

Work Is Good

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Day One

When you hear the word work or think about your work, what comes to mind first? Do you think about work primarily as something that you have to do to pay the bills? Is it a source of boredom, frustration, and drudgery? Or maybe you enjoy your work, and it is a space where you can be creative and challenged and satisfied. Probably for most, it's some combination of both. So, let's look at how God created work and how you and I can undervalue or overvalue it.

The word "work" first appears in the Bible in Genesis 2 after the creation story in Genesis 1 and before the fall in Genesis 3. Work is not a result of sin entering the world. Work is affected by it, but God's original purpose for work was for our good.

In Hebrew there are two different words which are translated into "work." The first one is in Genesis 2:2-3.

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done (Genesis 2:2-3).

This indicates work is something God does. So work is good. To see how God works, we go back to Genesis one and look for all the action verbs and the work characteristic that it goes with:

God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). This displays his authority.

God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness (Genesis 1:4). God separated, which shows organization expertise.

God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night" (Genesis 1:5). God names things, which provides order and administration.

Throughout much of the creation account God speaks things into existence indicating his creativity, authority, and communication.

At the end of his work God saw that it was good. *God saw all he had made, and it was very good (Genesis 1:31).* He reviewed and evaluated all that he had done. Another important skill used in work.

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27).

Since you and I are made in his image, we are made to do good work, to do amazing and wonderful things. It is God's gift allowing you to express your identity through your creativity.¹

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Day Two

Do you realize God created and modeled work for you and me? I looked at one word used for work, which focused on the aspect of creativity. Let's look at another Hebrew word used for work—avodah. And it carries the idea of purpose. It is also translated as service, worship, and even slavery. The common thread, it describes work done by one person for the benefit of another.

In Genesis 2, this word appears twice. In verse 5, we read there was no one to work the ground. Then in verse 15, God places the man in the garden *to work it and take care of it*. From the beginning, work is clearly presented as a gift given to humanity by God, part of his good creation plan.

Then in Genesis 3, after the fall, work itself is not introduced as a curse, but it is affected by the curse. The ground is cursed because of sin, and work becomes difficult and toilsome. Thorns and thistles now grow in the garden, and provision comes through pain and sweat.

Work is not the punishment for sin; rather, sin distorts work, just as it distorts every part of creation. As a result, work now includes struggle, frustration, and hardship. There are thorns and thistles, and at times it will be demanding and exhausting.

Considering this, how do you and I show up to work each day in a way that honors and reflects God? I find thinking of work as a gift from God—something he created me to do—helps maintain perspective.

The Apostle Paul writes in Colossians 3:17 to do everything with all our hearts, as working for the Lord and not for human masters. That truth reframes even the menial, boring, or difficult tasks every job includes. Those tasks matter, and you and I are called to do them with excellence—for his glory.

Work is also necessary. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to *make it your ambition to lead a quiet life... to work with your hands...so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody* (1 Thessalonians 4:11–12).

The Thessalonians had fallen into idleness, relying on others for support. Paul encourages them to work—not only to provide for themselves—but as a way of living out their faith.

Your work matters not only to pay the bills and sustain a living for you and your family, but as a witness to others. Let's go to work and remember who we really work for.²

Day Three

What does Scripture teach us about the meaning and purpose of our work? Let's look at some examples of how work can be an opportunity to use our God-given abilities to serve others.

The story of Ruth the Moabite comes to mind when thinking about an example of working to serve others. This short, four-chapter book of the Bible is packed with so much to reflect on, but today I want to focus on how Ruth's work blessed others, specifically her mother-in-law Naomi.

A fly over recap: Naomi was not only a widow, but she also lost both of her sons. There was no one to provide for her and she was living in a foreign land. Her daughter-in-law, Ruth, was also a widow who loved Naomi deeply and followed Naomi back to her homeland in Bethlehem.

They arrived back in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. Arriving empty handed and no way to feed themselves, Ruth said to Naomi, *let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor* (Ruth 2:2).

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God provided a way for the poor to feed themselves. He said, *when you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God* (Leviticus 19:9-10).

