrong like that in the world...I have seen this now and now I know about this. I was part of this. You see, I was there last year when this happened." They look me in the eye with poignant feeling and say "How could there be a God if there is a world like this?"

From hopeful 20- and 30-somethings, who long for love and who long to be loved but find themselves increasingly disappointed by the possibility, to married men and women who have known and been known and decided that "now I know and I can no longer love." From the eager-to-change-the-world new Washingtonian who has not yet seen the sausage being made, to the wizened hill staffer-become-lobbyist who knows that Washington is a mess and decides to use it. In the words of the GSA administrator, infamously put as he was planning the Las Vegas Extravaganza, "As long as it lasts." From the visionary, newly-minted MBA graduates who have thought deeply and passionately about why business matters and find that the actual work of businesses is very messy, to the seasoned business executive who spent years and years working in Washington and all over the country who said to me, "it's so, so, so messy." Most of the time we find that the more we know of the world, the less we love the world. The more we know, the more disillusioned we are. The more we know, the more disappointed we are.

I want to walk this question out with you tonight for a while and I am going to do so by taking up four major points: *The Story of the Blood:Water Mission*; *Where Does it All Begin*; *To Know is to Love*; and *To See Ourselves as Implicated for Love's Sake*.

THE STORY OF THE BLOOD:WATER MISSION

Some years ago, at The Falls Church, on a Sunday morning in early January, my wife and I saw a good friend who had been gone from Washington for several months. Clydette Powell had been in Africa on behalf of USAID. The White House had asked USAID to send someone to assess the impact of drought and famine on disease in Africa. Clydette, being a physician with global experience for decades, was sent to do this analysis. We had a nice lunch on an unusual winter day in Washington when big snowflakes were falling and it all looked so beautiful. We asked Clydette, "What did you see, what did you see, what did you see?" Clydette, who is thoughtful, brilliant, good, and careful, kept saying, "It was outrageous. It was outrageous. It was outrageous. It was outrageous. What I saw when I walked through these nations of Africa, trying to understand the impact of drought and famine on disease, it was outrageous. It was outrageous."

The very next week I was speaking in Michigan at a college, under auspices of *The Veritas Forum*. They put on lecture series in universities and colleges across the country. I was speaking one night, Tony Campolo was speaking another night, and these guys who called themselves *Jars of Clay* were playing music the next night. In the context of university education, I asked the question, not unrelated to this one, about the responsibility of knowledge.

I began the lecture that evening with my friend Clydette's story and her experience and response, "It was outrageous. It was outrageous. It was outrageous." I talked about my friend, who had seen so much that seemed so deeply wrong. Yet, I knew Clydette well enough to understand that the more she knew about the outrageousness of the broken world we live in, the more implicated she would see herself to be. She would be giving herself for years to come and engaging more fully and completely in what she had seen, even outrageous as it was.

I went on to show a little bit of a film called "Magnolia," which was then a very big film among a certain type of person in American culture. It was written, produced and directed by Paul Thomas Anderson and set in the San Fernando Valley in Southern California. In the course of a day he walks through the lives of a whole bunch of people. Aimee Mann is the singer/songwriter whose music blends through the film. At a certain point in the story, she begins to sing a song, which has lyrics sort of like this.

"Why don't you just leave right now because when you get to know me you will leave anyway. "Why don't you just leave right now because when you get to know me you will leave anyway?"

Later, *Jars of Clay* wanted to talk about what they heard that night in Michigan. Over the next weeks and months we talked more and more. I found that they had seen themselves as implicated, somehow, some way, in the world of Africa and especially the impact of HIV and AIDS. Wanting to use their platform to address the need in some way, they didn't quite know

what to do with it. Over time, they called it the *Blood:Water Mission*. They called me one day the next fall and asked, "Steve, we play guitars. We don't know what to do with all this. Do you have any ideas for us?"

I had met a young woman a few weeks before who was pretty passionate and articulate. I said, "You know, she wouldn't cost you very much. Get ahold of Jenna Lee." They called her, met her when they were in Washington State, and talked with her. About a month later she wrote a 25-page senior paper for them, saying, "This is what I would do."

