

SESSION 1



GODLY WORK

1. Our Work Is from God

- Any attempt to talk about what it means for us to excel at God's work has to start with some basic truths about us as God's creation...

A. We are called by God to work.

- Because we are called by God to work, we are responsible to excel in the work He calls us to do.

Ephesians 4:1:

"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called..."

- Because God calls us to work, it matters deeply how we use our God-given time, energy, abilities, and skills. Theologically, the use of our God-given talents is called "Vocational Stewardship."
- The Apostle Paul saw the importance of vocational stewardship, which is why he said we are to be *"making the best use of the time, because the days are evil."* (Ephesians 5:16)
- Jesus felt the weight of vocational stewardship and declared: *"We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work."* (John 9:4)
"How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives." – Annie Dillard

B. God is a worker.

- From the beginning God has been working.

Genesis 1:1:

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

Isaiah 40:28a:

"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth."

"The book of Genesis leaves us with a striking truth: work was part of paradise."
– Tim Keller

- God's work did not cease at creation. Jesus answered them, *"My Father is working until now, and I am working."* (John 5:17)

Philippians 2:13:

"... for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

"In Genesis we see God as a gardener; and in the New Testament we see him as a carpenter. No task is too small a vessel to hold the immense dignity of work given by God." – Tim Keller

- The Bible describes God in a number of metaphors related to work:

farmer	builder	shepherd	potter
composer	gardener	clothier	architect
judge	teacher	winemaker	metalworker

C. God designed us as workers.

- We are made in the image of God to be workers.
“Human beings are made in the image of God, and God is a worker. Human labor has intrinsic value because in it we ‘image,’ or reflect, our Creator.”
– Amy L. Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, 102

“Work is as much a basic human need as food, beauty, rest, friendship, prayer and sexuality; it is not simply medicine but food for our soul.” – Tim Keller
- Man resembles God in that we possess an intellect, emotion, and will that allows us to be relational, responsible, and creative [unlike the rest of creation].
- We represent God by responsibly ruling over creation.
Genesis 1:28a:
“And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it’...”
Genesis 2:15:
“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”
- We are given inherent dignity that we carry into all of our work.
Psalms 8:5-8:
“Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.”

2. Culture-Shapers

A. God has given us the task of making and shaping the culture with the work we do...

“People must now carry on the work of development; by being fruitful they must fill it even more; by subduing it they must form it even more. Mankind, as God’s representatives on earth, carry on where God left off.”
– Al Wolters, *Creation Regained*, 41

“Work is our design and our dignity; it is also a way to serve God through creativity, particularly in the creation of culture.” – Tim Keller

B. We never work alone.

- All work is gifted and fueled by God who made us and redeemed us for work.
Ephesians 2:10:

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

“When God made the world, he created it ex nihilo, out of nothing.

While we don’t possess that ability, nevertheless we are created to make things out of what we find scattered on the floor of creation.

So we do. But we never truly work alone.” – Russ Ramsey, Rembrandt is in the Wind, 89

- God enables us, by His **grace**, to perform good work on His behalf. We work with God.

2 Corinthians 9:8:

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”

1 Corinthians 3:9:

“For we are God’s fellow workers. You are God’s field, God’s building.”

C. Not all work is God’s work

- Man’s fall into **sin** had consequences for work. Sin frustrates our work and introduces disorder into God’s created order.

Romans 8:20:

“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it...”

- Man’s fall into sin made our work with creation harder and more frustrating because both the creature and creation are **fallen**.

Genesis 3:17b-19:

“... cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

- Man’s fall opened the door for some work to become **evil** work. Therefore, some work is:

1. **Wasteful** and unwise work.

Ephesians 5:15-17:

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

2. **Dishonest** work.

Ephesians 4:28:

“Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.”

3. **Destructive** work.

Psalms 141:4:

“Do not let my heart incline to any evil, to busy myself with

wicked deeds in company with men who work iniquity, and let me not eat of their delicacies!”

D. As men, we are to evaluate if our work is wasteful, dishonest, or destructive.

How do we discern this? The following questions will help.

1. Does my work contribute to cultural good?
2. What are those goods?
3. Are people’s lives made better or worse on the whole by what I do?
4. Does my job place ask me to do things against God’s design and desire?
5. Does my job put me in a spot where I am tempted to compromise God’s Word?

3. Enduring Work:

A. We will spend eternity working with people forming a beautiful and holy civilization.

Revelation 21:23-26:

“And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.”

B. Our works in this life will contribute to what will be taken into eternity.

2 Peter 3:10:

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.”

- That which exalts the glory of God will be taken into eternity, and that which does not will be done away with.

Revelation 21:27:

“But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

“Every faithful act of service, every honest labor to make the world a better place, which seemed to have been forever lost and forgotten in the rubble of history, will be seen on that day [at the final resurrection] to have contributed to the perfect fellowship of God’s kingdom....All who committed their work in faithfulness to God will be by Him raised up to share in the new age, and will find that their labor was not lost, but that it has found its place in the completed kingdom.” – Lesslie Newbigin

- We will be personally rewarded in eternity for the good works we did in this life.

1 Corinthians 3:13-14:

“...each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it,

because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.”

- What you do **matters** so make your work **count!**

Your Table Discussion Questions

1. What was your most favorite job? Tell the men at your table why you enjoyed it.
2. Our work is meant to serve God’s purposes more than our own. Think about the implications of this in our workplaces. How would God go about doing your job? What values would God bring to it? What products would God make? Which people would God serve? What standards would God use? In what ways, as an image-bearer of God, should your work display God?
3. In what ways has work [*maybe your work*] been affected by the fall? Talk about the impact with the men at your table.

Your “BetterMan” Reflection:

Before our next session, take a moment this week to reflect on your notes, and then answer the following question: Have you ever taken part in work that was wasteful, dishonest, or destructive? What made it so? How does the Gospel eliminate or redeem work that is wasteful, dishonest, or destructive? Write your answer in the space below!