

Work & Vocation Topical

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

Welcome to ONEGEN VI, Work and Vocation Topical. I want to start with a show of hands survey. Put your hand up if the answer is yes, to the following questions.

Do you love the work that you do? Do you feel your work is making a difference in the world? Do you feel called to the work that you are currently doing?

Do you think God cares about the work that you're doing? Do you think your work is building the kingdom of God? Do you have a sense that you encounter God through the work that you do?

And finally, do you have a grasp on what the Bible says about work and vocation? Okay, I am so encouraged. I feel like we could cancel tonight because most of the hands were yes.

My hope is that by the end of tonight, even more of us would be moving towards saying yes to all of those questions. In other words, that we would get an understanding of what the way of Jesus has to say about work and vocation.

The truth is, work is important. Do you know that for the working years of a person's life, we spend a third of our time at work? That's something close to 100,000 hours that we work in our life.

If you're at a party, what's one of the first questions that's often asked? What do you do? You answer and then you say, what do you do?

Work is really important. And it's my conviction that the Bible speaks to this really important issue. So thank you for coming tonight.

Tonight is a work and vocation topical. We're going to look at this idea. And we're going to do it through the same outline as last time.

If you were here two months ago, we looked at gender, marriage and sexuality in three parts. Firstly, a half hour teaching, which is this, and then a kind of 40 minute panel discussion. And then small groups.

We're going to do the same thing. You know me, I tend to like starting big and biblical, and then getting practical. So that's what we're going to do.

We have special guests, Stephen and Kathleen, joining us tonight. Give them a welcome. I'm really excited to hear from them and their wisdom and experience about work and vocation and finding fulfilment in that.

And then at the end of tonight, we're going to have small groups, not based on gender like last time, but based on vocational category. So all of the teachers will be talking about what that world means.

We're going to kind of see if we can divide ourselves up and have a good time. So work and vocation. Our methodology for tonight is the same one as last time.

I introduced this four-part framework, which is a way of telling the story of the entire Bible in four chapters, creation, fall, redemption, and renewal.

The truth is, you could take any topic in the entire Bible and study it through that lens, and it's really interesting. Last time we did it for gender, marriage, and sexuality, and tonight we're going to do it for work and vocation.

PRAYER

Let me pray for us as we jump in. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are present here tonight.

You're present in all places, but we, as we sit at the outset of this night, want to make ourselves especially aware of your presence and ask that you would speak to us by your spirit, that you would take our dreams and our fears and our

opportunities and our challenges of work and do something with them, for your glory and the good of this world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DEFINING WORK & VOCATION

So before we jump in to this four-part thing, it's probably helpful to define our terms. When I say work and vocation, what are we talking about? Firstly, work, broadly what I mean by work is that which we give our best effort to.

So obviously, that's going to include the kind of nine-to-five job that pays the bills, but it's much broader than that. It's what we give ourselves to.

So my wife Courtney is currently at home with our eight-month-old daughter, and it's our wedding anniversary today. So we're having dinner tomorrow night. And people often ask her, are you working?

Do you work? And she's so kind of gracious that she smiles and says, oh no, you know, I haven't worked since Esther was born. But it kind of ticks me off because she's the hardest working person that I know raising a child.

And so when I say work, I don't just mean nine to five thing that you get paid for. I mean what you give the best of yourself to. So that includes studying, employment, volunteering, parenting, and creating.

That's what I mean by work. And vocation, I don't know if you know this, the word vocation comes from the Latin word, vocare, which means to call. When you look at vocation, it's similar to the word voice.

This sense of calling out. When we talk about vocation, we're talking about what God or the world calls us to do. So tonight, we're looking at work and vocation.

Ideally, when you think about it, those two things are different, what we give our efforts to and what God calls us to do. Ideally, they line up.

That the thing that we give our lives to, 100,000 hours of our lives, ideally, that is the thing that God calls us to do. And my hope is by the end of tonight, we might move towards lining those two things up.

So, a Biblical theology of work and vocation starting in Chapter 1, Creation.

