

# Biblical Worldview-Whose Service?

## *Assertion of The Question of Labor/Work*

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### I. FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS AND WORLDVIEWS

Term	Origin	Historical Meaning
<b>Labor</b>	Latin <i>labor</i> via Old French	c. 1300: "a task, a project." Late 14c: "exertion of the body; trouble, difficulty, hardship... toil, exertion; pain, fatigue."
<b>Work</b>	Old English <i>weorc</i>	"A deed, something done, action... that which is made or manufactured, products of labor... physical labor, toil; skilled trade, craft, or occupation."
<b>Vocation</b>	Latin <i>vocatio</i> via Old French	early 15c: "spiritual calling, summons." 1550s: "one's employment, occupation," both mechanical and professional.

Common elements derived from these definitions include the involvement of an organized task, physical exertion, skill or craft, and the potential for the task to be useful, expedient, and remunerated.

#### The Two Worldviews

- **"Inside the Box" (Secular Humanism):** This worldview operates on the premise that God either does not exist or cannot be known. It rejects transcendent, absolute truth and asserts that human beings can build a better society through their own abilities, utilizing "science," reason, and rationality.
- **"Outside the Box" (Biblical Worldview):** This worldview is founded on the belief that God exists and is specifically the God of the Biblical narrative.

### II. THE SECULAR HUMANISTIC PERSPECTIVE ON LABOR

The Secular Humanistic view, depicted as resting on four pillars, justifies the importance of labor based on its tangible benefits to the individual and society.

- **Sociological Benefit:** Labor is seen as a contribution to the social contract. By working, individuals contribute to society and avoid becoming an undue burden upon it.
- **Economical Benefit:** Work is valued for its role in enhancing personal well-being and enjoyment. It fosters independence and self-sufficiency for the individual.

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- **Moral Benefit:** This perspective, rooted in principles like Utilitarianism, sees work as a moral good because it increases positive states of being (happiness) and reduces human suffering. Work that is not exploitative or harmful is considered ethical.
- **Existential Benefit:** Labor can provide intrinsic satisfaction and give a person a sense of meaning and purpose in life. It also offers the opportunity to create a lasting legacy that positively impacts society beyond one's own lifetime.

### Critique and Limitations

The challenges the sufficiency of this perspective is proposed by posing several critical questions:

- Is an activity still considered "work" if the person does not find it intrinsically fulfilling?
- Has a person's labor been worthwhile if they do not establish a lasting legacy?
- If an activity does not provide remuneration, can it still be considered labor or work?
- Does any work that is remunerated and does not cause harm constitute valid labor?
- Does an activity qualify as proper labor if society does not recognize it as beneficial?
- Is any work virtuous simply because it fulfills one or more of the four pillars of benefit?

## III. THE BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW ON LABOR

### The Divine Origin of Work: *Imago Dei*

- **Biblical Basis:** Genesis 1:26-27 states, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...'" This is immediately followed by the mandate to rule over creation, linking the divine image to productive activity.
- **God as Worker per excellence:** God's own creative actions in Genesis 1 serve as the original model for organized, purposeful, and useful work.
- **Humanity's Mandate:** In Genesis 2:7, 15, after forming man, "the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it." The Hebrew word for "cultivate" is *Abad* (עָבַד), which appears 290 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and means "to serve," "to do," or "to work."

### Labor as an Expression of Skill

The capacity for skilled labor is seen as an outworking of the *Imago Dei*. This is demonstrated through definitions and biblical examples:

- **Art:** Defined as "skill as a result of learning or practice... practical skill; a business, craft."
- **Technology:** Defined as "a discourse or treatise on an art or the arts... systematic treatment of an art, craft, or technique."

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### **Biblical Examples of Skilled Labor**

- **Cain:** Farmer
- **Abel:** Shepherd
- **Jabal:** Tents and livestock
- **Jubal:** Lyre and pipe (musician)
- **Tubal-Cain:** Bronze and Iron (metallurgist)
- **The Tower of Babel:** An example of collective art and technology.

### **The Concept of "Vocation" or "Calling"**

A central argument of the document is that the modern sense of "vocation" as a calling to a specific profession is a misapplication of the biblical concept.

- **The Sole Scriptural "Calling":** The analysis asserts that in a classical, biblical sense, there is only one spiritual "calling": to believe in the gospel. This point is supported by scripture:
  - "...deserting Him who **called you** by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel"
  - "It was for this He **called you** through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- **Conclusion on Vocation:** From this perspective, a believer is not "called" to a specific occupation, whether in "ministry" or a secular field. A person's labor or work is not their identity; it is the application of their skill.

### **The Role of Remuneration**

While acknowledging that remuneration for work is a good thing, the document states it is not an essential qualifier for an activity to be considered work. Many vital forms of labor are not remunerated.

### **Examples of Non-Remunerated Work:**

- Being a good mom (Proverbs 31; Titus 2:4)
- Being a good dad (1 Timothy 6:4; Colossians 3:21)
- Being a good wife (Proverbs 31; Ephesians 5:23-24)
- Being a good husband (Proverbs 31:28; Ephesians 5:25-33)
- Being a good student (2 Timothy 2:15)

## **IV. SYNTHESIS AND KEY CONCLUSIONS**

1. **Work as Task, Not Identity:** A person's labor is a task or project they complete; it does not define their core identity.
2. **Work as Service:** Work and labor involve the application of skill and ability that benefits another person or people.

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3. **Primacy of *Imago Dei*:** The personal and societal benefits of work are real but are a secondary outcome. The primary significance of work is that it underscores humanity's creation in God's image.
4. **Rejection of Professional "Calling":** The concept of a divine "calling" to a specific line of work or vocation is not supported biblically.
5. **Universality of Work:** A believer should recognize that all sorts of labor can be performed, and its value is not contingent on remuneration. The lack of payment does not disqualify a task from being observed as real and meaningful work.