

## The Design of Work

### 1. Intro

- How do you feel when the alarm clock goes off on Monday mornings
  - Do you jump out of bed eager to start another working week?
- If you're a normal human being ... the answer is probably ... "Not likely!"
- Many of us spend 40-50 hours a week working
  
- Sometimes work can be really satisfying
  - Other times it can be dead boring
  - For many ... it's just a means to pay the bills
    - So ... each week they trudge off to work singing "I owe I owe, it's off to work I go"
  - It feels a little bit like ground hog day
  
- Being a Christian doesn't necessarily make it any easier ... it can actually make it harder
- This is because of the Sunday-Monday crunch
  - On Sunday our minds are filled with the work of God
  - As we read & hear the Bible explained we hear how God is doing his great eternal work
  - He's sending out the great news of Jesus and drawing sinners into his kingdom
  - Then on Monday ... we change gears with an almighty crunch
  - We go back to our 9-5 job that can seem so temporary and insignificant compared to what God is doing
  
- Sometimes Christians can feel that the only work that is really matters is gospel work
  - It seems that only those involved in teaching and preaching about Jesus ... matter in the economy of God

- And those who do secular work ... it's only value is to provide you with a platform to evangelise others ... or provide money for gospel ministry
  
- So why should we work?
  - How should we think about our work?
  - What ethic should we have when it comes to work?
  - What does the Bible have to say about work and unemployment?
  - Is work a good thing or a curse to suffer through and put up with?
  
- Six weeks doing series on Faith and Work
  - Aim to not only look at what the Bible has to say about work
  - But help us integrate our faith and work
  - Try and break down the divide we can feel between faith and work
  
- Six weeks
  - Design of work
  - Purpose of work
  - Futility of work > effects of sin on work
  - Idolatry of work
  - New understanding of work > work of the gospel
  - New power for work > rest

## **PRAY**

### **2. Made to Work**

- When it comes to work ... many see work as a the world so often degrades work
  - We often hear people say ... "thank God it's Friday!"
  - People talk of Monday-itis
  - Boomtown Rats sang "I don't like Monday's"

- In other words ... when Monday rolls around and it's time to start the working week ... it's depressive and something to be avoided and endured
  - We can't wait for Friday and the end of the working week so we can stop work
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- But the Bible tells us we need to have a different perspective ... because work is actually a good part of God's world
  
  - Our starting point for a biblical view on work begins with creation
  - We see in Gen 1 ... that God was at work creating the H & E
    - He worked for 6 days and then on the 7<sup>th</sup> day he rested
  
  - And as you read through Gen 1 & 2 we see that God delighted in his work
    - Gen 1:31 - *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good*
  - But not only does God work to create ... but also to care for his creation
    - He forms the man
    - Plants a garden for him and waters it
    - Fashions a wife for him
  
  - And the rest of the Bible tells us how God continues to provide for his creation
    - caring for the world by watering and cultivating the ground<sup>1</sup>
    - giving food to all he has made
    - giving help to all who suffer
    - caring for the needs of every living thing<sup>2</sup>
  
  - God is a creator God > he worked in creation ... he continues to work in sustaining our creation

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 104:14-16

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 145:14-16

- As part of his creation process he put mankind on earth to rule over the earth
  - Mankind was given the mandate by God to be his agents on earth
  - To look after it ... to rule it ... to work it
    - **Genesis 1:27-28** <sup>27</sup> *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* <sup>28</sup> *God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*
- The word 'subdue' indicates that, though all God had made was good, it was still to a degree undeveloped
  - God left creation with deep untapped potential for cultivation that people were to unlock through their work
- We see this in Gen 2:15
  - *'The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to **work** it and take care of it.'*
- And so ... part of being made in the image of God means we have been made to work
  - God created us to work ... it's part of what being human and being made in the image of God is all about
  - It's part of our DNA
- And so ... contrary to what some people think ... work is **not** a bad thing
  - Work is not a result of the Fall ... it was part of God's creation mandate for humanity right from the beginning
  - It's not God's punishment on humanity because of A&E sin
  - No ... work is a good thing that God has given us to do

- Work is about fulfilling what God has made us to do > part of being human
- And so to not work is means we're not actually fulfilling our human nature
  - It's part of who we are and what we've been designed to be

### 3. Made to Love & Serve

- What is implied here in Gen 1 & 2 is made more explicit in the NT ... is that work means two things > it is
  - Love and service of God
  - Love and service of others
- When Paul was writing to the Colossian Christians he encouraged the slaves / workers to work diligently in their job because they weren't just working for their masters ... they were working for the Lord
  - **Colossians 3:17** *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*
  - **Colossians 3:23-24** *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men ... It is the Lord Christ you are serving."*
  - **1 Corinthians 10:31** *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*
- All our work ... all that we do ... is done for the glory of God
  - He's put us here on this earth to work it and take care of it
  - Therefore, our work is part of how we worship him
  - It's part of how we show our love for him ... as we serve him
- We show our love for God by being diligent, honest workers
- Even though work can be
  - Hard ... frustrating ... stressful ... unfair