CHAPTER 1: CREATION

Why did God create work? Because work is a central part of how we bear the image of God. Because God created us to work.

Because work is good. When you're doing a Biblical theology, you always start in what part of the Bible? When you're doing a Biblical theology, you always start in what part of the Bible?

Genesis 1 and 2. This is ground zero for Biblical theology. Genesis 1 verse 27.

So God created mankind in his own image. In the image of God, he created them, male and female, he created them. God blessed them, said to them, be fruitful and increase in number.

Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

If you were here last time, I quoted that verse, making the point that the image of God is only present when male and female are together represented. Tonight, we're making a different point, and that is to look at the next verse. Look at verse 28.

Look at the verbs that it uses. God says, be fruitful, increase in number, fill the earth, subdue it, rule over it. This is the language of work.

God created us to work. And in the beginning, work is good. This is what the image of God is.

It's a function. It's something that we do and something that we are. We're created to work.

And I think that stating that work is good is an important place to start. Because the Romans thought that work was undignified for citizens to do. They gave the work to the slaves and the peasants.

The Babylonians thought that human beings were created by the gods to do the work that the gods didn't want to do. Even today, we have this kind of idea that work is a curse. We live for the weekend.

But in the Bible, work is the blessing. You look at verse 28, it says God blessed them to be fruitful, to multiply, to fill the earth, to subdue it and to rule it. We were created to work and called to work, blessed to work.

So what that means is, when we talk about vocation, from page one of the Bible, the vocation of every single human being is to bear the image of God. That's what God calls us to do. That is the biggest picture of work.

We're called to bear the image of God. In Genesis 2.15, what that looks like is, the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Those are two helpful words, to work it and take care of it, to bring something new into the world. That's what work means. And then to foster and steward and take care of the good that is already in the world.

Work and take care of the world. You know the verse before this in Genesis 2, verse 10 to 14. It's that weird bit, that bit.

I'm not going to read it. It's weird. You're reading Genesis 2 and it's like, God and beautiful work.

And then a weird thing about rivers and gold and aromatic resin. I think the reason that part of the Bible is in there is because these are the raw materials that the human beings are given to cultivate and to make something of.

God says, work that and take care of that. In other words, bear the image of God. This is the vocation of all human beings.

When you think of the Garden of Eden, I wonder what you think of. Like literally, what do you picture? Do you picture a quaint English garden, ordered and perfect?

I think the picture from here is of a national park, enormous and full of all this raw potential. And human beings, the image of God is placed in the garden to work it and take care of it, to bear the image of God.

That is a compelling vision for work to start with. Andy Crouch says that work is the fruitful transformation of the world through human effort and skill in ways that serve our shared human needs and give glory to God.

This is cheesy, but I found it in a book. The Garden of Eden is not a vacation, but a vocation. It's not that they rest and do nothing for all eternity, but there was work to do in the garden.

One of my first jobs had this poster on the wall, and it was one of the core values of the company that I was working for. And it said, work to live. Is that right?

Work to live, not live to work. And there's something nice about that value that, you know, we want to have work-life balance and boundaries. But when you really dive into it, what is that saying?

That we work in order to enjoy the weekend. We spend five days working for the two days. In other words, that 100,000 hours of our life mean nothing until we get to enjoy the weekend.

I think the Bible's vision of work is even better news than that. That we were created to work, to do good work, to bear the image of God. You and I are kings and queens of creation.

That's crazy. God made us to rule this world with him. This is our calling and our vocation.

So, teachers, what does it mean for you to take, to work this world and to take care of it? It means, I'm not a teacher, you're going to talk about this at the end of tonight, but take curricula and then make a compelling lesson for kids.

Writers, take words and turn them into stories. Baristas, take coffee beans and turn it into the best coffee. Nurses, take sick people and nurse them back to health.

Parents, musicians, lawyers, warehouse workers, bricklayers, engineers, every job that's in this room. We are called by God to work and take care of this world in the unique way that God has enabled us to do that.