Unusually committed, passionate and full of energy, Jenna graduated and moved to Nashville. In the course of the last seven or eight years there have been one thousand communities in Africa that have been influenced and graced by the advent of new water systems and clean water supplies. Many clinics in their villages have addressed the needs of people with the complex diseases and hurts and sorrows of blood-borne diseases.

We had a big celebration last spring in Nashville, "The Well-Done Celebration," celebrating these one thousand wells in one thousand communities. Good work has been done; much good work has been done. Three times in the last year I have been down to Nashville, talking to Jenna and the staff of probably fifteen or twenty people representing diverse kinds of work within the organization. The question, as Jenna put it to me is,

"After all we have done, all of these years, what do we do now when Africa doesn't love you back? We've invested ourselves, given ourselves away, and worked so hard at this. Good things have happened. But you know what? Africa doesn't love you back. What are we going to do now? Could you come talk to us, about what we need to do to stick with it, to stay at it, when it gets harder and harder? The more we know the harder it gets. What do we do?"

WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

Where does it begin, this problem, this question, this dilemma, that when we know more, so often the harder it becomes? The less we care the more disillusioned we are and the more disappointed we become. Where does it all begin? Like everything else that is very important in this world, it begins in Genesis 1, 2 and 3. Strange it is to imagine this tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the very beginning of time. It is an epistemological temptation with a moral heart. Think about it. Why, out of all of the things in the whole cosmos, would God, in His own wisdom, choose to identify this tree as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? We see an epistemological temptation with a moral heart. "What will you do with what you know?" That's the question that comes out of this tree. "What will you do with what you know?"

I would say it's the primordial question, the perennial temptation; it is a question that keeps being asked and an answer that keeps being given. Every son of Adam, every daughter of Eve, in different ways, in thousands of complex ways, nuanced in your heart and mine, asks the

question and we answer it in the course of our lives. Most of the time we decide that we don't want to know because it will cost us more than we can bear.

The prism that makes the most sense to me is Roman 1. Think about this story that Paul writes to this group of people in the city of Rome when he says "all that you need to know about God and the world is so plainly revealed to you, through what He has done and who He is." In fact, it is so plain, so clear, and so powerful, that you are without excuse. You are without excuse. And yet, in the ways of your heart, the darkness of your heart, and the despoiling of your heart, what you do and what I do and what we all do is suppress. We repress that truth about the world, about ourselves, and about God, because, you see, we can't bear it. We can't bear it. We don't want to bear it.

Jesus, in the Gospel of John, puts it this way in a conversation with the Sadducees and Pharisees, "You don't want to know this because you can't bear to know it. You won't bear it. You don't want to bear it."

And so we suppress and we repress, resisting the connection between what we know and how we live, resisting the idea that we are implicated in what we know.

There was a great scholar of the Jewish religion in 20th century, Abraham Heschel. You can read many books by him on aspects of the Jewish religion. One I most love is *The Prophets*. It is a large book and it is easy to read. Heschel addresses the prophets and what they taught. It is the prophetic tradition at large, looking prophet, by prophet, by prophet, at what they taught and what it meant. In this grand book that Heschel has written, he takes up this idea that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is a God who knows and who feels what He knows. He is a God who sees and responds to what He sees. He is a God who hears and does. It is a God who knows and responds, a God who knows and does, a God who sees that "when I know things I feel things." This lament, through the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Micah and on and on, is:

How can you be my people, say that you know me, and you don't feel the things I feel?
You don't do the things I do. You don't respond as I respond. How can you say you know me but yet you don't do what I do?

Heschel, interestingly, argues that the prophetic position is written into a world of stoicism. Many of you probably have different relationships to what the word means. We could say, "I wonder why you are such a stoic?...He's a stoic, really...Why are you such a stoic?" We have ideas of what that may look like. Like every idea, every name of an organization, and idea of a movement, it is really human beings who are living in the world and trying to make sense of the world. I would say about stoics that they are people like you and like me, image-bearers of God living in God's world, in the broken, broken, fallen world. You can see where, living in this world, we don't want to have to connect what we know with how we live. We suppress and we resist and we repress because we don't want to have to deal with what we know, because that

question presses on every heart. What will you do with what you know? I don't want to have to be responsible for what I know. That's the dynamic of the human heart, from Genesis 3 all the way to Romans 1.

