

International Presbyterian Church - Ealing

Why business matters to God?



A biblical theology of work

Richard Turnbull, January 2021

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Biblical theology of work

Why business matters to God?

- 18<sup>th</sup> January *A biblical theology of work*
- 22<sup>nd</sup> February *Divine imperative of wealth creation*
- 15<sup>th</sup> March *Call and vocation*
- 19<sup>th</sup> April *Enterprise and entrepreneurship*
- May *In person discussion evening*

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Biblical theology of work

Overall aims and objectives

- Understand the role of business and the economy in God's world
- Appreciate the theology and biblical teaching around work, business and the economy
- Recognise the distinctive contribution that a Christian can bring to bear to questions of calling, ethics and values

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Biblical theology of work

A biblical theology of work

- The significance and importance of work
- Theological approaches and principles to work
- What the bible teaches about work

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Biblical theology of work

‘the very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables.’

Dorothy Sayers, *Why Work? An Address Delivered at Eastbourne, April 23rd, 1942* (London: Methuen, 1942), p18

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Biblical theology of work

Significance of work: why work is important

- What is the purpose and value of human work?
- Is there a priority given to spiritual work?

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Biblical theology of work

'From a Christian point of view, all human work (and not just "religious work") has eternal meaning and value.'

Darrell Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), p. 2.

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Biblical theology of work

'[work] should be looked upon, not as a necessary drudgery to be undergone for the purpose of making money, but as a way of life in which the nature of man should find its proper exercise and delight and so fulfil itself to the glory of God.'

Dorothy Sayers, *Why Work? An Address Delivered at Eastbourne, April 23rd, 1942* (London: Methuen, 1942), p1

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Biblical theology of work

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Biblical theology of work

Creation mandates

- God as worker in creation – humanity in his image

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Biblical theology of work

‘Men and women, then, were made in part to work, and by so doing to reflect this aspect of God’s glory.’

Jeff Van Duzer, *Why Business Matters to God: (And What Still Needs to be Fixed)* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010), p. 32.

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Biblical theology of work

Creation mandates

- God as worker in creation – humanity in his image
- Creation is good – so work is good

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Biblical theology of work

‘No work will be so mean and sordid as not to have splendour and value in the eyes of God.’

Calvin, Institutes, 3.X.6, Library of Christian Classics, vol. XX, ed. J. T. McNeill (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1960).

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Biblical theology of work

Creation mandates

- God as worker in creation – humanity in his image
- Creation is good – so work is good
- Humanity mandated to work as part of purpose in creation

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Biblical theology of work

‘Even the artisan with the humblest trade is good at it only because the Spirit of God works in him. For though these gifts are diverse, they all come from the one Spirit; it pleased God to distribute them to each one (1 Cor. 12.4). This does not refer only to spiritual gifts, which follow regeneration, but to all the sciences which concern our use of the common life.’

John Calvin, ‘Harmony of Ex-Dt’, quoted in Ian Hart, ‘The Teaching of Luther and Calvin about Ordinary Work: 2. John Calvin (1509-64)’, *Evangelical Quarterly* 67:2, 1995, p127

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Biblical theology of work

'Here Moses adds that the earth was leased to man, on this condition, that he busies himself cultivating it. It follows from this that men were made to employ themselves doing something and not to be lazy and idle.'

Calvin, 'Commentary on Genesis' (2:15) quoted in Ian Hart, 'The Teaching of Luther and Calvin about Ordinary Work: 2. John Calvin (1509-64)', *Evangelical Quarterly* 67:2, 1995, p121-22

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Biblical theology of work

'We know that men were created for the express purpose of being employed in labour of various kinds.'

Calvin, 'Commentary on the Harmony of the Evangelists', vol 2, quoted in Ian Hart, 'The Teaching of Luther and Calvin about Ordinary Work: 2. John Calvin (1509-64)', *Evangelical Quarterly* 67:2, 1995, p127

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Biblical theology of work

'Man was created not for leisure but for work, even in the state of innocence.'

Works of Luther, vol. 44, p. 183, quoted in Hart, 'The Teaching of Luther and Calvin about Ordinary Work, p. 38.

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Biblical theology of work

'The Church finds *in the very first pages of the Book of Genesis* the source of her conviction that work is a fundamental dimension of human existence on earth.'

Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, (1981), para. 4; emphasis in original.

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Biblical theology of work

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Biblical theology of work

What the bible teaches about work

- The development of enterprise and entrepreneurship
- The Lord endows with skill

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Biblical theology of work

‘Then Moses said... ‘See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel . . . he has filled him with the spirit, of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft.’

Exodus 35:30-33 (ESV)

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Biblical theology of work

What the bible teaches about work

- The development of enterprise and entrepreneurship
- The Lord endows with skill
- Work in the New Testament
- Scriptural warnings

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Biblical theology of work

Scriptural warnings

- Warnings against *laziness* (Prov 10:4-5; Prov 6:6; 2 Thess 3:10)
- Warnings against *exploitation* (Lv 19:13; Jer 22:13; Amos 5:12; Amos 8:5-6; Lk 12:16-21; Lk 16:19-31; Mt 6:24; 1 Tim 6:10)

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Biblical theology of work

Conclusions

- Work has intrinsic value and reflects God's glory
- Creation mandates demonstrate the importance of work
- All human work reflects God's character, not just spiritual
- The Bible shows the central place of work, business and entrepreneurship
- The Bible warns against both laziness and oppression

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