

FAITH @ WORK

A STUDY GUIDE ON THE INTEGRATION
OF FAITH AND WORK



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OF FAITH AND WORK



GRACE
BIBLE CHURCH



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INTRODUCTION

Whether you are a graduating senior looking for a job or a working professional already twenty years into a career, the topic of work is among the most central subjects in your life. Yet many Christians struggle to see how their work meaningfully connects with their faith. They cannot imagine how God could use their college education and career for His eternal purposes. In fact, the church itself has often exacerbated this confusion, as David Miller comments in *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* ...

“Whether conscious or unintended, the pulpit all too frequently sends the signal that work in the church matters but work in the world does not. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that workers, businesspeople, and other professionals often feel unsupported by the Sunday church in their Monday marketplace vocations.”

We want to help clear up that confusion. This study will reveal God’s design for work and how that design gives dignity to our work. While the word “work” can refer to unpaid labor within the home, the political arena, or the community, this study will focus on the traditional emphasis of work within a paid occupation. In *Every Good Endeavor*, Tim Keller elevates our definition of work from a commonplace *occupation* to a God-honoring *vocation*, saying ...

“A job is vocation only if someone else calls you to do it and you do it for them rather than for yourself. And so our work [should] be ... reimagined as a mission or service to something beyond merely our own interests. As we shall see, thinking of work mainly as a means of self-fulfillment and self-realization slowly crushes a person and ... undermines society itself!”

Such a “reimagined” understanding and approach to work can have a significant impact on us as individuals and on our entire society, as well. In fact, Robert Bellah in *Habits of the Heart* looks at our unraveling society and all of the current social injustices, saying ...

“To make a real difference ... [in the world, there would have to be] a reappropriation of the idea of vocation or ... a return in a new way to the idea of work as a contribution to the good of all and not merely as a means to one’s own advancement.”

Therefore, this 8-week study will establish the biblical foundation for an understanding of work as God designed it. Furthermore, the 2 practicums will explore each person’s gifts, passions, and personality through different profiles and tests to help determine the best job fit for each specific person.

CHAPTER ONE

RECONNECTING WORK AND FAITH

RECOMMENDED READING

Forward and Introduction in Tim Keller's *Every Good Endeavor*

INTRODUCTION

The average person will spend 90,000 hours at work over the course of their lifetime. That's 3,750 days, or a little over ten years! The only thing you'll do more in this life is sleep (25 years total). And unfortunately, while most of us enjoy sleep, few of us enjoy our jobs. According to a 2013 Gallup poll of 230,000 workers in 142 countries, only 13% of workers feel a sense of passion or engagement in their jobs. 63% feel unhappy and disengaged in their jobs, and the final 24% hate their jobs so much they seek to undermine their employers.

What do all these numbers tell us? Most people spend the majority of their waking life doing something they dislike and don't care about simply because they feel they must be employed. Work is a necessary evil for most people.

Must it be so for us? Or is it possible to find meaning and joy in work that can transform a burden into a blessing. We are convinced of the latter. God designed work so that even in this fallen world, our jobs can bring blessing and joy both to us and to others, and can glorify God in a way that matters for eternity! We will spend the next 9 weeks discovering how.

1 Source "Happiness at Work", Psychology Today

REFLECTION

➤ What was the most enjoyable job you've ever had? What made it enjoyable?

➤ What was the most unenjoyable job you've had? What made it unenjoyable?

➤ Have you ever had a job where you felt like your work connected with God's work in the world in some way? What made the job feel this way?

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

Many Christians make a distinction between “secular” jobs such as mechanic, teacher, lawyer, doctor, and “sacred” jobs such as pastor or missionary. Sacred jobs are considered important to God and significant eternally. These are the jobs God “calls” special people to perform, jobs that have real meaning in His kingdom. In contrast, secular jobs are ordinary and insignificant to God's kingdom. The only value in these jobs is that they provide opportunities to share the gospel with coworkers and money to tithe to those special few blessed with sacred jobs.

But is this dichotomy biblical? Does God distinguish between sacred jobs that are inherently valuable and secular jobs that are not?

Read Exodus 31:1-11. What jobs are in view? Are these jobs significant to God? Why or why not?

