

Why Do We Work?

May 3, 2015

Good morning CrossWinds. Welcome to the first week of the new series, *Work Matters To God*. We spend most of our lives working in the office, factory or field. We thought it would be appropriate to see what the Bible says about work, where we spend most of our time. For approximately 10 weeks we will study work. In the following weeks we will learn what went wrong with work and made it so hard? How does Jesus change the way we work? Why is rest important for work? What does the Bible teach about productivity? How do I choose a job? How do I handle difficult bosses? How do I share Christ at work? How do I get a break from work in our hyperconnected world? As you can see, this will be a series we will use almost every day of our lives.

During this series, we are doing something special. We are taking your questions about work, rest, productivity, balancing work and family and any other work and faith questions you have. Each week the pastoral team will answer one of your questions and post the answer on the www.CrossWinds.tv blog and on the CITY. Answers will be typically posted around Wednesday. Check your e-mail box or the www.CrossWinds.tv web site. As I close each week's message, I will whet your appetite for the weekly post by letting you know the question we will answer later that week.

In your bulletin you have a card to submit those questions. The card also has a QR code and a link to an online form if you want to submit your questions electronically.

Let's dive into today's study. As we begin, we are starting with a big picture question. Unless we understand the biblical answer to this question, the rest of the series won't be much help. *Why do we work?* For most of us, the answer seems obvious. We work to make money. We work to pay bills. Haven't you seen the bumper sticker that answers this question? It says, "I owe. I owe. I owe so off to work I go. I go. I go."

Some of us aren't working to survive, we are working to become wealthy. Our goal is that once we have enough money we won't have to work.

Our goal is an earthly heaven called retirement that is free from work so we can focus on enjoyment. What do you think? Is a life free from work a good goal?

The Bible tells us God has a much broader and richer purpose for our work than to pay bills. Today we will discover why God made us for work.

The first foundational truth we need is:

Work is not a necessary evil. Work was in the world before sin was in the world.

Bible tells us work was in the world before sin was in the world. The Bible hints at the incompleteness of the earth before God brought Adam and Eve on the scene.

...and there was no man to work the ground... Genesis 2:5 (ESV)

God created Adam, and ultimately Eve, to work the earth.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. Genesis 2:15 (ESV)

God created Adam and Eve to work this earth before sin came to earth. Once sin entered the world, work became difficult and frustrating. Next week we

look at what went wrong with work and how sin changed work. Let's save that story for next week. This week we are learning why we work. The foundational truth we need to begin our study is that work is good. It is not a product of sin. Work is good. It was given to Adam and Eve as a good gift before sin entered the world.

As we put our finger in the text, we will keep our focus on the first two chapters in Genesis, as we discover why we work.

1. We work because we are created in the image of God.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Genesis 1:1–2 (ESV)

In the creation story, God created what looked like an unformed mass called the heavens and the earth. Like a potter working with a lump of clay, God shaped them. First, God created light, and he separated light from darkness, calling one day and the other night. Then, like a craftsman, God separated the water from the sky above and the water on the earth beneath. Next he created dry land and created seas as he separated the seas. Next he worked in the ground creating plants and all kinds of vegetation. Then he turned his attention to the skies, and he sprinkled the heavens with stars and planets. Then God, the master craftsman gave his attention to the earth and he fashioned animals, sea creatures and birds. Finally, as the crown of his creation, God made Adam and Eve. In the flow of the creation was God working like a master craftsman fashioning the earth from something that is formless and void into a planet that is teeming with life. After God was done with the earth, he fashioned Adam and Eve.

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. Genesis 1:26–27 (ESV)

God created us in his image. We just saw God was a worker and a craftsman. Part of being created in God’s image means that he made us to be workers and craftsman. He made us to continue the task of refining and creating things of beauty and function upon the earth.

When a farmer works the earth to grow corn he is imaging God’s craftsmanship on the earth. When a man takes that food and orders it as he stocks it on a shelf he is God’s ordering on the earth. When the guy behind the counter at Jimmy John’s puts the meat, mayonnaise and veggies on your sandwich to make a great meal he is ordering things in this world to make them productive and helpful. He is imaging the work of God the father, which is exactly what we were created to do.

