FIELD GUIDE

THE MENTORING PROJECT

WORK AS WORSHIP: BIBLICAL TEACHINGS ON LABOR AND PURPOSE



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INTRODUCTION

I want you to think about your alarm clock.

For most of us, that sound is not a happy one. It rings early in the morning. It interrupts our sleep. It signals that the weekend is over and the work week has begun.

For years, I dreaded that sound. Before I became a pastor, I worked a job that felt entirely disconnected from my faith. I sat in a cubicle. I answered emails. I managed spreadsheets.

On Sundays, I felt alive. I sang hymns. I heard the Word of God preached. I felt the presence of the Lord. I knew that what we were doing mattered for eternity.

But then Monday came.

I would sit at my desk and wonder, "Does God care about this?" It felt like I was living two different lives. There was "Spiritual Me" on Sunday, and "Worker Me" on Monday. The gap between the two felt like a canyon.

I know I am not alone in this.

As a pastor, I talk to people in my congregation every week who feel this tension.

I talk to the stay-at-home mother who changes diapers and wipes up spilled milk, wondering if her exhaustion is noticed by God.

I talk to the salesman who feels guilty that he isn't a missionary, assuming that selling insurance is somehow "less than" preaching the gospel.

I talk to the mechanic who loves Jesus but thinks his skill with a wrench has nothing to do with his walk with Christ.

We have created a false divide. We have drawn a line down the middle of our lives. On one side, we put church, prayer, and Bible study. We call that "sacred." On the other side, we put our jobs, our chores, and our careers. We call that "secular."

We think God only lives on the sacred side. We think he stays at the church building when we leave on Sunday afternoon.

But this is not what the Bible teaches. This guide will help us understand *what the Bible says about work* and why our daily labor is part of God's plan. When you see work through Scripture, you begin to understand the idea of "work as worship", not just religious activity as worship.

If we look at Scripture through the lens of the Reformation, we see a God who is sovereign over all of life, not just the religious parts. Abraham Kuyper, a Dutch theologian, famously said, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, 'Mine!'"

That includes your cubicle. That includes your construction site. That includes your kitchen sink. When we begin to view our daily responsibilities as work in the Bible, we recognize that every task can be an act of work as worship.

When we fail to see this, two things happen.

First, we become discouraged. We spend forty, fifty, or sixty hours a week doing something we think doesn't matter. We feel like we are wasting our lives. We work only for the weekend, or for retirement. We trudge through the week, waiting for the next time we can do something "spiritual."

Second, we fail to witness. If we think our work is just a necessary evil to pay the bills, we won't work with excellence. We won't work with integrity. We will be just like the world-grumbling, cutting corners, and doing the bare minimum. We miss the chance to show the glory of God through our labor. A believer who understands work as worship sees every assignment, every meeting, and every project as a way to glorify God before a watching world.

The goal of this guide is to close the gap.

I want to help you see your work the way God sees it. I want to help you bring your Bible to work-not necessarily to preach on your lunch break, but to shape how you answer emails, how you treat your boss, and how you finish a project. When you understand what the Bible says about work, you begin to view every task as a divine assignment.

We need to understand that work was God's idea, not man's. Work in the Bible begins before sin, in the Garden of Eden, where Adam is called to cultivate and oversee creation. God worked, and He invited humanity to reflect His image by working. That is work as worship, not a punishment or a meaningless burden.

We also need to be honest about why work is so hard. We need to admit that work is broken because the world is broken. We deal with thorns and thistles-or today, computer crashes and difficult clients.

But mostly, we need to see how the gospel redeems our work.

Because of Jesus Christ, we are not defined by our job titles. We are not slaves to our paychecks. We are children of God who have been given a task to do in his world.

When we understand this, everything changes.

The alarm clock still rings. The work is still hard. But the meaning behind it shifts. We stop working just to survive. We start working to glorify God - true *work as worship*.

This guide is for the tired worker. It is for the ambitious career person. It is for the student and the retiree. It is for anyone who wants to know how to serve Christ between Sunday and Sunday.

Let's look at what the Bible says about the work of your hands.

1

A THEOLOGY OF WORK (WHY IT MATTERS)

The First Worker

To understand our work, we must look at the very beginning of the Bible.

We often skip past the first few verses of Genesis to get to the story of Adam and Eve. But if we slow down, we see something remarkable in the very first sentence:

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

The first thing the Bible tells us about God is that He is a worker.

He is not sleeping. He is not playing. He is working. He is creating. He is building. This is one of the most foundational biblical perspectives on work, showing us that productivity, craftsmanship, and creativity come from God Himself. It is also one of the clearest examples of labor in the Bible, demonstrating that work is woven into the fabric of creation from the very beginning.

In the creation account, we see God taking chaos and turning it into order. He separates light from darkness. He gathers the waters. He plants a garden. He forms animals.

God gets His hands dirty, so to speak. He is an architect, a gardener, a zoologist, and an artist.

And at the end of each day of work, He steps back. He looks at what He has made. And He says, "It is good."

God finds satisfaction in His work. He enjoys the fruit of His labor. This is a blueprint for a biblical work ethic, showing us that meaningful labor is not

simply about efficiency or profit-it is about reflecting the God who labors with purpose and delight.

This is the foundation of a Christian view of work. Work is not beneath God. Therefore, work is not beneath us. When we labor, we reflect His image. Whether we work with spreadsheets, tools, textbooks, or care for children and gardens, we reflect His creative nature.

