



“Theology of Work”

Genesis 1-3

February 27, 2022



Every Good Endeavor by Tim Keller

“Work is as much a basic human need as food, beauty, rest, friendship, prayer, and sexuality; it is not simply medicine but food for our soul. Without meaningful work we sense significant inner loss and emptiness.”



Genesis 1:26-31

“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them.



Genesis 1:26-31

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 heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.



Genesis 2:1-3, 15

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”



The Genesis of our Work

*“And 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 sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*



The Genesis of our Work

“Theologians call [Genesis 1:27-28](#) the “cultural mandate.” God is mandating that humans will create culture. Adam and Eve will produce children. Those children will create families, and those families will band together into cities and social networks. Those networks of human beings will reflect all the aspects of human culture—language and art and music and food and philosophy and theology.” Bob Thune



The Genesis of our Work

To 'subdue' = "to work creating order from chaos"



The Purpose of our Work

“The purpose of our work is to subdue creation and create culture in order to seek the flourishing of others and to display the glory of God.”



Don't Waste Your Life by John Piper

“If you are God, your work is to create out of nothing. If you are not God, but like God – that is, if you are human – your work is to take what God has made and shape it and use it to make him look great.”



The Purpose of our Work

“To make a real difference...[there would have to be] a re-appropriation of the idea of vocation or calling, a return in a new way to the idea of work as a contribution to the good of all and not merely as a means to one’s own advancement.”



The Purpose of our Work

“If a person felt a calling, this was a sign that he or she might “have a vocation,” which meant becoming a priest, a monk, or a nun. The ordinary occupations of life—being a peasant farmer or kitchen maid, making tools or clothing, being a soldier or even king—were acknowledged as necessary but worldly. Such people could be saved, but they were mired in the world. To serve God fully, to live a life that is truly spiritual, required a full-time commitment.” Veith (God at Work)



The Purpose of our Work

“A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops, and everyone by means of his own work or office must benefit and serve every other, that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, even as all the members of the body serve one another.” Martin Luther



The Purpose of our Work

“The doctrine of vocation, properly understood, frees us from our sinful selves through the gospel as our love for God overflows into love for our neighbors. Our work becomes transformed not in substance—Christian workers mostly perform the same tasks as non-Christians—but in its meaning and its value.” Veith



The Calling to Our Work

“The doctrine of vocation undermines conformity, recognizes the unique value of every person and celebrates human differences; but it sets these individuals into a community with other individuals, avoiding the privatizing, self-centered narcissism of secular individualism.” Veith



The Calling to Our Work

“People fulfill their individual and collective destiny in the art, music, literature, commerce, law, and scholarship they cultivate, the relationships they build, and in the institutions they develop—the families, churches, associations, and communities they live in and sustain—as they reflect the good of God and his designs for flourishing. To be Christian is to be obliged to engage the world, pursuing God’s restorative purposes over all of life, individual and corporate, public and private. This is the mandate of creation.” James Davison Hunter (To Change the World)



The Calling to Our Work

1. What am I passionate about?
2. How would you describe your personality?
3. What experiences have you had?
4. What unique skills and gifts do you possess?



Genesis 3:1-7

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.



Genesis 3:1-7

For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.”



Genesis 3:17-19

“And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.””



Genesis 3:17-19

1. The ground will be 'cursed'.
2. Work will be accomplished only by the 'sweat of your face'.



Genesis 3:17-19

“Before his work had been pleasure. Now, although the nature of work is in itself still good, it will be accompanied by pain and weariness so that Adam might well say, as Job did, “Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man? Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages...”

James Montgomery Boice



Figurative 'thorns and thistles'

1. We experience the thorn of failure.
2. We experience the thorn of frustration.
3. We experience the thorn of unrealized dreams



Figurative ‘thorns and thistles’

“...in all our work, we will be able to envision far more than we can accomplish, both because of a lack of ability and because of resistance in the environment around us. The experience of work will include pain, conflict, envy, fatigue, and not all our goals will be met. For example, you may have an aspiration to do a certain kind of work and perform at a certain level of skill and quality, but you may never even get the opportunity to do the work you want, or if you do, you may not be able to do it as well as it needs to be done. Your conflicts with others in the work environment will sap your confidence and undermine your productivity.” Tim Keller



Figurative 'thorns and thistles'

1. We experience the thorn of failure.
2. We experience the thorn of frustration.
3. We experience the thorn of unrealized dreams
4. We experience the thorn of deception



Glorifying God in our Work (Bob Thune)

God is glorified when we put our whole selves into our work, with a view toward pleasing God, not man.

“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.” Colossians 3:23-24



Glorifying God in our Work (Bob Thune)

God is glorified when we are honest, even when it hurts us or prevents us from getting ahead.

Psalm 15 and Genesis 39 (Joseph and Potiphar's wife)



Glorifying God in our Work (Bob Thune)

God is glorified when we honor our superiors and submit to their authority.

“Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. 1 Tim. 6:1

*“Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.”
Romans 13:7*



Glorifying God in our Work (Bob Thune)

God is glorified when we treat our work associates with kindness and respect.

“And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.” Luke 6:31

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” Romans 12:18



Glorifying God in our Work (Bob Thune)

God is glorified when we expose fraud or dishonesty and unethical behavior.

“Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible...” Ephesians 5:11-13



Glorifying God in our Work (Bob Thune)

God is glorified when we approach our work prayerfully.

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing...” 1 Thessalonians 5:17



Glorifying God in our Work (Bob Thune)

God is glorified when we avoid complaining or grumbling, even in less-than-ideal work situations.

“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...”

Philippians 2:14-15



Glorifying God in our Work (Bob Thune)

God is glorified when we refuse to make work and money our idols.

“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.” Matthew 6:24



Glorifying God in our Work (Bob Thune)

God is glorified when we plan diligently for the future.

“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.” Proverbs 21:5



Glorifying God in our Work (Bob Thune)

God is glorified when we live simply and give generously.

“Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.” Proverbs 22:9



Glorifying God in our Work (Bob Thune)

God is glorified when we trust him to provide today what we need for today.

“Give us this day our daily bread...” Matthew 6:11



Glorifying God in our Work (Bob Thune)

God is glorified when we rest from work.

Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:13-15