

Intro:

I'm sure 99% of the people here today absolutely love your job. I'm sure most of you wake up just aching to get to work so that you can knock out everything on your task list. I'm sure most of you find it easy to have great joy at work and to get along with your co-workers. Is that you? Or can you more readily identify with statements like these:

"Hard work never killed anybody, but why take the chance?" or **"I like work; it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours."** Or **"I only go to work on days that don't end in 'y'."** or some candid reflection from Steve Allen: **"All I ever wanted was an honest week's pay for an honest day's work."**

Whether you love it, hate it, or find yourself somewhere in between, the reality is that we spend the majority of our waking hours at work. The Work & Family Researchers Network, based at the University of Pennsylvania, found through a series of studies that:

- "Thirty-eight percent of Americans say they work more than 45 hours every week, with 12% of those eclipsing 60 hours a week!" (Arora, 2004, p. 2).
- "One-third of all U.S. employees can be viewed as being chronically overworked" (Galinsky et al., 2005, p. 2). We get this as those who live and work in Greater Boston. Pulling information from the U.S. Census, the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, a popular magazine [Men's Health] ranked our great city as near the top of the list for "City that Needs a Vacation."
- Because we work so much, and because work is so intrinsically so important, some of life's most significant questions revolve it. Whether you have a white-collar job in the financial district, work with your hands in the service or construction industry, are currently a student, or stay at home with the kids, we all ask questions like: Will I ever find fulfillment in my job? Why is work so frustrating? How can I get out of this dead-end job into something I was made for? Why am I not excelling in my work? Should I look for a better paying job or be content with my setup right now?
- Many people view work as a meaningless chore or a means of survival. Others conceive of it as a necessary evil, a thief that steals away our best time, energy, and emotions.
- Even Christians struggle with how to view work. Some see work merely as a venue to display morality, work hard, further social justice, make bank in order to be generous, and let's not forget, a place to share their faith.

"Why Work Matters"

Genesis 1-3

- It is my hope that we can correct and enhance these understandings and gain God's perspective on our work.
- So let me ask you: As you finish your morning routine and walk out the door, what motivates you to enjoy our day and work with excellence? This series is a quest to answer that and a plethora of other practical questions, and we are going to begin where the Bible begins: Genesis chapter one. Open your Bibles to Genesis 1. Page 1.
- We are going to cover the highlights of the first three chapters of Genesis and see just how much the Bible has to say about our work.
- Genesis 1-3 is going to teach us that *our work matters to God and is truly fulfilling insofar as it is connected to his work*. To turn that into an encouragement, we could say we should . . .

The Point: Find fulfillment in your work by connecting it to God's work.

[How can we do that? #1]

I. Understand that God is the God who Works. (1:1-2:1-3)

God is the God who Works

- Genesis 1-3 sets the trajectory for our understanding of the whole Bible. The overarching story of Scripture is laid out here and then unpacked throughout the rest of Scripture. The Bible begins with the God who creates.
- In the first verse of the Bible, we are introduced to the idea of work, not our work, God's work.

Read 1:1-2. Summarize 1:3-26

- In Genesis 1, we have God creating the world out of nothing (creation *ex nihilo*) simply by his will and word.
- Six different times it says God's work was good, and then verse 31, God stepped back took everything in, saw all that he had made, and says, "That is very good!" It is a picture of God enjoying and taking great delight in his work. We find this language of work in **chapter 2:1-3**
- **John 5:17** says: **"But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I am working.'" The NIV**

says, "My Father is always at work.." God wears the ultimate hard hat. No one works harder or better than God. If you want to learn how to get things done, get to know God.

- His Names reflect his work: Jehovah-Jireh (The God who Provides), Jehovah-Shalom (The Lord is my Peace), Jehovah-Raffa (God is my Healer). God is Savior, Shepherd, Redeemer, King, and Friend.
- God's reveals himself through his word and through his work.
- App: God's work should captivate us and humble us simultaneously. This is why I love Psalm 8. King David, Israel's greatest king, wrote a song about the work of God and our proper response to his work: "**O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. . . . When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?**" David is so amazed by the work of God that it makes him feel small and incredibly significant at once.
- God is the God who works and God *is the God who Works for His Glory*. Why did God create the world? For his glory. Why did God make us? For his glory. In the words of Colossians 1: "we were created by him and for him." which brings us to our second point. . .