Stoicism is what? It is human beings who live in the brokenness of this world and find themselves not wanting to get very close to it. Because, why would you? We are not romantics. We can't be. People who love God can't be romantics. It's too broken of a world to romanticize about it. There is just too much wrong in the world to think that somehow it would be an easy thing to follow God and take up his cares in the world. Anybody who has lived very long in the world knows that the older you get the harder it becomes, in many ways. Because, the more you know, the harder it is to love.

How are we going to be people who live our lives this way? The stoics, human beings as they are, were always people who could see the hurt, the wound, the frailty, and the messiness. They would say, "Well why would I want to get that close to it." Stoicism had, as its chief virtue, *apatheia*. It is a word we don't use anymore. *Apatheia*. We use the word *apathy*; it is the closest we get to it. But like many of these words, the cognate is the word that we get the word *passion* from. We have the words *compassion*, *empathy*, *apathy*, or *sympathy*. They are all related, as words, to one deeper idea. The stoics had this idea that it was the very heart of their lives. It wasn't a pejorative use of the word *apatheia*; rather, it was "this is the point of life, *apatheia*." *Apatheia* would allow you to say "Yes I know," but not get that close to it because "I don't want to not be happy. I will be a happy person in the end. I will not choose to somehow ruin my own happiness by getting that close to things that will bother me, burden me and somehow ruin my happiness, because I will be happy." Heschel takes up this look at the prophets.

Think about Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield who was a professor at Princeton Seminary about 100 years ago. He was a brilliant theological visionary. Among his many books is one of his essays, called *The Person and Work of Christ*. There is an unusual essay in it called "The Emotional Life of Our Lord." I have sometimes thought what an interesting thing it is to have a good Presbyterian theologian take up the emotions of God. It breaks some caricatures, doesn't it? Here, he takes up the emotional life of Jesus in particular. In the very first page of the essay, surprisingly, he echoes Heschel's thesis, not about the prophetic position but about the Gospel position. He says the Gospel is written into a stoic world—a stoic world again. What Warfield argues is that this is God incarnate. This is God in the flesh. This is God come to live among us. This is a God who says that "I won't stand outside history. I will enter into history. I will enter into history of a world marked by stoics." Stoicism again, where it is a wounded, messy, and broken world. "Why would you want to get that close to it? So of all things in every way, find a way to be happy. Don't let yourself not be happy."

Warfield takes up the Gospel of John 11, in particular. Because I have read Warfield and thought of him most of my life, I have come to the conclusion that if he is not right about this

and, in fact if John 11 didn't work its way out like it does, it would be harder for me to want to be a Christian. His argument recounts the story of Jesus and Lazarus,

When Jesus walks toward Bethany, hearing the news of the sickness and the strength of Lazarus, Mary and Martha meet him on the outskirts of Bethany where Lazarus is already dying. There, they are throwing dust in the air and ripping their clothes apart and wailing and crying out to heaven because Jesus, their friend, has come too late. Lazarus has died. Not so far into the conversation, we have these simple words, "Jesus wept."

"Jesus wept." As John takes those words and begins to push them out a little bit, he uses a word *embrimaomai*. *Embrimaomai* was the word Greek poets used to describe a warhorse. Raised up, its front hooves pawing the air, its nostrils flared out ready to enter into conflict, carrying a warrior but already being a warrior itself, is the war stallion. The Greek poets said the word *embrimaomai* "groaned deeply in spirit." That is how the New Testament often translated it; when Jesus "groans inwardly" He groans deeply in the spirit. It is that same word *embrimaomai*. For me, it is a line in the sand about my faith in all of my life. Because if God isn't like that, I am just not really sure I want to follow God. If God doesn't respond to the hurt of the world this way, to the tragedy of life in this way, to the wounds of the world in this way, and if God doesn't really care about it, why would I want to care about it? The stoics one more time.

Take the info-glutness of your life and mine and the reality of what I have called *sociological stoicism*. It may be that we have never read Epictetus, the Greek stoic philosopher, in our lives. We could live a good life, never having read Epictetus. I bless all of us not to. Epictetus may be the way in, but for most it will probably simply be being alive in the 21st century. James Billington, Librarian of the United States Congress, says he has to pay attention to a "very, very busy world" where The Library of Congress must catalog and account for 25,000 books a month, all day long, all week long, all month long. He asks a question, "As much of a challenge as it is for us at The Library, what are you going to do with all of this, America?" Are we becoming any wiser in this info-glutness culture?