Paul says in Ephesians 2 verse 10, we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do, to bear the image of God. Is that what you think of when you think of your work?

You wake up on Monday morning and you're like, I'm a queen of this spreadsheet. I am ruling over this world of 5-year-old psycho kindergarten students.

No, maybe not a lot of us think that way, which brings us to chapter 2 of the story of work invocation, Fall.

CHAPTER 2: FALL

How has sin distorted work? Well, in the Fall, from Genesis 3 onwards, we see that sin has frustrated work. It has infused it with its power and it's messed it up.

We started with this incredible image of kings and queens ruling over creation. But then you get to Genesis 3 and it's frustrated. We wake up on Monday morning and work is not easy.

The people we work with are hard, not in my works perfect, but you guys have really hard jobs apparently. The people that we work with, even the materials that we work with, work is frustrated. Here are some stats.

Seventy percent of Gen Z have considered leaving their job in the past 12 months. Gen Z will have, I don't know how they work this out, 18 jobs across six different industries in their lifetime.

Maybe that's not a bad thing, but it's maybe not a good thing either, that we don't have a sense of a placement in a vocation that God has put us in. One in three Australians regularly dread going to work. Work is frustrated because of the fall.

Now, you know the story of the fall. I'm not going to tell it again. It involves a man and a woman and a fruit tree and a serpent.

Do you know why the fall happened? I think in Genesis 3, the picture is that Adam and Eve were not faithfully bearing the image of God. So in Genesis 3, this serpent comes up and says, hey, did God really say you can't touch this tree?

And Adam and Eve should have said, get behind me, Satan. I named you, bro. God is trustworthy.

They're supposed to rule over creation. And when creation turns its head against God, they're supposed to bring it back into alignment with God. But instead, they listen to the voice of the serpent.

And look what happens next, Genesis 3. To the woman, God said, I will make your pains in childbearing very severe. With painful labor, you will give birth to children.

Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you. And then to Adam, God said, because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, you must not eat from it. Cursed is the ground because of you.

Through painful toil, you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your brow, you will eat, sorry, you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken, for dust you are and to dust you will return. That sounds a bit more like our work, doesn't it? Frustrated.

The people we work with, the materials that we work with are not kind of singing in harmony the way that God intended, work is frustrated. Note that work is not cursed. God does not curse work and he doesn't curse the humans.

He curses the ground. That's an important distinction. God curses the materials that human beings work with.

Work itself is frustrated and not cursed. I think it's frustrated in three helpful ways to think about. Firstly, work is frustrated into toil.

What should have been and what once was, hard work but rewarding has devolved, has been frustrated into toil, where people work hard and the ground just doesn't produce fruit. They're giving their best efforts to something and nothing is happening.

They're, in the image of the woman's work here, trying to bear a child and it's frustrated. The pain is severe. So many in our world today, even so many in this part of our world, are working just to survive.

They're toiling. They're working just to put food on the table for themselves and their families. In fact, the idea that you might choose what you do with your life is a very foreign idea for a lot of people in this world.

This is a consequence of the fall. Work is frustrated into toil. Secondly, it's frustrated into futility.

This is the lesson, I think, from the Book of Ecclesiastes. What's the key word of Ecclesiastes? Meaningless, 38 times.

Verse 2, Meaningless, Meaningless says the teacher. Utterly Meaningless. Everything is Meaningless.

He goes on to say that, you know, what do you get from your work? You work your entire life, you earn this much money, you do this much good, and then you die, and your money goes to the next person who doesn't do something good with it.

Work has been frustrated into futility. Thirdly, into idolatry. When our work is not thought of as a vocation, a calling from God, then we substitute that, and we try and find our fulfillment in our work.

We worship work instead of worshiping God. Like I said before, we live in a very unique time in the history of this world, where human beings living in this part of the world can generally choose what they want to do with their life.

Human beings have not had that luxury for the most of the history of this planet. If your dad was a carpenter, you're a carpenter. If your dad was a farmer, you're a farmer.

