

*5 individual Bible Studies on a Biblical perspective of work in the city.*

**Holy Trinity Church | Fall 2010**

These studies are dedicated to the hardworking and creative people of Holy Trinity Church Chicago:

Truck drivers,  
graphic artists,  
traders,  
teachers,  
public school administrators,  
songwriters,  
students,  
mothers,  
fathers,  
visual artists,  
musicians,  
bankers,  
dancers,  
theologians,  
vocational academics,  
architects,  
structural engineers,  
executives,  
waiters,  
and more.

You and your work matter to God!

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# Welcome to a Community Group

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## INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY GROUPS

We are committed to building authentic community in Chicago that transforms lives – so that each of us looks more and more like Jesus. Because we’ve been changed by the stunning good news of the gospel, we want to respond to one another in love. Jesus tells his followers, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

## VISION

We are praying for a movement of community groups throughout Chicago, so that our city is filled with Jesus’ glory.

## LIFE

Community Groups at Holy Trinity Church help us connect on four levels:

- **Connect to God:** God designed people for relationship with Him – and so we’ve specifically designed community groups to bring you closer to God. In fact, the very reason why Jesus came into the world is to bring people into intense, personal and eternal relationships with God.
- **Connect to the Word:** We believe that God speaks today through his word. So in our community groups we train each other on how to listen carefully to what God says in his Word. We have found that as we’ve studied the Bible, it has changes us individually and as a group to be more like Jesus. Jesus teaches (Luke 24:44-47) that he is the point of history and the Bible, and so we are always connecting our story to the story of the text and the larger story of God’s work in history.
- **Connect to other people:** City living can be isolating. But Jesus calls us to live in Christ-like community with each other in accountability, sharing, love and commitment. So we laugh, pray, sing and share together on a weekly basis. We celebrate the idea that God himself lives in eternal community!
- **Connect to the city:** Even as God sent Jesus as a missionary to us, we believe God has called us on a mission for the Kingdom. So we intentionally serve those in our city, the poor, disadvantaged and isolated – celebrating God’s goodness towards us with them.

## STRUCTURE

- **Sharing life together in Christ.** Generally, on the 1st and 3rd weeks of the month community groups will gather in homes for Bible study based on the previous Sundays sermon text, for prayer and occasional meals together.
- **Sharing Christ through life together.** In the intervening weeks (generally the 2nd and 4th weeks of a month) community groups will give themselves to activities and events meant to build intentional relationships for Christ with those outside the community of faith.

You are most welcome!

# *Objectives of this Study Guide*

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## **GREATER GROWTH**

We believe that the daily study of God's Word is critical for your spiritual growth. We are providing you with materials to study in an accountable context to foster greater growth in the Gospel.

## **GREATER APPLICATION**

We believe that the opportunity to study the scripture a number of times personally, hear a sermon preached on the text, and to then discuss in your Community Group will allow for a deep richness of understanding and application.

## **HOW IT WORKS**

We are asking you to engage the Biblical text through:

- » **Personal study** - Study each passage on your own three times,
- » **Sunday study** - Hear a sermon preached on the text, and
- » **Community Group study** - Discuss & apply the passage with the others in your community group.

## **PERSONAL STUDY**

To grow spiritually you need to read God's Word each day. We suggest that you find a regular time and place for 30 minutes each day to learn from the Scriptures. Bring a pen or pencil, your bible, a notebook and study materials.

## **SUNDAY STUDY**

Typically each Sunday you will hear a sermon based on the same text the Community Group study is based on. The sermon is another supplement to assist us in better understanding and applying the Biblical text we will be studying privately and in our groups. The Sunday sermon will also be available online at [www.htcchicago.org](http://www.htcchicago.org) for those unable to make the service, or if you would like to listen again.

## **COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY**

Most weeks you will have a chance to study and discuss the text together in your community group (see calendar on next page).

