

God and the Rest of the Week

Title: Part 2 – Work as Worship

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As you guys are saying “Hi,” I want to welcome everyone hanging out with us on our app or social channels. Thanks for stopping by! We want you to know we are FOR you so let us know how we can serve you or pray for you. And if this message blesses you then share it with a friend.

If you are just jumping in with us today, last week we began a collection of messages we are calling “God and the Rest of the Week.” If you missed it you can watch or listen from our app or website, but the big idea is that we tend to ghetto God into a couple of hours on the weekend but then the rest of the week we are busy running our lives. AND the goal of saying that is not to make anyone feel guilty, God doesn’t want to be in the REST of your week because you feel some sense of obligation. My goal in highlighting this or elevating this tension is because God wants to be so much more TO you and has so much more FOR you!

In fact, and I mentioned this last week, 39 out of the 40 parables of Jesus that we have recorded took place outside of church or a religious setting. Almost all of them had to do with the marketplace or family or finances... things like that. All the REST of the week stuff. SO, we are diving into some of these areas that consume us outside of church, things like work, family, our schedules, our finances... and how Scripture gives us insight into how we can bring God into the REST of our week.

Today I want to talk about bringing God into the marketplace, into our work. I want to preach a message I am calling:

Work as Worship.

When most people think of worship they think of something that happens inside of a church or some religious setting, right? We probably all have slightly different images when we say worship, but in this line of thinking to really worship then means that you get to church every time the doors are open. Back in the day that meant church on Sunday morning, then Sunday School, then church on Sunday evening. Then you’d come back for church on Wednesday evening, not to mention all the other things that might be offered. I think the theory was that if the church kept us busy enough then we wouldn’t have time to sin!

AND if you continue down that path, that means there are secular jobs and Christian jobs. Secular jobs are what most of you all do, they are necessities that need to be endured in order to put bread on the table. And if God has any interest in our jobs, it is primarily that we don’t cheat, and that we tithe off of our salaries. Christian jobs on the other hand are for people like me, the professional Christians. I get paid to be good, you guys are good for nothing.

But when we think about people who try to bring God into the workplace all kinds of disturbing images come to mind. Right? You think that to be a Christian business person is to open up a coffee shop called “He Brews” or “Holy Grounds” or something like that. It’s like when you have your kids in the car and you see the billboard for an Adam & Eve Stores on 75 and your kids go, “Look, dad, a new Christian store. We should go in there.” Different kind of Christians honey... We think being a Christian business person means defiantly saying, “Merry Christmas” every time some says, “Happy Holidays.” Or maybe sneaking in a “Have a blessed day” to somebody. Or maybe it’s something really bad, like forcing awkward moments into sales calls like, “Now that I’ve sold you life insurance, have you thought about insurance for life after death? Could I talk to you about Jesus.” Or, you know, something like, “So I have your name here on our mailing list, but is your name written down in the Lamb’s Book of Life?” Those are the images we have of being followers of Jesus in the marketplace.

BUT that's not the design God gave work. In fact, in Genesis 2, at the very first mention of work in the Bible, the Hebrew word that God used for work is the word **"Abad"** which shares the same root word as worship. In other words, Adam was to worship God in the garden, not just by reading his Bible and praying and staying away from a few bad apples. He was to worship God by doing the things in the garden that God had put him there to do! His work was worship!

So, what does that tell us? It tells us this, big idea for today: God wants to display His power outside of the church as much as He displays it inside the church. So, I've got five ways that you can worship God while you work. If you want to jot these down, grab your service guide or our church app, the first one is this:

Work fulfills God's purposes in creation.

In Genesis 2:15, God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden with the assignment to work the ground and to keep it. This was before the curse, before sin. In other words, work was not a punishment that God gave to mankind after we had sinned. It wasn't like the original plan was for us to sit around in the garden drinking wine while the angels massaged our feet but then after sin God was like, "Well, now you gotta get a job!" No, this is part of the original creation, for humans to work.

The word that God used for work literally means in Hebrew to "prepare" or to "develop." God made Adam a gardener. A gardener is not a park ranger who just guards the garden. A gardener is somebody who actually develops the garden. God put Adam in the garden to develop. He was to take the raw materials of the earth and he was to develop them for the glory of God and for the benefit of the other humans that God would create.

You see, God made man in His image. And the first thing we find about God in Genesis 1 & 2 is that God is a creator! So, when God made man in His image, He made him to be a co-creator. In fact, you remember the word that God used over and over again for His creation. God saw it and it was what? Good! Now good is good, but good is not perfect. Perfect means cannot be improved upon. Good means it's good, but it's not perfected yet. We are not park rangers that were given a perfect creation that we are to merely steward. We are gardeners that are to develop and create and subdue creation for the glory of God and the benefit of other humans.