And if you're a woman, you're at home taking care of the children. You are constrained by the requirements of this world. And so we live in a unique time, where mostly, I know that there are caveats.

Mostly we get to choose what we do. We have some sense of say. And when that happens, a lot of people find that work becomes an idol, that they try and find their identity in the thing that they do.

I think in parties, when you say, hey, what do you do? And then you go back and forth. Part of it's just small talk, part of it's sizing up the other person.

How much do you make? How important are you? And how important am I?

It's this idolatrous, competitive nature. Work is frustrated. Do you remember the story of the Tower of Babel?

Genesis 11. Pope Leo XIV just published his first encyclical as pope, titled Magnifica Humanitas. I'm not Catholic, but this is a masterpiece.

It's incredible. It's about AI, but really it's about what it is to be a human being. And in Magnifica Humanitas, Pope Leo XIV draws on the story of Babel, the Tower of Babel, as an illustration of what happens when human work goes wrong.

So let me read from Genesis 11. Now, the whole world had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

They said to each other, come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly. They use brick instead of stone and tar for mortar. Then they said, come, let us build ourselves a city.

And so far, so good. That's what God called them to do. Create culture, work and take care of this world, spread out, build things, do stuff.

But then it says, well, let's build ourselves a city with a tower that reaches to the heavens so that we might make a name for ourselves. Otherwise, we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.

The great irony of the story of Babel is that humanity were meant to spread out over the whole earth, to bring that culture-making vocational project to the ends of the earth.

But instead, work is frustrated, and they are working against each other and against God. This is the world that we live in, the world of Babel. So let me ask you, do you experience work as frustrating?

Is it all that you hoped it could be? Are there difficulties at work? Do you experience toil and futility and even idolatry?

Did you answer no to any of those questions that I opened with? That you don't love the work that you do, you don't feel your work is making a difference in the world, you don't feel called to the work that you're currently doing.

The reason for that is sin. It has frustrated our work, and this is the world that we live in.

CHAPTER 3: REDEMPTION

So what will God do about it? That brings us to Chapter 3, Redemption. Where is Jesus redeeming work?

In the Gospel, Jesus restores our broken vocation, and He gives us a new one. Remember that the first vocation that all human beings have is to bear the image of God. That's the calling that God has on every human being.

But in the fall, that vocation is frustrated. In the Gospel, Jesus restores us to fulfill that vocation again, and He gives us a second one. The first vocation is for all human beings, bear the image of God, Christian and non-Christian.

The second vocation is to make disciples, and that is for Christians to restore the image of God again. This is our second vocation.

In the Gospel, Jesus, by His death and resurrection, by the giving of the Spirit, makes us whole again in order that we might love Him and serve Him and make disciples, and participate with His redemptive work in this world.

To participate with God in His work to bring all things to unity under Christ. You know, Jesus' final words in Matthew, we've read them a hundred times, Matthew 28.

Jesus came to the disciples and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I've commanded you, and surely I'm with you always to the very end of the age.

Go and make disciples. That's the second vocation on every Christian, to be a part of what God is doing in this world. Now my question is, where does that happen?

That whole making disciples, teaching them to obey, where does that happen? Within the church? Yes, let's hope so.

But it also happens in your workplace. The place of discipleship is wherever you are. Because where you are, the Spirit of God is, and He is using that situation to form you in the image of the Son, of Jesus.

The place of discipleship is wherever you find yourself. And so we have this terrible idea in Christianity that the only people with a vocation are the paid Christians like me. I'm paid to be here tonight.

But everybody else who's not paid to be a Christian, they don't have a vocation. This idea, terrible idea, comes from the Middle Ages, where the priests had the vocation and nobody else did.

And so it introduced this divide in Christianity between what happens in the church and the office, what happens in sacred environments and secular, what happens on Sunday and what happens in Monday to Friday.

The problem is that dichotomy is nowhere to be found in the Bible.