Read Proverbs 31:10-31. What jobs are in view in this passage? Are they significant to God? Why or why not?
Note: there's no man or woman on earth who could do ALL of these things. This is a representative list of jobs or tasks that are beneficial.

Read 2 Chronicles 9:8 and Romans 13:1-4. What types of jobs would fit these descriptions? According to these passages, why are these jobs valuable to God and to the world?

The Apostle Paul spoke frequently on the subject of work. According to each of the following Pauline passages, why is work valuable in God's sight?

Ephesians 4:28

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

2 Thessalonians 3:10-12

1 Timothy 5:8

Titus 2:9-10

Based on the biblical evidence you've just studied, is the distinction between significant "sacred" work and insignificant "secular" work justified? Why or why not?

ACTION STEPS

Since this is our first week studying the concept of work, take some time to lift this study to God in prayer. Ask God to teach you how to work in a way that pleases Him and blesses the world. Ask Him to convict you of sinful or selfish attitudes about work. Ask Him to help you see your job (or future job) like He sees it.

If you currently have a job, take a few minutes to pray for your coworkers. Pray that God would use you to reach those who don't know Jesus and bless those who do. Pray that God would make you a light in your workplace.

If you don't currently have a job, take a few minutes to pray that God would, in His timing, bring you a job that will allow you to be a great light for Him in the world. Pray that He would prepare you to be a Christ-honoring employee in the workplace. Pray that He would work even now to refine your character and prepare you to be His hands and feet in your future industry.

MEMORIZE | COLOSSIANS 3:23

“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men.”

CHAPTER TWO

THE DESIGN OF WORK

RECOMMENDED READING

Chapters 1 and 2 of Tim Keller's *Every Good Endeavor*

INTRODUCTION

If you won a \$3 million lottery jackpot, would you quit your job? Conventional wisdom says, “Of course!” Who would want to keep working forty (or fifty!) hours a week when you could be relaxing on a beach?! However, a study of almost 200 lottery winners who each won an average of \$3.63 million found that over 85% of the winners continued to work, and two-thirds of those stayed in the same job. ²A similar study of 600 lottery winners found that almost 90% continued to work³.

Have they made the right decision? In other words, if it was financially possible for you not to work, should you choose to quit? Your answer will depend largely on the purpose you see behind work. If work is simply a means to earn a paycheck, then when paychecks are no longer needed, neither is work. But if work is something more, if it's an important part of who you are as an individual, then perhaps the decision is not quite so simple.

2 “Work Centrality and Post-Award Work Behavior of Lottery Winners” by Richard Arvey, Itzhak Harpaz, and Hui Liao, published in *The Journal of Psychology*, 1996, 130(1)

3 “Lottery winners: The myth and reality” by H. Roy Kaplan, published in *Journal of Gambling Behavior*, September 1987, Volume 3, Issue 3, pp 168-178

REFLECTION

- If you won a large enough jackpot to provide for all of your financial needs and desires for the rest of your life, would you continue to work? Why or why not? If you would remain employed, would you choose a different job or schedule (e.g. from full-time to part-time)?

- Think about the best job you've ever had. Other than a paycheck and benefits, what good things did you experience through this job?

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

To understand the purpose of work, we must look at the first examples of work: God's creative work and Adam and Eve's protective work in the first two chapters of Genesis.

Read Genesis 1. What verbs describe God's work? What exactly does He do during this first "work week"?

How does God assess the value of His creative work? What does this tell us about the nature of work?

"In the beginning, then, God worked. Work was not a necessary evil that came into the picture later, or something human beings were created to do but that was beneath the great God Himself. No, God worked for the sheer joy of it. Work could not have a more exalted inauguration."
- Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*

The first work week in Genesis 1 isn't just about God's work. It's about human work as well. Read Genesis 1:26-30 and 2:7-8, 15-20. What jobs does God give to His human creatures?

What's the relationship between God's work in chapter 1 and mankind's work in chapters 1 and 2?

Modern research confirms what the Bible taught millennia ago: work can be good for us! Multiple studies show that employment is generally good for both physical and mental health, while unemployment significantly increases the risk of heart disease, lung cancer, and suicide. ⁴ Humans were designed by God to work, and we can find satisfaction when we fulfill this design regardless of what specific job we have. As Paul states in Colossians 3:23, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord." Work is a gift from a God who works.