That is why Scripture gives us Bible verses about work, such as Colossians 3:23 ("Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men"), reminding us that every task can be sacred when done for God. There are even motivational Bible verses for work, like Proverbs 16:3 ("Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and He will establish your plans"), encouraging us to see daily tasks as a place of faithfulness and trust.

When we begin to see our jobs and responsibilities through this lens, we understand work according to the Bible as far more than a way to earn a paycheck. Our labor becomes worship. Every task-big or small-can be work as worship, especially when we offer it to God with diligence, gratitude, and integrity (see 1 Corinthians 10:31).

This also protects us from separating our faith from our vocation. The Bible and work are not two unrelated subjects. Scripture shapes how we show up in the office, how we use time, how we respond to mistakes, and how we treat coworkers. Understanding this allows us to pursue healthier rhythms, including work-life balance in the Bible, modeled by God Himself in Genesis, where He worked six days and rested on the seventh.

Ultimately, the more we study Bible verses about working hard, such as Proverbs 13:4 or 2 Thessalonians 3:10, the more we see that excellence, honesty, and perseverance are not merely corporate ideals-they are spiritual disciplines. Our daily labor becomes a sacred opportunity to glorify God, serve others, and live out our calling in the world He created.

The Creation Mandate

After God creates the world, he creates human beings. And immediately, he gives them a job description.

"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:28).

Theologians call this the "Creation Mandate" or the "Cultural Mandate."

It is God's command to the human race to take the raw materials of the world and make something of them.

He put Adam in the Garden of Eden "to work it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15).

Please notice when this happens. This is Genesis 2. This is before sin enters the world.

This is a crucial point for us to understand. Many Christians believe that work is a punishment for sin. We think, "If Adam hadn't eaten that fruit, I wouldn't have to go to the office today. I would just be sitting on a cloud playing a harp."

That is false.

Work was part of paradise. God designed humans to work. He designed us to be productive.

God made us in his image. Since God is a worker, we are workers. When we build, organize, clean, fix, or create, we are reflecting the character of God. This is where the idea of *work as worship* becomes deeply meaningful-our labor is not merely economic, but spiritual. A biblical view of productivity is central to understanding Christian work ethics.

Imagine a child watching his father fix a car. The child picks up a plastic wrench and mimics his father. He wants to be like his dad.

That is what we do when we work. We are mimicking our Father.

Whether you are writing code, painting a wall, or negotiating a contract, you are bringing order out of chaos. You are exercising dominion over a small part of God's creation. When seen through a Christian work ethics framework, even ordinary labor reflects the dignity of God's design and becomes an act of worship.

This gives our work profound dignity.

It means your work matters, not just because it pays the rent, but because it is part of what it means to be human. You were built for this, and work as worship helps us see that choosing excellence, integrity, and service in our vocation glorifies God.

The Brokenness of Work

If work is so good, why does it feel so bad?

Why do we struggle with burnout? Why do we have bad bosses? Why is the work often boring, repetitive, or frustrating?

To answer that, we have to turn the page to Genesis 3.

Adam and Eve rebelled against God. They sought to be their own gods. Sin entered the world, and it broke everything.

It broke our relationship with God. It broke our relationship with each other. And it broke our relationship with work.

Listen to the curse God pronounces in Genesis 3:17–19:

"Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you... By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread."

Notice carefully: God did not curse work. He cursed the ground.

He made the environment of our work hostile.

Before the fall, Adam worked the garden and it yielded fruit joyfully. It was a partnership.

After the fall, the ground fights back. Adam plants wheat, but weeds grow instead. He works hard, but the crop fails. There is friction. There is frustration.

This is the theology of "thorns and thistles."

Every job has thorns.

For the farmer, it is literal weeds and drought.

For the software engineer, the "thorns" are bugs in the code and system crashes.

For the teacher, the "thorns" are unruly students and endless paperwork.

For the mother, the "thorns" are the laundry that gets dirty again five minutes after it is washed.

We feel this frustration deep in our bones. We work hard, but things don't always work out. Projects fail. Companies go bankrupt. Our bodies get tired and ache.

This explains the "Monday Morning Blues." We are trying to do good work in a fallen world that resists us.

We are also broken on the inside. Because of sin, we tend to twist work into something it was never meant to be.

We make work an idol. We look to our careers to give us meaning and worth. We think, "If I get that promotion, then I will be somebody." This leads to overwork and anxiety.

Or, we go to the other extreme. We become lazy. We resent work. We do as little as possible. We act like the slothful servant.

So, we have a problem. We are created to work, but work is broken. The ground is cursed, and our hearts are idolatrous.

This is why the idea of *work as worship* becomes so essential. We need a redeemed vision of work that lifts our eyes beyond earthly frustration and toward God's glory.

And even more, we must see the hope Scripture offers. When we study Jesus and work, we discover that Jesus spent most of His earthly life as a carpenter, not a preacher. His example teaches us that ordinary labor can honor God, restoring our dignity in the workplace and helping us rediscover *work as worship* in a fallen world.

Is there any hope?

The Redemption of Work

The gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ has come to redeem all things.

He redeems our souls from hell. He redeems our bodies from death. And he begins the work of redeeming our labor.

Think about Jesus for a moment. He spent thirty-three years on earth. For three of those years, he was a preacher and a miracle worker.

But for the years before that, he was a carpenter (Mark 6:3).

The Son of God spent decades cutting wood, carrying timber, and likely building furniture or structures. He had calluses on his hands. He knew what it was like to sweat. He knew what it was like to have a customer who wanted a table by Friday.

