

Working and Resting with God

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Foundations / Genesis 2:1-4

Intro

Eighty-eight thousand hours.

If you work forty hours a week, for 50 weeks a year, from the age of 21 to 65, you will have worked 88,000 hours as an adult. Stay at home moms, you're on the clock 24/7, so that number is even higher...

But 88,000 hours at work.

That means **roughly one-third** of your **waking adult life** is **spent working**.

Hours upon hours of **drafting** contracts and **grading** papers and **balancing** books and **reviewing** numbers and **showing** homes and **closing** deals and **writing** code and **answering** calls and **caring** for patients and making burgers.

Hours upon hours of **leading** trainings and **providing** security and **designing** buildings and **calculating** expenses and **fixing** machines, and **changing** diapers and going to

meetings that should **never** have been meetings.

That's a lot of life. Does God care what we do with it?

In this series we are talking about God's design for flourishing —

So far in Genesis 1-2, we've seen that God made us to thrive as we order our lives under His word and let Him determine what is good. Last we learned that God made us in His image and gets to define our identity and purpose.

But something's really missing if we don't know how to spend those **88,000 hours**. Like, Sunday is great — but what about Monday, when I have to go back to work? Does that matter? Am I doing what God designed me to do? How does my work contribute to God's plan for me and all of creation?

Well today, I want to help us think **theologically** and **practically** about working and resting so that we would all join Him as He works to bring true flourishing to all of creation. [2:10]

God is a Worker

Let's look at Genesis 2:1-4 together...

Genesis 2:1–4 “1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. 4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.”

As scripture progresses, we find that God reveals Himself with many different metaphors and images — like a Shepherd, a King, a Father, a Judge, a Friend, a Savior. These communicate to us what He is like and what we can expect from Him as God, and depending on the season of life or what circumstances we find ourselves in, we may gravitate to one or the other.

- In a hard season, maybe the image of God’s tender care as a Shepherd is sweet to you.
- Or maybe you are being unjustly treated, and so God as a righteous Judge who will repay evil is particularly helpful

I love that God has revealed Himself to us in ways that we can grasp and that fill in who He is for us.

And here in the opening pages of Scripture, God gives us a picture of Himself that we don't often think about — This Shepherd, Judge, Father, King, Friend...the Creator of the universe wants us to see that He is also a Worker.

As we read those verses, what phrase did you hear repeated three times?

Verse 2...And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

The Creator God, Yahweh Elohim, is a Worker. In Genesis 1:1-2 we read that He spoke and things came to be out of nothing, yet the earth was formless and void. It's like He spoke and the **lump of clay** came to be, so the **skilled Potter** got to work at the wheel shaping it according to His plan. Or He spoke and the **log** came to be, so the **expert carpenter** got to work, measuring and cutting according to His designs, shaping and forming and filling His creation for six days.

God spoke and got to work. And never has there been a more productive work-week in all of history.

Right away, God wants us to see that He is a worker.

And this shines against the backdrop of competing creation stories at the time when Israel wandering in the wilderness. Genesis presents creation not as the result of conflict amongst the multiple gods, but as the intentional work of One, Skillful God. And this God, the LORD God, finishes His work, steps back, folds His arms, and delights in what He has done. His work was “very good.” And He rests on the seventh day.

“Rest” here is not because He is worn out — He does not grow weary or weak — but the idea here is that the work was complete.

- God created.
- God ordered.
- God finished.

And now God, the Worker, delights in His masterpiece.

As scripture continues, we see that God goes back to work... providentially caring for His creation, upholding the universe by the word of His power, and unfolding His plan of salvation in space and time.

And then Jesus shows up at the worksite and clocks in...

In John 4:34 He says: *“My food is to do the will of Him who*

sent Me and to accomplish His work.”

And in John 5:17 He says *“My Father is working still and I am working.”*

Jesus worked hard as a carpenter for many years - He didn't coast through life. And then he worked hard as a teacher and healer, before going to the cross where He worked to prepare a place for us in the Father's kingdom, by giving His life for our salvation, and cried out “It is finished” and His body rested on the cross. Jesus was a worker.

