

God describes himself as a worker (a shepherd, a potter, a builder, a king)

John 5:17 Jesus said to them, My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I too am working

God finds delight in His work

- Genesis 1:31 "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good"

We are created in His image and made to work

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Every Good Endeavor (EGE): The word "subdue" indicates that, though all God had made was good, it was still to a great degree undeveloped. God left creation with deep untapped potential for cultivation that people were to unlock through their labor.

God gave us work to partner in building his kingdom on earth

Phillippians 2:13 "For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose"

Luke 12:43 "When the master comes and finds the servant doing his work, the servant will be blessed."

Matthew 6:10 "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

The purpose of work is to honor God by bearing fruit, not just to exert effort

John 15: 5 "I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

John 15:-3 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful."

John 15:8 "My Father is glorified and honored by this, when you bear much fruit."

James 1:22 "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says"

EGE: [...] work is one of the ways we make ourselves useful to others, rather than just living a life for ourselves. Also, work is also one of the ways we discover who we are, because it is through work that we come to understand our distinct abilities and gifts,

Bearing fruit is to give others a glimpse of the love, excellence and perfection He wants to restore us into, so they may pursue Him for eternal life

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

EGE: God created people, not to receive love and honor from them but to share the love, joy, honor, and glory he already had within the Trinity.

Sin corrupts our purposes of work (and its benefits and fruit) to become an idol instead of a sacrifice

Exodus 20:3 You shall have no other gods before me.

Ten Commandments begin with a commandment against idolatry. Why does this come first? Because the fundamental motivation behind breaking godly law is idolatry. We never break the other commandments without breaking the first one. (Counterfeit Gods)

EGE He defined idolatry as looking to some created thing to give you what only God can give you.

EGE: It could be argued that everything we do wrong—every cruel action, dishonest word, broken promise, self-centered attitude—stems from a conviction deep in our souls that there is something more crucial to our happiness and meaning than the love of God.

EGE: Idols of comfort and pleasure can make it impossible for a person to work as hard as is necessary to have a faithful and fruitful career. Idols of power and approval, on the other hand, can lead us to overwork or to be ruthless and unbalanced in our work practices. Idols of control take several forms—including intense worry, lack of trust, and micromanagement.

Matthew 22:37 Jesus replied, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

Romans 12:1 “Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him”

EGE Meditate on these things, and the truth will change your identity. It will convince you of your real, inestimable value. And ironically, when you see how much you are loved, your work will become far less selfish. Suddenly all the other things in your work life—your influence, your résumé, and the benefits they bring you—become just things. You can risk them, spend them, and even lose them. You are free.

EGE If you see what Jesus Christ has done for you, losing the ultimate palace for you, then you will be able to start to serve God and your neighbor from your place in the palace.

EGE We either get our name—our defining essence, security, worth, and uniqueness—from what God has done for us and in us, or we make a name through what we can do for ourselves.

EGE Even the most loving, morally beautiful people fall prey to motives of self-interest, fear, and glory seeking.

I’m not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ’s servant.” Galatians 1:10

Sin made work hard but work is still meant to be and do good

Genesis 3:17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you: through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life."

We have seen that work in a fallen world can be fruitless; it can also be pointless. [...] Idealism says, "Through my work I am going to change things, make a difference, accomplish something new, bring justice to the world." Cynicism says, "Nothing really changes. Don't get your hopes up. Do what it takes to make a living. Don't let yourself care too much. Get out of it whatever you can."

God expects us to work hard

Exodus 20:8-11: 8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

We are motivated by His purpose and glory not by earthy masters and rewards

Colossians 3:23–24 "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward"

EGE If we begin to work as if we were serving the Lord, we will be freed from both overwork and underwork. Neither the prospect of money and acclaim, nor the lack of it, will be our controlling consideration. Work will be primarily a way to please God by doing his work in the world, for his name's sake.

EGE We all work for an audience, whether we are aware of it or not. Some perform to please parents, others to impress peers, others to win over superiors, while many do what they do strictly to live up to their own standards. All of these audiences are inadequate. Working for them alone will lead to overwork or underwork— sometimes a mixture of the two, based on who is watching. But Christians look to an Audience of One, our loving heavenly Father, and that gives us both accountability and joy in our work.