By working with his hands, Jesus sanctified human labor. He showed us that ordinary work is holy and can be understood as work as worship, not just economic survival.

But he did more than just set an example. He died for our sins and rose again to make us new creations.

When we are united to Christ by faith, our work takes on a new purpose.

The Apostle Paul gives us the new marching orders for Christian work in Colossians 3:23–24:

"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ."

This changes everything and reshapes how we see work as worship.

Paul was writing to bondservants-people who had no freedom and often worked in terrible conditions. Their tasks were menial. No one thanked them.

Yet Paul tells them: You are serving the Lord Christ.

This means your boss is not your ultimate boss. Your manager is not your ultimate supervisor.

Jesus Christ is your boss.

When you file a report, you are filing it for Jesus. When you change a tire, you are changing it for Jesus. When you clean a bathroom, you are cleaning it for Jesus. This is the essence of work as worship-ordinary tasks offered to the Lord.

This lifts the burden of our work.

If we are working for men, we are crushed when they criticize us. We are prideful when they praise us. We are constantly riding a rollercoaster of emotions based on their approval.

But if we are working for Christ, we are steady. We want to do excellent work because he deserves our best. But we don't need the applause of the world to feel valuable. We already have the love of God.

A New Motivation

Reformed theology teaches us that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, not by our works.

You cannot work your way into heaven. No amount of success at the office will impress God or pay for your sins.

But because we are saved by grace, we work out of gratitude.

We don't work to get saved; we work because we are saved.

We work to love our neighbor. And when our labor becomes an act of service rather than self-promotion, it naturally becomes work as worship, expressing gratitude toward God.

Martin Luther, the great Reformer, spoke often about this. He said that God does not need our good works, but our neighbor does.

God does not need shoes. But your neighbor needs shoes. So, the cobbler serves God by making good shoes for his neighbor.

God does not need food. But your neighbor needs food. So, the farmer serves God by growing good crops.

This is the dignity of your job. It is a way to love your neighbor.

When you do your job well, you are loving the people who benefit from your work.

If you are a barista, you love your neighbor by making a warm, excellent cup of coffee that helps them start their day.

If you are an accountant, you love your neighbor by helping them organize their finances and keeping them out of legal trouble.

If you are a janitor, you love your neighbor by giving them a clean, healthy space to live or work.

This is not "secular" work. This is kingdom work. It is the work of caring for God's world and God's people. When viewed through a redeemed lens, every righteous task becomes work as worship, carrying eternal significance.

Living in the Tension

We must be honest. We still live in a fallen world. The ground is still cursed.

Even with a right theology, work will still be hard. You will still get tired. You will still have days where you want to quit.

But now, we have a bigger perspective.

We know that our labor is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). We know that God sees what we do in secret.

We also have a promise. The Bible ends with a picture of a new city-the New Jerusalem.

In that new city, the curse is gone. There are no more thorns and thistles. But there is still activity. His servants will serve him (Revelation 22:3).

We are heading toward a world where work will be pure joy. We will create and build and serve without fatigue and without frustration.

Until then, we labor in hope. We ask God to give us strength, and we approach our daily responsibilities with the mindset of work as worship, offering every task as a way to glorify him.

We stop dividing our lives into "Sunday" and "Monday." We bring our faith into the factory and the office.

We are God's instruments, bringing a little bit of order and beauty into a broken world, pointing people toward the ultimate rest we have in Jesus.

2

THE IDOLS OF THE OFFICE (HEART CHECK)

John Calvin, a key figure of the Reformation, famously said that the human heart is a “perpetual idol factory.”

He meant that we are constantly taking good things-like family, money, or work-and turning them into ultimate things. We try to make them do what only God can do. We look to them to give us safety, meaning, and happiness.

We often think of idolatry as bowing down to a golden statue. But in the modern world, our idols are usually much more subtle. And one of the most common places we build altars is in the workplace.

The office, the job site, or the shop floor is not spiritually neutral ground. It is a place of worship.

Every day you go to work, you are worshipping something. You are either worshipping God by offering your work to him, or you are worshipping something else-success, money, approval, or comfort. Viewing our labor as work as worship keeps our hearts aligned with the Lord rather than with our own ambitions.

When we worship work, we ruin it. A job makes a wonderful servant but a terrible master. If you look to your career to save you, it will eventually crush you.

We need to do a heart check. We need to look under the hood of our motivations and see what is really driving us.

Identity vs. Calling

When you meet someone new at a party, what is the first question you ask?

Usually, it is: “What do you do?”

In our culture, we are defined by our jobs. We are doctors, plumbers, teachers, or accountants. We tend to think, “I am what I do.”

This is a dangerous place for a Christian to be. It ties our identity to our performance.

If your identity is built on your career, you will live on an emotional rollercoaster. When business is good, when you get the promotion, when the project succeeds, you feel soaring pride. You feel like you matter. You feel “righteous.”

But when you make a mistake, when the deal falls through, or when you get laid off, you are devastated. You don’t just feel like you failed at a task; you feel like you are a failure. Your very self-worth is destroyed.

This happens because we are looking to our work to justify us. We are trying to prove to the world, to our parents, or to ourselves that we are valuable.

This is a form of works-righteousness. It is the opposite of the gospel.

The gospel tells us that our identity is not found in what we do, but in what Christ has done for us.

