

Faith and Work - Part 1

The Design and Dignity of Work

How should Christians approach work?

- Do we work to live? – Is work merely a means to an end? Do we only work so that we can have provision and/or resources to experience the meaningful things of life?
- Do we live to work? – Is work our most important activity? Do we merely rest in order to “recharge our batteries” so that we are more productive at work?

The Design of Work

- **The Goodness of Work** - Work should not be seen as a necessary evil and was not given as a punishment for sin. There was work in paradise. The Bible leads us to believe that there will be work in the New Heavens and New Earth (Is. 2:4).
- **The Limits of Work** - God set the pattern of rest from work (Gen. 2:2) even though He didn't need physical rest and before sin entered the world. Rest from work is part of His perfect design.
- **The Purpose of Work**
 - Be Fruitful and Multiply and Fill the Earth (Gen. 1:28a) - We are called to fill the earth with image bearers.
 - The implication is that mankind's work was to extend beyond the boundaries of the garden to the whole earth.
 - This isn't just about filling the earth with the human species, but also about forming a human society. Not just procreation, but civilization.
 - Subdue and Have Dominion (Gen. 1:28b-30) - We are given the role of having dominion over the rest of creation.
 - We are stewards who exercise our authority under the authority of God.
 - While God's creation was “very good,” it still needed to be worked.
 - Work and Keep the Garden (Gen. 2:15) - We are to cultivate God's good creation.
 - We are to create and cultivate in a way that leads to human flourishing.
 - The language of “work” and “keep” is also found in the description of priestly duties (Num. 3:7-8). Adam and Eve were called to be God's priests in Eden.
 - Keep the Lord's Commands (Gen. 2:16-17) - We work within the bounds of God's design.
 - Trusting that God's commands lead to human flourishing, all of our work is guided by the character and Word of God.
 - We don't use work for our own glory, but to glorify God.

The Dignity of Work

- **God is Revealed as Working Throughout the Bible**
 - The Work of Creation - *“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.”*
- Genesis 2:2
 - The Work of Providence - *“You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth”*
- Psalm 104:14 (see also Genesis 2 and Psalm 145:15-16)
- **God Commissions Humans to Work**
 - Only Mankind is Given an Office (Job Description)
 - This Office is Given in Connection with Being Made in God’s Image
 - *“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”* - Genesis 1:26
- **Therefore, There is Inherent Dignity in All Kinds Work**
 - “Manual” work has no less dignity than “knowledge” work
 - “Secular” work has no less dignity than “sacred” work
 - *“God is milking the cows through the vocation of the milkmaid.”*
- Martin Luther
 - *“[W]henever you are engaged in work that serves humanity and is for the building of humanity, it has dignity, and it has worth. One day our society must come to see this. One day our society will come to respect the sanitation worker if it is to survive, for the person who picks up our garbage, in the final analysis, is as significant as the physician, for if he doesn’t do his job, diseases are rampant. All labor has dignity.”*
- Martin Luther King Jr.

Discussion Questions

- Do you tend to work to live or live to work? How does the Bible speak to both of these ways of approaching work and life?
- How are we as Christians sometimes guilty of seeing more dignity in some types of work than in others?