# *Fall 2010 Community Group Calender*

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September 13

Study #1

**CREATED FOR WORK**

Genesis 2:1-17

*personal study/sermon*

Community Group does not meet

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September 20

Dinner & Study #2

**WORK DEFILED**

Genesis 3:17-19

*personal study/sermons/group discussion*

Community Group gathers for dinner, introduction, and abbreviated discussion of the study.

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September 27

Study #3

**WORK AND THE SIMPLE LIFE**

Ecclesiastes 9:7-10

*personal study/sermon*

Community Group scatters for Missional Activity ("For One Chicago" on October 2nd)

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October 4

Study #4

**WORKING MASTERPIECES**

Ephesians 2:8-10, 4:25-28

*personal study/sermon/group discussion*

Community Group gathers for discussion of the study.

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October 11

Study #5

**WORKING FOR THE GOOD**

Colossians 3:22-25

*personal study/sermon*

Community Group scatters for Missional Activity

# *Introduction: A Theology Of Work*

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Every Monday morning, in billions of homes across our globe, the alarm clock goes off (or a rooster crows) signaling the beginning of the work week, and hands fumble for the snooze button. Every weekday in Chicago, some 658,000 people board the “L” as it rattles through the neighborhoods of our city, carrying people to and from work.

But there are questions we rarely ask about work:

- » *Why work?*
- » *You spend 40+ hours a week working, but why?*
- » *Do you ever stop and reflect on why you do what you do?*
- » *Is it just for a paycheck?*
- » *Is it merely to provide food?*
- » *Is it ambition?*
- » *And what does God think of your work?*
- » *Can we glorify God in our work?*

The five studies contained here are an initial outline of a biblical theology of work. They are a small attempt to help our city begin to recover what the Reformers called “the doctrine of vocation.” William Perkins (1558–1602), the Cambridge Puritan, defined vocation this way: “A vocation or calling is a certain kind of life, ordained and imposed on man by God for the common good.” We work, Perkins claimed, for our good and the good of others to the glory of God. One contemporary writer, Gene Edward Veith Jr., writes, “Recovering the doctrine of vocation can help Christians influence their culture once again as they carry their faith into the world, into its every nook and cranny, through the plenitude of vocations.”

Dorothy L. Sayers (1893–1957), the British novelist and devout Christian, has written that we are not to view work “as a necessary drudgery to be undergone for the purpose of making money, but as a way of life in which the nature of man should find its proper exercise and delight and so fulfill itself to the glory of God.”

She goes on to define what Christian work is: “The only Christian work is good work done well. Let the church see to it that the workers are Christian people and do their work well, as to God: then all the work will be Christian work, whether it is Church embroidery, or sewage-farming...”

To see what God thinks of work, we begin the first study in the garden with Genesis 2:1-17. If God created Adam and put him into the garden to work—even before the fall—then there must be something *good* about work. And yet, as Karl Marx has pointed out, we are in fact, alienated from our work. So in our second study we examine Genesis 3 and the idea that our work is, in a sense, cursed,

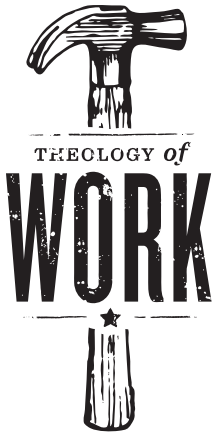
meant to be difficult, and we make our living by the sweat of our brow. This raises the question of our third study: can work then be enjoyed? Should it be enjoyed? The Teacher of Ecclesiastes argues that we can enjoy what we do, and gives us a vision of work and the simple life: doing what we do with all our might (Ecclesiastes 7:9-10). In the fourth and fifth studies we turn to the New Testament, where Paul shines the light of redemption through the gospel on work, claiming that we are in fact God's workmanship or masterpieces—created for good works in him (Ephesians 2:9-10). We learn that whatever we do, we are to do it for Him as our heavenly master (Colossians 2:22-25).