The apostle Paul writes in Colossians 3:3, “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

If you are a Christian, your real life is not your LinkedIn profile. Your real life is hidden with Christ.

This gives us a massive amount of freedom.

If your identity is secure in Christ, you can handle failure at work. It might hurt, and it might cost you money, but it cannot touch who you really are. You are a beloved child of God, and a bad day at the office cannot change that.

If your identity is secure in Christ, you can also handle success. You won't let it go to your head. You realize that your talents are gifts from God, and you give him the glory.

We need to move from viewing work as our identity to viewing it as our calling.

An identity is something you achieve; a calling is something you receive. When you see work as a calling, you are not trying to create a name for yourself. You are simply trying to be faithful to the one who called you, approaching your responsibilities with gratitude and treating them as work as worship, not as a way to prove your worth.

The Two Ditches

As we try to walk the path of faithful work, there are two ditches on either side of the road. We tend to fall into one or the other.

The First Ditch: Overwork

This is the ditch of idolatry. This is the person who cannot stop working. They check emails at dinner. They work weekends. They neglect their family, their health, and their church because they are obsessed with their job.

Often, this looks like dedication. The world applauds this. But God looks at the heart.

Why are we overworking? Often, it is driven by greed or fear.

We might be greedy for more money or more status. We want to build our own little kingdom. We want to be like the builders of the Tower of Babel, who said, "Let us make a name for ourselves" (Genesis 11:4).

Or, we might be driven by fear. We are terrified of not having enough. We don't trust God to provide, so we think we have to do it all ourselves. We work as if God doesn't exist.

Psalm 127:2 gives a stern warning to the overworker: "It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep."

Work is a gift, but it becomes exhausting when we make it ultimate. The book of Ecclesiastes offers a sobering reminder about toil, rest, and satisfaction. Ecclesiastes on work teaches us that endless striving apart from God is "vanity and a chasing after the wind" (Ecclesiastes 2:22–23). Without the Lord, labor becomes exhausting instead of life-giving.

If you cannot rest, it is a sign that you do not trust God. You think the world will stop spinning if you stop working. But God is sovereign. He can take care of things while you sleep.

The Second Ditch: Laziness

This is the ditch of sloth. This is the person who does the bare minimum to get by. They cut corners. They kill time. They grumble about every task.

The book of Proverbs is full of warnings about the "sluggard."

"The sluggard says, 'There is a lion in the road! There is a lion in the streets!'" (Proverbs 26:13). The lazy person is full of excuses.

Laziness is not just a personality flaw; it is a spiritual issue. It is a failure to love.

Remember, work is how we love our neighbor. If you are lazy, you are not loving your neighbor.

If a mechanic is lazy and doesn't tighten the bolts properly, he puts the driver in danger. If a teacher is lazy and doesn't prepare a lesson, the students suffer.

Laziness is also a form of theft. If you are being paid to work eight hours and you only work four, you are stealing from your employer.

We must avoid both ditches.

The Christian Way: Diligence

The Christian way is the middle path of diligence. We work hard, not because we are anxious or greedy, but because we are grateful. We strive for excellence, but we know when to stop. We are engaged, but we are not enslaved.

Here again, ecclesiastes on work helps us. Ecclesiastes 3:13 reminds us that to "eat, drink and find satisfaction in all their toil-this is the gift of God."

Work becomes meaningful when it is received as a gift, done unto the Lord, and held with open hands instead of clenched fists.

Working for the Applause

There is a third idol that often hides in our hearts at work: the idol of man-pleasing.

Who are you working for?

It is very natural to work for the applause of people. We want our boss to like us. We want our coworkers to respect us. We want our clients to be impressed.

There is nothing wrong with having a good reputation. "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches" (Proverbs 22:1).

But the desire for approval can easily become a trap.

Scripture calls this "eye-service." Paul warns against this in Colossians 3:22: "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."

Eye-service means working hard only when the boss is watching. When the supervisor walks into the room, you suddenly look busy. When they leave, you slack off.

This reveals that you fear man more than you fear God.

The "fear of man" is a crippling trap. If you live for the approval of others, you will be a slave to their opinions. You will be afraid to make hard decisions. You will compromise your integrity to fit in. You will be crushed by criticism.

You will become a chameleon, changing your colors depending on who is in the room.

But if you fear the Lord, you are free from the fear of man.

You know that God is always watching. He sees the work you do in private. He sees the extra effort you put in when no one else notices.

And more importantly, you know that you already have his approval in Christ.

If you are a Christian, you do not work to get God to love you. You work because he already loves you. You have the only applause that matters.

This gives you a deep, stable confidence.

You can respect your boss without worshipping them. You can serve them well, even if they are ungrateful. You can handle unfair treatment with grace, because you know that your ultimate reward comes from your Heavenly Father.

Diagnosis

How do you know if you have idols in your office?

Look at your emotions. Idols always demand a sacrifice. They usually sacrifice your peace and your joy.

Are you constantly anxious about work? Do you become angry or defensive when someone critiques your work? Do you look down on people who have "lesser" jobs than you? Do you envy people who have "better" jobs than you? Do you find it impossible to take a Sabbath rest?

These are smoke signals. They tell you that there is a fire in your heart. They tell you that you are looking to work to give you something that only Jesus can give.

The solution is not just to "try harder" to be balanced. The solution is to repent.

We need to confess that we have loved our careers more than our Creator. We need to confess that we have trusted our paycheck more than our Provider.

And then, we need to look to Christ.