A generation ago, in the mid 1980's, Neil Postman wrote his book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, looking at this hard question. I grew up pondering it as a person born in the 1950's and reading *Brave New World* and *1984*. The questions I pondered were, "Who will win? Will it be this, or will it be this? Which future will we have as people in America, in the world? Will it be Orwell's or Huxley's?" It is that question that Postman took up in his book. He argues that, hands down, Huxley won. It is an "amusing ourselves to death world," Postman argues. That was a way into this analysis of info-glutness, of a media-saturated world.

Walk your way across the last several decades and stop for a moment and we can listen to U2, an artistic group of musicians who "have a finger to the wind." They are like antennae; they are like those who get there first. 15 or so years ago, U2 was watching the world, listening to the world, with their artistic antennae out. Listen to their song called "Numb."

audience viewed music video

Numb by U2

Don't move
Don't talk out of time
Don't think
Don't worry
Everything's just fine
Just fine

Don't grab
Don't clutch
Don't hope for too much
Don't breathe
Don't achieve
Or grieve without leave

Don't check
Just balance on the fence
Don't answer
Don't ask
Don't try and make sense

Don't whisper
Don't talk
Don't run if you can walk
Don't cheat, compete
Don't miss the one beat

Don't travel by train
Don't eat
Don't spill
Don't piss in the drain
Don't make a will

Don't fill out any forms
Don't compensate
Don't cower
Don't crawl
Don't come around late
Don't hover at the gate

Don't take it on board
Don't fall on your sword

Just play another chord
If you feel you're getting bored
I feel numb
I feel numb
Too much is not enough
I feel numb
Don't change your brand Gimme what you got
Don't listen to the band
Don't gape Gimme what I don't get
Don't ape
Don't change your shape Gimme some more
Have another grape
Too much is not enough
I feel numb
I feel numb
Gimme some more
A piece of me, baby
I feel numb
Don't plead
Don't bridle
Don't shackle
Don't grind Gimme some more
Don't curve
Don't swerve I feel numb
Lie, die, serve Gimme some more
Don't theorize, realize, polarize I feel numb
Chance, dance, dismiss, apologize Gimme what you got
Gimme what I don't get
Gimme what you got
Too much is not enough
Don't spy I feel numb
Don't lie
Don't try
Imply
Detain
Explain
Start again I feel numb
I feel numb
Don't triumph
Don't coax
Don't cling
Don't hoax
Don't freak

Peak
Don't leak
Don't speak I feel numb
I feel numb
Don't project
Don't connect
Protect
Don't expect
Suggest
I feel numb
Don't project
Don't connect
Protect
Don't expect
Suggest
I feel numb
Don't struggle
Don't jerk
Don't collar
Don't work
Don't wish
Don't fish
Don't teach
Don't reach
I feel numb
Don't borrow Too much is not enough
Don't break I feel numb
Don't fence
Don't steal
Don't pass
Don't press
Don't pry
Don't feel
Gimme some more
Don't touch I feel numb
Don't dive
Don't suffer
Don't rhyme
Don't fantasize
Don't rise
Don't lie
I feel numb
Don't project

Don't connect
Protect I feel numb
Don't expect
Suggest

Don't project
Don't connect
Protect I feel numb
Don't expect
Suggest

I feel numb

Don't press
Don't pry
Don't feel
Gimme some more
Don't touch I feel numb
Don't dive
Don't suffer
Don't rhyme
Don't fantasize
Don't rise
Don't lie
I feel numb
Don't project
Don't connect
Protect I feel numb
Don't expect
Suggest

Don't project
Don't connect
Protect I feel numb
Don't expect
Suggest

I feel numb

Continued following audience-viewing of music video

I hope seeing someone putting a foot on someone's head and in their face wasn't too much for you. What is this about? It is an MTV version of a song. Maybe you have seen it. Maybe you have never imagined it before. But, here you have someone called "The Edge" who is one of the guitar players for U2 and the composer of the song. It is more of a Levitical-like litany, more than a rock song. It is a litany where he says "Don't, don't, don't," while he is having people put ropes on his neck and squeeze to kill him, blow smoke in his face, give him dollops of ice cream, and kiss him. All of these are pleasures and pains of this world, whether you like them or not. He will not be distracted, but from what? He's there looking straightforward at you, at me. Maybe, maybe not. About halfway through, Bono begins to sing. "I feel numb, I feel numb, I feel numb. Too much is not enough. I feel numb, I feel numb."