These studies were written out of love for Holy Trinity Church in the summer of 2010. Holy Trinity is a hardworking, creative lot. We launched this study to bridge the divide that many have between the secular and the sacred, to say that all good work can be done to God's glory.

These words of poet Marge Piercy (1936–present) could have been written about Holy Trinity of Chicago:

*I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,  
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,  
who strain in the mud and muck to move things forward,  
who do what has to be done, again and again.*

May God grant great joy in your work.



## ***Study #1: Created for Work - Why Work Is Good for Us***

**GENESIS 2:1-17**

**Week 1 - Week of September 13<sup>th</sup>**

Community Group calendar: **no meeting**

Text: **Genesis 2:1-17**

Ways in which you will interact with the text:

- » *Personal study*
- » *Listen to sermons preached on September 12<sup>th</sup>*

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### **MORE THAN A WORK ETHIC OR A PAYCHECK**

On April 16, 1989, a quiet phenomena was launched that captured a huge swath of public life. Scott Adams, a management-level employee at Pacific Bell in California, published a comic strip with United Media about a squar-ish man in shirt sleeves and his deadpan-witty dog as they engineer a mad invention. *Dilbert* the comic strip was born and corporate life in America had found its typecast photographic negative. The title character was a middle-level engineer and, along with déjà-vu co-workers spoke into the minutiae of 9-5 life in cubicles, whiteboard meetings, awkward flirtations, water coolers, and endless bureaucracy. Since then, *Dilbert* gave names to the nameless characters in workplace life that cultivates knowing nods across 2,000 newspapers worldwide.

Perhaps this is more than just amusing cultural satire? The popularity of Dilbert (recently along with NBC's *The Office*) reminds us that there is a certain milieu to work life that is beyond just the functional aspects of making a living. Indeed, more than just workplace dynamics between familiar people, what we do for a living, well, has a certain life to it. We're somehow reminded that work is more than a paycheck and that work is more than just a forum for our own personal work ethic. Work has meaning. But, what does it mean?

At the beginning of history, another creative project took place. In fact, at the very epicenter of creativity, God the Creator spoke life itself into being and man was born with a job to do without a paycheck or a sense that he had to be a workaholic. Humanity, you and I, were created to work—our resume starts with “Gardener”—in a way that was good for us and pleasing to God. The creative drive within each of us to develop, build, manage, create started in the beginning. In Genesis 2, is there something deeply raw that we can discover about what it is that we were created to do?

***The Seventh Day, God Rests***

**2** Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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 Creation of Man and Woman***

<sup>4</sup>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.

<sup>5</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— <sup>7</sup> then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. <sup>8</sup> And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. <sup>9</sup> And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>10</sup> A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. <sup>11</sup> The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. <sup>12</sup> And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. <sup>13</sup> The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. <sup>14</sup> And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

<sup>15</sup> The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

**READ GENESIS 2:1-3**

1. What do you learn about God and his work from verses 1-3?

What does verse 3 mean that God “rested from all his work that he had done in creation?” Does this mean that God is inactive now? Or that his manner of working has changed? (See also John 5:9-17, especially verse 17.)

2. Write out a summary of John 5:1-24 focusing on how the Father and Son work together, relating it back to Genesis 2. Do the same for Colossians 1:15-17.

**READ GENESIS 2:4-9**

3. How does the author of Genesis speak of what is present in creation and what is missing in verses 4-9? How does God address this?

4. In what way was the man necessary for the garden and the garden necessary for the man? (Cf. Proverbs 24:30-31 for a picture of this kind of relationship elsewhere.)

5. What are the two kinds of trees mentioned in verse 9? What do you learn about these trees in the immediate context? (See 2:17 and 3:24.)

6. What do you learn about the reappearance of the tree of life at the end of God’s story? (See Revelation 22:1-3.)

**READ GENESIS 2:10-17**

7. What role is Adam given in verse 15?

What does the presence of God-appointed work in the garden, before the fall, tell you about the nature of work?

