

## FINDING MEANING IN WORK PT 2

Why do we work? We started last week with the design and dignity of work and this week will look at work as cultivation and work as our calling.

The command to Fill the earth and govern it. (Alternatively, Subdue it.) In Genesis, 1:28 is called the cultural mandate. In Chapter 2 we see this expanded with the instructions God gives.

Spiritual growth. Word of God to obey v 2:16-17

Physical work. Looking after the garden v 2:15

Mental work. Naming the animals v 2:19

Community work. Provision of marriage. V 2:24

This is an expansion of the job description given in verse 28.

**Fill the earth** surely, this would just happen naturally. In fact, haven't we done enough reproducing? Surely, we need to stop so the world's limited resources do not run out. Why would we need to be commanded to do this? With the animals God just says Let me multiply. But we are given the job.

Commentators say that this is far more than just more people on earth. This is about building human society. God could have just said the word and created lots more people. We are called to fill the earth with healthy communities.

**Rule, subdue, govern.** Often taken as licence to do whatever we want with the natural environment and not to worry about the impact on society. Subdue has a force about it as if we are in a battle with the environment and we have to prevail but this command is given before the fall. When creation became subject to decay. There was a harmony in creation at this point

"Govern" is a much better translation. Governance implies that we are stewards of this world. God owns it but we govern on his behalf. The world has been created in such a way that its needs developed. We see God took the formless elements and created from them. We see God filling the spaces he had created. God had to work to bring about things. Calls us to do the same.

When Genesis describes God placing humans in the garden to cultivate it, this is wider than just for Adam and Eve. It is not saying we are all to be gardeners. The concept of cultivating the garden is a metaphor for something far wider.

To cultivate a garden takes a lot of hard work. All the raw materials for the garden are already there. We do not create dirt's, sand, and shrubs. However, we arrange them in such a way as to create something of beauty. A garden reflects both God's glory and human creativity. Queens Park is classic example. In addition, gardens need constant work. If Queen's park were left to its own devices within a year, it would be overgrown.

But this idea of gardening is metaphor for what the cultural mandate is about. It is about the creation of culture. WE

are to create, to cultivate to build, to take the raw materials given to us by God and we are to create and build culture and society.

Our work is to bring order out of chaos, our work is to create new things, our work is work with the patterns of nature. Our work is to create communities and societies that function well. So if we are repairing bones in surgery, or collecting rubbish, or painting a picture, or making a piece of machinery out of steel, or teaching children, or helping an office function well, or cleaning a building what we are doing in our work, is developing and maintaining and repairing the fabric of the world. AS we do this, we connect our work to God's work.

We need to celebrate the entrepreneurs and business owners as what they are doing is creatively taking resources to help meet human need, and in doing so creating new jobs, new products and a better quality of life. Equally we need to celebrate all jobs, because whatever we do is culture shaping. Let us say you work at the front desk of a business. You answer the phone and greet visitors. You help bring order to the chaos. However, you also cultivate the culture of your business by your attitude and how you treat people.

Those of you who are in the business of raising children might at times feel like you are just cleaning and cooking. But you are shaping the well being of the next generation. Your garden is it were is the home and your children. You are cultivating within them faith and discipline and manners and work ethic.

### Work as calling.

Pastors often have spiritualized this word. However, this exalted idea of calling is not very Biblical. Calling "Kaleo." Greek. Called into saving faith. God calls us. Romans 8:30 1 Cor 1:9 We are called into relationship with God. We are also called into relationship with other believers. Greek word for church is "ekklesia." Literally means "Ones called out."

Now read one Corinthians 7:17 Here we have this same word. Called. This time it is not talking spiritual way. This is about calling to our "secular" jobs as it were. God not only equips us for building up the body of Christ, God equips us with talents and gifts to build up human community.

Work is a calling in its own right. Not just spiritual people who are called to ministry. All are called to ministry and we are all called to work

Calling or vocation has traditionally been linked to doctors, teachers, and ministers. The concept behind a vocation is that you are called to do it, for the sake of others. Only a vocation is when someone else calls you to do it. And you



do it for their sake. Our daily work can only be a calling if we see that it is God's assignment for us. And that is for the service of others.

This cuts across our cultures idea today that work is for our self fulfillment. I do this because it gives me self esteem, it earns me lots of money, or because I feel good when I do this. That is not a calling. If you are a doctor, but your motivation is that of money, prestige, then it is not a vocation in the true meaning of the word.

Our self esteem and self worth comes from God. Not from what we do. So we don't need our work to provide this. The Question of what should I do with my life should not be based around what will give me the most money and status and self-fulfillment. It should be - With my gifts and talents how can I be of greatest service to others.

Martin Luther totally understood this concept. He fought against this idea that the only ways to be called by God was to be a priest, monk, or nun. That was spiritual work and everything else was just a necessary. That Attitude is still around. He got this idea that we are all priests.

He uses the expression of the masks of God. God works through humanity to provide and care. I.e. Psalm 147. God strengthens the bars of your gates. I.e. Provides safety and security to a city. How does actually God do that? Even the literal iron bars have to be made by someone. However, Good government, police officer, and laws are all what give security and peace. God cares for the civic needs through the work of others.

Ps 145 God feeds every living thing. How does he do that? Through the farmer, baker, truck driver, shop owner. God could give us food directly but he does it through others. This is the mask of God.

This idea should help us appreciate the work of those who are not Christians. We are saved by grace alone and we are not better father and mothers, better artist or business owners than those who do not believe. We can see God's glory through the world, when we see the people he created fulfilling their calling to work for the betterment of others

### **Our calling to work is actually an act of love**

If you had to make everything from scratch, you would not have very much. If everyone stopped working soon we would all be huddling around campfires wearing animal skins and Sleeping In caves. It would not be pretty. Therefore, our work is a way of loving others. The difference between wilderness and culture is work.

However, how we work is key. We love others by doing our work with excellence.

Let us say you go into a joiner and want him to make you a table. You are not interested in whether he treats his employees well. Alternatively, if he swears at his wife. What you want to know is Will he do a good job?

The very first way we serve God in our work is to make sure we are competent - that we are the very best we can be. Our work will be worship as we work competently.

High quality work is an act of love. This is different from being driven by a desire to succeed or earn more money or perfectionism this is a different drive from trying to earn God's approval. We are loved because of God's grace. But if our work is a form of worship to God and a basic way that we love others we will want to work with competence. Professionalism. Why - because that is how we show love.

Think about the place of work how does it fit into God's command to cultivate? And what is the culture you are cultivating in that place. How can you bring order, beauty, creativity?

How does the truth that you are called by God to your work alter how you see your work? How is your work an act of love towards others? Is your work done to the very highest of excellence, as an act of worship to God.

These two truths should profoundly alter how you see your work.

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### REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

Have you ever heard of the cultural mandate? How did you think it applied to you? Have you heard much teaching on it?

How is your work fulfilling the cultural mandate- ie bringing order out of chaos, creating culture, bringing beauty, developing maintaining and creating the fabric of the world.

Work is a vocation if you are called by someone else and are serving him or her.

Do you know you are called by God to your work? What is hindering you knowing you are called? Do you see your work as an act of service and love to others (and God) What makes this hard in your work?

Are you being the best you can be at your work? What could you do to grow in competency? In the past have you desired competency to get more money, or esteem from others?

How has this message challenged you in respect to your attitude to your work?

What could you do to see work as an act of worship just the same as singing a song on Sunday?



**CENTRAL BAPTIST**

LOVE GOD : LOVE OTHERS