"The earth had been completely unformed and empty; in the six-day process of development God had formed it and filled it – but not completely. People must now carry on the work of development; by being fruitful they fill it even more; by subduing it they must form it even more ... as God's representatives, [we] carry on where God left off." – Wolters, *Creation Regained: A Transforming View of the World*

4 "Work Centrality and Post-Award Work Behavior of Lottery Winners" by Richard Arvey, Itzhak Harpaz, and Hui Liao, published in *The Journal of Psychology*, 1996, 130(1)

ACTION STEPS

Genesis 1-2 reveals that our work – our 9-to-5, Monday-to-Friday job – is actually something that unites us to God since He also worked when creating the world. In fact, it is His six days of work, one day of rest that set the ancient paradigm for our “work-week.” Yet for many believers, the idea that our mundane, worldly jobs might somehow unite us to God seems strange. Why do we have a difficult time connecting our employment with our religious faith? In other words, why does our work seem disconnected from God’s work in the world?

Spend a few minutes thinking about the jobs you’ve had in the past. When you were in these jobs, did you see them as gifts from God? Why or why not? If you’re currently employed, do you see the job you have now as a gift from God? Why or why not?

Spend a few minutes giving thanks to God for the jobs He has provided for you over the years. Give thanks for the jobs you particularly enjoyed or that were particularly beneficial to your development or your family. Give thanks for the job you have now and ask God to help you see it as a gift from Him rather than as a burden.

MEMORIZE | GENESIS 2:2,15

“And on the seventh day God finished His work that he had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all his work that He had done ... The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”

PRACTICUM 1

RECOMMENDED READING

Tom Rath's *StrengthsFinder 2.0*

INTRODUCTION

I (Trey) have always disliked the stereotype of the husband who tries to tackle a home-improvement project only to find himself in over his head without the right tools or experience. Yet I became that guy when I attempted to remodel a bathroom in our first home as a married couple. After watching a series of YouTube tutorials, I was confident I could retile the bathroom shower, and in fact everything was going exactly as planned until I had to mix the mortar that would glue the tiles in place. I didn't have a mortar mixer, so I did what any resourceful guy would do: I grabbed my wife's kitchen mixer. My wife was away at the time and I planned to clean it well and put it back. No one would know. Unfortunately mixing mortar and mixing cookie batter are very different! My wife's precious kitchen mixer was not up to the task, as I discovered when the motor melted and filled the bathroom with smoke. The mixer and my bathroom project were toast.

So what's my point? First, don't ask me to help you remodel! Second, life works better when you have the right tool for the job. If we use the wrong tool, then both the tool and the job suffer. In much the same way, God designed us each with unique abilities and personalities that determine what jobs we are best suited for. Before we can know what job to choose, we need to discover who God designed us to be.

REFLECTION

- ☛ Use various adjectives to describe your personality. Knowing your personality, what kind of work may be a good fit? Conversely, what kind of work may be a poor fit?

- ☛ What are your passions? What things in this world really excite you or motivate you?

The last two lessons looked at God’s design of work beginning back in Genesis. But the Genesis narrative primarily centers on humanity as the pinnacle of God’s creation. Work was entrusted to humanity because of who God made humanity to be. What can we learn about God’s careful design of humanity from the following passages?

Ephesians 2:10

12/PRACTICUM 1

ACTION STEPS

The previous passages demonstrate that God created each person with a unique personality and set of gifts, and gives each of us unique experiences. These unique characteristics aren't by accident. God took great care in shaping and designing each person like a masterpiece work of art. So spend a few minutes thanking God for how He has made you! Also, pray that He would help you grasp how He has made you and wired you for work.

Once you've spent some time in prayer, use the following profiling tools to better understand your unique design. First, go online to <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp> and complete the FREE Meyers Briggs personality test. After you complete the personality profile, answer the following questions.

What was your listed personality type? In your own words, how would you explain your personality type?

Did the personality test results surprise you at all? Why or why not?

What kind of work would fulfill you and play to the strengths of your personality? Conversely, what kind of work would frustrate you and play to your weaknesses?