EGE "For many of us, being productive and doing becomes . . . an attempt at redemption. That is, through our work, we try to build our worth, security, and meaning."

God is working for those who love Him

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose.

EGE: The second chapter of Genesis goes on to show that God works not only to create but also to care for his creation. This is what theologians call the work of "providence." God creates human beings and then works for them as their Provider. He forms a man (Genesis 2:7), plants a garden for him and waters it (Genesis 2:6, 8), and fashions a wife for him (Genesis 2:21–22). The rest of the Bible tells us that God continues this work as Provider, caring for the world by watering and cultivating the ground (Psalm 104:10–22),

EGE while God works for us as our Provider, we also work for him. Indeed, he works through us. Psalm 127, verse 1—“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain”—indicates that God is building the house (providing for us) through the builders. As Martin Luther argued, Psalm 145 says that God feeds every living thing, meaning he is feeding us through the labor of farmers and others.

God has given us gifts

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Great work requires us to hone our gifts

Ecclesiastes 10:10 “If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed, but skill will bring success”

God wants our work to put others’ interests above our own self centered ambition

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

EGE: And because our disordered hearts crave affirmation and validation, it is just as tempting to be thrust in the opposite direction—making life all about career accomplishment and very little else.

EGE: One result of this belief is that many people take jobs that they are not suited for at all, choosing to aim for careers that do not fit their gifts but promise higher wages and prestige [pursuit of worldly markers of success and validation]. Western societies are increasingly divided between the highly remunerated “knowledge classes” and the more poorly remunerated “service sector,” and most of us accept and perpetuate the value judgments that attach to these categories.

EGE: The question must now be “How, with my existing abilities and opportunities, can I be of greatest service to other people, knowing what I do of God’s will and of human need?”

EGE: When this happens, work is no longer a way to create and bring out the wonders of the created order, as Calvin would say, or to be an instrument of God’s providence, serving the basic needs of our neighbor, as Luther would say. Instead it becomes a way to distinguish myself from my neighbor, to show the world and prove to myself that I’m special. It is a way to accumulate power and security, and to exercise control over my destiny. So often the observation of Qoheleth holds true—“I saw that all labor and achievement spring from man’s envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind” (Ecclesiastes 4:4).

EGE What were the builders of the tower [of Babel] doing their work for? What are most of today’s ambitious workers doing their work for? Verse 4 tells us vividly—and the motivation has not changed from that day to this one. It was to maximize their power, glory, and autonomy.

EGE: We said before that many people are doing “work under the work.” They are not merely doing the work that draws the salary—they are also working to chase away their

sense of insignificance. But here in Jesus we find the “rest under the rest,” the REM of the soul.

if we begin to realize that idols cannot simply be removed. They must be replaced. If you only try to uproot them, they grow back; but they can be supplanted. (Counterfeit Gods)

God wants us to be proud of work but not comparative

“Let each person examine his own work, and then he can take pride in himself alone, and not compare himself with someone else.” Galatians 6:4 (CSB)

God calls us to be blameless and prepared as workers

Titus 1:7 Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless - not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

God expects us to have plans and to commit them to Him

Proverbs 16:3 Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and He will establish your plans.

God has called us to rest from work as a holy sacrifice

Exodus 20:8-11: 8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

EGE Sabbath is therefore a declaration of our freedom. It means you are not a slave—not to your culture’s expectations, your family’s hopes, your medical school’s demands, not even to your own insecurities.

EGE: We are also to think of Sabbath as an act of trust. God appointed the Sabbath to remind us that he is working and resting. To practice Sabbath is a disciplined and faithful way to remember that you are not the one who keeps the world running [...] the very definition of a Christian is someone who not only admires Jesus, emulates Jesus, and obeys Jesus, but who “rests in the finished work of Christ” instead of his or her own.

EGE: Pieper argues that leisure is not the mere absence of work, but an attitude of mind or soul in which you are able to contemplate and enjoy things as they are in themselves, without regard to their value or their immediate utility. The work-obsessed mind—as in our Western culture—tends to look at everything in terms of efficiency, value, and speed. But there must also be an ability to enjoy the most simple and ordinary aspects of life, even ones that are not strictly useful, but just delightful.