And so in the Protestant Reformation, in like the 16th century, Martin Luther and his boys had this idea of the priesthood of all believers, meaning that every person in this room has a calling from God, not just the ones who are paid to stand in

front of others and talk about the Bible. This is insane. Every one of us at our work is invited to participate in what God is doing in and through us. This is what it is to make disciples and God is using our work to form us.

Just think for a second, if he didn't use your work, that means one third of your life God is not touching. That means 100,000 hours of your life God has no interest in. It's ridiculous.

God wants to use that time, wants to use your work to make disciples and to form you. And so the question now is not secular or sacred or Sunday versus Monday to Friday. It's are we building the kingdom of God or the empires of earth?

Are we working for God or for human beings, for God or for ourselves? When I was 16 years old, I kind of got a vision of this kind of vocation, that I should do something with my life.

And I decided that I wanted to serve God at church as a like professional Christian doing this sort of thing. And so my dream as a 16 year old was to share the gospel, teach the Bible, preach to thousands, transform lives, make disciples.

This was my decision at 16. And when I was 18, I got my first job working at a church. And my first job at church was cleaning toilets, wiping tables and vacuuming floors.

In fact, I used to wipe that pulpit over there. It was at this church. I used to wipe that pulpit.

And as I'm wiping it, I'm thinking that this is the very pulpit that I dream of one day God giving me a platform that I could preach the gospel from.

And here I am wiping this pulpit clean, cleaning those toilets, cleaning the one downstairs, vacuuming everywhere. And as I was doing this as an 18 year old, I'm thinking, God, this is not what I had in mind.

When I said yes to you, I was saying yes to standing in front of thousands and preaching the gospel. And yet the first job that the Lord had for me in like Christian work was to clean toilets.

And so I'm wrestling with this question of, is this work part of God's kingdom? Is Jesus using toilet cleaning to make a difference in this world? That was the question that I used to ask.

And you know, the resounding answer from the gospels is yes, he is. Jesus is using everything that we do for the glory of God in his redemptive work. The universal resounding answer of the gospel is yes, your work matters.

Paul says in Ephesians 6 verse 7, serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord, not people.

And so I started to think about this stuff and read passages and read books when I was 18, and get a vision that it looks like I'm cleaning toilets, but I'm worshipping God as I clean toilets.

As I vacuum this floor, I'm doing it as an act of service to God. You know the word for work in Hebrew, which is Avoda, or I don't do Hebrew, I do Greek. It's the same word for worship.

It's not a different word. Work is worship when we offer it to God. And so now, by God's incredible grace, I get to stand behind that pulpit that I once cleaned, and I get to have the great honor of telling people what the Bible says about life.

But in my heart, it's not different from cleaning a toilet. Now, in the metaphor, you guys are not the toilet that I'm cleaning.

The metaphor is that when you have a vision that your work matters to God, when you do it for the glory of God, it doesn't matter what you do, because we do it for an audience of one.

And so Paul says, sorry, Brother Lawrence says in his book, *The Practice of the Presence of God*. And by the way, Brother Lawrence was a monk in the 17th century who lived in a monastery, and he cleaned dishes. And that's it.

That was his job. He was the dish cleaner. And he wrote these words, We ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed.

Think about the life of Jesus. He was a servant of all. He turned greatness upside down.

He gave his life for us. There is nothing that is beneath a Christian that Jesus has not descended further.

Philippians 2, Paul says that Jesus made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, died even death on a cross. He went to the bottom of human society.

And from that place, God exalted him to the highest place. And so all of our work, when offered as worship to God, is the place where Jesus is doing his redemptive work.

Paul says in Colossians 3.17, Whatever you do, whether it's cleaning toilets, or preaching the gospel, or doing an accountant spreadsheet thing, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through

him. I strove, strived, strove to clean those toilets with excellence. Because I'm not just serving people, I'm serving God as an act of worship. I wonder what that looks like for your life.

Whatever your job is, do it well because Jesus asks you to. Because we work for God and not for people. Our work is an act of worship.

You know, Jesus was a carpenter for 30 years. Well, he was a child. He didn't, I don't know how many years that makes it, but he was a carpenter for a long time before he preached the gospel.

