

WORK THAT WORSHIPS

Peter Foxwell. Cornerstone Church. September 6, 2026.

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IT'S SCIENCE: WE NEED PURPOSE

A happy life is a purpose-full life. That's what science tells us.^{1 2}

- God wired us to need to feel like our life has meaning.

DEFINING WORK

The Bible word for purposeful and meaningful activity is “work.”

- Work is anything we do for God's glory.
- It does not have to be paid.

Work has three dimensions, all found in Genesis 1-3.

- These chapters were written to give the people of Israel an alternative worldview as they came out of Egypt's polytheistic religion.

1. WORK IS A GOOD GIFT

Genesis describes God as the worker who created the world.

- This tells us that work has value and dignity - even God works.

Genesis 2:1-3 (CSB) So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. 2 On the seventh day God had completed his work that he had

¹ For example: Kim ES, Chen Y, Nakamura JS, Ryff CD, VanderWeele TJ. *Sense of Purpose in Life and Subsequent Physical, Behavioral, and Psychosocial Health: An Outcome-Wide Approach*. Am J Health Promot. 2022 Jan;36(1):137-147.

² For example: Xiao-Xin He, Xin-qiang Wang, Michael F. Steger, Li-Jun Ji, Kai Jing, Ming-fan Liu, Bao-juan Ye, *Meaning in life and psychological distress: A meta-analysis*, Journal of Research in Personality, Volume 104, 2023, 104381,

done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested from all his work of creation.

God the worker also gave humans their own work.

Genesis 1:26 (CSB) Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.”

Genesis 1:28 (CSB) God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.”

- Part of God’s blessing was a job for them: to rule and subdue.
- God gave us work; it’s a gift, AND it is good.
- So, whatever you do for God’s honor - operating a machine or doing laundry - it is a good work.

2. WORK IS FOR GOD’S GLORY.

Work is worship.

- Genesis 1-3 are saturated with temple imagery, meaning that our work is like priestly service. For example:
 - God "walked" in the garden (Genesis 3:8). That is the same verb used for God's presence in Israel’s tabernacle (2 Samuel 7:6-7).
 - Adam's commission "to work and watch over" the garden (Genesis 2:15) uses the same words that refer to the Levites and priests’ work in the tabernacle (Numbers 3:7-8).
 - The cherubim posted to guard Eden after the Fall (Genesis 3:24) mirror the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:18-22).

- The river flowing from Eden (Genesis 2:10) matches the river described in Ezekiel and Revelation flowing from the new creation temple (Exodus 47:1-12; Revelation 21:1-2).
- The New Testament also ties work to worship.

Colossians 3:23 (CSB) Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people...

Work is worship if it's done "for the Lord."

- Pray as you begin: "Lord, this is for you. Use it for your glory. Amen."

3. WORK IS A GRIND

Why is work a grind?

- The answer is: Genesis 3. Adam and Eve's rebellion. God's response.
 - 3:16: God said that the work of giving birth would be hard.
 - 3:16: He said that the work of being a family would be hard.
 - 3:17-19: He said that the work of farming would be hard.
 - 3:19: He said, in the end, you will die.

That might actually be a good thing, so we don't make work an idol.

FINDING PURPOSE AND HAPPINESS IN WORK

- When we accept what we are - co-workers with God - we discover meaning and purpose in everything we do.
- We are not only born to work, but we are also reborn to work.

Ephesians 2:8-10 (CSB) For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift — 9 not from works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Use any or all of the following questions to guide your group's conversation about Sunday's sermon.

Icebreaker

If you could instantly become a world-class expert at any job or skill for one day, what would you pick and why?

Observation

In Genesis 1:26-28, what specific instructions does God give humans about their role in the world?

What does Colossians 3:23 say should shape the way we do our work?

Interpretation

Work was part of God's plan before anything went wrong, and only became painful after Genesis 3. Why do you think God built work into a perfect world instead of just rest or leisure?

Colossians 3:17 says to do "whatever you do... in the name of the Lord Jesus." What do you think it actually means for an ordinary task, like doing laundry or answering emails, to be done "in his name" rather than just getting finished?

Application

Think about one task on your calendar this week that feels tedious or unimportant - maybe because it's hard or unpaid. What would change if you treated it as work done "for the Lord"?

The sermon suggests praying, "Lord, this is for you," before starting work each day. What's one specific moment in your daily routine- a commute, a meeting, a chore- where a small pause like that could actually shift your attitude?