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Theology of Work Project

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beta.theologyofwork.org

After Feb 2012
www.theologyofwork.org

You can download a copy of this presentation there.



What does the Bible say about work?

God is a worker

Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning **God created** the heavens and the earth."

Genesis 2:4: "This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When **the LORD God made** the earth and the heavens."



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God created people to help finish the creation

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth **and there was no man to work the ground....**

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Genesis

2:4b-7,15



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God created people to be productive, for the common good

"God blessed them and said to them, "**Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.**"

Gen 1:28



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People are created to work in community with each other

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a **helper** suitable for him...." ²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man....

²⁴For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will **become one flesh.**

Gen 2:18, 21-22, 24



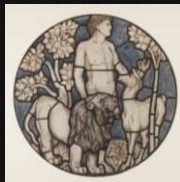
Work is the first activity where people meet God

"Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. **He brought them to the man** to see what he would name them; and **whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.** So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field."

Gen 2:19-20

"The man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was **walking in the garden** in the cool of the day"

Gen 3:8



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Conclusions about work

1. **Value creation:** People are essentially **built to create value**, as God himself does.
2. **Common Good:** People's work is intended to **benefit others**, and not only self.
3. **Relationships with people:** People are intended to **work in community**
4. **Relationship with God:** Work is a fundamentally **spiritual** activity, or at least it should be.

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We all choose to work against God

ADAM AND EVE



YOU AND ME



Work became hard and frustrating

"To the woman God said, "I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." (Genesis 3:16).

And to the man God said...cursed is the ground because of you; in toil 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 until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."" (Genesis 3:17-19).



Now there's twice as much work

- Creating new things
- Fixing what goes wrong



God will restore everything



"The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

Rev. 21:22-26

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Does God call people to non-church work?

YES

Questions?



What does "calling" mean?

Contemporary

"Calling"
(Work/Job/
Career)

Biblical

"Calling"
(Belong to
Christ)

Guidance
Commission
Wisdom
Set Apart
Appoint
Anoint
Call (seldom)

"Calling"
(Work/Job/
Career)

The call to belong to Christ and participate in his redemptive work

- ...including yourselves who are **called** to belong to Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:6)
- All things work together for good for those who love God, who are **called** according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)
- [God] desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4)
- We are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we **entreat** you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

Direct, unmistakable call to particular work

Non-church

- Noah – conservation (Gen 6:14-22)
- Moses – political/military leadership (Ex 3:4)
- Bezalel and Oholiab – craftwork (Ex 31:1-6)
- Judges & kings – political/military leadership
- Prophets – political activism

Church (or equivalent)

- Priests - Aaron (Ex 28:1), Samuel (1 Sam 3)
- Apostles/missionaries
- Deacons/servants

Direct, unmistakable call to particular work



Direct, unmistakable call to particular work



How many in the Bible?

~ 100?

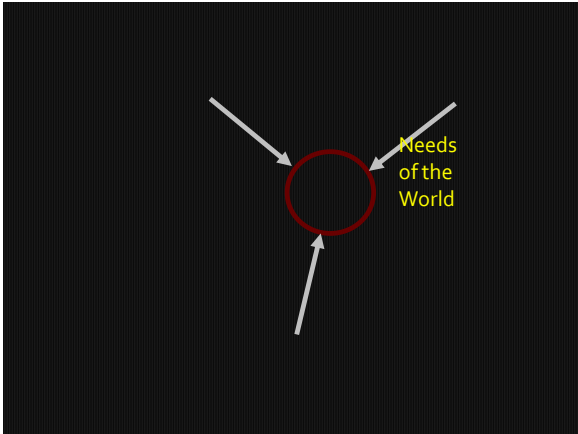
Universal "call" to work

- So God created humankind in his image, in the **image of God** he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27-28)
- The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to **till** it and keep it. (Genesis 2:15)
- Six days you shall labor and do all your **work**. (Exodus 20:9)
- For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to **work** should not eat. (2 Thess. 3:10)
- They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit... and my chosen shall long enjoy the **work** of their hands. (Isaiah 65:21-22)
- The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will **bring their glory** into it. (Revelation 21:24-26)

God's guidance to particular work

Three ways the Bible gives guidance about your work:

- The needs of the world
- Your gifts and skills
- Your deepest/truest desires



Needs of the world

Personal and family needs

- Whoever does not **provide for relatives**, and especially for **family members**, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Timothy 5:8)
- Aspire to live quietly, to mind **your own affairs**, and to **work with your hands**, as we directed you. (1 Thess. 4:11)
- The good **leave an inheritance** to their children's children. (Proverbs 13:22)
- The wise woman **builds her house**, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands. (Proverbs 14:1)
- Let people learn to devote themselves to good works in order to **meet urgent needs**, so that they may not be unproductive. (Titus 3:14)

Needs of the world

Needs of people around you and beyond

- Happy are those who are **kind to the poor**. (Proverbs 14:21)
- The crowds asked John, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must **share with anyone who has none**; and whoever has food must do likewise." (Luke 3:10-11)
- Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you **gave me food**, I was thirsty and you **gave me something to drink**, I was a stranger and you **welcomed me**, I was naked and you **gave me clothing**, I was sick and you **took care of me**, I was in prison and you **visited me**." (Matthew 25:34-36)

Needs of the world

Practical considerations

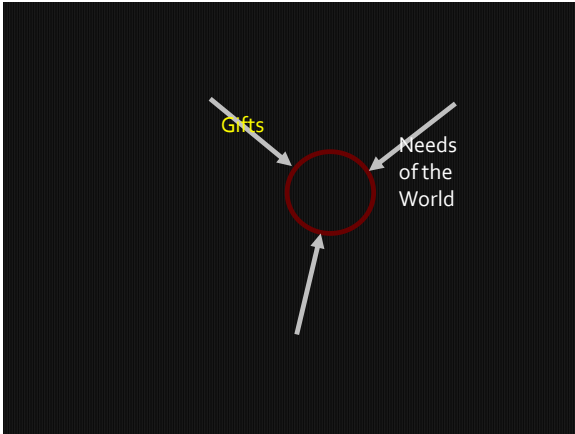
- Needs you are in a better position than others to know about or meet.
- Needs that feel especially pressing to you.
- Needs you can meet through voluntary work, not just needs you get paid to meet.

