

Theology of Work
Presented by Lauren Stibgen
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Day One

We are made for work. Think about this: Has there ever been a day you woke up not thinking about doing something? The answer may be a quick yes! If I am honest, I have had days when I wake up dreaming of doing absolutely nothing—being idle, quiet, enjoying leisure—but this quickly fades. Even when we daydream about what we'd rather be doing than going to work, the daydream will typically result in some sort of creation!

God's work started in Genesis and is still active today. And as followers of Jesus Christ, each one of us plays a part of this work. Even though God's first perfect work of creation was stained by the fall, God is working still on the redemption of everything that is his. We are often so involved with our career work we forget to think about God's big plan for his kingdom and how we are a very important part of it.

Reading Genesis 1, we see God created *the heavens and the earth*. These creation verses are filled with action! Let there be light, let the waters under the heavens be gathered into one place and let dry land appear, let the earth sprout vegetation, let there be lights in the expanse, let the waters swarm with living creatures, let the earth bring forth living creatures. And finally,

Let us make man in our image, after our likeness (Genesis 1:26).

After doing a lot of work in the creation, God created man in his image. And he immediately set man to work! He put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:28).

After the fall when Adam and Eve ate from the tree God told them not to, they still had to work, but God sent them outside of the Garden of Eden to *work the ground from which they were taken (Genesis 3:23)*.

Even with sin, we are still created in the image of God, a working God. No wonder we think about working so much!

Day Two

God chose to create men and women in his image! God created us to work and tend all the creation he had made both before the original sin of Adam and Eve and after. You and I are living in the after, and the good work we do for the kingdom today matters for eternity and for the promise of a new heaven and new earth!

Starting to view your work in this light may take some time. If you find yourself questioning your work or why God has you in a certain role or company, pause and consider this,

...for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose (Philippians 2:13).

He predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will (Ephesians 1:5).

As you consider these verses, know God has a plan for you, and it is for his will and pleasure. But what is his will and pleasure? God created, man sinned, and now, God is redeeming his kingdom! You may be wondering how God is using you to redeem his kingdom at work. God has created everything so his glory could be revealed, including you! One of the best embodiments of this is 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 (Ephesians 2:10).

Take heart and consider, you are God's workmanship, his glorious creation. Pause for a moment and think about this. God's work made you! Something about this makes me feel very special. God made me to display his glory!

God also made you to do good works which he prepared beforehand. As you work today, consider this. He planned this moment. God planned for you to be right where you are. Again, he did this for his glory!

And this is the best part. We just need to walk in these good works. He doesn't call us to strive, stress, or fret. He calls us to walk.

Somehow, everything God has set before you at work today is part of his great plan to bring glory to himself and to redeem his kingdom.

Day Three

Sometimes the mention of work doesn't elicit happy and joyous feelings. And, knowing God created us in his image for good works which he prepared beforehand makes us sigh as we think, is my workday over yet?! All jokes about TGIF, working for the weekend, and anything else related to not being at work feels real for all of us at some point. What can we do when we don't feel like work is a gift from God?

I recently had a sister in Christ tell me she was working to not curse what blesses her. This has not left my mind. Don't curse what is blessing you. In other words, when thinking about your work, think about the blessings. Think about the beautiful things that bring glory to God. All the other broken things, pray about them.

Sometimes our mindset about work needs to shift. If you are alone laboring for some sort of achievement or purely from envying what someone else has, it is hard to consider that work is a gift to us from the Lord. The book of Ecclesiastes is full of examples of how working to be the greatest and have the most never yield the warm and happy feelings about work that we would expect. In fact, they yield the opposite.

Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

How can we consider the gift of work? And, what about the good works God prepared for us beforehand? For those of us who believe in Jesus Christ, we are called to the greatest commandment of love. If we are working for vain achievement, it's no wonder we will never be satisfied in our work. If

you find yourself watching the hours on the clock to see when your day will end or longing for a weekend, I challenge you to start with a simple list.

First, how is your job blessing you today? It may be as basic as I am receiving a paycheck to provide for my family. Perhaps you have made a friend at work. Rejoice in this blessing!

Now, what do you perceive as broken? Remember, God is in the work of redeeming all things, and God calls you to be part of this by loving your neighbor as yourself. Are you in a bad culture or dealing with a difficult boss or colleague? Reframe your work with these things. How can you do good works to bring God glory today?

Day Four

Love your neighbor as yourself. Sometimes work is difficult. But what is our work anyways? I mean the work God has for us. If you are working today feeling like your job has no purpose for God, think again!

Let us consider how to stir one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24).

I want to stir you up to consider that God's work is multiplied through you. What are some things you can do today to bring glory to God? Does your job feel unimportant? I assure you it is not.

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ (Colossians 3:23–24).

Think about working for God, and the rewards he has for you. How do you reflect the love of Jesus Christ? Do people wonder what makes you different? And what is the point anyways?

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19–20).

Jesus wants us to make disciples! And we can start by thinking about good works at work!

An easy way to consider good works is to think about the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. Perhaps you have this list memorized—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Is there a way you can display more patience with someone at work? Can you choose gentler words when delivering feedback? Perhaps you can extend kindness to a colleague by affirming their work or even encouraging them when they are overwhelmed. Do you work in an environment full of strife? How can you bring the peace?

What about goodness? Do you choose to do what is right when perhaps you are faced with a scenario which may challenge your ethics?

We often get caught up in thinking about our position, more than we think about the way we work. Foundationally, the way we work, as to the Lord and not to men, is what can leave people asking why we are different and ultimately make disciples!

Day Five

With all this talk about how important work is to God and for the kingdom, it may feel like a heavy burden as a follower of Jesus. But you are not called to doing good works and making disciples alone!

We should work, yoked with Jesus, walking with him and considering his ways. Christ gives us a clear example of how to love others well.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you (Psalm 89:14).

Think about the people Jesus loved in the Gospels. They were never perfect, and neither are you and I! Think about how Jesus took time to see people. Whether it was Zaccheus, the tax man of small stature up in a tree, or the bleeding woman crawling down in the dirt to just touch Jesus's robe. Are there people you need to take time to see?

Jesus was very good at seeing one person at a time. In the busyness of our work, it is easy to forget the people involved as we move from meeting to meeting and project to project. Just like you and me, they have feelings about work, and things happening in life we may or may not know about.

Pause for a moment and think of your workplace. What would change if you thought about your boss or colleagues like Jesus would? What do you see?

Righteousness, justice, steadfast love and faithfulness: while we can never measure up to the perfect Jesus Christ, we can choose to reflect his love better every day at work.

Maybe this feels heavy, and you don't know where to start. Thinking about making disciples at work may be new to you and that is alright!

In Matthew 11:28-29, Jesus calls us in our work to come to him when we are weary and heavy laden; he can give us rest. He tells us to take his yoke upon us and to learn from him. He is gentle and lowly in heart. In Jesus, we find rest for our souls. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.

Turn to Jesus as you consider God's plans for your work. He wants to come alongside you and guide you!