Second, go online again to <http://apps.ctay.net/GiftSurvey/> and complete the FREE Spiritual Gifts Survey Questionnaire. After you complete the spiritual gifts survey, answer the following questions.

What were your Top 3 spiritual gifts? In your own words, how would you explain each gift?

Did the spiritual gifts survey results surprise you at all? Why or why not?

Does your current job (or even college major) play to your spiritual gifts at all?

“Giftedness is the unique way in which you function. It’s a set of inborn core strengths and natural motivations you instinctively and consistently use to do things you find satisfying and productive. Giftedness is not just what you can do but what you were born to do, enjoy doing, and do well.”

- Bill Hendricks in *The Person Called You: Why You’re Here, Why You Matter & What You Should Do With Your Life*

MEMORIZE | EPHESIANS 2:10

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

CHAPTER THREE

WORKING FOR THE WRONG REASONS

RECOMMENDED READING

Chapters 6 and 7 in Tim Keller's *Every Good Endeavor*

INTRODUCTION

Hopefully by this point in the study you are convinced that God wants you to have a job of some kind, but how do you know what job to pursue? If you already have a job, how do you know it's the right fit for you? There are thousands of careers you might choose from, and tens-of-thousands of companies you could work for. CareerPlanner.com lists over 12,000 discrete careers, from "Able Seamen" to "Zoologist"! The options are overwhelming. So how do you decide?

REFLECTION

- If you have already chosen a career or industry to work in (whether or not you are currently employed in it), why did you choose this career? If you've not yet chosen a career, what options are you considering? Why do these appeal to you?

- If you've been working in your chosen career field for some time, are you still pleased with your decision, or do you wish you had chosen another career? Why?

- ☛ What factors led your mom and/or dad to choose their career? If they have worked in more than one career field, what led them to make the jump?

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

Many people choose a career based on one or both of two criteria: salary and status. They choose the career that offers more pay or more prestige than their other available options.

Now let's be absolutely clear: there is nothing biblically wrong with considering salary or status when choosing a career or job. In fact, God commands us to work so that we can financially provide for our needs and the needs of others (2 Thess 3:11-12, 1 Tim 5:8). And when deciding between two otherwise identical opportunities, it is not ungodly to choose the option that pays more or that is more prestigious. These are not sinful criteria to weigh. The question is whether or not these are the primary criteria God would want us to consider when choosing a career.

To answer that question, let's consider the biblical evidence for each of these two common criteria. First up, money. Money is morally neutral – it is neither good nor bad. Yet when we make the pursuit of money our primary career goal, it can lead to serious problems. What are the dangers and/or limitations of wealth according to each of the following passages?

Proverbs 23:4-5

Matthew 6:19-21, 24

1 Timothy 6:9-10

Now consider prestige. In our culture, some careers convey far more honor upon a person than others. People tend to look up to brain surgeons, corporate executives, and NBA all-stars, but tend to look down on janitors, busboys, or grocery-store stockers. We want our kids to aspire to the first set of jobs, not the second. But is that really how God wants us to think about work and career? Consider the following questions.

What type of job did each of the following people have?

Adam before he fell into sin (Genesis 2:15)

David before he was chosen to be king (2 Samuel 7:8)

Jesus before beginning His ministry (Mark 6:3) [Note that Jesus could have chosen literally any career, including doctor, scribe, king... anything!]

Paul when he needed to raise funds (Acts 18:3) [Note that Paul could have chosen to be a lawyer since he certainly had the skills.]

What status or prestige does our society give to these professions? Furthermore, what does this tell you about how God wants us to view career status and prestige?

“If God came into the world, what would he be like? For the ancient Greeks, he might have been a philosopher-king. The ancient Romans might have looked for a just and noble statesman. But how does the God of the Hebrews come into the world? As a carpenter.”

- Philip Jensen, *Beginnings: Eden and Beyond*

What does God’s Word say to people who pursue career status above all else – to those who choose a career based on whether or not it makes them look intelligent and powerful? See 1 Corinthians 1:20-31.

“Many modern people seek a kind of salvation – self-esteem and self-worth – from career success. This leads us to seek only high-paying, high-status jobs, and to “worship” them in perverse ways. But the gospel frees us from the relentless pressure of having to prove ourselves and secure our identity through work, for we are already proven and secure. It also frees us from a condescending attitude toward less sophisticated labor and from envy over more exalted work.”

- Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*

ACTION STEPS

No one can read the previous passages without feeling at least a little guilty! We have all worshipped the idols of money and prestige at some point in life. So spend a few minutes in confession. Apologize to the Lord for the times in life when you have put the pursuit of money or status above your pursuit of His Son. Ask Him to help you put Jesus above these idols.

Are there any careers or jobs that you think are beneath you, or thought were beneath you in the past? Why do/did you think this way?

Look back at the reflection questions. Based on the biblical principles we've studied, do you see any problems with the reasons you've listed for choosing your career or job?

MEMORIZE | 1 CORINTHIANS 1:27

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

CHAPTER FOUR

WORKING FOR THE RIGHT REASONS

RECOMMENDED READING

Chapters 3 and 4 in Tim Keller's *Every Good Endeavor*

INTRODUCTION

I (Blake) am fortunate to have had two careers over the course of my life: first mechanical engineer, now pastor. While these careers are very different, both gave me moments of intense joy. I remember the day I completed a total redesign of a passenger bus suspension. That may sound boring to most of you, but it was a delight to me! My design was innovative and offered passengers a far more comfortable ride than the previous design. I felt incredible satisfaction as I presented the redesign to my supervisor after weeks of intense effort. I had that same sense of joy in my current career when I walked a tearful student through the reasons God loved her and saw the reality of God's unconditional acceptance wash over her. Two very different careers find common ground in these brief but profound moments of joyful satisfaction.

REFLECTION

- Can you recall moments of intense joy or satisfaction in your job or in a previous job (or in school if you haven't yet been employed)? What brought on these feelings of joy?

- Describe your ideal job. What would it offer you other than money and/or status, since we've already established that these are not the most important things to chase in life?

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

How should you choose a career or a particular job if money and status are not the primary criteria to weigh? What determines whether a particular career “fits you”? What job will please God and satisfy you best?

While there’s no passage in the Bible that will tell you what particular career God wants you to choose, there are a few principles that can guide all of us towards satisfying, God-honoring careers.

First, your ideal career will allow you to be a creator like God

You were made in the image of a God who creates (Genesis 1)! That means you were made to create.

Skim back over Genesis chapter 1. The whole chapter is about God “creating,” but what specific things is He doing (hint: look at the verbs again)?

Based on God’s example, to create might mean to invent something totally new (God created light), to improve something existing (God improved a “formless” world), or to bring order to something chaotic (God separated the waters). In each case, the world is better as a result of the creative effort.

Of these options – inventing, improving, ordering – which do you think God has uniquely gifted you to do? Why do you think this is the case?

“Imagine that everyone quits working, right now! What happens? Civilized life quickly melts away. Food vanishes from the shelves, gas dries up at the pumps, streets are no longer patrolled, and fires burn themselves out. Communication and transportation services end, utilities go dead. Those who survive at all are soon huddled around campfires, sleeping in caves, clothed in raw animal hides. The difference between [a wilderness] and culture is simply, work!”

- Lester DeKoster, Work: *The Meaning of Your Life*

Second, your ideal career will allow you to care for people just like God does

God loves the people of this world and expresses that love by sacrificially caring for our needs, both physical and spiritual (Acts 14:17; John 3:16). Since we are made in God's image, we are likewise to care for the needs of others, and our ideal career should give us the opportunity to do so. Now it's important to realize that there are many ways to care for people's needs. Designing a better bus suspension was my way of caring for the needs of passengers who wanted to arrive at their destination bruise-free. A doctor can care for her patients' medical needs. A mechanic can care for his customers' need for reliable transportation. A teacher can care for his students' need to learn. A lawyer can care for her clients' need for justice. There are many ways to care for people's needs.

How do the craftsmen of Exodus 31:1-11 care for people's needs?

How can soldiers and tax collectors care for the needs of others according to Luke 3:12-14?

How can government officials care for the needs of others according to Romans 13:3-4?

Third, your ideal career will allow you to be a witness to the world of God's grace

How does a job become an opportunity to be a witness in each of the following passages?