And I bet you, he was the best carpenter anyone had ever seen. He did his work with excellence. And we're called to as well.

So if you're an engineer, engineer well. If you're a programmer, program well. If you're a, whatever the job is, do it well as an act of worship to God.

So where is Jesus redeeming work? Anywhere it is offered to him in grateful, humble worship for the glory of God and the good of the world. That's where Jesus is redeeming work.

Now, an important note is that there are places where Jesus is not redeeming work. For instance, if you're doing IT for a porn website, your work is not glorifying God and for the good of the world.

If you're, you can, you take the gist of what I'm saying. If our job is fundamentally against the glory of God and the good of this world, then Jesus is not patting you on the back and calling you to do that work with excellence.

And if that is you, then honestly trust God and resign from that job. And I believe that he will give you a job that is building the kingdom. So if you happen to be in IT for a porn website, that's a specific word for you.

Or like HR for a gambling website or gambling company, probably a similar thing. Where is Jesus redeeming work? Anywhere it is offered to him in grateful, humble worship for the glory of God and the good of the world.

CHAPTER 4: RENEWAL

Which brings us to the end of the story, chapter four, renewal. What will work be like? Almost ten years ago, we had a men's course at church on work and vocation.

And one of the men at this course was a very successful business person, like CFO of a company that you know the name of, if I said it. And at this course, he said, the only thing at work with an eternal shelf life is the people you work with.

And he kind of elaborated to say that the work passes away, but the people, like, evangelize to your co-workers, build relationships with them, love them over your kind of water cooler chat. For ten years, I took that with me.

Another guy at that same course said that work doesn't really matter. The only thing that matters is the money that you make at your job and the good things that you do with that money. I'm like, yeah, okay, that makes sense.

We're called to be generous with our money, to, you know, money itself is not evil. The love of money is evil.

Ten years, I took those two things with me until I read the end of the Bible, especially when I read the end of the Bible in light of the beginning of the Bible, as in I read Genesis 21 and 22 in line with Genesis 1 and 2.

And when you do that, you realize that the parallels are striking, that God in His grace uses our work in the new creation.

So I no longer think it is true that the only thing that the only thing with an eternal shelf life at work is the people you work with. I think that our act of our work as an act of worship to God, God uses in the new creation.

And to prove it, here's a quote from Miroslav Volf. I'm skipping ahead a little bit.

The noble products of human ingenuity, whatever is beautiful, true, and good in human cultures, will be cleansed from impurity, perfected, and transfigured to become a part of God's new creation.

They will form the building materials from which the glorified world is made. What he's getting at is that there are two understandings about what happens at the end of time.

The first one is a theology of evacuation, which is kind of what these two people were saying, that at the end of time when Jesus comes back, he'll burn everything. The only thing that stays is the wispy souls of Christians who go to heaven.

That's a theology of evacuation. A theology of resurrection comes from 1 Corinthians 15. This is the greatest chapter on the resurrection in the entire Bible.

Paul talks about why we need a resurrection, what the bodies are going to be like, the difference between Adam and Jesus. And at the very end of the greatest chapter on resurrection in the whole Bible, this is Paul's conclusion.

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm, let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord. Why?

Because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. This is resurrection, not evacuation. Paul is saying that whatever we do, laboring for God, for His glory, and for the good of the world, is not in vain.

So God is going to somehow use the best of human culture as the furnishings for the new creation. I find that so compelling.

What I think that means is that in the new creation, there are grapes that are good, that are going to be turned into wine that is glorious. And there is wheat that will be turned into the best sourdough bread you've ever tasted.

There are trees that will be turned into the most beautiful guitars. The best of human culture will be perfected in the new creation. And so yes, obviously the people that you work with matter so much.

Share the gospel, love them, be an example. And yes, the money that you make matters. Give it away the way Jesus tells us to.

But our work itself is not in vain. And I wanted to really focus on that point because I think we missed that. I think we have this idea that our work doesn't really matter.