This is why it says we are to have dominion over the earth. Dominion means to subjugate. It means to shape something and rule over it.

One of the things I love about the summer at CrossWinds is when your out-of-town relatives visit the lakes. I love seeing your children, because they are the spitting image of their parents. They were created in your image. I love to see your parents, because they look like you. You were created in their image.

When we work, we are displaying the spitting image of our heavenly father who was a worker.

Just as God shaped the earth into a thing of beauty, God calls us to continue shaping the earth and creating things of beauty. That could be a farmer

cultivating the earth or a teacher developing a child. It could be a boat builder or a house builder. We are to shape the earth, build on the earth and work this earth because that is what it means to look like our dad.

Paul felt so strongly about this he said,

For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. 2 Thessalonians 3:10 (ESV)

Notice he didn't say those who can't work don't eat but those who can work but won't work shouldn't eat. Why did Paul use such strong language? Avoiding work is shattering the image of God we are called to display with our lives.

Work is so fundamental to our lives that it is actually a basic human need like food, rest, friendship and God. Without meaningful work we will feel empty and meaningless. We need work to thrive emotionally, physically and spiritually. If you have faced unemployment, you know it can be a terrifying time because we don't know how to contribute to the world, and everything inside of you knows we must contribute.

It is the same with retirement. Retiring to spend your time sitting in a La-Z-Boy watch pay-per-view sports is torture. It is against the grain of what we were created to do. We were not made for a La-Z-Boy. We were made for work, and lots of it. Work is one of the things we can take in large doses and it won't kill you.

2. We work because God created the earth to be worked.

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 the sea and over the

birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”
Genesis 1:28 (ESV)

Most of us think of creation was finished in six days. God’s creation was finished in six days but that doesn’t mean creation was complete. God created our planet like a huge Lego kit. The planet was perfect because it was ready for us to begin building things with it. Our job is to continue creating with God and for his glory.

One of the most unbiblical things we can believe is we should go hyper-green where we think the entire Earth should be kept untouched like the Canadian Rockies. The wilderness is wonderful. It is beautiful. God doesn’t want the entire planet to look like a national park. God built our planet like a Lego kit. It is filled with resources he wants us to use to build things for God’s glory and to serve others by doing them practical good.

Are we responsible for how we use the planet? Yes. Is strip mining the right way to get the resources out of the earth? Probably not. We are responsible for how we use the earth but we are responsible to use the earth.

The word subdue means to bring into submission. It is used to describe what you do with a horse. You break it. You make it submit so it can serve a rider. In the same way we are to bring the resources of the earth into submission so it can serve us, serve others and bring glory to God through the process. God wants farmers to plow, plant, fertilize and water to bring the earth into submission to produce corn for ethanol and food. God wants teachers training children so they can be productive members of society. God wants miners taking ore out of

the ground that can be melted down into metal for motorcycle parts. All of this brings glory to God.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. Genesis 2:5 (ESV)

Notice the two pieces in tension. We are to work the earth. That means we are to use it. We are to keep the earth. That means we are responsible for how we use it. There is a balance.

3. We work because work is a part of our worship.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. Genesis 2:15 (ESV)

The word *work* in Hebrew is the word *Avodah*. It is usually translated as *cultivating the ground* or *working the ground* but it has a broader meaning. Sometimes the word *Avodah* is used to describe the back-breaking work of the Israelite slaves in Egypt. Sometimes it is used to describe the delicate work of the artists that crafted the beautiful temple. Sometimes it is used to describe the work of the temple priests as they led people in worship to God.

What I want us to notice is the Bible uses the same word to describe work and worship. Our daily work and our worship of God are one and the same. To think of worship as a Sunday thing and work as Monday thing is unbiblical. Everyday work and worship are the same in God's eyes.

Just as half-hearted worship in church and half-hearted attention to God's word dishonors God, in the same way half-hearted work in the office dishonors him too. Our work and our worship are the same.