II. Fulfill your design to glorify God through your work (1:27-31; 2:15-17)

- **Read 1:27.** God is the God who works, and as those made in his image, his likeness, we are made to work.
- Every person has dignity and worth because they are not simply a product of random chance.
- Being made in God's image is not just something we have. It is who we are. *We are* image bearers.

This means that our work should be worship.

- Because we are made in God's image, our work provides a way for us to glorify God. Another way to say that is that through our work we are able to point to God' existence and greatness. That is our ultimate purpose in life.
- The apostle Paul, famously says in **1 Corinthians 10:31: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."**
- Pic: Here's the sad part. Many Christians treat their Christian life like a trip to a Target. Compartmentalized piece of life, not Intergrated (- Compartmentalization vs. Integration...)
- We have spiritual, personal, moral, rational, relational, emotional, and creative capacities unlike anything else in creation. Understanding this helps us understand how well suited we are to fulfill what he says in **verses 28-31**.
- God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and to subdue it and have dominion "or rule" over it. That does not mean that we have the freedom to misuse and mistreat the environment God has given us, but it does mean God has gifted us with the ability to take the raw materials of the world he has made and use our creative capacities to cultivate and develop the world he has made, which is really what the word "subdue" is getting at in verse 28. Now look at...

Read 2:15-17.

- "To work and keep it." (NIV: "work it and take care of it") He has placed us to care for his creation.
- C: This is why Christians should support *green* initiatives. Pick up trash, conserve energy, recycle, and be nice to the environment. ☺
- Let's not miss that all of this happens before sin and death entered the world through the fall as we are about to see. That means that work is not something we should view as a necessary evil but actually a joyful part of God's good creation. It was part of paradise found. It is a tainted but joyful part of paradise lost, and it will remain as a joyful part of paradise regained as we see in the NT, specifically in the book of Revelation. That is a fancy way of saying, we will work forever. (revise?) In the gospels, Jesus tells us that part of our rewards in the new heavens and new earth will be opportunities to serve and work.
- Because God enjoys his work, we also can find joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction in our work.

Apologetic Sidebar:

- Have you ever considered why we feel like something is not quite right when we are not working? There is actually a longing in all of us to work, because God made us to work. Work is as basic of a human need as food, water, air, and companionship.
- Pic: When we are not working we are like a fish out of water. Though work often feels confining and restrictive,

after all we all think we would love to spend 50 weeks on a cruise, at the beach, in the mountains, or sipping drinks in Tahiti, work actually brings us freedom because God designed us for work.

- Just as a fish cannot live unless it is restricted to water, so we cannot live out the fullness of our existence unless we engage in meaningful work. Without work we are not more free but less free.
- Have you ever seen this? Someone loses their job for a season, or is hindered from work, and they go into a state of depression. Why? One of the reasons is because we are made to work.
- You may be here and say I don't want to glorify God in my work. I want to glorify me in my work. Well, at one level, as someone made in his image, you point to the existence of God whether you want to or not. You yourself are an argument for the existence of God.

Trans: God made us to work and to glorify him in our work, which brings us to our third point.

III. Realize you were made to work, not for work. (3:1-19)

- Read. 3:1-13. Summarize. Emphasize. This was not a mistake. This was defiant rebellion leading to a cataclysmic fall! Read 14-19
- After the fall, we now labor in frustration and sweat. Our work is often described as toil: hard, difficult, laborious. This is true not only because of the sin of others, but also because of our own sin.
- I want to look at this from two angles: First, I want us to consider how work fails to bring ultimate fulfillment because of the fallenness of our world. Then, I want us to consider how work fails to bring ultimate fulfillment because of our fallenness.