Exploring the needs of the world

1. Write down a list of needs of the world that
 - you observe/notice
 - you feel strongly about
 - affect people you care about
 - come to mind when you read the Bible
2. Practice noticing needs when see, hear, read, pray. Add them to your list.
3. Spread out your list on the matrix on the next page.

Exploring the needs of the world

	Your Responsibility	Beyond Your Responsibility
You can meet now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earning a living to support my family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training emerging leaders to apply Christian faith to the workplace • Leading a scout group for pre-teen kids
You can't meet yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying for college tuition for my kids • Getting millions of people involved in the theology of work project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making churches meaningful to young adults • Ending torture worldwide

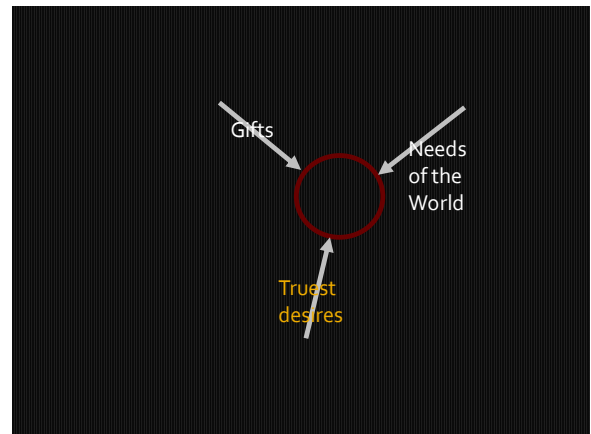


Your gifts and skills

- Do sowers not scatter dill, sow cummin, and plant wheat in rows and barley in its proper place, and spelt as the border? For **they are well instructed**; their **God teaches them**. (Isaiah 28:24-26)
- We have **gifts that differ**, according to the grace given to us: **prophecy**, in proportion to faith; **ministry**, in ministering; the **teacher**, in teaching; the **exhorter**, in exhortation; the **giver**, in generosity; the **leader**, in diligence; the **compassionate**, in cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6-8)
- To each is **given the manifestation of the Spirit** for the **common good**. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of **wisdom**, and to another the utterance of **knowledge** according to the same Spirit, to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of **healing** by the one Spirit, to another the working of **miracles**, to another **prophecy**, to another the **discernment of spirits**, to another various kinds of **tongues**, to another the interpretation of **tongues**. (1 Corinthians 12:7-10)

A way to explore your gifts

- List 3 or 4 gifts you believe you have.
- **Write** down some episodes where you or others observed these gifts.
- Choose a an episode that feels especially meaningful to you.
 - Were any of the gifts intensified or reoriented ?
 - Did others mention and/or benefit from any of your gifts?
 - Did using any of the gifts reduce your stress?
 - [Make up your own question(s) here]



Your deepest/trupest desires

- Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the **desires** of your heart. (Psalm 37:4)
- He fulfills the **desire** of all who fear him; he also hears their cry, and saves them. (Psalm 145:19)
- Blessed are those who **hunger** and **thirst** for righteousness, for they will be **filled**. (Matthew 5:6)
- Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your **joy** may be complete. (John 16:24)

Your deepest/trupest desires

But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me **all kinds of covetousness**. Apart from the law sin lies dead.... I **do not understand my own actions**. For I do not do what I want, but **I do the very thing I hate**.... So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members **another law at war with the law of my mind**, making me **captive to the law of sin** that dwells in my members. (Romans 7:8, 15, 21-23)

Your deepest/truest desires



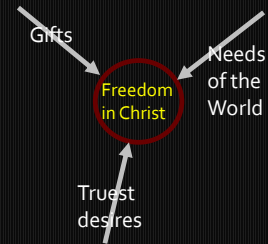
Your deepest/truest desires

"The place God calls you to is where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper, 1993) under "Calling."

Ways to explore your true desires

- Ask yourself what you truly desire, **answer by writing down what comes first to mind.**
- What are you afraid to admit that you desire?
- Observe—record, even—how you spend time
- Ask your friends what they think you desire
- What can't you imagine living without? Now imagine living without it — does it bring desolation or consolation?
- Who do you hang out with? How come?



Freedom in Christ



Freedom in Christ

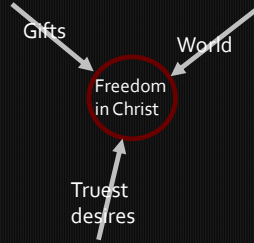
- So if the Son makes you **free**, you will be **free** indeed. (John 8:36)
- Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is **freedom**. (2 Corinthians 3:17)

How do you discern a call to specific work?

Calling is where

- Your gifts & talents
- The needs of the world
- Your true desires

come together in the freedom and creativity in Christ



Source: Adapted from Frederick Buechner, *The ABCs of Faith*

God's guidance for *how* you work

- What you do every day, and how you do it, is more important than getting the right job.
- Over a lifetime you serve Christ best by making the most of every job for his purposes, whether you feel called to every job or not.
- "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much." (Luke 16:10)