8. What role and responsibilities are both Adam and Eve given in verses 26-28 of chapter one? (*Note: chapter 1:1-2:4 is a summary of creation; 2:4-25 'zooms in' to describe just the creation of Adam and Eve.*)

9. What does the command that God gives to Adam in 2:16-17 tell you about God's authority over man?

### **SUMMARY**

1. How would you summarize what Genesis 1-2 teaches about the relationship of men and women to nature?

To work?

### **MAKING APPLICATION**

1. How do you tend to view the work you do? Do you view it as something that God has given you to do? Or is it merely a way to pay the bills?

» What are the benefits of your work?

» What are the difficulties of your work?

2. How would our attitude toward work change if we viewed it as given from God?

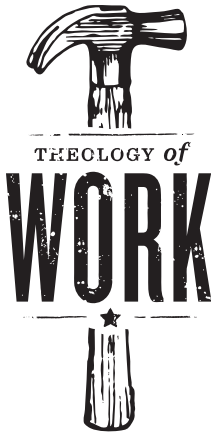
### **COMMUNITY**

3. How can we help one another view our work as a gift and opportunity and a way to glorify God?

# *Prayer Requests*

DATE

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## ***Study #2: Work Defiled - Why Work Is Difficult for Us***

**GENESIS 3:17-19**

**Week 2 - Week of September 20<sup>th</sup>**

Community Group calendar: **Dinner and abbreviated discussion**

Text: **Genesis 3:17-19**

Ways in which you will interact with the text:

- » *Personal study*
- » *Listen to sermon preached on September 19<sup>th</sup>*

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The sociologist Barry Schwartz, in his book *The Paradox of Choice*, makes the claim that the official dogma in America that the utility of choice in society is correlated to our sense of happiness is false. That is, choice is a paradox whereby the more choices you have, the more low-grade misery you experience. In a society where you and I have the opportunity to choose spouses, relationships, schools, smartphones, ketchup, and cruise lines while antidepressants fly off pharmacy shelves, this paradox is telling if not a little embarrassing. But as it relates to one's vocation, where the idea of choosing a career is a relatively new one in the scope of human history, maybe there's a deeper reason why mobility makes where you're at in your job seem a little dissatisfying.

At the beginning of the human story, we discover that the Creator creates you and me to work in a way that is integrated into who we are, so that our identities are not found in our jobs but rather in our being created in the image of God. And yet, as we see in Genesis 3, when we shift our sense of who we are from the Creator to creation itself—in this case, a tree—the effect is like a mirror facing a mirror: endless reflections that don't quite go anywhere. That day, not only who we are in our humanity as image bearers of God, but the idea of work itself, took a tragic nosedive. The restlessness of climbing another rung on the ladder, gaining further acclaim, seeking greater income, twiddling your thumbs at your desk, sweating through until you punch the clock, finds a common point in this episode when work became disconnected from God and from the way we were created. The curse of work came upon us and we've been sweating our jobs ever since.

**GENESIS 3:17-19: ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> 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; <sup>18</sup>thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. <sup>19</sup>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.”

**READ GENESIS 2.1-3**

1. What happens to Adam and Eve’s relationship with God as a result of their eating the fruit? (See especially verses 8-10.)

2. How does Adam respond to God’s questions? (See verses 9-11.) Where does Adam place the responsibility?

3. Where does the woman place responsibility? (See 2:13.) What does this tell you about our human nature?

4. How does the progression of blame invert the pattern of creation?

**READ GENESIS 3:14-19**

5. What is the progression of the curses? Where does God begin? Where does he end?

6. What does God promise Adam in verse 17 about the ground? How do we see this relationship of ‘pain’ to work expressed in our world today?

7. How does the description of thorns and thistles visually depict Adam’s new relationship to work?

## **READ VERSE 19**

8. The pain described in verse 17 is visually manifested by thorns in verse 18. How is the pain of work described visually in verse 19? What similarities are there between these descriptions? Differences?