I would say that the flickering translucence on the edge of space is a TV screen more than it is anything else. You see, he is plugged into the technological world, to the info-glut culture. He will not be unplugged. He will not become distracted.

Nothing, nothing good.
 Good, not so good.
 Happy, not so happy.
 Pleasurable, painful.

Nothing can distract him from being attentive and plugged into the technological world. Bono and the rest of the band sing, "I feel numb. Too much is not enough. I feel numb. I feel numb. I feel numb."

That was written a decade and half ago. I realize now, carrying an iPhone with me all the time, "too much is not enough." How often, in the course of a day or a minute, or every five minutes, do you check your phone to see, "Did someone else come into my world? Did they know something else? Do we need to respond to something else again, right now? I did that two minutes ago when I was at the other stoplight. Should I look again, really?" No, "too much is not enough." Before we go to bed tonight, "too much is not enough"? Before we wake up in the morning, you're going to look again before the sun's up. "Too much is not enough." It is there for all of us. Artists are touching, feeling the world we live in before we get there. "I feel numb. I feel numb. I feel numb." And so these guys sing this song.

10 years after "Numb" and after 9-11, the May 2002 *Harpers Magazine* cover story was "The Numbing of the American Mind," by Thomas de Zengotita. Two years later, it became a book called *The Mediated*, and looked at the mediated character of contemporary life. "I feel numb." The numbing of the American mind.

More recently, a book called *The Shallows*, by Nicholas Carr, came out with a different but similar argument, in the line of the Postman thesis of us living in an amuse-ourselves-to-death

world. We have so much to take in; I have called it a sociological stoicism. There is so much going on around us. What are you going to do with it anyway? How will you respond? What will you do with what you know, other than to decide to turn the barometer of your heart and mind down because you can't take it in. You cannot take anymore in. Even though you live with a siren call, "Too much is not enough. Too much is not enough."

TO KNOW IS TO LOVE

To know is to love. "What are you going to do with what you know," is the question that echoes out of Genesis 2 and 3. What will you do with what you know? The Hebrew vision, strangely, wonderfully, deeply, importantly, is a vision that actually speaks into the heart of the very first temptation, that primordial temptation, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It could have been named anything in the whole universe couldn't it? But it is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Somehow, in the middle of all of that fallen, broken world, as it became so quickly, God in His own wisdom uses a word *Yada*, Hebrew for "to know." He says "When you begin to know as I want you to know, to have 'knowledge of' means to have 'responsibility to' means to have 'care for.'" Hear it again, "To have 'knowledge of' means to have 'responsibility to' means to have 'care for.'" If you know, then you care. If you don't care, then you don't know. You see, it's a very different dynamic about what it means to know and how we answer the question "What will you do with what you know?" It makes sense of strange words, strange ideas and visions that Hebrew Scriptures offer to us. "Adam knew Eve, his wife."

In the first chapter of Exodus, there came a pharaoh "who knew not Joseph." It is the very same Hebrew word *Yada*. It wasn't that he didn't know about Joseph; he didn't care what Joseph's reputation meant. He felt no loyalty to the name of Joseph in his own life and times, politically; he was finished with that legacy. It was all over; the chapter was finished. A new person in a new day, "He knew not Joseph."

Walk your way through these, the Pentateuch, the first five books. Again and again you find this word *Yada* playing itself out, always tying together with this dynamic, "to have 'knowledge of' means to have 'responsibility to' means to have 'care for.'" Working its way into the book of Proverbs, it has a place like this, "The righteous man cares about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern." It is the same Hebrew word *Yada* that is used there, as it is in Genesis 4 where "Adam knew Eve, his wife."