Contractors take the raw materials of sand and cement and use them to create buildings. Artists take the raw materials of color or music and arrange them into art. Lawyers take principles of justice and they codify them into laws that benefit society. AND here is the key, in a way, God is Himself at work creating through us!

The great reformer Martin Luther took Psalm 147:13, which says this: (13-14)

For God strengthens the bars of your gates; he blesses your children within you. He makes peace in your borders; he fills you with the finest of the wheat.

Martin Luther read that and asked in the 1500's how exactly does God do that? He said, God does that by city planners and by architects. He does it by politicians who pass good laws to protect the city. How does God bless our children? Well, He does that by teachers and pediatricians outside of the home. How does He make peace in our borders? Well, He does that through our first responders. How does God fill us with the finest of wheat? He does that by farmers and factory workers and restaurant owners. In fact, Martin Luther went on to say this:

“When we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we ask God to ‘give us this day our daily bread.’ And he does give us our daily bread. He does it by means of the farmer who planted and harvested the grain, the baker who made the flour into bread, the person who prepared our meal.” — Martin Luther

Our professions, Martin Luther said, “are like the masks that God wears in caring for the world.”

And come on, some of you have experienced this without even knowing it. Some of you when you are working, when you are in your sweet spot, have almost a divine satisfaction. Maybe you're not even a Christian and you're not even sure what to call it, but you know that there is something, when you are working, that feels like you're doing what you were born to do. Right?

The word vocation comes from the Latin word “voca” which means to call. So, your vocation, the reason they chose that word for it, is because it's like a calling that God put onto your life because it's the mask He wears to do what He wants to do in the world. How cool is that?

In fact, there are two Old Testament figures in Exodus 31 that are very important, but hardly anybody knows about them, their names were Bezalel and Oholiab. You ever heard those names before? Don't worry nonprofessional Christians know them. But Bezalel and Oholiab are two guys in Exodus 31 and they are two of the very few people in the Old Testament who are referred to as men filled with the Spirit of God. Now here's what's interesting. How did they express they're being filled with the Spirit? Did they speak in tongues, preach great sermons, or write powerful music. No, they were filled with the spirit of God, and they were expert craftsmen! Their expression of being filled with the Spirit was the quality with which they did their work! Come on that'll preach!

There are some of you in business or at work that resonate with that feeling. You're like, “I'm not really sure how to describe it, but there's a certain divine pleasure I feel when I'm doing the work that I know I am supposed to do.” That's the Spirit of God at work within you!

Now, I know some of you hear that and think, I don't know what you are talking about, I have never felt that when I was working. And the reason for that is because one of the curses God placed on things after Adam and Eve sinned was that our work would be frustrated. So, for many of you, your work is partially fulfilling, but it is also toilsome and draining. Right? I'd say that is true for all of us. Our work is partially fulfilling but it is also a huge drain. OR it might just be a total drain! That's all part of the curse of sin.

So, what do you do if you're in that kind of job? Well, you can still do it faithfully as an act of service to other people. It's still helping somebody and there can be a certain pleasure in that. But you also might consider that there could be a distinction between your job and the calling that God has placed in you. For example, the Apostle Paul's calling was to take the Good News of Jesus to the Gentiles (the non-Jews). But Paul by trade was a tent maker. He made tents. So, making tents was Paul's job, but it was not the heart of God's calling. It was what enabled him to pursue his calling if that makes sense.

If you happen to be one of those rare people that finds a career that fits your calling from the beginning, listen, that is a blessing. It's not a right, it is a blessing. But what I wanted you to see from this is that calling is not something that just applies to those of us who are in the ministry. We are all the masks that God wears to serve the world and to create and He does that through our work.

Alright, number two:

All work is worship when we do it with excellence.

All work, whatever it is your hand finds to do, all work is an act of worship with you pursue excellence. I love what the Apostle Paul, again apostle and tent maker, I love what he wrote to the Colossian church. He says in Colossians 3:23: (23 & 24)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as if you are [what?] WORKING FOR THE LORD, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord [who?] CHRIST YOU ARE SERVING.

Paul is saying you have a higher boss, and you work for a greater reward than recognition or salary! Everything you do is an offering to the Lord because you are really serving Christ. AND as a Christ-Follower, everything you do displays the worthiness that God deserves.

C.S. Lewis said that he once noted how there were certain valleys that for thousands of years were undiscovered by human eyes. No human had ever seen these valleys until modern times. But when they were finally discovered, they also found beautiful flowers, some that had never been seen before. So, C.S. Lewis postulated this question, he said, "For whom did God create that beauty? If no human eye would ever see it?" His answer, "God does some things only for His pleasure. And God sees them when nobody else does." In the same way Lewis said, "Christians make beautiful things for God even when nobody else is there to pay attention."