## **SUMMARY**

1. Based on this study, how would you summarize the nature of work in Genesis 3?
2. How would you summarize the nature of work in chapter 2?
3. Write a brief one-paragraph summary of the pain and goodness of work that shows the nature of work today.

## **MAKING APPLICATION**

1. In what ways do you experience the “thorns,” “thistles,” and “sweat of your face” in your work? In what ways is this seen universally?
2. The fall changed our relationship to God, ourselves, others, and nature so that Romans 8:20-21 now speaks of all creation “groaning” for redemption. What would it look like to work in such a way that your work ethic is “groaning” for redemption?
3. What does Paul tell us will happen to all creation when Christ returns?
4. How should we learn to hope for redemption we do not see in our work until he comes?

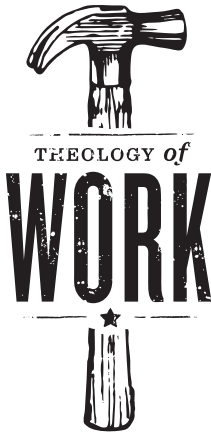
## **COMMUNITY**

1. How can we support each other in our work acknowledging the thorn and the need for redemption?

# *Prayer Requests*

DATE

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## ***Study #3: Work and the Simple Life - Doing Our Work with All of Our Might***

**ECCLESIASTES 9:7-10**

**Week 3 - Week of September 27<sup>th</sup>**

**Community Group calendar: No meeting. Missional activity (For One Chicago – Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>)**

**Text: Ecclesiastes 9:7-10**

**Ways in which you will interact with the text:**

- » *Personal study*
- » *Listen to sermon preached on September 26<sup>th</sup>*

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### **SIMPLICITY UNDER THE SUN**

Brooke Lawrence wants to see your messy closet. She is the self-described “Duchess of Declutter,” a small business owner in the Chicago area who makes her living as organizing/de-cluttering specialist. Such professional neat-freaks help you downsize your living spaces, organize filing systems, pack moving boxes, and firmly admonish in their assessment of whether you really need to keep that old sweater for sentimental reasons. Along with over a hundred members of the Chicago chapter of the National Association of Professional Organizers, she takes her drive to bring simplicity to Chicagoland workspaces seriously. For Lawrence, the vocation to declutter your life came early in life: “The mania started when I was wee, as I wasn’t your average toddler. . . I was also fanatical about maintaining a neat and orderly bedroom. Everything had its place, and if one stuffed animal or pillow on my bed looked askew, I wouldn’t leave my room until they were upright. . . it didn’t take long before I started organizing their [her parents’] drawers and their stuff. . . In short, I caught the bug at a young age and have been living and breathing it ever since.” Her sense of vocational destiny is about more than the piles on your desk: “I like to think that I contribute my flair to an often disorganized and cluttered world by making very good use of my flair for arranging, folding, planning and tossing.” Her vocation is to help others bring simplicity in their lives.

What about the clutter in our work life? Not the filing system or the tool shed—but all the reasons and drive that we tack on to the jobs. Honest and hard work inevitably gets cluttered with driving ambition, identity, greed, treadmill aimlessness, networking, and perpetual career change. Sometimes our messy mindset towards work needs simplicity so that we can center on what matters most in our lives. In the book of Ecclesiastes, the Wisdom teacher grapples with the messy angst of toil under the sun. Only because he’s been there, done that with all wealth enough to summer in the Hamptons and then buy out all his neighbors, does he attempt to sift through the life clutter to achieve a sense of life clarity. Maybe we make our work overly complicated with stuff that is vain and ephemeral? Isn’t there a simpler life for our work under the sun?

