

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Gospel Fluency
TITLE: Work

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 1-3; Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:22-24

DATE: 6 August 2017
PASTOR: Charlie Boyd

The word *gospel* simply means “good news.” When we read the word gospel in the Bible and in most other places, we know that it is referring to the good news about Jesus. The idea of fluency is used most often in relation to being able to speak two or more languages. Yet the word fluent means to be able to express oneself easily and articulately not necessarily just in foreign languages. Meaning when we talk about Gospel Fluency this summer, we are talking about being able to express and communicate the good news about Jesus easily and articulately to yourself and others.

Most of spend 60-70% of our waking hours at work. And I mean, all work—working outside the home receiving a paycheck and working inside the home raising kids. When I say all work, I’m also including getting ready for work, commuting to and from work, as well as things like going to the grocery store, preparing meals, doing chores, checking off to-do lists, and yard work. If you work 40 hrs/wk for 40 years, that means you will work over 80,000 hours at a job during your lifetime. For most of us, our work week is closer to 50+ hrs/wk and that calculates out to 104,000 hours at work, not including the 15,000 hours we spend kindergarten through college or learning a trade, preparing to work. How do you see work? For some, work is a curse—like a penalty box between weekends. For others, work is a god—it’s where we get our identity and measure our worth by how successful we are. However, according to the Bible’s story, both those ways of thinking about work are way off base.

Question — How do all those hours at work (or preparing for work) fit with God’s ultimate purpose for your life? Your work in sales, as a teacher, software developer, or whatever you do, what’s the purpose of it all? Christians talk a lot about how the main purpose of our lives is to “glorify God”—which is absolutely true—but what does that mean and how does that translate into our 8-5, M-F jobs? How does the Gospel speak into our work lives?

Two Overarching Points

1. You will never understand your purpose at work until you understand God’s purpose for work. Okay, so what’s God’s purpose for work? *The answer directly relates to why God created people in the first place.*

Genesis 1:1, 26-28 — In the beginning, God was creating/working. He made us in his image that we might “rule” with him over all creation. God blessed us with work—with the work of filling the earth with image-bearers who would work to extend and expand his rule to the ends of the earth.

Genesis 2:15 — God created people to work the Garden of Eden. In other words, God left “paradise” incomplete. God’s purpose was for people to continue the work of creating—ruling/reigning, subduing/shaping, forming/filling, keeping/cultivating more and more space for humans to flourish in God’s presence. *So, why did God create people? What was his purpose in creating us? (Two quick points here)*

- You were made to work. Work is core to being made in the image of a God who works. Work is built into your God-given DNA.
- The first blessing in God’s story is work. God was saying, “You have my blessing to take my Garden and create from it—a culture, a society, a civilization.”

But if work is a blessing and not a curse, why are so many people (80% of the American workforce) dissatisfied with their jobs? Genesis 3:17—tells us that as a consequence of sin, God cursed the ground (not work, the ground). Work is still a blessing, but it's hard—full of "painful toil." Now, people need to be "saved"—first, to be put back into right relationship with God—and second—to be put back right with God's creation—with God's original purpose for the work he gave us to do.

Which is why Jesus came as a *human*—not as a burning bush or a cloud of smoke and fire—as a human—Why?—to do what Adam was supposed to do—to rule over the earth: King Jesus came to put you back into right relationship with God (his first coming) and he will come again to put all creation back into right relationship with God (His second coming). Paul talks about Jesus two-part work in Eph 2:8-10.

Ephesians 2:8-10 tells us that God has saved you—put you back into a right relationship with God—"by grace through faith in Jesus." (2:8-9). Paul also tells us that he saved us *for a purpose* (2:10)—for "good works"—good works that he planned for you way back at the beginning of time. Through Jesus, God saved you to put you back into right relationship with himself and to call you back to work! To call you back to the original purpose for the work God blessed us with in the Garden.

So, what are these "good works?" Dorothy Sayers defines work this way: "(Work) should, in fact, be thought of as a creative activity undertaken for the love of the work itself; and that man, made in God's image, should make things, as God makes them, for the sake of doing well a thing that is well worth doing." Do you see here that God's purpose for work cannot be divided into "spiritual" and "secular?" In the story of the Bible, there is no such thing as "spiritual" and "secular" life and work.

Furthermore, God doesn't just "call" people into "full-time Christian service" as pastors and missionaries. That idea distorts God's original purpose for work in this world. God "calls" all people into all kinds of different vocations.

Your work matters to God because God's purpose for this world matters to God. The fact is, your work is part of God's big idea for his work in this world.

God's original purpose for work = "Fill the earth, rule over the earth, cultivate this garden (Gn 1-2) until it becomes a thriving city/civilization that reflects my glory" (Rev 21-22).

God's purpose for your work = See your work as God's call on your life to live into that story for his glory.

What does it mean to do your work for the glory of God? (see 1Cor 10:31; Col. 3:22-24) It means you have a part in reshaping your world at work so people see and sense God's presence in your life and they reap the benefits.

2. BIG IDEA: Your purpose at work is to show that God is at work in your life.

For Discussion

1. What was your biggest "aha" or "take away" from this message?
2. How has your idea of what you do for work changed? What else? Who else?
3. Compare Gn1-2 to Rev21-22. If God's story went straight from Gn1-2 to Rev21-22 what does that say about God's ultimate purpose for creating us to work?
4. Read and discuss 1 Cor 10:31 and Col 2:22-23. What does it mean to do your work with "sincerity of heart" and "with all your heart?" ...What kinds of things at work make this difficult? What do you need to remember when you are tempted to talk about struggles and conflicts at work like people who don't know God?
5. *The purpose of your life at work is to show that God is at work in your life* (Jeff Henderson). Talk about specific things you can say and do to show that God is at work in your life without coming across as "preachy."

Great Resources on the Gospel and Work: Every Good Endeavor by Tim Keller; Work Matters by Tom Nelson; The Gospel at Work by Sebastian Traeger and Greg Gilbert, and Garden City by John Mark Comer.