So maybe you say today, "Brian, my boss is terrible. Like Michael Scott level horrible. They never reward me. They are borderline abusive. I never get the bonus. And they end up taking the credit for what I do." Listen, I know that's hard. I see you. I know that leads to a lack of motivation. But here's what I hope you hear today. You are not doing it for them! You're doing it for Jesus! He's the One you are serving!

And if that seems too "pie in the sky" then did you notice what Paul said? He said, "Working for the Lord, not for human MASTERS..." Masters implies slaves! Paul is saying, "Some of you are like, man, my boss totally owns me. But for the Colossian church, their boss actually owned them!" Paul says even in those terrible circumstances we are to do our work unto the Lord as a statement of His worthiness.

This is one of the things that's supposed to separate Christians and set them apart, is that we do our work for the glory of God! So that whether we eat or drink or mop floors or write contracts we are doing it to show how beautiful and how worthy God is of our very best!

Students! I think you should be involved in your school's campus ministry like FCA, but what Paul is telling you here is that how you do your schoolwork is a statement about the glory of God. The quality with which you do your assignments is a reflection of the worthiness of God. Because before you do it for your teacher, you do it for Jesus.

All work is worship when we do it with excellence. Number three:

Ethical work is worshipful work.

Business ethics should really matter to the believer because our work is done first and foremost unto God—AND—our ethical practices reflect on God. In fact, Proverbs 11:1 says this:

The Lord detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him.

Dishonest scales today would be like fudging a mileage report. It means padding a business expense. It means overcharging for work not needed. It means skimping on a time card. Calling in sick when you are

not. It means commandeering office supplies for personal use. Those things God says are detestable in His eyes!

To worship God in your work means having standards higher than even the world does. It means going above and beyond the world standards. AND I'll be honest with you. This is not always the case with Christian businesses or business people. I hate to say this, and some of you who are not Christians, you're like, this is exactly what I was hoping to get at church. But I don't like to do business with other Christians. There, I said it! But it's true! Not all the time, but often when a Christian business finds out that I'm also a Christian they take what I call "extensions of grace" like not delivering work when promised, asking for extra fee or labor costs, doing really subpar work, stuff like that. It's like, "Oh, you love Jesus, I love Jesus, great then you'll understand why I put you on the back burner while I go and make money on all these other jobs first." Anyone know what I am talking about?

OR I don't know how many waitresses I've heard say, "I don't like to wait on Christian tables." Why? Because they are like, "Why would I tip you more than I tip God, I'm not adding more than 10 percent." Church, listen to me, don't do that! Especially if you put down an invite card! I swear we will come to your house if we find you doing that... If you put down anything connected to our church it's gotta be at least 20 percent! I'm serious. At least 20 percent! If you're gonna put down less than that then say you're a Jehovah Witness for the love of God!

Psalm 15 says this, this from the Message translation, but the Psalmist writes: (v.1-3)

God, who gets invited to dinner at your place? How do we get on your guest list? [God says] "Walk straight, act right, tell the truth. Don't hurt your friend, don't blame your neighbor; despise the despicable. Keep your word even when it costs you, make an honest living, never take a bribe. You'll never get blacklisted if you live like this."

You wanna know how to take God into the REST of your week? Do these things! Ethical work is worshipful work. Number four:

Make blessing others the bottom line.

Worshipful work makes blessing others the bottom line.

To follow Jesus means that you think about your life the way that Jesus thought about His. Let me say that again, to follow Jesus means that you think about your life the way that Jesus thought about His. And the thing that characterized Jesus' life was leveraging His position of strength and power, not to build His own Kingdom, but to serve others. That's why Paul comes along and says in 2 Corinthians 8:9:

You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, [Though He had a position of power, though He was influential] yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich.

Paul says that's how you ought to think about your life. God has made you rich in various places. You may be rich in money, you might be rich in talent, might be rich in position, you may be rich in good looks like me... Why is that so funny? But Paul says take those things and leverage them to bless others and serve others the way that Jesus leveraged His to serve you!

So, what does that actually look like in business or at work? Well, let's start with just your attitude. You'll have this sense that I'm serving other people and that should give you a certain level of joy! It's gonna give you a spirit that you serve with because you're doing it as a way of washing their feet. You get to be like

Jesus in that! I can also guarantee you that it will mean you begin to look for places within your job that you can extend the grace and the mercy and the beauty of the Gospel. Right? Ways that you can be forgiving and not cutthroat like the rest of your industry. For those of you who own a small business, it means that you think about more than merely personal profit in your bottom line. You start to ask questions like this, "I know we might make a profit from this, but is it genuinely helpful to people?"

