

“Light for Electricians”¹

Discussion Guide

In this discussion, you will return to the opening pages of Scripture to explore God’s purposes for work and what these principles mean for our lives. Keep in mind that work is not the same as a “job.” It is not defined by our age, stage of life, or whether we receive a paycheck for our labor. Rather, work is about engaging the created world to nurture, create, develop, and renew its resources in God-honoring ways.

INTRODUCE Go around the room and have each person answer these questions:

What is your name?

Tell us about your daily work...(Note: Some work, like homemaking, may be unpaid.)

What are your most favorite and least favorite aspects of your work?

DISCUSS VIDEO and ARTICLE If possible, watch this short video showing Karla Nugent and the Weifield Group Electrical Contracting <https://vimeo.com/196310217> (4:35). Discuss the following questions together:

What stood out to you from the reading and video?

In what ways do you see Karla’s faith expressed in her work?

The apprentices in Nugent’s program not only learn a trade, they find a new purpose in their lives. Why does this happen? How does work contribute to a person’s self-confidence and sense of purpose?

EXPLORE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS To understand the reasons why we labor, we must return to Genesis, where we discover two key concepts that introduce a framework for our work.

1. God is a worker (Read Genesis 1:1-4).

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.”

The opening scenes of the Bible show God at work—speaking creation into being, bringing order to the world, and designing humans, insects, and animals. He is a thoughtful creator, intentionally shaping each element of the world as we know it and affirming that his created work is good. Indeed, God’s creative acts are referred to as “work” in Genesis 2:2.

What does this tell you about God? What does it tell you about the value of work?

Do you think of your own work as creative? In what ways is your work like God’s work?

2. God made us to be workers, too (Read Genesis 1:26-29).

“Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’”

Reread this passage and circle the phrases that describe how humankind was created. Underline God’s instructions to men and women. What do you notice?

Imago dei is Latin for “image of God,” a theme which is repeated four times in this short passage. Men and women were created to be like God and to reflect his purposes and attributes as we go about our daily lives. If God is a worker, than one of the primary ways we emulate him is by working, too. And notice, “God’s work” isn’t limited to overtly religious work. We worship a creator who isn’t afraid to get his hands dirty as he engages creation.

Thinking practically, how might you reflect God’s purpose or character through your work?

[THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE WE SEE GOD AT WORK] “SHAPING, MOLDING, SPEAKING, COMMUNICATING, SHOWING OUTCOMES, DESTROYING, EMBELLISHING, MAKING THINGS BEAUTIFUL, FIXING AND MENDING, RESTORING, DESIGNING, KEEPING THINGS RUNNING, AND BRINGING THINGS TO CONCLUSION. THIS IS GOD AT WORK. GOD DOING BUSINESS.”
- R. PAUL STEVENS II

“MEN AND WOMEN WERE CREATED TO BE LIKE GOD AND TO REFLECT HIS PURPOSES AND ATTRIBUTES AS WE GO ABOUT OUR DAILY LIVES. IF GOD IS A WORKER, THEN ONE OF THE PRIMARY WAYS WE EMULATE HIM IS BY WORKING, TOO.”

3. God calls us to be “culture-makers.”

Revisit the words you underlined in Genesis 1:26-29. How would you describe the instructions God gives humankind in your own words?

Scripture describes our task using words like “be fruitful,” “fill and subdue,” “have dominion,” “cultivate” and “care,” which convey a sense of authority, stewardship, creativity, and expansion. God created men and women to take the raw materials of the created world and to make something of it. As author Katelyn Beaty explains, this fruitfulness includes our reproductive potential, but goes well beyond it:

“God intends [humans] to build civilizations. Procreation is bedrock to society—you can’t have a civilization without people to inhabit and guide it. But the buildings, food, laws, courts, gardens, clothes, calendars, dances, languages, and the million other artifacts and ideas that comprise culture are what God anticipates as he invites his image bearers to take up the creative task.” - Katelyn Beaty ⁱⁱⁱ

Every human has the potential to make culture through their daily work—to develop the raw materials God gives us, to bring order, restore something that is broken, or to give and nurture life. How do you fulfill this calling through your daily work?

APPLY TO YOUR WORK Because God created us with an innate capacity for work, our humanity is affirmed and enlarged through meaningful labor—whether for pay, at home, or in or volunteer roles.

How could the principles we discussed today change the way you regard your daily work?

How could your words and work be a witness for Christ? How could you sacrificially serve others (colleagues, clients, the community) through your job?

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Genesis 1 introduces us to a God who works and invites us to join him in the task of cultivating and caring for the world. Yet, only two chapters later, this plan goes awry as men and women disobey God’s instructions and sin enters the world. The beauty and order God created is marred and work that was filled with joy and purpose becomes toil.

Our work exists in the context of a fallen world where we see sin’s effects every day—in school systems that struggle to educate their students, corporations that adopt unethical business practices, or manufacturers that exploit the created world. In the midst of this brokenness, we find hope in Christ’s work on the cross.

Christ’s death frees individuals—and all creation—from the bonds of sin, beginning a restoration process that will continue until he comes again. Our call to steward creation remains the same, but we gain new hope and power through Jesus’ redemptive work on the cross. Our daily work is vital to the full expression of the gospel in the world.

PRAYER

God, you are good creator, and we marvel at the things you made. Thank you for creating us in your image, that we may follow your example and understand your ways. Be with us this week in our work and empower us to create, renew, and restore. In Jesus’ name. Amen.



RECOMMENDED READING

“Being Made in God’s Image Equips Us for Relationships,” Theology of Work Project <https://www.theologyofwork.org/old-testament/genesis-1-11-and-work/god-creates-and-equips-people-to-work-genesis-126-225/relationships/>

“Bringing Light to Darkness,” Denver Institute for Faith & Work <http://denverinstitute.org/2017/02/01/bringing-light-to-the-darkness/>

Every Good Endeavor by Timothy Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf

From the American Enterprise Institute: *The Dignity Deficit* by Arthur C. Brooks <https://www.aei.org/publication/the-dignity-deficit-reclaiming-americans-sense-of-purpose/>

ⁱ Originally published in *Christianity Today*, March 21, 2016.

ⁱⁱ Stevens, R. Paul, *Work Matters* (Eerdmans, 2012).

ⁱⁱⁱ Beaty, Katelyn, *A Woman’s Place: A Christian Vision for Your Calling in the Office, the Home, and the World* (Simon and Schuster, 2016).