



March 19, 2021

The Importance of Our Work

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, - (Ephesians 3:20)

Many people believe labor is something to be avoided. But if we do not work, our lives are wasted because God designed work as a fundamental structure of love in the kingdom of God—something that is meant to bring people together in loving community for mutual benefit and support. What's more, work is a good thing, and it is a natural disposition of human beings from early childhood on. Work is simply human creativity, a special type of causation through which goodness and blessing can be promoted.

Simply put, work is the expending of energy to produce good in various forms and ways. God did not originally intend our work to be difficult—for us to sweat, to grind ourselves back into dust. When Adam was given work to do in the garden, I believe Adam worked the way that Jesus did when dealing with the fig tree that did not bear fruit (Matt. 21:18–19). Jesus didn't say, "Peter, go get the chainsaw." No, he spoke, and it withered away. This is the way Adam worked before the fall. The sweating came because, in disobedience, we broke ourselves off from God and each other and from the energy that would accomplish the good we intend.

If humanity were united under God in love and understanding, we could, with ease, achieve wondrous things far beyond what we can now achieve or imagine (Eph. 3:20). Without such harmonious cooperation we are thrown back on ourselves to do what we can to work and grind out a living on our own. This feeds into our isolation, pride, egotism, and antagonism with others. This is clearly not what God desires.

Your work is the total amount of lasting good that you will accomplish in your lifetime. That might include your job, but for many of us, our families will be the largest part of the lasting good we produce.

Today much that is called work is not the use of energy to produce good. In our fallen world we must distinguish between a job and work, because many "jobs" can produce evil. Your job is what you get paid to do, and it might or might not contribute to lasting good. Of course, you may be at a point in your life where you do not have a job or do not want one. That's all right. You still have work to do; you still have the opportunity and responsibility to produce good in the world.

Practice: *Many people base their identity on their work and their job—that is, they think they are what they do. This is problematic because they will identify their jobs with their lives and their personal sense of worth. Then they are apt to draw terribly mistaken conclusions, such as, "Since I do not have a job I am a nobody." How does seeking to produce good shift our perspective and cause us to reframe the way we think about ourselves, our work, and the outcome of our life?*