

Work: Our Gift to The World

Overview: In the Theological Foundations series, we've explored a number of themes: 1) That we're created to work and bear God's image through our labor, 2) That living in a fallen world means we'll encounter sin and brokenness in our work, and 3) That work is one of the primary ways God's redemptive work is accomplished in the world. Scripture teaches us that work is good, but what if it was more than just good—what if it was a *gift* God gives the world? This discussion challenges group members to offer their work in service to others and as a witness to Christ.

Introduction:

Imagine you stopped 100 people as they rushed to work and asked them “Why do you work?” How do you think they'd respond?

- To earn the money I need to live
- To use my professional skills
- To stay busy
- To fulfill my calling

As Christians, work is part of our God-given identity, but what if God specifically gifted us, not merely for “religious” purposes, but for the good of the world and as a witness to him. What if the answer to “Why work?” was, “Because God has gifted me to serve and for my work to point to him?”

Discussion Questions:

1. Work as SERVICE

I Peter 4:10 “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.”

- Examine the three segments of this verse – what does each tell us about how God intends us to use the gifts he gives?

We often assume God gives his people spiritual gifts to serve the church (teaching, mercy, hospitality, giving,) but he also gives us vocational/professional gifts to serve others. As this verse reveals, we extend God's common grace to the world through our gifts.

Definition - Common grace: God's sustaining care of creation, that extends to all people. Examples of common grace include rain—that waters the crops of the godly and ungodly alike, or the gifts of medical professionals—who

care for members of their community, regardless of background or belief system. In this example, God cares for our civic needs through the work of others.

- **Consider the examples below and ask yourself: How does this person’s job demonstrate God’s grace? How does their work help others thrive?**

Curt works as an engineer for Denver Water, overseeing operations at one of the company’s water treatment plants. It’s a thankless, dirty job but someone’s got to do it. Curt takes pride, knowing the city has some of the cleanest, best-tasting water in the country.

Lainey works as a project manager for a web-design company that creates interactive websites for nonprofits and universities. She excels at managing the myriad details of the web design process and strives to create an effortless, intuitive experience for guests visiting the sites her team creates.

- **As you read the following quotes, ask: What do they tell us about our motivation for work? How do they inform the way we do our work?**

“All the gifts we possess have been bestowed by God and entrusted to us on condition that they be distributed for our neighbors’ benefit.”¹ – John Calvin

“God not only loves us, but also loves the world and wants us to serve it well. My work is a critical way in which God is caring for human beings and renewing his world.”² - Tim Keller

“We are not to choose jobs and conduct our work to fulfill ourselves and accrue power, for being called by God to do *something* is empowering enough. We are to see work as a way of service to God and our neighbor, and so we should both choose and conduct our work in accordance to that purpose. The question regarding our choice of work is no longer, ‘What will make me the most money and give me the most status?’ The question must now be, ‘How, with my existing abilities and opportunities, can I be of greatest service to other people, knowing what I do of God’s will and of human need?’” – Tim Keller³

2. Work as WITNESS

We’ve all seen an athlete or musician “give thanks to God” for their success, but what if God intends our witness to be something more?

¹ Calvin, John. *Institutes III, vii.5*

² Keller, Tim. *Every Good Endeavor*

³ Keller, Tim. *Every Good Endeavor*

- **What comes to mind when you think of being a witness through your work?**

You may think of sharing your faith with your co-workers or working in a way that honors God, both of which are elements of our witness. In addition, when we instill God’s values in our work (the relationships, environment, or systems we create) we expand his Kingdom “on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matt 6:10)

- **How could the systems, structures, and relationships you create reflect Kingdom values?**

Tonya teaches at a low-income elementary school in NE Denver. While she can’t control what kids experience outside of school, she wants her classroom to give them a taste of God’s character. She maintains order to create a peaceful environment and introduces beauty through music, art, and objects from nature. Tonya insists on honesty, even if it leads to difficult conversations with her kids, but also offers grace and forgiveness. Although school policy limits how openly she can talk about Christ in the classroom, His presence is felt through the way she does her work.

Note: Letting our work be a witness does not suggest we avoid talking to our colleagues about Christ. Rather, our verbal witness exists on a broad spectrum of ways we point to Christ. In addition to redeeming souls, God is redeeming all of creation, of with the daily, seemingly “non-spiritual” aspects of our job are a part.

“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!”

- Abraham Kuyper

Application:

How does today’s discussion expand how you see your daily work? Identify two practical ways you could put these principles in action.

Additional Resources:

The Fabric of This World: Inquiries into Calling, Career Choice, and The Design of Human Work by Lee Hardy

“What’s the Point of Common Grace?” by Hugh Welchel, The Institute of Faith, Work and Economics, <https://tifwe.org/common-grace/>