

RUINED BUT REDEEMABLE: WORK

Genesis 2-3

We tend to think of a sacred-secular divide. We view some activities and spaces as sacred (preaching, teaching Sunday school, the church building) and other activities and spaces as secular (playing sports, work offices, our homes). Scripture tells us there is no such thing as a sacred-secular divide. We can worship God in all that we do (Romans 12.1; 1 Corinthians 10.31; Colossians 3.17).

God gave men and women a cultural mandate (Genesis 1.28). This means we are to use our abilities to make a God-honoring civilization. With this in view, God charges mankind to work in a meaningful way.

God gave humans the gift of work

Part of God's good design is for humans to use their skills, to apply them to situations, and to see the fruit of their labor (Genesis 2.15).

Human work is prelapsarian = before the Fall. Work gives us purpose, structure, and a chance to grow. Many of us make good friends along the way. We can make contributions towards a goal and that brings a degree of satisfaction.

The charge to "keep" the garden brings us to the idea of responsibility. We all have authority over some area. How we tend that space reflects our ability to care for it.

Humans using their gifts to make healthy culture is an act of worship.

When we see someone good at their craft, it brings a sense of joy.

In the Fall, work becomes difficult

After the Fall, work becomes onerous (Genesis 3.17-19).

Many struggle with their jobs. The task itself can be physically taxing.

For others, it's an issue of culture. The environment is "toxic". There are few shared goals. It feels like there is always a competition. We become inordinately fixated on financials.

Still another pitfall is that we confuse our jobs with our very identity. This is why many of us find such difficulty in retirement. Work becomes an idol.

Redeemed Christians serve God in every sphere of life

We are called to do our jobs with excellence (Colossians 3:17, 23). We will not be a convincing witness of the Lord Jesus if we are lazy or sloppy in our work.

How we use language is crucial (James 3:1-12).

We almost always have a chance to invest in other people. All Christians are in “the people business”.

Ask good questions and listen. Use phrases like “tell me more” or “how did you come to that decision”? or “what challenges are you currently facing”?

God gave some people the ability to make a lot of money. Christians do not need to be embarrassed about making money. This brings an opportunity for financial stewardship.

On the other hand, work is not tied to remuneration as much as it is about impact. Take, for example, how our culture thinks of full-time moms. Do some ask, “what else do you do”? Are we inclined to answer, “I’m just a full-time mom”? I hope we see the high calling of motherhood.

Retirement presents challenges. Has my identity become too connected to my job? Did I associate my worth with earning money? Am I only as good as the extent of my authority? In God’s design, I still have meaningful work to do. We can build God honoring culture and invest in other people.

Key Idea: Work in God’s design is an act of worship.

Application Questions:

As a Christian, in what ways can you impact your work environment for Christ? How can I point people to God?

How do Christians model healthy work life balance?

While work gives us purpose, what happens when it becomes our identity?

Bibliography:

John Beckett, *Loving Monday*
Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*
Tom Nelson, *Why Your Work Matters*
Common Good Magazine, commongoodmag.com