It's only evangelizing at lunchtime, but the gospel is even better news than that. JR. Tolkien. JRR. Tolkien. Do you know how the story of the Hobbit came into being?

It was a bedtime story for his kids. And it kind of grew and grew and grew. And then he had this idea for this massive story.

And he was encouraged by CS. Lewis and the Inklings and those guys to do it. And so he started literally writing languages and building history and books and this enormous literature project for the glory of God.

And then World War II hit and he was too old to fight, so he didn't fight. But he wasn't sure if Britain would win or if he would survive if he could even publish this book. And so Tolkien began to despair that he would ever finish it.

And then he woke up one morning with a story in his mind. It's called Leaf by Niggle. It's a little tiny little book by Tolkien.

You should read it. And in this book, this character whose name is Niggle, who is Tolkien in the book, has pretty much the same thing. But then he dies and he realizes that the project that he gave his life to is found in the new creation perfected.

And so Tolkien had this sense that his labor is not in vain. And I want to say the same thing to you. Your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

When you do things for the glory of God and the good of the world with excellence, God doesn't burn it at the end of time as though it doesn't matter. He perfects it and brings it into the new creation.

And to me, that's even better news than the alternative. Dallas Willard tells us to think of a project. I had to.

There's no sermon on the mount though, so it's pretty good. Dallas Willard tells us to think of a project that you would like to spend a thousand years doing. Because you're going to have a lot of time.

I'm thinking like building a city would be fun. Planning a city. I'll do that for a thousand years.

Or like building a really good guitar for a thousand years. This is the point of new creation. The glory of God in our work, transforming good to very good to glory.

CONCLUSION

So here we are at the end. Creation, fall, redemption and renewal. Every human being in this room, in fact, every human being on the planet has the vocation, the calling from God to bear the image of God.

But where that image has been frustrated by sin, we Christians are called to step in the way Jesus did and restore the image of God by the power of His Spirit.

And we do that through excellent work, through baristas that make really good coffee and lawyers that do really good lawyer things and teachers that teach good lessons, partnering with God as an act of worship. So that's it.

I told you guys, I like the big stuff. The point of tonight is hopefully that we start big and kind of theoretical, but hopefully compelling, and then we get more practical and more practical and see what this means for us.

I want to finish with this quote from Friedrich Bickner, I think is how you pronounce his name. The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

So if you're sitting there thinking, I don't know if I'm doing what I'm called to be doing, what does God call me to do anyway? Use this.

Draw on a notebook a circle with what you are so glad about, what you're good at, what you love to do, and then what the world needs. And see if you can find something in the middle that you could get paid to do.

That will be where God's calling you to live. I think I have found my vocation, at least my path. This right now, this is the thing that I love most in the whole world, seriously.

I've been dreaming of doing a night like this for multiple years, and Jack can testify because we talk about it together. I love what I do. I was really fortunate to have parents that helped me discover what I love to do.

It helps that I'm doing what my dad does. That was quite helpful. If you don't know what you want to do with your life, here are some questions that John Markoma gives us in his book, Garden City, really helpful book.

Take a photo of that and think about it. What do you love? What are you good at?

And what are you bad at? What does your world need? Does it make the world a more garden-like place?

What are the open doors in your life? What is God blessing? What are people who know you saying?

And what's the spirit stirring in your heart? So let me pray. And then we've gone, I've gone 10 minutes over time.

So then we're going to have a panel. We're going to hear from these guys and I'm going to stop talking. Let me pray.

Father, we thank you for your grace. We thank you that you have saved us even when we were lost and so far from you. In fact, we were enemies.

You showed us your love when Christ died for us. We thank you that you're not only in the business of evacuating us out of this earth, but you're in the work of redemption and resurrection.

So I thank you that you call us to work with excellence and you show us what that looks like. And I pray for all my brothers and sisters here, struggling with work right now and with where you're calling them to be and to work.

I pray that you would speak by your spirit and bring guidance and wisdom because we pray in Jesus' name, amen.