## **ECCLESIASTES 9:7-10: ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION (ESV)**

### **Enjoy Life with the One You Love**

<sup>7</sup> Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. <sup>8</sup> Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. <sup>9</sup> Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. <sup>10</sup> Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

### **READ ECCLESIASTES 9:7-10**

1. What are the three or four basic relationships affirmed in these verses?
2. What do you know about the context of Ecclesiastes? Authorship? (See 1:1.) Perspective? (See 1:2-11; 2:18-26.)
3. What reason is given for joy in eating and drinking wine with a merry heart in 9:10?
4. What does it mean that God has already approved what we do?
5. How is the curse of Genesis 3:17-18 present in Ecclesiastes 9:9?
6. Why would the author of Ecclesiastes call life vain?

### **MAKING APPLICATION**

1. How often do you actually live as if “God has already approved what you do”?

If you believed this from the perspective of the gospel, how would you live differently this week?

What are the biblical limitations on making this application?

**2.** Read Romans 8:1-2. How does it give you hope? How does the idea that you are not under condemnation free you?

**3.** Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.” Proverbs has a great deal to say about our work, particularly as it relates to the idea of diligence.

What do you learn about doing your work mightily from these passages?

» Proverbs 12:11

» Proverbs 12:27

» Proverbs 13:4

» Proverbs 13:11

» Proverbs 16:3

» Proverbs 18:9

» Proverbs 19:24

» Proverbs 20:13

» Proverbs 21:5

**4.** To what degree does our city live as if these verses on might, diligence, and work are true? How is your work in planning (21:5)? Where do you want to repent of slacking in your work?

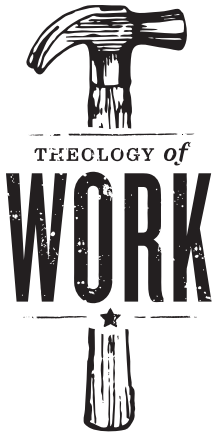
## **COMMUNITY**

1. How can we help each other live with greater diligence?
2. How well do you do in celebrating the simple things in life (bread, wine, marriage and relationships, work)?
3. What are the obstacles to you celebrating these things more fully?
4. What changes would you like to make in your life based on these passages?

# *Prayer Requests*

DATE

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## ***Study #4: Working Masterpieces - Gospel Implications for Work***

**EPHESIANS 2:8-10; 4:25-28**

**Week 4 - Week of October 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Community Group calendar: Community Group meets for study.**

**Text: Ephesians 2:8-10; 4:25-28**

**Ways in which you will interact with the text:**

- » *Personal study*
- » *Listen to sermon preached on October 3<sup>rd</sup>*
- » *Community Group discussion*

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### **WORKING MASTERPIECES**

One might think that epic tales of Narnia, Middle Earth, and Hogwarts are just for childhood imaginations. But for Shaun Parker, a middle-aged man from Menasha, Wisconsin, the stories of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table became more than youthful fantasy. In a recent story from NPR about his life, Parker describes how the movie on which Arthur's legend is based frames his world: "Excalibur made me think that just like Arthur, I had a destiny." In his youth in Menasha, that sense of destiny drove his quest for his own Guinevere—a young woman named Heidi. However, he didn't get the girl. Nevertheless, he now shares his story—along with others with such life chronicles to audiences in Los Angeles. The NPR piece turns to Antonio Damasio, a behavioral neurologist and author of *Self Comes to Mind*, "You're constantly rearranging the narrative in your life. . . And you're rearranging as a function of the experiences that you have had and as what you imagine your experiences in the future ought to be." In other words, we're all on a quest for "something more" in order that our own personal stories might become meaningful.

If you've ever worked in a way that is driven by a punch clock, you know that waiting for the next break or quitting time is nauseating monotony. Or, on the flip side, if you need to be torn away from your work, it is nearly mental addiction. If Dr. Damasio is right, it would seem that the endeavor we spend most of our conventional waking adult lives on—our work—becomes most meaningful if given some narrative plot; a part of a great story for our lives for the common good. Of course, most of us are not creative enough to sustain the quest—especially when it's all so complicated or even just boring. Is it possible that our lives could be storied into masterpiece theater without having to be our own producer, director, star, and script writer?

