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# Life's Work

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Sunday, May 31, 2020 — Part 1: God's Design For Work

### Introduction

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to rethink the totality of our lives in accordance to the Kingdom of God. A large portion of our life is our labor, our work. As the economy gets unlocked again, many have lost their jobs and will be looking for new jobs. Many businesses have either closed or are struggling to get back to full capacity. Government officials are debating what policies will be the best way to stimulate the economy. But how are we supposed to think about work in accordance to God's Kingdom?

I want us to have a biblical vision of work, understanding it from God's perspective and how he designed our lives with work having a significant role to play in our humanity. Work (our labor and vocation) is a critical part of what it means for humans to be made in the image of God.

Work is part of being made in the image of God.

Why do we work? Make money, pursue desire, find fulfillment? In today's time we lack a story that helps us understand how we fit and why our work matters in the larger scope of what God is doing in the world. In previous generations, work mattered in that you were just supposed to work hard and get paid to provide for your family. In more recent times, the story we found ourselves in is that we work in order to pursue desire and to buy things in order to consume them and try not to die. In today's time, much of this generation is trying to make their work fulfill their own desires, we work in an industry or company because it makes me feel good. (This is assuming you don't just work to pay the bills.)

But these frameworks lack a grand story that moves us toward a hope, a future that we want to move in the direction of, a grand story that we find our place in and contribute to something larger than ourselves. What are humans if we don't have a story that organizes all the days of our lives and why we spend much of it working? Some thinkers call humans without this "formless monsters," creatures with no direction or aim or self-control, guided only by whims, distractions, emotions and feelings, or survival instincts.

A grand story of work is what the Bible is giving us. The Bible itself is a "big story," one, unified story that leads to Jesus. If the Bible is God's big story, what does it say the role work has in our lives?

## In the Beginning...Work

Who is the first “worker” in the Bible?

**Genesis 1:1-2 (ESV)** 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.

Without form and void — “Tovu vavohu” — “wild and waste” — desert wasteland

Genesis 1 is God transforming the “wild and waste” into a habitable place for humans to be present and flourish.

**Genesis 1:3-4 (ESV)** And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was **good**. And God separated the light from the darkness.

Who needs light to flourish? Light is good for humans. He separates the light from the darkness, bringing order out of the chaos.

**Genesis 1:11-12 (ESV)** And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and **fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed**, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Trees are about to play a key role in this story. Fruit trees are good for humans, and these are the only trees presented at this time in the story.

**Genesis 1:31 (ESV)** 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.

He sees the order and beauty of His creation and calls it “good” (“tov”).

God’s design for work is turning the “wild and waste” into “order and beauty.”

**Genesis 2:1-3 (ESV)** 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 in creation.

God is modeling the purpose of “work” in His creation. Work, from what He models, is taking the “tohu vavohu” (the “wild and waste”, “formless and void”) and bringing order and goodness and beauty out of it, bringing out the raw potential of it, for the benefit of someone else. Why did God create the world and order it the way He did? For the benefit of humans, not for His benefit.

Work is an “others-centered” activity. God works to share the fruits of His labor with others. He gives us a vision of work that is more than for mere survival, but for sharing. God wants to share this creation with particular creatures.

God’s ultimate vision of work is for **sharing**, not just **survival**.

## Conclusion

Genesis 1 gives us a beautiful vision of work; it is something God does and gives over to the image-bearing creatures. Work is a dignified and beautiful vocation of taking what is potential and bringing it to beauty and over so that it can be shared with others, it can benefit more to others than just surviving. Most human vocations are given this dignity of imaging God in our work.

Where is there “tohu vavohu” in your workplace? Your Life? Your Family?  
What can you put your hand to for the benefit of others?