

Review of *How God Makes the World a Better Place*

By Ilya Manzyuk

In this installment of our series featuring resources on Faith, Work, and Economics, we recommend David Wright's [*How God Makes the World a Better Place: A Wesleyan Primer on Faith, Work, and Economic Transformation*](#).

Writing from the perspective of the Wesleyan tradition, Wright sets out to aid the reader in discovering the potential of work as a 'lifelong source of well-being and fulfillment,' not just for him or herself, but for those around them as well. Drawing on the principles of Charles and James Wesley, Wright's focus is on how principles of Christian discipleship should inform ideas about work, economy, and society.

3 Major Takeaways

Each chapter in the book works through two fundamental questions and their relationship to the idea of work and the economy: "*Who has God called us to be?*" and "*What has God called us to do?*" By focusing on our identity as Christians and our mission towards discipleship, Wright brings the Wesleyan tradition to bear on three big ideas.

Work Shapes Our Identity

Work matters. And not just because we spend a significant portion of our life doing it. Work provides us with a sense of purpose, value, direction, and fulfillment. Contributor Christin Taylor makes the point that perhaps we should not be so quick to reject the idea that work shapes our identity. Instead, she suggests that the sense of value and fulfillment we get from our work is a reflection of *imago dei*:

"Because we are made in the image of a creating God, our work does quite a bit more than just occupy our time or provide basic necessities; it creates value for people so wealth and well-being can grow over time" (6).

Rather than viewing work as a means to an end, the book challenges us to view our work as a means by which God makes the world a better place.

2. Our Work Becomes God's Work

During the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century, the work of John Wesley and countless others in England served to spark global change in practices of slavery, working conditions, social justice, and helped encourage the development of a middle class. To John Wesley, our work was (and is!) the means by which God acted to make the world a better place. The root of that perspective was in the transformative and life-changing power of conversion, which Wesley preached throughout his life. He believed that conversion (or salvation) was something that had a direct impact on the *here and now*, not just in eternity. Before people can approach the work of changing their behavior and how they relate to their neighbors (*what they do*), they must first be radically transformed by a relationship with Jesus Christ (*who they are*). Conversion is the catalyst for transforming our work to that of God's work.

3. Discipleship Blesses Your Community

The strong emphasis on a personal conversion experience was only the starting point for the work we are called to do. A lifelong pursuit of holiness and discipleship was to be the lasting fuel. Wesley encouraged his congregations to pursue holiness on a personal and communal level. Personally, a commitment to holiness would impact how we approach every decision and action in life. Communally, this commitment would serve to “create a community framework that embodies biblical principles of peace, fairness, and hope for all,” (58).

Final Thoughts

For many, work is seen *as* the curse of the fall, and life without work is seen as the ultimate redemption. Yet, the principles of the Wesleyan movement challenge us to view our salvation through Christ in a different light: “The joy and blessing of conversation is not that we are freed from working but that we are freed to experience work as the expression of all that is most beautiful and magnificent about us” (122).

Read the Book

[Wright, David. *How God Makes the World a Better Place: A Wesleyan Primer On Faith, Work, and Economic Transformation*. Grand Rapids: Christian's Library Press, 2012.](#)