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 (ESV)

On the most practical level this means the way a teacher teaches is their act of worship. The way an employee smooths concrete is his act of worship. If you are in the kitchen at Burger King, the way you flip burgers is your act of worship. If you are a car dealer, the honesty of your car sales are your acts of worship.

It is not just what we do that is our act of worship but it is how we do it that matters. Our attitude at work is part of our worship. The mom that changes her son's diapers is worshipping God in the way she cares for her son. If mom has a bad attitude when she is changing the diapers, it taints her worship. The meal a mom prepares is her act of worship to God as she feeds the family. As mom prepares the meal, if she has a snarky attitude the worship of her work is tainted.

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 (ESV)

Shining like a light in the world with the excellence of our attitude, is one of the ways we worship God with our work.

4. We work because it is the way we love our neighbors.

We don't just work to worship God but we work to love our neighbors.

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Galatians 5:14 (ESV)

One of the most practical ways we can love our neighbors is simply doing our job and doing it well. Pretend you work at Polaris creating motorcycles. It takes more than one person to create a motorcycle. Some workers specialize in motorcycle design. Other workers specialize in assembly. Some workers specialize in paint while other workers specialize in electronics. All it takes to ruin

a motorcycle is for one person to not do his or her job well. When he or she does, the entire motorcycle is ruined. To build a Victory motorcycle everybody needs to work together. The best way an employee can love his neighbor at work is to simply do his absolute at work with the best attitude he can have. That is loving your neighbor. God created us to be connected. Work is one of the most interconnected places we can be. Doing our jobs well is the best way to love our neighbors because at work we are closely connected to others.

On January 15, 2009, US Airways Flight 1549 ran into Canadian geese while taking off from New York. The engines ingested the birds, transforming the massive plane into a helpless glider filled with jet fuel only minutes after takeoff. Thankfully the captain was Chelsey Sullenberger. He was a former fighter jet pilot with thousands of hours flying commercial aircraft under his belt. He was a man that did not do the minimum amount of work to simply squeeze by. He had gone above the call of duty and become a safety expert. He studied and taught how to handle crisis scenarios in aircraft. He spent time honing his flight skills to perfection. On January 15, 2009, all of the work came to fruition.

What took place that day became known as the Miracle on the Hudson as he guided the lifeless plane into the Hudson River and achieved what is known as the most successful aircraft water landing in aviation history. His excellent work saved the lives of 155 people. How did Captain Sullenberger love his neighbor? By simply doing his work and doing it well. There are hundreds wives, husbands, children and parents that thank him for simply doing his job and saving their loved ones that day. In the same way, one of the most practical

ways we can love our neighbors is by not scraping by at work but by doing our absolute best. When we do, we love our neighbor.

5. We work to give and receive joy from a job well done.

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 1:31 (ESV)

When God looked upon his creation, he had joy in a job well done. One of the reasons God gave us work is because we too should experience joy when we make something and do our job well.

For instance, I enjoy cutting the lawn. I enjoy making sure the lines are the same direction; I kill the weeds, fertilize the grass and water the lawn. I make sure the sidewalk is trimmed. I walk around the house twice a week and personally nuke every new weed with Roundup. I like a nice-looking lawn. It brings me pleasure. I get pleasure from a job well done.

None of us like weeds, brown patches and a half-cut lawn. The reason we like well-done jobs is because we are created in the image of God. When God created the Earth, it was a well-done job. He experienced joy looking at the finished product.. He created us to feel that same joy when we do work and do it well done.

If we don't do our work well, we steal joy from our lives. Did you ever think about that as a student? The way to get the maximum amount of joy out of school is to work really hard and do your best. You may not graduate with straight "As" and start on varsity every game but you will have joy. The way to enjoy your job is to work really hard at your job and whatever work you do make sure it is the best you can do.

Good work isn't just given to us to give us joy, it is given to us to give others joy.