1 Kings 10:1-9

Acts 9:36-39

Titus 2:9-10

Fourth, your ideal career will provide for your family and people in financial need

While money is not a primary criterion in choosing a career, it is a necessity of life in this world.

What does Paul say in 1 Timothy 5:8 about the person who chooses not to provide financially for his family?

What reason for getting a job does Paul give in Ephesians 4:28?

ACTION STEPS

How might an investment banker do his or her job in a way that mirrors God's creativity and love for people?

Think about your own career field. How can you work in this field in a way that mirrors God's creativity and love for people, and allows you to be a witness for Jesus?

“In her work as a professor of physics, Catherine can do much to shape the culture of her courses and her research lab. In the somewhat sterile and technological environment of a laboratory, she can play classical music to create an atmosphere of creativity and beauty. She can shape the way her students respond to exciting and disappointing results, and can model both hard work and good rest rather than frantic work and fitful procrastination. By bringing her children with her to work occasionally she can create a culture where family is not an interruption from work, and where research and teaching are natural parts of a mother's life; by inviting her students into our home she can show that she values them as persons, not just as units of research productivity. At the small scale of her laboratory and classroom, she has real ability to reshape the world.”

- Andy Crouch, *Culture-Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*

MEMORIZE | 1 THESSALONIANS 4:10B-12

“But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more [in love], and to make your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands ... so that you will behave properly towards outsiders and not be in any need.”

PRACTICUM 2

RECOMMENDED READING

Bill Hendrick's *The Person Called You: Why You're Here, Why You Matter, & What You Should Do With Your Life*

INTRODUCTION

I love television series that gradually unpack a story over the course of many episodes. The best are those that surprise us at the end of the season with a shocking twist based off a seemingly minor detail from the first episode. That's good story-telling!

God is a great story-teller, and your life is His master work. He never wastes experiences in our lives because nothing is random or useless to His purpose and plan. He weaves things together, even painful things, in ways we never could have foreseen. This can happen even in our work and career.

REFLECTION

- What have been some of the defining moments in your life that shaped you profoundly?
- What have been struggles in your life that have shaped your vision and convictions in life?
- How have you seen the Lord direct you to a job based off of your experiences in the past? Where has God as a master storyteller dropped clues in the past that you see fulfilled now?

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

One of the greatest stories ever told involves a man named Joseph, as told in Genesis chapters 37-50. God gave Joseph incredible wisdom. He could interpret dreams (40:1-23; 41:14-32), advise kings (41:33-37), and manage entire kingdoms (39:3-4,22-23; 41:38-49). Yet God also allowed Joseph to experience incredible suffering, including being sold into slavery by his own brothers (37:18-36) and being unjustly thrown into prison (39:7-20). But God had a plan for good in Joseph's life.

Read 45:1-11 and 50:20-21. How did God use Joseph's unique abilities and experiences to bring good to many people?

Can you think of other biblical characters whose unique skills and experiences prepared them for a career or mission that blessed the world in surprising ways?

ACTION STEPS

In Practicum 1, we used a personality profile and a spiritual gifts survey to explore how God created and designed each of us. Feel free to review those results as we continue to discover the Lord's direction in our work and careers. As Tom Nelson in *Work Matters* concludes,

"How God has created us and gifted us, and the very human dispositions we have been given shape His vocational will for our lives."

When we understand our unique personality, passions, abilities, and opportunities, it can help us discover our best occupational fit. To that end, please go online to <https://www.profiler.com/cgi-bin/ciss/moreform.pl?client=ncs&page=intro> to take the Campbell Interest Skill & Survey. In addition to following the "Next Steps" where you will need to create a username and password, **please note that this survey costs less than \$20** (but it is worth its weight in gold!). After you complete the survey (and get your 20 page survey results back), answer the following questions.

Which of the 7 "Orientation Scales" were you encouraged to pursue? Any surprises?

Which of the 7 “Orientation Scales” were you encouraged to avoid? Any surprises?

The “Orientations & Basic Scales” section delves a layer deeper into actual jobs and careers. Where did you score the highest? And where did you score the lowest?

How did your scores in this section relate to the following table of “Interest & Skill Patterns”?