Naomi was certainly poor, and Ruth was a foreigner. God's law made provision for this situation. But someone had to go out in the field and put in some effort to gather the leftover grain. There was work involved. This was physical work. Ruth may not have been accustomed to it, but it didn't keep her from attempting to provide for Naomi and herself. I imagine it was not creative work, and commentaries indicate it could have been dangerous even for her. But God provided for and protected her in this as well, since she "happened" to end up working in Boaz's field, a relative of Naomi's husband. And as the narrative goes, he became the kinsman redeemer, providing more than Naomi and Ruth could have imagined.

All this to say, Ruth, through the unglamorous work of gleaning barley in the fields, not only provided temporary nourishment for Naomi, but also was the catalyst for providing a kinsman redeemer—someone to rescue them from poverty. In the end, Boaz married Ruth and had a son who carried on the name of Naomi's husband. Best of all, their son was the grandfather of King David and ultimately in the lineage of Christ as we read in Matthew chapter 1.

I just love how God uses us where we are. No matter what work we are doing, however humble or elevated our jobs might be if we are working for him and doing our best, he can and will use us.

Day Four

Work can be either overvalued or undervalued. When it is overvalued, it can quietly become an idol—an identity. So how do you keep that in check?

What if you genuinely enjoy your job and want to succeed? You have goals—maybe to advance, earn a certain position, or work at a prestigious place. Is that wrong? Is work becoming too important? Has it begun to define your whole life? I believe it comes down to the posture of our hearts.

King Solomon, a man who had more success and resources than most could imagine, reflects on this in Ecclesiastes. He writes: *I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun* (Ecclesiastes 2:9-11).

This sounds like striving and ambition to me. He was successful and achieved many things. But in the end King Solomon reflects and feels empty. He denied himself nothing yet nothing fulfilled him. He also writes in Psalms 127:1 that *unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain*. Ambition and striving are not inherently something to be avoided. But if you are not putting your relationship with God at the center, relying on him, trusting in him, daily walking with him, then it's all in vain.

The question is not *whether* we should work hard or pursue excellence or go after that next promotion, but *who* we are working for and *why*. When our work is surrendered to God, it becomes more than striving. It becomes stewardship. We can hold ambition with open hands, trusting that our worth is not found in what we achieve, but in whose we are. As we commit our work to the Lord, he gives it meaning, direction, and lasting purpose—far beyond what we could accomplish on our own.

Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established (Proverbs 16:3).

I pray you think of your work—whatever it is—as unto the Lord, to be a good steward so others will see his light in your life.

Day Five

Much of life is spent working—both in a job and in the ordinary daily tasks that keep life going. Scripture makes it clear that rest matters, yet the question remains: is rest truly practiced? Is there space to unplug, sit still, and be present?

The fourth commandment speaks directly to both work and rest: *Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God...* (Exodus 20:8–10).

God did not only command rest; He modeled it. Genesis tells us, *by the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy* (Genesis 2:2–3).

What a gift this is. God gives meaningful work and purpose, and he also knows the human need for rest. That is why the Sabbath was given, blessed, and made holy.

Is this model followed? In a culture that values constant activity, it is easy to stay busy—at work, at home, and even in good and meaningful pursuits. Worth can quietly become tied to how full the schedule is. Yet the truth remains: rest is necessary. Not only physical rest but mental and emotional rest as well—time for the mind and spirit to be renewed. Too often, the command to rest on the Sabbath is brushed aside.

Stillness can feel uncomfortable. Being alone with one's thoughts may feel unfamiliar, or even unproductive. Rest can seem boring in a world that never slows down. But Sabbath does not mean doing nothing; it means resting from ordinary labor and setting the day apart for God.

For many, Sunday serves as a Sabbath. Others who work on Sundays may need to choose a different day of the week to set aside. Even while Israel wandered in the desert, God established a rhythm of rest. Manna was gathered on the sixth day so that the seventh day could be devoted to rest and worship.

Jesus declared himself Lord of the Sabbath. When the Pharisees accused him of working on the Sabbath, he explained that meeting basic needs and doing good—healing, helping, restoring—were never violations of God's intent. As Jesus said, *The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath* (Mark 2:27).

May this rhythm of work and rest become a lived practice—one that brings freedom, restores the soul, and honors the gracious gift God has given.