Jesus is the only one who finished the work. On the cross, he said, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

The work of salvation is done. You don't have to earn your place in the universe. It has been given to you as a gift.

When this truth sinks into your heart, the idols begin to crumble. You can go back to work on Monday with a light heart. You are free to just do the job, love your neighbor, and go home, knowing that you belong to God.

3

THE MYTH OF "SECULAR" WORK

Pastors vs. Plumbers

There is a hierarchy in the Christian mind that is hard to break.

We tend to think of Christians in a pyramid. At the top are the missionaries who move to the jungle. Just below them are the pastors and the worship leaders. Then, maybe, come the employees of Christian non-profits.

And then, at the bottom, is everyone else. The accountants, the truck drivers, the waitresses, the dentists.

We think the people at the top are doing the "real" work of God. They are in "full-time ministry." The rest of us are just paying the bills to support them.

We assume that if you really loved Jesus, you would go to seminary. If you really wanted to serve God, you would quit your job and work at a church.

I want to tell you clearly: This is a lie.

It is a lie that has crippled the church for centuries. It suggests that there are two categories of life: the "sacred" (prayer, evangelism, church) and the "secular" (business, art, politics, manual labor).

The Protestant Reformation fought hard to destroy this wall.

Before the Reformation, the church taught that the only way to live a truly holy life was to become a monk or a nun. You had to withdraw from the world to get close to God.

Martin Luther, the German Reformer, looked at the Bible and said, "No."

He taught the "priesthood of all believers." He argued that a dairy maid milking a cow can glorify God just as much as a preacher in a pulpit.

Why? Because the work of the dairy maid is God's work. God wants the cow to be milked. God wants the people to be fed. When she does her job, she is God's hands, feeding his creation.

Luther wrote, "The works of monks and priests, however holy and arduous they be, do not differ one whit in the sight of God from the works of the rustic laborer in the field or the woman going about her household tasks."

Do not miss this. In the sight of God, the sermon and the spreadsheet are not spiritually different. They are different functions, yes. But one is not "holier" than the other.

Both can be done in faith. Both can be done for the glory of God. Both can be done as acts of love.

If you are a plumber, you are not a second-class Christian. You are a servant of Christ who brings fresh water and sanitation to people. You prevent disease. You bring order to chaos.

That is kingdom work.

The Sacredness of the Ordinary

We struggle with this because we tend to be Gnostics at heart.

Gnosticism was an ancient heresy that taught that the physical world was bad and the spiritual world was good. Gnostics believed that God didn't care about bodies, food, or buildings-He only cared about souls.

We fall into this trap today. We think God only cares about "spiritual" things like Bible study and prayer. We think He is indifferent to how we build bridges or how we bake bread. But a biblical perspective on work corrects this misunderstanding by showing us that God created both the spiritual and physical realms and delights in both.

But look at the Bible.

God created a physical world. He called it "very good." He gave detailed instructions to Moses on how to build a tabernacle-involving gold, wood, fabric, and oil. He cared about the craftsmanship (Exodus 31).

Jesus Christ took on a physical body. He ate fish. He walked on dirt roads. He touched lepers. He was resurrected in a physical body.

God loves the material world. He made it. Therefore, working with material things is a spiritual act. When a carpenter builds a table, he is working with the wood God created. When a scientist studies a cell, she is examining the work of God's hands.

A biblical perspective on work helps us understand that the ordinary is sacred. There is no such thing as "secular" work for the Christian. Everything we do is done in the presence of God.

Brother Lawrence, a 17th-century monk who worked in a kitchen, famously practiced "the presence of God" amidst the noise of pots and pans. He said, "The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen... I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament."

You can have communion with God while you are coding. You can worship while you are welding. A biblical perspective on work teaches us to stop waiting for the "spiritual" moments and realize that the ordinary moments are where we live our faith.

The Concept of Vocation

If all work matters, how do we know what we should do?

This brings us to the doctrine of Vocation.

The word "vocation" comes from the Latin word *vocare*, which means "to call."

For a long time, people thought a "calling" was a mystical experience where God told you to become a priest.

But the Reformers retrieved the biblical truth that *every* legitimate job is a calling.

God calls people to be farmers. He calls people to be magistrates. He calls people to be mothers and fathers.

How do you know your calling? It is usually not a voice from heaven. It is the intersection of three things:

1. Your Talent: What are you good at? God has given you specific gifts. If you are terrible at math, you are probably not called to be an accountant. If you faint at the sight of blood, you are not called to be a surgeon.
2. Your Desire: What do you enjoy? God often gives us a holy enjoyment in our work. Some people love the challenge of sales. Others love the quiet focus of research.
3. The World's Need: What does your neighbor need? This is the most important factor. A calling is not just about self-fulfillment; it is about service.

If you have a job right now, you can assume that-for this season-this is your calling.

God is sovereign. He is the one who orchestrates the details of our lives. You are not at your desk by accident. You are not on that construction site by luck.

God has placed you there.

He has placed you there to be salt and light. He has placed you there to restrain evil and promote good.

Think about the story of Joseph in the Old Testament. He was sold into slavery. He worked in Potiphar's house. He worked in a prison. Eventually, he worked in the palace of Pharaoh.

Joseph could have complained. He could have said, "This isn't spiritual work. I'm just managing grain storage."

But he did his work faithfully. And because he did, God used him to save thousands of people from starvation.

Your work has a purpose in God's providence.

You may not see it. You may feel like a small cog in a big machine. But God uses the faithful work of his people to sustain the world.