The “Occupational Scales by Orientation” section may be the most helpful of any section! Which occupations listed the Top 5 highest scores for you? Do you agree? Why or why not?

How do these survey results correspond with your current job and satisfaction? For college graduating seniors, how do these survey results help shape your future job search?

“To believe that a wise and good God is in charge of things implies that there is a fit between things that need doing and the person I am meant to be ... God calls you to the kind of work that you need most to do, and that the world most needs to have done .. the place God calls you is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” – Frederick Buechner

MEMORIZE | ROMANS 8:28

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DIFFICULTY OF WORK

RECOMMENDED READING

Chapters 5 and 8 in Tim Keller's *Every Good Endeavor*

INTRODUCTION

Typically, the honeymoon phase of a job lasts about a month, at best. After four weeks, excitement begins to give way to boredom. New friendships are strained by the discovery of annoying habits. Promising projects turn out to be unrealistic pipe-dreams. And that paycheck can no longer numb the sting of waking up at five every morning to fight traffic. No job ever lives up to the hype.

This sad reality tells us that something is profoundly broken with work. No matter what career or job we choose, it will at some point (or at many points) frustrate us, fatigue us, and disappoint us. Recall the statistics from the first lesson of this study. Only 13% of surveyed workers felt a sense of passion or engagement in their jobs. 87%, the vast majority, felt frustration instead. God designed work to be a blessing and a joy to us; but for most of us, it's not.

REFLECTION

🔗 What are some of the worst experiences you've endured at work? What made them so awful?

- ☛ What one thing do you really wish was different about your current job? Do you think it is realistic to hope this change will happen? Why or why not?

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

What happened to God's design of work? How did it turn from something good and joyous into something hard and frustrating? To answer that question, we must go back to the beginning, to Genesis 3 and the fall of Adam and Eve. Read Genesis 3:1-24 and answer the following questions:

List the immediate negative consequences of Adam and Eve's sin as described in verses 7-13.

How do these negative consequences show up in our own work experiences?

God curses Adam and Eve in verses 16-19. Name a few ways in which this curse affects our experience of work today.

Genesis 11:1-9 records one of the greatest construction projects in human history: the tower of Babel. Why did this project fail? What was sinful about this work?

In the book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon used his supernatural wisdom to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of every human endeavor, including work. What problems or limitations of work does Solomon describe in each of the following passages?

Ecclesiastes 1:2-11, 14-15

Ecclesiastes 2:16-23

In Romans, Paul describes the character of the person who does not yet know Jesus. Read Romans 1:28-32 and 3:10-18. How do these realities effect our experience of work? What do they tell us we should expect to find when we walk into the typical work environment?

Based on the biblical evidence you've studied, what difficulties should we expect to find in our jobs?

“Just because you cannot realize your highest aspirations in work does not mean you have chosen wrongly, or are not called to your profession, or that you should spend your life looking for the perfect career that is devoid of frustration. That would be a fruitless search for anyone. You should expect to be regularly frustrated in your work even though you may be in exactly the right vocation.”

- Timothy Keller, Every Good Endeavor

ACTION STEPS

Think through your own experiences with work (if you haven't yet worked, think about your parents' work experiences). Describe a time when you observed each of the following:

- Fruitlessness
- Selfish Ambition
- Idolatry

Is competitiveness and ambition at work always negative? If not, when is it a good thing and when is it a bad thing?

Think about how our society views work. How has sin broken our attitude and approach towards work? In other words, when it comes to how a person should act at work, where do you see differences between what the Bible says is good and what society says is good?

MEMORIZE | ECCLESIASTES 2:18-19

“Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity.”

CHAPTER SIX

OPPORTUNITIES AT WORK

RECOMMENDED READING

Chapters 9-12 in Tim Keller's *Every Good Endeavor*

INTRODUCTION

Light shines brightest in the darkest places. There is a darkness that pervades work in this cursed world, a darkness full of futility, frustration, selfishness, and sin. We should not celebrate that darkness, but we should see it as an opportunity to be a light. If work was always easy and satisfying for everyone, then there would be little opportunity for God's people to demonstrate God's supernatural peace, joy, and love. It was only after watching me patiently endure weeks of frustrating setbacks at my engineering job that one of my non-Christian coworkers finally asked, "Why are you so joyful all the time?" Until that day, he'd never allowed me to talk with him about religion. Difficulty created opportunity. Without the pain, there would have been no chance to tell him about Jesus.