Our family recently bought a trailer to transport and store some of my father's furniture from Philadelphia. I was a tight wad so I bought a trailer that was one of the cheapest I could find. I soon learned you get what you pay for. At first glance the trailer looked fine but days after I purchased it I began noticing flaws. Some doors had gaps between themselves and the frame as large as my thumb. One of the lights didn't work. Metal between the roof and the side was stained. One door was rusting. There was rust under the bottom. The saw that cut some of the metal plates had gone too far and extended but marks were seen in the body. Some screws were put in at angles. There were gap in pieces of metal where they didn't meet. Part of the roof was dented. Guess what happened when it rained? It leaked! After a while I began wondering if the crew that built the trailer was on drugs or if they didn't care about their jobs. The trailer had a number of quality issues. On paper, did it fit all the specs? Yes. It was not a job well done. I found my attitude toward the trailer turn from thankfulness to frustration because of poor quality work.

I returned the trailer and through some great customer service I was able to get a different trailer without any hassles. We work to have joy in doing a job well and we work to bring others joy because when we do our jobs well; it brings joy into their lives too. When we don't do our jobs well we squander our own joy and we frustrate others.

6. We work because God calls us to a work and shapes us for work.

If you are a high school student, you have a myriad of career options in front of you. As you get ready to graduate, the school counselors always ask you the standard question, “What do you want to do for a job?” Because you have no idea what you want to do, you ask the school counselor the standard question. “Which jobs make the most money?” Those questions are not bad questions but they aren’t the most important questions. Those questions assume the reason for work is money and the reason for work is to do what I want to do with my life. Both of those are not the way God wants us thinking about our jobs and our futures.

First, God tells us our jobs are not a matter of what we want to do. We need to begin by asking God what he wants us to do. Focusing on what I want to do makes life about me and my glory. When we begin by asking God what he wants me to do we are starting from the right perspective. Life is not something I am to use for my glory. My life is a gift from God he wants me to use for his glory.

My life is not ultimately about making money. My life is about finding out how God is calling me to serve him and to serve others, then doing it well. Our career search begins by asking God how he wants me to serve him and to serve others. What is he calling me to do with my life?

God may want you to be a realtor and serve others by getting them a great house. He may want you to be a brain surgeon that serves others by removing life-threatening tumors from their bodies. He may want you to be a

concrete spreader to bless others with a nice driveway or a sandwich maker that blesses others with a great lunch. The important part is understanding our jobs are not about finding what we want to do. It is asking God what he is calling us to do to serve him and serve others. If we don't start from that perspective it will be very difficult to find what God is calling us to do with our lives.

But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you. 2 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)

Paul viewed his job as the area of influence assigned to him by God. He didn't begin by asking what he wanted to do or what made the most money. The question is what is God assigning me to do?

The other thing to remember is God doesn't make mistakes in the way he shaped us. God shaped us for the work he is calling us to work. He shaped us with an intellect for where he is calling us to serve.

Last week my daughter Deanna had nine-hour back surgery putting rods in her back for her scoliosis. Thankfully God gave the surgeon an extreme intellect, extremely steady hands and concentration that can last for nine hours of surgery. If God hasn't given you the brains to do nine-hour back surgeries, that isn't where he is calling you to serve. Of course we need to study and develop our skills. Of course we sometimes find ourselves in jobs that don't match our skills. God uses those times to mature us and refine us. Remember that you are not a mistake. God shaped us the way he wants us to serve him and to serve others in the job he is calling you to do. Isn't that a comforting thought as you try to find your career?

Why do we work? We work because God is calling us to specific work and he has shaped us for that specific work.

Conclusion

Work is a big part of our lives. Our work is not a sinful thing. It is a good thing. We work because God is a worker and when we work we are imaging our dad. We work because God designed the earth like a Lego kit for us to work it, shape it and assemble things. When we shape the earth, God is glorified. We work because good work is the first way we worship God and the first way we love our neighbors. We work because there is joy for us when work is well-done and there is joy for others when we do our work well. We work because work is not ultimately about what we want to do and making money but work is about serving God and others in what God is calling us to do and living out the way God shaped us.

If work was created by God and it was designed to be a joy, why is it so hard? What went wrong with work? That is the question we will look at next week.

This week, the question we are answering on our weekly blog post is, “How do I balance work, family and my personal life?” Look for it this week.

Until next week CrossWinds family... let's go to work.



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