And the Same Spirit who hovered over the chaos in Genesis 1 ready to work, now hovers over the hearts of man bringing repentance and making us new creations in Christ. The Spirit is a worker.

Church, God is a worker.

Application

What would it look like in your life to start viewing Him that way? To not only worship Him as Shepherd, Savior, King, Friend, Father...but also as Worker, a skillful Laborer, a master craftsman who delights in forming, shaping, and finishing His work.

He cares about those 88,000 hours because He is a worker.

And He invites you to look to Him, the way Moses did in Psalm 90, and pray:

Psalm 90:16–17 *“16 Let **your work** be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. 17 Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!”*

[Transition] God is a worker. **Look** to him as One. **Worship** Him as One. And reflect Him as one.

Because if God is a worker, and we are made in His image, then we were designed for work [8:00]

We Were Designed to Work

As we saw last week, the rest of chapter 2 takes us back to Day 6 and zooms in on the creation of humanity.

We were created in the image of God, male and female, He created us to reflect Him on earth. And then He commanded us to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, having dominion over it, subdue it.

But in chapter 2, when we are given more camera angles and details, we find that having dominion and subduing isn't some abstract or vague thing. It looks like normal work.

Though everything up to this point in the story was good, there was still something lacking, as verse 5 says...

Genesis 2:5 “5 When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground,”

Think about that. God could have spoken a word and immediately finished everything. The sun, moon, and stars are in place. The oceans are filled with living creatures. The earth is covered with vegetation — strawberry plants and mango trees and everything else — and filled with people just enjoying a complete paradise. In one moment, He could have done all of that.

But He didn't.

God spoke, and matter, space, and time came into being. And then He went to work —forming and filling that raw creation over six days through a deliberate process.

And God designed the world in such a way that it would **need human work to flourish.**

After creating man from the dust of the ground, God planted a garden, and in verse 15 we read...

Genesis 2:15 “15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”

Though everything was good, there was a degree to which the world was **undeveloped**. God **created** a world that **requires cultivation**. A world that would need to be **cared** for by **humans**. A world where **flourishing** comes as people **work** it and **keep** it and fill it.

Like Genesis 1:2, God created man to take the **raw materials** of earth and turn it into something **beautiful**. With the **bodies** He has given us — our **minds**, our **talents**, our **strength** — He placed humanity in an **uncultivated** and **undeveloped** world and essentially said,

“Go, be like me. Work it. Make it great. Develop the world, draw out its potential. And then Keep it. Guard it, maintain it, and care for it.”

[10:30]

God has **commissioned** us to be like Him — to **take** and **rearrange** the **raw materials** of earth in ways that **help** all of **creation**, and **humans** in **particular**, **flourish**.

Think about it: Humans were to be **fruitful** and **multiply** and **fill** the earth, and **as** they did, lots of **stuff** would need to be **cultivated** and **created**.

- **Farmers** would need to find creative ways to cultivate **food**. To do that, people would have to come up with creative ways to make **tools** and **ingenious ways** to move **water** around for **irrigation**.
- Then, the **food** would need to make it to **various communities**, so **wheels** and **vehicles** would need to be formed.
- Then people would need **store** the food, so man would have to think about **containers** and **refrigeration** of sorts.
- They would need to **cook** it, so **harnessing** the **energy** of the world would take some **creative thought**, to utilize fire for **heating**
- And after people eat, they would want to show God's **creativity** in **music making**, so means instruments like **digerydoos** and glockenschpiels and jaw harps would be formed.
- Of course, people would **gather** together, they would need to **build communities** and **cities**, and **systems** to support it all.

And we could go on for days naming all the ways that God's creativity would be displayed in the normal, everyday,

ordinary work that would be necessary for humanity to flourish on earth.

God did not create us simply to live in His world, but He placed us in it to work it and keep it and make it great for all of creation, and especially humans...and for us to do so with Him.