REFLECTION

- Have you had any opportunities to talk about Jesus with a non-Christian coworker? If so, what did you say or do that opened a door for these conversations?

- Describe your reputation at your current job. Is it positive or negative? How did you get this reputation?

- ☛ If you work among non-Christians, do you think that they see a significant difference between you and the average employee at your work? If so, what is that difference?

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

In this lesson we want to get practical. How can we as followers of Christ share His love and truth in the context of our work? The Bible gives us three primary strategies, beginning with our words.

Strategy 1: Speak the Words of the Gospel

Acts 4:12 tells us that “there is salvation in no one else” other than Jesus. Forgiveness of sins and eternal life can only be found through belief in the good news about Jesus. But how can someone believe if they’ve never heard? Therefore, our most important task on earth by an infinite margin is to share the good news (that is, the “gospel”) about Jesus with everyone we can, including the people we work with. So let’s make sure we understand the gospel message. Look up each of the following passages and summarize what they tell us about the gospel.

John 3:16

Romans 3:23-24

Ephesians 2:8-9

Summarize the gospel message in your own words as you might share it with a coworker who has just asked you, “How can I be saved?”

Strategy 2: Demonstrate Competence and Diligence

Few things destroy a person’s ability to witness for Jesus faster than laziness or incompetence at work. Our coworkers are counting on us to support the team and the company through skilled, diligent work. If we are either lazy or incompetent, we damage the productivity, the reputation, and quite possibly the survival of the entire company.

Read Proverbs 6:6-11, 10:26, and 22:29. What do these sayings teach us about laziness, diligence, and competence?

“The church’s approach to an intelligent carpenter is usually confined to exhorting him to not be drunk and disorderly in his leisure hours and to come to church on Sundays. What the church should be telling him is this: that the very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables.”

– Dorothy Sayers, *Creed or Chaos*

Paul speaks to slaves in Colossians 3:22-24, and while we are (thank God!) not slaves of our employers, some of the principles still apply. Read the passage and then describe the work-ethic God desires us to demonstrate in our jobs.

“If the call of the Christian is to participate in God’s ongoing creation process, the bedrock of our ministry has to be competency. We must use our talents in as competent a manner as possible.”

– William Diehl, *The Monday Connection: On Being an Authentic Christian in a Weekday World*

Read Philippians 2:14-15 and then describe what this behavior would look like in a typical office environment.

Strategy 3: Love Others as God Has Loved You

Jesus tells us in John 13:35 that the world will know we are His disciples (followers) “if you have love for one another.” Forget for a moment what our society means by the word “love.” What do you think Jesus meant by that word in this verse? *Hint:* John 13 records the conversation that occurred during the Last Supper. Think about how Jesus demonstrated “love” shortly thereafter.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 describes God-like love. Read this passage and then give a few examples of what this type of love would look like in your workplace.

ACTION STEPS

How can you practically demonstrate Christ-like love at work towards...

- Your boss?
- Your peers?
- Your employees or staff?

Name one practical way you can increase either your diligence or competence at work?

Think about three people you work with who do not yet know Jesus. Spend a few minutes praying for each of them by name. Pray that God would use you to tell them about Jesus. Pray that God would help them to believe.

MEMORIZE | PHILIPPIANS 2:14-15

“Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.”

APPENDIX

BOOKS

Culture Making: Recovering our Creative Calling by Andy Crouch

Joy At Work: A Revolutionary Approach To Work by Dennis W. Bakke

The Person Called YOU: Why You're Here, Why You Matter, & What You Should Do W/ Your Life by Bill Hendrick

When the Kings Come Marching In: Isaiah & the New Jerusalem by Richard Mouw

Work Matters by Tom Nelson

WEBSITES

<http://faithandwork.com/> - Tim & Redeemer Presbyterian's Center for Faith & Work

<http://www.dts.edu/hendrickscenter/resources/faithandwork/> -DTS's Faith & Work

<http://saddleback.com/connect/ministry/Saddleback-at-Work/lake-forest>
-Saddleback@Work





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