- We do well to remember that when we work ... we're working for the Lord
- It's him we are honouring and serving as we work
  
- **Application**
- There are a number implications that flow out of this
- This helps us to foster an ethic of honesty in the work place
- If we're working for the Lord ... who knows, sees and hears all we do ...
  - He knows when we're being lazy and bludging on our bosses time or take those "mental health days" ... even if our boss doesn't
  - He knows when we cut corners ... because we can't be bothered doing it properly ... or we want to get out the door early
  
- **Joke – 100%**
- Heard about the guy who says he always gives 100% at work
  - 10% on Mondays
  - 20% on Tuesdays
  - 40% on Wednesdays
  - 15% on Thursdays
  - 5% on Fridays
- Not the Christian who's working all for the glory of God ... its 100% every day
  
- Remembering that work is about our love and service of God ... also helps us to make decisions that are honouring to God in our work
  - How do I deal with this staff member who's not particularly efficient or has annoying habits in a way that loves and serves God?
  - How do I deal with office politics in way that pleases God?
  - How do I react when I don't agree with what the boss asked me to do in a way that that honours God?
  - How do I treat those under me whom I have power over?

- **Love & Service of Others**

- Another aspect to work is that we do it in order to love and serve others

- **Not to burden others**

- 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 – *"Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to **work** with your hands, just as we told you, <sup>12</sup> so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and **so that you will not be dependent on anybody**"*
- Part of working is so that we are not a burden on others or society
- We're not to sponge off others because we're lazy and don't want to work
  - We love and serve others by working so they don't have to unnecessarily support us
  - Not talking about the unemployed seeking work ... but those who chose NOT to work
  - You think about it ... the person who bludges on the dole ...
    - They think ... "why should I work? I get paid to do nothing!"
    - But this thinking is selfish and not loving towards others in the community
  - Same is true for the adult child who lives at home ...
    - mum feeds him and does his washing ...
    - while he sits around playing Xbox and reading Superman comics
- So we work so as not to unnecessarily burden others

- **Provide for our family & relatives**

- Another reason that work is good ... is in order to provide for our families and relatives
  - 1 Timothy 5:8 - *"If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."*

- Context is supporting family members who are widows ... but the principle applies to all our family members who cannot support themselves ... which includes our kids
  - If you have a family ... it's good for you to work to support them
- **Share with those in need**
- Another good reason for us to love and serve others through our work ... is in order to share our goods and possessions with those in need
  - Ephesians 4:28 – *"He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must **work**, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need."*
- We work ... not so we can hoard our money and possessions ... not so we get richer while the poor get poorer
- Part of our work is being able to ensure others in our community are cared for
  - Using your money to support
    - Compassion child overseas
    - Giving to mercy ministries like Anglicare
    - Helping a friend pay a bill
    - Paying for someone to go on church weekend away or conference
- As part of working to fulfill God's creation mandate ... we do that by loving and serving others
  - Working to earn and living > not being a burden on others
  - Working to provide for our families > not neglecting our family responsibilities
  - Working to share with others > not hoarding it all to ourselves
- This attitude of working to love and serve God and others runs very counter-cultural to the world around us
- The world's attitude to work it's all about you get out of it



- The job satisfaction
- The money to fund my lifestyle
- The accolades from others at my successes
- But god's design for work is how you love and serve God and how you can love and serve others
  
- Andrew Cameron ... theologian and writer defines work as
  - *'fulfilling our God given mandate to in order to build communities that love God and where people care for each other'* (repeat)

#### 4. Made to Work Well

- If this is a biblical view of work ... then what are its implications for us today?
  
- **Work Redefined**
- One of the things that flow out of a biblical understanding of work is ... it redefines how we understand work compared to our culture today
  - In our culture ... work typically refers to your job > your career > the thing you do to get paid
  
- But when you're working *in order to build communities that love God and where people care for each other* ... it helps us see there's actually no distinction be paid and unpaid work
  - Work doesn't equate to paid employment
- This means the
  - The volunteer worker
  - The stay the mum who works at home to care for her children
  - The retiree who does part time church work ... or pastoral visits
    - is just as valuable as the doctor ... or banker ... or lawyer who earn 6-7 figure salaries

- Because unpaid work is still meaningful work when it's in service to God and others
  
- **Illustration – Lawyer to Mum**
- Friend of ours in London
  - Very smart, trained as lawyer > topped her year at law school
  - Christian > serve God and serve others practicing law
  - Married young > not long after graduating > fell pregnant straight away
  - Didn't get a chance to practice law
  - But was content to say ... "my job / my work now is to be a mum and raise my children" ... and she's been doing that ever since
  
