**Vocation is Ministry**

Our abilities, whatever they may be, are God-given. Our work, no matter what we do,

matters to God. Our jobs, well done, show our love for others.

**Episode Six: The Redemption of Work**

"Ring the bells that still can ring, Forget your perfect offering,

There is a crack in everything, That's how the light gets in." --Leonard Cohen "Anthem"

**Ethical | Vocational | Local | Pastoral | Communal**

God’s Original Intention

1. Genesis 1:26-27 “image of God”

a. Giftings, vocations, work—we do with what we’ve been given (Ex 29-32)

b. Gender, Ethnicity, Class—we are all one (Gal 3.29; Eph 2.10-14); smash ‘glass

ceilings’; equality, inseparable from liberty; spread wealth through opportunity

2. Genesis 1:28 “God said to them, ‘Subdue, have dominion’”

*Conservation-management-development-domestication-privilege-obligation*

3. Genesis 1:28 “the cultural mandate,” “common grace,” and “beneficence”

a. “The cultural mandate”—God commands humans to manage His world

b. “Common grace”—God gives good gifts through creation to everyone

c. “Beneficence”—God sets the standard for and approval of goodness

4. “Righteousness & Justice, Peace & Hope, Order & Structure”—

*Our Theology should drive our sociology, not the other way around*

5. Four Relationships: Us with God, creation, others, self

God’s Renewal Redemption

1. Virtue, Goodness: Think-Be-Do Good (Titus 3:1, 8, 14)

a. John 13:33-35—best apologetic is love

b. 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12; 2 Thess 3:12-13—best testimony is hard work

c. 1 Peter 2:11-12, 3:13-17, 4:12-19—best conduct is goodness

2. Broken, mended, hope: Peace pulls the pieces together, *shalom* = wholeness (Jer 29.4-7)

3. *Excellence-Premier-Example-Testimony-Holiness-Distinctiveness*

4. Work with others, agree to disagree, toward the common good (Mark 9:38-41)

a. Celebrate the good works of others, no matter viewpoints (2 Chr 33:1-20)

b. Belief is nothing without action, action is impotent without belief (Matt 25; James)

c. We should not second guess another’s intentions, motivations (Rom 14:10-12)

5. Sin, messed up; grace, a messy way out; life, a mess here; eternity, no mess there (Eph 2.1-10)

Questions to Ask

1. How can I view my work as a reclamation of creation? a reconnection to God’s original intention?

2. Why is the word “restoration” so important to a Christian understanding of work? How does a biblical view of sin establish a need for salvation in my whole life?

3. How do I define “excellence?” Do I understand what excellence means in my vocation, what it takes to maintain a standard of work, praised by God and man?

4. What creative, innovative thinking can I do that would use what is in me, around me, with me to refashion my world—the world in which I live—for God’s glory?

5. How should we be who we are, where we are, with what we have?

In the ancient Near Eastern world, the gods were lazy, creating human beings to do the work they did not want to do. Not so Yahweh, the triune God of Israel. “He never sleeps” declares the Psalmist (121:4). Jesus explains, “My Father is still working, and I also am working” (Jn 5:17). Many metaphors identify God as a worker: weaver (Ps 139:13-16), shepherd (Ps 23), and potter (Jer 18:1-9) to name a few. Human work mirrors God’s work (Gen 2:3).

Work was originally intended by The Lord for human good (Gen 2:5, 8, 15). The curse of pain and hardship that would accompany labor came as a result of sin (Gen 3:17-19). It was prophesied that Noah would be a comfort to people because of the cursed ground (5:29). But work gives meaning to life, providing pleasure as a gift of God (Ecc 3:12-13; 5:18-20; 8:15; etc.).

Without work the result is poverty (Prov 6:6-11). Laziness is condemned in Proverbs only bringing a person to ruin (Prov 18:9). Night (Ps 104:23), one day a week (Ex 20:9-10), and festivals were opportunities to rest from “laborious labor” (Lev 23:7-8, 21, 25, 35, 36; etc.). Work produced a product (Gen 4:21-22) depending on how a person was gifted (Ex 1:14; 35:24; 1 Chr 4:21; 2 Chr 34:13; Is 19:9). When offered in service to God work is not bondage but a joyful, liberating experience (cf. Deut 28:47). In the new earth God’s children will “long enjoy the work of their hands” (Is 65:22-23).

Both Testaments confirm work should be understood as worship—the total response of the total person to our Lord Jesus (Rom 12:2; Eph 6:7). Indeed, the word for work in the First Testament (Deut 6:13) is the same as tilling the soil (Gen 2:5), collective worship (Deut 4:19), or a general statement of life dedicated to serving God (Deut 10:12).

Work honors The One who makes life possible. Work provides for personal needs (2 The 3:10-13), families (1 Tim 5:8), and the needy (Eph 4:28). Hard work is seen as positive (Prov 31:10-31) fulfilling the first great commission to rule and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28). Right attitudes toward work are to be developed by self-discipline (Gal 5:23), submission (Col 3:22-4:1), and single-mindedness (2 Tim 2:1-7). The whole of the Christian life—labor, work, endurance—is to be subject to and energized by faith, love, and hope (1 The 1:3).

Work brings benefit to humanity. Labor produces the following guidelines for service in the Christian community:

(1) Virtue and enjoyment should accompany a believer’s explanation of all work

(2) Creational science emphasizes earth exists for human activity not the other way around. However, while production from creation is encouraged, protection of creation is demanded

(3) Work is not a necessary evil but rather a gift, intended by God for human good, dispelling the common complaint “Why do we have to do this?”

(4) No one occupation is more “spiritual” than another, there are no “lesser activities” in life, and people must learn that jobs are not to provide money so we can “do ministry”

(5) Developing skills in a profession is far less important than developing character qualities that encourage discipline in a lifetime of work

(6) Labor supplies opportunity, creativity, and responsibility for the Christian willing to commit the time and effort

(7) Redefining worship as established in The Bible would begin to change Christian thinking toward the idea that every activity has redemptive value. [<http://warpandwoof.org/work/>]