"How can you say you know me?" is the way the question comes to us in Jeremiah. "You build big houses and panel them with cedar but this is what it means to know me," declares the Lord. That's the way it works its way through the Old Testament. Hear it in the New Testament, "The Word becomes flesh and lives for a while among us." It isn't enough, as the Greek philosophers argue, to have the "ideal of justice, the ideal of goodness, the ideal of beauty." For the Hebrew tradition, it had to work its way out in life; it had to be grounded and to somehow be seen. You

had to see it be worked out. Incarnate in the Gospel it is "the word becomes flesh and lives for a while among us."

Come back to the Gospel of John with me, especially Chapter 4. Chapter by chapter, conversation by conversation, are always working out of this "Word become flesh living for a while among us." But chapter 4 is a strange, wonderful, interesting, and perplexing conversation of Jesus with a Samaritan woman.

Jesus, having been in Jerusalem, not having been heard, deciding to go back to Galilee, rather than doing as the Pharisees would have done and crossing the Jordan to avoid the Samaritans. He walks right up, through the Samaritan world. Fully human, fully God that He is, in the middle of the day He is hot, tired and thirsty. He asks a woman for a drink. In a simple conversation, "May I have some water?" turns into a perplexing and strange conversation because it is about water that "will never allow you to be thirsty again." And Jesus says to her "Go call your husband." "I have no husband," she replies. "Yes you've had five and who you live with now isn't your husband." She said to him, "but you are a prophet. You know me. How do you know me?"

It is a strange, wonderful conversation of great grace. But the surprise to me is the way that it ends. After this so very tender conversation with somebody, about such a tender part of life, she runs back to the village and she says, "This man has known everything about me." Implicitly she says, "And I have been loved. You come meet him too. You come meet this man who has known me and who has loved me. You see, I have been known by a lot of men in my life and not loved by any of them. And this man, He is different. You see He has known me and He has loved me. You see He has known me, He has cared about me. You come meet Him, too."

We could spend hours on that; I am not going to tonight. But I want to push this into the fourth dimension of our evening's outline.

TO SEE OURSELVES AS IMPLICATED, FOR LOVE'S SAKE

One of the most important intellectual influences in my life was Vaclav Havel, the great Czech playwright in the 1960's and 1970's. When communism was becoming increasingly oppressive to the Czech people, Havel spoke out as a playwright, artistically and artfully through his work on stage. Finally the communist government said "you have got to leave Prague" and so he went up into the mountains and spent some years of his life. Eventually he was imprisoned for much of the 1980's. Inexplicably, when the communist rule imploded, in 1989 and 1990, he was taken from prison and, in the course of a month, was made the president of Czechoslovakia. A few years later, when the people decided to separate, he stayed as President of the Czech Republic.

Over the course of the next 10 years or so, Havel gave speeches all over the world asking one question, "What are the conditions in which human beings can take responsibility for history?" He was asking not as a Christian, but as a concerned human being and an essential European political leader whose people had been oppressed by Nazis in the 1940's and the Communists in the 1960's and 70's. Both times, tanks literally were running them over and the oppressors were changing the textbooks, changing the schools, and re-writing the history of the people. Havel realized that his people had been victimized politically, socially, economically, and historically. He understood that as long as a person sees himself or herself as victimized, it is very hard to imagine a future. That's true in the most individual way, but it is also true more corporately, more politically. It is hard for a people that have been oppressed like that to imagine that you can do anything to change the future and step into the way that the world might be. So Havel asked this question in speeches all over the world, "What are the conditions in which human beings can take responsibility for themselves in history".

I can talk for hours about it but I will put it this way to sum it up. He said this, "The secret of man is the secret of his responsibility." The secret of man is the secret of his responsibility. The very core of who we are as human beings is our ability to respond. You see, that is what it is to be responsible. It is to be able to respond, to be able to respond, to be responsible. Not as a Christian, but Havel put it this way.

At The Library of Congress, Dr. Billington put together an event honoring Havel with the intellectual leaders from around the world; Havel gave the banquet address. "When we lose God in the modern world, we lose meaning, purpose, accountability, and responsibility," he said. So there is something about who God is and what God represents and means to the human heart; if we lose God, we lose meaning and purpose and accountability and responsibility. "The secret of man is the secret of his responsibility."