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul—a pretty accomplished writer himself with an epic life story—grabs our imagination from a prison in first-century Rome with the image that we were zombies who have now been brought to life in the light for good work unfettered by the stale.

With the role of Creator in such life and death drama, trusting in God is to trust in a unique epic tale for our lives and vocation that is more genuine than the Odyssey, The Revolution, the Round Table, and Boy meets Girl. He makes our lives his poetic masterpiece.

## **EPHESIANS 2:8-10; 4:25-28: ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION (ESV)**

### **EPHESIANS 2:8-10**

<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

### **EPHESIANS 4:25-28**

<sup>25</sup> Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. <sup>26</sup> Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> and give no opportunity to the devil. <sup>28</sup> Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

### **READ EPHESIANS 2:1-10**

1. What is the context surrounding verse 10? (See verses 1-8.)
2. The idea in verse 10 (“we are his workmanship”) is that we are his masterpieces. From verses 1-8 list:

*Our natural state*

*What God has done*

3. Paul uses the word “walk” in verse 10 saying God has good works for us to walk in. How is this different from what we used to walk in? (See verse 1.)
4. Paul writes of the good works we are to walk in. Read/scan the second half of Ephesians where Paul continues the walk imagery.

*Text*

*Image*

*Meaning*

4:1-3

4:17

*Text*

*Image*

*Meaning*

5:2

5:8

5:15

### **SUMMARY**

1. How does the idea of us being God's workmanship naturally flow from salvation (2:1-9) to doing good works?

### **MAKING APPLICATION**

1. How does the idea that God has specific good works for you to do encourage you? If you could dream about what those works might look like, what might be some of your dreams?

2. How often do you think of yourself as one of God's specially designed redemptive masterpieces? If you were to think of yourself this way, how would it change your attitude? Your work?

3. Some of the good works we are to walk in (as seen above) are specifically outlined by Paul (see 4:1-3; 4:17; 5:2; 5:8; 5:15). Which of these are the most difficult for you? Easiest? How can we pray for you on these?

### **COMMUNITY**

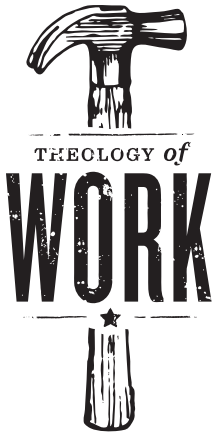
1. Spend some time communicating to one another the kinds of "good works" that you believe God can specifically use the others in the group to do.

2. Spend time in prayer asking God to reveal the good works he has for our community to do in the city.

# *Prayer Requests*

DATE

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## ***Study #5: Working for the Good - Doing All for the Glory of God and the Common Good***

**COLOSSIANS 3:22-25**

**Week 5 - Week of October 11<sup>th</sup>**

Community Group calendar: **No meeting. Missional activity.**

Text: **Colossians 3:22-25**

Ways in which you will interact with the text:

- » *Personal study*
- » *Listen to sermon preached on October 10<sup>th</sup>*

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### **WORKING FOR THE BEST**

It can be said that Mike Rowe has the worst job in America. Imagine the most challenging jobs that would have the least number of responses to a “help wanted” ad—such as Casino Food Recycler, Toilet Crusher, Garbage Pit Technician, Billboard Installer, Bologna Maker—and doing not just one, but all of these “dirty” jobs. Then, such an eclectic job description would be so unconventional, monotonous, gross, painful, dangerous, that it could be nearly entertaining to catch a glimpse of all the variety. Of course, Mike doesn’t do all of these—and a whole lot more of those “somebody’s got to do it” work—for a living. Rather, he stars and hosts in the television show, *Dirty Jobs* (Discovery Channel), which has run since its debut in 2005. From the original pilot that showcased Shark Repellent Tester and Shark Suit Tester, which required jumping into an actual shark feeding frenzy, Mike would profile a number of jobs in an episode based upon viewer submissions. But, instead of poking fun at the people who wash windows off skyscrapers or scrape skulls for science, the view into these tasks although amusing, brings a certain dignity to the worst jobs in America. Mike Rowe can do it with an everyday-man, intelligent, and self-deprecating demeanor because he knows that his audience is watching and he aims to educate and entertain. So, it could be said that he also has the best job in America as well.