When you deliver a package, you are helping commerce flow. When you legislate a just law, you are protecting the weak. When you paint a beautiful picture, you are refreshing the soul.

But What About Evangelism?

I can hear the objection: "But isn't saving souls the most important thing? Shouldn't I just use my job as a platform to preach to my coworkers?"

Evangelism is crucial. We are commanded to share the gospel. We should pray for open doors to speak of Christ to our colleagues.

But we must be careful here.

If we view our work *only* as a platform for evangelism, we devalue the work itself.

Imagine a Christian surgeon. Before the surgery, he prays with the patient. That is good. But then, during the surgery, he is sloppy. He doesn't pay attention. He makes a mistake.

Is God glorified by that? No.

God is glorified when the surgeon cuts straight and heals the body.

If you are a Christian pilot, the best way to glorify God is to land the plane safely. If you preach the gospel over the intercom but crash the plane, you have not served your neighbor well.

We glorify God *by* doing the work well.

Our competence is often what gives us the platform to speak. Our excellence never saves anyone, but it removes unnecessary obstacles to hearing the gospel. When people see that you are diligent, honest, and skilled, they will respect you. They will wonder why you are different.

Peter tells us to "keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable" so that they may see our good deeds and glorify God (1 Peter 2:12).

Your work is the primary way you show the world what God is like.

If you are lazy, you tell the world that God is not worth serving. If you are dishonest, you tell the world that God is a liar.

But if you are excellent, kind, and trustworthy, you adorn the gospel. You make the truth about Jesus look beautiful.

So, do not despise your "secular" job. Do not wish you were somewhere else.

Stand tall in your vocation. Whether you are sweeping floors or running a corporation, you are standing on holy ground. You are a priest in God's world, offering up your labor as a sacrifice of praise.

4

HOW TO WORK LIKE A CHRISTIAN (PRACTICAL SKILLS)

Excellence as Witness

We have established that work is good, that it matters to God, and that it is a way to love our neighbor.

Now we need to get practical. What does this actually look like on a Tuesday afternoon?

The first and most important way a Christian acts at work is by pursuing Excellence.

There is a strange idea in some Christian circles that because we care about the "next world," we don't have to care too much about this one. We might think, "Well, the world is passing away, so it doesn't really matter if this report is perfect," or "Jesus is coming back, so who cares if the paint job is a little messy?"

This is terrible theology.

If we serve a God of excellence-a God who designed the wings of a butterfly and the orbit of the planets with precision-then our work should reflect that excellence.

Excellence is a form of witness.

Imagine you have a coworker named Dave. Dave has a "Jesus Saves" bumper sticker on his car. He plays worship music at his desk. He invites everyone to the Easter service.

But Dave is terrible at his job. He is always late. He misses deadlines. His work is sloppy. He blames others for his mistakes.

What does Dave teach the office about Jesus?

He teaches them that Christians are lazy. He teaches them that God doesn't care about quality. His incompetence becomes a stumbling block for the gospel. When he tries to share his faith, people roll their eyes.

Now imagine a coworker named Sarah. She doesn't have a bumper sticker. She is quiet about her faith at first.

But Sarah is the most reliable person on the team. When she says she will do something, she does it. Her work is thorough. She anticipates problems. She is helpful.

When Sarah eventually speaks about Jesus, people listen. They respect her. Her competence has built a platform for her testimony.

Proverbs 22:29 says, "Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men."

Skill matters. Competence matters.

This doesn't mean you have to be the CEO. It doesn't mean you have to be the smartest person in the room. It simply means you do your specific job to the best of your ability.

If you are a janitor, be the best janitor in the building. Make those floors shine. If you are a student, write that essay with care. Check your grammar. If you are a coder, write clean code.

We do this not to show off, but to serve. Bad work burdens our neighbor. Good work blesses our neighbor.

As Christians, we should be the employees that bosses fight to keep. We should be the contractors that homeowners recommend to their friends. Our reputation for excellence should be so strong that it makes people curious about the God we serve.

Integrity in the Gray Areas

The workplace is full of gray areas. It is full of opportunities to cut corners, fudge numbers, or twist the truth.

This is where Christian character is tested.

We believe in a God of truth. Jesus called himself "the Truth" (John 14:6). Therefore, a Christian must be a person of absolute integrity.

This is easy to say, but hard to do when money or reputation is on the line.

When you make a mistake that will cost the company money, do you admit it? Or do you try to cover it up? When you are selling a product, do you disclose its flaws? Or do you spin the facts to get the commission? When you fill out your expense report, are you honest? Or do you pad the numbers because "everyone else does it"?

Integrity means doing the right thing when no one is watching.

But for the Christian, Someone is always watching.

We live *Coram Deo*-before the face of God. We know that God sees the secret emails. He sees the hidden accounts.

This conviction helps us resist temptation. We know that a clean conscience is worth more than a bonus check.

One specific area of integrity we often overlook is Time Theft.

If your employer pays you for eight hours of work, and you spend two hours scrolling through social media, shopping online, or chatting with friends, you are stealing. You are taking money for work you did not do.

We often justify this. "My boss doesn't pay me enough," we say. Or, "I get my work done quickly, so it doesn't matter."

But the Bible calls us to be faithful in little things (Luke 16:10).

Christians should be known as people who give a full day's work for a full day's pay. We should be known as people who tell the truth, even when it hurts us.

This kind of radical honesty is rare. In a world of spin and deception, integrity stands out like a light in the darkness.