Back to my friend Clydette, somebody who has seen something "outrageous, outrageous, outrageous." You see, most of the time, as I get to know people, I would say that our response is to say "I've seen enough. I can't take anymore in. What am I going to do with that anyway?" In various ways, nuanced in your heart and mind, we decide to turn the barometer down. "What am I going to do with something horrific like that, outrageous like that?"

I have watched Clydette for the eight years or so since our snowy January lunch. She keeps going back to Africa and all over the world, month by month, entering more fully, more completely, more deeply, more persistently, into these complex questions of drought, famine and disease that affect all of us. She does so on behalf of all of us, because she is the physician at USAID who takes up tuberculosis in all of the countries in the world afflicted by this. She thinks it through, works it with other issues and solutions for all of us. She is somebody who has chosen, in fact, to enter in responsibly, for loves sake, to the wounds of the world.

Think about the band, *Jars of Clay*. I had breakfast with them a few weeks ago in Nashville, talking about many things including the progress, the movement, and ability of the *Blood:Water*

Mission to do what it does. *Jars of Clay* are no longer actively involved in it day by day, because others do it for them in their name. But they are still very interested in this and have given themselves to concerts, week by week. Wherever they go, all over the face of the earth, they raise the question again, "As you hear our songs and listen to our music, we want you to somehow see and hear our hearts because we care about this and we hope you will too." A decision to enter into, for responsibility's sake and for love's sake, the way the world ought to be.

My friend, Jenna, is almost 30 years old and more wizened and more seasoned. She's seen more of the sausage being made. It has become harder for her. As she put it to me quite painfully last year several times,

Steve, now I know that Africa doesn't love me back. What do I do now? How do I keep at it, when what I think I have been called to do doesn't respond as I want it to? You see it is more messy, more difficult. It hurts more. It costs me more. What will I do now?

I am in touch with her almost weekly, more often sometimes. We keep talking this through, working it out. How do you, "for love's sake, for love's sake, for love's sake," choose to become responsible for history?

Now it's not just Jenna, but a team of gifted, able, and passionate people who are fundraisers, organizers, graphic artists and water specialists and others who have taken this up. They all enter in and find that it is complex and difficult and it's outrageous. What do you do when you find it is outrageous? Can you find your way in, knowing what you know, rather than being turned off by it, disillusioned because of it, and disappointed in the face of it? But can you, for love's sake, decide, "I will enter in and be responsible?"

This past week Kate Harris and I were out in Kansas City. We put together, with a friend of ours who is a CEO of a corporation there, a gathering that he initiated last summer with us. My friend Dave is someone who sells things that many of your have in your homes—I know that is true—stuff all over the world. He is someone who has a great passion for wanting to do business the right way. Last summer he called me and asked,

Would you help me gather a conversation of other CEOs and presidents of companies who are also committed to this idea of doing business the right way; I need some help thinking these questions through. It is complex for me. It's not easy. I want to do the right thing, but sometimes I just don't know what the right thing is. And I would love to have some conversation partners. Can you help me find them?

Last week, in his corporate headquarters in Kansas City, we met with people who were serious, thoughtful leaders of businesses all across America. They were trying to ask the question together, "What is the responsibility of business?" It was that word "responsibility" that my friend Dave wanted to use. "What does it mean to be responsible in business? How do we

work out responsibility in the world of business?" It is a good word. "The secret of man is the secret of our responsibility."

Our credo at The Washington Institute is simply this, "vocation is integral, not incidental to the *missio Dei*, to the mission of God in the world." So there is my friend Clydette, my friends *Jars of Clay*, my friend Jenna and the team that works with her, my friend Dave, and the business leaders. We could go on and on and on and talk about people I meet with. For all of this, it is this vision that vocation is integral, not incidental, to the work of God in the world. To the *missio Dei*, to the mission of God in the world.