- **Dignity**
- Secondly, if we are made in the image of God
- And God has given us the mandate to work
  - Then that means there is real dignity in work
    - Work is a good thing ... a positive thing
    - Work is not a necessary evil
  
- Without this then the secular person might say ...
  - "I work to live"
  - "I work to fund my lifestyle > holidays, comforts, dinners, hobby"
- Christian person might say
  - "Work is only valuable to help us support our families and support Christian ministry"
- But a biblical view of work says our work has much more dignity than that
  
- And because work has dignity ... then
  - the type of work we do doesn't matter
  - all work is valuable
    - Not just

- High paying city jobs
  - Not just teachers, doctors, and firemen
    - But all jobs
      - sparkie, volunteer, stay at home mum or check out-chick
  - And that goes for the non-Christian as much as the Christian
- It also means there is no room for condescension of others because of their work
  - No room for looking down on someone
    - who is not a high up the employment ladder as you .... or
    - who's salary isn't as high as yours
- It also means we can be free to take
  - lesser paying job or
  - a job of lower status than we're qualified for ...
    - because pay and status don't determine the dignity and value of your work
- All forms of work ... whether it's manual labour of a farmer or the intellectual prowess of a high court judge ... reflects our dignity as human beings ... because it's part of who we are in the image of the God who also works
- **Joke - Parachutes**
  - Four men on a plane > pilot > professor, priest, backpacker
  - Plane gets into difficulty and is about to crash > only three parachutes
  - Pilot > I'm very important person, grabs parachute and jumps out
  - Professor > ditto
  - Priest > says to the backpacker "I lived a long life, I know I'm going to heaven when I die > you're young, your life is before you, you take the parachute"

- Backpacker > "No, there's still two parachutes left ... that professor who insisted he was so brilliant just jumped out with my backpack!"
  
- You see our culture today says ... the job you do is what defines you
  - None more so than in Christian circles
  
- In Roman Catholic thinking ... especially prior to the Reformation, religious work more valued than secular work
  - One of the sacraments of the RC church is taking holy orders
  - Means one of the ways of accessing God's grace was to become a priest
  - Being a priest was more important in the economy of God
  - Created a very real sacred / secular divide
  
- But a priest no more in the image of God than the farmer or check out chick
  
- And so when you're working *in order to build communities that love God and people care for each other* ...
  - There is no difference in the economy of God
  - Church pastor, house-wife, Prime Minister, truck driver ...
  - Whatever it is you do ... all work has value and dignity
  
- **Criteria to Assess work**
  
- Thirdly ... you're working *in order to build communities that love God and people care for each other* ... it also means you have a criteria to judge whether work is morally good or bad
  - It gives you a framework to choose work that promotes a community that loves God and cares for others ... & we can reject work that doesn't
  - Or we can change jobs if we're in one that doesn't contribute to communities that love God and people care for each other
  
- **Illustration** – Marketing Director for Tabcorp
  
- Mate > senior marketing executive

- Retrenched ... looking for work > not a lot of work at executive level
- Offered a high paying job at Tabcorp
- Primary function of the role was to promote horse racing
- His goal was to increase number of people gambling on horses and & increase share of wallet of existing gamblers
- Mortgage and kids in private schools ... very tempting to take the job to help fund all that
- But when you're working *in order to build communities that love God and where people care for each other* ... he was able to assess that job offer against that criteria
- When he did that ... he was able to conclude that gambling ...
  - Doesn't build communities it destroys communities
  - Not loving and caring of others if he was trying to get them to waste their money rather than supporting their family or the poor
- With that criteria he could see that gambling totally undermines what work should be for ... he could say no to that job
  
- For you younger guys ... trying to work out what job you're going to do in life > what career you're going to pursue
  - This gives you a criteria to help work that out
- Many people come out of school and uni wondering
  - "What job will I do?"
- And often the criteria is
  - "What job can I do that will earn me the most money"
  - "What job is the most prestigious?"
  
- But when you're working *in order to build communities that love God and people care for each other* ...
  - That's the most important thing ... building communities that love God and where people are for each other

- Not “how can I earn the most money” and “what job is more prestigious”
- And yet within that biblical understanding of work, there is great freedom to do any job within that criteria
  - So it won't tell you what job to do > or what career to pursue
  - But it will give you a framework for working out what job might be better as you seek to love and serve God and the community we live in

## 5. Conclusion

- The Bible makes it clear
  - We're made in the image of God who works
  - And like him ... he's created us to work
- And because of that ...
  - Work is a good thing that God has given us and
  - There is real dignity in our work regardless of our status or pay
- But God's design for our work was never for our own glory or benefit
  - We've been designed to work in order to love and serve God and to love and serve others
  - We've been designed to work *in order to build communities that love God and people care for each other*
- That means we have great freedom to seek the work suits our gifts and passions
  - It's not just about doing
    - the highest paying job
    - most prestigious of jobs
    - ministry related jobs
- *But whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

- *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men ... It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

***PRAY***