The Difficult Boss and the Annoying Coworker

Work would be great if it weren't for the people.

We can handle the spreadsheets and the tools. It is the micromanaging boss, the gossiping coworker, or the rude client that makes us want to quit.

How do we handle difficult relationships at work?

We must start with our theology of sin. Reformed theology teaches that human beings are "totally depraved." This doesn't mean everyone is as bad as they could be, but it means every part of us is tainted by sin.

Therefore, we should not be surprised when people at work are selfish, angry, or incompetent. We are working with sinners. And we are sinners, too.

So, how do we respond?

1. We respond with Submission.

This is a hard word. But the Bible is clear.

Peter writes, "Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust" (1 Peter 2:18).

Peter was writing to slaves who had no rights. Yet he told them to submit-even to the unjust ones.

This applies to us today. If you have a difficult boss, you are called to respect their position, even if you don't respect their character. You don't roll your eyes. You don't badmouth them in the breakroom. You do what they ask (as long as it is not sinful).

We do this because we trust God's sovereignty. God placed that boss over you for a reason. Maybe he is using them to teach you patience. Maybe he is using them to humble you.

2. We respond with Grace.

The workplace is often a place of judgment. If someone makes a mistake, they are hammered. If someone is weak, they are pushed aside.

Christians bring grace into the office.

We are the people who forgive. When a coworker snaps at us, we don't snap back. We assume they might be having a hard day.

We are the people who refuse to gossip. When the team gathers to complain about Susan, we walk away, or we say something kind about her.

We are the peacemakers. Romans 12:18 says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."

This doesn't mean we are doormats. It doesn't mean we tolerate abuse or illegal behavior. There are times to speak up, to go to HR, or to quit.

But our general posture is one of kindness. We treat the janitor with the same respect as the CEO. We look people in the eye. We listen.

3. We respond with Prayer.

Do you pray for your coworkers?

It is easy to complain about them. It is much harder to pray for them.

But Jesus told us to "pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

If you have a boss who is making your life miserable, pray for him. Pray for his family. Pray for his salvation. It is very hard to hate someone you are praying for.

We must view the "annoying coworker" not as an obstacle to our work, but as the *object* of our work.

Maybe God put you in that office not just to write code, but to show the love of Christ to the guy in the next cubicle who is going through a divorce. Maybe the work is just the setting for the real ministry of relationship.

Being a Non-Anxious Presence

Finally, one of the best skills a Christian can bring to work is a non-anxious presence.

Workplaces are fueled by anxiety. People are terrified of missing targets. They are stressed about layoffs. They are frantic about deadlines.

In the middle of this storm, the Christian should be a rock.

Why? Because our hope is not in the quarterly earnings report. Our hope is in the Lord.

We know that God is in control. We know that he holds the future.

When everyone else is panicking, we can be calm. We can think clearly. We can remind people that the sky is not falling.

This peace is supernatural. It comes from the Holy Spirit. And it is incredibly attractive.

People will come to you and ask, "How do you stay so calm?"

And that gives you the open door to tell them about the Prince of Peace.

5

REST AND THE END OF WORK

The Command to Stop

We have talked a lot about working hard. We have talked about diligence, excellence, and sticking with it. But if we only talk about work, we are missing half the picture. God did not just create work. He also created rest.

In Genesis 1, God works for six days. He forms the mountains. He fills the oceans. He creates man and woman. It is a flurry of activity.

And then, in Genesis 2:2, the Bible says: “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.” This rhythm of rest is foundational to a biblical perspective on work, reminding us that labor and rest are both gifts from God rather than competing priorities.

This is shocking. God is omnipotent. He has unlimited power. He does not get tired. He does not have sore muscles. He does not need a nap.

So why did He rest?

He rested to set a pattern for us. He built a rhythm into the fabric of the universe: work and rest. Six days of labor, one day of stopping. Later, when God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses, He made this rhythm a law.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God” (Exodus 20:8-10). This command reflects the heart of a biblical perspective on work- that our vocation is meaningful, but it is never ultimate. Only God is ultimate.

We often treat the Fourth Commandment as a suggestion: “I’m too busy to rest. I have too much to do.” But refusing to rest is not a badge of honor. It is disobedience.

Refusing to rest is actually a form of pride. It is acting like we are God. Only God can keep the world running without stopping. When we refuse to stop, we are saying, “I am indispensable. If I stop working, everything will fall apart.”

The Sabbath is a weekly reality check. It reminds us that we are creatures, not the Creator. We are finite. We have limits. A biblical perspective on work helps us see that rest is not weakness - it is worship and humility.

When we stop working for one day a week, we declare our trust in God. We are saying, “Lord, I have done what I can do. Now I trust You to take care of the rest.”

In the Reformed tradition, we view the Lord’s Day (Sunday) as a “market day for the soul.” It is the day we stop our ordinary labors to focus on worship, fellowship, and mercy. It is a day to reset our hearts.

If you never stop working, your soul will shrivel. You will become dry and brittle. You will lose your joy. You need to stop. You need to put down the phone. You need to close the laptop. You need to rest in the finished work of Christ and enjoy the physical rest He gives His beloved.

Boundaries

If we are going to rest well, we need boundaries.

In the modern world, work has no boundaries. It follows us home in our pockets. The smartphone means the office is always open. Your boss can email you at 10:00 PM. A client can text you on Saturday morning.

If you do not set boundaries, work will eat your entire life.

This destroys your ability to love your neighbor-specifically, the neighbors who live inside your house.