In our own jobs—although they may never be profiled on a TV show—we have “dirty” elements to them that we’d rather not perform. If we do the tasks for ourselves, or even for our families, it takes sheer determination to get through to quitting time. But what if, like Mike Rowe, we too had an audience that was pleased by our work? In the New Testament times, being a slave had its disadvantage; you were not a citizen and belonged to someone. But the Apostle Paul in reflecting on what even could have been perceived as ignoble work, brings about nobility because of the audience for whom one works. God is watching; performing our work for him and for his providential purposes means that we could all have the best of jobs.

### COLOSSIANS 3:22-25: ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION (ESV)

<sup>22</sup> Slaves, 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. <sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. <sup>25</sup> For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

### READ COLOSSIANS 3:22-25

1. What is the surrounding context of the passage? What is Paul addressing in verses 3:18–4:1?
2. Verses 18-25 are sometimes called a haustaffel (household) passage, this one addressing the members of an ancient household in the region of Colossae. List out the imperatives in verses 18-25 given to the various members of the households.

Household member

Imperative

verse

What do you notice about the various imperatives as you compare and contrast them?

3. The Greek term for slave in verse 22 is literally “bond servant.” In the first century, a bond servant is one who normally owed a large debt and worked without pay in order to pay that debt. Onesimus, the one who with Tychicus (4:7-9) likely delivered this letter to Colossae on behalf of Paul, was a bond servant who had escaped from his master (see Philemon 10-20) and then became a follower of Christ, and had likely stolen from his former master (Philemon 18) and now had rejoined his former master and the church at Colossae. Paul addresses some of the natural issues of motivation for bond servants like Onesimus who would struggle with serving a master. What does Paul say about the how the bond servant is to serve and obey?

4. Describe the attitude and behavior of “eye-service” (verse 22). What would serving by way of eye-service look like practically in that context?

What would serving by way of eye-service look like practically in our context?

5. Describe the attitude and behavior of “people-pleasing” (verse 22).

How is working with “sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord,” different from “eye-service” and “people-pleasing”? Describe what this might look like in an ancient or contemporary workplace.

6. Why would it be important in the first-century context for the bond servant to remember he or she was working “as for the Lord and not men”?

7. Verse 24-25 teach that God will eventually hold wicked masters accountable for the wrong they have done and reward the bond servant. How would this help the bond servant to keep focused on “serving the Lord Christ” (verse 24b)?

### **MAKING APPLICATION**

1. The perspective of “serving the Lord Christ” (verse 24b) with sincerity of heart (verse 22b) in very difficult circumstances working for a final reward (verse 24) springs from what might be called “high Christology.” Read verses 1:18-20 and list how the Father has made Christ “preeminent” (verse 18).

2. In what ways do you slip into doing your work for men rather than Christ? How often does “people-pleasing” happen in your workplace? Give some examples. How about in your own life?

3. How might you practically stay focused on working “heartily, as for the Lord and not for men” (verse 23)?

4. A prevalent theme in Colossians is thankfulness (1:3, 12; 2:5, 7; 3:15, 16, 17; 4:2). Read 3:15-17 and meditate on the connection between thankfulness and serving the Lord. How would greater thankfulness in your life benefit you in your workplace and reflect Christ as Lord?

## **COMMUNITY**

1. What difference might it make in our city for Christians to work in the manner described here? (See also Colossians 4:5-6.)

2. We are exploring “vocational communities” which gather Christian and non-Christian Chicagoans to think about work in their particular area of vocation. How would these truths change your vocation in the city?

3. What changes do you need to make to work with greater focus on Christ and not your earthly boss?

# *Prayer Requests*

DATE

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