CONCLUSION

Next week, the Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities will be held at the Kennedy Center. At this annual event, someone is named the Jefferson Lecturer. This year, it is Wendell Berry. He is a gifted writer, poet, novelist and essayist. He is also a farmer in Kentucky. Somehow, working his horses, and keeping his sheep, he has become the most prophetic writer in American literature. He is the most serious essayist in America today. I have come to love his work and have read most of it. He writes about the importance of people and place, but not because we should all live on the banks of the Kentucky River. That's not his argument. What he is saying is that when we casually give up a relationship to people and place, we lose something crucial to our humanity. Think about the plague of an anonymous metropolitan city like Washington, DC. Here, you travel along the roads you don't know with people who you don't know and don't know you and who didn't know your grandfather and didn't know your father and don't know your brother. You shop in stores where they mostly don't know who you are. They don't really care, in one sense, who you are because they don't know who you are. You could be this person or that person and it wouldn't really matter to them at all. That kind of anonymity, I find, can be one of the hardest faces of life in a big city like this one. I am like everybody else. I want to be known. I long to be known. I long to know. I long to belong.

Somehow, finding my way into belonging, into a people, a place, a community, is one of the deepest yearnings of my heart. Meg and I have worked hard at this over the course of our years in Washington, DC. How do you, in a vast metropolitan world, connect to people and to place in a way that enriches and nourishes you? That is Barry's burden in all of his work.

He has a book of short stories called *That Distant Land*. I almost always require it of students that I teach. One is called "Thicker Than Liquor." I am going to tell you a little bit about the story and read you the last few words. It takes place in a little town called Port William, Kentucky. Uncle Peach is the brother of Wheeler Catlett's mother. When Wheeler is a little five year old and eight year old, Uncle Peach is just the most fun uncle ever to be imagined. He laughs, he tickles, and he plays. But at age 15 and 16, Wheeler realizes Uncle Peach is a drunk. He is an alcoholic and Wheeler no longer thinks he is fun and funny. He is embarrassed by Uncle Peach at that point in his life. He goes off to the university and comes back home from law school and decides to settle into the family world and the community where he grew up.

One day a hotel clerk calls to his mother and says that "your brother's sick and drunk and has messed up a room here at the hotel in Louisville. Someone needs to come pick him up." Nobody can go; his mother calls Wheeler and asks, "Would you go."

Wheeler doesn't really care about Uncle Peach, you see, but he does care about his mother at that point, at age 25. He has worked his way through his adolescent angst and angers and no longer despises his mother for being his mother and the things she cares about because she cares about them. Of course, he is drawn more in because he is beginning to love his mother and her loves. He says, "yes I will" and he gets on that train and he goes to Louisville.

The hotel room is a grand awful mess. Vomit, clothes, and sheets are everywhere. Slowly he puts his uncle back together again, gives him some coffee, and they go back home on the train. Uncle Peach throws up again and again on Wheeler and he sits through all that mess on the train. Finally, they get to the station and Wheeler decides that, of course, he needs to take Uncle Peach back to his house where the old bachelor lives alone. Uncle Peach retches and retches and retches. Wheeler yells at him at a certain point and puts him into bed. He gives him something to eat and drink and watches him for a while as he wrestles with his demons under the covers and can't settle down.

Finally, Wheeler decides that he will get in bed with Uncle Peach and sleep beside him through the hours of the night.

And so they waged the night, Uncle Peach striving with the Devil, and Wheeler striving with Uncle Peach. It seemed to Wheeler that the two of them were lost together there in the dark house in the dark sky. He could not have told the time within three hours.

Once, after they had passed through yet another nightmare, Uncle Peach, who had momentarily waked, said slowly into the darkness, "Wheeler boy, this is a hell of a way for a young man just married to have to pass the night."

"I thought of that," Wheeler said. "But it's all right." And he patted Uncle Peach, who went back to sleep and for a while was quiet.

Later, Wheeler himself went to sleep, his hand remaining on Uncle Peach's shoulder where it had come to rest.

And that is where daylight found him, far from home.

Well, my question to you, brothers and sisters, is this, at the very end of our evening: Which beds will you get into in this world, putting your hand on the shoulders of what part of this world, holding on through the hours of the night as you take up your vocation in this world? Barry puts it this way in an essay, *Word and Flesh*,

"Love is never abstract. Love is not by its own desire heroic. It is heroic only when compelled to be. It exists by its willingness to be anonymous, humble, unrewarded. The older love becomes, the more clearly it understands its involvement in imperfection, suffering and mortality. Even so, it longs for incarnation."

Can we know the world and still love the world? I think actually the stoics were pretty right. In fact, I think they are right unless there has been an incarnation.

Amen