

WORKING ON PURPOSE

DATE: SUNDAY, 03RD OF OCTOBER 2021 | GOD AT WORK SERIES: PART 1

GENESIS 2:7-9, 15

Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

GENESIS 2:2

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.

NOTES FOR LEADERS:

Please see preach notes below for the very broad definition that Steve gives of work. He speaks about productive activity whether you are earning an income or not, e.g. your vocation, stay-at-home parent or retired - all of us should be "productively active".

START TALKING

1. What was your key takeaway from Sunday's message?
2. What is the thing you love most about your work?

START THINKING

1. Read Genesis 2:2. A healthy theology of work imitates God and honours Him, and all forms of work in some way reflect God (see examples in notes). How does your job/line of work reflect God? As a group, can you think of any more examples? (if you are not earning an income, e.g. stay at home parent or retired or between jobs - how do you reflect God's character in your day to day activities)?
2. On Sunday, Steve said that a healthy theology of work separates work from income (productive activity). What did he mean by that? Why is this such an important concept to grasp?

START SHARING

1. What words would you use to describe your relationship with your work? (e.g., draining, joyful, purposeful, energising, stressful). Have you ever viewed your work as worship? Why or why not? What can you do this week to reimagine your work as worship to God?
2. On Sunday, Steve said that work is ministry - a way to honour God and show love to others. Have you ever looked at your workplace as your ministry? Why or why not?
 - a). If yes, please share how this has impacted your work life (use examples).
 - b). If not, what one thing will you start doing differently this week to change that?

START PRAYING

Father, we are so grateful that we can be productive in Your world every day. Where our attitudes towards work need changing, please work in our hearts so that we would see our work as a god-given gift. May our work always glorify You!

START DOING

1. #TGIF (Thank God it's Friday) and "I hate Mondays" are common thoughts relating to our work. This week, find something about your work to be thankful for every day and write it down. At the end of the week, review all the things you've written down and give thanks to God for your work!
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you alert to opportunities to show the love of God through your work this week.

SUMMARY

OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

Do you view your work as a necessary evil or as a God-given gift? Maybe on your worst days, you have imagined winning millions in a lottery or inheriting a fortune and never needing to work another day in your life!

In this series, we look at the idea of having a God-glorifying 'theology of work' – very simply – in other words, we should think about work the same way that God does!

One of the ways we should look at the subject is to look at what the world was like before sin came into the world, i.e. what was the original design that our Designer put in place.

Genesis 2:7-9,15

7 Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

8 Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. 9 The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

1. Work is not punishment but part of our purpose.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. Genesis 3:15

So, in other words, God did not make man to sit around all day doing nothing. He designed him to be active and productive. In the beginning, work wasn't related to money. So we could say that work is a productive activity (which is different from income-generating activity). Only some activity will generate income, but all of our activities should be productive. A healthy theology of work separates work from income.

Work became more difficult after the Fall (part of the curse in Genesis 3:19 - By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food), but we were designed for productive activity, and it was designed for us.

If I am living a Christ-centered life, then:

2. Work is Worship

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Genesis 2:2. So God called His productive activity **WORK** too!

A healthy theology of work imitates God and honours Him. Almost all forms of work in some way reflect Who God is. The Bible uses metaphors that He is: Architect, Builder, Gardener, Landlord etc.

- If you are involved in anything **creative** – from pure artists to graphic designers, video editors, construction, engineering, architecture, etc. – you reflect God's creativity in the world.
- If your productive activity involves **bringing order** into any environment – administration, strategist, consultant, filing clerk, rubbish removal – you reflect the fact that God made a world that has order and structure to it for our benefit.
- If you are involved in anything to do with **stewarding finances** well – book-keeping, accounting, financial advisor etc. – you reflect that God is the Owner of everything and calls us to be good stewards of His stuff.
- If any part of your vocation involves **leading** something or someone – you reflect the fact that God is our Leader and expects us to lead like Him.
- If you are involved with **imparting knowledge** to others – teachers, trainers, coaches etc. – you reflect that God is our Teacher.
- If you are involved in a **'healing'** profession – doctors, nurses, physio, OT, chemist, psychologist, counselling etc. – you are reflecting that God gave us bodies and wants us to live healthy lives in them.

- If you are involved in **'care'** professions – palliative, aged, frail, orphans, the poor etc. – you reflect that God is a God of comfort and that His heart is towards those who are weak.
- If you are involved in any form of **justice** – judge, magistrate, lawyers, non-profits, advocacy groups – you reflect the fact that God is a Just God.
- If you are a **parent** – whether you have another vocation or are doing parenting full-time – you reflecting the fact that we are God's children and His is our Father.

We could go on ...!

Unhealthy views about work push us to one of two extremes: LAZINESS or OVERWORK. Neither of these is God-honouring worship! The Bible speaks strongly about laziness - even as far as to say that if a man doesn't work, he shouldn't eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). God is not lazy; therefore, we shouldn't be either. On the other end of the scale, work shifts from healthy to unhealthy when we overwork and start to idolise and draw identity from work.

If I am living a Christ-centered life, then:

3. Work is Ministry

Ministry is loving God and loving people. One of the most unhelpful (and unbiblical) ideas in church history involves the idea that there's a split between the sacred and the secular. In other words, "you do the work of the 'ministry', and we will do the work of earning money and keeping the economy afloat."

Many times we hear people say: "I wish I didn't need to work at such a meaningless job. I would love to work at the church – then I will be able to do something for God." It's great that they want to 'do something' for God, but this idea is a misconception of what ministry is about. God has called each one of us to minister wherever we are!

Ministry is about using our resources to love God and to love other people. We all have resources of time, money, energy, friendliness, kindness etc. When we use those to honour God and love people, we are doing ministry. We don't have to leave secular employment to 'do ministry'. For many of us, the workplace is where we are called to minister.

If we are living a Christ-centered life, then:

1. **Work is not punishment but part of our purpose.**
2. **Work is Worship**
3. **Work is Ministry**