Work in this Fallen World

Although our work is not a result of the fall, it is influenced by the fall. Our work lives are not the way they are supposed to be because we live in a fallen world. Here are a few ways we see that:

- **Work can become a drudgery.** All of the sudden the job we once enjoyed turns into a joyless duty. Another way to say that is: Work can become a drudgery. We do what we do because we were told to do it or have to do it, not because we love to do so.
- **Work can be tainted by the actions of others.** Injustice abounds in the workplace. Favoritism, nepotism, lazyism, work hard only when the boss is lookingism, cut cornerism,
- **Work can also be frustrating and meaningless.** You may be in the place right now where it is simply miserable to get out of bed to go to work. Work has become a primary source of stress. According to a survey conducted by the National Life Insurance Company, four out of ten employees state that their jobs are "very" or "extremely" stressful. Work can also be frustrating because we don't accomplish all that we want. (Task list.. get used to failure! There are no perfect days in life and no perfect days on the job.) Some days we struggle to work hard, but then even when we work hard, we sometimes fail to work smart and still don't get what we need done.

Trans: The second primary way sin manifests itself in our work is not simply that our world is fallen, but also because we are fallen.

Work as Idolatry

Work can quickly become our chief desire and chief delight, or at minimum an inordinate desire and inordinate delight. It becomes more important to us than it should be. **An idol is a good thing (like work) that we elevate to an ultimate or god thing.** We are tempted to wrap up our satisfaction, hope and meaning in our work. Work then becomes a false god that, like all idols, overpromises and underdelivers.

- **Work becomes selfish.** We value work simply for what it can give us. We work, not to serve God or our neighbor, but to serve ourselves. Work is a means to an end, and we are the end. [Purely utilitarian.] We punch the clock to boost our image, make a name for ourselves, and look good in the sight of others. Work becomes the source of our boasting and a means of self-glorification. Just a few chapters later in Genesis 11, the inhabitants of the city Babel decide to build a tower. Why? They wanted to "make a name of themselves."
- **Work becomes supreme.** *We love our work so much that it becomes our god.*

- Here's the irony: Though we live in the land of freedom, Americans are probably more enslaved to their work than any other nation.
 - In an article in the *Journal of Management*, Wendy Boswell and Julie Olsen-Buchanan write: "To get ahead, a seventy-hour work week is the new standard. What little time is left is often divvied up among relationships, kids, and sleep."
 - 80 percent of 1,000 U.S. workers surveyed worked after leaving the office. The study found people check their email in bed in the morning (50% of the time..), before 8 a.m. (68%), after 10 p.m. (40%), when they are out with their families (57%), and when they are at the dinner table (38%). And 69 percent say they can't go to bed without doing so. All of this means we are almost working an entire extra day of work from home.
- How can we **fight back** against **being a workaholic**?
1. **Hit a priority reset.** Make God and your family your treasure, not work. When our worship is right, our work will be right. Along those lines . . .
 2. **Practice proper boundaries.** As much as possible, leave work at work. Stop mixing work with family and personal time.
 3. **Learn to say, "no."** This may mean having some hard conversations and making some hard decisions. We can't do everything. Trust that someone else cover that task or opportunity, and many times, they will be able to do it better than you. Say no to good things so that you can say yes to what is best. "Good is the enemy of great."
 4. **Schedule rest.** Work/Rest?? Genesis 2:1-3. Exodus 20.

Here's the Result

- **Work becomes our identity.** We controls and defines us. It becomes the ruling factor in our life. Our emotions, thoughts, hang on our work week, and work becomes an identity substitute. Our identity is in our job, which means our sense of self-worth rises and falls with the bottom line or the boss' approval, or the gold stars hung up in our cubicle.
- If someone asks how your week went, is your first inclination to answer based on your work week?
- Remember. Your work will never bring ultimate satisfaction. Why? You were made to work, not for work. We were made for God.
- Augustine said, "You made us for yourself O God, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you."

IV. Receive God's grace to restore meaning to your work (3:20-24).

- Read 3:20-24 Grace! After the fall, God goes to them! He takes the first step. He wraps them in garments that he made for them.
- I think we would all agree: We all need to work on our work. But here's the irony: We can only truly work on our work through through the finished work of Christ.
- Gospel Hook: Christ is our identity... IN Christ...

Conclusion: Micah up... Is your identity in your work, or is your identity in Christ? Christ died to free us from everything that enslaves us and restricts us from living the life he intends for us to live. Amazing Grace. Have you received it?