If you are physically present at the dinner table but mentally checking emails, you are not loving your family. You are ignoring them.

If you are too exhausted from work to serve at your church or help a friend move, your work has become an idol. It has taken the energy that belongs to God and his people.

We need to learn the holy art of saying "No."

We need to say "No" to the phone after a certain hour. We need to say "No" to working on the Lord's Day. We need to say "No" to the promotion if it means sacrificing our family's spiritual health.

This requires faith. We worry that if we draw boundaries, we will fall behind. We worry we will get fired.

But remember who provides for you. It is not your company. It is God.

Psalm 23 says, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

If the Lord is your shepherd, he will make sure you have what you need. You don't have to hustle 24/7 to survive. You can work hard, go home, and sleep in peace.

Setting boundaries also makes you a better worker.

Study after study shows that people who never rest actually produce less. They make more mistakes. They are less creative. They burn out.

God knows how he built us. He built us to need sleep. He built us to need play. He built us to need worship.

When we respect God's design, we flourish.

The Eternal City

Finally, we need to talk about where this is all going.

What is the future of work?

Some Christians think that heaven is going to be an eternal church service. They imagine we will float on clouds, wearing white robes, singing hymns forever and ever.

If that's your view of heaven, work seems temporary and meaningless. You might think, "I'm just enduring this job until I get to the real life where I don't have to do anything."

But the Bible gives us a different picture.

The Bible ends not in the clouds, but in a city-the New Jerusalem coming down to the New Earth (Revelation 21).

Cities are places of culture, architecture, and activity.

In the New Earth, the curse will be gone. There will be no more thorns and thistles. There will be no more frustration, no more sweat, no more exhaustion.

But there will be service.

Revelation 22:3 says, "His servants will worship him." That word for "worship" is often translated as "serve."

We will serve God. We will reign with him.

Think about what Adam was supposed to do. He was supposed to explore the world, develop it, and fill it with God's glory. He was stopped by sin.

In the New Earth, the Second Adam (Jesus) restores us to our original purpose.

Scripture teaches that we will serve and reign with Christ-what that looks like, we do not fully know. But it won't feel like a job. It will feel like joy.

Imagine creating art without ever running out of inspiration. Imagine building structures that never decay. Imagine exploring the universe without ever getting tired. Imagine working in perfect harmony with others, without jealousy or politics.

This changes how we view our work now.

Our work today is a "first fruit." It is a practice run.

When you build something good today, you are echoing the future. When you bring order to chaos today, you are acting out a small parable of the New Creation.

Your work is not just about paying the bills until you die. It is about practicing for eternity. It is about developing the talents God gave you so that you can use them for his glory forever.

This gives us hope.

The project you can't quite finish? In the New Earth, it will be finished. The justice you fight for but can't quite achieve? In the New Earth, justice will roll down like waters. The beauty you try to create but falls short? In the New Earth, everything will be beautiful.

We work today in the hope of that coming Kingdom.



CONCLUSION

We have covered a lot of ground.

We started with the alarm clock and the dread of Monday morning. We looked at God as the First Worker. We admitted that work is broken by sin, but we also saw that it is redeemed by Christ.

We looked at the idols of our hearts-the desire to make a name for ourselves or the temptation to be lazy.

We smashed the myth that "secular" work doesn't matter, and we saw that every legitimate job is a calling from God.

And we looked at how to actually do the work-with excellence, integrity, and grace-before finally resting in God's design.

So, where do we go from here?

Tomorrow morning, the alarm will ring again.

You will have to get up. You will have to commute. You will have to deal with that difficult boss or that confusing spreadsheet.

But you go into it differently now.

You go into it armed with a theology of work.

You know that you are not just a cog in a machine. You are a child of God, placed in that specific spot to bring glory to your Father.

As you head back into your daily routine, remember that ordinary labor becomes a work of worship when it is done for the Lord and not merely for human approval. What feels small or unnoticed can be a holy offering when your tasks are done with faith, love, and sincerity.

The Apostle Paul gives us a final word of encouragement in 1 Corinthians 15:58. After writing a long chapter about the resurrection and the future hope of the believer, he lands the plane with this practical command:

"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

Your labor is not in vain.

It is not wasted time. It is not meaningless.

Every email answered with kindness, every floor mopped with excellence, every diaper changed with love-it all matters. God sees it. He counts it as service to him.

This is why everyday work is not separate from ministry. Your workplace can become a quiet work as ministry when you love your neighbor through the quality of your service, the integrity of your conduct, and the compassion you show to those around you.

So, go to work.

Go to work knowing that you are justified by grace, not by your performance. Go to work knowing that Jesus is your true Boss. Go to work knowing that you are loving your neighbor.

Let me pray for you as you head back to the task.

Father, I pray for the person reading this guide. I thank You that You have given them work to do. I pray that You would help them see their job through Your eyes.

Lord, when the work is hard and the thorns are sharp, give them endurance. Remind them that they are serving the Lord Christ.

When they are tempted to make an idol out of their career, remind them that their life is hidden with Christ in God. Give them the courage to rest.

And when they feel like their work is small and unnoticed, remind them that nothing done for You is ever in vain.

Bless the work of their hands, Lord. May they work with such excellence and grace that the world looks on and gives glory to You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

THE
MENTORING
PROJECT

Dr. Paul Allen has a PhD in Old Testament and has been teaching Bible for over 20 years. He loves serving the Lord and helping young generation grow in faith.