

Undercover ruler

By [Christine Chakoian](#)

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*For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page, which includes Chakoian's current Living by the Word column as well as past magazine and blog content. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.*

Rarely do I compare biblical passages with television, let alone reality TV. But in preparing [this week's Century lectionary column](#), somehow I started thinking about the show *Undercover Boss*, in which a high-level executive joins his or her own company's working ranks incognito. I couldn't let it go.

I remember especially the episode in which Chicago Cubs CEO Todd Ricketts went into the stands as a beer vendor. Ricketts was impressed with the good humor and strong work ethic with which his staff faced daunting challenges, demanding fans and discouraging games. It may be scandalous to compare Christ with a beer vendor--especially for the perpetually losing Cubs--but I'm encouraged to think that our celestial "boss" might actually be happy with the work we're doing. "Well done, good and faithful servant" may really be achievable--if we pay attention to what is expected of us.

But it's hard to hang on to that focus. I have a thousand other matrices for success: how many people are in the pews, how the budget is holding up, how many baptisms I've performed and so on. It's much harder to measure intangibles like whether people are growing in faith, whether their priorities are being transformed, whether they know and love Jesus any better because of any efforts of mine.

I need constant reminders of what counts and what doesn't. Thank God for my friends who are more faithful than I am. These co-workers keep me honest about the work we're up to--and the nature of real success in the business we're in.