Work with God

We saw last week that God designed us to be in relationship with Him, but one of the implications of that is that we work with Him, like Adam and Eve in the garden, whether or not we realize it. God is providentially caring for His creation through the ordinary work of individuals like you and me.

When Jesus is teaching us to pray in Matthew 6, He says, “Father...Give us this day our daily bread.”

There’s a lot of work that goes into God giving us our daily bread, or our daily needs.

Farmers farm and bakers bake and delivery trucks deliver and stores sell and people cook, but, God gives it to us. Or as Psalm 145:15–16 says “*15 The eyes of all look to you, and **you** give them their food in due season. 16 **You** open your **hand**; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.*”

James 1:17 “*17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...*”

Think of all the good gifts that you have. Phones to communicate, and couches to sit on, and planes to fly in and coffee to enjoy... so many good gifts that humans have come up by working and keeping creation and yet somehow, behind it all, is God’s good hand providentially caring for us, and all of creation.

Yes, we **distort** and **misuse** God’s gifts. But that doesn’t change the truth: **every good and perfect gift ultimately comes from God**, whether people recognize it or not.

And here’s why that matters.

When we **realize** this, our work is no longer just a job. It becomes one of the ways God chooses to care for His world. God wants to work **through you and with you** to bring about good on earth — so that people can eat, connect, heal, learn, enjoy, celebrate, and ultimately, flourish.

You were designed to work with God.

And that’s not just “spiritual work.” Over time, many Christians inherited a **sacred–secular divide**—the idea that “spiritual” work, the churchy or explicitly religious kind, matters more to God than ordinary work. That way of

thinking didn't come from the Bible. It came from philosophical ideas that split the world into spiritual and material—treating one as higher and the other as lesser—and from the church gradually separating clergy from laity.

But Genesis 1-2, and the rest of scripture, doesn't make that distinction. All of life is spiritual — to be lived in relationship with God and unto God for the good of others — and there is not an inch in the universe nor a moment of our lives that does not belong to God and that He doesn't care about.

Whether you are a salesman or a pediatrician or a housewife or an attorney or a pastor, your work matters to God. It is done before His face, sustained by His grace, and meant to serve His purposes in the world.

One man that understood this was Crawford W. Long. Dr. Long was a physician in Georgia who, in 1842, became the first to use ether to render a patient unconscious during surgery, years before it gained wider recognition. His work quietly transformed medicine by making modern, humane surgery possible.

Greg Taylor was in DC and sent me this picture of a stature honoring Dr. Long and at the bottom it quotes him as saying:

"My profession is to me a ministry from God"

Do you view your work that way — as a ministry from God?

Or is just a job to get by?

You are uniquely crafted by God, a workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.

When Jesus said you are salt and light, what did he mean?

Salt is a preserving agent that stops corrosion. It also gives flavor and makes you thirsty. Your life, your work, should do good creation, push back the effects of the fall, make the world better, and give people a glimpse of the Kingdom so they desire it.

As light, you should shine, so that in whatever you do, people see what the Kingdom is like and glorify God. So whether the actual selling of a phone — which promotes communication and connectedness, good gifts — or just your character as you sell the phone (kindness, patience, self-control, not showing partiality — your work, done in relationship with God for the good of others, can be a ministry from God, like Dr. Long.

Church, God gives you the gifts, skills, and resources to do for others what He wants to do in this world.

So I want you to think about your work through two simple questions:

1. God wants to show the world _____.

2. And in my work, I can do that by _____.

So, as an Electrician

- a. God wants to show the world “faithfulness and order”
- b. And in my work, I can do that by “making sure systems are safe and reliable even when no one sees the work”

Or as a Stay-at-home parent

- a. God wants to show the world “patient, sustaining care”
- b. And in my work, I can do that by “showing up daily to nurture and form my children with joy”

Manager

- a. God wants to show the world “justice and wisdom”
- b. And in my work, I can do that by “making fair decisions and developing people rather than using them”

Like Adam and Eve in the garden, God has placed you somewhere for a reason. He is inviting you to work with Him for the good of others and creation.

