

Series Title: Higher Purpose

Subtitle: Redeeming our work

Primary Aim: *In this series we will try and get our heads around a Biblical vision for our work. We will define our work as inclusive of all that we do in our studies, our workplace and caring for others (e.g., children/parents). God made us to work but the Fall changed all of that. While we await Jesus' return and the arrival of the God's New Creation, work continues to be quite a challenge. Some work too much or for the wrong reasons while others are caught in idleness and/or unproductivity. We will wrestle with how to redeem both our work, and for that matter our rest. The Bible talks about working from a place of rest and finding a higher purpose as we find meaning in working to bring glory to God.*

1. Created for Work

Passages: Genesis 1-2

Blurb: This first session we will explore how God made us to work. Intrinsic to how we approach our work is an understanding of how God made us. God made Adam & Eve stewards who were to rule, care & name the living creatures (2:19-20), as well as to spread out across the whole earth, developing it and making it better. God made a world that was full of potential and in it He placed physical beings made in His likeness. During this session we will introduce the Tick Diagram as a means to understand God's big plan for His people.

2. Working from a place of Rest

Passages: Genesis 2:2-3, Exodus 20:9-11, John 15:1-15 & Matthew 11:28-30

Blurb: A Jewish day runs from nightfall to nightfall illustrating, in the words of Mike Breen that "we work from our rest, not rest from our work." This is also the principle laid out in the Semi-Circle LifeShape which focuses on the swing of the pendulum between rest (abiding in Christ) and work (fruitfulness). Many of us are addicted to work rather than to rest but in God's design rest comes first and should be an intrinsic part of our rhythms of life as demonstrated in the fabric of Old Testament law. In this session we will lay the foundation for a healthy balance between work and rest. In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus promises rest to those who are weary and burdened if we come to Him.

3. Finding purpose in our work

Passages: Genesis 3:17-19 & Ecclesiastes 2:17-26 & 4:7-8

Blurb: As a result of the fall work becomes a struggle. God curses the ground, and He says that in order to eat, there would be painful toil from then on. We are only too familiar with the idea that work can be a struggle, but this is the nature of work in a fallen world. Solomon wrestled with this in the book of Ecclesiastes and said that he had come to hate all of life because "it was meaningless, a chasing after the wind" (2:17). Still, he does find some meaning from the hand of God which he says enables us to find satisfaction and enjoyment in our toil (2:24-26). This side of Heaven work will have its frustrations, but we will see that it is only in relation to God that we will begin to understand its meaning and find purpose in our work.

4. Right ways of working: For the Glory of God

Passages: Colossians 3:17, 22-25, Ephesians 6:5-9, Titus 2:9-10 & 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

Blurb: Paul gives us an overall principle that "whatever we do, we should do it for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). He develops this in several of his letters within the context of instructions to slaves and masters. The relationships we have between employees and employers are not quite the same, but the principles Paul gives are still transferrable. Paul exhorts us to serve wholeheartedly (Eph 6/Col 3), with sincerity (Col 3), as to the Lord not people (Eph 6/Col 3), and so that we would make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive (Titus 2). We are encouraged that we will receive an inheritance from the LORD as our reward. These passages will go a long way towards painting a picture of what redeeming our work might look like.

5. Wrong ways of working: Pitfalls to avoid

Passages: 1 Tim 6:6-10, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13, Luke 12:13-21, 16:1-15 & 18:18-30

Blurb: A clear and present danger to us as we seek to work out Session 4, is that we lose sight of God. When this happens work and/or money can become idols to us – things that assume God's rightful place in our lives. Paul warns Timothy against this when he writes that the "love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim 6:10) and says that some have therefore wandered from the faith. At the other end of the spectrum there are those in Thessalonica, who Paul has to warn against idleness, saying that they must work to earn the food that they were to eat. Jesus too warned against these things in his parables: He spoke of the guy who built bigger barns to make space for all his surplus grain (Luke 12:13-21) and the sad story of the rich young ruler

who was too attached to his wealth to be willing to give it up (Luke 18:18-30). Finally, in the fascinating parable of the shrewd manager (Luke 16:1-15) Jesus says that we “cannot serve both God and money”.

6. Work in the New Creation

Passages: Isaiah 65:17-25 & Revelation 14:13, 21:24-26, 22:3

Blurb: These sessions have largely followed the progression of the Tick Diagram (Creation – Fall – Redemption – New Creation). This final session seeks to address the work in the New Creation. Work was part of God’s good creation before the Fall – it makes no sense to say that there will be no work in Heaven. The parable of the minas seems to imply we will work for the servants who faithfully grow their master’s wealth are told that when the master returns they will be given charge of 5 or 10 more cities (Luke 19:11-27). Revelation 14:13 seems to say that we will rest from our work, but its not so much about resting from work itself but from the frustrations of work. Rather than being toilsome, frustrating and meaningless we look forward to work that is restful, fulfilling, enjoyable and full of meaning. Isaiah’s vision of the New Heavens and New Earth (Isaiah 65) makes this clear. In the New Creation the “glory and honour of the nations” will be brought into the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:24-26) and we, God’s servants, will serve Him (Revelation 22:3).

Reference: <https://www.redeemingproductivity.com/will-we-work-in-heaven/>