Are you with me? Make blessing people the bottom line. We should conduct ourselves at work in such a way that it makes people ask questions like, "I don't get it. Why do you have such joy in the way that you serve? Why is it that you work so excellently even when the boss rewards somebody else for what you did? Why is it that you forgive? Why don't you hold grudges? Why don't you talk about people? Why do you leverage what you have? Why do you give away so much money? Tell me about what motivates you to work like this?"

Worshipful work makes blessing others the bottom line. And we will wrap it up with this for now. Number 5:

Seek to advance Jesus' mission at work where you can.

If you want to bring God into the REST of your week then seek to advance Jesus' mission at work where the opportunity arises. Billy Graham once said that the next great awakening is going to happen in the workplace.

See, and maybe this will help if this seems foreign to you, here is what you need to know about God's will for your life. Some of Jesus' last words before He ascended back into heaven after being seen by His followers for 40 days after the resurrection. Some of His last words are something called the Great Commission. The Great Commission is to go into the world and make more disciples. So here is what you need to know about God's will. You should not wait around on Jesus to call you or tell you that He wants you to leverage your life for the Great Commission. He already did that. That call was in the original call to follow Jesus. He said, follow me and I will make you a fisher of men. Which means that it is your responsibility no matter your profession, this isn't just for the pastors, all of us should ask the question how can I best be leveraged for the purpose of the Great Commission? The question is no longer **IF** you're called to be a part of the great commission, the question is simply **WHERE** and **HOW** are the most effective places?

What I am saying is quit asking Jesus questions that He's already answered and start saying, "Jesus, guide me into where I'm supposed to leverage my skill and talent and work ethic for the purposes of your Kingdom."

Here's another way to say that:

Whatever you do, do it well for the glory of God, and do it somewhere strategic for the mission of God.

Whatever you do, not all of you are called to be pastors or be like me, thank God, right? You're called in a vocation, whatever you do, teacher, project manager, nurse, small business owner, stay at home mom, whatever you do, do it well for the glory of God. **AND** do it somewhere strategic for the mission of God. When you are figuring out what job to take, what money to make, where you wanna live don't just consider all that from the world's perspective. Look at it from a mission standpoint. Does that make sense?

Proverbs 22 says: (v.29)

Do you see a person skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure people.

In other words, do your work well, all the things we have been talking about, do your work well and then you will stand before the lost kings of the world. And when you do, you tell them about the Jesus that gave you the ability to do what you do!

Work fulfills God's purposes in creation. All work is worship when we do it with excellence. Ethical work is worshipful work. Make blessing others the bottom line. AND seek to advance Jesus' mission at work where you can.

Here's my word of warning in all this and we will pray. I know this is a battle that many of you face right now so I couldn't let our time end without saying this. God sent me today to tell someone to **worship God, not your work**. Work that is worship worships God, not the work itself.

You see when Adam and Eve fell, listen to this, our relationship to work fundamentally changed. What God had given us to be something that we enjoyed, to be something that brought Him glory, to be something that served other people, became instead for us our primary source of identity and idolatry.

In Adam and Eve's descendants, in Genesis 4, you see their descendants and you see the most subtle, fascinating distinction when it lists out the descendants of Cain. It lists all their jobs and says these guys were good with farms and these guys were good at building cities and these guys were good with music. And as you read on you see what was happening. They were becoming defined by their work. That all culminates in Genesis 11 at the Tower of Babel when the descendants of Cain built this massive tower as a declaration about how awesome they are!

In contrast to that, are the descendants of Seth who were not defined by their work in Genesis 4, look at it, Genesis 4:26:

At that time people began to call on the name of the Lord.

The point is not of course that worshipers of God don't work or that they work less. The point is that worshipers of God are not primarily defined by their work. Instead, they are defined by the name of the Lord who they worship.

But because of the fall, many of us worship our work and we make it our identity. Right? It's like the second question we ask people, what's your name? What do you do? We define ourselves by our work or our relationship to work. Work is our primary source of security, which is why you are so paranoid about losing your job. It's why you're so discouraged about not having gotten ahead further faster. It's why some of us are a slave to our job.

BUT hear me, work makes a terrible master! Work makes a terrible master, but Jesus is a terrific master! Jesus says I no longer call you slaves but friends! Jesus is a much better master! You are a son or a daughter of the king, regardless of your position! He also offers much better security. Jesus is the One who took care of our primary problem, which is not a lack of education, not a lack of talent, and it was not a lack of money. Your primary problem is that you were cursed and dead in your sin, but He loved you so much that HE came and took the penalty upon Himself and gave you new life!

Jesus says, "Don't you think that if I took care of your primary problem, I'm gonna take care of your day-to-day needs too!" Come on, when Jesus is your life, then you can actually enjoy the rest of your life! When Jesus is your security and your identity and you don't look to work for that, then you start to enjoy work! Work matters to God, and God matters to your work!

Let me pray for us...