That doesn't just mean putting a cross on your work truck or

giving a gospel tract with your business card. That could be part of it. But let's broaden our view of the work God wants to do in this world — a work that includes faithful, ordinary labor done for the good of others.

You were designed to work.

[transition] But, work is hard, isn't it?

Work is Hard

The reason work feels heavy isn't because work is bad. It's because the world is broken.

Genesis 3 tells us that the ground is cursed, work is frustrated, and what once produced joy now produces thorns and sweat.

Look at...

Genesis 3:17–19 *“17 And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19 By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you*

are dust, and to dust you shall return.””

The Fall doesn't erase God's design for work; but it explains why it now feels so difficult. Why it often feels fruitless or pointless even.

We still work in God's world, but we do it east of Eden.

Genesis 3:23 *“23 therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.”*

And from that day on we have been struggling with this gift that God has given us. Not only is the work hard, but because of sin we can be tempted to fall into two ditches in relationship to our work.

1. We can become **cynical**.

a. It's pointless. It's evil. It doesn't matter. Just get me to the next vacation.

2. We can **idolize** it.

a. It can become everything to us. Where we find life and meaning.

But a better way, the biblical way, is that work is a gift to be stewarded for the glory of God and good of others. To see that God wants to use my work, but it doesn't define

me. And to know that all of this is headed somewhere....

Romans 8:18–23 “18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

Complete restoration awaits and all of creation, because God is still at work. One day all things will be made new. And in the new heavens and earth, we will work without thorns and thistles. It’s hard to imagine, but we were designed to work, and that will continue when God returns and dwells with us. So we work with that end in mind, and endure whatever hardships we face in our work now.

[Transition] So, that’s the theological foundation. But practically, what can we do with that?

1. Work with Purpose

a. You have a job description, a calling from God: love Him and others. Do good in this world for His glory. Show the world what He is like.

i. God has a purpose for His creation through me! Work with that in mind. Whether you are flipping burgers or coordinating a merger, you can do your work with confidence knowing that God gives you purpose and meaning.

b. But, what do I do?

c. Calling stuff...

i. In Acts 16:6–10

1. Paul and company go into the region of **Phrygia** and **Galatia**, because they were **forbidden** by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.

2. And when they had come up to **Mysia**, they attempted to go into **Bithynia... nope**

3. So, passing by **Mysia**, they went down to **Troas**.

ii. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”

iii. Acts 16:10 *“And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”*

1. Called here = same word as 1 Cor 7:17 where he is talking about life circumstances God placed you in

2. God clarifies in the midst of obedience, moving forward. Submit yourself to him and trust Him to clarify...

a. Explain pillars

d. So, work with **purpose**.

2. **Work with excellence**

a. In the beginning, God’s work was very good. It was excellent. And he wants us to do the same.

b. Colossians 3:23 “23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,”

i. Dorothy Sayers -> carpenter

ii. Sloppy work = dysfunction. Tells untrue things about God. Do it well!

3. **Work with joy (not grumbling, complaining)**

a. God has placed me here. I trust Him. My identity and meaning isn't wrapped up in this. I don't need to whine.

4. **Work with God (ie for God, audience of 1)**

a. Colossians 3:22–24 “*22 Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*”

b. With in relationship with God and for God. Have an Audience of One. And do it for his reward, an inheritance with Him.

5. **Rest with God**

a. Seventh day pattern = invitation to rest.

b. Worshipful, Life giving, reviving rest.

c. Whether it is one day, or it is moments here and there, we must be able to unplug and rest. We have freedom in the NC, but we still need this.

- i. Create boundaries for this.
- d. Rest is an Act of trust that God is at work
- e. And then get back to work

Conclusion

So church. You are going to spend 88,000 hours working. How does God want you to spend it?

May we all have this posture:

Psalm 90:12–17 “12 So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. 13 Return, O Lord! How long? Have pity on your servants! 14 Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. 15 Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil. 16 Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. 17 Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!”

Closing Song

“Your Labor Is Not in Vain”